

**MEMORIES OF NELLY LEVY BERG**  
**HER LIFE IN GERMANY AND HER FIRST TEN YEARS IN AMERICA**  
**1910 - 1948**

**As told to and written by her daughter  
Lorraine Wulfe**

**Based on interviews with Nelly and Fred Berg,  
Irma Dannenbaum and Ruth Simon**

**MEMORIES OF NELLY LEVY BERG**  
**HER LIFE IN GERMANY AND HER FIRST TEN YEARS IN AMERICA**  
**1910 - 1948**

**As told to and written by her daughter  
Lorraine Wulfe**

**Based on interviews with Nelly and Fred Berg,  
Irma Dannenbaum and Ruth Simon**

Copyright 1995  
by Lorraine Wulfe  
All rights reserved.  
No part of this book may be  
reproduced in any manner  
without written permission.  
Revised 2nd printing

Printed by Copy.com  
1201-F Westheimer  
Houston, TX 77006

All of the information contained herein has been obtained from reliable sources. The author did not, however, independently verify either the publicly available historical information nor the non-public personal information provided.

*This book is dedicated to  
the memory of  
Tante Martha Breier and Nathan Klein,  
to whom we owe our very lives.*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped me in this year-long project and in making this book a reality. First and foremost, I want to thank my parents Nelly and Fred Berg and my aunts Irma Dannenbaum and Ruth Simon for unlocking their memories and sharing them with me in hours upon hours of interviews. Their memories, sometimes going back as much as 80 years, were incredible. It was an experience I will treasure forever.

I also want to thank my cousin Elaine Levy Proler for asking the questions about her grandfather's family in Germany that led to this book, my daughter Sondee Hatcher for her long hours of editing and re-editing, my friends Steffie Odle and Ellen Howard and my cousin Evelyn Simon Westheimer for their valuable input after reading a draft, my rabbi Roy Walter for his help with definitions of Jewish terms, my cousin Bennie Dannenbaum Roder for her assistance with my new computer, my cousin Helen Rosenbaum for translating letters and books written in Polish, my nephew Steve Astrich and Bridgett Seigler at Kinko's for their assistance in printing, and those besides my parents and aunts who shared their stories with me, all of whom are given credit in the text of the book. And a very special thanks to my husband Ed Wulfe for his continuous loving support, for his input, and for enabling me to literally retrace my family's footsteps.

I also want to thank everyone who shared their pictures with me for this book - my parents and my aunts, as well as my cousins Elaine Levy Proler, Gladys Pollak, Helen Dannenbaum, Martha Breier Stelly, Paula Friedlander, Edward and Ernest Klein, Martha Klein Lottman of Canton, Ohio, Marshall Wagner of Duvall, Washington, and Jerry Burchardt Eason of Huntsville, Alabama. Never would I have dreamed of finding some of these pictures, especially those of the Dannenbaum siblings of my great-grandmother Henrietta Dannenbaum Levy. Many of the pictures were located as a result of my calling relatives whom I didn't even know while working on a Dannenbaum family tree, and often the relatives who had the pictures didn't know who the people in the pictures were. It was as if these pictures were just sitting in a box somewhere waiting to be asked for and identified. What an exciting experience it has been for me to be able to gather all these scattered pieces - pictures and memories - and assemble them together in this book.

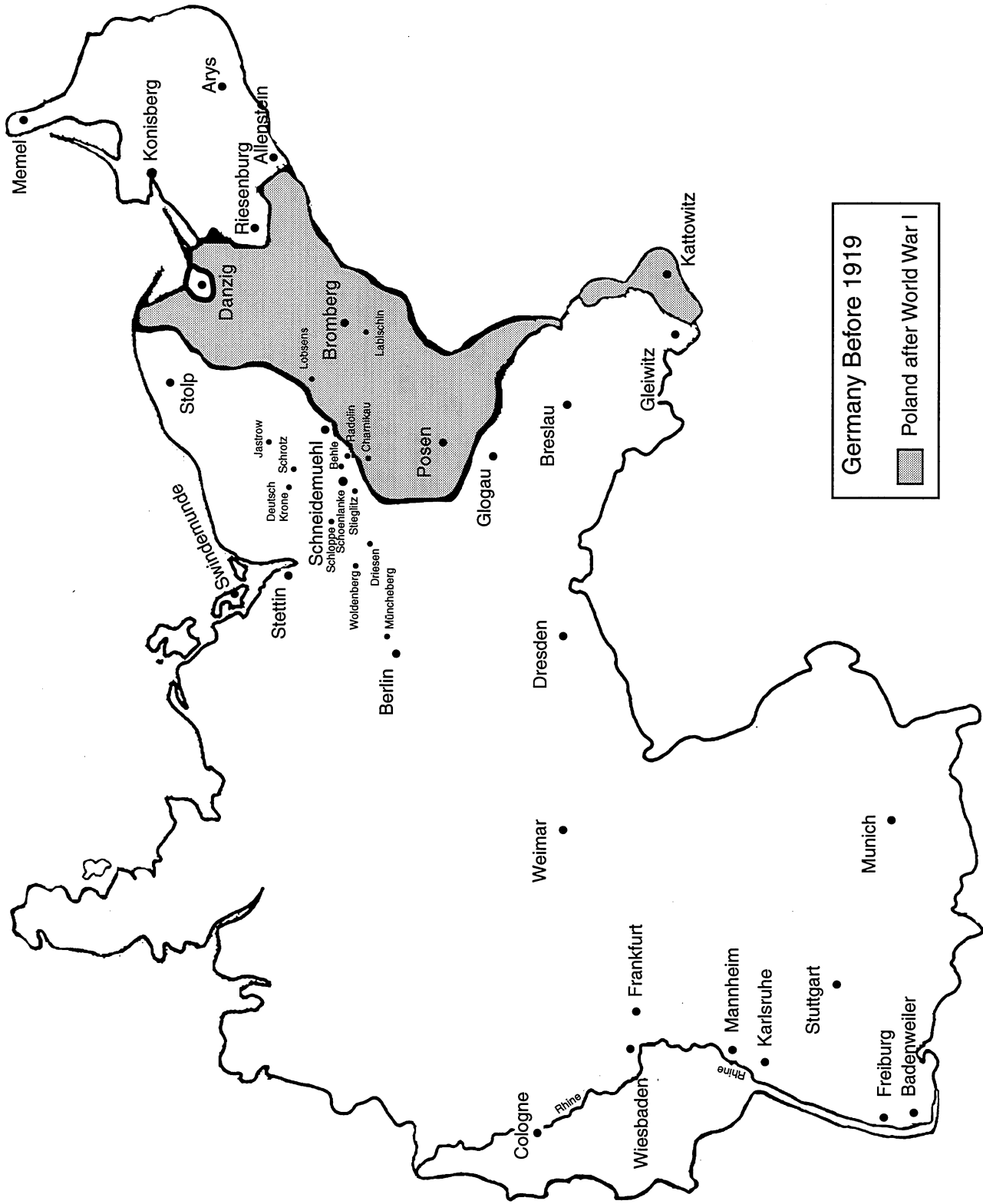
And most of all, I thank God for blessing me with such a wonderful family and this incredible opportunity to tell their story and record it for future generations. While the book is entitled "Memories of Nelly Levy Berg" and is written from my mother's perspective, it is not just her story, but the story of her entire family. And there would be no family or story to tell if it weren't for Tante Martha Breier and Nathan Klein to whom this book is dedicated.



## CONTENTS

Chapter 1 - Our Home in Schoenlanke	1
Chapter 2 - Life In Schoenlanke	11
Chapter 3 - Our Extended Family	21
Chapter 4 - Sidelines	31
Chapter 5 - A Time of Change - Personal and Political	33
Chapter 6 - From Germany to America	37
Chapter 7 - Nathan Klein and The Holocaust	47
Epilogue	51
Retracing Family Footsteps - A Personal Report by the Author	53
Family Trees	64
Glossary	67





## Chapter 1

### OUR HOME IN SCHOENLANKE

#### Our House

I was born in 1910 in Behle, Germany, the third daughter of Max and Hilde Levy. Behle was a small village in an area of eastern Germany that became Poland after World War II. My parents moved us to Schoenlanke nearby in 1913 when my oldest sister Ruth was starting school. Schoenlanke was a town with a population of about 10,000.

Our house in Schoenlanke was across from the train station. In fact, our address was *Bahnhof* (Train Station) 1. The express train that went from Paris to Russia came right through our town, although it didn't stop there. We actually could feel its vibration in our house as it passed by. We loved to hang out the windows and watch everyone coming and going from the trains, especially during the Jewish holidays when the young Jewish bachelors would come home to be with their families. Sometimes people coming from the station would come up to our windows which were made of beveled glass to touch them because they were so beautiful. There were shutters on the windows that we closed every night and opened in the morning. In the summertime when it was real hot, we'd close the shutters during the day. Then the house would be cool, and we'd lie down on the rugs.

Our house had a beautiful recessed entrance way with big white double doors with panes of clear and blue beveled glass. Along each side of the entrance way was a niche containing shutters to cover the front doors, but we never used them. It was inside one of the niches that Ruth vaccinated me and my other sister Irma with one of Mama's knitting needles. It was during World War I, and we liked to play nurse. Each of us would wrap one of my baby brother Joachim's white receiving blankets around our waist and a diaper around our head like a nurse's hat.

When you entered the front door of our house, there was a large entrance hall where we had a *Gardrobe*<sup>1</sup> (wardrobe) without doors for our company's hats, coats, and umbrellas. Off the entrance hall on one side were the dining room, living room, kitchen, bathroom, and Mama's and Papa's bedroom. We only ate in the dining room when we had company. The rest of the time we ate in the living room which was right next to the kitchen. We also had a piano in the living room. All of us took lessons from *Frau* (Mrs.) Budewig, but I was the only one who liked to play. In the bathroom, there was something like a water heater with a spout going into the tub. We would light a fire under it to warm the water before filling the tub. We had no warm water in the kitchen. It had to be boiled in big kettles and poured in the wash sinks. Before we had indoor plumbing, we used outhouses. However, at night we each kept a potty under our bed so that we didn't have to go out.

On the other side of the entrance hall was the bedroom where Irma and I slept, and later Joachim who was six years younger than me. I only remember sharing a room with Joachim while he was in the baby crib, which might have been until he was six years old because I slept in the crib until he was born. Joachim was really spoiled, being the first boy after four girls. I had a baby sister named Herta who died when she was just a few days old. I still can picture my father wearing a top hat carrying the little coffin out of the house and going with the *Shamas* (temple caretaker) in the closed carriage to the cemetery. Ruth remembers when Joachim was born, at home of course with the midwife *Frau* Becker. Papa was out of town, and when he returned and was told that he had a boy, he didn't believe it until the nurse opened Joachim's diaper to prove it to him. In addition to nursing Joachim, Mama also nursed the Schramm baby across the street because *Frau* Schramm had trouble with her milk. *Herr* (Mr.) Schramm was one of the *Bahnhofmeisters* (train station masters), and they lived in a duplex that belonged to the station.

Upstairs in the *Boden* (attic), which was built out, were three bedrooms - a guest bedroom, one where Ruth and later Irma slept, and one where the *Dienstmaedchens* (working girls) slept. We always had two *Dienstmaedchens* - a *Stubenmaedchen* (room girl) who cleaned the house and a *Kuechenmaedchen* (kitchen girl) who helped in the kitchen, gathered the eggs, and milked the cows. Twice a year, before Passover and the high holy days, the *Dienstmaedchens* did a big housecleaning, concentrating on one room a day. The wood floors would be waxed, the rugs taken outside and beaten, the windows, which opened inward, washed on both sides, and all of the bedding taken outside to air. All of our *Maedchens* were Catholic, and sometimes they would take us to church with them where we would have to kneel. Schoenlanke had both a Catholic and an *Evangelische Kirche* (Protestant church). One of our *Maedchens* was Agnes who moved with us from Behle and worked for us for a very long time.

---

<sup>1</sup> In German, all nouns are capitalized.

The rest of the *Boden* was for storage. I remember there was a big, and I mean really big, box like a chest where we stored the bedding. There was also a built-in smoker where we smoked geese, beef, and all kinds of sausages. Every room in the house had a tile wall oven to warm the room, with the tile going all the way to the ceiling. The *Stubenmaedchen* would come in our rooms in the morning before we got up to light the fire.

Along the back of the house was a porch. Whenever beggars came asking for food, which was often, Mama would feed them out there. From the porch you entered a hallway through big double doors with a huge iron key. We would hold that cold key against the back of our neck to stop nose bleeds. On the left side of the hallway was a door into the kitchen, a door into the bathroom which also was accessible from the kitchen, and the stairs going up to the *Boden*. On the right side, there was a door into the apartment where Omama and Opapa, Mama's parents (Ernestine and Wolf Abraham), stayed when they came to live with us, and the door to the cellar where there was a machine for the running water and where we stored potatoes for our immediate use. There was also a little niche in the hallway where we kept the *Centrifuge*, the machine that the *Kuechenmaedchen* used to separate the whole milk into skim milk and cream. From the cream she made butter and occasionally ice cream, and from the skim milk she made cottage cheese. Mama also made *Kochkaese* (cooked cottage cheese with caraway seeds).

