

THE LONELIEST BOY

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THE LONELIEST BOY

The name of the German village at that time was Hellstein. It had been Hellstein for centuries. My family had lived in Hellstein for centuries. The address where my family lived before World War II was Hauptstrasse 55. To the best of my knowledge the house was build sometime in the 1860's. It was build as a duplex by my great-grandfather to accommodate the families of his two sons. My Grandfather Jakob, I called him Opa, and his half-brother Moses. This was where my family had its roots. This was the house in which I was born, in which my father had been born and his father before him. Probably many of my ancestors had been born at this same address, for centuries, in previous houses that had been build by members of my family.

The county seat was the city of Gelnhausen and the area was known as Kreis Gelnhausen, a *Kreis* being the same geographical subdivision as a county in the United States.

Our family name was Grünebaum. Of the five Jewish families in Hellstein, at the time I was growing up there, three had the last name of Grünebaum. The two other family last names were Aretz and Moritz. There were six Jewish children in Hellstein, five girls and one boy. I was the youngest of the six Jewish children. I was also the only boy. The girls were the two Aretz sisters, the two Moritz sisters and my sister Johanna commonly known as Hannele or Hanni.

My parents named me Erich. In the dark days of 1938 after the *Krystallnacht* tragedy, all Jewish individuals had to assume a middlename for identification. Males were given the middlename of Israel and females the middlename of Sara. Therefore my name became Erich Israel Grünebaum until the day I left Germany.

It seems ironic now in the later part of my life that I am living in the same general type of environment as the one into which I was born.

Here, in this peaceful valley in Southwest Colorado, I almost feel as if I have come home to the little village in central Germany where I spent my first years.

There was the big house, a gravel yard in front with the wood pile stacked next to the stairs leading up to the front door. On both sides of the house were the outbuildings; a hen house, the barn and attached stable, a tool shed and the unfortunate outdoor toilet. (The plumbing in Colorado is now indoors.)

My mother maintained a vegetable garden out back, which to me, as a child, seemed enormous. It couldn't have been more than a quarter

of an acre. Beyond the fenced vegetable garden was a meadow of sorts with fruit trees. The homestead was bordered on the west by a stream and to the north by the main street which bisected the town. The population of the village was just over four hundred inhabitants.

It was an idyllic surrounding for a little boy. However I might as well have been in prison.

After 1933, being the only Jewish boy in town, I was the loneliest child in Hellstein.

Hellstein no longer exists, absorbed by a larger civic entity. It is now a part of the community of Brachtal. Kreis Gelnhausen has also fallen by the wayside. This political subdivision of the Federal Republic of Germany is now Main-Kinzig Kreis. But the memory of my childhood will endure, in that little village in what was then Hessen-Nassau.

There is a story about the country of Palestine, which of course later became the Jewish home state of Israel. Eastern European immigrants from the turn of the century had come to Palestine with a view toward establishing a home state. They had the vision that Jews would always be outsiders in foreign lands. These were the young people from the rural areas of Poland and Russia and they were familiar with working the land. They were carefree informal groups working together on communal farms that were known as Kibbutzim. Shorts, shirts and sandals were the usual manner of dress.

Into this environment in the middle and late thirties came the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany also looking for a homeland. The stiff, formal, very proper Germans were completely out of place in the Kibbutz environment. The Germans turned out every morning like a proper German would dress; shirt, tie, suitcoat and hat. The carefree kibbutznicks which had been there awhile would laugh and holler in Yiddish: "Look at the guy with the *Yekke*," the word *yekke* being the Yiddish word for Jacket. German immigrants to Israel to this day are known as *Yekkes* because they are such sticklers for having every detail exact and proper. German immigrants to the United States were not that different, they still insisted that things should be done by the old Germanic standards.

This was the German-Jewish culture into which I was born.

HELLSTEIN

I was born at 12:45 on the morning of July 7, 1928. It was a Saturday morning and that made me a "*Schabbos Kind*", a "Child of the Sabbath". This also made me especially blessed in the tradition of the Jewish religion. My father gave me the name Elieser, thereby making my Hebrew name Elieser bar Yonoh. My father chose the Arameic *bar* instead of the Hebrew *ben* for the term "son of". It comes from the same source as the word Bar Mitzvah. My mother chose my secular name of Erich. In those days middle names were not commonly used.

Let me try to recollect my earliest childhood memories. These are flashes and scenes, necessarily unconnected.

Between 1928, the year of my birth, and 1937, the year I left Hellstein, it was a village with a population of about four hundred inhabitants.

The location of Hellstein is hard to find without explicit directions. Fifty-five Kilometers east of Frankfurt-am-Main is the town of Waechtersbach on the main north/east south/west highway between Frankfurt and Fulda. One must go straight north from Wächtersbach ten kilometers, toward Birstein, past the little town of Schlierbach. A side road to the right will state that Hellstein is two kilometers over the next hill. The road to Hellstein was unpaved until the mid-nineteen-sixties. The road was not very well traveled in my childhood years since Hellstein was served by a daily train that was in reality the main means of transportation. A little steam engine pulling two or three ancient cars came puffing up the valley from Wächtersbach every morning on its way to a town called Hartmanshain. It traveled backwards in the afternoon, since there was no facility to turn it at the end of the line, down the valley, back to Wächtersbach, for connection with the main line railroad.

Anyone coming into Hellstein by road could pause at the top of the aforementioned hill to see the village spread out below him. The view from the top of the hill was mostly of a small sea of red tiled roofs.

Across the little valley one could see the road reemerging out of Hellstein and winding up another hill on the eastside of town toward the village of Udenhain. The road bisected the village east and west, the railroad and a parallel stream, called *Der Reichenbach*, north and south. There was a prominent church steeple of the Evangelical Church in the middle of the red tiled roofs. The only other prominent feature one might notice was the incredible green of the surrounding hillsides if it was anything but the dead of winter.

Hellstein in those days was strictly a Protestant Evangelical

town. We had the six Jewish families with our limited number of congregants of course and then there was one lone lady of the Catholic faith. She was picked up every Sunday morning, without fail, by a relative and driven to Wächtersbach, the nearest Catholic Parish.

The Grünebaum house in Hellstein, at Hauptstrasse 55, was in the almost geographical center of the village. It was certainly at one of the most prominent locations in town, where Main Street crossed the *Reichenbach* next to the bridge. It was an imposing house, four stories high, of a duplex type construction. The two sides, left and right, had identical floor plans, but were mirror images of one another.

Our side was the residence on the left as you faced the house from the street. On the right lived Uncle Moses with his daughter Elsa, her husband Max Aretz and their two daughters Valerie and Martha. Uncle Moses was a butcher and so was his son-in-law Max. They had outfitted the ground floor as the retail butcher shop.

The total property also included a stable for the cattle, a barn, and beyond the barn on the extreme right as seen from the street, a slaughterhouse that had been built on the bank of the *Reichebach*, our local stream.

We had the use of the stable and the barn for my father's cattle business. The butchers in turn had the slaughterhouse.

Between the stable and the main house was a breezeway leading to the rear where there was an orchard, a meadow and two vegetable gardens for the two households. Built into the breezeway against the wall of the stable, was the outhouse for both families. Also in this area was the cesspool, a deep pit in the ground loosely covered with boards, which gathered all the drainage from both the outhouse and the stable. Periodically, preferably in the spring, the pool was pumped out into a cattle drawn tank wagon (dubbed Honey Wagon by members of the US Armed Forces during and after World War Two) and taken into the fields. There the material, which was in liquid form, was spread as fertilizer, a time honored system used for centuries before the advent of chemicals.

The main house, stable, barn and slaughterhouse; all in a row, were set back from the street a distance of several yards. In the area in front of the stable door, was the manure pile. The manure was accumulated for most of the year until needed in the fields. After the last harvest in the fall, it was piled onto a wagon and was taken out to be spread onto the fields. The manure pile was more straw than anything else and made very good compost or mulch.

The main house as I mentioned, was built as a duplex. It was built in four stories, from the ground floor to the attic.

The street level was mainly the root cellar and a workroom on our side. Old tack and harness parts hung from the walls and the workbench was just inside the entrance. The entrance to this area was from the front yard

and on the left corner of the house. Inside, a passage led to the right into an area with separate bins for storing vegetables. Also on the wall in this area, were shelves on which was stored the heavy black bread which my mother was so good at baking. I think the several compartments in the root cellar might have been the horses' stalls in the old days when the family had horses. All we had in my father's time were cows that were also used for draft animals. These cows were kept in the stable next to the barn.

The main living area was on the second level. In Germany, even today, floors of buildings are numbered as ground floor, then first, second and so on. Therefore, at that time, our living quarters were on what we called the first floor. The sleeping area was on the second floor and then we had an attic with what used to be the maid's room and also held a lot of storage.

Access to the first floor from the ground was by means of an outside, very steep staircase. The staircase looked, and still looks today, as if it had been added onto the house as an afterthought.

These outside stairs and the upstairs landing were open to the elements and quite dangerous in the winter. The steps themselves were made of local sandstone. I never knew as a child, steps were not supposed to be naturally hollowed out.

Entering the main part of the house from the upstairs outside landing, one came into a hallway. Ahead, straight down the hall was the kitchen. On the right, just inside the hall, was the stairway going to second floor and the bedrooms.

On the left side of the hallway just inside the front door was the doorway leading to the living room that was also the main dining area. We took our meals in this room on the Sabbath, on Holidays and other special occasions. A desk was in the corner, a couch against the far wall. To the right a big, green tile covered stove dominated the room. There was a dining table with chairs, some easy chairs and a chest of drawers. The walls had several mirrors, pictures and a wind-up wall clock. Since the front door faced north, this room was in the northeast corner of the first floor.

The room beyond, on the southeast corner, was used as the small grocery store which my mother operated at the time of my birth. It was a somewhat smallish room with a counter, shelves and a potbellied stove. The kitchen was in the southwest corner of the first floor.

The kitchen of course is where we spent more time than anywhere else. A sink with cold running water, a cookstove burning wood or coal briquettes, a table and two cabinets for dishes. It was necessary to have two dish cabinets, since we kept kosher and had to have two sets of dishes. The dishes from meat-based meals were not to be intermingled with dishes used for dairy meals. A table with chairs stood in the center of the kitchen. The table was always covered with oilcloth, white for meat-based meals, red for dairy.

One day an itinerant man who was passing through Hellstein

stopped at our house and asked Mama for a drink of water. Mama of course would never refuse any stranger a courtesy. She took a glass from the cabinet and drew the water from our faucet in the kitchen. After the man was gone she gave us a lengthy lecture on sanitation.

“Always assume that a stranger might be carrying a harmful disease,” she said.

She boiled the glass before putting it back on the shelf.

The floor of the kitchen was made up of the same sandstone as the outside staircase. Mama would scrub the kitchen floor with a piece of burlap on her hands and knees. Whenever it was time for any of us to take a bath, this event also took place in the kitchen, in a galvanized bathtub that was hauled out for the occasion. It is funny how I can remember some of the details. For instance the package shampoo which my mother used on my sister had a black silhouette of a little girl on a yellow background.

Under the stairs and in the hallway outside the kitchen door was storage. I shall describe my personal experience with this area later.

On the second floor, immediately at the top of the staircase, was the bedroom Opa and I shared while he was still alive. It had two beds, one on each side of the window. A bare bulb was in the ceiling with a string running across the ceiling and down the wall next to Opa's bed to turn the light on and off. Cracks in the walls had been patched with raw cement (not plaster), leaving ugly gray marks at eye level. This room was mine, sharing it with either Opa or Hanni, from the time I was too old for the crib in my parents' room, until I left Hellstein.

The rest of the second floor was taken by my parents' sleeping quarters. A sitting room was toward the front of the house with their bedroom behind it. The sitting room was my mothers private preserve where she kept her personal things. Mementos from her childhood, souvenirs, her good jewelry, sterling silver items and other treasures were kept here. It was in this room that she hid an ill-fated batch of misbaked bread when she was a newlywed.

Since build-in closets were unknown in the Germany of that era, my parents had an enormous, double, wooden wardrobe for their clothes against the wall of their bedroom. King size or double beds were not in common use at the time either. Married couples had two beds of standard construction but which fitted together with wooden dowels making one huge marriage bed. My parents' beds practically filled their bedroom. Of course under each bed, in all bedrooms, was the ever-present chamberpot.

The stairs to the attic for some reason had a door that could be kept locked but seldom was. Entering the uppermost level of the house was an eerie experience since the walls were not finished on the upstairs landing. Raw mortar, stone and wood beams greeted one upon emerging from the stairwell.

A huge smoke chamber dominated the center of this area. All

smoke from the ovens and stoves passed through the smoke chamber before entering the chimney. The smoke chamber had racks and hooks for curing and preserving meats by smoking. This, one must remember, was before refrigeration. Access to the smoke chamber was by a large cast iron door on hinges. When there was meat to be preserved by smoking, coal was not allowed to be used in the kitchen. At those times my parents only used wood and even made a big fire in the living room heating stove whether they needed heat or not.

There were several separate rooms in the attic. One was a bedroom, at one time intended to be the maid's quarters, but while Opa was still alive it was used by my sister Hanni.

Two storerooms served distinct and special purposes.

One storeroom was always kept locked. In it were kept all the *Pesach* (the Jewish holiday of Passover) dishes, linens and utensils.

Kosher-for-*Pesach* items could never be mingled with everyday items. Of course the *Pesach* stuff was also separated again for meat and dairy use. The *Pesach* closet also contained preserves and glass jars with fruits and vegetables from when my mother did the canning. During canning season in the fall, one day was always set aside for *Pesach* canning. The kitchen was scrubbed, the *Pesach* utensils brought down from the attic for the occasion and my mother canned strictly for *Pesach*, the food to be taken upstairs and stored for the six months or so until this holiday arrived. While Mama did the *Pesach* canning, we were not allowed to have our meals in the kitchen.

The other storeroom in the attic had shelves upon shelves of regular canned items from the canning season. This was for everyday use. In the summer and fall putting up vegetables and fruit and making preserves and jellies was a continuous thing. As the vegetables ripened they had to immediately be preserved. There was a special oven in the laundry room for dehydrating fruit. Apples, prunes and apricots, especially prunes were dried for storage.

Refrigeration was unknown in our house. For instance, butter was kept from going rancid by storing it in a glass dish in a clay bowl filled with water. As the water evaporated through the walls of the clay bowl it cooled the inside of the bowl thereby keeping the contents fresh. That was why we had the smoke chamber in the attic for preserving meat and the constant emphasis on proper storage to keep the produce.

Every house has a catchall area to store things not needed at the moment but too good to throw out. This was the purpose of the rest of the attic. Here was Papa's old army uniform. Of particular fascination was his helmet that always rested on top of the smoke chamber. The helmet was of the variety the German Army used in World War One with the point sticking out of the top. We children called it a lightning rod. My sister once speculated that Germany might have lost that war, because the lightning rods of all the German soldiers attracted the Allies' gun flashes.

Other items stored here were old furniture like my baby crib, old kitchen utensils no longer in use and other things fascinating to a little boy.

One other feature of the property in Hellstein was the hen house, which was located to the left of the main building, that is on the eastside. We kept a number of chickens and a rooster or two, for fresh eggs and also to have poultry for the table.

To the rear of the house was the vegetable garden and orchard. Actually it wasn't really an orchard but more of a meadow with fruit trees planted in it. We had mostly apples but also some pears and prune plums.

The Hellstein of the nineteen-thirties had a central water system installed to all the homes. We also had electricity. The roads were either gravel or packed dirt. We heated our home with stoves that burned mostly wood and sometimes coal. There were no open fireplaces. In our home, cooking was done on the coal stove in the kitchen. A prominent feature of our cook stove was the water tank attached to its side, which was kept filled with water from the cold water faucet. The tank had a little tap in front so that in a manner of speaking we always had running hot water as long there was a fire in the stove. When I was old enough to be trusted, I was the one who would start the fire in the kitchen stove most mornings.

There were only two telephones in Hellstein, our house had one of the two. Mama insisted on having a phone since her family lived rather far away.

No one owned an automobile in the Hellstein of my childhood. One farmer had the only horse in town. All other draft animals were cows or oxen.

The only public transportation that reached the town, was the little train every morning and every afternoon. The train brought the mail, freight and the newspapers. Hellstein had no newspaper of its own. There were two methods of disseminating local news of interest. We had a town crier with a brass bell. Every weekday morning between ten and eleven he made the rounds stopping every so often, ringing his bell and making announcements of public interest. The announcement was also posted on a bulletin board on the side of the bake house for those that missed him. In the mid-nineteen-thirties, a yellow post wagon, a big truck-like van, was added to bring the mail from Gelnhausen our county seat of government.

This then was the environment in which I grew up for the first ten years of my life.

My earliest recollection as a child is my being in a crib in my parent's sitting room just outside of and to the left of their bedroom.

I remember waking up from my nap one afternoon, crying because I was alone. Mama came into room and held me and I stopped my crying. At another time in this location, a relative, a cousin of my father's, passed through town on business and stayed at our house. There were no inns

or hotels in Hellstein. Papa in turn was also away from home on business overnight. Mama slept in the attic with my sister that night and gave the master bedroom to the guest. I was still in my crib in the sitting room. Before putting me to bed for the night she cautioned me against crying or making any other unnecessary noise. She was afraid I might disturb the guest.

I must have had a craving for calcium for some reason. The wall next to where my crib was located had a hole in it where I had dug out the plaster and eaten it. I think I probably slept in the crib until I was maybe two years old, after that I shared the bedroom with Opa. The crib of course moved to the attic. I wonder if my parents ever thought of having any more children.

I had a special relationship with my Opa, my father's father.

Incidentally, my mother's father was never called anything but Grandfather, very formal, there was never any encouragement the few times I saw him, for any terms of endearment.

This special relationship that existed between Opa and I, is so often the case between grandson and grandfather. As a very small boy I would follow him as he did chores around our place. Papa was often away on business all day and it was Opa who took care of what little livestock we had.

I remember Opa as a tall, completely bald man with a beard. Opa smoked a unique pipe. It had a long stem decorated with tassels. The stem was so long that when Opa was seated in his easy chair the bowl of the pipe would rest on the floor.

Opa had his friends in the village, men his own age with whom he would play cards, probably men with whom he had grown up and had known all his life. One of his best friends was a cabinetmaker. They were such good friends that they both named a son by the same first name of Jonas. One of course was my father; the other Jonas became a barber. They had their home across the road from our house. The other Jonas' family had a son who was the same age as my sister.

The two families were so close that this young man came to our house one day when I was still very small to talk to Mama. He asked her if she thought it was warm enough for him to not have to wear long underwear anymore. His mother made him wear long underwear into the spring and he wanted Mama to use her influence on his mother to let him be more comfortable.

There was an incident when the two grandfathers were playing the cardgame Skat at our house with someone else in their group. It was a cold night in the middle of winter and the big stove covered with green ceramic tiles in one corner of our living room had a roaring fire in it. All of a sudden, my Opa jumped up and grabbed the deck of cards and threw them into the fire. He had obviously been losing and took it out on the cards. Such was his temper. His friends roared with laughter. I, as a small child playing on the floor, was awestruck.

Opa's friend, the cabinetmaker, made a toy for me, a jigsaw puzzle. He took a board and literally cut it up with a jigsaw in a random pattern, for me to again reassemble. That of course is where the term jigsaw puzzle comes from. It is one of the earliest toys I remember.

This brings to mind another scene. Papa had taken me across the street for my first haircut. After we left his friend's barbershop we stood in the middle of the road between the houses. Papa pulled a small pocketcomb out of his vest pocket and firmly holding my chin with his left hand, he re-combed my hair to suit him. This was very annoying to me, therefore I remember it well.

In later years the other Jonas' oldest son became an SS trooper and we could no longer get our hair cut by my father's namesake. We had to go to the town of Schlirbach for our haircuts, where we were not so well known.

It was with my Opa, holding his hand, that I went to the schoolhouse in Hellstein to observe him voting in the presidential election of 1932. I remember how emphatic he was in voting for the right man. The right man to him, was Graf Paul von Hindenburg. Hindenburg won the election but then unfortunately appointed Adolf Hitler, his opponent in the election, Chancellor of Germany, a position akin to Prime Minister. The Nazi Party seized absolute power on January 30, 1933.

As I mentioned before, while Opa was alive I spent more time with him than with Papa. The scenes of Opa playing the card game Skat with his friends on winter evenings are very vivid. Also in my mind's eye I can see him sitting in the overstuffed chair next to the green tile stove with his long pipe. He was the one who taught me about the prayer shawl and what the fringes meant. He taught me to make the knots on the fringes. At my grandfather's feet I learned for the first time how to make a half hitch, which is the knot used in tying the fringes on the prayer shawl, although of course I didn't know the name of the knot. I watched him when he put on the *Tfillin*, the Phylacteries, leather straps with little boxes containing prayers. These are worn during the morning prayers on weekdays. He explained to me how they are put on and that the meaning of the prayers inside the boxes was the continued reaffirmation of our faith.

Opa, the same as I do today, must have had a sweet tooth. He was a sight standing next to his desk cutting up a piece of licorice to share with me. Mama disapproved of this, since she didn't like licorice and she probably thought it was bad for me.

Opa, during warmer weather, spent his time in the ground floor workshop or in the barn. I can still see him standing at the workbench with a hammer, straightening bend nails, salvaging them.

I see him sitting on a low stool in the work area picking over a sack of potatoes choosing the best ones for seed potatoes. The seed potatoes were then put away by themselves in a dark corner of the root cellar until the

following spring.

Opa would shake bundles of hay into a sieve and then screen the droppings to sift out seeds of hay for reseeding the meadow the following year.

In my mind's eye I see Opa standing by the workbench with a wooden grass rake that had teeth missing. He carefully whittled new teeth, about three inches long and a quarter inch in diameter, out of a piece of wood and inserted them into holes in the rake where the old teeth had broken out.

One summer evening, just before sunset, Opa and I stood in front of our house. It had been a warm summer day and a fresh breeze was starting to cool things. The wind started to blow a little harder and the barn swallows for some reason were swooping in and out of the meadows at a very low altitude.

Opa said to me: "Look at the swallows, when they fly low like that we are going to have a storm, it won't be long before it will rain".

It wasn't long after, that I noticed the big thunderheads building up in the west. By nightfall the winds had increased and sure enough thunder and lightning and then rain followed.

I learned a lot from Opa.

Although Opa was seventy-seven years old when I was born, he was still in good health for years. He would be out in the meadow in the back of the house swinging his scythe with an easy regular rhythm cutting the grass for hay. He showed me how to use the whetstone to sharpen the scythe but would not let me do it myself lest I either hurt myself or damage the tool. I have never really known which reason prevailed.

I like to think that I gave some joy to Opa in his last years just by being there. I know he made my early childhood more meaningful by being there with me. I am also grateful that he was spared the awful years that we had to endure soon after his passing.

I mentioned earlier that in my early childhood I shared a bedroom with Opa.

On a fateful night, in the summer of 1932, my father again was out of town overnight for business. My mother was in my parents' bedroom. My sister had her room in the attic and Opa and I were in the room we shared.

In the middle of the night when Opa turned on the light I woke up. He was sitting up in bed with tears running down his face. I tried to question him but he wouldn't answer. Something was wrong with my Opa, he couldn't talk anymore. I later learned that what had happened to him is called a stroke and it had caused him to lose his speech. At that moment though, I was only bewildered. Being only four years old, I went back to sleep.

In the morning when I came downstairs, Mama was telling Opa that he should really stay in bed, at least until Papa came home. He only shook his head. After breakfast, as always, he went out to the barn and up

into the hayloft and got the hay to feed the cows. Mama stood at the bottom of the ladder to the hayloft, crying and begging him not to do any work. He only silently shook his head.

This of course was the beginning of my Opa's terminal illness. All through the fall and most of the winter he grew worse. He was bedridden through December and January of that year.

Opa passed away on February 22, 1933. Hanni and I and other neighborhood children were sledding down the slope from the Hauptstrasse to the frozen surface of the *Reichebach* when Mama came out of the house to give us the sad news. I remember the scene vividly. Mama held me close and I buried my face in her apron.

"You can have a good cry," she said, "it will make you feel better."

It was almost three weeks to the day, since the Nazis came to power when Opa died.

Opa was the last Grünebaum to be buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Birstein.

The week of mourning after Opa's funeral, was the last great get-together of the Grünebaum family. With few exceptions I never saw most of my uncles and aunts again. I have a suspicion that my mother and many of my father's brothers were not on the best of terms. The Bachenheimers of Fulda and my Uncle Adolf who settled with his family in nearby Wächtersbach were the exception.

Opa was born on November 14, 1851 in Hellstein. His father, my great-grandfather, was named Isack and my great-grandmother was Irma with the maiden name of Strauss. A new house replaced the house in which he was born in about the year 1862. I was told that Opa served in the German army in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71.

The family had always been in the retail and cattle trading business. Young Jakob Grünebaum followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and probably uncles and cousins in the same line of work. In documents still in existence his profession is given as either '*Viehändler*' (cattle trader) or '*Kaufmann*' (retailer). How many brothers or sisters he might have had, I never knew.

Opa probably married my grandmother sometime after he left the military in the middle eighteen-seventies. The young lady's maiden name was Johanette Strauss (possibly a distant relative of her mother in law to-be) and she was commonly known as Jette. Her hometown was Oberseemen up the hill in the *Vogelsgebirge*, the low mountain range to the north of Hellstein. In line with the customs of the times, it was more than likely an arranged marriage.

The marriage was blessed with nine children, three girls and six boys. The first, a daughter named Zilla, arrived on October 21, 1879. The

youngest, Adolf, saw the light of day a little more than twenty-one years later on November 14, 1900. In order of appearance my uncles and aunts were: Zilla, October 21, 1879; Bertha, July 6, 1881; Zadock, June 9, 1883; Leopold, May 5, 1885; Simon, February 9, 1888; Wolf (Willi), December 6, 1889; and Mathilde (Tilly), September 3, 1891. My father, Jonas, was next in line on March 2, 1896, as the second youngest, and then the youngest, my Uncle Adolf on November 14, 1900.

Of the six sons of Jakob Grünebaum, five served in the German army in the First World War. Uncle Zadock was killed in action, three of the other four were wounded, including Papa. Uncle Leopold walked with a cane for the rest of his life. Leopold incidentally, was also the only one who went beyond grade school to acquire a higher education. He later became a teacher in Cologne. Papa took over the family business in Hellstein that was to have gone to Uncle Zadock had he not been killed in the war.

The Nazis in concentration camps killed six of the brothers and sisters, including the wounded war veterans. Obviously patriotism to the *Vaterland* meant nothing when confronted by the politics of the Nazi regime.

Uncle Adolf, the youngest of the nine, married in 1930. He and his wife had twins, Ingolf and Norbert. The twins were born on both sides of midnight on separate days, giving them different birthdays. Since the *Brith-Milah*, the ceremonial circumcision of Jewish boys, is performed eight days after birth, the family had to have two ceremonies on succeeding days. Ingolf contracted Polio as a baby and was bedridden for most of the ten years that he lived. The Nazis wiped out the entire family.

I had and still have numerous cousins from the offspring of Jakob and Jette Grünebaum. The Nazis during the Holocaust killed many of the descendants, but many others are now spread over several continents.

In my immediate family I was the only survivor, since my sister Hanni unfortunately was one of those that perished.

Our branch of the Grünebaum family had ceased to exist in Germany by the end of 1942.

My mother was not the happiest of women in her marriage but she settled into a resigned routine for the five years after Opa died, until the family was completely torn apart in 1938.

I can only guess at the scenario that brought my parents together from such widely separated locations as Dettelbach in Bavaria and the backwoods village of Hellstein in Hessen-Nassau.

Mama's maiden name was Steinberger and the family was somewhat of a snobby group. The Steinbergers considered themselves sophisticated, cultured, world-wise and educated. They were high on the social ladder of any Jewish community in which they lived. This was especially true in Dettelbach. (This trait would also become evident in later years in the New World wherever they would settle). My Grandfather

Hermann Steinberger accepted only the best for his children. In keeping with this philosophy, the Nuns in the local Convent educated Mama and her sisters for their secular education after their primary school years. The Convent school in my grandfather's opinion was superior to the *Volkschule*, the public school.

As a young woman Mama had had a crush on a distant relative whom grandfather had thrown bodily out of the house. She was not interested in meeting anyone else for a long time. By the time she turned twenty-seven years old, Grandfather was afraid that he would have a spinster daughter on his hands for the rest of his life.

Mama's oldest sister, Aunt Bertha (whom we called *Tante Berthel*) had married Uncle Sigmund Marx a teacher, a refined and well-respected gentleman. Teachers in the Germany of the nineteen-twenties were employees of the federal government and subject to transfers anywhere within their area. In 1922 Uncle Sigmund was assigned to the city of Gelnhausen, our county seat, to teach the Jewish children there. He would stay in Gelnhausen until 1929. Of course the Marxes, my Aunt Bertha and Uncle Sigmund, became prominent in the Jewish Community of whatever town they were residents of. Gelnhausen was no exception. They knew everyone and no doubt were known by everyone.

My aunt passed the word that she had a single, eligible, younger sister; whose father wanted to get her married off in the worst way. Like all towns of any size in those days, Gelnhausen had a *Shadchen*, a marriage broker. The lady's name was Frau Ballin.

In the meantime, back in Hellstein, Herr Jakob Grünebaum had a son Jonas; also single, also eligible, also not being able to find a mate. My Grandmother Johannette, my father's mother, lay dying with terminal cancer. There was also the youngest son, my Uncle Adolf still living at home. This big house in Hellstein with three men and an ill woman needed a housekeeper to run it. No doubt about it, Jonas needed a wife. The most logical person to contact of course was Frau Ballin, the nearest *Shadchen*, to find a wife for bachelor Jonas.

Frau Ballin just happened to know of a marriageable young lady from a good family, from the town of Dettelbach near Würzburg in Bavaria. The young lady's name was Else Steinberger.

As they say, the rest is history.

My parents were married on November 24, 1924 in Würzburg.

In the true Steinberger tradition, it must have been a grand affair. My Uncle Sigmund, *Tante Berthel's* husband, the teacher, was a scholar and a talented artist. He produced a "*Hochzeit's Zeitung*", a "Wedding Newspaper", a tradition of the times. It was hand drawn and filled with oblique gags, innuendoes and cartoons. If the proceedings were half as

elaborate as the wedding of my Aunt Ruth, another of my mother's sisters, which I attended in my fifth year, it had to be an affair to remember.

Grandfather Steinberger was in the wine business. He owned a vineyard as well as running a wholesale operation. He did not produce any of the wines himself. The storehouse area of their place in Dettelbach was filled with huge bins of wine. Grandfather and his helpers filled bottles from the bins, put his own label on the bottles, packed the bottles in straw sleeves, put them in wooden crates and shipped them off to the customers. Grandmother Jette, my mother's mother, would cook a mixture of potato starch and water to use as paste with which to affix the labels.

Uncle Gustav, one of my mother's brothers, was the salesman for the business. He traveled the length and breadth of the country selling the family wine. The house label was called "**Louvet Royale**". My favorite wine was a sweet Malaga which grandfather had named *Morea Sonne*, *The Sun of Morea*, it had a mysterious exotic sound to it and was very sweet.

There were six brothers and sisters in my mother's family, the children of Hermann and Jette Steinberger. The oldest was Tante Berthel; we children always called her Tante Berthel. She was a survivor. She was the first to be born and as it turned out she was the last of the six to pass away at age ninety-five, she was born in 1895. My mother came next on February 6, 1897, with brother Isidore following in 1898. Brother Gustav was born in 1900, Edmund in 1905 and the baby, Ruth, in 1910.

Of the six children, three survived the Holocaust. Tante Berthel went underground in France from 1942 to 1945. After the war, together with her two sons, my cousins Julius and Ernst, she came to America. The two older brothers of my mother, Isidore and Gustav, emigrated to the United States before World War Two and settled in Indianapolis.

Mama had an indelible souvenir of her childhood in Dettelbach. At one time the family had their own livestock and in back of the house there was still an old barn with stables where the horses used to be. Mama as a child played in the barn a lot. She must have been a regular tomboy. There was a machine that was used to cut straw into silage. One day she turned the machine on or otherwise rotated the blade and her thumb was in the way. For the rest of her life Mama had only half a left thumb.

The Steinbergers' good opinion of themselves was reflected in the relationship between my father and his in-laws.

There were several times during my early childhood that we went to Dettelbach during the Jewish High Holidays. I know Papa would rather have stayed home, but he could not deny Mama the pleasure of spending some time with her family. The reluctance he had to visit with his in-laws, must have been well known among the Steinbergers. On one occasion someone made the remark, as we were ready to go to the train station for our return trip: "*Der Jonas streichelt die Lokomotive*". Loosely translated it means: "Jonas is making nice to the locomotive". The inference was that

Papa regarded the locomotive as his friend for providing the means to get him out of there as fast as possible.

My parents' marriage was not the ideal romantic union. As a matter of fact I have always been under the impression that it was a marriage of convenience. There was always an undercurrent of tension. At the time of their wedding Papa was twenty-eight years old and Mama twenty-seven, almost twenty-eight. By the standards of the day that made her almost an old maid.

Mama entered the household of her in-laws as unprepared for the customs of the region as was possible. In the German-Jewish culture of the nineteen twenties, living habits, eating habits and customs were as diverse between regions as among the non-Jewish population. Of course Mama had learned to cook from her mother, but the cuisine was Bavarian not Hessian. As an example, in Hellstein the bread was a coarse black rye, in Dettelbach a soft white wheat bread was preferred. Even though both houses were strict Kosher, the cooking with which Mama was familiar, was of a more regional nature.

The same culture clash was evident in other aspects of Mama's training to be a wife. The clothes she wore, the way she talked with a Bavarian dialect, the views she expressed, all made it very awkward for her to get along with her new family, let alone the other townspeople. Even if we hadn't been Jewish, Mama would have been considered an outsider in the backwoods village of Hellstein.

At the time of my parents' marriage, Oma, my paternal grandmother was already bedridden with terminal cancer. The three men in the household at the time; Papa, Opa and Uncle Adolf expected the new bride to immediately step in and assume the duties of the mistress of the house. Unfortunately her training did not prepare her for what was expected of her.

The young, unmarried brother-in-law, Adolf, was especially hard to get along with. He, as a bachelor, might have thought it was his role in life to tease the newlywed young woman. From the stories I heard in later years he was a real problem. Being the youngest and with his mother ill, his father had a hard time controlling him. He owned a motorcycle as a bachelor, was wild, and had pretty much his own way in the household, until he got married. But that is another story.

Oma passed away on February 4, 1925. She was buried two days later on February sixth. The burial was on Mama's first birthday as a married woman. Mama always sounded particularly depressed when she told us children about the manner in which she celebrated this special day.