### **The Vegetable and Fruit Gardens**

Our property, which was more than a block in size, was really a farm, one of the only ones in Schoenlanke. On the left side of the house, if you were facing the house, there was a very large *Obst Garten* (fruit garden). You can't imagine how beautiful it was. We had a huge pear tree that must have been 100 years old. We also had hazelnut trees, two kinds of apple trees, and, on the other side of the fence, small cherry trees with sour cherries. And besides fruit trees, the garden had beautiful flowers. There were so many *Flieder* (lilac) bushes - white and purple - you can't imagine how many. The lilacs bloomed in May, and when people came for Ruth's birthday, everyone took some home. We also had *Veilchen* (violets), *Maigloeckchen* (lily of the valley), and *Schneegloeckchen* (snow bells) which were the first flowers to bloom after the snow melted. We never had to do anything with the flowers. They just came out every year, even though it froze every winter. In the middle of the fruit garden was a *Laube* (gazebo) which had a large round wooden table and rounded wooden benches where we sometimes would have our birthday parties when we were young. Adjacent to our fruit garden was the *Bahnhof Garten* which was directly across from the train station. They often had local concerts there that we could hear from our fruit garden. *Frau Dirks*, who worked at the train station and slept there, was in charge of the *Bahnhof*

*Garten* and gave us permission to play croquet there. She ran the restaurant in the building with the waiting area which had divided sections for the first, second, and third class passengers. *Frau* Dirks had a nephew who was a real anti-Semite and spread vicious rumors about Jews, especially at Passover time.

On the right side of our house was a small gated entrance to the *Hof* (farmyard) to walk through, and then came a big gated entrance for the wagons and carriages. The entrance and the entire *Hof* were paved in cobblestone, as were the roads. Next to the entrance was a big *Gemuese Garten* (vegetable garden) with all kinds of vegetables - carrots, green beans, snap peas, cauliflower, onions, cucumbers, and chives. And in addition to the vegetables, there was more fruit - grapes, strawberries, gooseberries, rhubarb, and *Pflaumen* (plums) from which we made *Pflaumenmus* (plum preserve) and *Pflaumenkuchen* (plum cake). There was also a big cherry tree with sweet cherries that Papa climbed to pick for us. Along the street in front of the vegetable garden and all the way to the end of the block, which was all our property, was a double sidewalk with a row of *Kastanien Baeume* (chestnut trees) growing down the middle. At the end of our property, our street dead-ended into *Bahnhof Strasse* (Train Station Street) which was where many of the stores and businesses were.

### **The Farmyard**

As you went around to the back of the house, you first came to two red brick *Pferdestaelle* (horse stalls) - one for about ten horses and then a smaller one for maybe three horses. The post office rented one of our horses, and the *alte* (old) Wolfram, one of the farm workers, would walk the horse several times a day to the post office on the *Markt* (plaza, like a town square), hitch it up to the mail wagon, ride back to the train station to meet the trains coming in to get the mail, take the mail wagon back to the post office, and walk the horse back home. Ruth remembers a time when Papa was also in charge of having the freight delivered that arrived at the *Gueter Bahnhof* (freight station) which was behind the train station, and for this he had very large wagons with big wheels.

In between the two *Pferdestaelle* was a room for the *Knecht* (farm servant who slept on the premises). We had only one man who slept there, but others worked there full time, such as the *alte* Wolfram and his son the *junge* (young) Wolfram. I think they worked for us the whole time we lived in Schoenlanke. We also had Stelter and later Westphal who were in charge of the cows. Stelter was an old man with open sores on his legs on which he put *Kuhscheisse* (cow manure). We also had many other workers who worked for us only as needed, such as at harvest time. We would go to their houses the night before to let them know when we needed them.

After the *Pferdestaelle* came the brick *Kuhstall* (cow stall) with two entrances for the milk cows. Mama sold the milk and that was her own money. In summer or early spring, Stelter or Westphal took the cows out to graze, and you can't imagine how good the butter made from the milk from these cows tasted. In addition to the milk cows, we also had a few bulls. Other people would bring their cows to mate with our bulls, and Irma would watch. During World War I when you weren't suppose to kill any cattle, Papa would send all the workers home and have *Herr* Strauch, a butcher from Behle, come and kill a cow for us. We would make up baskets of meat and take them to *Herr Buergermeister* (mayor) Froese and to *Fraeulein* (Miss) Stegmann, the president of the bank that was next door to our school. Papa was also in the business of buying and selling cattle and horses. He'd often go to East Prussia to buy cattle and to Berlin to sell them, always transporting the livestock by train. Whenever he made arrangements in East Prussia for a cattle car, he gave a false name because they already didn't like doing business with Jews there. I remember when inflation got so bad, he'd have to take a suitcase full of money on his buying trips. I never saw Papa doing manual labor on the farm; he was a businessman.

Next to the cows was the *Huehnerstall* (chicken house). At night we closed the doors, and the chickens went to sleep on some ladders as long as the room. We also had geese, but we didn't raise them as we did the chickens; I guess we bought them. *Frau* Westphal, the wife of Westphal who took care of the cows, came everyday to force-feed the geese to make them fat. It also was *Frau* Westphal who killed the geese, as well as the chickens, after we stopped taking them to the cantor who was a *Shochet* (ritual slaughterer). We pickled and smoked the breast and legs of the geese to make *Spickgans* (smoked goose). To make *Gaense Schmaltz* (goose fat), we took the skin and fat off the geese, cut it in squares, and cooked it with onions until the fat was clear and the skin was brown. After we pressed the fat out of the skin, we loved to eat the *Grieben* (crispy little pieces of skin) which was just delicious. We stored the *Gaense Schmaltz* in large brown ceramic jars and used it instead of butter when cooking or eating *fleischig* (meat). I remember when Joachim was a baby, Mama kept me home from school one day when they killed some geese. She and the *Dienstmaedchens* were going to be busy in the kitchen all day making *Schmaltz*, and she needed me to watch Joachim and shake his buggy. I sat on the bench in front of the tile oven in the living room and must have shaken the buggy too hard because it fell over and Joachim fell out. I quickly picked him up and put him back in the buggy, and Mama never knew what happened. Irma now tells me that the same thing happened to her once. When Joachim was bigger, he raised pigeons which we also ate. However, Mama had to wait until he was away to kill one of them. We only got to eat pigeon when we were sick. I remember taking a baked *Taubchen* (little pigeon) to *Schwester* (Sister) Anna when she was in the hospital with pneumonia. She was a nurse who took care of us three girls when we all had scarlet fever and they had to put a "Quarantined" sign on our house.

We always got everything together - measles, mumps, whatever.

Along the left side of the back of the house, there was a brick building where we kept the carriages. We had a big closed carriage, an open one, a sleigh, and a two-seater which was the only one that Papa ever drove himself. We were one of the few families in Schoenlanke to have a big carriage. However, even though we had all these carriages, we walked everywhere except when the weather was really bad. On the ground along the side of the building for the carriages was the door to our underground cellar where we kept meats and geese that had been pickled and smoked and fruits and vegetables that Mama had canned. It was always real cold down there.

Next to the building for the carriages was the *Waschkueche* (wash kitchen) where we washed the clothes and which also had a very big oven, like a baker's oven. Then came a small room for plucking goose feathers. We used these feathers to make feather bedding including the *Unterbett* which went on top of the box spring and the *Oberbett* which was like a down comforter, except a real down comforter was made only from the very small down feathers under the goose's belly. We also used this room to store the bread for the farm workers during Passover. Then came a stall where we sometimes kept sheep which served as our lawn mower, the *Rollstube* (roller room) in which there was a machine with wooden rollers to roll the laundry through, and, at the end of that row of buildings, three outhouses.

Across the back of the *Hof* were two large *Scheunen* (barns) where we kept the straw and hay, wagons, the big machine that separated the grain from the chaff, and a smaller machine called a *Hexel* that cut up the straw real fine to feed to the animals. The big machine used so much electricity that we got electricity at a lower rate for big users. In between the barns was a building where we stored coal and wood. In the middle of the *Hof* was the water pump, an old *Schuppen* (shed) for broken wheels and such, and an area where they collected all the horse and cow manure that was used to fertilize the fields.

Irma and I used to like to play hide and seek in all of the buildings in the *Hof* with the Wurstmacher boys and with Trude Raasch who lived across the street next to the train station in the duplex where the Schramms lived. Her father was the other *Bahnhofmeister*. They raised rabbits which they ate and then made muffs out of the fur. They also had a goat for goat's milk. We would walk it on a leash to the meadow to graze. The Wurstmacher boys lived on the other side of the train station. Their father was the *Gueter Bahnhofmeister*. Irma and I also liked to play in the carriages, pretending that we were on a date. I don't remember Ruth ever playing with us, except that time she vaccinated us. She was only 15 months older than Irma but thought that she was too sophisticated for us.

## The Fields

Next to the vegetable garden was another big field where Papa grew corn and red beets to feed the animals. I remember twice when the field was empty, Papa rented the land to a merry-go-round that would come to town, and we and our friends could ride it as much as we wanted for free. We also grew wheat, rye, barley, and oats on a field far away from the house on the other side of the railroad tracks. The barley and oats were feed for the animals, and some of the wheat and rye we had made into flour at *Herr Mattke's* mill in Lemnitz. Whenever *Herr Mattke* would come to our place, he'd bring us honey from his bees. We stored the feed grain in locked *Speichers* (granaries) on the second floor of the buildings with the carriages and the horses. Some of the grain we would sell, but we never sold any of the fruit and vegetables that we grew.

Every year at the end of grain harvest, we girls would go out to the field where the workers were. *Frau Westphal* would tie straw around our arms and say this little verse: "*Wir haben vernommen unser Fraeulein ist gekommen; wir wollen sie binden mit lieblichen Dingen mit lieblichen Sachen; viel Komplimente koennen wir nicht machen*" ("We see that our miss came; we want to welcome her and to tie her with lovely things; enough compliments we cannot make"). We'd give her a little money, and then we'd all return to the house for an *Erntefest* (after harvest celebration). A long table with a tablecloth was set up in the back of our house where we'd serve a big dinner with *Schnapps* and beer. The men drank and drank. We'd also play the gramophone, and the workers would dance.

There was another big field where we grew potatoes. At harvest time, Mama would go out to the field each day and give the workers a coupon for every basket they filled, and they were paid according to the number of coupons they had. The potatoes would be stored in a deep hole dug in a field behind the *Scheune* (barn). First they lined the hole with straw, then filled it with potatoes, and then covered the potatoes with more straw and then with dirt, making a mound on top.

A good distance from the house, Papa also owned a meadow where they'd let the grass grow high to make hay. Twice a year, in the spring and fall, many men would go out to the meadow to cut down the tall grass. In the earlier years, they used a sickle, but later they used a machine pulled by a horse.

## Our Chores

We girls never went out to help with the animals, but Joachim loved to and would go out instead of doing his homework. Then Papa would get mad at us for not making



him do his studies. We didn't have any chores outside except every evening one of us would go unlock the *Speichers* and watch the farm workers weigh the grain to feed the animals.

Although we always had two *Dienstmaedchens*, we were expected to help with certain chores inside, like drying dishes. Mama said that it was always good to know how in case we ever had to do it. Also, after *Mittag* (noon meal), we had to dust and use the carpet sweeper in the living room, even though the *Stubenmaedchen* had already done it once in the morning. We also helped peel potatoes, and Mama liked us to help her cook. However, I didn't like that because all she'd have us do was bring her things. If left alone in the kitchen, I liked to fix *Carbonade* (pan-fried rib veal chops), and whenever I fixed that, Papa would remark that he didn't know why it tasted so much better than usual.

### Frau Westphal

In addition to the two *Dienstmaedchens*, *Frau Westphal* came everyday to help with various chores such as those already mentioned. I really don't know what we would have done without her. She even cured some of our ailments. Whenever we had warts, she would tie a string around the wart and then bury the string, and the wart would fall off in a few days. When we had an infected finger, she would blow on it, say a prayer and cross herself, and the finger would somehow get better. Even Papa let her cure him of his backaches. *Frau Westphal*, who was strong but not big, would stand back to back with Papa and then bend over forward pulling Papa over backwards.

One of *Frau Westphal's* regular chores was doing the laundry. The night before, the *Stubenmaedchen* would smear soft soap over the dirty wash. In the morning, *Frau Westphal* first would scrub the dirty laundry on the washboard, then put it into large kettles on the range in the *Waschkueche* where she boiled it in soapy water and then again in clear water. Then she hung the laundry on the clothes line in the fruit garden. When it was dry, she folded it, took it to the *Rollstube* where she rolled it around these big wooden rollers on top of which she pulled down this big machine to smooth it all out. Then she folded the laundry again, and the *Stubenmaedchen* ironed it. Doing the laundry was a big job.

*Frau Westphal* also baked the bread for the week. Mama did all the rest of the cooking and baking except for when *Frau Kroschel* came to bake sponge cakes for Passover and to cater special occasions such as Papa's 50th birthday. Both *Frau Westphal* and *Frau Kroschel* used the big oven out in the *Waschkueche*. *Frau Westphal* would come the evening before and fix the dough in a big wooden trough which she

stood in front of the kitchen oven where she'd leave it overnight to rise. The next morning, she took the dough out to the *Waschkueche* where she formed round loaves of bread and put them on this big wooden board and let them rise again. Then she pushed the board in the oven. After the loaves started getting brown, she took the board out, brushed the loaves with some water, and put them back in to bake. This made the loaves all shiny when they were finished baking. The bread was delicious, but I preferred the bread from the baker.



## Chapter 2

### LIFE IN SCHOENLANKE

#### Our Judaism

While we usually had our big meal at noon, on Fridays we had it in the evening for *Shabbas* (Sabbath). Mama lit the *Shabbas* candles every Friday night, but I can't remember anyone ever saying the blessings over the candles, wine, or bread. Every Friday, Mama would bake two *Strietzels* (*challahs*, traditional Jewish braided bread). She would send them to Stabenow's Bakery to bake in their oven as she did with cakes because it was too much work for her to heat the big oven with wood and coal, and the baking sheets were too big for the oven in the kitchen. As soon as we picked up the *Strietzel* from the baker, we'd start eating it, not waiting for our *Shabbas* meal.

We kept kosher at the table - no pork and no mixing *fleischig* (meat) with *milchig* (dairy) - but not always in the kitchen. At harvest time, we fixed pork sausage sandwiches on real thick slices of bread for all the workers in the fields. Mama also fixed pork liverwurst sandwiches on Sundays for Ruth when she was working and slept till noon, and would take them up to her room. Papa didn't know about that; he would not have liked it. We had two kinds of tablecloths - white for *fleischig* and colors for *milchig*. When I was younger, we also had three sets of dishes - all white for *fleischig*, white with blue for *milchig*, and another set for Passover - but not later.

We had a nice size temple in Schoenlanke. It was on a *Gasse* (narrow street without sidewalks) behind the *Markt*. People would come from the neighboring villages and towns that didn't have a temple. The temple was conservative, leaning towards orthodox. The women were separated from the men and had to sit in the balcony. We had a rabbi, a cantor, and a *Shamas*. The cantor and the *Shamas* lived in a duplex right next door to the temple, and the rabbi lived in an apartment house on the *Markt*.

You didn't pay dues to the temple. Instead, the local government automatically

collected a percentage of your income along with your income tax and turned it over to whichever religious group you belonged to. Wherever you lived and anytime you moved, even within the same town, you had to register at the local police precinct, and on the registration form was a blank for religious affiliation. While you didn't pay dues to the temple, you did have to buy your seats, with the price going up the closer to the front. Papa sat on the first or second row. The seats were wooden pews with arm rests.

Right next to the temple was the *Mikvah* (Jewish ritual bath) where they also had separate rooms with tubs where people who didn't have indoor plumbing could bathe. The real orthodox women went to the *Mikvah* to be cleansed before they were married and then after menstruating each month, but Mama never went. When Ruth got married, the new rabbi, Rabbi Berlinger, wanted her to go be submerged, but she got hoarse and couldn't go. We also had a *Bet Midrash* (house of study) where we went weekday afternoons and Sunday mornings for Hebrew. Rabbi Bamberger was our Hebrew teacher, and he was awful. He would fall asleep, and we learned nothing from him. People would bring him the thing that hung from the neck of a goose or chicken to see if it was kosher, and he would touch it and then would pinch our cheeks. After Rabbi Bamberger died, they hired a very strict teacher, *Herr Hess*, and we really found out how little we had learned. The *Bet Midrash* also was used, instead of the temple, by men saying morning and afternoon *Kaddish* (memorial prayer).

We also had religion in school with different classes set up for the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish children. Rabbi Bamberger would come to teach once or twice a week. The Protestant and Catholic children had religion on other days also when we didn't, and we were allowed to leave for that hour. We'd go visit Uncle Julius and *Tante* (Aunt) Laura Dannenbaum, Papa's aunt and uncle, who lived on *Friedrich Strasse* near our school. Uncle Julius was so much fun. We would run around with him singing "*Oh Tannenbaum, Oh Tannenbaum.*"

The only times I remember going to temple were for the high holy days. Only the men went on *Rosh Hashanah*<sup>2</sup> eve and *Yom Kippur* eve. Papa wore a white *Tallit* (prayer shawl) with black stripes along the bottom which he kept in a dark velvet case with yellow embroidery. Ruth says that he also wore the traditional *Kaepchen* or *Yarmulke* (skullcap), but Irma and I just remember him wearing his *Zylandar Hut* (high hat). On *Rosh Hashanah* day, one of us would have to leave services early to go home to tell the *Kuechenmaedchen* to put the potatoes on. We had a telephone at our house - our number was 16 - but the temple didn't have one. On *Yom Kippur*, we children slept till noon and then went to services in the afternoon. On the way, we stopped at Nowitzky's flower shop and bought cut violets to take to Mama so that she would have something

---

<sup>2</sup> All Jewish holidays are explained under "Jewish Terms" in the Glossary at the back of the book.

good to smell during services since everyone would be fasting. Mama sat with *Tante Martha*, *Tante Therese*, and *Frau Ziegen* (Goat) Levy (no relation) on the front row of the side balcony. We called *Frau Levy* and her husband "*Ziegen Levy*" because he raised and smoked goats and sold the meat. She would come to temple all *ausgeputzt* (overdressed) and looking as if she had emptied her whole safe. Ruth, Irma, and I would sit and talk with the other girls on a long bench at the back, and sometimes the *Shamas* would have to come upstairs to tell us to be quiet. After services, one of the farm workers would come in our carriage to pick us up because we would be too weak from fasting for the 30 minute walk home. When we got home, we first had breakfast - *Strietzel* and coffee - and then a big meal.

On both the first and second nights of *Pesach* (Passover), we had a *Seder* (Passover service and meal). Papa read the entire *Haggadah* (prayer book for Passover *Seder*) in Hebrew which none of us could understand. Irma and Ruth often had a romance novel inside their *Haggadah*, but I was sitting next to Mama so I didn't dare. We'd have *Haroses* (traditional Passover dish of chopped apples, nuts, and wine), hard boiled eggs, *Matzo* ball soup, turkey for the main course, and sponge cake for dessert. We'd get our *Matzos* (unleavened bread), freshly baked round ones, from the big *Matzo Fabrik* (factory) owned by the Ruschins and the Philipps right in Schoenlanke, one of only two in all of Germany. The *Matzo Fabrik* was just on the other side of the railroad tracks from us, and when they were baking the *Matzos*, we could smell it at our house. The Ruschins also owned the Jewish bakery.

During *Sukkos*, the *Shamas* would come to our house very early every morning with a *lulav* (palm, willow, and myrtle branches) and an *esrog* (citron) which he would wave while saying a prayer. I guess he went door to door to every Jewish family. Ruth remembers that Rabbi Bamberger would build a *Sukkoh* (hut covered with greenery and hanging fruit) on the balcony of his apartment and that Papa would send him corn stalks to cover it with. On *Simchas Torah*, which was the last day of *Sukkos*, we would go to temple and watch as the *Torahs* (scroll containing the Five Books of Moses) were marched around. After the *Torahs* were replaced in the Ark, all of the children would gather downstairs, and unwrapped candies would be thrown to us from the balcony. It was the only time that we girls were allowed downstairs in the temple. I guess *Simchas Torah* was one other time besides the high holy days that we went to temple.

On *Purim*, the children went to the *Bet Midrash* to read the *Megillah* (Book of Esther), and at night there would be a *Purim Ball* at Kramp's Hotel where the Hebrew school students would perform. At *Chamukah*, there was a *Chamukah Ball*. We lit the *Chamukah Menorah* (candelabra for nine candles) at home every night, and the whole family played a card game called *Gottes Segen bei Cohn* (God's Blessing by Cohn) with money. We didn't exchange gifts like we do in America. In 1918, Uncle Isidor and

Uncle Philipp Sommerfeld stayed with us for a while and were there over *Chamukah*. Uncle Isidor's daughter came to visit and played "*Ma-oz-tsur*" ("Rock of Ages") on the piano. Uncle Philipp and Uncle Isidor were Mama's first cousins from Schubin which had become Poland at the end of World War I, and they were trying to avoid serving in the Polish army. We called all of our older relatives "*Tante*" or "Uncle" even though they weren't really our aunt or uncle.

We didn't celebrate Christmas, but on Christmas Eve the *Weihnachtsmann* (Santa Claus) would come and leave us sweets and *Pfefferkuchen* or *Lebkuchen* (kinds of cake) in our stockings or shoes. He stopped coming after we figured out who he was when we found the mask and Papa's fur-lined coat which he had worn inside-out on the back of the cellar door. Our *Dienstmaedchens* had a very small Christmas tree in their room, and we'd like to go in there to see it. We'd also get to see the big Christmas tree at *Frau Westphal's* when we'd go to deliver her *Buntenteller* (tray of sweets and fruit) that we gave her and all the servants. She lived in an apartment on the third floor above Stabenow's Bakery. And on Christmas day, we always had a goose dinner.

### **Eating Well**

We ate very well. We started each day with two *Fruehstuecks* (breakfasts). The first *Fruehstueck* was around 6:30 when we'd just have bread. In winter, Papa would put a piece of bread on a fork and hold it in one of the tile ovens to toast. Irma remembers that Papa would drink his coffee poured over a beaten raw egg. I don't remember that, but I do remember drinking wine poured over a beaten raw egg when we were sick to make us stronger. The second *Fruehstueck* was at 10:00. If we were at home, we'd have cheeses or eggs, and if we were at school, we'd eat sandwiches that we had taken along. Trude Raasch used to bring bacon sandwiches that smelled so good.

As I said before, our main meal, *Mittag*, was at noon. We had four courses: *Suppe* (soup), vegetables, meat and potatoes or fish and milk rice, and dessert, maybe fruit. In the summertime, we'd have cold *Suppe - Blaubeeren* (blueberry), *Apfel* (apple), or *Rhabarba* (rhubarb). We'd go to school in summertime at 7:00 instead of 8:00 and come home at noon in time to eat with our parents. But the rest of the year, we went to school from 8:00 until 1:00, so Mama would have to save our *Mittag* for us. By 3:30 we were hungry again, and we'd have coffee and cake or warm *Broetchens* (rolls) that we'd get fresh from Stabenow's Bakery, or sometimes we'd get fresh *Matzos* from the *Matzo Fabrik*.

For supper, around 7:00 or 8:00, we'd just have potato pancakes or open-faced sandwiches on hard rolls. On Saturdays, we went to town to *Frau Vermut's*, a produce store and *milchig* deli, to buy smoked flounder and cheeses for supper - it had to be

*milchig*. And on Sunday evenings, we had *fleischig*. We went to Hirsekorn's, a small Jewish hotel and kosher *Fleischerei* (meat market), and bought *Dampfwurst* and other sausages which we would then put in potato or pea soup for Monday's *Mittag*. And for every meal, we'd set the table.

### Our School

Ruth, Irma, and I went to a private school on Wilhelm *Strasse* that went through tenth grade. Boys attended the first three grades, but then went to the *Realschule* (private school for grades four through twelve) on Friedrich *Strasse*, next door to Uncle Julius and *Tante* Laura Dannenbaum. There was a *Volksschule* (public school) on *Bahnhof Strasse* that went through eighth grade, as required by law, for anyone who couldn't afford private school. We had school six days a week; however, on Saturdays the Jewish students were excused from doing any writing. Our school was a good 30 minute walk from our house. It was right down the street from the courthouse and jail which was behind a big red brick wall. We were always scared when we walked past the jail.

We didn't wear uniforms to school, but we had to wear navy *Klassen Muetzens* (class caps) that looked like stiff berets. On the cap were different color bands representing each grade we had completed. At the end of the school year after we got our report card, we would stop at Goldstein's Men's Store on the way home and get our new cap with the next color band on it. When Mama and Papa saw us coming, they could tell if we passed, which of course we always did. Papa didn't care so much if we made good grades in our classes as long as we tried our best because he understood that it could be hard to learn sometimes. However, he insisted that we make a "1," which was the highest mark, in *Betragen* (behavior) and *Aufmerksamkeit* (attentiveness).

When Ruth started school, she didn't want to go, so she said she had a stomach ache. Mama took her screaming the first day, and *Tante* Kaetchen Ruehe, one of the school owners, carried her up the three flights of stairs to her classroom. When Ruth got home, Papa asked her how her stomach ache was and gave her a spanking. She never complained again about going to school. I don't remember Papa ever laying a hand on me or Irma. All he had to do was give us one of his looks, and we did whatever he said.

Out of about 20 to 25 girls in my class, there were about five other Jewish girls, including my first cousin Ilse Levy. We were good friends with the Jews and gentiles alike. All of the teachers were women and were very nice, except two of them who were very German and couldn't stand Ilse. One of them was *Fraeulein* Witzman, the gym teacher, who stuck Ilse with a pin you know where when she couldn't climb up a



wooden pole. For gymnastics we walked to the *Realschule* around the block where they had a gymnasium with all kinds of gymnastic equipment. And after school we met at the *Sportsplatz* (sports field) behind the *Volksschule* to play ball. On Sundays, they had soccer games there, but I never went. I didn't think that any Jews ever went, but Irma just told me that she went with Trude Raasch.