Mama also told us a story in later years, about her first attempt at baking bread as a newly married woman. There was a commercial bakery in Hellstein of course, but items bought there were only for special occasions. Cakes were baked at home in the oven that was part of the stove in the kitchen. For everyday bread the town had a community bakehouse, a small

building which is still in existence, standing in the middle of the village. It was a stone hearth bake oven. There must have been some kind of system for doling out the time and arranging for the women to each take their turn in using the facility. The common bread of the region was a coarse, black, home baked, sour dough, rye bread. The sourdough starter was always saved from each batch, to start the next batch.

Any housewife baking bread in the village bakeoven, had to bake at least a two weeks' supply. If everyone had equal time at the bake house, they couldn't have gotten the use of it more frequently than that.

I would also like to mention here, that after 1934, Jewish families were no longer permitted to officially use the public facilities. The community bake house was one of those facilities. Therefore, after the ban went into effect, Mama would have to sneak into the bake house at two in the morning and do her baking then. All the neighbors knew this, but no one said anything, to protect her from the authorities.

Getting back to Mama's first experience as a bread baker. She had never had to bake bread in her life where she grew up. All at once she was thrust into this situation where she was expected to know all about small town customs and skills. My terminally ill grandmother might well have given her brand new daughter-in-law a few rudimentary instructions, laced with a few comments about why her son married someone so ignorant.

In any event, Mama went through the steps of getting the sourdough starter, making the dough and forming the loaves. In the meantime a fire had to be built in the bake oven, and then banked after the oven got good and hot. She then popped the formed loaves into the oven and waited for them to bake. When she brought the bread out it was nothing like what she had expected. She had hard, round, flat disks of baked dough which, according to her, would have fractured someone's skull had he been hit over the head with one. She was terrified of the wrath of the members of the household, probably not my father's though, since she was his new bride; but that of her in-laws and young smart aleck of a brother-in-law.

She felt so humiliated, she told Hanni and me, that she took the entire batch of bread and hid it behind the sofa in the sitting room until the middle of the night, at which time she sneaked it out and disposed of the evidence.

My guess is that she may have forgotten to let the loaves rise or else didn't know about that.

In later years however, Mama became skilled enough that whenever she baked bread, she made miniature loaves for us children and put our initials on the top. I remember the delicious smell of the bread baking in the bake house and the taste of a fresh loaf.

Mama had a good sense of humor as a young woman. What happened to that sense of humor I can only attribute to the staid atmosphere of the household in Hellstein. As an example Mama told Hanni and me about

her appendicitis. It was shortly after Mama and Papa were married that she was diagnosed with the illness. She was taken to Gelnhausen, the county seat where the nearest hospital was located to have the operation. Just before she was put under the anesthetic she wrote a postcard to one of her sisters telling her that:

“I am about to be put on the butcher’s block”.

She asked Papa to mail the card for her, he read it and didn’t think it was funny. He reprimanded her for making light of a serious situation.

My sister was born on December 24, 1925 and given the name of Johanna. Her nickname locally was Hanni but in the Bavarian dialect of my mother's youth she was called Hannele. I don't think my Mama was very reverent in her religion. She often referred to Hanni as "My own little Christ child". She was alluding to Hanni's date of birth. I don't think Papa thought that kind of talk was very funny either, it always brought a frown to his face. Papa was a rather stern person.

Papa would tell war stories to us children about his adventures as a German army infantryman on the front during the World War. That was what is now known as World War One. I remember two of his anecdotes.

When he was first inducted into the army Papa was assigned to the Russian front. After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Russia made peace with Germany. The German army then withdrew its troops from the east and shifted them to the western front, concentrating on its war with France and England. The troop movements were by railroad. The main line railroad passes within ten kilometers of Hellstein through Wächtersbach. Papa told us about the train stopping in Wächtersbach, seeing the hills of his home from a distance, and not being able to get off the train. He always sounded so sad when he told us this story.

In another instance, on the occasion of *Pesach*, the Jewish Holiday of Passover, his mother my Oma, baked him a *Matzoh Kugel*. She sent it through the mail to him on the front in France, where it reached him about three weeks later. A *Matzoh Kugel* is a baked dish made with eggs, Matzoh, herbs and spices. It arrived completely moldy. According to Papa, he would have eaten anything that wasn't army food. It was on this occasion that Papa also mentioned that in the army was the only time he ever ate non-Kosher food; it was a matter of necessity in order to survive.

Papa was wounded on the Western Front. An American bullet may have caused his wound. He sometimes showed me a deep hole in his upper thigh where he was hit. That made Papa a wounded war veteran of the German army of World War One. Papa, I believe, was a patriotic German in his day. Germany's defeat in the war hurt him as much as it would any patriotic citizen. When the Nazis stripped the Jews of their citizenship in the nineteen-thirties and we were deprived of all our rights, Papa always believed that as a wounded war veteran and respected member of a veterans

association he would be a little immune to the oppression. This was an unfortunate error of judgement. He never made any move to try to emigrate from his beloved fatherland.

My Grandparents lost their son Zadock in the First World War. Today his name is still on a monument in the Hellstein cemetery together with other fallen heroes of both wars.

After Papa recovered from his wounds and returned home, he decided to assume the business of his fallen older brother. The family had operated a small convenience store out of the back of their home. That was my father's responsibility before the war. Zadock had been the cattle trader. With Zadock gone Papa became the cattle trader. This gained him a nickname in Hellstein. Since he jumped from one profession to another, he was from then on known as the "*Kitze Hüpper*", it was also sometimes pronounced "*Kitze Hipper*". A *Kitze* is the colloquial name for a basket with straps, worn over the shoulders like a rucksack, which in the olden days was used by farmers to carry fresh produce to market. The word *Hüpper* is dialect for *Hüpfer*, which translates to jumper. Since Papa jumped from one business enterprise to another, he was from then on known as the basket hopper. That was his nickname, country humor, Hellstein variety.

After my parents married, and by the time I came along, Mama was operating the grocery store and Papa devoted full time to the cattle trading.

Lest someone overestimate our wealth, cattle trading in the Germany of the late twenties and early thirties did not have any remote resemblance to what the cattle business is in the United States. Papa would leave on a typical morning and head out along a preplanned route, stopping at all the farms in a number of villages. Sometimes he would ride a bicycle, at other times he would be on foot. If a farmer had an old cow that had run out of milk, or maybe he just had a surplus of animals, Papa would make him an offer. This way Papa collected old or worn-out or just useless cattle, one at a time. He'd drive them home from wherever he bought them, a distance of no more than a few kilometers.

One scene I remember was of him coming home one evening on his bicycle, riding without hands, with a calf slung around his neck, shouting at the top of his lungs for Mama or Hanni to open the barn door. The neighbors didn't stop laughing for weeks.

As Papa collected the animals, they were kept in our barn. Of course the cows had to be fed. We had a few acres of pasture for that purpose and as I grew older I became the official cowherd of the family.

Trading cattle was one of the most common professions that Jews were allowed to pursue from the time they were allowed to settle in the region. Since the business and knowledge had been passed down from father to son for generations, ours was a typical small time operation as practiced for centuries.

Mama thought that Papa and I should have a closer relationship. Being the younger child it was natural that I grew up being closer to my mother than to my father. It was during the summer when I turned six years old, that it was decided I should spend a day with Papa while he was visiting one or two of the neighboring towns in the pursuit of his business.

One fine morning Mama dressed me up in good clothes and Papa and I set out for some, what is known in modern relationships, male bonding. We headed out together in due time for the nearest village, which was Udenhain. I of course couldn't walk as fast as Papa, so the trip took longer than he anticipated. We visited several farmsteads together, where Papa inspected the cows the farmers had for sale. I was duly introduced, which took up still more time, which Papa hadn't counted on. Many of the rural people still remembered the lavish party at our house a few years before on the occasion of my *Bris Miloh*. This ceremonial circumcision celebration is held on the eighth day after a boy's birth. Everyone my parents knew had been invited at the time, including Papa's non-Jewish business friends.

Sometime during the course of the morning we had to cross a field. I don't know how it happened, but in the process of going through a fence, I managed to rip my trousers. Papa just couldn't understand how that could happen, since he himself had no problem overcoming the obstacle. From that moment on the atmosphere became decidedly strained. The fact that Mama had insisted that her little boy wear his good clothes didn't help any.

When it came time for lunch we sat by the side of the road and ate the sandwiches Mama had packed. After I finished mine I was still hungry, all that walking and fresh air had had its effect. Papa shared half his lunch with me. With my little tummy full, I became sleepy and wanted to go back home. Papa gave up trying to accomplish anything that day, and somewhat disgustedly, took me home. I think he had to carry me part of the way.

He must have decided there and then that he would wait until I was somewhat older before involving me any more in the family business. He never again took me along.

Whenever Papa had collected enough cattle in our barn to fill a railroad boxcar, he would order one of the cattle cars spotted on the siding next to the little Hellstein railroad station. The animals were loaded into the railroad car and then taken to the cattle market in Frankfurt or Wächtersbach to sell. It was on those occasions that Papa would have to stay away from home overnight.

Another "career" Papa pursued, was to be the nominal head of the Jewish congregation of Hellstein. The Jewish community also consisted of families from the neighboring village of Schlirbach who had no Synagogue of their own. The congregation owned a building in Hellstein in which the upstairs was used as a Synagogue. In the nineteen-thirties the rest of the

building was leased to a local farmer. This situation at times created the paradox of seeing pigs slaughtered in the courtyard of the Synagogue. The building owned by the congregation was diagonally across the road from our house.

Most Saturdays Papa would go to the Synagogue by himself and go through the prayers only accompanied by me, his only son, whom he was trying to raise to be a pious Jew. The problem with this idea was that Papa was not a very good teacher, I was not a very good student, and therefore I received only minimum training in the religion of my ancestors. Not until I was about eight years old, did I attend anything that resembled a Hebrew school and by then it was too late. To this day I still cannot read a Hebrew prayer book, except with great difficulty, and I certainly don't know what the words mean.

In order for a Hebrew Congregation to have a proper prayer service it is necessary to have a *Minyan*, a group of ten adult males in attendance. By the middle nineteen-thirties, the combined villages that made up the Jewish Congregation of Hellstein could barely count on a total membership of ten men, **if** everyone showed up for services. Emigration had started to take its toll. During my childhood in Hellstein a Minyan could usually only be counted on during the High Holidays. Papa faithfully maintained the Synagogue but usually only for himself. Orthodox law forbids a Jew from venturing beyond the confines of his township on the Sabbath. To go beyond the boundaries is considered traveling and is a sin. Papa therefore most of the time became a congregation of one.

On one occasion however Papa took me on a walk through the forest, that separated Hellstein and the village of Birstein to the north, on a Friday afternoon. He performed the ceremonial rites along the way, which were designed to establish a link between the two towns, so walking the path on the Sabbath would not be considered a sin. The next morning he and I walked the seven kilometers to Birstein and attended the services in what was one of the few remaining established congregations in our area. I think we did this only one time, probably because Mama and Hannni did not participate.

In the light of my subsequent education and experiences, I have often wondered about how pious my parents really were. I am sure Papa was a good, believing Jew with the best of intentions to keep all the laws. Every morning he took his prayer book from where he kept it on top of the old clock in the living room, and said the morning prayers. However, like myself, I don't think he ever received the thorough religious education to be an expert on the subject. I know he seldom wore a hat, except when he was praying or eating. Everything I have learned about the religion in my later years, told me that an orthodox Jew must never keep his head uncovered. As a matter of fact, in none of the photographs in existence now, do any of my relatives wear a headcovering. This rule may not have been observed in the rituals

common to our area.

I have also learned since then, that Papa did not know the traditional melodies for the holy songs. I am almost positive that the tune he used for one particular segment of the Friday evening services, was a poor rendition of the melody to the Tchaikowsky 1812 Overture. Since he was always alone for these services, no one knew any different and I am sure he had the best of intentions.

The religious education Papa received during his childhood may also have been somewhat spotty, taking for granted that Opa was probably no better a teacher than his son, and in light of the fact that Hellstein had always had difficulties attracting Hebrew teachers.

Fridays of course was the day on which both my parents were both busy getting ready for the Sabbath, colloquially we called it *Schabbos*.

Mama spent the afternoon scrubbing the house, while the big meal of the week was cooking on, or in, the stove. The only proper way to scrub the stone floors we had in both the kitchen and the entrance hallway was for Mama to do it on her hands and knees. A pail of water and a burlap sack were the approved implements. The mop had probably been invented by then, but the news must not yet have reached Hellstein. Change came slowly to the Hellstein of the nineteen-thirties.

The Schabbos meal always consisted of the same courses. Tradition played a large role of what was to be cooked for the occasion. Again I have to surmise that my mother had to learn what was appropriate for the region. Of course she baked the Sabbath bread, here in America we call it Challah, in the rural areas of Hesse it was called *Datscher* or *Berges*, a loaf of white bread with poppy seeds and a small braided tail across the top.

A thick navy bean soup was always cooked in a crock pot in the oven. It was prepared and put in the oven in the afternoon to sit and simmer. When we still had meat, a soup bone gave flavor to the soup. The main dish would be boiled potatoes with a meat dish when available. After the ban on kosher slaughtering went into effect, it would be just potatoes and a cooked vegetable or if we got lucky, some fish.

Since we didn't make a fire on the Sabbath, the Saturday noon meal was always cold leftovers from the night before. Hanni hated the cold stringy meat we had for some Saturday noon meals. There were some ugly scenes, times when she would absolutely refuse to eat. It seems that she sat sometimes with her mouth full of meat refusing to swallow. The test of wills might go on until three or four in the afternoon, because Mama refused to let her get up from the table rather than waste food.

Papa's routine on Friday afternoons also seldom varied. He tried not to be away from home on Fridays, to prepare for Schabbos. As an orthodox man he did not use a razor. He let his beard grow all week and only scraped it off with a depilatory cream on Friday afternoons. He always did this in the living room and used a wooden scraper, like a knife carved from a

flat piece of wood. The cream smelled terrible, it really stunk up the house. We never understood why this should be better than a straight razor and soap. After all, the barber used a razor on us when we had our hair cut.

After his cheeks were smooth, Hanni and I made a great to-do about coming over to him and making nice, even though there was a lingering smell of the cream. Once a week he had nice smooth cheeks and it was a pleasure to give Papa a kiss. After this routine he would go upstairs and get dressed in his suit, shirt and tie for the Sabbath, even though he didn't leave the house.

Mama in the meantime, was busy finishing in the kitchen, and getting us dressed. Then she was supposed to get into her finery.

The Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday night and Papa was in his place, standing in front of the dining room table, ready to start the prayers at the appointed hour. Mama was never ready on time and he wouldn't start without her. Here he would display one of his most annoying habits. Mama was upstairs and we children and Papa were in the living room waiting for her. He would go out into the hallway, without saying a word, and loudly knock on the wall outside of the living room door. This was his way of telling her that he was waiting for her.

This rude mannerism infuriated her every time and put her in tears. Papa did this almost every week and probably on holidays too and all he did was create unnecessary tension when it was supposed to be a joyous occasion.

What Opa taught me while he was alive, our routine on Schabbos, and my observations of my father saying his prayers on a daily basis, were the only experiences I had with religion until I was about seven or eight years old.

I mentioned the outhouse that served both families. From the day when I first became aware of what it was, I was terrified of the facility. I always thought that if I were to be made to use it, I would fall through the hole and into the pit. It frustrated Mama and Papa that I was so backward in my toilet training. The chamber pot was my comfort and my joy.

The place where I sat as a little tyke was in the hallway under the stairs, between the front door and the kitchen. I spent a lot of time there, the memory is vivid in my mind. The stairs to the second floor were along the wall and the angle between the bottom of the stairs and the floor provided a dark corner where I could not be seen. Here was my perch when I had to go.

When it came time to graduate to the adult facility, it was Papa who took it upon himself to teach me. He had me out there, between the barn and the house a few times, but I wouldn't stay by myself. The moment he turned to leave me alone, I would go into hysterics. After a while he gave up and rigged something for my private use behind the hen house. A big

crockery-pickling jar with a lid that had a hole cut in the top. Again it seemed that I was perched on that forever.

As I got older and could shift for myself I found my own little corner of heaven for the purpose. I would get up early in the morning and sneak downstairs. A bell was attached to the front door that rang whenever the door was opened. The bell was installed for when we still had grocery customers, to alert Mama if anyone came in. On my way out the door I stood on a chair and held the bell so it wouldn't ring while I opened the door, I didn't want to wake the rest of the family. Outside I made a beeline for the stable, my own comfort station. There in the corner behind the cows, in the straw, was my private place. My parents accepted the inevitable and dropped the subject.

Before 1933 and before I entered public school, I had occasional contact with boys of my own age. Even at that time it was clear to me that I was different. The social life of Hellstein, like many small towns, revolved around the church. We of course didn't participate in the events at the church, therefore we had a minimum of social contacts with the townspeople of Christian faith. The other little boys and I would play together at times but generally I didn't really have that much in common with them. One exception, for instance, was the time I was dunked in the creek and almost drowned.

Hauptstrasse crossed the Reichebach on the only bridge in town. One summer during my pre-school years a group of boys of my own age and I were playing on the banks of the stream south of town. They decided it would be great fun to throw me into the water. My mind is a blank as to what happened next. Someone must have pulled me out, saving my life. I ran home to my mother, soaking wet and crying. Mama compounded my hurt by spanking me for playing with the *Goyebuben* near the water. This incident may be the reason why I have always had a fear of water and have never learned to swim.

This was my first experience as a survivor. There would be many more in my life.

If anything, what contact I did have with the other children of Hellstein, only served to stress the differences.

There was a time when I was together with the other little urchins and we started to compare genitals. Little boys will do that. The scene was the meadow near the Reichebach. Mine was the object of much wonder since of course I was the only one who had been circumcised. I, in turn, thought there was something wrong with them.

European football, called soccer in America, is the national game in Germany.

Everybody played it, except me. Even before school age, older brothers and fathers teach most boys the game on weekends. My weekends

did not coincide with theirs since we observed the Sabbath on Saturdays and they observed Sundays. Since, after I entered school in 1934, I was by law not allowed to play with the other kids my age or participate in any school event; it eliminated my being proficient in any sport.

From the day I was born, my best and closest friend was my sister Hanni. This was not necessarily by choice. There just wasn't anyone else. Not only was I the only boy among all the Jewish children in Hellstein, and not only was I the youngest of all the Jewish children in Hellstein, but Hanni was also the youngest of all the girls. Therefore that made her the closest to me in age of all the Jewish children. The Aretz girls and the Moritz sisters were all older than both my sister and I, so Hanni and I were naturally drawn together.

In thinking back over this time period of 1933 to 1938, it today strikes me as odd that my parents very seldom entertained, as we know the term. Periodically a relative stopped to visit, or someone from a neighboring town dropped in. However I don't remember any instance when we had neighbor families to dinner as our guests or, for that matter, that we went to someone else's home. Considering that there were only four or five families in Hellstein of our faith, one would think there would have been some social life. My recollection is that this was at a minimum. I suppose it goes back to the fact that Mama was not from Hellstein and therefore a stranger even to the other Jews of the town.

During summer vacations of course, cousins who lived in cities would show up for some good country air, Hellstein was after all, the ancestral home. However I don't even recall too many instances of uncles or aunts spending any time with us. I have had to reach the conclusion that my mother and father were rather private people, either by their nature or through the fact that the atmosphere in our home always had the aforementioned underlying tension.

Also, living conditions were probably so primitive at our house that not too many of the sophisticated city relatives cared to stay overnight with us in Hellstein. Did I mention the outside toilet? Even in Dettelbach, where my mother was born, the Steinbergers had indoor plumbing.

I have also reason to believe that there was tension with the in-laws over legal matters. Some of Papa's brothers were seldom seen after Opa passed away. Was there a problem with the inheritance? I'll never know. Also I don't recall my maternal Grandfather Steinberger ever coming to visit his daughter. What were his reasons? Did he still remember the long ago ill-fated romance?

Uncle Adolf, Papa's youngest brother, moved to Wächtersbach after he married. With him we had the most contact, especially after the twins arrived. After all, the twins were only a few years younger than I was and they were boys with whom I could play. Aunt Hedi, Uncle Adolf's wife, and my mother also seemed to get along rather well. We also saw much of the

Bachenheimer boys from Fulda. They loved the rural environment of Hellstein.

At the time the twins were due to arrive and Aunt Hedi went into labor, Mama of course went to Wächtersbach to help with the delivery. I was only about three years old at the time and Hanni could not have been more than five. Mama had to take us with her since Papa had to work and there were no baby sitters in those days.

The delivery took up most of a day and a night. Hanni and I sat dutifully in the front parlor of my Uncle Adolf and Aunt Hedi's house. To keep the two of us happy, every so often a neighbor lady would come into the room and bring us a fresh plate of butter cookies. That had to be the most cookies Hanni and I ever ate in such a short time. Why else would I remember them?

What other contact we had with the family was for holidays in Dettelbach or an occasional visit.

The regard our combined families had for Hellstein could best be summed up by what my Uncle Sigmund, the teacher, called the area. He referred to our region as the *Medineh Finster*. Literally translated this means "The Dark Region". It could also mean a bottomless pit or the black hole of outer space. Hillbilly country in the United States would be a good comparison.

Because of the high outside steps Opa originally received a nickname from our relatives, my mother's family the Steinbergers, "**Jakob von der Hohe Trepp**", (Jakob of the steep staircase). They were always ready to have a laugh at the expense of those they considered to be nothing but peasants.

There was one shoemaker in Hellstein. In those days a shoemaker was not only a shoe repairman, but was literally what the name implies. He made shoes. Papa would go to this man once a year, in the fall, and have a pair of working boots made for him. The reason I feel this is worth commenting on is because of the complicated procedure the two men went through before the boots were finished.

Papa of course also owned regular dress shoes to wear on the Sabbath, on holidays and for special occasions. These dress shoes were usually bought at a regular shoe store in Frankfurt or in Wächtersbach. More than likely they would have been bought through a third cousin, Emil Grünebaum, whose mother Klara still lived across the road from us. Klara's husband, who was my father's second cousin, had died years before I was born. They had two sons, Max and Emil.

There was a story to impress upon me the dangers of electricity. Someone in their house, years before, had been electrocuted while changing a light bulb in the basement. Evidently the story sank in for me to still remember it after more than sixty years.

With Klara's husband gone and also her oldest son, she didn't

feel like keeping the homestead going with the little acreage they owned or to keep any cattle. I suspect Emil was a little flighty as the baby in the family. As soon as he was old enough, he left the dust of Hellstein behind him and headed for Frankfurt. There he worked as a salesman in a shoe store and lived the life of a bachelor. I remember him mainly for the fact that whenever he came to visit his mother, he brought us some balloons from the shoestore, with the name of the shoe company printed on them of course. My assumption is that we bought our store shoes through Emil.

Getting back to Papa and his dealings with the local shoemaker. His boots were hand made to his special measurements. The process would start by Papa making an appointment with the man. Since I went with him as a small child of three or four, I had a front seat for this drama. Papa stood in his stocking feet on a piece of paper and the outline of his feet were very carefully drawn. After the soles and the uppers were cut, but before being assembled, Papa went for what can only be described as a fitting. All the parts were held together by hand against Papa's feet. The quality of the leather was discussed at length, including the leather that was to be used for the lining. After about three weeks and several long discussions, Papa would get his new boots in time for winter. But of course this was at a time when our neighbors and fellow townspeople were still allowed to associate with us. For my father, getting a new pair of boots made, was a ritual not to be taken lightly.

The clothes my sister and I wore during our growing up period were of unvarying style, country primitive. Hanni usually wore a dress, wool in winter and lighter cloth in summer. For special occasions she had a dirndl style, a reminder for my mother of her native Bavaria where these styles were more common. The legs were sheathed in full length, over the knees, cotton or wool stockings with a pair of sturdy leather shoes.

My attire also varied very little. I always wore short pants with suspenders, summer or winter. For winter wear and snow play I seem to remember pulling a pair of sweat pants over my regular pants and that, with a sweater, seemed sufficient for inclement weather. I wore a one-piece undergarment most of the time. I also had only long, over-the-knee stockings that had to be fastened with buttons to the underwear so they wouldn't slide down. On my feet I had high top shoes. Many times I would fall down and skin my knees. The resultant scab would fester and then the stockings would stick to the knees. The subsequent operation by Mama to remove the offending garment, usually with butter as a lubricant, would cause me excruciating pain.

I learned another painful lesson from that period of my growing up. One morning I decided I was grown up enough to not wait for Mama to slice my bread for me. I took a knife from the kitchen drawer and the loaf of heavy black bread and attempted to cut a slice of bread. Predictably the knife slipped and cut a deep gash into my left index finger, right at the base. I was

lucky I didn't lose the finger. I stood in the middle of the kitchen hollering bloody murder when just at that time the local mailman delivered the mail. His words will forever ring in my ears:

"Wer nicht hören will, muss fühlen." ("He who will not listen, must feel".)

I am still carrying the scar as a reminder to be careful with knives.

Mama also seemed to like dressing me in yellow shirts, she must have favored that color. A favorite birthday present from my parents to me was often a yellow polo shirt, as they were then known. It was a foregone conclusion in our house and the subject of a running joke, that whenever I wore a yellow shirt I would get a nosebleed. It got to the point that I would anticipate falling down the stairs whenever I wore a shirt of that color.

I don't think the short pants that I always wore ever had any pockets. However I did wear a head covering. The style that my parents provided for me was called a *Basken Mütze*. Now in the United States this garment is called a beret. The name came from the type of headwear that originated in the Basque region of France. Since there were no pockets in my pants, whatever I needed to carry with me, mostly only a handkerchief, I carried inside the beret on top of my head

The public school in Hellstein in the early nineteen-thirties took children as of age six for the first grade. There was no kindergarten grade for the public schools. The school year began after the spring holiday or as it might be called, the Easter vacations. Children ended their school year in spring, and those that graduated were all confirmed at the same time on Easter Sunday. This ceremony of course did not apply to the Jewish children. The schools and government of Hesse of that time was very much geared to the Evangelical Church.

My sister Hanni, being two and a half years older than I, started school in the spring of 1932. On her first day of school she was decked out in new clothes and had a brand new leather book bag over her shoulder. It was also a custom of the time, and maybe even today, that any children starting school, were given a big conical bag with candy or other sweets. I remember my sister standing by the dining table holding her bag of goodies, ready to march off to school. Mama, ever considerate of my feelings, of course also had a treat for me at the time.

When Mama took her firstborn daughter to her first day of school for her big adventure I was able to tag along.

The one room schoolhouse in Hellstein had been serving the community for many years for that purpose. It is located in the center of the town across the road from a small community park. A few steps lead up to the entrance and double doors. Inside, a hallway led to the schoolroom on the right. To the left, off the hallway, were the municipal offices. A stairway led upstairs to the living quarters of the resident schoolmaster.

The schoolroom itself had the usual rows of double desks. In the front were little desks for the lower grades, with the desks getting progressively larger toward the rear to accommodate the older students as they grew bigger. The one teacher, a man, taught all eight grades at once in our times.

In modern days, the schools of the area have been consolidated and buses take students to more modern facilities. The Old Schoolhouse of Hellstein, however, is still in existence and with an addition to the north of it, still serves the town as a community center.

With Hanni off to school, I was home alone and had to make do for entertainment as best as I could. Being my sister's constant companion, I also shared her schoolwork with her. As she learned to count so did I, when she learned to read, I read with her. By the time I was ready to enter school two years later, I was well acquainted with the basic subjects. During this two-year period I eagerly looked forward to starting school since I missed her even though we argued constantly while we were together.

I recall a fantasy of mine regarding my relations with my sister at this time of our lives. Being the older one she of course dominated me in typical older sister fashion. Also she loved to make me the butt of her practical jokes, maybe to show off to the other older girls with whom she associated. She was a tall girl for her age. Whenever I would get angry with her and tried to chase her, she would run and run and I couldn't catch her. I dreamed of the day when I would be grown up enough, to be able to run fast enough, to catch her. When I caught her, I fantasized, I would hit her and make her pay dearly for all the anguish she caused me by her teasing. I was between four and six years of age and she was about seven or eight. Sadly we did not stay together long enough for my dream to come true.

The time period between the passing away of Opa at the beginning of 1933, until I started school in April of 1934, is a vacuum for me in my memory. How does a little boy of five entertain himself? I seemed to have spent a lot of time with the animals in the barn. I remember at one time trying to emulate my father by milking the cow. The attempt was a failure mainly because I could not get the animal to hold still for me.

We always kept a cat. A cat is a useful animal in a rural area mainly to keep the mouse population under control. The care and feeding of this creature became my responsibility. When we lost the old cat we had to find a new one because a cat was a necessity. Friends of ours in Schlierbach had new kittens and offered us one. My mother displayed her confidence in me by letting me go there by myself to pick up one of the kittens.

It was a rainy day, but that never kept me indoors. The distance to Schlierbach, to the south of us, was perhaps three kilometers or a twenty-minute walk for me. Our friends placed the kitten in a gunnysack for me. I slung the sack over my shoulder and set off for home. I was proud of the fact that I was able to accomplish this mission by myself. As I neared Hellstein,

the rain increased in intensity. The ditches along the road started to run heavy and it was at this point that I became a little worried. As I finally crossed the bridge over the Reichebach near our home, I saw the water almost touching the underside of the bridge. The kitten in the sack had been clawing through the material and into my back, I was nervous over the storm and being out alone on a wild afternoon. But I made it home safely and to Mama's warm welcome.

The cat was supposed to stay outside or in the barn or the stable. Its existence was only tolerated to keep the rodent population under control. I would set out a dish of milk once a day, otherwise the animal was on its own. Mama was absolutely adamant that the cat was not to be let in the house. A few times it got by us through the open door.

Cats are supposed to always land on their feet when they fall. This cat proved this theory when it was thrown off the first floor landing after messing under the sofa in the living room. This was one of the times Mama displayed her temper. Our cats never had pet names, they were a necessity and were simply called The Cat. We never had a dog or a horse either. In fact I don't recall more than two or three dogs in Hellstein and only one horse in the entire village.

My relationships in pre-school years with the adults of Hellstein seemed to have been on a rather good-natured footing. I was the only boy named Erich in town and a favorite banter, when one of the farmers met me on the road, seemed to be the alliteration, "*Erich bist Du Ehrlich?*" ehrlich is the German word for honest. Of course they were not questioning my honesty, they just thought the sound of the phrase was amusing. Nevertheless this always embarrassed me because I didn't know what to answer.

There was a house near ours whose backyard adjoined ours. In this house lived a very very old woman. This lady had a very bad case of arthritis. Her hands were so bad they almost looked like fingers were bend backwards. Since I spent a great deal of time out back and she was not able to do anything either except sit in the sun on nice days, we saw a great deal of each other. The way her fingers were bend fascinated me. I was too shy to ask her about it but did stare at her a lot. One day Mama saw me looking at the lady and advised me to not stare or I might embarrass the woman.

I had one big fear at that time of my life. There was one dog in town that seemed to me to be the most ferocious animal there ever was. It seemed to be constantly barking and I was sure it was going to attack me one day. I was deadly afraid of it and stayed far away from the animal.

Various other townspeople remain in my memory. There was a young man, probably at the time of my being in Hellstein he was no more than a teenager. This young fellow had only one eye. The story I was told that he had gotten into a fight with his brother when he was a little boy and in a fit of temper the brother threw a pair of scissors at him, hitting him in the eye. Mama or Papa impressed the importance of safety with sharp objects

upon me, whichever of the two told me the story.

Opa was still alive on a certain night when I was very small. The fire bell to call out the volunteer fire department awakened us. The Hellstein Volunteer Fire Department consisted of one hand-operated pumpertruck. We wondered where the fire was. We went to the upstairs windows and saw the glow in the distance in the west toward Neuenschmidten. All the neighboring towns helped one another. We found out the next day that a farm's haybarn had caught fire, it was a total loss.

Until National Socialism came, the Jewish families of Hellstein were part of the community, accepted for what we were and tolerated.

It was a quiet life in a quiet village for a very quiet little boy.

WHY?

A teen-age cousin posed a question a few years after the end of World War Two when a few family survivors started arriving in the United States:

"What did my uncle do that was so bad that the Germans would kill him? Was he a criminal?"

The answer of course is: "He did nothing wrong, he was not a criminal, he was killed for no other reason than that he was a Jew."

Many people in future generations may ask the same question.

It seems like such an enormously outrageous thing to try to eliminate an entire religion for no other reason than for what they are. They of course DID nothing wrong except that they were Jews.

Erich Israel Grünebaum
Zehn Jahre kaum
Stellt sich vor
Bitte neigt Euer Ohr

"WHY ME?"

"WHY IS OUR FAMILY DIFFERENT?"

"IF WE ARE SO DIFFERENT, WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?"

"WHY CAN'T I PLAY WITH THE KIDS I KNOW FROM SCHOOL?"

"WHO ARE WE?"

"HOW DID WE GET HERE?"

LET'S GO TO THE BEGINNING OF TIME AND TRY TO
UNDERSTAND
WHERE WE CAME FROM
WHO WE ARE
WHY WE ARE WHO WE ARE.
WHAT ARE JEWS?

IN THE BEGINNING

The Jewish people have been called a race, a nationality, and what is probably the most accurate, a religious group. Let's take a good look at what we really are.

According to the Bible our earliest ancestors were Adam and Eve. They were expelled from the Garden of Eden because they disobeyed God's orders. This is the story in Genesis that is the first book of the bible. The story of creation as told and which was to have taken place in seven days is symbolic. Seven days to God is like seven million years in the history of mankind. Anyhow, Adam and Eve are the earliest humans of whom there is a record. They symbolize all the weaknesses to which a mortal can be subjected and because of their weaknesses, it is said, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden.

The next legendary person in our colorful history was Noah. God caused a great flood, allegedly to once again punish the people for their sinful living. God considered Noah one of the good guys and on God's instruction Noah built a boat so that he and his family could be saved. Noah was also instructed by God to rescue a pair of each living species. Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Yaphet.

Noah, after the flood, established himself as a farmer and, among other things, grew grapes from which he made wine. One hot afternoon Noah had a little too much of his own wine and fell asleep in his tent. In his sleep, because it was hot, he threw off his covers and exposed himself. Son Ham saw his father lying there and called to his two brothers, laughing at his father's shame.

However, son Shem would not look at his father but asking his younger brother Yaphet to help him, he backed into his father's tent with a blanket and covered his father's embarrassment.

As a reward for being such a good son God decided that Shem's descendants would be God's chosen people. They were thenceforth known as Shemites or Semites. That is why we, the Jewish people, who are God's chosen, are known as Semites and those who would oppose the Jewish people are known as anti-semites.

A descendent of Shem was Abraham. He was very old when he and his wife were blessed with an only son. They named their only son Isaac.

When Isaac was a very little boy, God told Abraham to take Isaac out into the wilderness and sacrifice him to God as a test of faith. Abraham took Isaac into the desert, made an altar of rocks and prepared to sacrifice his only son to his God. At the last moment God called out to Abraham to stop the sacrifice, that Abraham had proven his loyalty. Abraham found a ram that had caught his horns in the nearby bushes and

sacrificed the ram to God instead.