*Tante* Kaetchen taught us French starting in the third grade, and *Tante* Lieschen, her sister with whom she owned the school, taught us English starting in the fourth or fifth grade. We had to continue taking both languages all the way through school. *Tante* Lieschen would make us stick out our tongue between our teeth to make the "th" sound which didn't exist in German. They had another sister, *Tante* Lucy, who was in charge of the boarders who came from nearby towns. I don't know why we called the owners "*Tante*." Our other subjects included math, history, and geography, each with a different teacher, and religion as I already mentioned. When the teachers came into the room, we had to stand up. And if we saw them on the street, we had to *knix* (curtsy). We had four weeks vacation in the summer and a week at Easter and Christmas.

If you wanted to go to college, you had to go twelve grades. Since our school only went through the tenth grade, you had to go to the *Realschule* for the last two grades to get your *Abitur* (graduation certification). I only knew two girls who ever did that. One of them was Ilse Rosenberg who even went on to go to medical school but had to quit when the Nazis came to power. I saw her in Israel when we were there in 1969, and she was working as a nurse. While none of us went to college, Ruth did go to finishing school in Freiburg for a year and to business school in Berlin. She then worked as a secretary for Alexander Cohen, a wholesale grocery company in Schoenlanke. When they opened an office in Schneidemuehl, she moved there, which was really something for a young single girl to do at that time.

### **Entertainment**

Although Schoenlanke's population was only about 10,000, it didn't feel like a small town - we had everything. We had three hotels (besides Hirsekorn's small Jewish hotel) - Teucher's, Kramp's, and Leege - Jahn's Ballroom, and a *Konditorei* (coffee house) called Cafe Seuss. On weekends, Teuchers had musicians come from Schneidemuehl, and we would go dance - when I was old enough that is. I remember before I was 16, I would cry when Ruth and Irma would go off and leave me at home.

We didn't go out on dates in Schoenlanke like people do here. We'd just all go together in groups or meet up with friends somewhere. On Saturday or Sunday

afternoons, we would walk with friends to the Zaskersee, one of several lakes in the area. It was a good distance from our house, and you had to walk through the woods to get there which always made me nervous. On the way back, we'd stop at Teucher's for 5:00 tea and to dance. As my sister Irma always said, there really wasn't much going on at Teucher's if the Levy girls weren't there. *Frau* Teucher was very nice to us and would rub our hands to warm them when it was cold. We'd then go home for supper, and after supper we would return to dance some more. Mama and Papa would come along in the evenings to chaperone. And oh how we loved to dance - the waltz, the charleston, and the tango. While dancing the tango with Hans Grunwald, we used to sing a song that went "*Was machst du mit dem Knie lieber Hans beim tanzen?*" ("What are you doing with your knee dear Hans while we're dancing?"). Hans's brother Alfred was also good at the tango and bent you over so far that he'd almost break your neck.

Mama had taught us how to dance very early - I must have been five or six years old. We had an old gramophone that you had to wind up, and she taught us how to do the waltz, the polka, and the Rhinelander (two steps of the polka and then turn). I remember dancing with the men at my cousin Rudi's *Bar Mitzvah* (male rite of passage at 13), and I was only ten. Sometimes we would dance when *Herr* Hennemann, a son of a friend of Papa's from Kreutz, would come for meals and would play the piano for us. He was in Schoenlanke studying at the *Preperanden Anstalt* (Preparatory Institute) to be a teacher. Mama was a very good dancer and could be much fun. However, she also was known to be "quick with her hand" and even used it once on Ruth when she couldn't catch on to the waltz. Mama couldn't understand how a daughter of hers couldn't dance. She finally sent Ruth for lessons with *Herr* Kleinschmidt who came from Schneidemuehl once or twice a week and taught at Jahns Ballroom. And all three of us also took dancing lessons (but not ballroom dancing) from *Frau* Vigletti who always stood and walked with her feet in first position. She choreographed dances such as the *Matrosen Tanz* (sailor dance) that we would perform at local functions such as for the *Kaufmaennischer Verein* (the equivalent of a retail merchants association). She only taught on Sundays though because she also had a *Confiture* (candy store) which smelled so good when you entered.

Schoenlanke also had a picture show with a balcony. I remember seeing silent movies with Tom Mix and Charlie Chaplin. And what excitement it was when the first talking picture came to town. And what a disappointment when it didn't work. The Kramp's Hotel also had visiting musicians, performers, and lecturers come for *Kunst und Wissenschaft* (Art and Knowledge) that Mama belonged to and attended.

### **Business and Industry in Schoenlanke**

For such a small town, Schoenlanke had much industry. Besides the *Matzo*

*Fabrik*, we had four *Zigarren* (cigar) *Fabriks* - Will *Soehne* (Sons), Eppenstein's, Grunwald's, and Eckersdorf's. We also had a brewery that was owned by the Lehman's and a soda water plant owned by the Scharloks. Both families had daughters with whom Irma and I were friends. And there were several furniture manufacturers and lumber yards. One of the furniture factories was owned by the Tobias and Adolph Levy (no relation) families who lived in a beautiful villa around the block from us on *Bahnhof Strasse*. It was called a "villa" because they had a very large beautiful landscaped yard. We saw the Tobias's son Herman when we visited Israel in 1969. And there was also a business selling farm equipment, a brick factory, and a *Lumpen Fabrik* (rag factory) which bought old rags. I don't know what they did with them. In addition to the heavy industry, Schoenlanke had a professional photographer (Carl Land), several banks, and not only one, but later on two local newspapers.

Schoenlanke also had many stores. We had so many *Kolonialwarens* (grocery stores) - Donner's, Luedtke's, Pfeifer's, Kleissner's, Sinasohn's, and Radtke's - I couldn't name them all. We shopped at Donner's who even delivered. Mama sometimes just called in her order. However, at Passover we bought all the *Pesachdik* (kosher for Passover) items at Kleissner's. The grocery stores sold staples such as canned goods, sugar, flour, coffee, tea, rice, and noodles. For produce you had to go to a produce store such as *Frau Vermut's* or to the *Markt* twice a week when farmers would come sell their crop; for bread to a bakery; for meat to a *Fleischerei*; and for milk to the *Molkerei* (dairy) or to Mama. We had many meat markets including two kosher ones - Hirsekorn's and Cohen's. Fish you could buy from village people who came house to house with baskets full of fish wrapped in *Rhabarba* leaves. Or you could buy fish caught in the *Ost* (Baltic) Sea from fishermen who came to the *Markt* from Kolberg twice a week when the farmers were there. We also had stores such as Munter's selling dishes and pots and pans, dry good stores such as Salinger's selling bedding, linens, and material, and bookstores such as Huebner's. And then there was *Frau Rueckert's* elegant jewelry and gift shop. I still have beautiful cut glass pieces that Mama bought there.

### Our Clothes

For clothing, there were hat stores such as *Fraeulein* Schaul's, shoe stores such as Biener's, and stores such as Goldstein's that sold men's clothing. However, Papa was so big that he had to have his clothes custom-made. He always wore three-piece suits and ankle-high leather boots with elastic which he had handmade at Biener's. But the one thing Schoenlanke didn't have was a store to buy good ready-made women's clothing. So we had to have all our clothes made by a series of dressmakers - first *Fraeulein* Schirmer, then *Fraeulein* Goldstein who was the daughter of the *Shamas*, and after she got married, *Fraeulein* Witchorek. When we were young, we three girls

dressed alike which wasn't so bad except I, being the youngest, had to wear all the hand-me-downs and would end up wearing the same dress for many years. I particularly remember a blue and white striped *Matrosen* (sailor) dress with a pleated skirt and a navy silk dress with pink embroidery that we're wearing in a picture I have. In that same picture, you can see our handmade laced-up above-the-ankle shoes which we had made at Biener's. I wore such shoes until I was about ten. We wore dark cotton or wool stockings with the black or brown shoes and white stockings with the white ones. Once on a buying trip to East Prussia, Papa bought us beautiful lined black patent boots with Persian lamb across the top to wear over our shoes in the winter. In between periodically taking our wool clothing to the cleaners in Schneidemuehl, Mama would brush off the dark wool items with a brush dipped in cold coffee. We wore our dresses below the knee until the 20s when we kept right in style with short flapper dresses. I had dresses in Germany that I wish I still had to wear today. Mama always insisted that we dress well because you never knew who you might meet.



## CHAPTER 3

### OUR EXTENDED FAMILY

#### Family in Schoenlanke

I've already mentioned Uncle Julius and *Tante* Laura Dannenbaum who lived near our school. Uncle Julius was a brother of Papa's mother, Henrietta Dannenbaum Levy, who died when I was only three years old. Uncle Julius and *Tante* Laura had moved to Schoenlanke before I was born from Stieglitz, very close by, where Uncle Julius ran a tavern that had been owned by his father.

I also had another Uncle Julius living in Schoenlanke - Papa's brother, Julius Levy, who lived at *Bahnhof Strasse* 39. He and Papa both were heavy set, shaved their heads, had big red mustaches, and looked real German. Uncle Julius was so full of humor and was so much fun. It's amazing that no one ever got mad at him for his teasing and the pranks he played. Papa was quiet but also had a sense of humor and could tease, but not like Uncle Julius. *Tante* Martha, Uncle Julius's wife, was a lovely, truly remarkable woman - a little thing who really could handle big Uncle Julius and could make much out of little. We were very close to her. They had three children - Ilse, who was in my class; Rudi, who was born to Uncle Julius's first wife who had died in childbirth along with Rudi's twin sister; and Maexe, with whom we played a lot. Uncle Julius sold horses and cattle like Papa, but their place was much smaller than ours.

Papa had an unmarried sister *Tante* Therese who lived in a little apartment on the side of Uncle Julius's house. Even though she had a kitchen in her apartment, she ate all of her meals with them. *Tante* Therese really loved herself; she stayed in bed all winter and whenever her nose just dripped a little. However, *Tante* Therese did make a wonderful *Magdalenen Kuchen* (a kind of cake) on her birthday which was the same day as the Kaiser's. We'd all get together for birthdays, first having a *Kaffee Klatch* (coffee get together) with coffee and cake in the late afternoon and then eating a cold supper. I remember one year for Ilse's birthday, it was very cold so Papa sent us in the sleigh, and on the way, I ate the little chocolate animal that I was to give her for her birthday.

Whenever Mama had everyone over for a birthday, she'd usually fix potato salad and kosher *Wuerstchen* (wienies). The families didn't get together for holidays though.

And we never got together with *Tante* Grete Heide, Mama's only sister, and her family. *Tante* Grete's husband, Uncle Paul, and Papa didn't speak to each other. The Heides had lived in Lobsens, and after it became Poland at the end of World War I, they wanted to move to Schoenlanke. A good friend of Papa's, Simon Goldstein, told Papa about a grocery and building material business for sale. Papa told Uncle Paul, and he ended up buying the business but refused to buy *Herr* Goldstein a box of cigars to thank him as Papa suggested. So Papa bought the cigars himself, and after that he and Uncle Paul never spoke. When Uncle Paul walked past our house to go to the train station, he'd walk on the other side of the street. And we never shopped at their grocery store which was across the street from the *Finanzamt* (German equivalent of the I.R.S.) where you went to pay your taxes. When Omama and Opapa, Mama's and *Tante* Grete's parents, came to live with us, *Tante* Grete and her children Kurt and Ruthchen would come over to visit, but that was the only time we'd see them. Kurt, who was sent to England through O.R.T. (Organization for Rehabilitation and Training) in the 1930s to escape Hitler, returned to Schoenlanke (now Trzcianka, Poland) in 1976 and took a picture of our house which was still standing. It looked awful. It looked as if it had been divided into apartments, and the shutters had been removed. He was surprised to find how much of the town looked unchanged. We had gotten to know Kurt and Ruthchen better when we got older. In fact, they both visited us in Houston after we immigrated, and Irma and Ruth visited them often on their trips to Europe. Kurt was still living in England, and Ruthchen had moved to Marbella, Spain from Buenos Aires where she had escaped to before the war.

### **Omama and Opapa in Schrotz**

After World War I ended in 1918, Germany and the newly recreated Poland still were fighting over the new boundary dividing the two countries. Schoenlanke was very close to the disputed area, and we actually could hear gunfire at our house. So our parents decided to send Ruth, Irma, Joachim, and me, along with *Tante* Therese, Ilse, and Maexe, and one of our *Dienstmaedchens*, for several weeks to stay with Omama and Opapa who were still living in Schrotz. Schrotz was probably just 15 or 20 miles north of Schoenlanke, but we had to go through Schneidemuehl where we changed trains, and the trip took about an hour. My parents, afraid that the Poles would come in and destroy everything, also sent a horse and wagon full of household goods. But we were lucky - the Poles never got to Schoenlanke, and the new border was drawn just east of our town.