God told Abraham that because he was such a loyal believer, from that moment on, all male descendants of the tribe were to be circumcised, as a sign that a special covenant existed between God and the descendants of Abraham, to show that they were truly God's chosen people. This is why all Jewish boys are circumcised one week after birth.

Abraham's son Isaac had two sons of his own, Esau and Jacob. They were twins, although Esau was the first-born. Esau was an outdoorsman, strong, hairy and tough. Jacob was more fragile and a little introverted. One day, after Esau came home from the hunt, he was very hungry. Jacob had made a tasty dish of lentil broth. Esau was so hungry that he agreed to give up his right as the firstborn for a meal. Therefore Jacob was given the right of inheritance and became the head of the clan after his father's death.

There is also a story in the bible of how Jacob was the favorite of his mother Rebekah. In his old age Isaac became blind and Rebekah covered Jacob with the fur of an animal and led him to his father Isaac. Isaac stroked Jacob and when he felt the fur he thought it was his first-born son Esau who was hairy. Isaac therefore gave Jacob the blessings of the first born.

Jacob also acquired the nickname *Israel* because according to legend he wrestled with an angel of God and won. The name in Hebrew means "Warrior of God". That is why the Jews, from then on, have been known as "The Children of Israel" since we are all descendants of Jacob. Also the Jewish homeland in later years was called *Eretz Israel*, "The Land of Israel".

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are known as the three Patriarchs.

Jacob fathered twelve sons by various wives. As the sons also acquired families of their own the descendants of Jacob grew in numbers. They became the twelve tribes of Israel.

There are many stories in the bible of some of the intrigues and jealousies and human frailties of these people. They were not saints but human beings. One story tells of the youngest, Joseph, being abandoned in the desert by his older brothers because they were jealous of him being his father's favorite. He was found by nomads and sold into slavery and eventually re-united with his father. Also one of the boys took liberties with his father's female companion and gave her a child.

Eventually due to a famine in the Land of Canaan the Children of Israel moved to Egypt where, in time, they were enslaved for many years because they were strangers in a foreign country. After hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt, a man named Moses headed a rebellion and led the Children of Israel out of Egypt in what is now known as the Exodus. He took them to the Promised Land where the first Jewish State was established.

Moses himself never entered the country of Israel because, through wisdom given him by God, he did not want the people to look upon

his tomb as a shrine. The people were only to revere God and not any mortal. Moses, after showing The Children of Israel the country of their destiny, wandered off into the desert to die by himself. His place of death is forever a secret.

This brings up an important point of why the Jews have always been so different. The Jews were the first to adhere to the belief that there is only one God. The Jews have never believed that a redeemer has come to earth to be the Messiah.

Another important characteristic of the Jewish religion is the fact that the Jews have never actively recruited converts. Even in modern times it is difficult to join the Jewish religion. A simple declaration of desire is not enough. A convert must be educated in the religion and pass an examination before a Rabbi who must approve the conversion.

It might be interesting to speculate what history might have been, had the Jewish slaves in Rome instead of the Christians, converted the Roman emperor. Would Judaism then have been declared the state religion of Rome in the year 313 instead of Christianity?

After Moses died the Children of Israel conquered the land of Canaan, the land that was promised to them by God, and the Kingdom of Israel was established. Israel served as the homeland of the Jews for nearly seven hundred years.

King David established the City of Jerusalem as the capital city for the Kingdom of Israel.

A Temple to God was built by King Solomon, King David's son and his successor.

The Temple was destroyed by the Assyrians and it was later rebuilt by King Herod.

Eventually, after the country had endured for the seven hundred years, the second Temple was also destroyed, this time by the Romans.

Both the first and second Temple were destroyed on the same day on the Hebrew calendar, the ninth day of the month of Av, known as *Tisha B'Av*. *Tisha B'Av* has been a Fast Day through the ages, second only in importance to Yom Kippur.

THE DIASPORA

As Rome became a world power and conquered all of the Middle East, the Romans made slaves out of the Jews and other nationalities.

The Romans brought many of their slaves with them as they established their empire, especially in Europe. Jews were particularly sought after in the Roman civilization because Jews were generally well educated.

As the Roman Empire spread through the world so did their slaves, the Jews. Jews were used as official scribes by the Roman Nobles, as bookkeepers, bankers, and educators and in other clerical and administrative duties.

The Romans conquered the Germanic tribes that were living along the Rhine and other waterways of central Europe. Rivers were the main trade routes and the oldest and largest cities of the region were established along them. With the growth of the cities so grew the Jewish populations of these cities.

Some of the cities, which date back to Roman times, are Frankfurt, Cologne, Trier, Worms and Mainz. Even the recent capital city of Germany, Bonn, was founded by the Romans more than two thousand years ago.

As a reference point: The town council of the City of Mainz in 1432 referred to Jews as having lived there for over fifteen hundred years. Nothing however, is known of the history of the Jews during those centuries in Germany, but this was how the first Jewish presence was established in Germany.

The Jewish servants of the Roman nobles often proved themselves invaluable to their masters. The Jews had a written language which most had mastered. This Hebrew language enabled the Jews to communicate with their brethren in many other lands on behalf of the people for whom they worked.

In the Hebrew calendar year of 3760, a boy was born in Israel whose parents gave him the name Joshua. The Greek translation for the name Joshua is Jesus. Unbeknownst to him, his followers would change the history of the world for all times.

The modern secular calendar is based on the birthday of this man whom his followers believed to be the Messiah.

The year 3761 of the Hebrew calendar is year "1" on the modern calendar.

The Greek word for Messiah is Christos. Since the followers of Jesus believed him to be the Messiah, they called him Jesus the Christ and themselves Christians.

Christianity, as spread by the Roman conquerors of Europe, became known as the Roman Catholic Religion. The Pope became the head of the church, and was revered as the successor to Peter, who was the nominal leader of the disciples of Jesus in the early days.

In time the Pope became the most powerful influence in the administration of the conquered countries of Europe. By the year 400 AD, the Roman Catholic religion was being enforced actively throughout Europe

through pressure brought by the church.

By the end of the sixth century all of Germanic Europe had been converted from paganism to Christianity. Jewry was to find its cruelest enemy in Christianity. Even at times when local political rulers or even the Pope showed a tolerant attitude towards the Jews, the local Bishops might take it as a personal affront that these foreign people in their midst would not conform. Every Bishop had as his goal the total conversion to Christianity of every soul in his Diocese. The Jews would not convert and therefore had to suffer the consequences of persecution.

The pattern of persecution of the Jews, through the Middle Ages and down through the present, was first established during these times:

- Jews were called Christ-killers.
- Jews were ordered burned to death for attempting to convert Christians to Judaism.
- Jews were not allowed to molest those who converted to Christianity from Judaism.
- Jews were forbidden to circumcise their heathen slaves.
- If a slave was converted to Judaism, the Jew lost all property rights to that slave.
- All interfaith marriages were forbidden.
- Christians were forbidden to associate with Jews.
- Christian-Jewish friendships were forbidden.
- Jews and Christians were forbidden to eat together.
- Jews were accused at times of using Christian children's blood for religious rites.
-

In the Seventh Century, a man named Mohammed conceived what is now known as the second daughter of the religion of the Jews. The first offspring being Christianity. He was the founder of the religion of Islam.

Islam was at first designed by Mohammed to assimilate all the Jews, especially those living in Arabia, into his new beliefs. The calendar, holidays, days of rest and many rituals were designed to please the Jews. Only a few Jews joined Mohammed. As a consequence the regard Mohammed had for the Jews turned to hatred. He changed observances, abolished the common holidays and moved the weekly day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath to Friday for all Mohammedans.

After Mohammed's death his anger at the Jews was soon forgotten and wherever they met, the two Semitic people lived in harmony.

During the Moorish invasion of Spain in the Eighth Century, Jews accompanied the Mohammedans. The Arabs were the conquerors and then turned the administration of the cities and towns over to the Jews, who then managed the communities. Once again there was a strong Jewish presence on the Iberian Peninsula after their expulsion of a century before.

From Spain, the Jews expanded their sphere of influence into the south of France, up the Rhone and Rhine valleys and into central Germany.

However by January 2, 1492, over seven hundred years later, the forces of Islam had again been completely driven from Spain after their presence of many centuries.

The Spanish throne took revenge on the Jews for helping their fellow Semites in past centuries. In 1481 the Pope had authorized a national inquisition in Spain. Tomas de Torquemada was named as the Grand Inquisitor. At first the inquisition was directed mainly at the Marranos, Jews who had converted to Christianity but were believed to be practicing their true religion in secret. Many were burned at the stake, in the belief that if their conversion had been genuine, God would save them. Eventually the anger turned against all Jews. As of August 2, 1492 all Jews had been expelled from Spain.

It was no coincidence that 1492 was also the year in which Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain sponsored Columbus' expedition to find a new route to the Orient to further the spice trade. The expulsion of the Jews and consequent confiscation of Jewish property, provided the Crown with this much needed capital.

Many of the Jews of Spain, Sephardim, retreated across the Strait of Gibraltar and settled in North Africa. In a reverse migration, many wandered back to the Middle East to Egypt, Greece and Turkey. Jews also went even further north, across the Balkans and into Poland and Russia. These were the nucleus of what was later to become the great Jewish population of Eastern Europe.

The Jews of Central Europe became known as Ashkenazim, the Jewish word for Germans or in a broader sense all Central Europeans.

Events happened in Central Europe that also profoundly affected world Jewry. Stories had come back from Palestine, the Holy Land to Christians, that the Mohammedans had desecrated some of the holy places of the Church. A great cry went out to form an army to march on the Middle East and liberate the Holy Land from the non-believers. Three separate crusades headed for Jerusalem over the next eighty years. None were successful.

From the formation of the first crusade in the upper Rhineland, until the end of the last one about the year 1190, the mobs that made up the bulk of the crusades first took out their anger on the local Jews.

The relationships between the Jews of Germany and the local authorities were once again decidedly strained. The only direction in which The People could find relative safety was to the east. Soon the Jewish population of Poland grew to over half a million people.

The Jews of Germany brought east with them their own language. Through evolution and usage, this mixture of high German with a

liberal seasoning of Hebrew terms, written in the Hebrew alphabet and embellished with some Polish and Russian words, in time became what is to this day known as Yiddish. In Germany it was called "*Deutsch-Juedisch*", (German-Jewish), and it was in later years sneered at by the sophisticated German Jewish population of that country, as being a bastard language.

Soon the Jews were invited back to Germany since they provided revenue and expertise in commerce. Once again Jews drifted back to the big cities of Germany, France and England and established themselves.

Martin Luther came on the scene on October 30, 1517 at which time he nailed his ninety-five theses, questioning the Catholic Religion, on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg. The reformation had begun. Followers of Luther called themselves Evangelists but eventually became known as Protestants.

Europe became sharply divided between Catholics and Protestants. Northern Germany, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries leaned toward Protestantism. Southern Germany, Bavaria, Austria and the Latin Nations were more loyal to Catholicism.

In 1618 fighting began. "The Thirty Years' War" was to tear Europe apart until the year 1648.

THE JEWS IN HESSEN

At the start of the Thirty Years' War the Jews of the world had been in exile for nineteen and a half centuries. The ebb and flow of politics, and the world economies had caused them to move from continent to continent and from country to country, mostly at the whim of the current rulers, either political or religious. They had settled in the larger communities of Central Germany but were virtually unknown in the rural countryside.

The war had a profound effect on the area now known as *Hessen*, and particularly the center of Hesse which was the *Kreis* (County) *Gelnhausen*. From the confluence of the Rivers Main and Rhine, the area in which are located the cities of Frankfurt, Mainz, Wiesbaden and Darmstadt, a broad rolling plain extends in a northeasterly direction, across Hesse, toward what was known in the old days as Prussia. This corridor without any great natural barriers, became the historic invasion route for conquerors. Armies have moved across this natural terrain since the dawn of civilization. From Attila the Hun to Napoleon and later to General Patton in World War two, the route has served historically as a convenient way to the conquest of Europe.

By 1648, thirty years of warfare had caused armies to move back and forth through the rural farmlands and villages, leaving the area devastated and some communities virtual ghost towns. Regional centers such as Hanau, Gelnhausen and Fulda were reduced in some instances to no more than a third of the population which they had before the Thirty Years' War started.

The situation was the same, if not worse, on the farms and in the small towns of *Kreis Gelnhausen*. The city of Gelnhausen itself, had a population of about 1500 in the year 1618AD at the start of the war. A census taken in the year 1640 reported only 540 remaining inhabitants. Homes were destroyed, villages were laid bare and fields went unplanted and were unproductive. As a result of the war and accompanying plagues, the population was decimated. *Kreis Gelnhausen* needed an infusion of capital and commerce to put it back on its feet.

The local aristocracy once again went to the Jews in the big cities to get financial connections and business know-how, to aid them in the rebuilding of the local economy.

One by one Jews started to settle in the valley of the Bracht River, the region of what is now the township of Brachttal. In the old days the villages comprising this area were Spielberg, Neuenschmidten,

Schlierbach and Hellstein.

The Jew Hiskias was living in Wächtersbach, the next big town to the south, as early as 1643. In Birstein, to the north, Gumpel lived in 1649. The year 1662 shows a Jew named Jorl, short for Joseph, as living in Spielberg.

Records show that the Jewish cemetery in Birstein, which served many Jewish communities of the area, had been in continuous use since the year 1679.

As the Jews settled in the local jurisdictions they became a ready source of cash income for the local government. The usual means was to assess the Jews a flat fee for the privilege of moving into the area and also a yearly tax for doing business. These levies were generally only collected from the Jews. In return the *Graf* (Count) gave the Jews permission to pursue their business and placed them under his protection by the means of a "*Schutzbrief*", a letter of protection. *Schutz* is the German word for protection, therefore the Jews were known as "*Schutzjuden*".

The nearest Synagogue with a Rabbi was in Gelnhausen in those early days. The Gelnhausen Synagogue had also been destroyed during the Thirty Years' War but permission had been granted to rebuild it. The scattering of Jewish families in the rural areas was not enough to meet the requirements for a *Minyan*, a gathering of ten adult males, which was needed to hold a proper service.

For the Jewish High Holidays and other special occasions, in the late seventeenth century, one can imagine the Jews of the countryside gathering together at a central location or in someone's home, in order to hold services.

As the number of Jews in the area grew, some towns managed to establish congregations and hire part-time teachers. These men could also double as *Cantors*, leaders for the prayers, and even perform such functions as the ceremonial circumcisions on the male offspring, giving him the title of *Mohel*, and/or do the ceremonial slaughtering, if he qualified for the position of *Shochet*.

The permission to do business in the jurisdiction of the local Count, was usually granted only with the specific stipulation of what line of work a Jew may pursue or what business he may enter. A common endeavor, for which Jews were given permission in the area of Central Hesse, or specifically in the villages of the valley of the Bracht River, was that of cattle trader. Most of the Jews of Hellstein, the ancestral home of the Grünebaum family, followed this occupation.

Throughout the period following the Thirty Years' War, as Jews were settled in this area, they were mostly known by their first names or by their Hebrew names. That is, their given name followed by the name of their father, such as Jonoh ben Jakov. Given these circumstances it is hard to trace back the specific lineal ancestors. It is more than likely, given the scarcity of

Jewish families, that sooner or later everyone was somehow related to every one else. It is however documented, that young Jewish men from the region would go far afield, sometimes as far as Hanau or Frankfurt, in order to find young Jewish women to choose as wives.

It is unclear at what exact point in history, the use of surnames came into being. The nobility had always identified itself by the adding of the ancestral home to their given names, such as the *Graf von Ysenburg*, who was the local ruler in the upper Brachtal. Probably, as the population grew, the need for further identification arose also for the common people. The gentiles in the trades came to be known by their professions, such as Fred the Smith (*Friedrich Schmidt*), John the Carpenter (*Johann Schreiner*) or Morris the Farmer (*Moritz Bauer*).

It is generally believed that the use of surnames or family names became mandatory during the reign of King Frederick II of Prussia, also known as Frederick the Great.

Other than aristocrats and wealthy people Jews did not get surnames in Eastern Europe until the Napoleonic years of the early 19th century.

Most of the Jews from countries captured by Napoleon; Russia, Poland, and Germany were ordered to get surnames for tax purposes. After Napoleon's defeat many Jews dropped these names and returned to "son of" names such as MENDELSON, JACOBSON, LEVINSON, etc.

During the so-called Emancipation, Jews were once more ordered to take surnames.

In Austria the Emperor Joseph made Jews take last names in the late 1700s, Poland in 1821 and Russia in 1844. It's probable that some of our families have had last names for 175 years or less.

In France and the Anglo Saxon countries surnames went back to the 16th century. Also Sephardic Jews had surnames stretching back centuries. Spain prior to Ferdinand and Isabella was a golden spot for Jews. They were expelled by Isabella in the same year that Columbus left for America. The earliest American Jews were Sephardic.

In general there were five types of names: (people had to pay for their choice of names; the poor had assigned names)

1-- Names that were descriptive of the head of household: Examples: HOCH (tall), KLEIN (small), COHEN (priest), BURGER (City dweller), SHEIN (good looking), LEVI (temple singers), GROSS (large), SCHWARTZ (dark), WEISS (white)

2 --Names describing occupations: Examples: HOLTZHACKER (wood chopper), GELTSCHMIDT (goldsmith), SCHNEIDER (tailor), KRIEGSMAN (warrior), EISEN (iron), FISCHER (fish)

3-- Names from city of residence: Examples: BERLIN or BERLINER, FRANKFURTER, DANZIGER, OPPENHEIMER, DEUTSCH (German) POLLACK (Polish), BRESLAU, MANNHEIM, CRACOW, WARSHAW

4 --Bought names: Examples: GLUCK (luck), ROSEN and ROSENBLATT, ROSENBERG (roses), DIAMOND, KOENIG (king), SPIELMAN (spiel is to play), LIEBER (love)

5-- Assigned names (usually undesirable): Examples: PLOTZ (to die), KLUTZ (clumsy), BILLIG (cheap)

Jews came to be known by local landmarks, Steinberg or Steinberger for instance, which means stone mountain or more likely rocky hill. Gruenebaum means green tree, near which the family's house might have been located. Jews acquired family names such as Goldschmidt, an approved occupation for Jews since it was more in the retail trade. Rosenthal (rose valley), Rosenberg (rose hill), Neumann (new man), or they kept the first name of an ancestor for family identification such as Nathan, Abraham, Moritz, Jacobi or Meyer. Colors were also used frequently, such as Braun, Schwartz or Weiss for instance. be

Some family names were given in relation to the city or town from which the family originated. Examples of this are the names Frankfurter, Bamberger, Berliner, Kissinger or Wiener. (Henry Kissinger's family probably originated from the little town of Kissingen in Bavaria, this is located not far from the city of Fuerth where Henry was born).

Also the standing in the religion became a means of identification. Kahn or Kohn are germanized words for Cohen, the priestly caste, from the origin of the Jewish religion; Levi is of the same origin, Kantor was the singer, Kaplan came from the Spanish and means Chaplain, perhaps a Rabbi was so named.

The family names were generally in place by the second decade of the eighteenth century. The Grünebaum family is shown as being in the retail business, the cattle trading business and as having small farms and orchards. The Steinbergers in Bavaria had also some cattle and were in wine production.

The following excerpts are from a series of legal documents, on file in the Archives of the State of Hessen. Many are notarized bills of sale, or agreements between parties, one of whom is named Grünebaum. These are the earliest records to be found of the Grünebaum family in the village of Hellstein.

An interesting fact was the need to notarize some of these documents. Many of the peasants or farmers of the time, the early eighteen hundreds, were still illiterate. Also many of the Jews, although literate, were literate only in the Hebrew. Therefore whenever someone made his mark on a document, this mark needed to be witnessed by an official, to attest to the fact the mark was the genuine signature of the individual. The practice of notarizing documents came from this need.

- In 1833 Loeb Grünebaum paid a burial tax in Hellstein.
- On the 15th of September 1841, Jonas Grünebaum of Hellstein and Konrad Spielmann of Udenhain entered into a

contract for the sale of a cow for six Gulden.

- On the 9th of April 1844, Moses Grünebaum of Hellstein and Abraham Goldschmidt of Sterbfritz made an agreement regarding a debt dated 18th of May 1842.
- Mendel Grünebaum of Sterbfritz had a document notarized with Adam Schmidt of Wittgenborn on the 29th of July 1849.
- Lazarus Grünebaum appeared on the 17th of July 1850 with Johannes Mittingen regarding a business deal about some goats. Herr Mittingen signed with three distinctive exxes, while Herr Grünebaum wrote his name in Hebraic script. The official made a note in the margin of the document to the effect that: "This is supposed to say Lazarus Grünebaum".

It might have been because of the influence of the French and American revolutions thirty years before, or maybe because times were changing, but Europe became more enlightened by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The German states, at that time called Electorates, started passing laws in the eighteen-twenties to give their citizens more equality.

In the Principality of Kurhessen (Hesse), as of December 30th 1823, a law went into effect emancipating the Jews. The law opened educational opportunities for all Jewish children but they had to be educated according to the public school standard. If the Jewish teacher in the congregation was not qualified as public school teacher, Hebrew youngsters were required to attend public school for their education in secular subjects. Their Hebrew teachers outside of the public school would teach them religion. If a Jewish community was wealthy enough to be able to hire a teacher who was certified able to teach public school, as well as being qualified in religious education, then the congregation was able to establish its own full time school, for both secular and religious education, the same as the Catholic church had done for a long time.

The law, besides regulating the educational process, also gave the Jews full rights as German citizens. The restrictions on owning property, what trades to follow and other economic sanctions were lifted. Jewish citizens were able to vote and hold public office, something that they had never been able to do. Jews were also able, even required at times, to serve in the military.

Another interesting aspect of these emancipation laws was that certain rules had to be followed as to the language used by the Jewish congregations. A Rabbi had to be proficient in the German language and be able to give sermons in German. He was not required to give every sermon in German but a certain percentage was required since the younger generation was now being instructed in public schools. It was no accident that Reform Judaism started in Germany in the eighteen hundreds.

The remainder of the nineteenth century, and until after World War I, was an enlightened time for the Jews of Germany. Jewish influences were felt in the arts, the sciences, education and government. The Jews of Germany were being assimilated into German culture and society.

There were, of course, always incidents of racial disturbances in the country. When the economy slowed in the eighteen nineties some people immediately blamed the Jews. Some Church people still felt Jews were outsiders because they worshiped different from the Christians. However, mostly it was a period of growth and relative enlightenment.

There were some Jewish families in almost all of the small towns and villages of the upper Brachttal. The difficult part of maintaining a Hebrew congregation, as stated before, was that the population was spread too thin to be self-sustaining for any one community.

Hellstein had its public school that the Jewish children now attended. A one-room schoolhouse in the center of the town, served as both school, city hall and living quarters for the teacher. To give the Jewish children their religious education, however, it was necessary to cooperate with another community. For many years the Hellstein Jews were members of the congregation of Birstein a few kilometers to the north. Before 1850 there were probably no more than six Jewish families in Hellstein.

As the population grew, the heads of the Jewish families of Hellstein wanted to establish their own congregation. The Rabbis of both Gelnhausen and Schlüchtern, when asked to offer their opinions decided that the distance to Birstein was too far under Jewish Law, and should really not be traveled on the Sabbath.

Hellstein, together with Schlierbach to the south, which had two or three Jewish families, established its own congregation and held services in someone's home.

Religious organizations in Germany are funded by the state through the means of a religion tax. The money is allocated to each congregation in proportion to the number of members it has. The Birstein congregation objected strenuously at this loss of revenue and protested to the civil authorities in Hanau, who still had control over the boundaries. The Hellstein congregation was ordered to disband in 1850 and rejoin Birstein. The Schlierbach people, as before, went back to Wächtersbach.

The issue arose again in 1868 when the Elders of the Hellstein group, Moses Moritz and Isaak Grünebaum, petitioned to establish their own congregation. They stated that they had obtained two Torah scrolls for services, and had acquired a building for remodeling, to be used as a Synagogue and which also had room for the ritual bath. Hellstein at that time had eight Jewish families and Schlierbach three. There was no problem in having the required ten male adults for a *Minyan*.

The building, after remodeling as a Synagogue, also had room for two small apartments. Non-Jewish caretakers lived on the ground floor

and there was room for a resident teacher on the upper floor. The main prayer room was also located on the upper floor.

The Hellstein-Schlierbach congregation was one of the smallest as well as one of the poorest in the district. Having a full-time teacher, let alone having an individual who could teach a full secular curriculum, was out of the question. Hellstein shared Hebrew teachers over the years with either Wächtersbach or Birstein, when one was willing to agree to such an arrangement.

A Jewish community needs the services of several specialists in order to function in the approved orthodox manner. A Rabbi is needed as spiritual leader and for knowledge of the Law. A teacher to give instructions and prepare the children for adulthood; also a ritual slaughterer known as a Shochet to kill the animals for the table in the kosher manner. The congregation also needs a Cantor, a leader of prayers in the Synagogue. Ideally, for a small poor congregation, one person might be found to fill several of these positions. Probably a small congregation would not have a Rabbi, since a regional Rabbi could oversee many small towns. However a qualified teacher might also lead in prayer, slaughter ritually, officiate at funerals and Bar-mitzvahs and have enough knowledge of the Law to be consulted on its fine points. Since Hellstein was not big enough to support such a man, the congregation had to always improvise in the education of their children.

Very little changed over the next sixty-five years. More often than not one or more of the men in the congregation had to step in and help at leading the flock. One of the fiercely independent Grünebaums was always involved in one way or another.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after a journey of two thousand years, three thousand miles, and spanning three continents, the Jewish family Grünebaum had officially arrived in Hellstein.

PERSECUTION

What happened to the Germany of the nineteen-twenties to turn what had been an enlightened, highly cultured, modern country into a tyrannical police state?

Before World War One, all of the royalty of Europe by some means or another, was tied together by family ties. They were either cousins or had married into each other's family.

Jealousies were rampant among the various families. The land grabs in Africa, colonization of other undeveloped countries, just plain greed and petty gripes all contributed to the bitter feelings.

War for dominance of the world was inevitable. The assassination of the Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Sarajevo in 1914, was just an excuse for the shooting war to start.

The Tsar of Russia, the King of England, the Republic of France all banded together against the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

Then came the communist revolution in Russia. The Bolsheviks took over Russia and withdrew from the war against Germany. Having made peace in the East freed the German army from the eastern front and resulted in a concentrated effort against France and Britain.

The Germanic factions looked like they were gaining after having invaded France and were advancing on Paris. Then they made the mistake of sinking an American ship. They underestimated the United States. America came into the war and brought far greater resources than the Germans were able to cope with. Germany lost the war.

The victorious Allies imposed all kinds of sanctions against Germany and restricted her ability to make any further war. Territories like Alsace-Lorraine were taken away and given to France and Germany was prohibited from having any military forces west of the Rhine River. Germany was also required to pay huge sums in war reparations. The economy in Germany was in shambles.

Bitterness set in among a once proud nation. The American Senate did not ratify the League of Nations treaty and therefore America was not involved in the reconstruction of Europe. France and England were taking their full measure of war prizes but doing nothing to help a beaten nation to get back on its feet.

The Germans were looking for someone to blame for their misfortune. Many new political parties sprang into being. The most ruthless among them was the "National Socialist German Workers' Party". A man named Adolf Hitler was the head of this party. They were a violent bunch to

the point were Hitler even spent some time in jail. During his jail time he wrote his book, "*Mein Kampf*", "My Struggle". It became the manifesto of his political movement. In this book he advanced the theory that World Jewry had caused all of Germany's problems and to eliminate all Jews from Germany would solve all these problems.

The German people were ready to believe anything and brought this party to power.

The term *Nazi* is an outgrowth of the German penchant for acronyms, in the form of shortened names, for organizations. The true name of the political party was "*National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*", (National Socialist German Workers Party). The pronunciation of the German word National is *Na-zi-o-nal*. Hence the term *Nazi*. However the official abbreviation for the party name in Germany at that time was simply the initials NSDAP. I think they frowned on the use of the term Nazi.

In the late nineteen twenties and early nineteen thirties I am sure Papa was well aware of the turn the politics of the country were taking. But I think he was an optimist in that respect, never expecting the government to go to the extremes it eventually did. It could well be that the Nazis themselves, at the beginning, underestimated the power they could wield.

The first time we seriously encountered anti-Semitism was on the occasion of the national holiday of May Day in 1933. My parents were warned that there would be a parade and an anti Jewish demonstration in Hellstein on that day. They took the warning serious and left town, deciding to go to a meadow we owned on a hill east of town, where we had a picnic.

We sat on top of the hill and could hear the band music and loudspeakers below us in Hellstein. I have no idea who the demonstrators or marchers were, or where the band came from, since our town didn't have that kind of resources. It was a national holiday, so I must assume this went on in every town and village. The organization of this event was thorough, as was every thing the Germans did when they set their mind to it.

After the initial demonstration on May Day, the Nazis brought more and more pressure to bear. It was almost a daily occurrence that a political cartoon would be stapled to the community bulletin board on the side of the bake house. The cartoon was always aimed at Jews. I never knew who posted these caricatures, I don't believe it was anyone local. However the propaganda began to have its effect. More and more the family was shunned by the Christian neighbors. Germans were always taught to respect authority and no one wanted to go against the mainstream. The population was being effectively intimidated.

One man, a Christian farmer who was our neighbor, spoke out against the injustice. He denounced the government publicly. He was taken away for a year for political confinement. When he returned, his head was shaven clean and one of the infamous numbers was tattooed on his arm. He was made an example of what it meant to defy the state.

The restrictive laws against Jews soon began to make themselves felt. Ritual kosher slaughtering of meat was forbidden. Allegedly the routine was inhumane to the animals. Max Aretz, our butcher neighbor and distant relative, regretfully went non-kosher. It of course didn't help his business any because his Kosher Jewish customers would no longer buy from him and the non-Jews weren't allowed to deal with him either. Gentiles could no longer patronize my mother's grocery store, and legally the other stores in town were in turn not allowed to deal with us either. We were forced to acquire our supplies from friendly shopkeepers after dark.

The lack of meat for the table became a real inconvenience. The edict also included poultry, a mainstay of our diet. In the old days my parents might periodically get a live goose, keep it in a pen in the basement and fatten it. Usually this would be for a holiday meal. There was no point in attempting to do this anymore.

We of course always had our hens from the henhouse. Now we could still have the poultry, but it was illegal to have it ritually slaughtered by a Shochet. Every once in a while Mr. Levi, the teacher from Birstein, would come and stay with us overnight, and under cover of darkness, he would perform the ceremony. He did this several times, but eventually it became too dangerous for him.

Also, kosher meat imported frozen from America or Argentina might become available. This happened infrequently and was very expensive. We ate fish when available, since fish do not have the same slaughtering rules. Carp was a fish of choice that my mother prepared with a sweet and sour sauce. I remember seeing canned fish paste at a Sabbath meal. Papa brought it with him from Frankfurt on one of his business trips.

Mama also became very innovative with vegetables. She made an excellent goulash type meal with mushrooms as the main ingredient in place of meat.

Dairy meals became the mainstay of our diet. We had our cow or cows and were always assured a supply of milk. We had a cream separator and a butter churn, so we could make butter. There was a shelf high on the wall of the kitchen on which was always a supply of country cheese in various stages of curing. Mama also made very good cottage cheese as well as having sourcream on hand. We had no refrigeration of course, therefore it was necessary to process the milk continuously.

The butter that was produced at home was never salted. It was a sign of age and possible rancidity for anyone to salt butter. For butter to ever have to be salted was a disgrace. Salted butter was always considered to be a sign of inferiority. For this reason I believe Mama always referred to our butter as "Sweet Cream Butter". I questioned the terminology one time, since the butter didn't really taste sweet to me. The next time my Mama buttered a piece of bread for me she had mixed some sugar into the butter.

"Is this what you had in mind?" she asked me.

One of Papa's favorite dairy meals, a dish that was a family tradition, something he acquired a taste for during his childhood, was what he called "*Kartoffel und Matte*". This was boiled potatoes served with a mixture of cottage cheese and sour cream and lightly salted. The potatoes (*Kartoffel*) were peeled and then boiled off in salt water. The *Matte* part was the cottage cheese and sour cream beaten together to form a smooth textured paste. No one could prepare this dish to Papa's satisfaction except he himself. It was not fancy but decidedly healthy.

We of course also had our vegetable garden and creamed vegetables were much in evidence. No one really starved although there was a marked lack of variety.

Another main dish that comes to my mind was mashed potatoes with stewed prunes on top. I also recall seeing boiled noodles being served with blueberry or another fruit compote as a topping. I think there was a lot of experimentation going on to keep our meals interesting.

Our potatoes were grown in one of the fields we owned on the outskirts of town near the railroad tracks. We had several such fields, one for the potatoes, on another Papa grew wheat and still another was kept only for hay. This was the meadow to which we went during the Mayday parade. I was with Papa one year at hay cutting time in this meadow. He was almost as good with the scythe as his father, my Opa, used to be. I followed him as he went row by row and watched with horror as he inadvertently sliced a frog in half. I was a very sensitive child and he had a hard time explaining to me that it was an accident.

The field on which we grew either wheat or rye provided a cash crop for the family. Papa was careful when cutting the grain to always leave the corners for the poor as the Bible commands.

Every fall a traveling threshing machine would stop in Hellstein to process what grain had been grown. A steam tractor, known locally as a Bulldog, towing a threshing machine, pulled into town. The tractor was connected to the thresher by a long belt. The harvest was fed into one end of the threshing machine, the machine separated the grain and straw, baled the straw and filled the grain into burlap sacks. We sold the grain after threshing and stored the straw for the cattle to use as bedding.

Our vegetable garden in back of the house provided most of our other needs. Mama planted carrots, beans, peas, beets, tomatoes, spinach and many others that I do not remember. As the vegetables ripened they were put up in jars or, if appropriate, stored in the root cellar. We also had many varieties of berry bushes for preserves as well as the fruit trees.

Nothing went to waste. What we couldn't use ourselves was either fed to the cattle or spaded back into the soil. Pears and plums were canned, nuts from a walnut tree and from the hazelnut bushes were collected and stored. The apples had a variety of uses such as applesauce, apple jelly or sliced and dried apples to be used at a later time for cakes or just eating.

The bulk of the apples, of which we had many and of many varieties, was made into apple juice to be later converted into apple wine. Hard cider it is called in America. There was one apple press in the area, over the hill in the village of *Neuenschmidten* to the west. When it was time to have the apples processed, we hitched a cow to a wagon and took the baskets and bins of apples to the people who owned the machinery. They had a big grinder and a press. The apples were ground up and then squeezed through the press. The juice was collected and stored in a wooden barrel my father had for that purpose.

We took the barrel of apple juice home and stored it in the dark root cellar. We had the pleasure of having sweet apple juice as a beverage for a short time. After it started to ferment however it was left strictly alone to let it ripen to maturity. The apple wine was one of the few indulgences Papa had. It was a tradition in the region. As a matter of fact, apple wine is known as a specialty of the area around Frankfurt, even to this day.