Schrotz was a small village, nothing like Schoenlanke. Whenever we talk about

someone who doesn't dress very well, we say that they look like they came from Schrotz. Omama and Opapa had a store in the front half of the downstairs of their house. It was the only store in Schrotz. They sold everything - dry goods, groceries, material, shoes, candy - you name it. Opapa was very tall and good-looking and lots of fun. Omama was the boss in that family - a real businesswoman who ran the store. Whenever a woman came in the store, Omama would lift her dress to see if her slip or petticoat was made with material from the store. Ruth remembers cigars they sold from Will *Soehne* in Schoenlanke which had wrappers that read: "*Sollt ich sterben, gibt Zigarren mir zehntauseud mit ins Grab, dass ich auf der langen Reise von Will Soehne Zigarren hab*" ("Should I die, put ten thousand cigars in my coffin from Will Sons so I have enough to smoke on that long journey").

Omama put a bed for *Tante* Therese in the *gute Stube* (good room), usually used only for high visitors, and, it being winter, she stayed in bed the whole time. We children were out playing on the frozen lake one day when the ice broke and Maexe fell in. I don't remember who pulled him out. After that Omama kept us busy doing cross-stitching. Whenever we'd go visit Omama during summer vacations, which was often, we liked to catch fish in that lake using big nets.

Omama and Opapa lived across the street from the Catholic Church. They also owned a two-story apartment house next door to them, and one of their tenants was the vicar. We used to like to look inside his outhouse which he had covered with newspapers and magazines. Schrotz was a very Catholic town. In August, people would come on a pilgrimage from all around for *Kraut Marie*, a Catholic holiday. The vicar and priest would lead a processional, sprinkling holy water and blessing everyone. If we happened to be there visiting during summer vacation, Omama, being the good businesswoman she was, would tie money belts around us and send us outside to sell soft drinks and sweet rolls. Mama said that she used to do the same thing when she was a little girl.

Omama and Opapa were the only Jews in Schrotz but were orthodox and kept kosher. They had to take their chickens to Deutsch Krone to be killed by the *Shochet* there. I guess the only reason they lived in Schrotz is that they inherited the store from Omama's parents, Marcus and Rosalie Cohn. Ruth remembers when Omama's father still lived with them. I was just two when he died at the ripe old age of 98.

Whenever we went to Schrotz, Opapa would come in his horse and wagon to pick us up at the train station. On the way to their house, we would pass a farm where a stork had built its nest on top of the silo. Every year the stork would return and lay its eggs. The town could tell when spring had arrived by the return of the stork. Kurt also visited Schrotz (now Skrzatusz, Poland) in 1976 and took a picture of that same stork



nest with a stork standing on it. I guess that stork could have been the great-granddaughter of the one we used to see. I'm sure I was convinced at one time that that stork had delivered me. When I got a little older, Irma and I would talk about where babies really came from, and if Ruth heard us, she'd say "*Das sag ich Mama*" ("I'm going to tell Mama").

Ruth was the only one of us who liked to go to Schrotz to visit. Omama would let her do things that she couldn't do at home, such as wear *Holz pantoffel* (wooden shoes) like the farm children wore. Mama wouldn't let her children be caught dead in them. She also liked to help herself to the candy in the store. Once when Ruth was there visiting during vacation, she gained so much weight that Omama sent her home wearing a corset. She thinks that she was their *Marzipanpueppchen* (favorite little doll made of marzipan).

In 1920, Omama and Opapa came to live with us. Papa had advised them to sell their house and store. Inflation was terrible, and whatever they got became worthless almost immediately. They brought some of their leftover inventory with them and stored it upstairs in the guest bedroom, but wouldn't let us have any of it. So whenever they went to visit *Tante* Grete, Mama and Papa would go up there and help themselves to sugar and to rolls of white linen that Mama used to make bedding. Opapa died in 1924 while my parents were in Berlin on business. Omama lived with us until Papa died in 1929 and we moved to Schneidemuehl; then she lived with *Tante* Grete until her death in 1931.

### **The Dannenbaum Family**

I didn't know my other grandparents, Henrietta and Joseph Levy. Papa's father died in 1898, crippled with arthritis. My grandmother Henrietta Dannenbaum Levy died in 1913. Ruth remembers her, but I don't. They had lived in Behle, but she moved to Schoenlanke with *Tante* Therese after my grandfather died. We recently have learned a great deal about her family, the Dannenbaums, because my daughter Lorraine has been working on a Dannenbaum family tree.

Henrietta's parents were Nathan and Ernestine Joseph Dannenbaum from Stieglitz, Germany, about five miles south of Schoenlanke. We knew that Henrietta had two brothers - Uncle Julius Dannenbaum who lived in Schoenlanke near our school, and Joseph Dannenbaum who had immigrated to Texas around 1860. And we just found out while working on the family tree that she had three other siblings - another brother, August, and two sisters, Pauline and Amalie, or Mollie as she was called - all three of whom had immigrated to America in the late 1800s and initially lived in East or West Columbia, Texas, about 50 miles south of Houston.

We had known about my grandmother's brother Joseph Dannenbaum, even though he had immigrated in the mid 1800s, because Uncle Julius Dannenbaum and my grandmother Henrietta each had a descendant who married a descendant of Joseph's. The first time the families intermarried was when Uncle Julius's son, also named Joseph (I'll refer to him as Uncle Joe), immigrated to America in 1896 and married his first cousin Rosa Dannenbaum, a daughter of his Uncle Joseph. I only saw Uncle Joe once when he and his wife *Tante* Rosa came to Germany to visit in 1924; he died before I immigrated. The second time the families intermarried was when my sister Irma, after immigrating in 1934, married her second cousin Nathan Dannenbaum, a grandson of the original Joseph Dannenbaum.

We also recently discovered more information about the original Joseph Dannenbaum. According to Civil War records which his great-great-grandson Kevin Lewis had obtained, Joseph enlisted as a private for the Confederacy in October 1861, was stationed in Galveston, and deserted in August 1864. His great-grandsons Bob and David Dannenbaum remember hearing stories that he had fled to Mexico thinking he had killed a man in a fight after the man had accused him of cheating in a poker game. When he returned to Texas several years later, he discovered that the man only had been knocked unconscious. We recently got our hands on a tin-type photograph of Joseph in his Civil War uniform from his great-granddaughter-in-law Gladys Pollak. We also just surprisingly discovered, by using a magnifying glass to look at the dates on a picture of my grandmother Henrietta's grave, that she and Joseph were twins. No one had ever mentioned that. However, Florence Blum, a friend of the family, explained that way back then people used to be ashamed of having twins because they didn't understand how it happened and thought it might have been the result of kinky sex or something.

We found out about August Dannenbaum, who had immigrated in 1868, when questioning Laura Norma Wolff, a relative in Houston, as to how she was related to us. We always knew we were related, but neither of us knew how. At first all she knew was that her grandfather's name was August Dannenbaum and that he was from Germany. However, she then found an old German prayer book that had belonged to her grandfather in which he had written in German, which she couldn't read, births and deaths of family members. There I found my great-grandfather Nathan Dannenbaum listed with the date he died. We later found at the Mormon Library a birth record for a child born to Nathan and Ernestine Dannenbaum on the same date as August's birth date found on his tombstone at the old Beth Israel Cemetery here in Houston where August, Joseph, Pauline, and Mollie are all buried.

We found out about Pauline Dannenbaum, who had immigrated to Texas in 1873 and married Winzenti Freund, when trying to figure out how her daughter, Cousin

Esther Levy, another relative in Houston who died many years ago, was related to us. We knew it wasn't through the Levy side of the family. My father had a sister *Tante* Martha (who will be discussed at length later) who had immigrated to Texas in 1895, supposedly to find a husband, and we had heard that she had stayed with Cousin Esther's parents when she arrived. We finally solved that puzzle when Paula Levy Friedlander, a granddaughter of Cousin Esther, found a book from her grandmother's funeral that named Cousin Esther's mother as Pauline Dannenbaum Freund. Paula then found in a family bible a listing for the death of N. Dannenbaum, presumably my great-grandfather Nathan. We later got our hands on an old album that belonged to *Tante* Martha from her grandson Marshall Wagner, and in it was her wedding invitation which read "Mr. and Mrs. W. Freund respectfully request your presence at the marriage of their niece, Miss Martha Levy to Mr. Morris Breier." That album also had some wonderful old photographs of family members.

And the last Dannenbaum we just found out about is Mollie Dannenbaum who married Wolf Burchardt in Germany, lived in Radolin, a small village next to Behle, and immigrated to Texas in 1881. We found out about her after Henry A. Breier, a son of *Tante* Martha's, identified one of the pictures in *Tante* Martha's album as being the Burchardts who he said were related to us, but he didn't know how. I knew Mollie Burchardt's grandsons, Mikey and Bubba Solomon, because they were very good friends of Henry A., but I didn't know that they were related. We were able to get a copy of Mollie's death certificate from Austin, and it showed her father also to be N. Dannenbaum of Germany. So what we originally thought to be a family of three siblings turned out to be a family of at least six that we now know of. And what's really amazing is that either they or descendants from each of them eventually settled in Houston where today there currently are living over 100 descendants representing all six branches of the Dannenbaum family.

### **Tante Rosa**

*Tante* Rosa Rosenbaum, a daughter of Uncle Julius and *Tante* Laura Dannenbaum, had lived in Charnikau not far from Schoenlanke. However, after World War I, Charnikau became part of the newly recreated Poland, and she wanted to leave. Her husband, Uncle Gustav, had died of a kidney infection that he got while serving in the war. Fortunately, *Tante* Rosa, who was left with three small children, got a pension from the army. It was hard to move, however, because there was such a housing shortage in Germany with so many Germans fleeing the newly created country. The parents-in-law of *Tante* Rosa's brother, Uncle Arthur Dannenbaum, finally were able to arrange housing for them in Muencheberg which was near Berlin where Uncle Arthur and *Tante* Rosa's other brothers Uncle Ernest and Uncle Heinrich Dannenbaum were living with their families. Another brother Uncle Sally had been killed in battle the first

week of the war, and a sister Martha Silberschmidt had died in 1917. Papa sent a carriage to Charnikau to pick up *Tante* Rosa and her children, Max, Reinhard, and Judith. According to Judith (today Mayer), *Tante* Rosa had hidden some money in her purse which she gave to a cousin to hold while telling everyone goodbye. She was halfway across the bridge to the German side when she realized she had forgotten her purse and quickly ran back to get it.

During vacation time, all of the Rosenbaums would come to Schoenlanke to visit. We have a wonderful picture of all the families taken in our fruit garden during one of those visits. Max later moved to Schoenlanke to go to the *Realschule*. He stayed with Uncle Julius and *Tante* Martha Levy with whom he was doubly related. Not only was Uncle Julius, like my father, his mother's first cousin, but also *Tante* Martha was his father's sister. We got to be real close with Max during this time.

### **Tante Martha Comes to Visit**

In 1925, *Tante* Martha (Papa's sister, not Uncle Julius's wife), who had immigrated to Texas in 1895, came from Houston with her daughter Esther for a visit. We had sent her that wonderful family picture taken when *Tante* Rosa Rosenbaum and her children had been visiting, and the picture had made *Tante* Martha homesick. *Tante* Martha had married Morris Breier, a Hungarian immigrant, originally lived in Galveston, but moved to Houston after the 1900 Galveston flood that claimed the life of their two-year old daughter Rose. *Tante* Martha's immigrating to America later proved to be a life-saving event for my family.

When *Tante* Martha came to visit, we had a wonderful time. First she insisted that we all have our hair cut. All three of us girls had very long hair that we wore braided and then twisted under with a big black taffeta Mozart bow that we got from *Fraeulein* Gerstner. Up until that time, Papa wouldn't hear of us doing such a thing, but since *Tante* Martha said it was the thing to do, he gave his approval. So we all took the train to Schneidemuehl, about 15 miles northeast of Schoenlanke, and got short haircuts. Even Mama cut her hair which was so long, down past her waist, that someone had to come to braid it and wrap it in a bun for her. *Tante* Martha also tried talking Papa into letting Irma come to America, but he was such a good loyal German that he wouldn't hear of such a thing.

Joachim was only nine when *Tante* Martha came, but being the spoiled little prince he was, he already had his own pony and a small black open carriage with red seats. One day he drove Esther, Irma, Maexe, and me to Behle. The carriage was so small that I don't know how we all fit in. When we got to Behle, we told the children there that we were part of a circus and handed out tickets that Maexe had made.

On another day during *Tante* Martha's visit, Papa took all of us on the train to Driesen to show *Tante* Martha some property he owned there. Downstairs was a bank, and upstairs were several apartments. It was on a beautiful piece of land with a garden and a stream running through it. Papa sometimes would send Irma there by herself on the train to pick up the rent for him. She felt very important when she did that. On some of our other day trips there, we'd visit *Tante* Betty Lewy (Mama's first cousin) and Uncle Louis and their son Isbert. *Tante* Betty's mother was a sister to Omama. Also living in Driesen who we'd visit were the Schramms who used to live across the street from us in Schoenlanke and whose daughter Mama wet-nursed.