During one summer my parents volunteered to have a young lady stay with us. She was on the list for emigration to Palestine, as Israel was then called, to live on a *Kibbutz*, a cooperative farm. While she was staying with us she was supposed to get acquainted with country life and learn all about agriculture. Her hometown was Berlin, the largest city in Germany. If it hadn't been so irritating to my parents, the culture clash could have been very funny. Like many big city teenagers she sneered at many of our country ways. Also, she was not raised in the orthodox tradition nor was she used to a kosher household. Mama was not happy that the girl found it hard to conform.

Our parents were out one day leaving this girl in charge with my sister and I. Hanni and I took a nap in the afternoon. When our parents returned home they found a strange container of milk in the kitchen. They asked the Kibbutznick about this milk and where did it come from? The girl was very proud of herself she told our parents, she had found someone who had a supply of goats' milk. She also informed our parents that goats' milk was much healthier than the old cows' milk we were drinking and they should be grateful that she was so resourceful. When Papa asked what she used for payment for the goats' milk, he was in for a surprise. She told him she had traded what was left of the old apple wine in the cellar, which no one drank anyhow, for the goats' milk.

Her stay with us came to an abrupt end.

Slowly but surely the new politics of Germany, that is to say Nazism, made its mark on our daily life in Hellstein. We, that is our parents and the other Jews in town, were well aware of the fact that there was a growing gulf between us and our neighbors.

We would of course not display the swastika as the national flag since it represented something hostile to us Jews. On national holidays when the colors were to be shown, Mama hung out the black, white and red banner

of the old Weimar Republic. It wasn't long before she was told to discontinue the practice.

The country way of greeting a neighbor was to nod or wave and maybe say "*Gruess Gott*" (God's greeting), a colloquialism. The new laws required neighbors to raise the arm in the Hitler salute and say "*Heil Hitler*" (Praise Hitler) in greeting. Since we found this greeting repugnant, Jews stopped greeting their neighbors on the street.

Social contact among lifelong friends was coming to an end. The business relationships Papa and his ancestors had cultivated for centuries with the farmers were becoming strained. Life was getting harder and it showed in my father's temperament. I think he was becoming more bitter by the day.

I was at loose ends in the year or two before I started school. I was too young to go to school, too young to do real chores and certainly too old to be kept confined.

Since by necessity I was left to my own devices, I became an explorer. I explored the attic, I explored the barn and stable, and I explored the environments of Hellstein. On many days I made it my business to walk to the station at train time just to watch the little engine puff into town. I acquired my love of the railroad at this time and have never lost this love. However the area that occupied more of my time than any other, was the meadow and orchard to the rear of the house.

I had my own miniature size wheelbarrow. I would fill it with dirt and move the dirt from one area to another. I build mounts and tore them down again. In season I might fill my wheelbarrow with fallen fruit from the trees and bring the fruit into the cellar. I also ate a lot of the fruit, which didn't hurt my health one bit. In winter the wheelbarrow hauled snow for snow men or snow forts. I made one attempt to make an igloo by forming snow blocks using the body of the wheelbarrow as a form. It was a very useful toy.

A painful episode happened during one summer. I was so fascinated by the train that I wanted to play railroad in the worst way. We grew pole beans in the vegetable garden and Mama had a supply of tall (to me) slender poles to form the latticework on which the beans would grow. I decided the poles from the garden, since they had not yet been put to their intended use, would make great toy railroad cars. I laid out the poles in a row, end to end. Next I tied them all together and straddled the first one as one would a hobbyhorse. I pretended the lead pole was the locomotive, and I rode it around the yard dragging the others along behind me like so many cars on a train. I had a high old time.

What I had not realized or had forgotten, was that Mama also used these same poles for her clothes lines to prop them up when the wet clothes were on the line. By playing Choochoo with my mother's clothesline poles all over the field, I was dirtying the poles. Mama was furious when she

discovered what I was doing. I had left the poles lying in the field at the time I tired of the game. Papa was away that day, so it was up to my Mama to administer discipline. She ordered me to retrieve the poles, wash them and stack them where they belonged. I don't know why, but I became stubborn and flat out refused. A spanking did no good. I was locked in the root cellar until Papa came home. He was tired when he came home and the storm blew over in time and I don't recall the outcome. However it ruined my playing Choochoo for a time.

Hanni and I played cards by the hour. Somewhere she had learned the game of rummy. We had a deck of cards around the house, which was probably left over from Opa's card playing days. We did not have a complete deck but remnants of several decks. With these cards, Hanni and I played rummy. We must have had some bizarre games what with not having a complete deck, and having duplicates of many cards, but we had fun nevertheless. Out of necessity we created our own entertainment.

I guess I wasn't much help around the house, at least I bet Papa thought so, considering the areas that were important to him. Hanni and I, of course, both had to learn to make our own beds. I remember doing so because to me as a little boy, the feather quilts we were using seemed awfully heavy while I was shaking mine out in the morning. Also I had to take turns with my sister at doing the dishes. The dishpan we used was set up on a little stand in front of the kitchen window. I would dawdle over the chore while I stared out the window until Mama brought me back to earth. Memories are composed of visual scenes.

One morning Mama came into our bedroom and woke us up by throwing open the shutters, which covered our bedroom window. She had a surprise for us. It had snowed during the night and the world was a winter wonderland. I couldn't wait to get into my warm clothes, get my sled and go outside to play in the snow.

Papa wanted me to take charge of sweeping a path through the snow in the front yard. Again a scene stands out in my mind. I couldn't do it to my father's satisfaction. He grabbed the broom out of my hand and went quickly from the base of the stairs to the street, the broom going back and forth furiously clearing a path. Again he did not seem to have the patience to teach me, finding it easier to do it himself.

I entered school in 1934, just short of my sixth birthday. I was eagerly looking forward to school. I felt I would distinguish myself because of my ability to read and count, having learned these skills from Hanni.

On entering school I finally came face to face with the reality of politics in the Germany of the thirties. The classes were all in the one room at the same time. There could not have been more than thirty students of grade school age in Hellstein. The teacher arranged the students with the smallest ones in front, to assure a view, getting progressively taller and older to the rear, having the eighth graders in the rear seats. Except for the Jewish

children. We, including myself the youngest, sat behind the biggest gentile kids, the eighth graders, in the very back of the room where we could be conveniently ignored. In vain I tried to get the teacher's attention to show off my knowledge. I was there, but I might as well have been on the moon.

I absorbed what I was taught. I did the homework assignments. I copied the letters and sentences that were dictated, onto my slate board with my chalk. I did the additions and subtractions. I brought my work home to my mother and she did the correcting or praising as necessary. The teacher at times would make the rounds, look over my shoulder but never addressed me. If I did anything that warranted discipline, such as talking, I received a swift lash with his pointer over my shoulder. But he never said a word to me.

One such disciplinary action came because of my religion. The official religion of the region was Evangelism and as such it was taught in the public school. One class a day was religion. The teacher, on this day, dictated a passage out of the New Testament. I dutifully copied the dictation, with one exception. I was taught at home not to believe in the man Jesus as the savior. As the name Jesus was dictated I left a blank space on my slate. When the teacher saw this he was furious, it became cause for a beating.

A lecture by the teacher to the upper classes sticks in my mind. He demonstrated, with official charts, how the shape of a person's head dictated his intelligence. He commented on the fact that because the Jewish skull is shaped differently through heredity, Jews were inferior to Aryans in smarts. There is no doubt in my mind that he was only following the official state line, that it was his duty to teach the children this propaganda. Coming from their beloved and respected schoolmaster, this mistruth was accepted and believed, by a generation of German children.

The school had outings of course. We went to a quarry, we studied the flow of the local stream, and we also went outside to study the weather. I was never a participant, I was only allowed to hover on the fringes, never being able to ask a question nor would I have gotten an answer had I asked. It didn't take long for me to fall into the routine of being a non-person in the public school of Hellstein.

Someone came to the school one day and asked the teacher if he could borrow the services of the younger boys. The ladder that was part of the school's equipment was hoisted onto the shoulders of two of the stronger young men and we took off for a chore in the village. I was part of the group. Our path took us to the Church. When I realized where we were heading, I turned tail and went home. It was inconceivable to me that I should enter the Christian Church. No one seemed to have missed me and nothing was ever said about it.

On September 15, 1935, over one hundred years' worth of enlightenment and progress for the Jews of Germany was erased by the passing of "The Nuremberg Laws". Jews lost their citizenship, their civil rights, and what affected me personally; Jewish children were barred from

public school. After a certain date, we were forced to stay home without getting an education.

Hanni and I, during this subsequent period of time, lived in a never never land. There was no school for us, there was no one to associate with and we had nowhere to go. So we stayed home and had very little to occupy our time.

I took full responsibility for the few cattle we still had. Most of the time it was only one cow that we kept for milk for our own use. To the east of Hellstein there was a community meadow available to everyone in town to let them graze their cattle. In the mornings I would tie a rope around the cow's neck and take the animal out to this meadow or to the meadow we ourselves owned farther up the hill. I seemed to have had no problems using the community meadow. The farmers didn't object probably since our family had always used it and the new politics had not yet been extended to animals owned by Jews. On weekends, however, other little boys would take their family's animals to this field, therefore my father had me stay home when someone else was there. It was a foregone conclusion by then that they would gang up on me if I tried to mingle.

I had the field to myself on schooldays and I learned to enjoy the solitude. No big sister to pick on me, no father to nag me, no *goyische* kids to beat up on me. The cow became my best friend.

Next to the meadow someone had planted a field of potatoes. I was capable of handling fire, having started the fire in the kitchen stove many times when I was the first one up in the morning. I build a fire for myself in this meadow, then went into the potato field and dug up some potatoes. I washed the potatoes in a little stream and placed them in the fire to roast. I did this many times, in spite of the fear of being caught stealing someone else's potatoes. Had I been caught, the landowner would have been unforgiving. The beating up of a Jewish boy by an adult in the Germany of the thirties was not a crime. However, I enjoyed my periodic snack, an early experience at being self-sufficient.

As the weather got cooler that fall of 1935, the fire was a comfort. However I didn't seem to have adequate gloves. There came a day on which my hands were really freezing. The cow was grazing away in the field with her fur coat on and I wished the animal would share her warmth. Cows have a dewlap, a loose fold of skin hanging from the throat. I came up to the animal and wrapped my hands in this fur-covered skin. Evidently I must have hit a nerve, for the cow took exception to this. The poor beast let out a yelp and took off with a leap. From the meadow, out to the highway and down the hill into town the cow raced. I was running behind her as fast as my little legs could go, I was only seven years old at the time and I was not able to catch up. The animal only stopped when it reached our yard and the entrance to our stable. It knew its way home without any help, giving me a brand new respect for animal instinct.

Another time I thought it would be great fun to ride the beast instead of having to walk with her back and forth to the meadow. My attempts to mound the animal were never successful. One of the locals saw me try this once and the incident was reported to Papa. Telling the tale must have been good for a few good laughs and some kneeslapping. Thereafter I was under strict orders to dispense with nonsense and to tend to the animal like I was supposed to do.

Papa still made some attempts at pursuing his business but I don't think he was very successful. There was still some movement of cattle in and out of our stable and he would periodically go to the cattle auction in either Frankfurt or Wächtersbach. Wächtersbach was usually his primary destination since his brother, my Uncle Adolf, lived there and was able to put him up for the night. Uncle Adolf was also a cattle trader.

On one fateful day however the cattle trading business for the Jews of Hessen came to an end. We found out when Papa came home sad and dejected. The day before, during the height of the trading at the cattle market, the "SA", (*Sturm Abteilung*), the storm troopers, the Brown Shirts, had raided the place. For hundreds of years Jewish traders had dominated the cattle market and it was still a traditional Jewish profession. Most of the people at the cattle market were therefore Jews. The stormtroopers rampaged through the marketplace, scattered the participants and chased them from the area beating up those they could catch.

Even non-Jews, who were there, and therefore guilty of doing business with Jews, incurred the wrath of the brown-shirted bullies. Those of the Jewish men that were caught were given a severe beating. Papa escaped by running to his brother's house and hiding in the attic. It was a degrading experience for a man who had always been a leader of the community. I think this incident finally drove home to him the fact, that his "*Vaterland*" had little or no respect for him or his accomplishments, in or out of the military. For a business man and family head to be so degraded was a bitter pill for him to swallow.

For some time now my parents had been getting advice from friends and relatives to make arrangements to leave the country. Papa was an optimist where his patriotism was concerned. He was not going to be uprooted from his home. He had firmly believed that the persecution was a temporary situation. Things would get back to normal as soon as the economy was straightened out. Hitler would then moderate his policies or else the German people would throw him out on his butt.

Papa had also firmly believed that as a wounded war veteran, a man who had bled for his country, he would not be as affected as some of the big business people with the big bank accounts. He belonged to an organization of war veterans called "*Bund Deutscher Front Soldaten*", (Organization for German Frontline Soldiers). He was a member of, and received mail from this group, right to the end. He was a true German patriot;

a Jew assimilated into German Society. Our roots in Hellstein were deep; it was inconceivable that we would leave the family home.

By the time of the incident at the cattle auction it was too late to make any arrangements for emigration. People were standing in line at the American Consulate in Stuttgart to obtain quota numbers for immigrating to the United States. The numbers currently being issued in 1936 or 1937 probably wouldn't be called for years. The United States only allowed a limited number of immigrants from each country and Jews trying to leave were stretching Germany's quota to the limit.

Other countries of the world also had closed their borders to the flood of refugees except for certain emergencies. I don't think Papa ever even tried to make any arrangements to leave Germany. I really don't know what went through his mind. Probably like many others, he thought that it couldn't get any worse, but it always did.

Before long our parents grew weary of my sister and I just wasting our lives away without getting an education. Mister Levi in Birstein ran a school for Jewish children as part of the congregation that still existed there. Arrangements were made for Hanni and I to take the train to Birstein every morning to go to school there. As part of the compensation for this service, since we weren't members of the Birstein Congregation, we brought a container of milk for the children attending the school. Every morning the two of us, during the next year, boarded the little steam train for the ride to Birstein, returning in the afternoon.

Usually Hanni was the one to carry the blue enamel milk pail to school since I was not considered responsible enough but I carried it home after it had been emptied. When we arrived at the school the pail was placed on top of the wood stove with which the schoolroom was heated. Drinking cold milk was unheard of in Germany; milk was always warmed before drinking.

Since the ban on Jewish children attending public school extended to all communities, we had many Jewish children from surrounding villages attending Mr. Levi's school in Birstein. They were in the same situation we found ourselves. I had never before been in the same classroom with boys my own age with whom I could communicate. Having never had a pal of my own gender, I was not really at ease with the other little boys in the Jewish school. By this time in my life I just was not able to form any friendships. Therefore I don't remember any of the boys.

However I do remember a little girl named Elsbeth who sat next to me. She was my age, about seven years old, and had the rosiest cheeks and dark hair braided into two pigtails. Her home was in a little town to the northwest of Birstein from which she also commuted. My first crush on a girl, ever.

I was painfully shy by then, being able to communicate was not one of my skills. I even had a hard time asking the teacher, either Mister Levi

or his wife, to let me go to the lavatory. To my embarrassment I had some unfortunate accidents because of this fear of asking for permission to leave the room.

In Mister Levi's school in Birstein I finally received some instructions in the Hebrew language. I learned the alphabet and how to read Hebrew, over the next year and a half, or however long we were there.

The part I liked best about going to Birstein to go to school was being able to ride the train every day. Papa bought student railroad passes for Hanni and I to make the daily commute. We were not yet restricted from traveling; therefore this was not a problem. However we were constantly admonished by our parents to only ride in the last car and draw as little attention to ourselves as possible. The fear of losing the privilege to ride the train must have already been instilled in my parents. Of course as a little boy of seven or eight I couldn't just sit still, difficulties were bound to happen.

Like every little boy my age the world over I had marbles to play with. Glass marbles were a luxury and I only had a few of those. Most of the marbles with which I was familiar were made of baked clay, coated with paint to make them colored. I always had a few of these marbles in my pocket. On my way home from school one day, on the train, I decided for no reason to put three marbles in my mouth. I think I liked the feel of the glass marbles, cool and refreshing, when I had put them in my mouth previously. This time however the marbles were made of clay and didn't taste good. As a matter of fact the paint from the marbles came off in my mouth, scaring me into thinking that I might have poisoned myself. I went to the rear platform of the coach I rode in and spat the paint out onto the floor. The conductor happened to come by at that time and became furious with me. The fact that I was one of the Jewish kids didn't help any, officialdom was already turned against the Jews and my spitting on the floor of his precious old train platform didn't help matters. He didn't leave any of the derogatory terms used against Jews at that time in Germany unsaid. He then made me take my handkerchief out and wipe the dirty, sooty, old car platform with the handkerchief. Once again I had the distasteful task of explaining something unpleasant to Mama.

Another incident on the train, while going back and forth to school, came about from my fascination with the train itself. I would constantly lean out of the window of the coach to see the front of the train and observe the steam engine. Inevitably one day a cinder flew into my eye. This of course had happened before and I was always able to wipe or blink the foreign object away. This time the cinder was really embedded into the eyeball. By the time I came home to Hellstein I was in agony. Mama and then Papa both tried to remove the speck in the approved manner of the time, with the corner of a handkerchief, but to no avail. The cinder remained firmly imbedded in the eye. Papa decided he would have to take me to the doctor in Schlierbach, but first he had to finish his chores. Mama thought that I had better go to bed and take a nap, the cure-all for all ills. I laid down and closed

my eyes and fell asleep. When I woke up the foreign object was gone.

Since we had already decided to go to the doctor, Papa felt we might as well do it and have the eye checked. The evening turned out to be a delightful experience. Papa and Mama took their bicycles, with me riding on the cross bar of my Papa's bike. It was a nice night and turned into a fun family outing taking a ride over the hill at twilight. The eye turned out to be just fine, the cinder probably washed out by itself during the nap. That was one of the happy moments to remember.

I was almost nine years old on May 6, 1937, the day the airship Hindenburg exploded over Lakehurst New Jersey on landing. We were still getting the newspaper delivered every day and I saw the headline as the paper lay on Papa's desk. I always read the front page of the paper.

Under the headline were the commentary columns. One subtitle read:

"Report of Jewish American Fighter Pilot, Firing on Hindenburg".

It was the propaganda machine of the Nazi government at work. Any incident in the world that could be turned against the Jews to show us in a bad light was exploited, whether there was any truth to the matter or not. The odd thing about this story was that I was not surprised to read this, not that I would believe the story for one minute. We were just so used to the fact by now, that the Jews would be blamed for anything that went wrong in Germany, that we had become callused to any indignity.

The dissemination of news as practiced during the Nazi era in Germany, was a perfect example of how necessary it was to apply the old rule: "One must always consider the source."

Joseph Goebbels was the propaganda minister for the German government. His theory was that if a lie is big enough and repeated often enough, sooner or later people would believe it. Unfortunately, by now the German people usually believed these lies.

The holiday of Succoth occurs in the fall during the full moon, either at the end of September or early October. The English name for the holiday is The Festival of Tabernacles. Actually it is intended to be the harvest festival. Observant families have a booth set up outside, made of branches and light materials, where during the week of the holiday meals are eaten. The booth is known as a Succah. Again the structure commemorates the wandering in the desert during the exodus from Egypt, since the people during their travels only lived in temporary shelters. We always had a Succah in Hellstein, a prefabricated hut, the materials to which were stored from year to year until needed. We children always looked forward to this holiday since it was a real adventure to eat under the stars, especially on the holiday dishes.

Sometime during the early thirties, probably after the start of the Nazi era, my parents abandoned the Succah we had been using. With the cooperation of the relatives who owned the other part of the house, the front

entrance was remodeled and the outside landing, at the top of the stairs, was partially closed in. This upstairs landing just outside of our front door was from then on used as the base enclosure for the Succah during that holiday.

Another childish adventure happened during this remodeling. While the workmen were doing the masonry work on the staircase and related walls, piles of material were stored in the common front yard. Sand, gravel, cement and a pile of white powder that I didn't know what it was. It sure looked to my four or five year-old eyes like powdered sugar. I of course had to taste it. My mouth was on fire and I had blisters on my tongue for days. What I had thought was a confection, was a pile of lime. I was lucky I didn't ruin myself for life. This was another instance of lucky survival for me.

The Succah was installed on this front porch for several years during the holiday of Succoth. One year while we were having our holiday dinner, a rain of rocks started coming through the flimsy roof, hitting our dining table. Persecution was starting to intensify. There was no point going to the authorities since the act of vandalism was probably officially sanctioned. This happened in the fall of 1936.

The following year when the holiday of Succoth approached, we knew we were not going to have a Succah. There were people in the big city, Frankfurt, pious Jews, who were willing to open their homes to children from families who could no longer celebrate the holiday. My sister and I had the privilege to be chosen to spend the holiday with several of these families. Unfortunately Hanni and I were separated, each of us going to a different family.

As well-meaning as these wonderful people were, once again the experience turned into a disaster for me. I was eight years old and had never been alone away from home, especially in strangers' homes. I missed my sister and I missed my parents. The people lived in a big apartment in the city but to me it felt like a prison. Once again I was too shy to inquire where the toilet facilities were, nor could I find same in the dark in the middle of the night. An accident was inevitable.

I was deeply ashamed of myself. I have no recollection of the holiday or of what kind of people they were. I just wanted the ordeal to end. Some time during the holiday week my sister and I met. I think the family with whom she was staying picked me up so we could have some time together. Her family owned a variety store and made her presents of some custom jewelry. I especially remember her having a little ring with a stone shaped like a ladybug. I visited their store with them and enjoyed the afternoon.

I began to realize through this holiday outing that it was not easy for me to relate to strangers. For the first eight years of my life I lived in virtual isolation, except for Hanni and my parents. I was a loner. I found it hard to get to know people, to talk to people or to make friends.

Another memorable occurrence happened in the fall of 1936.

The Germany Army chose our area to hold field maneuvers. For weeks in September and October convoys of vehicles would speed through the town without regard for any speed control. On the outskirts of Hellstein, on the hill to the west of us, a battery of artillery was installed. For several weeks the guns might be blazing away with blanks at any time during the night or day. A field kitchen was set up for a time right in our front yard. We observed lines of soldiers being fed, what looked like stew, from a huge kettle.

This was the regular army without any political axes to grind. I think Papa was torn between fascination for the military activity, since it had not been that long that he himself was a soldier and the caution he knew he must exercise as a Jew to not call attention to himself.

We youngsters of course stood around gawking at all the activity. The smell of the strange gasoline exhaust, which I found out later was made from coal, still lingers in my nostrils. The field kitchen happened to be in our front yard over the holiday of Yom Kippur. As I stood there in the afternoon looking, one of the soldiers good-naturedly offered me a piece of chocolate. I was dumbfounded and didn't know what to say. Yom Kippur is a fast day and I knew I was not allowed to eat anything.

Mama had been keeping an eye on me. She approached and graciously accepted the candy on my behalf and made me thank the man. Later on in the house she explained that it would not have looked right had I not accepted the gift. We should not take a chance of offending anyone, even though I might not eat the candy until later.

One unit of cavalry, they still had some horse troops, used our backyard orchard to quarter their horses. This was supposed to have been quite an honor, since the commanding officer of the unit was the son of a famous general.

After the horses had gone, the grass surface was a shambles as was our vegetable garden. At the conclusion of the maneuvers there was a general announcement in town to submit any claim for damages which might have been caused by the military. The notice was for the general population of Hellstein, but I don't think they meant to include the Jews. Nevertheless Mama put in a claim for damages to our meadow and garden. She was of course, and not very politely, ignored.

Uncle Gustav, the salesman for my Grandfather Steinberger's winery, had an automobile for his business. In his travels, if possible, he would make it a point to go out of his way every once in a while to visit with his sister in Hellstein, my mother. The last time he came to visit us in Hellstein he almost lost his car. He always parked in front of the house. That was a mistake in 1936. A non-Jewish friend of the family, with old loyalties, dropped in and warned us that there was a plan to take the automobile during the night. Papa and Uncle Gustav hastily pushed the car, a blue Opel, into the barn and blocked the doors. It discouraged the hoodlums but it was also the last time Uncle Gustav visited Hellstein.

During the winter of 1936-37 we continued to attend school in Birstein, taking our little train every day. Except for Mr. and Mrs. Levi and the little girl Elsbeth, I don't remember anyone there. Our blue enamel pitcher of milk continued to sit on the wood stove in the classroom every day, courtesy of the Grünebaum cow. I imagine I gained my share of knowledge. The government at the end of the schoolyear in the spring of 1937 disbanded the school. Once again it was only Hanni and I for each other's company.

I developed a love for the written word, I became an avid reader. There really wasn't that much to read around our house in Hellstein. If the prayer books of that time had been in German instead of just Hebrew I might have gotten a better understanding of the religion. Probably I would have read the bible, *The Chumosh*, had it been in German. I read everything there was, the daily paper, my sister's books, advertisements that came in the mail.

Particularly well do I remember the Chanukah holiday of the winter of 1936. An organization, probably a Jewish community group from Frankfurt, made it a point to give presents to the children in the communities where no other facilities existed. When a package came there was a pair of new shoes for me, but also, best of all; I received a brand new book. The title was "*Der Letzte der Mohikaner*"; "The Last of the Mohicans" by James Fenimore Cooper translated into German of course. How I treasured that book all through that winter. I tried to imagine the locale of where the action took place in what is now upstate New York. I never had any idea that some day I would travel the area and would remember that treasured book of so long ago. "The Last of the Mohicans" was the very first book I received that I could consider strictly my own.

It was sometime around this time that we started to lose our Jewish neighbors in Hellstein. Mr. Ludwig Moritz and his family gave up on Hellstein, sold their place and moved to Frankfurt. Klara Grünebaum, the distant relative who had lived across the street, also sold out and moved to be with her son in The Big City.

At the beginning of the Nazi era, the city of Frankfurt a/Main had the most numerous Jewish population of any German metropolis. It was known as *Die Judenstadt*, The City of Jews. Of the total population of Frankfurt of half a million, about ten percent, or 50,000 people were Jewish. In 1933 even the mayor of Frankfurt was a Jew although after the passage of the Nuremberg laws, he quietly resigned, packed his bags and left the country.

Frankfurt therefore became the magnet for displaced Jews from the surrounding countryside in the ensuing years. People felt that there was safety in numbers. The exodus had begun. Looking back on history, it was the reversal of what had happened at the end of the thirty-year war. The Jewish population was again concentrating in the cities.

By early summer of 1937 Hanni was eleven and a half years old. My parents thought it was time that she learned to ride a bicycle and found

one for her. It was an adventure for her to learn to ride it. It was also an activity I could not share with her. Maybe they thought I was too young at nine years of age or maybe too awkward to have a bike. Now there were three bicycles in our family of four and any bike outings on which the family might go, found me sitting on Papa's bike's crossbar. Oh how I longed to be able to ride my own bicycle.

Again, during that late spring, with no school to attend, my parents were at a loss at what to do with us children. A rare opportunity arose for Hanni to do a little traveling.

Our Aunt Ruth, Mama's youngest sister, married a nice man in late 1933. We attended the wedding on a cold night in Frankfurt during December of that year. It was probably the last big formal wedding in our family. Hanni was the flower girl and my cousin Ernst Marx and I each carried a corner of the bridal train. My new uncle's name was Selmar Schaumberg. Uncle Selmar had a vision of things to come. The newlyweds, immediately after their wedding, immigrated to Holland. There they settled in the city of Utrecht. Unfortunately they never had children.

One can imagine the two sisters corresponding between Hellstein and Utrecht. Mama worried about her children not getting an education. Her sister, my Aunt Ruth, lamented the fact that she didn't have children. Aunt Ruth also had a soft spot in her heart for her oldest niece, which is what Hanni was in that branch of the family. It was the most natural thing in world for Hanni to get invited to Utrecht for a visit that summer. I wasn't invited.

One fine day Mama and Hanni left for Frankfurt, there for Hanni to be put on a train for Holland for a visit with the relatives.

When Hanni returned at the end of her several weeks' visit, she told stories of the enlightened living conditions in Holland. What a great time she had with Aunt Ruth and Uncle Selmar who couldn't do enough for her. On the Sabbath, after services, people would linger in front of the Synagogue loudly greeting one another with hearty "*Gut Schabbos*" calls. This would be frowned upon in Germany where any display of Jewishness was strictly forbidden. They visited places and did things that would be unheard of by Jews in our society. Once again how I envied my sister her good fortune.

I was however not completely deprived that summer of 1937. While my sister was away in Holland I too had the opportunity to do a little visiting. An acquaintance of my parents' was traveling through Hellstein one day with some female relatives, on their way to the main highway south of us at Wächtersbach. They were on their way to Fulda and stopped off on the way to say hello to Mama and Papa.

Mama's ears perked up when she heard Fulda. We had relatives in Fulda, my Aunt Tillie and her husband Uncle Bernard Bachenheimer, they owned a bakery in Fulda. Quickly my mother picked up the phone and called the Bachenheimers:

"Can poor little Erich spent a few weeks with you? He is all alone and you have four boys and it would do him so much good!"

How could they refuse? I always liked my Bachenheimer cousins, all boys and all older than I.

Mama crammed some of my clothes into a cardboard carton while the visitors waited. Soon I was sitting on my cardboard box on the floor in the back of the automobile, facing backward out the rear window. I will never forget that automobile trip. I even remember the brand of soap that came in that carton. It was PERSIL, a major brand of washday soap. The entire trip I sat with my body facing backward but my head turned to the front so I could see where we were going. It is no fun to see where you've been, you want to see where you're going. For some time after I arrived at my relatives' house in Fulda I had one world-class stiff neck.

I had a good time during my two weeks' stay with The Bachenheimers. There were my four boy cousins, Lothar, Julius, Erich and Berthold. Berthold was the youngest, only one year older than I was, and therefore closest to me in age. The bakery was still a going business, although they only had Jewish customers. Actually it was really more of a cafe in that they not only produced their own baked goods but also served light meals. Maybe it was the only kosher restaurant in Fulda. To a little boy from Hellstein it was like entering paradise. My cousin Lothar, the oldest, delighted in showing me around the actual bakeshop, where he served as an apprentice to his father.

Every morning, except on the Sabbath, there was a delivery route to deliver fresh bread to various households. This was Berthold's job and while I was there I helped him with his route. We had a little wooden wagon loaded with the bread for the route. The wagon had a handle by which to pull it and the two of us pulled our little wagon, side by side. My Uncle Bernard was of course the master baker. The man must have been of a very patient disposition and gentle nature. I asked him all kinds of stupid questions about how is this done or why is that. I remember him standing by the stove and good humoredly explaining to this ignorant eight or nine year old how one makes the dough for croissants or what are the ingredients of cooked custard or some such technicality.

The Bachenheimers were super orthodox people, much more so than my own parents were. I was in awe of their piety. There was no way that any work could possibly be performed on the Sabbath. They had a charcoal stove made just for the purpose of keeping food warm for the weekend. The charcoal was banked and stayed hot without having to be touched. My aunt cooked all the meals and set them on the stove on Fridays. There is no experience like drinking coffee that has been sitting on a hot stove for over fifteen hours.

I enjoyed my vacation in Fulda. The Bachenheimers seemed to have been a very happy family.

On my return home I was reunited with Hanni, but we still had no schooling, not being allowed into the public schools. Life in Hellstein was becoming bleaker and bleaker. What at one time amounted to being shunned and then later turned into harassment, was by this time open hostility and persecution. The children especially, after four years of being taught that Jews were evil, believed what they were taught. The teacher at school certainly wouldn't lie to them. Also more and more of the young men in town started to wear the uniforms of the various segments of the Hitler movement. The Hitler Youth in school, the SA, the SS, all were represented. Even in a little village such as ours we would not dare to be in their way on the street. A blow was the least we could expect, whether it was for my father or a little boy like myself.

After the holidays in the fall of 1937 our parents told us of the arrangements they were making for Hanni and I.

Our Uncle Sigmund Marx, the teacher, who had married Mama's older sister, Tante Berthel, was now assigned to teach at the school in the city of Speyer-am-Rhein. The same as everywhere else, Jewish children were not allowed in the public schools in Speyer. Uncle Sigmund taught all the Jewish children in a one-room school, on the top floor of the Synagogue. He was still an employee of the state but was only allowed to teach Jewish children. The two of us were going to live with these relatives in Speyer in order to be able to attend the Jewish school.

All our clothes were packed and Mama took us by train to live with her sister and her husband. Our two cousins, Julius and Ernst, knew us well enough so there were no surprises. We settled in with them sharing a spare room. The living quarters were crowded and the relatives were to be commended for making the sacrifice. It must have been a real hardship making room for two more children in a third floor apartment.

This was in the fall of 1937. We settled in and tried to adjust. At least my sister and I were together.

The year I left Hellstein I was nine years old. I had had about two years' worth of sporadic education. I had not made friends with any boy my age. I had had no pals, chums or anyone to share confidences with of like age and interests.

Hanni and I were dropped into the established society of the Jews of Speyer, among whom my Aunt and Uncle were prominent leaders. To say that it was once again a traumatic experience for a little boy from the village of Hellstein would be an understatement.

My cousin Ernst, two and a half years my senior, took charge of my education. He was twelve years old and quite the sophisticate. He introduced me to his circle of friends by whom I was considered a novelty, and for a very short time that fact made me a celebrity.

Until I arrived in Speyer I didn't know that I spoke with a

country dialect. The residents of the rural backwoods area of *Kreis Gelnhausen*, where I grew up, had their own ways of expressing themselves. My quaint speech, which I am sure was hard to understand at times, became a source of entertainment for my city cousin and his friends.

I was drawn into the circle of Ernst's acquaintances and encouraged to relate stories of life in Hellstein. They would roar with laughter at my country speech, which only encouraged me. It took me a while to realize that some of the experiences which I told repeatedly, weren't really that funny. The boys were just being entertained at my expense. I was still different.

Once I understood that I was only being used as a source of entertainment I resented it and again withdrew into myself. I don't know whether I was justified in erecting a wall between myself and the rest of the boys, but this was my defense against anything unknown and boys my age were an unknown quantity to me, especially since I felt I was only being tolerated to be laughed at.

Hanni and I lived with the relatives in Speyer for a full year. Although I felt that I did not really fit in, I realize now that it was a very valuable part of my education to learn to accustom myself to city life.

Soon after our arrival in Speyer, the Synagogue in that city celebrated its centennial. The ceremonies had been long in the planning with a lengthy list of dignitaries expected to attend. The nearest Rabbi was stationed in Mannheim and he was the person who would have a key role in the rededication. My uncle of course, being the nominal spiritual leader of Speyer, was the main organizer.

The ceremony was scheduled for a weekday evening since many of the out-of-town people would not travel on the Sabbath. We children were way in the back of the Synagogue, Hanni in the women's section and I, with my cousin and his friends, in the rear of the men's area, which was also the main body of the building.

I don't remember anything of the proceedings since the only memory I have is of Ernst constantly joking about the various men who had come from the outlying country towns. With one it might be the outdated clothing, another had his return railroad ticket stuck in his hatband so he wouldn't lose it, why that was funny I still don't know, and more giggles about other casual acquaintances. The Synagogue was packed for the occasion and the proceedings were quite serious and solemn with many speeches. However all I remember is the fun and games that went on in the back. This was my first real introduction to my peers in Speyer.