### **Family in Schneidemuehl**

Having short hair, we had to return to Schneidemuehl regularly for haircuts. Schneidemuehl was the province capital with a population of about 30,000 people and was very cosmopolitan. After getting our hair cut, we'd go to the *Konditorei* and then walk along Posener *Strasse* where all the big stores were. We'd also often go to Schneidemuehl to visit *Tante* Grete Gumpert (Mama's first cousin) and Uncle Leo and their children Helga and Gunthie who were much younger than us. Before Helga was born, they had a baby boy who died of blood poisoning from his circumcision. The Gumperts lived on Wilhelm *Platz* (Plaza) in the middle of which was the temple. While in Schneidemuehl, we'd also go visit *Tante* Grete's parents, Uncle Philipp and *Tante* Lachotzki, another sister to Omama. I never knew *Tante* Lachotzki's first name; we always just called her *Tante* Lachotzki. However, I did recently find out that her name was Rosalie. Uncle Philipp had married her after his first wife, her older sister and *Tante* Betty Lewy's mother, had died, as was the custom in those days. A son Sally, from Uncle Philipp's first marriage, and his wife Claire and baby Hannelore lived with them for a while before moving to Muencheberg where *Tante* Claire's parents lived. *Tante* Claire was a sister of Uncle Arthur Dannenbaum's wife *Tante* Cilly, and it was her parents who had arranged for *Tante* Rosa Rosenbaum to move from Charnikau to Muencheberg after World War I.

Omama had another sister - I think her name was Nette Sommerfeld - who also had lived in Schneidemuehl but died before I was born. I'm named after her. She was the mother of Uncle Isidor and Uncle Philipp who stayed with us one Chanukah. She also had a daughter, *Tante* Bertha, who must have caused quite a scandal in the early 1900s when she had a child out of wedlock, which really had to be something in those days. *Tante* Bertha stayed with us when our parents went for a couple of weeks each year to "take the cure" at Bad Kissingen, a resort near the Black Forest in southern Germany. They would take baths, have massages, and drink the special water from the hot springs. Besides going to Bad Kissingen once a year, the only other place they'd go was to Berlin when Mama sometimes would accompany Papa on his frequent

business trips.

### **Family in Berlin**

While we never took family vacations, Mama often would take us to Berlin to visit relatives or to buy new winter coats at Arnold Mueller. In Berlin, we sometimes would stay with *Tante* Cilly and Uncle Arthur Dannenbaum before their daughters Ilse, Eva, and Gerda were born. Papa and Uncle Arthur were first cousins and were very close. Uncle Arthur, who sold material for men's suits, traveled a lot and would stay with us in Schoenlanke whenever he was there on business. His younger brother Uncle Heinrich also came often to visit and would climb our fruit trees. Both of them were much fun, and we loved it when they came. Sometimes we would hide little things like brushes in their beds.

On most of our trips to Berlin, however, we stayed with Uncle Philipp and *Tante* Hilde Lewy, another daughter of Uncle Philipp Lachotzki and his first wife. Uncle Philipp Lewy was a brother to Uncle Louis Lewy. Two sisters, Hilde and Bette Lachotzki, had married two brothers. *Tante* Hilde and Mama, who were first cousins, were the same age and were very close. Mama had lived with the Lachotzkis in Schneidemuehl for a few years and attended high school with *Tante* Hilde because they didn't have a high school in Schrotz. They also were confirmed together in Schneidemuehl. We didn't have confirmation, however, in Schoenlanke when I was growing up. The beautiful carved oak library and other carved furniture that Irma now has all belonged to *Tante* Hilde. While in Berlin, we also sometimes would visit *Tante* Hilde's brother Uncle Willy and *Tante* Ellen Lachotzki and their children Robert, Rita, and Heinz. Heinz, or Heine as we called him, was Joachim's age and would come often to Schoenlanke to stay with us during vacations.



## Chapter 4

### SIDELINES

#### World War I

Papa and his brother Uncle Julius both served in the German army during World War I. We were lucky the fighting never reached us. Uncle Julius fought in France, but Papa never fought anywhere. He was away in Bromberg for a short time, and then I think he bribed someone to get him back to Schoenlanke where his job was to direct the trains. And then he didn't even do that, instead paying someone to do it for him. Mama worked for the Red Cross during the war. In addition to knitting, she helped cook meals for the soldiers passing through in the big kitchen that had been set up at the train station. Irma and I would go to the station with our friend Trude Raasch who, because her father was one of the *Bahnhofmeisters*, could get us onto the platform. Otherwise, you needed a pass. The soldiers coming through would give us chocolates, which you weren't able to get during the war. However, *Frau Haase*, Simon Goldstein's daughter and a good friend of Mama's, gave Irma some when she almost died during the 1917 flu epidemic which hit us all. Our *Dienstmaedchens* also got the flu, and Papa had to help Mama in the kitchen.

#### Petznick

Sometime in the 1920s, Papa, Uncle Julius (Levy), and a friend of theirs bought a very large working estate near Schloppe once owned by an earl. It was called Petznick and was about a one hour drive from Schoenlanke. Both Uncle Julius and Papa had a car at that time. Ours was an old Adler, but we didn't have it for long. There was a big old house at Petznick and a lake where we'd go fishing whenever we'd go there on day trips. On one trip, Ruth took off her dress and went into the lake wearing only her silk camisole body suit. What a sight when she came out with that wet camisole sticking to her body; she was already quite developed at that time. While there, all of us, except Papa that is, would eat sandwiches with pork sausage made from one of the pigs raised on the estate. Papa ended up losing a lot of money on Petznick. That was the



only time Papa ever had a partner. He always said that he never liked to have a partner because a partner was like a car - they only take from you. I guess that's why we didn't have the car for long.

### **Badenweiler**

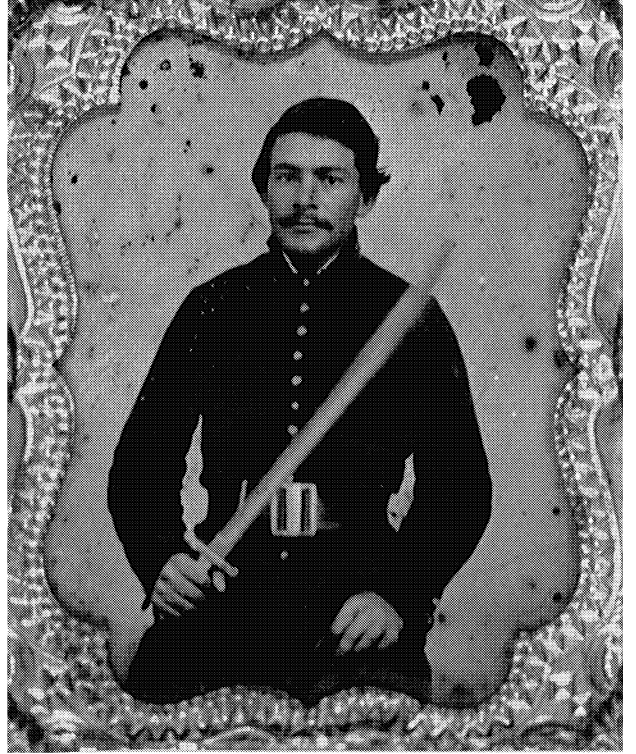
One winter when I was maybe 15, I had two bad bouts of pleurisy. Dr. Heinecke, our regular doctor, had died, and *Herr Medecinalrat* (a superior doctor) - I don't remember his name - took care of me. He was very good-looking. I had to go a couple of times a week to the hospital for treatment under a big light shining on my chest. When my cough lingered and my lungs remained inflamed, Mama took me to Professor Fritz Mayer, a doctor in Berlin, who ordered that I lay outside every day and that for my second breakfast I was to have a cup of chicken soup and a *Broetchen* with *Schinken* (ham), and that's what I did. I wish you could taste German *Schinken*; it was delicious. When I still didn't get better, Professor Mayer suggested that I go to a sanitarium in Badenweiler in the Black Forest for three months. Before sending me there, my parents spoke to *Frau Ascher* who had stayed at the sanitarium for quite some time for T.B. She was the wife of Papa's lawyer whom we called *Herr Rechtsanwalt* (Mr. Lawyer). We even sometimes called her *Frau Rechtsanwalt*.

Badenweiler was just beautiful. The sanitarium looked like an old castle. A nurse would come to my room each morning to wake me up with this awful thick drink, but I would pour it in the bucket by my bed. After a wonderful big breakfast, we were taken to a beautiful wooded area where we laid on chaises covered with blankets. Then after a delicious big noon meal, we'd rest again. I don't remember ever taking any medication. Once I gained some weight, I was allowed to go for walks into the city and into Kur Park which had beautiful gardens. Mr. and Mrs. I. Miller of I. Miller shoes were there at the time, and they'd order a cab to take a bunch of us on day trips like to the nearby Swiss border. There were mostly older people there, with only a few other young girls, but I had a wonderful time. The people there with T.B. had to stay in their rooms which had balconies where they would lay out. While at Badenweiler, I got my hair cut really short in a *Herren Schmitt* (man's cut).

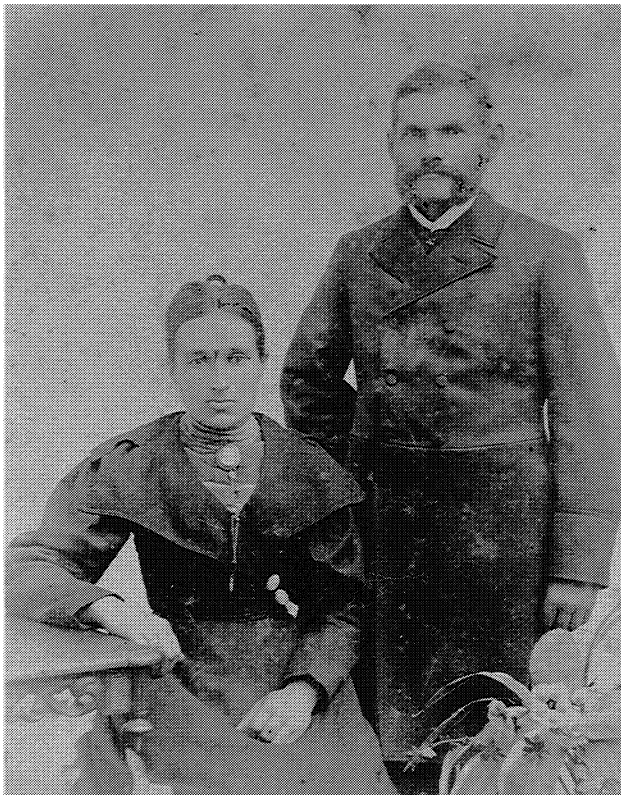
## THE DANNENBAUM SIBLINGS - mid to late 1800s



My paternal grandparents,  
Henrietta Dannenbaum Levy & her husband Joseph



Joseph Dannenbaum in his Civil War uniform



Uncle Julius Dannenbaum & his wife Tante Laura

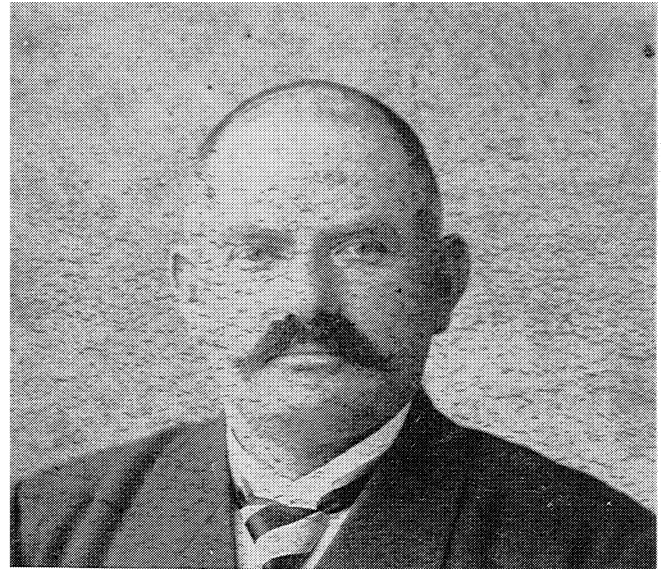


August Dannenbaum & his sisters, Mollie Dannenbaum  
Burchardt & Pauline Dannenbaum Freund in America

# THE LEVY SIBLINGS - late 1800s to early 1900s



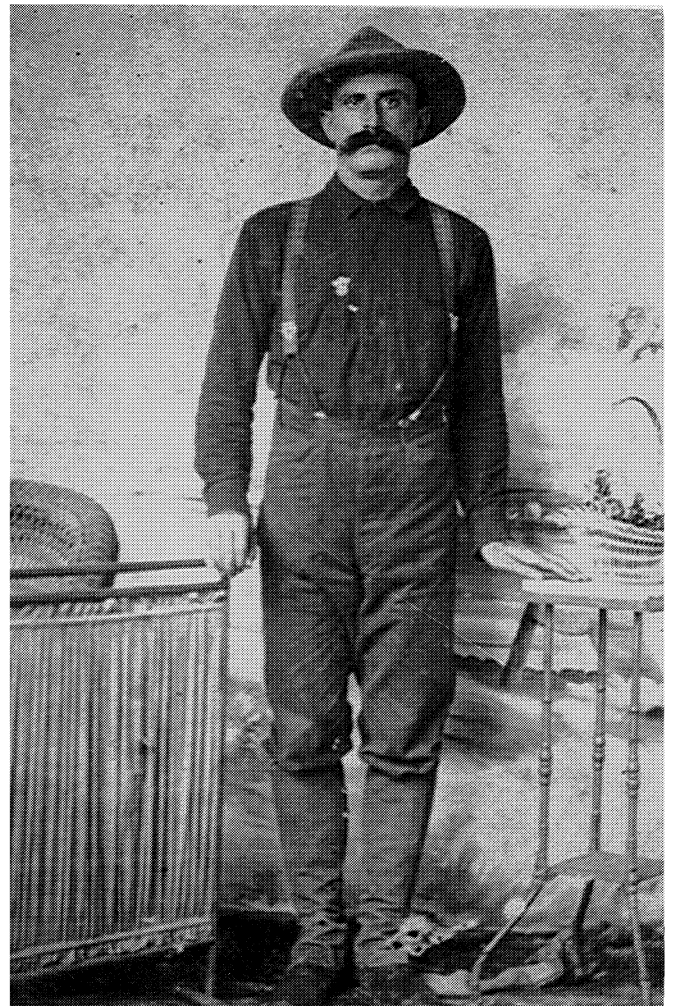
Papa



Uncle Julius



Tante Therese



Uncle Adolph in America



Tante Martha, we think. It was on the first page of her album next to her husband, Morris Breier.

## MAMA AND HER FAMILY



My maternal grandparents  
Omama & Opapa, Ernestine & Wolf Abraham, 1897



Tante Grete, Mama's sister, & Mama, circa 1902



Tante Hilde, Mama's first cousin, & Mama  
at their confirmation, 1904

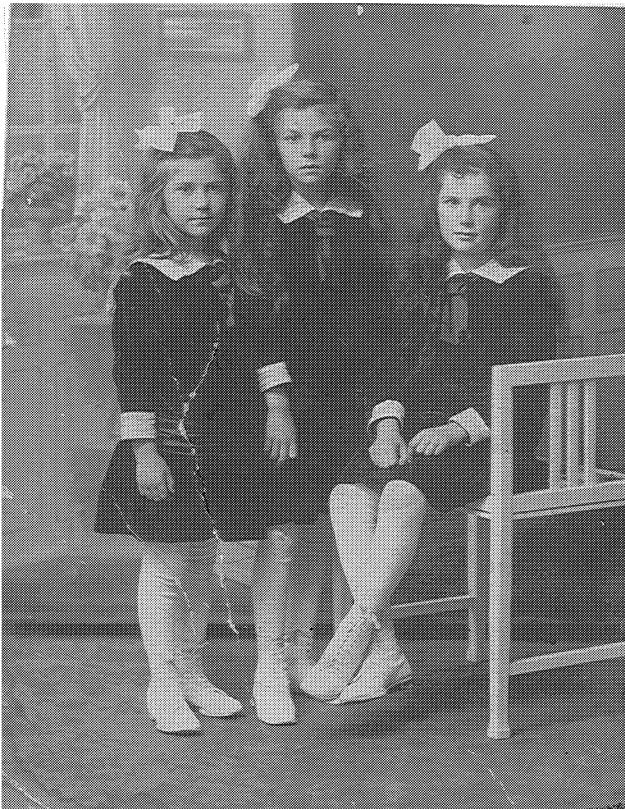
# LIFE IN SCHOENLANKE - 1913 to 1930



My sister Ruth



Joachim with me, Irma & Ruth  
in our navy dresses, circa 1919



Me, Irma, & Ruth in black velvet, circa 1916



Joachim, Mama, Papa, & Heine Lachotzki  
in front of our house



Rudi, Tante Therese, Ilse, Tante Martha, & Maexe Levy



Tante Laura & Uncle Julius Dannenbaum,  
as I remember them



STANDING; Opapa, Tante Cilly & Uncle Arthur Dannenbaum;  
SITTING: Mama, Tante Cilly's mother, & Tante Therese Levy



Uncles Arthur, Heinrich, Ernest, and Joe Dannenbaum  
during Uncle Joe's visit in 1924



Tante Rosa & Uncle Joe Dannenbaum visiting  
his sister Tante Rosa Rosenbaum in 1924



Papa in his World War I uniform



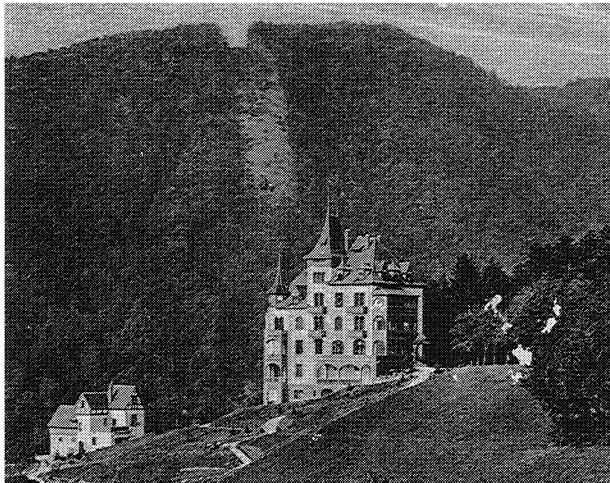
Mama



In our fruit garden, 1924; BACK ROW: Rudi Levy, Max, Tante Rosa & Reinhard Rosenbaum, me, Ruth, & Irma; MIDDLE ROW: Tante Martha, Uncle Julius & Ilse Levy, Tante Laura Dannenbaum, Judith Rosenbaum, Joachim, Papa & Mama; ON GROUND: Maexe Levy



Irma, Ilse Witchorek, our cousin Ilse, Kate Scharlock,  
& unknown in one of Frau Vigletti's performances



The sanitarium in Badenweiler



Me with other patients at the sanitarium, 1925



Our maid Agnes, me, just back from Badenweiler with my  
*Herren Schmitt*, & Mama looking out our windows in Schoenlanke



## Chapter 5

### A TIME OF CHANGE - PERSONAL AND POLITICAL

1929

In July of 1929, Ruth got married to Herman Simonstein in the ballroom at Hirsekorn's. (They changed their name to Simon when they became U.S. citizens.) Papa had a big fight with the new rabbi, Rabbi Berlinger, who was much more orthodox than Rabbi Bamberger and wanted Ruth to have a more orthodox ceremony. He even wanted her to sign a paper that in the event Herman died, she would marry his brother Daniel. The rabbi finally gave in when Papa threatened to quit the temple. After a honeymoon to Wiesbaden, Ruth and Herman lived in Schneidemuehl where Herman owned a store that had belonged to his parents. Their two daughters, Evelyn and Margit, both were born there.

In November of 1929, Papa died, and life significantly changed for us. Papa had suffered serious financial losses due to the terrible inflation in Germany, and after his death we lost the farm, and our family split up. Irma moved to Berlin where at first she worked as a governess and later as a secretary for Uncle Philipp Lewy who had a very successful dress manufacturing business that copied Paris originals. Mama and I moved to Schneidemuehl. Joachim stayed in Schoenlanke to finish school and lived with Mama's friend *Frau* Haase who had no children and was crazy about Joachim. After he finished school, he went to Jastrow as a *Lehring* (apprentice) in the wholesale grocery business.

#### **Life in Schneidemuehl**

In Schneidemuehl, Mama and I lived on *Neuer Markt* (New Plaza) in one of two apartments on the third floor of a three-story house where Mama ran a *Mittagstisch* (noon meal table). We had three bedrooms. Mama and I slept in one bedroom, and we rented out the other two bedrooms, quite often to Polish diplomats. In the other

third floor apartment lived the Polish attache and his wife. They ate their meals with us, or our *Dienstmaedchen* took their meals over to them. The landlord lived on the second floor and had a jewelry store on the ground floor.

I had a good time with the Polish diplomats, having little parties and going on picnics with them, often when Irma came to visit. One of the diplomats was Bogden Brzezinski whose nephew Zbigniew Brzezinski served as National Security Advisor under President Carter in 1976. Bogden and Irma had quite a romance, and he continued to write to her in America well into the 60s.

### **Siegfried Comes Into My Life**

I started dating Fred (he went by Siegfried then) in 1933. I had casually known him years before, having seen him in Schneidemuehl when I'd visit the Gumperts. I'd see him eating at the butcher Jakubowski's next door to the Gumperts. He had known Jakubowski in Labischin where they both had lived until it became Poland after World War I. After leaving Labischin, Fred's family had moved around quite a bit, finding it difficult to find housing, and Fred had to drop out of school. They finally settled in Arys in East Prussia. Fred took the train every day to Lyck where he attended a business school studying bookkeeping, a skill that continues to serve him well. In 1924, at the age of 15, he left home and moved to Riesenburg in West Prussia where he apprenticed in a clothing store for room and board. To make a little money, he traveled to a nearby town on Sundays and worked in a store owned by the same family. After the two and one-half year apprenticeship, he got his first full-time paying job as a sales clerk in Woldenberg. It was there that he changed his name from "Itzig" to "Berg" at the request of his employer who said he just couldn't call him "*Herr* Itzig." The name "Itzig" was used in dirty anti-Semitic slogans throughout Germany and Poland. It was his employer who suggested the name "Berg" because a salesman by that name had just left. Fred was later to change his first name from "Siegfried" to "Sig Fred" when he became a U.S. citizen in 1945 because during the war "Siegfried" was considered too German. After only six months in Woldenberg, Fred moved to Schneidemuehl in 1927 where he got a job with Rosenbaum's Department Store (no relation), working his way up to become the buyer for carpet and drapes.

I also had seen Fred at functions of the *Deutsch Juedischer Jugendbund* (German Jewish youth group) sponsored by *B'nai B'rith* (a Jewish organization) that we both belonged to. There was also a Zionist youth group. One particular sporting event in Deutsch Krone especially sticks out in my mind because Fred was a runner, and I saw him wearing just shorts. I had never seen anyone with so much hair on their body. He had quite a few girlfriends before me. I thought I knew about most of them, but I just found out about another one. One day when Lorraine was interviewing me for this

book, we were talking about Schoenlanke, and Fred said something about where the Zaskersee was. When Lorraine asked him how he knew about Schoenlanke, he said he'd been there to take out Recha Levy and they had walked to the Zaskersee. Well, I just couldn't believe it. I didn't know that Fred had ever been to Schoenlanke, and Recha Levy was three years older than my sister Ruth. Fred insisted that they just walked to the lake and didn't stop in the woods nearby. It turns out that he met her at one of those Jewish youth events.

Anyway, it wasn't until 1933 that we started dating. It all began at a Jewish dance in the ballroom at the Landes Theatre that I went to with my good friend Margot Becker. Fred and I danced quite a lot that night. He was a very good dancer; in fact we called him the *Walzer Koenig* (waltz king). The next day I went with a girlfriend to the Hotel *Goldener Loewe* (Golden Lion) where they had dance music. Fred was there playing cards with some friends, but when I arrived he stopped to dance with me. He asked me for a date the next day and, according to him, took me to a play called "Rose Berndt" at the Landes Theatre. After that we saw each other regularly. In 1934, Fred bought a car, a 1934 baby Ford made in Germany, and began working as a manufacturer's representative. The new job required him to travel a great deal, and almost every time he returned from a trip, he would bring me a gift. I still have a pigskin traveling bag he gave me. And I also still have the first birthday present he ever gave me - an expensive sterling silver necklace with a yellow stone. When one of the Polish diplomats moved out of his room in 1934, Fred moved in; but shortly after that, I moved to Berlin.

### **Moving to Berlin**

Hitler came to power in 1933 and started a boycott against all Jewish businesses, and instances of anti-Semitism started to rise. I still can picture when the Nazis made *Herr Caspari*, a Jewish high province official, march through the streets of Schneidemuehl carrying a long heavy pole with a Nazi flag. On another occasion, they marched through the streets two gentile girls whose heads had been shaved because they were dating Jews. One of them was Annie Krueger who dated Ernst Simonsohn, both good friends of Fred's. I also remember walking down the street one day and seeing Trude Raasch, my old friend from Schoenlanke, who pretended that she didn't see me and walked on.

It was around this time that I had my first appendicitis attack. Dr. Kronheim ordered me to bed and to put ice packs on my stomach. Our *Dienstmaedchen* Herta went to the ice house to get some ice, and when they asked who it was for and she answered *Fraeulein* Levy, they said they didn't sell to Jews. Things got progressively worse, especially in the smaller cities in eastern Germany, so I moved to Berlin. Mama

later moved to Warburg where she ran the household for a widower who was in the baby food business. In Berlin, it was hard for Jews to find employment. I first got a job with a family who had an epileptic grown daughter with whom I had to stay. It was awful; she'd have terrible seizures, once on the street. I then went to work for a family who sold pianos, and the man was blind. When he'd go out to tune pianos, I'd go with him. After that I became a housekeeper for *Tante* Hilde and Uncle Philipp Lewy when they no longer could get gentiles to work for them.

While in Berlin, I had my second appendicitis attack and had to have my appendix taken out. A Jewish doctor, Dr. Herzberg, performed the operation. While I was recuperating in the clinic, Fred brought me ice cream with sour cherries from the *Konditorei* Dobrin. He had moved to Berlin in September of 1935, still working as a manufacturer's rep and doing very well. While even Jewish businesses weren't allowed to hire Jews, as a rep Fred was considered self-employed and allowed to work. That is until June of 1938 when the Nazis took over the last company he was representing and closed his *Arbeitsbuch* (work permit), prohibiting him from accepting any further employment.