Hanni and I arrived in Speyer about the end of October in 1937 and stayed until the time of the *Progrm* of November 9, 1938, which is now known as *Kristallnacht*, the night of the broken glass.

During the school break in December of 1937, what Christian children called Christmas vacation and we called the Chanukah holiday,

Hanni and I went back to Hellstein. We rode on the train by ourselves, with Hanni in charge of course. When we arrived in Hellstein we were so happy, we were home. There was snow on the ground and I couldn't wait to get out my sled and go sledding on all the old slopes.

One of my favorite spots to go sledding had always been a little lane called Hochstrasse that angled off from the main road almost across from our home. The Synagogue in Hellstein was located on Hochstrasse. I could sled down its twisty curves right down to the end, across Hauptstrasse and practically to our front door. I took my sled up Hochstrasse and sledded the old run, and again. The third time I pulled the sled to the top of the hill, some gentile boys, my own age, were waiting for me. At the time I knew all of these boys by name, I also knew that they were not my friends. They surrounded me. I clutched my sled and backed off against the nearest wall. After much teasing and name-calling they took my sled away from me. I knew what would follow; they were going to gang up on me and beat on me. I ran for home. There was no recourse of course, the sled was gone. My parents tried their best to console me but there was nothing they could do either, it must have been a sad experience for Mama and Papa.

After a few more days of visiting with our parents, Hanni and I headed back to Speyer and the home of our relatives. Hellstein was no longer "Home".

I never saw Hellstein again as a child.

The next time I saw Hellstein, I was in uniform, as a soldier in the United States Army.

The year in Speyer brought home to me the fact that mine was not a usual upbringing. I just could not relate to children of my own age. My Uncle Sigmund, who was also our teacher, recognized this and tried to have me included in their games and leisure activities. I was ignorant of most sports. In Hellstein I was not allowed to participate in games at recess with the Christian children. I had no skills such as football or bike riding nor did I know what most of the others were talking about most of the time. Therefore my age group in Speyer largely ignored me. I was still the outsider, the country bumpkin.

One boy, I believe his name was Harry, was practically ordered by my uncle, who we must remember was the teacher for all the Jewish children, to take me under his wing and do things with me to bring me out of my shell.

Consequently, Harry asked me to join him the following Sunday to come with him to see a football game being played by the local Speyer team. I went to Harry's house, and met his mother who was a very pleasant lady. She gave us a lot of admonitions as to how we should not make ourselves conspicuous as two Jewish nine-year-olds out among the city crowd. She also gave her son some money for refreshments.

We went to the football field at the edge of the city, there was no admission charge, and where Harry bought some peppermint coated chewing gum for the two of us. He shared the candy with me of course and we proceeded to watch the game. Since I knew none of the rules, the game itself made no impression on me. I just dutifully copied all the groans and cheers of my friend. After a while Harry noticed that I was not chewing the gum and asked me what I had done with it. I told him that I had of course eaten the "candy". Never having seen gum before, I was not aware that it was not to be swallowed. Harry thought that I was one of the dumbest kids he had ever met. End of friendship.

My sporadic education in the years before we moved to Speyer did not teach me any good study habits. In my early years in Hellstein there was little if any homework and what I did do was seldom, if ever, checked. All this changed in the classroom of my uncle the teacher, Herr Sigmund Marx. He ran a very disciplined program with assignments being handed out on a daily basis. Although I lived in his home he did not believe in coaching or supervising me on my homework. To get the work done was strictly my own responsibility. After all there were four of us children living there. My inability to conform to this regimen put me constantly in hot water in the classroom. Corporal punishment was the accepted thing in the German school system and he was still a product of the German educational system, even if he was forced to run a segregated school.

I have vivid memories of him taking me out of the classroom to the stairwell and laying the stick on my bottom for not doing my assignment. I never thought that, being a relative, he would enforce the rules that strenuously. Again I was wrong.

So I started to do my best to do the required work at home. I was an awkward child and handling pen and inkbottle were no easy task. Too often in my clumsiness I upended the inkbottle and spilled the contents on the kitchen table, soiling a tablecloth. My aunt was not happy with me. My oldest cousin, Julius, who was about sixteen at the time, came to my rescue. He took an empty cigarette box and cut a hole in the top in the shape of the inkbottle. By inserting the bottle into the cutout it steadied the bottle and solved my problem. After that, homework became easier.

Other adventures which got me into trouble.

Tante Berthel took Julius, Ernst and Hanni to the nearby city of Mannheim one Sunday to see a stage production. I was probably not considered old enough to be able to understand it, so I was left at home in the charge of Uncle Sigmund. It turned dark outside and I was bored. My uncle had been reading on the couch but eventually fell asleep with his book. A tablelamp was left burning on the end table next to the couch and in front of the window. The reflection of the light in the window glass prevented me from seeing out onto the street. I took a book from the bookshelf and put it over the lamp to keep the light from spilling on the window. I could now see

out. Soon my uncle awoke and saw what I was doing. He snatched the book from the reading lamp and showed me how the heat of the bulb had scorched the pages of the book. He was furious; I had ruined one of his newest reference books.

I have always had a sinus problem. In Speyer, probably because of the extra pollution in the city air, this was more pronounced than in Hellstein. Too often, while sitting down to a meal, this situation would become aggravated from the steam rising from the food and I felt compelled to blow my nose at the table. I had been told that blowing one's nose at the dinner table was not polite and I therefore bent down to below the level of the tabletop to perform this bodily function. Once again I was the butt of gibes, taunts and ridicule because of my disgusting peasant-like behavior.

Our parents surprised us with a visit to Speyer during the early spring of that year; it was about March in 1938.

On the Sabbath of the week of my parents' visit, my uncle wanted to honor me in front of my father at the afternoon children's services in the Synagogue. He asked me to lead the group in a portion of the service, which required me to sing or chant several songs. It was as much of a surprise to me as it was to my father, especially since I was totally unprepared for the event. I became extremely nervous, I had never been in the public eye before. My voice was not of the best quality and much snickering was heard from the youthful congregation. I quit in tears halfway through one of the songs. I was angry with my uncle for embarrassing me even though his intentions were good.

Later during this week I took Papa aside and privately asked him for some pocket money for school supplies I wished to have. He was very surprised, having assumed that the relatives were taking care of all our needs. The truth was, and I don't think I even admitted this to Papa, I was just too shy to communicate properly with my uncle and aunt. I was simply intimidated.

As 1938 turned to spring and then summer, it was taken for granted by everyone in the family that I just preferred being by myself. I became a great explorer. I took long walks through the city of Speyer by myself, getting to know every street and alley and never getting lost. It was at this time that I began to realize that I had the talent of an unusually keen sense of direction. This fact was brought home to me when I overheard a conversation between two teenage girls of our acquaintance. They commented on how well I seemed to know my way around Speyer, even though I was only a country boy and had not lived there very long. This was a proud moment for me; I could do something right after all.

My schoolwork seemed to have straightened itself out by this time for I don't remember any unusual happenings after the initial period of adjustment. One fact about the school seems to stick in my mind from that period. Since we were a segregated Jewish school, meeting on the top floor

of the Synagogue, we had no physical education facilities in the Synagogue, but were still required by state law to get in some physical education. Once a week, it was probably on Sunday afternoons since the place was deserted, we went out the back door of our building, through an alley and into the side door of the public school in the neighborhood. There we engaged in gymnastics and other physical activities, boys and girls together. We were always cautioned by my uncle the teacher, not to call unnecessary attention to our presence there, lest we invite unpleasantness.

There had been a bridge across the River Rhine at Speyer until it was destroyed during the First World War. The present government of Germany, that is the Nazi regime, had rebuilt this bridge and 1938 was the year during which a huge rededication ceremony was scheduled. The event took place in May and a park near the approach to the bridge was turned into a carnival area for the occasion. Nobody told me not to go there so I went by myself with a few *pfennige* in my pocket. I bought some candy, did some sightseeing and enjoyed the people watching. Suddenly some gentile schoolboys spotted me and recognized me for being a Jew. Their catcalls and cries of "*Jude, Jude*" (Jew, Jew), attracted others and I was soon in full flight fearful for my life with a horde of boys at my heels.

I ran out of the park and up a rear street not knowing where to turn. I saw the rear entrance of a Pharmacy and ran inside begging the proprietor to please shield me. The gentleman only shrugged his shoulders, there was nothing he was allowed to do to protect a Jew, even if only a little boy. I ran out the front door of the shop onto the main street. The man must have discouraged the gang because my pursuers had disappeared. I went home sadder and wiser.

I reached my tenth birthday in July of that year.

All day long on the day of my birthday I waited for something wonderful to happen, but nobody seemed to have remembered that it was MY day. By afternoon I became despondent and not knowing what else to do I walked to the railroad station to meet a gentleman who was a boarder at our house. I felt that I would probably get a warmer greeting from him on my birthday than I had gotten at home. He and I walked slowly back to the street where we lived. As we entered the apartment I was greeted by an uproar. Everyone had been looking for me. The family had planned a big surprise for me and that was why my birthday had not been mentioned. They had made arrangements to take me to the circus, which happened to be in town. We quickly went to the performance and I remember it to be one of the most wonderful evenings of my life. I had never been to the circus before. When the evening ended I could not believe that it was over already. However I wished that they had not tried to surprise me, anticipation is half the enjoyment.

My relatives thought, since I was a country boy, giving me a living thing to take care of would make me a little happier. For my birthday

I was given a goldfish bowl with several fish inside. Also the pet shop where it was purchased convinced Tante Berthel that the bowl needed several snails to keep the water pure. I don't think I had ever seen a live fish before and did not care one bit about having goldfish for pets. Inevitably the fish died one by one due to my forgetting to feed them. However the snails fascinated me, I knew snails from our backyard in Hellstein. I watched the snails by the hour and hoped that eventually they would multiply. My taste in pets disgusted everyone until one day the fishbowl disappeared mysteriously.

It was during this summer that Hanni and I were informed that my parents had been forced to sell our home in Hellstein. The German military had established a training facility in the eastern part of the country, and as a consequence they had displaced many of the farmers from that area. To compensate these rural people the government simply displaced Jews that lived somewhere else and handed the confiscated Jewish property to the eastern farmers. My family was a victim of this forced "sale".

Today that German family is still living in the house in Hellstein my great-grandfather had build.

After being driven from Hellstein our parents were relocated to the city of Frankfurt, there finding work as caretakers in the Jewish home for the aged. We visited them briefly during our vacation in the summer of 1938. They were living in a single room upstairs in a row of charity houses behind the home for the elderly. What furniture they brought with them was stored in one rented room a block away. I didn't realize it at the time but the transition must have been a terrible shock for Papa, a person from the country, who had grown up in the wide-open spaces of the Hellstein surroundings. The forced sale and subsequent relocation to the big city with its confusion were just one more way of humiliating Papa.

We stayed with our parents in this one room for the week we were in Frankfurt. To give us something to do, arrangements had been made for Hanni and I to go to a daycamp with the children of the local Jewish Orphanage. We took the streetcar to the orphanage and there joined the other children on buses for a day in the country. My most vivid recollection of this week of summer daycamp was the constant swarm of bees hovering over our imitation fruit drinks.

An important sidelight emerged from this week in summer camp. It was here that I first met children with whom I later emigrated to France and then to the United States and some of whom, as adults, are still close friends more than 60 years later.

The week in Frankfurt during this summer vacation was very depressing to me, seeing Papa do menial work for other people. He did make an attempt to make his work appear interesting. He showed me the boiler room, of which he was in charge, in the sub-basement of the home for the aged, trying to impress me with the size of the equipment and the scope of his responsibility. However it was not home and he was out of his element.

It was decided, after our week in Frankfurt, that Hanni and I should spend the remainder of our vacation time with our maternal grandparents in Dettelbach, who were always called by the formal titles of Grossvater and Grossmutter unlike Opa or Oma.

Dettelbach am Main, as it is known, had also become a depressing place for me, there were only the Grandparents at home now. Uncle Gustav, the remaining bachelor, was on the road selling the wine. It was not like when we visited there for the holidays in previous years with Mama and Papa, uncles, aunts, and cousins there and friends dropping in.

I was mostly on my own once again for the week. The grandparents bought me a pair of leather sandals, which made me feel quite grown up. I walked down to the river in the sandals and watched the barges plying the stream with their cargo. One afternoon juvenile bullies once again identified me as a Jewish child. I had rocks thrown at me and heard the usual calls of *Yid, Yid*. The incident stands out in my mind only because of the sandals. The sandals did not fit very well and impeded my progress or my escape would have been much swifter, but escape without serious harm I did, one more time.

As we left the grandparents' place, Grossmutter gave both Hanni and I a bar of chocolate to eat on the train back to Speyer. She also gave us a bag with chocolate bars for our cousins Ernst and Julius. Once we were seated in our compartment and the train got under way, Hanni of course became nosy and had to see what our common grandmother was sending to her other grandchildren. She opened the bag and examined the chocolate bars. She decided that grandmother was playing favorites. The candy for the Marx brothers was good Swiss chocolate whereas our bars were of a cheaper domestic variety. Hanni seemed to have had no problem with her conscience switching the candy, with us eating the better ones. These are some more of my childhood memories.

THE LOST CULTURE

From the time of the Roman Empire, for sixteen hundred years, Jews had been a presence in Germany. Jews established themselves in the business community and were taken for granted as part of the everyday life. However they were still always considered outsiders mostly because of their religion.

For one hundred years, from the middle of the eighteen-thirties to 1933, Jews were granted full citizenship in Germany with all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Jewish men served in the armed forces, Jews were appointed ministers of state and served in respected and responsible positions. Germany had university professors that were Jewish, also doctors, lawyers and representatives in most other disciplines.

Over a period of time there evolved among the Jews of Germany a unique culture, distinct and separate from the mainstream German gentiles and even more different from the rest of world Judaism, the majority of whom lived in the Eastern countries.

The Nazi Government of Germany wiped out almost two millennia of tradition and customs in less than a decade.

Between 1933 and 1938 the Jews of Germany had lost their citizenship, their children were denied access to the schools, Jewish teachers could no longer teach in German schools nor could they have private non-Jewish students. Jewish musicians were barred from practicing their art in German orchestras and Jewish doctors were forbidden to treat Non-Jewish patients. Jews were being forced out of government, banking, newspapers, the stock market and any other endeavor which would have them come in contact with non-Jews.

It was the Middle Ages all over again. In these five years 114,000 Jews emigrated from Germany after being subjected to outrageous harassment by German authorities to force them to leave the country. By July of 1938 each Jew was required to carry a special identity card and it was at this time that Jews were required to add the middle names of Israel for males and Sara for the females.

Forty years previously, between the years 1900 and 1933 many Jews had left the eastern countries of Poland and Russia for what seemed a better a life in Germany. However, German law made it next to impossible for these people to acquire German citizenship. This status automatically made them a lower class in the eyes of both the German people and German Jewry. The sophisticated, well-educated and snobbish German Jews considered their eastern counterparts to be uncouth, loud and an

embarrassment to their society.

In the fall of 1938 the German government issued an order that all Jews who had not held German citizenship, must immediately return to their homeland. The majority of Jews thus affected were of Polish or Baltic origin. Most of them knew where their country of origin was but there was no way many of them could go back since many countries had either changed boundaries during the World War, or worse, the country might not even exist any longer. These facts meant nothing to the Germans. The order was given and they meant to drive these foreign Jews out of Germany.

The order was forcefully implemented in the early morning hours of one October day. In typical efficient German fashion, police and Gestapo, implemented by SS troops, entered the homes of non-ethnic German-Jews in the pre-dawn hours and forcibly took them to waiting railroad trains, allowing them only the personal belongings they could carry. The trains took them east to the German-Polish border stopping just short of the border crossing point. With drawn weapons the German troopers forced the people out of the trains and to cross the border out of Germany and into the strip of no-mans-land between the two countries. There was no turning back. Over a period of days, over 14,000 Polish and other nationality Jews were thus deported.

The Polish border guards saw this wave of humanity coming toward them without warning. They hadn't a clue as to what was going on. They in turn raised their weapons and forcibly stopped the Jews from entering their country. The Jews were trapped for days between the two countries, living in temporary, filthy, inhumane camps. Some provisions were made by international relief organizations such as the Red Cross. Some soup kitchens were established and tents were erected. However conditions were miserable in the fall of the year at the German-Polish border.

After a time the Polish government relented and started admitting the deportees. However over five thousand lived in these temporary camps for weeks until arrangements could be made for them.

Among those thus trapped was a family by the name of Gruenspan or Grinspan, which had been living in Hannover. A member of this family was seventeen-year-old Herschel. The family must have been fairly well to do since Herschel at the time was studying in Paris where he was sent after the schools were closed to Jewish students. Herschel Gruenspan was outraged by the atrocity committed on his Jewish/Polish-German parents. Seeking revenge, Herschel procured a pistol and entered the German Embassy in Paris on November 7, 1938 intending to kill the German Ambassador. It was a dumb stunt by a misguided teen-ager. The person Herschel encountered eventually and shot at, was Ernst vom Rath, an aristocrat but only a military attaché. Vom Rath died of his wounds on November 9th.

Germany was outraged.

The German government called the subsequent riots and bloodletting against the Jews a "spontaneous" demonstration of the people against the Jews in retaliation for the killing. In reality the simultaneous riots against the Jews that followed all over Germany and Austria had been carefully orchestrated by the Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels far in advance of the event, but for just such an eventuality. All that was needed was an excuse to strike.

On the night of November 8/9, 1938, twelve hundred synagogues all over Germany were burned to the ground. Over thirty thousand adult male Jews were arrested and taken to concentration camps. Practically every Jewish business in Germany was closed and then destroyed by rioting mobs. Jewish homes, especially in the cities, were invaded in the early morning darkness and personal belongings, furniture, dishes and anything else that was loose was thrown out of the windows and destroyed. These actions were especially satisfying to the mob when perpetrated from the upper stories of apartment buildings. The streets and sidewalks of German cities were littered with broken glass from shop windows and Jewish homes.

This was "*Kristall Nacht*". Translated into English it means crystal night, "The Night of the Broken Glass".

The date of November 10, 1938 marked the end of traditional German Judaism.

We were awakened in the early morning hours of November 9th, 1938, by pounding and shouting at the downstairs door of the apartment building in which we lived with our relatives in Speyer.

"Mister Marx, Mister Marx, the synagogue is burning," shouted a voice.

It was one of my uncle's students, a boy who was half-Jewish. His Jewish mother had married a non-Jew, which put him in a half world between the two factions. He could not attend public school but he was free to go where he pleased unlike us Jewish kids. Now it was he who brought us the unpleasant news that the end was at hand.

The apartment in which we lived had been in turmoil all week. The eighth of November was Ernst's thirteenth birthday and his Bar Mitzvah was scheduled for the following Sabbath. Many relatives were expected for the occasion, including the grandparents from Dettelbach. The bedrooms were all being cleaned and rearranged to make room for everyone. Hotels would no longer accept Jews in those days; therefore everyone that was coming had to be accommodated in the apartment. Hanni and I had been temporarily moved to the attic to make room downstairs.

Into this hectic situation, on the morning of Thursday November

ninth, was dropped the bombshell news of the Nazi crackdown. We dressed hurriedly and all gathered in the kitchen. I personally had no knowledge of the world event, which precipitated this action. Uncle Sigmund must have been well aware of the whys and hows. He was soon on the phone to a man with whom he had a friendly relationship from years past but who was now a member of the *Gestapo*.

The acronym *GESTAPO* comes from the words '*GEheime STAats POLizei*', (secret state police).

From the conversation, Uncle Sigmund gathered that he was also soon to be taken into custody. He received the assurance that his friend would be the one to arrest him and he could therefore count on not being shipped out to a concentration camp.

Being forewarned, my uncle was able to prepare himself by packing a little bag and being dressed properly for the ordeal, instead of being taken away suddenly without preparation as so many Jewish men had experienced. His hope was that he would soon be released through his friend's intervention. Soon after, three agents arrived and my uncle bade us all goodbye to be taken away to the local jail.

As a ten-year-old the seriousness of the situation didn't really impress me, or maybe I was just so used to having my life disrupted that I took this latest atrocity for granted. Tante Berthel was frantic. To have our revered schoolmaster and her beloved husband arrested like a common criminal was a terrible blow to her pride and dignity.

The city of Speyer is located on the West Bank of the Rhine River some miles south of the larger city of Mannheim. Now came another blow. Sometime during the middle of this day all Jews in Speyer, and for that matter all Jews in Germany west of the Rhine to the French border, were ordered to be clear of the west bank of the river by midnight that night. Jews were considered enemies of the German people and according to official philosophy they would aid the archenemy of Germany, France, in case of war. The entire charade was more harassment for the local Jewish population. Most of the belongings of the Jews would have to be left behind, subject to looting by the mob.

I was cautioned to stay out of sight all day and not to approach the windows. I remember sitting in the middle of the kitchen on a straight-backed chair and reading a Cowboy and Indian story by the German author Karl Mai. What Hanni and my cousins did that day I have no idea. Tante Berthel had had to be on the phone all day checking with relatives around the country, and mostly with our parents on what to do with us two. Under the circumstances Hanni and I were a tremendous burden on my aunt with her husband in jail and having to take care of her own two sons and not knowing where to go before the deadline.

Toward evening we all started packing our suitcases with what little we could carry. Obviously a decision had been reached.

After dark, by way of back streets, we walked to the home of an acquaintance, carrying our few belongings, where a car was waiting. The car was loaded with people to the point that the driver, whom I didn't know, was afraid the rear bumper would drag on the ground. In addition, the automobile also towed a little utility trailer with some people's belongings. From conversation during the ride I gathered that one lady was even bringing her sterling silver with her, this was considered to be frivolous waste of good space. The journey was in a northerly direction along the river road until we crossed the bridge over the Rhine between the cities of Ludwigshaven on the west bank and Mannheim on the east side of the river. We crossed the river just before midnight, thereby avoiding violating the new orders.

Tante Berthel had obviously been able to make arrangements for us to find shelter with friends in Mannheim for the night. I was too sleepy to care where I was, I only remember that Ernst and I shared a bathtub to sleep in that night.

The next morning Hanni was put in charge of me once again and we were given explicit instructions on what to do and how to behave. Since it was a Friday we were to act like two German schoolchildren on a weekend outing. We were each given a rucksack with a little lunch and what other personal belongings we could carry. We walked to the intercity bus station where my sister bought two student tickets for Frankfurt. We were going home to our parents.

We had strict orders to sit in the back of the bus and to not make ourselves conspicuous. I was aware of the seriousness of the situation and tried my hardest to be a good boy. Nevertheless the bus ride was a real thrill for me. I had never been on the Autobahn before although I had heard a lot about it. It seemed to me that the ride ended too quickly; I felt like I did on the day we went to the circus. One of the more memorable sights that I remember seeing along the way was the huge airport outside Frankfurt. It was another first for me. I had never seen an airplane on the ground before, nor had I ever seen one of the Zeppelins, the huge dirigible airships, and furthermore up this close.

Mama was waiting for us as we arrived at the bus terminal in Frankfurt. She stood against a wall in a plain housedress and she obviously was trying hard to blend into the crowd so she wouldn't be noticed.

I think I should explain again that German Jews, my family was no different, acted and dressed as Germans. We wore no distinctive clothing such as the Eastern European Jews might have worn especially the Chassidim. The Jews of Germany were not yet required by law to wear the yellow Star of David to identify them, that indignity would come later. For all intents and purposes my mother appeared to be just another German Hausfrau meeting someone at the bus station. Her biggest fear was that she would be recognized by a gentile acquaintance who might know her to be Jewish.

We had an emotional reunion with Mama. She brought us up to date on what was happening here in Frankfurt. Papa didn't come because it would have looked strange for a man to bother coming to the bus station on a weekday for just two little children, most men should be at work at that time of day and Papa didn't want to be noticed as being different.

Mama told us that all the Synagogues in Frankfurt had been burned to the ground the same as in all the rest of Germany. The beautiful big Synagogue next to where our parents lived on a big plaza called the *Börne Platz*, which my parents could see from their bedroom window, had been burning all the previous day. This Synagogue had been built in a classic and opulent style reflecting the wealth and importance of the Jewish community of Frankfurt. A high copper dome topped the roof and the walls were of a classic design. Even as we arrived at the bus depot in Frankfurt that afternoon it was still smoldering from the fire of two nights ago, according to Mama.

Before we left the bus depot Mama, in a very quiet voice, instructed us on how to deport ourselves while we were in public: "Do not converse among yourselves," she told us, "in case someone overhears you".

We were going to take the streetcar to where my parents lived: "Do not take a seat on the streetcar but stand on the rear platform."

Jews were no longer allowed to ride the streetcars and if we were caught Mama would be arrested. Always the same admonitions:

"Be inconspicuous, be inconspicuous".

The German people had declared war on us, the Jewish People who lived among them, and we were the enemy.

It seemed strange to ride through the familiar streets and have to feel the obvious hostility even though we were not bothered at this time, thanks to our Mother's precautions. As we passed, and saw signs of, the destruction and vandalism to Jewish stores, properties, houses of worship and community centers, Hanni and I fell into a deep depression. We finally sensed the full implications of what was happening.

In Hellstein the year before, we had still felt some optimism that it would all turn around soon. In Speyer we were discriminated against but still life was not too uncomfortable. We saw very little of the destruction in Speyer since we left the city at night and weren't on the street in daylight to observe any of the atrocities. Now, here in Frankfurt, in the city that we knew so well, it was hammered home to us that this was the total destruction of our world. We were very glad to be reunited with our parents.

We arrived at the tram station at the Börne Platz near the home for the elderly where our parents worked and lived. The burned-out hulk of the Synagogue was on the corner. My reaction to the destruction was that of deep anger. I couldn't understand the terrible waste. Papa was waiting for us in the room that was our parents' living quarters; he was relieved that we had made it safely.

Again we were cautioned not to show ourselves more than was necessary. The four of us in the family were to occupy the one room for the time being; we children were not to go out while our parents looked after their duties in the Home for the Aged next door. Papa told us they were very short-handed now since the younger men had been arrested. The reason he was still there was because someone had to do some of the mechanical work to keep the home operating.

The following morning I looked out the window of the room we occupied and observed a German civilian crew in the process of finishing the demolition of the great Synagogue. The frame of what had been the copper dome was lying inside the burned out four walls. The copper must have melted off in the fire and the remaining steel then crashed through what was left of the roof. They had attached a bulldozer with chains to the steel frame of the dome and were trying to drag it out through the archway of what used to be the main entrance. The dome's framework was too large and the opening too small and no matter how hard the bulldozer tugged, the walls would not crumble to widen the opening. I thought that God was exacting punishment on the Germans by making the workmen look silly in the final destruction of our house of prayer. I think my mother or father then came into the room and told me to get away from the window so I would not be noticed.

I learned much later that in the following few weeks the German government assessed the Jewish Communities throughout Germany billions of Marks, to pay for the cleanup of the mess the mobs had made and also for the demolition of the ruined structures. It was a classic case of adding insult to injury.

It was in the next few days that a decision was reached which came to be another major turning point in my life.

As I mentioned before, our parents had never made any arrangements to leave Germany, always still considering it to be their homeland. Now it was too late to emigrate as a family.

The call went out throughout the world that at least the children of German Jews should try to be saved. Many relief organizations in other countries of Europe were making arrangements for the children to find shelter. Great Britain, Belgium and France were among the nations that offered help. Queen Wilhelmina of Holland personally pledged her country to accept a number of Jewish refugee children.

Since my parents were relatively unsophisticated country people it was hard for them to make a decision. They were told Hanni and I had an opportunity to go on the transport that was being formed to take children to Holland. There were also children's transports being formed to go to the various other countries, France, Switzerland and England to name a few.

“Shall we send them out of the country?”

“Is this really the right thing to do?”

My parents just didn't know what to do for their offspring. As a consequence they took a chance and left the choice to us children. I was ten years old at the time and Hanni was almost thirteen.

Hanni jumped at the chance to go back to Holland. She had been there the year before, visiting her Aunt Ruth, she had had a great time and she was eager to go back. I had not been invited to visit Holland for summer vacation on the other hand, and was still pouting as only a ten-year-old can pout, over being slighted by our aunt. I didn't want any part of Holland.

Because of this grudge which I held against my Aunt Ruth, my sister and I went separate ways. The decision that I made because of a petty grudge was the deciding factor of my surviving the holocaust, whereas Hanni did not survive.

Within a few days of *Kristallnacht*, my parents prepared their oldest child to leave the country. The decision for her to leave was made on such short notice, that our parents never had a chance to supply Hanni with a proper wardrobe. We had left Speyer with only a few things in a rucksack and therefore my sister had nothing to wear. Mama scrounged a few dresses where available and even gave Hanni some of her own lingerie. Within a week my sister was out of my life forever. I regret that I was not able to see her off at the station, but at that time we never realized we would never see each other again, we were still of the opinion that this might only be a temporary political situation.

I think I was somewhat blasé over her leaving the country, while I stayed behind.

Hanni went on the first transport that left for the Netherlands. I remained at home with my parents.

Several months later, after a stay in the Jewish Orphanage and bouts with various children's diseases, including a stay in the hospital, my opportunity came to leave the country.

Tante Berthel, the mover and shaker in the family, was able to pull strings on my behalf. She was active with an organization that was putting together children's transports to go to France; there to be cared for by an organization called Union OSE. Her son, my Cousin Ernst, had already gone there and she was determined that I should be with the next group, lest the opportunity be lost. She went so far as to confront the director of the hospital personally, in order to gain my prompt release so I wouldn't miss the deadline.

The idea of going to France was to my liking. I admired Ernst and was happy to follow in his footsteps. I went to France and lived in an OSE home. My sister was in a children's home in Utrecht, Holland.

The decision not to go to Holland saved my life. As events developed during the war, many of us in France stayed ahead of the German

Army and eventually were brought to the United States. The children of Holland did not have this opportunity of course. The Nazis overran the Netherlands in 1940 on their way to invade France, and Hanni and most of her contemporaries eventually perished in the camps.

As events turned out, the childish grudge that I carried as a ten-year-old, proved to be a factor in the turning point which saved my life.

I stayed with my parents for a while in the room next to the Old Folks' Home. I tried to make myself useful around the home and was surprisingly successful in that department. No one in a metropolis the size of Frankfurt would pay much attention to a little ten-year-old who looked like a street urchin. I was able to run errands for the director of the Home, I was sent to the market to buy commodities which would otherwise not be available to a Jewish facility. I even went to offices of the city government to deliver documents where a grown-up Jew might feel at risk to be seen. I was happy to be able to keep busy and to feel important. As usual I was the only child in my environment. I also matured tremendously during those stressful few months.

I was able to observe at first hand the changes that had come over Frankfurt. It was at that time a city of half a million people. At the time the Nazis came to power ten percent of that population, or about 50,000 people, were Jewish. Frankfurt had the largest Jewish population of any city in Germany. It had the nickname of "*Die Judenstadt*", "The City of Jews". Now the entire Jewish culture was being radically and systematically destroyed. The destruction of all things Jewish, restaurants and stores and offices and the Synagogues and schools together with everything else was hard to comprehend. I was in the center of history in the making and didn't realize it.

One night in our room I awoke with a terrible itch all over my body. Under cover of darkness the next evening my parents took me to a Jewish doctor who still carried on a clandestine practice in his home. He diagnosed me as having chicken pox. That ended my gallivanting all over town and I also was not able to enter the main part of the retirement home any more. For several days I was forced to stay in bed in our room covered with calamine lotion.

It was also during this time period in Frankfurt, between illnesses, that Mama and I went to the train station one afternoon. My Uncle Isidor, one of my mother's brothers, and his family from Würzburg were emigrating to the United States and their train made a stop in Frankfurt on the way to the seaport of Hamburg. It was my mother's only chance to say goodbye to her brother. There was my Uncle and his wife Fanny and their two little girls Eva and Kate.

After they had left, I was the only one of my Grandparents Steinberger's grandchildren to still remain in Germany. My sister Hanni was in Holland, cousin Julius Marx had gone to Basel Switzerland while his

brother Ernst was sent to France.

After my recovery from the chicken pox, Papa made arrangements with the director of the Jewish Orphanage, his name was Isidor Marx and he was a brother of my Uncle Sigmund, for me to be able to live in that institution for the time being. The orphanage was no longer strictly for orphans, by now it had become a shelter for all Jewish children who were no longer able to live at home. This was the same place where we had boarded a bus the previous summer to join children for summer day camp.

Papa, ever the optimist, had also enrolled me in a local Yeshiva which was operating again, to try to further my education. I say my father was an optimist because I was totally unprepared for the level of studies being taught at the "*Samson und Rafael Hirsch Real Schule*". Also, I think he thought that things would sooner or later revert to some semblance of normalcy. He had bought a new leather briefcase for me to carry back and forth to school for my books and so I trudged through the city on a daily basis. We were still not allowed to ride public transportation but the frenzy of persecution and harassment of Jews had somewhat abated from what it had been the first week of November, and I felt fairly safe on the streets by that time. As I stated, the curriculum was way over my head and any attempt I made to keep up was purely bluff. Again I was odd man out.

I had been assigned to sleep in a dormitory in the orphanage together with more boys than the room had been designed for originally. This was once again a new experience for me, to have to sleep among such a crowd. It was on the second or third night of my stay there that I suffered from a severe case of insomnia. I wandered around the room observing the various sleeping forms. I had never heard that much snoring before. Another boy, somewhat older than I, must have been suffering from the same malady; he too was wandering restlessly. Put two ten year-olds together and you have mischief. It wasn't long before we wandered among the rows of cots seeing if we could stop the snorers by pinching their nostrils together. Someone was bound to wake up sooner or later and of course we were caught.

The next morning I was summoned to the office and given a severe lecture. The adult staff member invoked the name of my distant relative, Herr Marx the director, and how I was ungrateful after being taken in, especially in such difficult times. Once again I was the loner that got himself into trouble through ignorance of how to relate to other people.

It was in the middle of January 1939, when I had been living in the orphanage for only a few weeks, that I was once again afflicted with an itch over most of my body. I thought I had a recurrence of the chicken pox of a few weeks before. I went to the nurse's office with my complaint. The nurse took one look at me and called a resident doctor for his opinion. He confirmed what she had suspected; I had scarlet fever, a particularly contagious childhood disease.

From that moment on I was not allowed to come in contact with

any of the other children in the orphanage. Due to the upheaval in our Jewish society the orphanage had taken in many more children, like myself, than they had room for. In many instances some of the smaller ones were sleeping two to a bed. The last thing the institution needed at this time was to have an epidemic of this contagious disease. What happened to my clothes I don't know, they were probably burned. I was never to return to the orphanage.

In time an ambulance appeared and I was taken to the hospital in the *Gagern Strasse*. It was commonly known as the *Gagern Spital* and was strictly for Jewish patients. I was to remain there, mostly in isolation, for the next six weeks. Later on I learned that there had been six cases of the illness in the orphanage. My six weeks in the hospital are vague in my mind. I seem to have had periods of high temperatures with the accompanying feelings of dizziness and nausea. At other times I was quite lucid and recall reading many books. Once I had one roommate, at another time there were two other boys in the room with me. I was never able to have any personal visitors. My parents and other relatives came to see me often but had to stay on the outside of the isolation ward, on the other side of what appeared to me to be a moat outside my window. I was still the loneliest boy in town.

Now was the time for Tante Berthel, the energetic, the leader, the take-charge person, to step in. How she managed to be able to travel so freely around Germany I'll never know, but she seemed to be able to come and go at will. She approached my parents regarding the program with which she was working about organizing children's transports being shipped to France. An organization called Union Ose would be in charge of the children in France and the Rothschild banking family of Paris was financing a large part of the effort. My cousin Ernst, Tante Berthel's son had already escaped and was part of the first group to live in Paris.

My parents were of course all in favor of my going, especially with Tante Berthel in charge, except that I was still in the hospital. It was at this time that my aunt once again came to my rescue. I had been in the hospital a total of six weeks and she made it her business to get me out of there, or there wouldn't be enough time to get my paper work ready to get me in with this next group. A total of two hundred and fifty children were being accepted at that time by OSE, five groups of fifty from each of five cities. If I didn't get on this transport I might not have another chance since my aunt would be one of the adults leading this group from Frankfurt and she had no intention of coming back.

She went personally to the director of the hospital and used all of her persuasive powers to get him to release me. She made it clear to him that he would be personally responsible if I didn't survive. I was obviously no longer contagious, just weak, and I was released into her care.

I then moved back in with my parents to the room adjacent to the retirement home, for the interim period until my departure. I had to get many certificates of health due to my hospitalization. I had to get all new

clothes since I had none. More paperwork to get my travel permits. I received a youth identification card with a big capital "J" stamped on it to show that I was a Jew. This was in lieu of a passport. As my father made the rounds with me to the agencies and offices it had to be with a heavy heart, he was after all expediting the departure of his only son and he had very little hope of seeing me again.

During these few weeks, while I was getting ready to leave, the family also received travel permission to make a visit to Dettelbach. My Uncle Gustav was getting married prior to his emigration and the modest religious wedding ceremony was at our grandparents' home.

Uncle Gustav, like most Jewish men, had been jailed on November 9th. He was being held at the local jail in Dettelbach.

By coincidence, his secretary of several years, while the wholesale winery was still in existence, also had the last name of Steinberger, her name was Frieda Steinberger. In the course of working together the two had grown rather close although my Uncle, I believe, did not exhibit any kind of inclination to give up his bachelorhood.

The young lady had had the foresight earlier to apply to the US Consulate for a visa for entry into the United States. While my uncle was in jail her quota number came due and she was eligible to emigrate from Germany. The visa was good for an entire family or just a single person. Frieda was a determined young lady who had had her sights set on her former employer for some time.

She went to the jail and informed the authorities that the visa number had come due for her and her "husband". Because of the identical last names she was able to pull off the deception on the Germans, or maybe the Germans didn't really care and were happy to get rid of one more Jew. The American authorities though required proof of marriage for the visa to be valid for both. Uncle Gustav had very little choice and the civil marriage took place on January 17, 1939.

A few weeks later, at my grandparents' home, upstairs, very quietly, without fanfare, so as not to attract undue attention, the family got together for religious sanctification of the union. I was the only grandchild still in Germany and therefore the only grandchild in attendance. Beside the bridal pair and the grandparents, the only other ones there, were my parents and Uncle Sigmund Marx and of course his wife my Tante Berthel. The main dish for the wedding feast was the usual sweet and sour carp.

Uncle Sigmund the intellectual, jotted a simple poem for me to recite at the ceremony, it ran three stanzas. I carried it with me for decades all through my years of living in France and through my adolescence in the United States. Some years after Tante Berthel arrived in the United States I gave the original to her as a keepsake from her husband who perished in one of the camps.

*Erich Israel Grünebaum
Zehn Jahre Kaum
Stellt Sich Vor
Bitte Neigt Euer Ohr*

Erich Israel Grünebaum

Barely Ten Years Old

Introduces Himself

Please Lend Him Your Ear

The remainder of the poem is lost from my memory.

The occasion of this wedding was also the last time the family would be together for any event.

Soon after we returned to Frankfurt from Dettelbach, from Uncle Gustav and Aunt Frieda's wedding, the date was set on which our particular children's transport was to leave for France.

My parents were to have me at the main railroad station in Frankfurt for a 9:00 AM departure on a train for Paris by way of Saarbrücken on the morning of March 8, 1939. Tante Berthel was going to be one of the escorts and this was her way of emigrating from her homeland.

All the formalities had been taken care of. My new clothes were packed in a new little suitcase. All my papers were in order. I don't recall feeling any excitement on the eve of this latest milestone in my life. The evening before my departure my mother handed me a postcard she had written to her mother, my grandmother, asking me to add a few lines of greetings. The next day, March 8, the day of my departure, would be grandmother's sixty-second birthday.

We arrived at the train station and joined our group. We were put into the special coach that had been reserved for us and I met the other children in our group. A few children I already knew from the orphanage. Many of these people would in the years to come be the only family I would know. Even sixty years after this event many of us are closer than Mishpoche.

Our parents were gathered on the train platform while all of us children were leaning out of the train windows saying our last good-byes.

This was the first and only time in my life that I saw my Papa cry. It was such an unusual thing that I was dumbfounded and didn't know what to say to him and Mama.

Finally as the train was starting to move slowly out of the station

I shouted with my ten-year-old wisdom:

"Don't cry Papa, we will see each other again soon."

We were fifty Jewish refugee children heading west out of Germany on the train that morning. Several adults, among who was my Tante Berthel, accompanied us.

The train stopped at the border for customs and passport control. We had only been allowed to take ten German Marks in cash out of the country. This money was collected by one of our adults allegedly to be exchanged for French Francs. I never received any money back. Probably the amount was really for some border fee, we were never told.

At last we crossed the border into France. Our great adventure had begun.

It was at nine o'clock in the morning, on March eighth 1939, as the train pulled out of the main railroad station of Frankfurt, that I saw my parents for the last time.

REFUGEE CHILDREN

I enjoyed the train ride as I enjoyed all train rides. The French countryside doesn't look much different from German scenery. What was fascinating was to see signs along the route in a foreign language, this was a real novelty. I had never encountered a foreign language before. As we passed little towns we tried to decipher what the words meant.

We arrived in Paris at the Gare du Nord toward evening. I of course didn't know the name of the train station at the time. We were led out of the station and to waiting busses. The sights and sounds of a new country with the foreign language were overwhelming. There were many more people hovering around us to make sure that no one got lost.

The busses took us to the Rothschild Hospital where one dormitory-like ward had been prepared just for us. There were so many new impressions for me to deal with that the details are fuzzy in my mind. I will have to assume that the girls had one dorm and the boys another.

We stayed in this hospital for several days. It might have been some kind of quarantine that the French government had imposed, as a condition for us to be admitted to the country.

After several days our numbers began to shrink as slowly some groups were removed to more permanent homes. I had no idea at the time where anyone was going or where I would end up eventually. My aunt, who had entered France with our transport, had disappeared. The people who now took care of us were complete strangers, however I still knew some of the boys from Frankfurt whom I had originally met at the orphanage.

At the end of the second week in the Rothschild Hospital, there only remained a few of us and not by coincidence, it was the group from the orphanage in Frankfurt whose director was my Uncle Sigmund's brother. We too by then were told to pack our bags, we were going to our new home.

We were loaded into a van and driven to the Parisian suburb of Boulogne, to a religious boarding school named École Maimonide.

École Maimonide, as I remember it now, was an ultra- orthodox prep school for Jewish boys who might have ambitions to go to the Yeshiva. Those of us from Frankfurt who came as a group were, Heinz Schuster, Fritz Strauss, two Hirsch brothers Anselm and Jaque, myself of course, and to my surprise I also found my cousin Ernst Marx in residence there. Ernst's presence probably explained how I came to be there. Tante Berthel was still watching over me. We were a very small group of German speaking boys in the midst of a school of French-Jewish students.

The two languages, which dominated in the school, were French and Hebrew. My knowledge of either of these languages was next to nothing. Ernst took me under his wing to a certain extent but he was in a higher grade than I and therefore couldn't do me much good in my studies.

One Sunday morning Ernst again took me in charge and we left the school together. We were going to visit his father, my Uncle Sigmund. Uncle Sigmund, on the train out of Germany a few weeks earlier, he was an adult escort on a different transport, had tried to open a compartment window and it had slammed down and crushed his hand. He was now in the same hospital, which we had so recently left, with his hand in traction.

On the way to the hospital Ernst demonstrated his ability to adjust to strange surroundings. He hadn't been in France that much longer than I, but he threaded his way through the maze of the Parisian subway system like a native. I was truly impressed. This was my first time on an underground transportation system, another achievement for a wide-eyed ten-year-old from Hellstein.

While at École Maimonide I was also introduced to an organization that made a big impression on me. At breakfast one Sunday morning I observed one of the older boys in a strange uniform and with a large-brimmed hat. When I asked what the uniform was for, it was explained to me that he was a member of a boy scout troop. The German word that was used in the translation of the word scout, was *Pfadfinder*, pathfinder in English. I had seen the word *Pfadfinder* in my book by James Fenimore Cooper, which was given to me, in the German translation of course, when I was eight years old. I visualized this young man creeping through the bushes stalking Indians. Germany had Boy Scouts before the Nazi era but the organization that supplanted the scouts was known as the *Hitler Jugend* (Hitler Youth), a much more politically oriented and militaristic group. This was my first introduction to the world scout movement, an organization with which I would be closely connected in my adult life.

Our stay at the religious school came to a halt a few weeks later as the *Pesach* holiday approached. The school would be closed for a few weeks and most of the boys were to go home to their families. Also it had become apparent to the school administration that the small group of us from the orphanage in Frankfurt, just weren't capable of doing the work in this sophisticated institution. Three of us were told to pack our things one day and were taken back to the Rothschild hospital where we had stayed on our original arrival in Paris. The other two that stayed with me were once again Heinz Schuster and Fritz Strauss,

The three of us were the only ones in that particular part of the facility. It seemed strange just three boys in the entire ward. At first we didn't know what to make of our isolation. We sat around on our beds wondering what to do. Finally Heinz, a natural leader, approached one of the nurses who knew English. He had learned a little of that language and so he

asked her haltingly if we could go outside.

“Of course,” she laughed, “you are not prisoners.”

After that we had the run of the beautiful landscaped grounds surrounding the hospital, but we still had no idea what was to become of the three of us or why we were singled out.

While we were on hold in the hospital, some very fashionable ladies of a French Jewish organization took us out almost on a daily basis and showed us the sights of Paris. The time is such a pleasant interlude in my memory. I am positive that Madame Rothschild herself was one of the ladies. We were in this holding pattern for about five days and the three of us had the time of our lives. Lunch in fancy restaurants or in someone's apartment, a tour of the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and other attractions. They even took us to the Zoo where we rode on the back of a camel. I think because the three of us had no family connections in Paris they took charge of us to cheer us up.

The ladies communicated with us by speaking Yiddish since it was so close to German. Even though there was some difficulty with the pronunciation, we managed to have a good time amid a lot of good-natured laughter.

For instance I remember one lady asking me in Yiddish:

“Wih sint Deine Eltern?”

In German that would mean she asked how my parents were. I answered in German “they are fine, thank you.”

What she meant to ask was, “where are your parents?” amid much amusement we finally got things straightened out. It was keeping fancy company for a little boy from Hellstein who, less than eighteen months previously, had never been away from home.

This pleasant interlude came too soon to an end. Once again we were told to pack our suitcases and were taken to the train station. This time our escort took us to a town named Pond-Oise. From the train station we were driven into the countryside and to what looked like a very old and dilapidated chateau. We found out the name of this place was Chateau Maubuisson. It was being used temporarily to house refugee children such as us.

Quite a number of children were in residence there already. Most of them seemed to be from a transport that had come from Vienna. There were also many of our friends from Frankfurt whom we hadn't seen since before we went to École Maimonide.

There were also children there from Berlin, Saarbrücken and other areas of Germany. Here is where we found out the full scope of the refugee program. We were given to understand that Union Ose, the organization in charge, had agreed to accept 250 refugee children. Five transports of fifty each had arrived in France, each from a different city, and were now being organized into a number of more or less permanent children's

homes.

The man in charge of us was Ernst Papanek, a non-observing Jewish socialist from Austria. He was an educator in his native land and his wife was a pediatrician by profession. A perfect combination to supervise 250 children far from home. It was also the Papaneks' golden opportunity to find refuge.

We were grouped by age in the sleeping dormitories at Maubuisson. Once again it was a novel experience for me to be together with my own kind, in age, in gender, in background and with like past experiences. It was here that we formed more lifelong friendships. I formed a particularly lasting friendship with a boy from Vienna by the name of Oswald Kernberg who was only three months younger than I and had similar likes and dislikes. This became a friendship that has also endured over the years for over half a century.

At the time I left home and my parents, Papa had provided me with a pad of writing paper and envelopes in order for me to stay in touch with them. I guess I got careless in this place, Maubuisson, and left my stationary lying about. One day I couldn't find my paper, it was gone, someone must have picked it up. I was very irresponsible and looked upon the incident as one less chore to do. My parents back in Frankfurt had of course gotten my new address from me and after about two weeks I received a very angry letter from them about not having written. Papa particularly mentioned that, even though I was still young, I still had to assume certain responsibilities. I then finally tried to make up for lost time.

Chateau Maubuisson was a very old building probably dating back to the middle ages. It had beautiful park-like grounds that we children were free to roam. No provisions had been made for an education, our time was our own. In one corner of the grounds were some ruins that were supposed to have been a convent at one time. This building was designated to be the boys' toilet facility. There were stalls from ancient times with stone slabs for floors. In the middle of the floor in each stall was a hole that accessed into a belowground stream. On each side of the hole were indentations for the feet. This was Maubiusson's version of the flush toilet.

Once we had a group outing to visit the city of Pont-Oise. We wandered down the shopping street and I observed how the fresh fruit and produce merchants displayed their merchandise on the sidewalk on tables. I asked one of our adult companions how this could be possible, why did they not lose their wares to thieves.

"Oh no," I was told, "no one steals from a shopkeeper in France."

I realized then what a difference there was in cultures, in Germany no one trusted anybody.

We observed the holiday of Pesach while at Maubuisson. It wasn't much of an observance. In fact if I remember correctly the dietary

laws were not adhered to very well. At one meal I distinctly remember having garbanzo beans for a side dish, a taboo item for the week of Passover. God somehow forgave this transgression.

It wasn't long before we were moved again. This time it was to a cheerful villa in the Paris suburb of Montmorency. The name of the home was Villa Helvetia. The home had recently been refurbished, in order to make it suitable for occupancy by children. It was springtime, the house was pretty and new looking and it was a far cry from Maubuisson.

We had young counselors supervising us and an attempt was made to have organized activities. In a craft class I constructed a greeting card for Mama for Mothers' Day under the guidance of one of the teachers. I pasted lilac leaves in the shape of a heart on the card to mail home. I hope I made up for some of my earlier thoughtlessness when I neglected to write. Mama acknowledged the card and wrote how much she loved it.

Villa Helvetia didn't last long for me. It was designated to house only pre-schoolers. Union Ose's operation to care for refugee children was getting organized under the guidance of Ernst Papanek.

They now had three homes within comfortable walking distance of each other to house most of us children.

Villa Helvetia was for the little ones. Les Tourelles in the town of Soisy was headquarters for the Papaneks and was the largest of the facilities; it housed the non-observing Jewish children. Villa La Chesnaie in the town of Eaubonne, up the road, was exclusively for those children who observed the orthodox Jewish doctrine. La Chesnaie became my home for the next year.

We settled into our new existence at La Chesnaie divided by age groups, eight or ten to a sleeping room. I felt a real sense of belonging at last. We had classes; we had regular synagogue services in the home and a Rabbi who came regularly from Paris to talk to us. We lived by a comfortable routine.

The summer of 1939 is a happy memory for me. It took a while for me to realize that I really belonged here. These were my friends, we had a lot in common, I was in my own age group, and I was not going to be excluded from anything for any reason.

A pleasant surprise came to me about the time of my eleventh birthday in July. The Marxes, Tante Berthel, her husband my Uncle Sigmund and Cousin Ernst had been living in Paris since their emigration the previous spring. Now my other aunt, Aunt Ruth, the one who lived in Holland, came to visit her sister. They were both my mother's sisters and they came out to Eaubonne to visit me, their nephew. I was the envy of the entire home. I didn't have to go to classes that day and got to spend it with my relatives. Not many of the refugee children ever had visitors, cut off as most were from their families.

The biggest concern of my age group that summer seemed to

have been that we couldn't wait to become thirteen, Bar Mitzvah age, when we would then be in an older group and could participate in more mature activities.

Villa La Chesnaie was a villa in name only. It was a beautiful estate in the middle of the town of Eaubonne. The manor house (as it would be called in England) sat in the middle of spacious lawns. The house had a broad staircase leading up from the driveway to the main living area. It had a wing on each side. To the right were the kitchen and dining areas, while to left of the main floor were sitting rooms that were used as our classrooms and a prayer room.

The two upper floors were the dormitories. The boys were in the wing to the left, the girls were on the right.

The staff was all refugees similar to the children. The maintenance man came from Poland. The head counselor for the boys was a Russian named Boris, a well-respected man. Most of the women teachers/counselors were German or Austrian. Everyone was Jewish of course since we were an orthodox home.

The estate probably measured a quarter mile square and was entirely enclosed by a high iron fence. The lawn in the front was turned into an athletic field and we all participated in athletic contests, organized by the ever-energetic Boris. I at last learned to play football. Boris even organized mini-Olympics between our home and Les Tourelles, the bigger where the non-observants lived..

We had a good time at La Chesnaie. A beautiful estate with the spacious grounds and all surrounded by the fence and a buffer of bushes and trees inside the fence.

Oswald and I decided to pledge our friendship for all times. We found a piece of roofing slate and wanted to inscribe on it that we were lifelong buddies and then bury the slate in the fringe of woods like a time capsule. Being in France, our adopted country, we of course wanted to make the inscription in French. The problem was that we did not know enough of that language to know the French word for friends. We asked one of the older boys who was only too happy to help us. He told us the inscription should read, "*Erich et Oswald sont Anes*". Later we found out that the word for friends in French is really "*Amis*" and that *Anes* means donkeys. What we had written on the advice of the practical jokester was that we were a couple of jackasses. The other boys in our group had a good laugh at our expense.

We were also exposed to French culture. We had regular French lessons to learn the language; we learned French folk songs including the French national anthem La Marseillaise. Periodically we were taken into town and even saw a movie or two, in French of course.

We were a novelty to the French people. Being a novelty, we had a constant stream of visiting dignitaries to the homes. We only saw the ones that came to La Chesnaie, the other homes probably had even more

people traipsing through, especially Villa Helvetia where the little ones were living. On any given day we were told to go out onto the lawn, were given little French flags and told to parade around in a circle while the movie cameras were running. We thought it was all great fun and didn't mind. I only wish that if any of that film had ever gotten into the newsreels, we could have seen some of it.

Groups of new children arrived periodically from various sources. They were accepted and became part of us.

One such group we labeled "*Die Kubaner*", the Cubans. They were children from the ill-fated German steamer The Saint Louis. The Saint Louis had left Germany with a load of Jewish refugees who thought they had visas to enter Cuba. When the ship arrived at this Caribbean Island, the government of Cuba would not let the refugees disembark. All the Jews had to stay on the ship. The ship spent some time steaming up and down the coast of North America. All the passengers were able to do was admire the coast of Florida from a distance in what had to be sheer frustration.. The captain was not allowed to discharge any of his passengers anywhere. Eventually he had to take his ship back to Europe.

The captain was ordered to take the ship the port of Antwerp. Four countries, England, Belgium, Holland and France, each agreed to accept a contingent of the Jewish passengers from The St. Louis. The passengers destined for France were in turn transshipped to the French port of Boulogne. The adults had to agree to be interned by the French government, while the children were taken in by Union OSE into our homes. The name *Kubaner* stuck with them even though they only saw Cuba from a distance and they personally never really liked the name. Many of our subsequent leaders in student councils came from this group.

I learned much later that the captain of the St. Louis knew he would doom his Jewish passengers if he took them back to Germany. In a humanitarian gesture he schemed to ground the ship off the coast of Ireland to have the passengers rescued by the Irish or British authorities. That would keep them from having to go back to Germany if they chose to claim political asylum. By offloading them in Antwerp he was spared that decision to ruin his ship.

One Friday afternoon, as we were getting ready for Shabbat, Ernst Papanek came unexpectedly to pay us a visit from Les Tourelles. Of course he, being the general director of the operation, came frequently to La Chesnaie to look after us but his visits were usually known beforehand. On this occasion however he came unannounced and immediately put out the word he wanted to see everyone on the east lawn, near a set of high steps which he often used in making announcements.

In a very quiet voice Ernst informed us that Germany had invaded Poland that morning and that both England and France had declared war on Germany. As of this day we were cut off from our families.

The date was September 1, 1939, a bare six months since we left home.

We were all stunned. As children we really hadn't expected world events to take such a tragic turn. We were at war and we were not in the country, which we had always considered our homeland. France had been the enemy against whom our fathers fought and now we were here and they were there. It became a very confusing time for us German-Jewish refugee children.

The following months seemed to bring very little change to our way of life. Blackout curtains were installed on the windows, we practiced air raid drills, I think there was beginning to be some food rationing, but our life went on basically as it had before.

Little by little we began to see more military uniforms on the street. A French military garrison had been established not far from us, probably for the defense of Paris in case of an invasion. Nobody really thought that the war would get very serious. France was a world power and a member of the allied forces which had defeated Germany before and we were sure history would repeat itself.

Autumn turned to winter and the war for us seemed to be at a stalemate. There was no more mail of course from our parents and we missed that. Every so often we would have some war news read to us but it meant little to me as an eleven-year-old.

The spring of 1940 signaled that once more we would be losing the feeling of security, which until then, we had enjoyed in our country of refuge.

All through the winter and early spring of the year 1940 we were made more and more aware of the war that was being waged between the countries of France and Germany.

In Villa La Chesnaie we had been drilled in air raid alerts since early in the war. It was like a game we were playing. The basement of the villa had been furnished with surplus mattresses and each sleeping dorm from upstairs was assigned a certain space down below, mainly to be able to make an efficient head count after everyone had come below.

I have memories of the smell of urine in the far corners of the catacomb-like basement area. Nobody had thought of installing toilet facilities and we had to do the best we could. We survived in spite of the fact that there were no inspections by any public health authority insuring that we had proper sanitary facilities. The bureaucrats had their hands full with more pressing problems at the time.

The kitchen staff had cupboards installed in the basement and stored emergency food and water in them. Two of the older boys in this orthodox facility were given the responsibility of taking the Torah out of its Ark when the sirens sounded and to carry it with them to the shelter.

There were a few practice alerts early on but eventually when

the sirens sounded in the middle of the night we assumed the alert to be for real. In late spring of 1940 the German war machine struck.

There were times when someone returning from the city, Paris, would relate of having seen bomb damage that the German planes had inflicted. In some instances, depending on who the person was, we thought some of the horror stories were a little embellished in order to make them more dramatic. But whether we believed it or not, the bombings of Paris grew in intensity. We were lucky that Eaubonne was just far enough away that there were no strikes near us.

Early in May of that year, the news came that Germany had invaded Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg and launched a sneak attack on France from the north. The war was getting close. It wasn't long before we could hear cannon fire in the distance. We knew what it sounded like but it really didn't seem believable that the enemy could get that close that quickly.

Now we were being prepared to evacuate. Everyone knew that there was no way a group of German-Jewish refugee children could survive if caught in the German invasion.

Ernst Papanek, his staff and the OSE organization had in all likelihood been planning for such an eventuality and the plan of action was now implemented.

They had always had a van vehicle for the use of the staff; it was called a *cabriolet*. This vehicle was to take the highway south, driven by Boris and he had with him a group of the oldest boys. They carried the essentials for setting up a home such as the kitchen utensils, the Torah and other things.

The rest of us were given cold lunches, plus fruit and drinks to take with us each individually for oneself. One morning we were loaded onto buses and taken into Paris to the train station. I still never realized how grave the situation was. It was really hard to believe. As we were walking down the station platform I realized that all the tracks had trains lined up only heading south. I saw a sign on the train car we were about to enter that said: "*Seulement Pour Les Enfants*", "Only For the Children".

We were loaded into some of the most ancient passenger cars that could still be in existence on the French National Railways. Old wooden benches, what looked like kerosene lamps in the ceilings, and open platforms on each end. Every piece of rolling stock that had been sitting in every corner of every railway yard had been pressed into service for the evacuation of Paris. Of course every seat was taken and many of us even sat on the floor.

I think that the authorities went out of their way to make room for us Jewish refugee kids from Germany knowing that if we fell into German hands our lives would not be worth much. French kids could survive an occupation by the Germans but our chances would be pretty slim.

Eventually the train started to move. As we rolled out of the city we started to see the signs of the war. There were some burned out

buildings, wrecked vehicles on the roads, and everywhere there were people on the highways heading south, away from the invading German army.

Along the railroad right of way we even saw downed fighter planes with British and French markings but I don't think there were any German casualties in evidence in that area.

Slowly the train made its way south with its load of refugee children on board. We were fortunate that we were not on the highways which roughly ran parallel to the railroad line and which we saw periodically. The crush of people on the roads was so great that no vehicle could move faster than at a walking pace. The entire French nation seemed to be in a panic.

Our train finally arrived in the city of Limoges after dark and after an all day trip for a distance that would take no more than three hours on an ordinary schedule.

THE CHILDREN OF MONTINTIN

Later we learned that we were supposed to have gotten off in Limoges and walked the rest of the way to our destination, which would have been an all night expedition. We children still didn't know what our destination was, maybe some of the older ones did, but my little group didn't.

Anyhow, Ernst Papanek met the train at the Limoges station and talked to the railroad officials. He found out that there were no trains going north, everything was heading south away from the front lines. The train we were on was also going on to a southern destination. He convinced the officials to let us stay on the train and to drop us off at a small station which would be much closer to our new home, saving us many miles of walking in the dark.

So it happened, through Ernst's common sense, that a little while later the train stopped again at the small village station of *Magnon Bourg* where we dismounted.

There was some borrowed transportation waiting for us but some also walked from there down a country lane. The walk couldn't have taken long and in less than an hour we had all arrived at our new home. An old chateau in disrepair deep in the woods, it was called *Chateau Montintin*. We knew none of these details of course at that time. All we knew by now that we were hungry and tired after our all day adventure. Somehow it still seemed like a big adventure to me.

Someone had preceded us and had prepared some food. After that we just bedded down on the bare floor the best we could and finally slept.

In the following days and weeks Ernst Papanek and his staff got us organized. As many of the adults as were willing to come with us to our new home, had come to Montintin from the former homes in and around Paris.

The older boys and the men teachers who had taken the highway with the van finally arrived. Among them was Boris the father figure, the leader, the shop teacher. He had brought the woodworking tools in the cabriolet.

In the next few days from somewhere he procured some lumber, set up a wood shop and proceeded to guide the woodshop boys in making rough furniture for our use.

To give us a sense of normalcy, as soon as possible school was organized and the teachers again held classes.

We had food but not in great abundance. The rules of a kosher

diet had to be temporarily suspended. At one meal we were given stewed rabbit, no doubt from the countryside. I was so revolted that I threw up. I just could not bring myself to eat something that was that foreign to me. The rules of a kosher diet had been instilled in me since birth and I could not abandon these rules that easily.

We endured these discomforts without question since we were still all together, by now feeling like we were one big family. As a matter of fact, I think by then we were probably closer than a family, through shared hardships. There was the feeling of safety in numbers, as long we stuck together nothing too tragic could befall us. I was still with Heinz Schuster, Fritz Strauss, Oswald Kernberg and at least a dozen others with whom I had shared experiences over the last year or year and a half.

Eventually we orthodox kids were moved out of the main house and segregated in what used to be the caretaker's cottage off to one side on a hill. We had our own cook and a married couple to oversee us and also once again give us religious instructions.

The Torah had been brought down in the cabriolet and regular religious services were instituted with the older boys leading the services again.

Within a very short time after we arrived in Montintin, France surrendered to Germany. The Germans divided the country with the northern portion including the Capitol City of Paris under German occupation. Marshall Petain established a puppet government for France, friendly to the Germans, with its capital in the City of Vichy, leaving what was from then on known as Vichy France, unoccupied. We were lucky we were in Vichy France and not under German Occupation, however the Petain government did take orders from the Germans. Good fortune was still following our group. Many German-Jewish refugees all over Western Europe were caught in the German advance and eventually perished, my sister Hanni, in Holland, unfortunately was among them

In Montintin we greeted the armistice with a sigh of relief. The most immediate relaxing of the rules was the fact that we no longer had to observe rules of blackout at night; also we no longer had to carry the terribly smelling gasmasks with us wherever we went. We children did not experience any harassment by officials although I am sure our adult leaders had to toe the line.

For the next year food was not plentiful in Chateau Montintin but we survived. Since we arrived in early summer there was plenty of time to plant a vegetable garden and so we grew our own produce. We were able to get bread and other staples with ration cards. The forest surrounding Montintin had many chestnut trees giving the cooks a chance to be creative in making dishes from chestnuts. The estate also had apple trees planted on it; so in the fall as the apples ripened they provided more nutrition for our diet.

Milk is a necessity when you have to take care of children but it too was rationed. Someone made a deal with a local French farmer to supply us with a container of milk every morning. This was of course illegal and the man would have been punished if the authorities had found out. To make the deal inconspicuous we children took turns, two at a time, to get up very early each morning to go and get the milk. There was a time during the winter of 1940/41 when we had a severe cold spell. It was Oswald's and my turn to get the milk one morning but I did not have enough clothes for the early morning walk across the fields in the bitter cold. One of the other boys in our group had to stay in bed until the two of us got back because I had to borrow some of his clothes to wear.

We improvised and survived. Each of our rooms had a fireplace and there were stoves in all the common rooms. Since Chateau Montintin was located in the middle of deep woods, fuel for heating was no problem.

We were lucky to be able to stay together and draw strength from each other.

I received a pleasant surprise during the first few weeks we were in Montintin "Tante Berthel" came to see me. She had also been able to leave Paris ahead of the German army and managed to make it to Limoges, the nearest real city to Chateau Montintin. Actually it shouldn't have come as a surprise to me to see Tante Berthel. She always seemed to turn up wherever I was, almost like a guardian angel. She was a real survivor.

She and her son, my cousin Ernst, came down to Montintin to see about Ernst being able to live there with the rest of us. He eventually did since the home would not refuse shelter to any refugee child.

It was on the occasion of Tante Berthel's first visit to Montintin that I was once again made painfully aware of how deficient I was in social skills. I had greeted her and we were walking from the main building up the path to the cottage where we orthodox kids were housed. At that point she said to me:

"Please Erich, now I would like you to introduce me to your teachers."

"I don't know how to make introductions," I had to admit in a mumble of words. She gave me a funny look and made the rounds of the adults, introducing herself as she went along. Once again I felt like the country bumpkin which I was.

Tante Berthel visited periodically from then on. I was beginning to take it for granted that no matter where in the world I was; she would be there.

Her husband, my Uncle Sigmund the teacher, had been interned by the French police, as had other Jewish men, on orders of the German authorities. The camp in which he was being held was within walking distance of Montintin and I went with my aunt and Ernst on a one-day excursion to visit him.

This was to be the one and only contact I ever had with a concentration camp. Since the camp was basically run by what was left of the French army, the rules were very relaxed by the Germans' standard.

Obviously the detainees had the privilege of having visitors or we would not have been able to get in. The housing in the camp consisted of wooden barracks. The sleeping quarters did not seem to me to be any more crowded than the various children's homes in which I had lived. The conditions certainly were nowhere as bad as the real Nazi concentration camps had been, as I subsequently learned.

The area in the camp where we visited Uncle Sigmund was only for men. Besides bunks with straw mattresses, the barracks also had tables for the men to take their meals and which they also used for passing the time. I saw chess games, people writing, an artist was doing sketches or others would just be reading. It all seemed very relaxed to me.

During the walk back to Montintin I offered my twelve-year-old opinion to my aunt.

"That doesn't really seem that bad," I said.

She then gave me a piece of wisdom, which I have never forgotten.

"A man may stay at home for weeks at a time, not step out the door and enjoy it," she told me; "but the moment he is told that he cannot leave, that is when he wants to go out."

This observation has stuck with me for the rest of my life. It may well be that that was the incentive, when I was a foster child growing up by myself in Chicago, for me to toe the line and not do anything dumb which might have gotten me locked up as a teenager.

Shared experiences make for very close bonds. None of us will ever forget our year at Chateau Montintin. We lived together, we slept together, we were hungry together and we had happy experiences together.

Besides our classroom work we were also assigned to a vocational curriculum. Everyone had a part in the upkeep and maintenance of the home. There was the wood shop, the vegetable garden, the kitchen, the raising of small animals for food and other practical assignments. Every department had an adult supervisor but we called them teachers. Besides gaining practical knowledge we obviously also helped ourselves. It was both good physical as well as mental therapy.

I was assigned to the wood shop, I don't remember if it was my choice or not. After a few months I grew bored with the discipline and thought I would like it better if I worked in the vegetable garden, since I was raised in a rural environment in Hellstein. I cornered the then director of Montintin, a French lady, and requested a change; I spoke German to her since she was familiar with both languages. She looked at me piercingly and said in French,

"Come back and ask me again when you can make your request

in French.” I dropped the subject.

Every holiday was celebrated. We flew the French flag and sang the Marseillaise on Bastille Day. We held Rosh Hashono and Yom Kippur services for the entire home when those days occurred. The wood shop under Boris' supervision made a beautiful Menorah out of chestnut wood for Chanukah. For Purim we handmade costumes out of paper and some of the talented older ones wrote paraphrases to popular songs, appropriate to the holiday.

It is hard to put into words the closeness we felt for one another during that very difficult time.

Wood fireplaces were the only means of heating the various sleeping quarters in the winter. We were surrounded by forest and this made it convenient to keep fuel on hand.

Among the older, more mature, teenagers, some romances blossomed between girls and boys. Why else would young men voluntarily go out into the woods to gather firewood for some girls' rooms?

When spring arrived, adult leaders once again organized sport events similar to tournaments found in good private schools.

Orthodox versus non-observant, rooms versus rooms of the same age group, there was something for everyone to keep us all involved. I personally was a member of the orthodox contingent's relay team.

As I look back on that year, I feel that the experience could serve as textbook exercise on how to keep young people from going insane under adverse conditions. I have to believe that we had an unusually talented group of adult leaders looking after us.

I personally also did some pretty stupid things while there.

We all suffered from malnutrition. There were many consequences because of this condition. Bed-wetting was widespread among the younger kids. Also there were many cases of diarrhea because we would eat anything and everything that looked good to us.

My personal affliction was that I developed many boils on my arms and legs and chest because of my lack of resistance to infection. These painful boils eventually became filled with puss and opened up. I had heard that if this puss would touch another part of my skin that part would also become infected.

I developed the brilliant idea that I would smear the puss on an uninfected part of my forearm in the shape of my name. I would then develop an infection in that shape and when it healed I would have a scar in the shape of my name. God protected me from myself and did not let that infection develop.

We were all convinced that eventually we would all reach the United States, the land of milk and honey, the land of unlimited opportunities. A few of us got together and decided that when we did reach America we were going to be rich. American women loved fur coats and fur was a high

priced commodity. We started trapping gophers and moles and skinned the poor little animals, carefully preserving the hides in a loft-like area above the woodshed.

Winter set in and the hides froze stiff. We wanted the pelts to dry so we procured a large tin container in which bulk food had arrived, and fashioned it into a homemade stove. We had a few days of having a roaring fire up there until we were discovered and kicked out together with our evil smelling get rich quick furs. It was a miracle that we didn't burn the shed to the ground.

I look back at Montintin with nostalgia and with a lot of fondness. I was among my own kind, sharing, caring and being cared for. It started in Eaubonne at the Villa La Chesnaie but intensified at Montintin because we also had shared hardships and dangers and were forced to live much closer together. None of us were able to leave the Chateau during that year more than once or twice at most during these twelve months.

There was a radio at the main house of Chateau Montintin. We still didn't speak much French and all our conversations were still carried on mostly in German. With the German army occupying most of France not far from us, we were able to pick up the German Occupation Army's radio broadcasts. I believe we actually received some pleasure from this entertainment, the only entertainment we were able to receive, even if it came from unfriendly forces. I particularly remember them having a comedy program for their troops that we greatly enjoyed.

Sometime during the late summer of 1940 the Papanek family was able to leave France and emigrate to, what was then still, a neutral United States. Everyone greeted the occasion with a lot of optimism because we all felt that with our leader in America, we would all soon follow, since Ernst Papanek was like a father to us.

Montintin had a bulletin board for everyone near the office in the main house. This was a way of communicating with everyone; it saved having to constantly have assemblies. Soon after Ernst left there appeared a picture of him together with a picture of President Roosevelt side by side on the bulletin board.

Someone had written the caption under Ernst's picture:

"He is the one who will get us the Visas."

Under President Roosevelt's picture was the caption:

"He is one who will give us the Visas."

We never lost hope.

Winter turned into spring without any of the children having heard anything more about being able to leave France. There were even some grumbles about Ernst Papanek having abandoned us now that he had been able to save his own skin.

Spring came to Chateau Montintin and by April of 1941 our hopes of being able to leave France were raised once more. Rumors started

flying of impending transports being formed for immigrating to the United States.

Finally one day we were officially informed that some would be leaving.

I WAS ON THIS LIST.

To this day we still don't know who made the decision on which of us would go and who would be left behind. My friend Oswald Kernberg, with whom I had formed the closest ties, was not on the list. We came from the same family background; both our parents were still in Germany, his in Vienna, mine in Frankfurt, we were the identical age.

I can only assume that my Aunt Berthel, who was always nearby, once again had used her influence to save my life.

Those that were scheduled to leave were starting to get processed by the first week of May. Medical examinations by the resident doctor, forms to fill out, clothes were selected for us to take with us. Our adult leaders made sure that each of us on the list had a serviceable suitcase in which to put our few possessions.

Finally the date of our departure was announced, we were to leave on May 10th. We still held our breath hoping that nothing would go wrong.

The day before the big day Oswald and I sat on the hill before the main house and he cried like a baby. He couldn't understand why he was being left behind. There was very little I could say to him except to reassure him that he would probably be on the next transport.

As things turned out he was put in with a group that arrived in the United States about three months later but I was not to see him again for another fifteen years when we met in Los Angeles.

May 10, 1941, early in the morning, we, the group that was leaving, were loaded into the cabriolet. Tante Berthel was there as was my cousin Ernst, who were both still living in Limoges. My Aunt gave me a hug, but she too did not say much, everyone wondered if we'd see each other again.

All the children who were not going, stood in a silent circle quietly wishing us good luck and at the same time envying our good fortune.

Then we were rolling and another adventure began, as once again I only looked ahead, regretting what I left behind but also looking forward to whatever lay ahead. I think I really was convinced that if we got out, eventually everyone would get out, it just couldn't be done all at once.

We were loaded onto a train at the nearest station and after an all day train ride arrived in the city of Marseilles by evening. We were taken to what appeared to be a Catholic boarding school, at least there were some nuns there, so I can only assume what it was.

The surroundings were a pleasant change from Montintin. Clean whitewashed dormitories, pleasant grounds, well dressed people. Marseilles, after a year of cessation of hostilities between France and

Germany, had assumed an air of normalcy. We were taken by bus on a round of offices to complete our paper work. I found out later that the American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers, was doing all the legwork for us. We were taken for more medical tests, then to the American Consulate, in between stops at other places whose purpose we didn't know.

It was in later years that we found out the true story of the tremendous effort the Quaker Organization had to expend in order to get us out of France. On our arrival in Marseilles none of the paperwork had yet been done. There were one hundred children in our group. The Quaker people had thought they would be able to obtain one group visa to enter the United States covering all one hundred of us. That was not to be. One hundred separate documents had to be prepared one for each child. Each document was labeled in English

AFFIDAVIT IN LIEU OF PASSPORT.

Since the beginning of the war, two years before, only very few immigration quota numbers had been issued by the United States Government to German citizens. Thus by the time we arrived at the US consulate in Marseilles there were openings in the immigration quota for Germans. My immigration quota number for entry into the United States was the **German Immigration quota number 5692.**

Four pictures had to be taken for each of the one hundred youngsters in the group, that was four hundred pictures. There were not enough photographers with equipment and supplies in Marseilles. The conditions were such that our escorts had to take us to sidewalk souvenir photo kiosks and line us up at these coin-operated facilities. We had to obtain one hundred exit visas from the French authorities, plus one hundred transit visas for us to pass through Spain, and finally one hundred visas to enter Portugal where we were to embark on the ship.

Nothing went smooth; the Spanish consulate was closed on some days and open only half a day on others. There was a shortage of office help at the consulates. Two of the secretaries from the Quaker office, with typewriters, went to the Spanish consulate and offered to help with the typing of the paper work. A promise of forthcoming American chocolate for the Spanish staff lubricated the process.

The Portuguese consul who insisted that each picture had to be stapled onto the affidavit threw another obstacle in the way of the proceedings. There was a shortage of proper stapling equipment in Marseilles at that time and the pictures, all one hundred of them, were attached by hand.

The adults in charge were by this time getting very nervous; time was running out. The ship on which our passage had been booked was to leave Lisbon on June 7th, three days earlier than first announced. In order

to make the deadline; our group had to leave France no later than Saturday May 31st. The final visas were not issued until Friday May 30th.

We children of course were not aware of any of any of these difficulties; we were enjoying our stay in the big city.

Representatives of the American Friends Service Committee, The Quakers, always saw to it that our leisure times were filled with activities. We were taken on sightseeing trips and we were treated to our first ice cream cones in years.

One day we were riding on a streetcar and I was standing holding on to a vertical post for support. A black soldier from the French colonial forces, wearing a red fez, stood next to me. I had never been this close to a person of the Negro race nor had I seen one since the circus came to Speyer three years before. In the swaying of the car his hand inadvertently touched mine. The experience gave me a little shiver, without thinking I looked at my hand to see if any of the color had rubbed off. He seemed not to have noticed my little thoughtlessness.

It was also at this time, in Marseilles, that for the first time in my life I saw the open ocean, even if it was the Mediterranean Sea. Life was one adventure after another.

Eventually the paper work was done and we once again packed our little suitcases and were taken to the train station. The train left Marseilles in the morning, headed north and west and then took a southerly route. We were all keenly interested in which direction we were headed and how our escape from Europe was to be accomplished.

In thinking back on those days I cannot remember one instance of an adult speaking to us about exactly how we were to emigrate or by what means or by what route. We were all so glad to be going somewhere and to be doing something that we really did not care about the details. Optimism was the order of the day. We were going to America and we didn't care how we were going to get there.

By mid-day the train was heading in a southerly direction. We had stopped at various larger cities along the way and now as we looked ahead into the distance we could see extremely high mountains rising sharply out of the plain. Knowing our geography we deduced that this had to be the Pyrenees, the mountain range between France and Spain. I had never seen real high mountains before and the sheer massive, dramatic appearance of this range was truly awe-inspiring to me. I was glued to the train window, seeing real mountains was just another chapter in the course of one long adventure.

By mid-afternoon we arrived at the French-Spanish border at a little station high in the mountains. We were told to leave the train, walk across the platform and then enter another train waiting there from the Spanish railways. This other train was by far a more primitive conveyance that any we had seen before, it looked like it was out of the eighteen hundreds.

Our journey continued across a Spanish countryside still showing the signs of the Spanish civil war. It was a depressing sight for us to see. The Spanish countryside looked even worse than defeated France did and which we had just left. We arrived in Madrid in due time and were put up for the rest of the day and that evening in another convent-type facility. All I remember of the place is the smell of scorched olive oil, which is still in my nostrils.

It is my opinion that whoever guided us across Spain did not want to make it too obvious that we were a group of Jewish refugee children on their way out of Europe. Spain after all was by then controlled by the Fascist party of General Franco. We were kept out of sight in the convent and then taken to the railroad yards in the middle of the night to continue our journey, not the regular train station but the yards. We had a good scare in the railroad yards in the dark when it looked like a locomotive was bearing down on us directly while we were standing on the ground, but it was on the next track.

We boarded a train that night and our trip continued westward to the Portuguese border. While we were rolling along, the car was so crowded that I laid down on the floor of the carriage and fell sound asleep right there on the floor. It was toward dawn that the train stopped at a border town and we transferred again, this time to buses, for the ride across Portugal and into Lisbon. Eventually the buses deposited us in what we found out later was a children's summer home, on the coast a few miles north of Lisbon.

What a wonderful feeling it was to know that war and oppression was behind us and we were in a genuine free and neutral country. We were of course aware of the fact that there would be a ship to eventually take us to the United States. While waiting for this ship we were treated royally by the community. Those of us, who wanted to go, were taken to Friday night services in Lisbon, where a German speaking Rabbi welcomed us and gave a sermon on our past hardships. We were really made to feel at home. Also during the week we were taken to the seaside resort of Estoril, a very plush operation and there treated to lunch, with special attention being paid to those of us that kept Kosher. It was all very impressive and thoughtful.

Also while waiting to embark we found out that one couple that had been adults in charge for the past few days, opted to go on their own and took passage on the PanAm clipper and flew to the United States. We again felt somewhat betrayed but as it turned out it really didn't matter. At last we were told to pack again and this time it was for the climax of our journey. We were taken to the docks in Lisbon and boarded the Portuguese steamship Mouzinho. The Mouzinho lifted anchor on June 10, 1941 for New York.

The sailing across the Atlantic lasted ten days and it was just one more great big adventure to me. We were berthed in the deepest hold in bunks three high. Men, women, children, all mixed up. The area next to us

was loaded with cork as cargo for import to the United States. We slept in the bilges but when we ate it was in the dining room with white linen and waiters catering to us while an orchestra played.

The ship was really an old tub of about 10,000 tons, small as cargo ships go and it was being used as a combination passenger ship and freighter. I think an apt description of the Mouzinho would be that she was a tramp steamer. However this ship will go down in history for saving so many people from war ravaged Europe. Besides this journal she will be mentioned in many other writings.

Somehow we children had the run of the ship. We clambered through the engine room and explored all the cargo holds. No part of the ship, which wasn't really that fancy, was off limits to us.

Our group was having lunch on one of the first days of the trip when a young lady came to our table, looked at me and exclaimed in German: "Erich, where did you come from?"

I must confess I acted like a real dummy. I stood up and said defensively: "I don't think I know you."

I don't know why I talked liked that, of course I knew her. It was Beate Moritz from Hellstein, one of my sister's best friends. The Moritzes were one of the Jewish families that were our neighbors at a time that seemed so long ago. She and her family were on their way to Venezuela.

She took me to see her parents who had a cabin and we chatted for a while. I wish now that I had acted a little more mature and spent more time with them, since they were after all close friends of my parents and one of the last links to my home town. Mister Moritz wrote out a greeting for my parents on the back of a sight seeing card for me to mail when I arrived in New York. I am sorry that as an irresponsible child I did not mail the card. I still have it among my souvenirs. Basically I was a child without any social graces and I ignored this family for most of the voyage.

While on the Mouzinho I also encountered my first taste of seasickness. At first I had no idea why I was feeling so woozy, but after I had to lean over the rail a few times I remembered having read about this illness. Seasickness was another part of my learning experience.

Once again I had the thought, "if only Mama and Papa and Hanni could see me now."

The Mouzinho went on her slow and steady way across the Atlantic, taking us to our new life.

The crossing lasted ten long days.

THE PROMISED LAND

The Mouzinho arrived in New York Harbor on the morning of June 21, 1941. She docked at Staten Island, which deprived us of the glorious sight of sailing past the Statue of Liberty. We of course had been looking forward to seeing the Statue but not being able to see it did not make our arrival any less meaningful, we did get a glimpse of it in the distance up the ship channel.

We pulled up to the pier and numerous people were there waving and shouting and greeting us. My first impression was that I was witnessing a stage play. The women all wore an excessive amount of makeup in my old-country opinion, and all the clothes did not seem real. I do remember seeing some women with nurses' uniforms.

We orthodox kids had a meeting since it was Shabbos and we knew it was a sin to get off and ride somewhere. But it was decided that under the circumstances we would be all right since obviously we didn't have a choice anyway.

I received a huge surprise when I saw my Uncle Gustav and his wife Aunt Frieda on the dock waiting to greet me. They must have received word from Tante Berthel that I was on that ship. Instead of being overjoyed at seeing long lost relatives, I again acted real naïve.

"They must have ridden a vehicle on Shabbos and committed a sin to get here," was the first thought that went through my mind. How ungrateful I was.

Another surprise was the fact that Ernst Papanek, the erstwhile director of Montintin, whom we didn't think we'd ever see again, was waiting for us as the ship docked. Upon seeing him, we knew we were in good hands and that his plan was working after all and he didn't desert us.

We were taken by bus to a place on Amsterdam Avenue, some children's facility it seemed. We were ushered into an auditorium and seated. Our papers were probably being processed while we were waiting.

We were given Oreo cookies and milk and to keep us amused while waiting, a movie was shown of a couple taking a trip through the United States on a Greyhound bus. We didn't understand any of the dialogue of course but I kept the memory until later, when I found what this was all about. It was a nice travelogue. A commercial movie but very entertaining.

Also, since we were not used to such rich fare as cookies and milk, especially ice-cold milk, we came down with severe stomach cramps and diarrhea later that day, we had yet to get acclimatized.

We were assigned sleeping quarters in this facility on Amsterdam Avenue and again wondered what was next in store for us. Throughout the next few days, to keep us busy, we were shown New York by bus and otherwise amused.

Uncle Gustav and Aunt Frieda came to visit me several times during those few days I was in New York. They bought me ice cream and gave me some American money, explaining the value of the coins. A quarter in 1941 was still a big deal for refugees. They would have probably taken me out more if it had been possible, however I don't think we were able to leave the premises without guidance from the organization.

One day a group of about ten of us were separated and taken to the train station for the trip to Chicago. To my surprise, my cousin Cilly Bachenheimer from Fulda was at the station to see me off. She must have only found out about my whereabouts at the last moment. Things had happened so fast in the last few weeks that it all seems like a blur now. Marseilles, Lisbon, the ocean journey, all the people in New York, skyscrapers, I was overwhelmed. Poor Cilly she barely had time to say hello before the train pulled out of Grand Central Station.

It never occurred to me at the time, but the telephone wires had to have been humming among all the various members of my family, announcing my arrival from war-torn Europe. I think I was the only one of the extended family that had so far escaped since war broke out two years earlier. There was no way I could have known what a tremendous accomplishment that was, even though I really had no control over my destiny. I just took in all in stride.

We took the New York Central Railroad from Grand Central Station in New York City. We traveled in a Pullman sleeper, the kind with curtains down the aisle, a far cry from sleeping on a dirty coach floor as I had done a few weeks earlier in Spain. We ate in the dining car, both dinner and breakfast. Ernst Papanek accompanied us on the Chicago trip and explained everything.

Our arrival in Chicago was greeted by publicity with photographers and newspaper reporters. We had our pictures taken and were written up in Chicago's newspapers. I still have a copy of the article from The Chicago Herald-American, misspelled names and all.

The Chicago Jewish Children's Bureau ran a home for orphans on the south side of Chicago on Woodlawn Avenue near Sixty-second Street, it was called Woodlawn Hall. That is where the small group of us was taken. It was Saturday June 28, 1941 when we arrived and once again we had to travel on the Sabbath. It was also the Sabbath only two weeks removed from when I was supposed to have my Bar Mitzvah.

Months before, in Montintin, I had started taking instructions from the older orthodox boys in preparation for this event. Among those of us who came to Chicago with me in our group were two brothers also from

Frankfurt, Anselm and Jackie Hirsch. Anselm was the older and he was very knowledgeable in religious observances.

Anselm's father was a dentist in the old days in Frankfurt and a very pious man. Besides practicing dentistry he was also a Mohel, a ritual circumciser. He did the honors in the small villages in Hessen Nassau where I was born, and he was the one who had performed the "*Brit Milah*" on me thirteen years before, thereby officially making me a Jew.

What a strange coincidence that Doctor Hirsch's son would now assist me in celebrating my Bar Mitzvah in Chicago. Anselm had been giving me instruction all through our trip, even on the Mouzinho while we were at sea. Now he did a final fine-tuning at Woodlawn Hall in Chicago. Woodlawn Hall had a chapel with a Torah and we got permission to practice there. To Anselm's horror he found that the Torah had been marked up with notes in pencil and he no longer considered this holy scroll as Kosher and it was therefore unacceptable for me to have my celebration there.

The following Sabbath, one week before the big event, the three of us, Anselm, his brother Jackie and I, set out along the streets of Chicago, without permission, to find an Orthodox Synagogue in which to worship.

We found a small congregation on a side street. It was named Congregation Beth Hamidrosh Hagodol Anshei Dorom, a long name for a small Shul. We entered to observe the Sabbath services with them. After the service the members, who were naturally curious about us, started to question us. We knew no English but Yiddish being close to German, we were able to communicate. The head of the congregation was Rabbi Eliazer R. Muskin. Another member of the congregation was a Mister Frank who was also a German refugee and through him interpreting, we told the Rabbi and others what our circumstances were. I was about to become a Bar Mitzvah boy and we needed a Synagogue for the occasion.

They were astounded at our nerve to search them out in a strange city after arriving in the country only two weeks earlier. We were welcomed with open arms and were told that of course I could celebrate my Bar Mitzvah there the following Saturday. There was a Kiddush, the blessing over wine and bread, after the services for which we stayed and afterwards the Franks took us home to lunch to their small apartment.

We didn't arrive back at Woodlawn Hall until late afternoon.

Our arrival back at the orphanage was greeted by bedlam and we were the cause of it. We had left early that morning without telling anyone where we were going and were gone most of the day. The director of the residence was on the verge of calling the police to have them search for us.

Ernst Papanek was still there in Woodlawn Hall and he was furious. We were taken by him to an empty room where he gave us the worst chewing out I remember getting since I left my Uncle and Aunt's home in Speyer years ago. He especially blamed Anselm Hirsch, he being the oldest,

and he was supposed to be the most responsible. The Southside of Chicago even in the early forties was not the safest place to be and they had to be prepared for the worst.

The entire exchange of course had to be carried on in German since we didn't know English and the director of the home knew no German or I am sure he would have directed a few choice words at us himself. Slowly they both calmed down.

We finally were able to explain ourselves and the two gentlemen I believe understood what motivated us to take off like that. The director gave us his blessings to go to the Synagogue the following week and be gone for the day. However he made it clear that anytime we left the home he was to be informed of our whereabouts, no exceptions. Ernst Papanek was leaving to go back to New York the next day and we would no longer have an intermediary.

Ernst did leave after staying with us for ten days and I never saw him again.

The director of Woodlawn Hall must have been a fairly kind soul basically. He notified the Jewish Children's Bureau, who were our legal guardians at that point, of my impending Bar Mitzvah. During that next week I was outfitted with a complete new wardrobe. Suit, shoes, socks, shirt, tie, everything. I was provided with a Talith, a prayer shawl. It was a pleasant surprise, the first new clothes I had gotten since leaving Frankfurt.

So that is how I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah. In Papa's mind this was to have been the most joyous occasion in his life, his only son's Bar Mitzvah. We were separated by thousands of miles. What could have been going through my parent's mind on that day? Weeks later I received a letter from them telling me how many acquaintances; friends and relatives came calling on them in Frankfurt on that day to congratulate them. I had no idea at the time what it must have been like for my parents on such an occasion and under those circumstances. How I have regretted many times that I didn't show more feeling for their blight and how sad they must have been. Dare I blame the circumstances of my early childhood and being shunted around the world, for my callous lack of emotion?

The day itself with the good people of Congregation Beth Hamidroh Hagadol Anshei Dorom went as planned. I was called up to the Torah, I recited my well-rehearsed section of the Torah and the Rabbi gave a little speech congratulating me, of which I of course, didn't understand a word. The Rabbi also gave me a Chumash the Jewish Bible that I have treasured all my life. I was so excited that I only fleetingly noted that there were two familiar faces attending the service in my honor. Theodor Cremer was a cousin of my mother's on my grandmother's side whom I had met briefly in Frankfurt some years before. I knew he lived in Chicago but I was still surprised to see him there. Also there was my mother's Uncle Ludwig Steinberger, my grandfather's brother, who also lived on the north side of

Chicago. The only reason I recognized Uncle Ludwig was because he looked so much like his brother, my grandfather, I had never met him personally.

Both gentlemen left without my being able to say anything to either of them. Conspicuous by his absence was my Uncle Isidor, Mama's brother, who had a home and business in Indianapolis two hundred miles to the south of Chicago.

In the ensuing years as I was growing up, I learned more of the circumstances and the how and why I came to be in Chicago. Mama's sister, Tante Berthel, who was still in France, had written her two brothers, my Uncles Gustav and Isidor in the United States, that I was on the transport leaving France. The war was over for France at the time and communications with neutral countries like the United States had been reestablished. As a consequence Uncle Gustav had met me on the dock in New York. The agencies who had the responsibility to place us around the United States were also made aware of the fact that my closest relative in America and also the most affluent one was my Uncle Issi and that he lived in Indianapolis. Chicago was the nearest large city to Indianapolis, which could handle and process refugee kids and that, was why I came to Chicago. I think the assumption in sending me there was that my uncle and his wife would take me in and provide a foster home for me.

One of the conditions for allowing us into the U.S., as set by the federal government, was that we be placed in foster homes and be assimilated into American society. There would not be any enclaves of foreign speaking school children such as we had in France when we first came into that country. We were not to be placed in children's homes or orphanages.

Uncle Issi came to Chicago when I first arrived, greeted me warmly and seemed happy to see me. He also had long conferences with the director of Woodlawn Hall. Much later I found out that my uncle's wife, Aunt Fanny, would not hear of taking me into her home. It was out of the question. They had their own home and their own business, but they also had two young daughters. Aunt Fanny did not feel very secure about taking in a thirteen-year-old boy with her two little girls, ages ten and eight, living there. Did Aunt Fanny have a suspicious mind? I don't know, she certainly didn't discuss it with me. I was left in Woodlawn Hall and didn't see much of my closest relatives after the initial visit.

Now came a lonely time for me. The Jewish Children's Bureau was working very hard to find homes for the entire group of refugee children living at Woodlawn Hall. The idea was to get us placed in foster homes before the start of the school year, which was the day after Labor Day in September, so we could get an education. By ones and twos all my friends disappeared for permanent homes. The Koenig sisters, the Hirsch brothers, Norbert Schwarz, Inge Sauer, Rudy Frankel, they all left during those hot days of July and August of 1941.

I had established contact with my parents and wrote and received letters from them. I had one or two letters from my sister Hanni. In one letter she reprimanded her little brother for griping about the lack of attention I was getting from the local relatives.

I went to the beach with the rest of the orphanage population and got my first taste of real sunburn. In fact the burn was so bad that they put me in the infirmary in Woodlawn Hall.

There were other diversions for the children living in Woodlawn Hall during that summer. The Balaban and Katz movie house chain had a big theater about a block from the home. Once a week, as an act of kindness, they gave access to the children of Woodlawn Hall to the balcony of the theater. This was rare treat for me.

We would file down the street into the back entrance of the theater on a weekday afternoon and up the stairs into the balcony. Summertime in Chicago can be very hot and humid and the theater was air-conditioned. Of course in 1941 air-conditioning was rare especially in an orphanage, just to sit in the cool environment for a few hours was worth going to the theater. I had never before encountered a cooled atmosphere and once again America awed me. Not yet having learned English, most of the time I didn't understand a word of dialogue in any of the films. Many of the boys from the home took great pride in explaining the movies to me. One movie particularly sticks in my mind. It was called "The Great Dictator" with Charlie Chaplin and Jack Oakie. The movie was the famous parody of Adolf Hitler and it left me dumbfounded that it was possible to put on such a production, even in the United States.

It was also at this time that I reached puberty and all the strange feelings that came with this milestone. I had no one to explain the mystery of the two sexes to me except other boys in the orphanage. The sex education I got was at best flawed.

I became more and more isolated without my shipboard friends and once again I was the loneliest boy in the community.

Periodically someone would come to Woodlawn Hall who was interested in providing a foster home for someone, but they never chose me. A particularly humiliating incident occurred one day. A well-dressed woman came to the home with good intentions. I was introduced to her and she looked me over. Due to the malnutrition from which we suffered in France my body still had running sores, some of which were also still somewhat infected. Also I still had the remnants of the sunburn. This woman looked me up and down and then told the director to have me remove my shirt. She inspected my body minutely and then rejected me. I felt, as the slaves must have felt at the slave market in the old south before the civil war, as a potential buyer was inspecting them.

Still there were bright spots during that summer when I became acquainted with what was to become my hometown of Chicago.

Uncle Ludwig and his wife, my mother's uncle who came to my Bar Mitzvah, had both been teachers in Germany but of course could not pursue those careers in the U.S. They had some resources and bought a small neighborhood delicatessen on the north side in the Rogers Park neighborhood. They had three sons all in their teens at the time. They were bright young men who later in life became brilliant scientists. One of the teens would come down to the South Side of Chicago every so often on a Sunday afternoon to pick me up and take me sight seeing. Since they still spoke German I could communicate with whichever one of the three took me out. These excursions were my first experience with riding the Chicago El trains and going through downtown I got to see the skyscrapers of Chicago. It was a pure act of kindness for a young man to travel clear across town to give a young cousin, whom he really didn't know, a little diversion.

Hanni Cremer, Theodore's wife, also visited me a few times with her young son Ralph. Theo was a housepainter, and they lived in a third floor, one bedroom apartment, in the Albany Park neighborhood on the northwest side, also a fair distance away.

So went July and August of 1941 for me, excursions to the beach, free movies at the local movie house for the kids living at Woodlawn Hall and an occasional visit by a distant relative.

Finally toward the end of August a decision was reached. The Cremers took pity on me and agreed to provide a foster home on a temporary basis until their son Ralph, who was seven at the time, got older.

I left Woodlawn Hall and moved in with Hanni and Theo Cremer in their apartment in Albany Park, the first home I had lived in, in almost three years.

The day after Labor Day of 1941 I was enrolled in Haugan Elementary School on my way to becoming an American.

Since I knew no English the school administration decided to put me in the sixth grade for the record, but the first three hours of every morning, until lunch, I sat with the second grade class to learn the language. The little ones in the lower grade were highly amused by the sight of this thirteen year old in their midst sitting at such a little desk. I had no problem picking up the language. Having learned a small amount of French plus my knowledge of German, made English easy for me. In the school newspaper at the end of the semester was a one-line profile of each student. I was flattered that I was described as "The Perfect Gentleman".

Since America was still neutral during most of 1941, I corresponded with my parents, but sporadically. I was still not a good writer. It seemed too much like homework to feel obligated to sit in front of a blank sheet of paper and put words on it.

Mama and Papa of course replied instantly to all my letters. There was a lot of good advice to their youngest child. They worried about my behavior, my manners, my schoolwork, how I conducted myself

generally. The German censors opened all the letters before they left that country and Mama and Papa had to leave many things unsaid. For instance they could never use a Hebrew word such as when they referred to my Bar Mitzvah, say just called it my "Honor Day". They wanted to know what I did on my honor day, did I thank everyone for kindnesses extended and so on. There was never a direct reference to any actual event or person. Another strange thing about my parents' letters during that period was that the letters were never dated, as a consequence I never knew how long it had been since they wrote the letters. Papa also always enclosed an international postage coupon with which I could buy a return postage stamp. On the bottom of each letter he made it a point to mention:

"International Return Postage Coupon enclosed."

I think he wrote that to discourage the censors from taking the coupons.

I believe the following was the last communication that I ever received from them. I translate literally from German.

My Dear Erich!

We received your letter of August 21 and as always when we receive mail it makes us very happy. I think you also enjoy getting mail and therefore I will answer you immediately and hope that you & Uncle Theo with Aunt Hanni and Rolf are healthy.

You have already seen a lot in your young life and (*I*) would like, like to very much to converse with you. You must have a lot to tell.

And did you acquire a lot of treasures with your allowance?

See to it that you will soon, real soon, send for us because I have such a yearning for you, for my brothers and sister and for Hanni etc. We have been apart for so long already.

And for the holidays I am sending you and the dear relatives only the best with special wishes that we will soon converse personally and not by writing.

Did you receive the letter from Miss Stern? She meant so well and wanted to please you. Aunt Rosa is still in the orphanage, but must leave, where to, we still don't know.

Uncle Adolf & Norbert & Aunt & Ingolf are well as well as Norbert can be. Uncle works and Aunt has to take care of the boys. Norbert came once again out of the hospital and I will go to him this week. Uncle Simon lives as always. Also Aunt Tillshen is still at the old address. Cilly visited you also. Did you still know her? Write us more or do we first have to squeeze everything out of you?

Uncle Theo must have a lot of work with this nice summer weather. Did I write that Hanni sent the first package not long ago? She means well but she herself doesn't have much and she is spending the money. Aunt Ruth has a different address.

Here with us is still Frau Lisel you do know her. Frau Strauss is now Frau Hirsch because she married again. Ilse, the dark one, you know her also, and Sister Anna whom you always addressed as "the most beautiful woman in the world", Frau Simons & of course Frau

Koenigshoefer. Otherwise there are only 'greenhorns' here. We are not as big a staff and therefore have a lot more work. Also healthwise we want to be satisfied.

Dear Martha was here for 14 days on vacation and went back to Berlin on Sunday. She is a little thinner but grew taller. She is very good. Valerie is just like her Papa and nicely grown but looks like Uncle Moses. Must know for sure through Ludwig Moritz that Uncle Moses and Herta Aretz aren't alive anymore. They have both been released from their torment. Uncle Moses fell and broke his thigh and Herta Aretz had a stroke. Nothing nice but they are better off.

Do you know by the way the address of Ludwig Moritz? Than write it to us. Hanni's address I will hereby communicate: H.G. Central F. Weeshuis Utrecht Holland, Nieuwe Gracht 92

Did you write the Grandparents? Because of your dear Grandmother you must make somewhat more distinct and larger letters because of her eyes. Otherwise enough for today, be hugged and kissed by your loving Mutti

(The following is for the Cremers with whom I was living.)

Dear Relatives!

Also once more a warm thank you to you for everything that you are doing for Erich. We will never forget. Hearty greetings and good holidays. Your Else

My Dear Eric

We were very happy with your dear letter and are reassured that you are well taken care of by Aunt Hanni and Uncle Theo. You write that you receive three dollars, you will surely soon have a bank account and will put up bond for us. I have a lot of work here. Heating, house repairs and am earning less than at the beginning. But I will do it all gladly as we stay healthy and will have an emigration possibility soon. That we shall be reunited again soon. Stay devout, obedient and good. Be warmly embraced by your Papa.

(International Return Coupon Enclosed)

It was hard for me after a two-and-a-half year absence to remember all the people that Mama wrote about. I had to assume they were either people with whom they worked at the retirement home or people who were patients there. Acquaintances and relatives I remembered vaguely. Such references as "Aunt Ruth has a different address", must mean that Aunt Ruth was taken to a camp else Mama would have given me the new address. In light of what I found out later about living conditions there at that time, anything non-specific probably meant a bad thing had happened to the person to whom she was referring.

The phrase "Uncle Simon lives as always" had to mean that Uncle Simon, Papa's brother, was probably incarcerated. The letters painted a picture of people living furtively and from day to day, without anything to look forward to except that outside chance that somehow, someday they

would be able to leave the country.

There were other letters from my parents during those fall months in Chicago and also one from my sister Hanni. Again, I was never a disciplined letter writer but how I wish I had been and had reciprocated more.

One day, after I had been at the Cremer's several weeks, I received a phone call from my Uncle Issi from Indianapolis. He told me that there was a slim chance of my parents being able to immigrate to a South American country, I don't remember which one. He told me a lot of cash was involved and I should make it my responsibility to approach the Jewish Children's Bureau to see if they could come up with some funds. I felt so helpless. I had no idea how to approach the agency for funds; I only knew the one social worker and, at that, had trouble communicating with her until my English improved. Nothing came of the idea and I heard no more about it. I thought it was absurd to ask this of a thirteen-year-old boy and a shy one at that, who was barely in the country a few months. As much as I wanted to help my parents there was nothing I could do.

I matured that autumn in Chicago and familiarized myself with what I now considered to be my hometown. My English improved. I became familiar with the streets and the subway system and before long felt free to travel and visit friends anywhere in the city.

It was a Sunday afternoon in early winter that I traveled to the South Side to visit one of the children with whom I'd arrived in the country and who was in a foster home in that section of town. As I approached the El station to go back home I saw big headlines at the newsstand next to the station.

JAPANESE BOMB PEARL HARBOR

It was December 7th, 1941 and the Japanese fleet had attacked the American fleet without warning.

The next day we sat in Mrs. Phelan's class at Haugan School and heard President Roosevelt declare "the date that shall live in infamy". The United States formally declared war on the Empire of Japan. Soon after, Japan's ally Germany, in turn declared war on the United States. My ties with my parents and my sister Hanni were once more irrevocably severed. I was never to have contact with them again.

Within a few months I was able to stay with my sixth grade class full time. By the end of the school year the following June, after attending summer school, they also let me skip grade seven and I went directly to the eighth. I was still a year behind my age group and I would remain so until my graduation from high school five years later.

I lived with the Cremers for two years until I graduated the eighth grade and was ready to enter high school. By that time their apartment had gotten too crowded and the social worker from the Jewish Children's Bureau had found a new family for me, the Ikenns, in the same neighborhood.

I wanted to stay in Albany Park so that I might be able to go to

Roosevelt High School with the kids I knew from Haugan. I stayed with the Ikenns for two years until the end of the war when returning veterans made that home also too crowded.

I was then placed with another family for a few months and finally with the Simon family until I reached age eighteen. I was still in high school at that time since I was a year behind my age group but I was working and felt mature, so I petitioned my then social worker to let me move out by myself into a rooming house. She OK'd the move and I was on my own all through my senior year at Roosevelt. I had been in four foster homes in five years.

While in high school I joined several clubs, such as the Jewish Youth League and something called Alpha Tau that was considered by its members to be a high school fraternity. Through these organizations I became acquainted with many of my classmates.

My school years were very undistinguished. When I entered high school I was encouraged by the social worker to find an after-school job. Once I started working, and it was not hard to find something to do in wartime, I liked the idea of having my own money. I was also asked by the social worker to help in a small way in paying for my upkeep. Some of my teachers commented in my grade book that I would be doing better work if it were not for after-school employment.

There was never any question however, but that I would finish school and graduate from Roosevelt. The fact that I had no family was not a factor. The fact that mothers in the foster homes were former immigrants themselves without much of an education and therefore didn't have a clue as to what was required of me in school was also not a factor. They were asked to provide a home, a bed and meals, and that they did. No, the only factor that drove me to go on and get that high school diploma was that I just did not want to quit. I just took it for granted that that was the way it was.

Albany Park was a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in the nineteen-forties. Roosevelt High School's student body was 92% Jewish. But the principal was a Mister O'Brien. In fact Jewish teachers were very much in the minority at Roosevelt. On Jewish holidays the school was virtually deserted except for teachers and staff.

The school was located a block from the end terminal, Kimball Avenue, of the Ravenswood Rapid Transit line. My love affair with trains and railroads once again received a shot in the arm. In my senior year I saw a chance to work on the trains on a part time basis since I was already eighteen years old. I jumped at that chance.

The company running the subway system at that time was called The Chicago Rapid Transit Company. I worked for them all through my senior year in high school on a part time basis in a position called Student Trainman. At that time the CRT had ancient cars, some dating back to the eighteen-nineties. Each car required a separate trainman to open the doors at

the stops. During rush hours when there were as many eight cars on each train, the company had a number of students to work for only one round trip to the Loop and back lasting about two hours. The job was a dream since it dovetailed nicely with my school hours and it certainly paid better than some of the jobs I had held in high school, such as working at a drug store soda fountain.

After I graduated from Roosevelt in June of 1947 I applied for, and was granted, full time employment with the Chicago Rapid Transit Company. Eventually all the bankrupt transportation companies around the Chicago area were consolidated into a public entity called the Chicago Transit Authority. I was to stay with them a total of four years, getting promoted, and eventually becoming a foreman until I was drafted into the US Army in October 1950.

The Albany Park neighborhood on Chicago's northwest side during the period of those ten years became my hometown. As a matter of fact I acquired a deep loyalty for all of Chicago. This was the only real hometown that I had ever known. I suppose Hellstein might have qualified but obviously I was not welcome there, besides by now Hellstein was in another lifetime. Without any outside influence from either relatives or the social worker I nevertheless determinedly set out to Americanize myself. Dress, speech, tastes and attitudes were those of what I considered to be the typical American teen-ager. I still had an accent of course, but I chose to ignore it. I wanted to assimilate since I had had enough of turmoil.

I really had mixed feelings about the neighborhood of Albany Park. Yes it felt like my hometown, I had explored every corner of the area and knew it well. I had also explored all of Chicago with my curiosity taking me to every neighborhood and every corner of the downtown area. I had ridden every mile of the subway system, attended Easter Sunrise services in Soldiers' Field, gone to the top of the highest skyscrapers, wandered through newspaper offices always rubbernecking. I was no different as a teenager than I was as a smaller child back in Speyer fresh from Hellstein. I was curious and I was still alone.

Somehow I still didn't feel that I fit in. Maybe by trying to understand the history of Jewish immigration into the United States my feelings will become clearer. Here is good time to reflect a little on Jewish culture into which I was cast in the fall of 1941 in the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago.

Judaism in the United States until the late 1890's was very much dominated by those who had emigrated over the previous century from Western Europe. French traders, British merchants, German financiers and craftsmen; German Jews were especially well represented. They came before and after the American civil war to help open the west, many establishing well-known financial empires. We can still recognize many of the old family names on the financial pages of newspapers. Oppenheim, Salomon Brothers,

Stern, May, Goldblatt, Neiman, Marcus, Levi Strauss, Schwab just to name a few. They established banks, brokerage firms, department stores and manufacturing facilities. They brought commerce and business know-how to the expanding American West. The situation was very similar to central Germany after the thirty-year war. People were needed with expertise in commerce and finance for the rural areas. Jews were the perfect candidates to fill that void in the development of America.

At about the turn of the century came the great influx of eastern European Jews. Great pogroms in Poland and Russia, a new awareness of the rest of the world among the Jewish young people plus better and more frequent transportation between the continents were all factors in this great migration. Millions of Jews came to the United States from Eastern Europe.

The cultured Jewish establishment of Westerners, especially the German Jews who considered themselves high society, looked upon these newcomers with disdain. They spoke this uncouth Yiddish which was really not considered to be a language. Also they tended to cluster in densely populated neighborhoods of the big cities among their own kind, thereby creating instant ghettos.

In Chicago, the area in which these immigrants settled was largely the near West Side. The established Jewish society of the time having its origins in Western Europe sneered at this largely unwashed, uneducated and uncouth rabble.

This so-called rabble however would not have been there, had the individuals of which it was composed not had the drive and spirit that brought them to America in the first place. Within a few decades these Eastern European Jews, by sheer force of numbers, became the stereotypes by which non-Jews eventually identified Judaism in the United States. Entrepreneurs among them pulled themselves up, out of these ghettos, by their bootstraps and became prominent business leaders in their own right.

Eastern Jews created the entertainment industry, especially the film business, as we know it today, almost exclusively. They developed and dominated the ready-to-wear clothing industry. They became shop merchants, real estate developers and prominent in the building trades. During the nineteen-twenties and thirties the second generation of Eastern European Jews were enrolled in colleges and universities and eventually took their place as the leaders of Judaism in America.

The Eastern European Jew soon became the prototype of what main stream America thought all Jews should be.

Then came the Nazi era in Germany and German Jews left their homeland by the thousands, the prime destinations for these refugees of course being the United States. When they arrived here they found themselves to still be a minority, a minority among their fellow Jews. It was payback time for the indignities through which the earlier Eastern European Jews had to suffer at the hands of the pioneer Western Jewish, especially

German-Jewish, snobs.

The German Jewish immigrants of the late nineteen-thirties felt themselves more at home with Western European Gentiles than with the majority of the Jews. The Yiddish language was still very much the language of the home among American Jews and second only to Hebrew in the Synagogue. We Germans still thought it was a bastard language.

The welcome for German immigrants, *THE YEKES*, by the large Jewish population in the cities was less than cordial.

I was dropped into the community of Albany Park, a waystation for affluent Jews up the ladder, without any knowledge of the low regard the established Jewish population had for the German Jews. I was shocked by the reception I received. The nearest Synagogue to where I lived was called Beth Yakov and I automatically assumed any Jew could go to the nearest house of worship and be welcomed. I was wrong. I was still an outsider; I still found it hard to be a part of this exclusive club. It wasn't until several years later when I became fluent in English and after I entered Roosevelt High School that I established any kind of closeness. Nevertheless I still felt like a stranger, being an orphan and not having a permanent home to which to invite what friends I had acquired.

This was the environment in which I spent my formative years. Foster homes, part time jobs after school, strange customs and a strange culture even among my fellow Jews. I was alone and became a real loner. I enjoyed all the advantages of being in America but I had no real family to give me support. I am a survivor, and survive I did.

The war of course ended with the defeat of Germany and Japan. I celebrated V-E Day and V-J Day with my fellow teen-agers by going downtown to the Loop, the central area of Chicago. It was as if a magnet had drawn the entire population to the center of the city. Everyone wanted to share the good news with everyone else.

After the war I had no way of getting news of my parents and sister. One day Hanni Cremer called me and told me that she had received a phone call from uncle in Indianapolis who in turn had had a letter from Cousin Julius in Switzerland. To the best of their ability the authorities had determined that my family perished in the war.

I was expecting this news and therefore was not greatly surprised or shocked. My attitude toward the end had been that "I hope for the best, but expect the worst."

CLOSURE

Tante Berthel, my mother's sister, arrived in the United States with her two sons, my cousins Julius and Ernst, sometime during 1948. She had gone into hiding in France after the German army had occupied all of Vichy France during the war. Ernst had joined the French underground. They had had a long hard four years until the war ended. Julius sat out the war in Switzerland.

The three of them settled in Indianapolis so Tante Berthel could be near her brothers. I was never asked to move there and by then I probably wouldn't have.

After their arrival and as a few other survivors came over, all my hopes that I might see my parents and sister again vanished. Through countless agencies and displaced persons' organizations not a trace was found of either my parents or Hanni.

My Uncle Issi in Indianapolis, on behalf of all of us heirs to the grandparents' property in Dettelbach filed suit with the German government for restitution. I had no idea that I would personally get anything for what we had in Hellstein. I always said let the Jewish agencies file and get what they could and let it go to a good cause. I was not too interested in legalities and no one really gave me any advice. I was young, I had a good job and I didn't pay too much attention to things.

In July of 1950 the Korean War broke out and I was drafted by the end of October of that year. I was assigned to the 43rd Infantry Division and trained to be a radio operator. The following year the division was assigned to Germany as part of the newly formed NATO and we were stationed in Augsburg in Bavaria.

I had some very mixed emotions as I came back to Germany for the first time and under much different circumstances than when I left fourteen years before. The train ride from Bremerhaven to Mannheim, our first destination, carried us right through the heart of the region where I was born.

It all came back to me as the train rolled south. My buddies from Battery D who were in the coach with me were impressed as I pointed out the landmarks. I even surprised myself that I remembered the region as well as I did. I thought the war would have changed the countryside more. I even predicted when we were about to pass through a tunnel.

As we were passing through Wächtersbach I thought of my father having made a similar trip thirty-five years before as his troop train

rolled through the area of his home without stopping. For me however it did not feel like home.

Our unit was quartered near 43rd Infantry Division headquarters in Augsburg and my duties seemed to include a lot of interpreting since I still spoke German.

I was in contact with my relatives back in the States of course. Eventually my uncle contacted me and thought it would be a good idea for me to personally get in touch with the attorneys he was using in Würzburg for the restitution, since I was one of the heirs. On my next furlough I took the train to Würzburg and found the offices of the attorneys. I felt very uncomfortable being in a German business office even though I was wearing my uniform. I signed some papers, which probably saved some time for the family, and went on my way, glad to be out of there. Any official with whom I had contact always brought the thought to my mind: "Where were you on November 9th, 1938?" although I never directly asked that question.

The little errand I performed for the family started me thinking about finding out more about what happened to Mama, Papa and Hanni, especially since I was on the scene.

In the following months I pursued my quest. I found my grandmother's grave in Würzburg, the city with a Jewish cemetery closest to Dettelbach. I went to Frankfurt, Hanau and Gelnhausen.

I finally made the journey back to Hellstein. I took the train to Wächtersbach and then found that the little train to Hellstein was still operating. I walked up to the old house where I was born and knocked on the door. An old woman answered. When I explained who I was she fell to her knees and wrapped her arms about my legs crying:

"Please, please, dear Sir", or words to that effect, "please don't take our home away from us. You know we had nothing to do with your parents being displaced. You know we would have nowhere to go."

I was dumbfounded, this was not the intention of my visit. I informed her that I did not intend to ever live in Hellstein again and if they had to pay restitution it was out of my hands, the proper Jewish authorities would handle the matter. The last thing I wanted or needed was to get into a debate with her.

She finally quieted down and let me walk through the house since I wanted to take some pictures. While I was in the house word got out throughout the village that I was there. When I emerged from the old house some people that claimed to have known me were waiting on the street. I never realized that I was supposed to have had so many friends in Hellstein when I was a little child, they could have fooled me. Everyone I talked to made a point of telling me that their life would have been in danger had they made their true friendship for us Jewish people known. No one in the village was ever a Nazi, according to them. Many people insisted that I should come with them to their home to have some good old-fashioned coffee and cake

just like my mother used to bake. The thought revolted me.

I sat for a while and listened to the hypocrisy and then left Hellstein again, having been there for only a few hours.

I went to Frankfurt to the main police station and demanded to see what records they had of my parents. They produced a file; the Germans always were meticulous record keepers, with the final form stamped in bold letters "EVACUATED" and the date, September 15th, 1942. The official was very apologetic that he was not able to be of better assistance. I felt frustrated and went back to my unit in Augsburg.

The United States Army discharged me after my two years of service. I went back to Chicago and tried a new career. Eventually I got married, a mistake, and divorced after only seven months.

Most of the former German refugees I knew, by then were receiving restitution from Germany. I had never had the stomach for this but now at urging of friends and relatives I looked into the matter. It was now almost ten years after the war and Germany was again well off economically. A former German official now living in Chicago was recommended to me as being an expert in representing people.

Mr. Lorenz knew the right procedures for getting information and for filling out the myriad of forms. He contacted the Rest Cross, the international refugee organizations, displaced persons agencies and many other places. Little by little he garnered the forms needed. Birth certificates, death certificates, affidavits and whatever else I needed for the process. I was glad I had placed myself in the hands of a professional.

What few facts he could find through his inquiries still left me frustrated. No definite information was available as to the final fate of my parents and my sister. They were declared legally dead since no trace was ever found of their survival.

In early 1957 I left Chicago for a new life in California.

Once again I started a new career, this time in restaurant management. I also found a wonderful woman with whom to share my life. In 1958 we married. My wife Eileen and I started a family with our oldest son Jeffrey arriving in February of 1960 and his brother Martin following in September of 1962.

Eventually we were in business for ourselves with a major chain franchise, and we achieved a certain degree of success.

As I grew older and as our sons matured, it became more and more important to me to have a record of the fate of my parents and my sister. I felt I owed it to my two sons and their descendants.

The year 1974 was good to us. The business was doing well, the boys were growing up and I thought they deserved to know where the family originated, that we had not just fallen out of the sky. It was a good time to make a pilgrimage to where I was born. Actually I planned the trip

to retrace my steps backwards.

We landed in Lisbon and traveled through Spain and France by train. Eventually we came to Frankfurt and there rented an automobile. We drove up through Wächtersbach and took the side road to Hellstein.

Twenty-two years had elapsed since I had seen Hellstein as a GI in uniform. What a difference it was. A new prosperous Germany had transformed the farm village into a bedroom suburb for the nearby cities. The little railroad was gone, a paved highway having taken its place. New shiny automobiles were in the driveways and prosperity seemed to be everywhere. We knocked on the door of the old house that now had a new coat of paint and a new addition where the henhouse used to be. The same elderly lady whom I knew from my army days answered although she was two decades older. She didn't remember me of course; I had to introduce myself. I asked her and she obliged by showing us the house. I showed our sons where I was born and then gave them a brief tour of Hellstein and surroundings. Now they knew they had roots.

We drove to Birstein and found the old Jewish cemetery. Opa was the last one to have been buried there in 1933. We examined his gravestone and found others with the family name of Grünebaum. I think Jeff and Marty were impressed that I really had an origin and that we had ancestors. Jeff, ever the collector, even took the ancient lock from the gate of the cemetery to have something to show from his great-grandfather.

Eileen and I went back to Hellstein a few times in future years without talking to anyone. Once during the trip in 1992, I attempted to gain some information from the courthouse in Brachttal, the new name of the township, but was rebuffed. I wanted to get a list from the birth records of who my father's brothers and sisters were since I knew there had been nine siblings. I was told that that was confidential information, a lame excuse I thought for what was an obvious desire not to cooperate. This after all was ancient history and would certainly do no harm. However a Frau Müller, to whom I talked, did refer me to a gentleman who turned out to be a tremendous help in my research.

Herr Jürgen Ackermann was a teacher of history and English in the local high school in Wächtersbach. He made it his life's work to do research on who the people were that left such a vacuum in the communities around him, namely the Jews. I contacted him by phone and found that he was very anxious to meet me. We arranged to spend an afternoon together at his home in Wächtersbach. The day proved to be very fruitful. He was a tremendous help in being able to supply me with copies of documents and pictures and information all relating to my family. However he was not able to shed any more light on the final fate of Hanni and my parents.

I mentioned to him about my visit to the courthouse and how I was frustrated by the lack of cooperation. Within a few weeks of my arriving home in Durango he forwarded to me all the information about Opa's family

that I requested at the courthouse and had been denied. Obviously, “where there was a will there was a way.”

I researched libraries and museums; I pored over lists that had been put out by various agencies including the Government of Germany. Most lists were very vague, just listing my family as *verschollen*, lost, presumed dead.

I had visited the archives at the *Yad Vashem* The Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem years ago, but all without any concrete information. On that same trip though, in Jerusalem, I found a book in the library of the Hebrew University that was of interest. The title of the book is “*Die Jüdischen Gemeinden von Hessen*” (The Jewish Congregations of Hesse). For the first time I actually saw my father’s name in print as being the head of the Congregation in Hellstein before 1938.

Also many years before, in Los Angeles, I attended a travel show. One of the booths at the show belonged to the Polish National Tourist office. I asked the lady what were the chances to visit Poland with the express intent to visit the former camp at Auschwitz. I thought I might learn something if I went to the place that had chalked up the highest number of fatalities. She threw up her hands in horror; “Oh we couldn’t let you go there, she said, that place is not something you want to visit.” Poland was still an iron curtain country at the time and they only wanted the tourist dollars at their show-place resorts.

The Mormon Church keeps one of the most detailed and comprehensive genealogical libraries in the world at its headquarters in Salt Lake City Utah.

On one of our vacation trips in the western United States we passed through Salt Lake City. I had the idea that I would go through the library and do research there. All the records from our part of Germany were on microfiche. I loaded the spool of film into the machine and proceeded to read the numerous documents that are on file there, scrolling them from right to left in the microfiche reader. What a strange experience it was to see my family name in this remote western city. Eventually as I sat, the constant images going before my eyes caused severe nausea and I had to give up that idea. I did however find the name of Opa’s father, my great-grandfather. His name I found out was Isack.

In the late 1980s the Iron Curtain started to disintegrate. Once again people were able to travel into areas that were formerly forbidden. We decided to make the big trip in February and March of 1996 and do more research. We traveled by train from Frankfurt with a stop in Berlin and arrived in Krakow, Poland near the Auschwitz State Museum on March 2, 1996. It was the day that would have been Papa’s 100th birthday, an unplanned coincidence.

Finally I would be able to piece together the entire story of the fate of my family.

THE FINAL SOLUTION

The turning point was Kristallnacht, November 8, 1938 when the Nazis burned every Synagogue in Germany and arrested all the male adult Jews.

Everyone knew it was the beginning of the end of Judaism in Germany. Papa had never made arrangements to emigrate because he thought he was immune to persecution because he was a wounded war veteran of the German Imperial army in the World War. When he realized he was wrong it was too late.

An effort was made to at least save all the Jewish children after Kristallnacht. Many countries accepted transports of children. Queen Wilhelmina of Holland personally guaranteed shelter for 150 Jewish youngsters. Hanni was one who went to Holland.

A few months later I was sent to France on a children's transport. I left my parents at the train station in Frankfurt at 9AM on March 8th, 1938 never to see them again.

I was in France for over 2 years living in homes of the UNION OSE. One year near Paris in Villa Les Chesnaie, near Eaubonne and after the fall of France in spring of 1940 we were moved to the south to what was called Vichy France. There we lived in an abandoned chateau called Chateau Montintin. In May of 1941 I was chosen to be part of a group to finally go to the US arriving on June 21, 1941. I WAS SAFE.

The war broke out in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. The German army overran the Netherlands in the spring of 1940 to invade France and my sister Hanni was back under German jurisdiction.

In January of 1942 officials high in the German government held a conference at a resort called Wannsee near Berlin, on what to do about the Jewish problem. The Germans had a large Jewish population on their hands that they had so alienated, that even the German Jews would never be able to help them with their war effort. The Germans made a decision.

The answer to the problem they decided, would be total eradication. They called it **The Final Solution**.

Hitler hated the Jews so much that he would not consider any compromise except to once and for all kill all the Jews. In his sick mind he still equated the Jews with everything that was wrong in Germany. Hitler's word was law.

After the German occupation of Holland, Hanni lived in an Orphanage in Utrecht, Holland. In the spring of 1942 all German-Jewish refugees in Holland were gathered and interned in Concentration Camp

Westerborg. One section of the camp was reserved for juveniles, Hanni was one those juveniles. She was sixteen years old at the time. Another teenager at this camp was named Anne Frank.

A gentleman, who was also part of the group as a teen-ager at the time, related the following events to me when I caught up with him in 1996. His name is Moishe Frank and he was seventeen years old when the following events happened. He was the cousin of Anne Frank. When I spoke to him he was in his seventies and he was living in retirement in the city of Utrecht.

One day in late spring of 1942 the teenagers were gathered together for a meeting. A very refined and cultured appearing German gentleman addressed them with dignity and courtesy in high German and said in essence:

"As all of you know you are basically Germans. You came to Holland because of your religion, which is illegal in Germany. However since Holland is now under German rule there is no reason for you to stay here and be a burden to this war torn country. Therefore; we are asking all of you to come willingly with us back east, where we need workers for the war effort. If you work hard and behave yourselves you will be treated well and you won't be sorry."

Hanni was sixteen years old and had a boyfriend. The boyfriend was all for the plan, it seemed better than being locked up in the camp, and she quietly went along with him. They were loaded into trains and left Westerbork on July 13, 1942.

The youngsters' transport arrived at Concentration Camp Auschwitz in Poland on July 15, 1942, putting the lie to the smooth talk the cultured Nazi gave them.

As the government implemented the final solution to the problem of the Jews more and more, the Jewish retirement home in Frankfurt, where Mama and Papa worked, was also shut down. All residents and staff were removed. It was at that time, September 15, 1942, that my parents were put on a transport for Theresienstadt.

As I mentioned earlier, the official documents only showed them to have been "evacuated".

Concentration Camp Theresienstadt was a special place that was used as a holding facility. There were no gas chambers in Theresienstadt. Many of the inmates were older people and it was expected that they would die of natural causes, that is disease or starvation, but not from out and out murder. In fact Theresienstadt was the camp the Nazis used as a model whenever a neutral country or International Red Cross officials wanted to see what was going on in a camp. The food there was a little better, the place was a little cleaner, and conditions were just a shade more comfortable than at other facilities.

In Theresienstadt Mama also found her own father, my grandfather. Grandmother had died while they were still living in Dettelbach. She is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Wuerzburg. Grandfather would succumb while in Theresienstadt

Mama and Papa survived in Theresienstadt for four months. On January 29, 1943 they were loaded into freight cars together with 998 other individuals for an overnight transport to Auschwitz. The transport arrived at Auschwitz on the morning of January 30, 1943.

Before World War Two the camp at Auschwitz was a Polish army base with sturdy brick buildings. The original name of the town was Oswiecim. After the Germans conquered Poland, any placename they didn't like, they renamed and gave it a more German sounding name. Therefore Oswiecim became Auschwitz. When they took control, they at first used the original camp for political prisoners and as a prisoner of war camp.

They decided the area was well suited for their plans for an extermination camp. It was not on German soil, a very important prerequisite, it had a great amount of territory that could be requisitioned, a good supply of fuel for the crematory ovens in the form of coal was in the area and a staff was already in place. Auschwitz was also located on a major transportation corridor with a railway line and highway nearby.

The Germans built their extermination camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, about three Kilometers from the original camp. In the beginning the SS unloaded the people in the freight yards in town and made them walk to the camp. This was too slow for them. They had the railroad lay a spur track directly into the camp to make the operation more efficient. With the new system the condemned had to walk only a few hundred feet to the alleged "showers" and the final solution.

It was at Auschwitz-Birkenau that they built the infamous Gate of Death, which led to those equally infamous long railroad sidings. The trains holding the prisoners backed through this gate from the main railroad line and then down the long three-quarter mile siding to the end of the line for most people.

The Germans kept very precise records of all the people that passed through Concentration Camp Auschwitz. In fact I was amazed at how complete the records were, given the contempt they had for any undesirable human being that they had decided to eliminate.

In the present museum facility one of the old brick barracks of the camp is used as the archives for all that had happened there.

I entered the archive building and was greeted by a young Polish woman. I asked her, since I did not speak the Polish language, as to whether she preferred to communicate in English or German. She was very adamant, no German. Her English was passable.

All she needed was the names, birthdays and places of birth of anyone for whom I was searching. I gave her the information for both my

parents and for my sister. She disappeared among a maze of file cabinets. It wasn't long before she came back with three little file cards. One card each for Papa, Mama and Hanni. We verified that the information was of the people for whom I was looking.

My parents' cards had no numbers stamped on them but Hanni's did. It was explained to me that those who were put to work were given a number, the ones who were deemed not fit for work had no number, those were taken straight to the gas chambers.

The lady excused herself and went to another part of the building with Hanni's card.

When she came back she explained what she had been doing. Since Hanni's card had a number, it meant that she had a number assigned to her and was given some job. Hanni was allegedly put to work as a dental assistant in the camp. A death certificate was on file for Hanni, signed by a doctor, which the lady brought with her to show to me. Hanni died in Auschwitz on August 26th 1942, only five weeks after her arrival. The cause of death was listed as *Allgemeine Körperschwäche*, General Body Weakness.

My parents' cards showed that they arrived in Auschwitz on January 30th, 1943 on a transport from Theresienstadt. The museum employee then referred me to a thick volume in German for me to read, since she did not understand that language. It was a complete log of happenings in the camp for the years 1939 to 1945.

According to the official log of happenings in Concentration Camp Auschwitz:

*KALENDARIUM DER EREIGNISSE IM
KONZENTRATIONSLAGER AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU 1939-1945
(Rowohlt):*

30 Jan 43

“On a transport of the RSHA, 1000 Jewish men, women and children arrived from the Ghetto Theresienstadt. After the selections, 122 men were given the numbers 98152 to 98273, and 95 women were given the numbers 33158 to 33252 whereupon these were admitted into the camp as prisoners. The remaining 783 people were killed in the gas chambers.”

There were some factories in the area for the German war effort. Those whose card showed no number were not chosen for work and were immediately murdered. My parents evidently were not fit for work.

I again returned to the camp called Auschwitz-Birkenau and entered through the Gate of Death. It was cold and snowy with a layer of snow on the ground on that March afternoon on what would have been Papa's 100th birthday. I walked the length of that multiple track railroad siding to the very end where the rails stopped. I stood and looked back up toward the guard towers above the gate. I tried to imagine what it must have been like on that even colder January morning when that transport arrived from Theresienstadt.

What thoughts went through the people's minds? Had they had any food at all lately? An all-night trip in the dead of winter across the farmlands of Poland and Czechoslovakia in cattle cars must have left many fatalities. I tried to imagine 1000 men women and children shuffling along through the snow despair on their face, probably well aware finally what their ultimate fate would be.

After all these years the tears finally came to me for my lost family for whom I had had a hard time grieving. I turned to my left and walked a few hundred feet to the mound, now nicely landscaped and terraced, where the sign stated that this was the place where were deposited the ashes of over one and one-half million human beings. At last I was able to say a prayer over the grave of my parents and my sister.

So ends the story of the Family Grünebaum in Europe.

FOOTNOTE TO HISTORY

A certain caste system developed among the survivors of the Holocaust. It was called the Hierarchy of Suffering by some.

The social standing of individual survivors at survivor-gatherings depends on the degree of suffering they incurred during the years 1933 to 1945.

At the top of the order are those who were in concentration camps. This category in turn is subdivided by which camp the survivor spent time in:

“I was in Theresienstadt”

“Hah! That’s nothing I was in Bergen Belsen.”

“If you survived Auschwitz, like I did, then you can talk of suffering.”

The higher the suffering of the individual was, the higher is his status as a survivor.

A concentration camp inmate outranks someone who had only been in hiding.

Having been in hiding made the individual more at risk than those who passed with false papers.

Living with false papers had more prestige than being in a *protected* marriage with a non-Jew.

Living under the Nazis in a protected marriage counted for more than having gone to another country as a refugee. Among these refugees there is still a descending order of prestige:

- Emigrated alone and never saw one’s family again.
- The entire family was wiped out except for a sibling.
- The family was reunited after the war.
- The entire family emigrated before the war and is considered not to have suffered hardly at all.

A strong person will take pride in his skill to survive and those that survived banked on their skill of having been able to survive.

At times I feel guilt that my survival came to me so easily. I don’t remember hardly suffering at all. If I suffered, I only suffered discomfort.

My biggest loss was the loss of my family. To keep my sanity I have, over the years, build up what I call “Layers of Emotional Calluses”.

When World War Two ended and by 1948, I had my choice of three countries in which I could become a citizen.

I was a legal resident of the United States and eligible to become a naturalized United States citizen.

I could go to Israel and as a Jew without a country would automatically become an Israeli citizen in that new country.

I could go back to Germany and claim my birthright as a German born citizen.

Going to Germany, needless to say, was repulsive to me; I had no desire to live there.

Israel was a new country, surrounded by enemies, it seemed just too risky, I enjoyed the American way of life.

In March 1949 I became an American citizen.

As part of my citizenship procedure I asked that my name be changed to, the more American, Greene. I had no more family or ties to the old life.

I was proud to become an American and to no longer be an outsider.

TIMELINE

November 11, 1918	Germany surrenders to the allies, losing World War One.
January 30, 1933	Adolf Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany.
March 5, 1933	Anti-Jewish laws passed by Reichstag, (Parliament).
March 24, 1933	Reichstag empowers Hitler to pass laws by decree.
April 1, 1933	One day boycott against Jewish businesses.
April 7, 1933	Non-Aryan officials are removed from office.
April 21, 1933	Ritual slaughtering of animals is forbidden.
April 25, 1933	Enrollment by non-Aryans into public schools is severely restricted.
June 6, 1933	There are about 500,000 Jews in Germany.
July 14 1933	“Undesirables” can lose their German citizenship.
August 2, 1934	President Hindenburg dies. Hitler assumes the title, of both President, and Chancellor and declares himself “Führer” as Head of State.
September 6, 1935	Sale of Jewish publications is prohibited.
September 15 1935	Passage of “The Nuremberg Laws”. Jews lose their German citizenship and are prohibited from marrying German citizens. Jews are not allowed to employ German citizens under 35 years of age.
March 15, 1935	Hitler declares the Versailles Treaty null and void
July 3, 1936	Jews lose all voting rights. Re-occupation of the Rheinland by German troops.
July 2, 1937	Jewish student numbers are further severely restricted.
September 16, 1937	Jews are issued passports for foreign travel only in

	special cases.
March 13, 1938	German troops enter Austria.
April 26, 1938	Jews must report all their assets.
July 6, 1938	Jews are prohibited from pursuing certain professions. (Agents, tourist guides, brokers, among others.)
July 23, 1938	As of January 1, 1939, Jews must carry identity cards on their person at all times.
July 25, 1938	As of September 9, 1938, Jewish physicians will only have the status of “medical attendants”.
July 27, 1938	All Jewish sounding street names are replaced.
August 17, 1938	As of January 1, 1939, Jews may only have Jewish first names, if a Jew has a German first name, Israel or Sara must be added to it.
October 5, 1938	Jewish passports will have a “J” on the cover.
October 28, 1938	About 17,000 Jews of eastern ancestry are expelled to the German-Polish border where they are trapped in the “no-mans-land”.
November 7, 1938	Jewish teen-ager Herschel Grynszpan shoots German military attaché vom Rath at German Embassy in Paris.
November 9, 1938	vom Rath dies. First outcries against the Jews. November 9/10/11, 1938 - anti-Jewish riots, now known as Kristallnacht. 300,000 Jews are arrested, 191 Synagogues are destroyed, 7,500 Jewish shops are looted.
November 11, 1938	Jews may not own or carry any weapon.
November 12, 1938	German Jews as a group are assessed the sum of one billion Reichmarks as reparations. Jews must make good on all the damages caused by the riots. Jews may no longer pursue any trade or business. Jews

	may no longer visit theaters, movie houses, concerts or attend any exhibition.
November 15, 1938	All remaining Jewish children are removed from public schools.
November 23, 1938	All Jewish businesses are dissolved.
November 28, 1938	Jews are restricted on when or where they may be in certain areas.
December 3, 1938	All Jews lose all driving privileges.
December 3, 1938	Jews must sell all their business assets and must turn in all their jewelry and securities.
December 8, 1938	Jews may no longer visit Universities.
March 8, 1939	Erich Grünebaum leaves Germany for France.
April 30, 1939	Rent protection for Jews is reduced.
May 17, 1939	There are about 215,000 Jews left in Germany.
September 1, 1939	World War Two breaks out when Germany attacks Poland. Jews may not leave their homes after 8:00 PM in winter or 9:00 PM in summer.
September 23, 1939	Jews must turn over all radios to the police.
February 6, 1940	Jews receive no more ration cards for clothing.
February 12, 1940	First German Jews are deported.
July 29, 1940	Jews may no longer have telephones.
June 12, 1941	Jews may only refer to themselves as “Unbelievers”.
September 1, 1941	Jews must wear a Jewish star on their clothing. They may not leave their residence without police permission.
December 26, 1941	Jews may not use public telephones.

January 1, 1942	There are about 130,000 Jews left in Germany.
January 10, 1942	Jews must give up all wool and fur garments.
February 17, 1942	Jews may not have any newspapers or magazines.
April 24, 1942	Jews may not use public transportation.
May 15, 1942	Jews may no longer have pets.
June 19, 1942	Jews must give up all electric appliances, bicycles and typewriters.
July 17, 1942	Jews may no longer wear anything which will identify them as handicapped.
August 26, 1942	Johanna Grünebaum dies at Concentration Camp Auschwitz in Poland.
September 15, 1942	The Jewish home for the aged is closed. Jonas and Else Grünebaum are deported to Concentration Camp Theresienstadt.
October 4, 1942 to April 21, 1943	All German Jews in concentration camps, jails, prisons or otherwise held by authorities are removed to Auschwitz.
January 30, 1943	Jonas and Else Grünebaum die in the gas chamber at Concentration Camp Auschwitz.
September 1, 1944	About 15,000 Jews Remain in Germany.
May 8, 1945	World War Two ends, Germany collapses.

There are many people in this world to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for helping me and without whom I either would not have survived or have kept my sanity.

First and foremost my wife Eileen, companion and friend for over forty years who encouraged me to write this and roamed all corners of Europe with me in my quest for information.

A hug and a kiss for my granddaughter Allison, her brothers Ryan and Dillon and my grandson Eric Michael, without whose existence I would not have had an incentive to write this.

A thank you to my sons and daughters-in-law for giving me

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