Everyday in Berlin, Nazis would march down the streets singing the "*Horst Wessel*" marching song, written about a young Nazi soldier who had been killed. Everyone they passed was supposed to give the Nazi salute and say "*Heil* Hitler." Whenever I was on the streets and heard them coming, I'd duck into the nearest store or building. Once when I was at the train station saying goodbye to a friend leaving Germany, I saw Hitler boarding a train. I also saw Mussolini when he came to Berlin for the 1936 Olympics.

## Chapter 6

### FROM GERMANY TO AMERICA

#### **Irma Leaves for America**

Irma had left for Houston in 1934. Papa's sister *Tante* Martha (Breier) had written and again invited her to come. *Tante* Martha's oldest daughter Sarah had married Nathan Klein who owned an ice cream factory and also was buying up property all over Houston. He bought land in what later became the Rice Village when it didn't even have utilities, and *Tante* Martha thought he was crazy. Anyway, Nathan signed the necessary affidavit guaranteeing that Irma would not be a burden on the country. Before she left, she came to Schneidemuehl for a few days. Fred and I drove to Berlin to pick up her things. From there, he and I drove to Stettin to see Margot Becker and went with her by boat to Swindemunde for the day. Margot had moved to Stettin for employment, but she had lost her job and was going to Swindemunde for an interview. On the boat coming back, there was much excitement over the news that the Nazis had killed Roehm, a high Nazi official in charge of the S.A. (Hitler's storm troopers), when they found out he was a homosexual. He was killed in the Preussenhof Hotel in Schneidemuehl right next door to where we lived. On our trip back to Schneidemuehl, we were very scared when we got stopped by Nazis. They questioned us and searched our car, finding a book of Irma's entitled "*Geliebter, O Mein Goy*," ("My Beloved, Oh My Gentile"), but luckily they didn't know what "goy" meant.

When Irma first came to Houston, she lived with the Kleins and their four children, Edward, Ernest, Martha, and Shirley. She tells a funny story about when at dinner one night, Nathan asked if they had mice in Germany. "*Mice*" in German means corn, so Irma shocked them all when she told them that she ate it in Germany. Four-year-old Martha was quite upset when Irma got married the following year to Nathan Dannenbaum, her second cousin. Martha had fallen in love with Irma and wanted to marry her. She cried at the ceremony at the Kleins' house, hanging onto Irma's dress. Nathan gave Martha a dime store ring that appeased her for a while, at least until he and Irma left without her. And now it seems that Martha wasn't the only one who was

upset. After all these years, Edward, who was twelve at the time, admits that he too had a fallen in love with Irma and had hoped that she would wait for him to grow up.

Nathan's mother, Aunt Sadie Dannenbaum, had served as matchmaker for Nathan and Irma. She had tried to get her wild single son to call on his newly arrived German cousin. However, Nathan couldn't be bothered, saying that Irma would be there when he was ready. So Aunt Sadie took it upon herself to invite Irma over, and when Nathan saw his good-looking red-headed cousin, he wasted no time. They were married within six months. I got to know Aunt Sadie when I came over. She was a lovely woman and very active in the community. She served as the first president of the Houston section of National Council of Jewish Women. Nathan's father, Judge Henry Dannenbaum, was also very prominent. He had served as a district judge in Houston and later as an assistant Attorney General enforcing the Mann Act, which he was instrumental in getting passed to prohibit procurement of prostitutes across state lines. Judge Henry also was active in the civic and Jewish communities, serving as president of the Houston School Board, the Civil Service Commission, Congregation Beth Israel, and District 7 of *B'nai B'rith*.

### Leaving Germany

In the next few years, Nathan Klein signed affidavits for and brought to Houston my brother Joachim and my cousins Ilse Levy and Max and Reinhard Rosenbaum. Finally, in 1938, it was my turn to leave Germany. I remember right before I was to leave, I got a terrible toothache. I called a dentist, giving my real name, not knowing if he would see a Jew, but they gave me an appointment. The first thing I saw when I entered the waiting room was a copy of "*Mein Kampf*" and a picture of Hitler on the wall. The doctor, wearing a Nazi uniform of a high officer, asked if I was Jewish. When I said "yes," he said he didn't take care of Jews, but since I was in such pain, he would do it. I thanked him and said he didn't have to and walked out. I don't think I'd be so brave today. When I got to America, I had to have that tooth pulled.

Before I left for America, Fred drove me to Schoenlanke to tell *Tante* Martha and Uncle Julius Levy goodbye. *Tante* Laura and Uncle Julius Dannenbaum both had died many years before. We went to the cemetery there and took pictures of the graves of my grandmother Henrietta Levy and her father Nathan Dannenbaum. Although my great-grandfather had lived in Stieglitz, he was buried in Schoenlanke because it had the only Jewish cemetery in the area. I don't know what happened to the picture of his grave. When Kurt was there, he went to the cemetery, or what used to be the cemetery, but all the tombstones had been removed and used to pave a road.

When I left Berlin, Fred came on the train with me as far as Brandenburg, and

when he got off, I cried and cried. A young man asked if I was leaving Germany and said he was leaving too, but I was afraid to talk to him. I stopped in Warburg overnight to tell Mama goodbye and then continued on to Cologne. As we crossed the border into France, Nazi soldiers came on board to check our papers and suitcases. We were only allowed to take out ten marks (two dollars) in German currency which was practically worthless anywhere else. I had shipped some cut glass pieces from my mother on ahead. On the way to Paris, four Nazis traveled in the same car I was in and at first were very friendly. But when I returned from the dining car, they wouldn't even look at me. I think they saw my name and destination on my suitcase. I was really scared the rest of the way. Luckily on the train I ran into Rudi Guttman who had worked with Fred at Rosenbaum's. When we arrived in Paris, Sally Simonstein, Ruth's brother-in-law who recently had fled Germany with his family, met us at the station and took us to his apartment, a single large room divided by curtains, for a visit and then to our hotel.

The next morning we boarded the *Ile de France* at La Havre and sailed to America. The trip took about a week and was pretty rough with some bad weather, but we had a good time. Besides Rudi Guttman and myself, there were a few other Jews fleeing Germany, and also some American Jewish men who were returning from fighting in the Spanish Civil War against Franco. The boat arrived in New York the day before Good Friday. Two men from HIAS, or one of the other Jewish agencies, were there to meet those of us who had no one meeting them. They took me and an older man in a cab to a hotel that was filled with Jewish refugees. And would you believe, they made us pay our own cab fare. Luckily I had some money that I had gotten on the boat. As part of my fare, I had paid extra for money to spend on the boat, and once on board they returned that amount to me in American dollars. On Good Friday, I boarded the Sunshine Special for Houston. It was very hot, hotter than it ever was in Germany, and for the first time I saw people perspiring, but I didn't know what it was. The back of their shirts were all wet. And I was wearing a brown wool suit.

### **Arriving in Houston**

I arrived in Houston on Easter Sunday, April 17, 1938, and was met at the train station by Irma and Nathan and their two-year-old son Frank. I was surprised to find that Houston was nothing more than a little cow town. It seemed to me that Schoenlanke had more than Houston. Our first stop was *Tante* Martha's house at 1302 McGowen. My cousin Ilse was staying with her at the time, and no one had told her I was coming. It was in the morning, and she wasn't even dressed when I arrived. We then went to the Kleins' house on Avondale. I still can picture Sarah Klein coming down the stairs with her long reddish-blond hair open, wearing a long housecoat. She looked like a movie star to me.

I stayed with Irma, sharing a room with Frank who often kept me up at night screaming "ma," "wa," or "pee." Nathan Klein gave me a job at the Klein Ice Cream factory packing ice cream. I worked 44 hours a week at \$.25 an hour - that's \$11 a week. I was surprised to find out that after all my years of studying English in school, I couldn't understand anyone speaking English. So I enrolled in night school at the old Sam Houston High School downtown across from the old post office. But what really helped me improve my English the most was reading picture books to Frank. Irma had improved her English by sitting in the German class at San Jacinto High School where the teacher, Mrs. Shanahan, ended up having Irma teach the German.

### **Fred Leaves Germany**

Fred had not yet gotten his visa for America when I left because Labischin where he was born had become Poland after World War I, and Poland had a lower quota for visas than Germany. However, an official in the American Consulate had taken a liking to him and made special arrangements for him to go to Palestine in December of 1938 to wait for his visa, instead of to Cuba as he had planned. Fred's parents, Salomon and Rosalie Itzig, and his sister Herta had immigrated to Palestine several years before. Limited to taking out only ten marks, Fred smuggled out of Germany gold pieces hidden in jars of Nivea cream and Leica cameras hidden in his shoes, all of which he shipped on ahead.

Fred was still in Berlin, though, on November 9, 1938, for *Kristallnacht* (night of broken glass). He witnessed Nazis demolish windows in Jewish-owned stores after a Jew named Gruenspan, angered over the deportation back to Poland of his Polish parents, murdered a German attache. Nazis were picking up all Jewish men, so Fred went to hide at my sister Ruth's who also had moved to Berlin by then. He figured it was safe there because her husband Herman and brother-in-law Daniel had been picked up previously and put in a concentration camp. The Nazis had come for them at 2:00 one morning, saying they were just taking them in for a hearing. The next morning, Fred bravely had gone with Ruth to the police station, but was unable to find out where they were. They eventually found out that they had been taken to Buchenwald.

Anyway, Fred was hiding out at Ruth's the night of *Kristallnacht* when again at 2:00 in the morning the door bell rang, and he went flying out of the window. The next morning, Ruth sent Evelyn off to the Jewish school, unaware of what all had taken place. When Evelyn returned and said the school had burned down, my mother, who was staying there at the time, didn't believe her. So she walked back to school with her and saw for herself. When she later saw prayer books burning in the street, she realized the magnitude of what had happened. They later found out that all the temples



in Germany had been destroyed. After *Kristallnacht*, all Jewish passports had to be turned in and were reissued with a red "J" stamped on them. Fred still has his passport with the red "J" on it.

A few weeks later, the U.S. Consulate notified Ruth that their affidavits had been approved and that as soon as they had their physicals, they would be given the date for their visas. Fred picked up the papers and took them to the S.S. (Nazi defense force) and was able to get Herman and Daniel released from the concentration camp which at that time was used more like a labor camp for limited periods or until one could show that they would be leaving Germany. Uncle Julius (Levy) also was put in a concentration camp in late 1938 and later released, but he had been beaten so badly that he was never the same and died a short time later.

In November, Ruth and Herman and their daughters Evelyn and Margit sailed on the *Orinoco* to Cuba, one of the only countries whose doors still were open for Jews to come to await their American visas. Before they sailed, however, Nathan Klein had to deposit \$2,000 in Cuba for them as insurance that they would not remain there. They were very lucky to get into Cuba when they did because when the *St. Louis* arrived in December, it was turned back. Ruth had gone to the harbor with an acquaintance from Berlin to greet his wife. They watched in horror as many Jews on board jumped overboard, choosing to drown rather than return to Nazi Germany.

Upon arriving in Cuba, Ruth and her family temporarily were put in an internment camp on the island of Tiscornia with other Jewish refugees. When they were released, the *Hilfsverein* (an official German Jewish migration agency) provided them with food and lodging at a motel because they weren't allowed to work in Cuba while waiting for their visas. Nathan and Sarah Klein came to see them and to make sure they were being treated well. They finally got their visas and arrived in Houston in March of 1939. Nathan and Sarah Klein were at the train station to greet them, together with their daughters Martha and Shirley who were the exact same ages as Evelyn and Margit. Martha remembers how her father had given her and her sister the responsibility of making their refugee cousins feel welcome, and what a failure she felt like when all they could do was look at one another because Evelyn and Margit couldn't speak English.

### **Fred Arrives in Houston**

Fred arrived in Houston around the same time. My brother-in-law Nathan took me to the train station to meet him, and for years after Nathan would remark that he'd never seen a kiss like that. My brother Joachim was to pick up Fred's trunk and drop it off at the apartment where he was going to stay for a few weeks. Evidently, Joachim wasn't

too excited about having to do this, and he literally "dropped" the trunk off in the street. Fred's mother had sent with him jars of canned fruit that broke and spilled all over his clothes. Joachim always was unpredictable. He had two short marriages in Houston and then disappeared for years. In late 1950, he came for a surprise visit from Chicago with a wife and three children, and returned a few years later with another child.

A few weeks after Fred arrived was Passover, and *Tante* Rosa Rosenbaum invited us for *Seder*. She and Judith had arrived in Houston a few weeks after I had and were reunited with Max and Reinhard who had immigrated in 1937. We took the bus to their house on Cleburne, stopping at Henke & Pillot to buy them a chicken for \$.39. Max had a beautiful voice and chanted the entire *Seder*. Fred had become friends with Max and Reinhard in Berlin. The three of them often played cards together, an activity that later was to be continued with wives at Sunday canasta games. Sarah and Nathan Klein came by after their *Seder* at Temple Beth Israel and took us home.

On April 9, 1939, Fred and I were married in the Kleins' home by Rabbi Henry Barnstone, the senior rabbi at Temple Beth Israel, with his assistant Rabbi Robert I. Kahn in attendance. After the ceremony, we walked to Walgreens on Main Street where we ate a steak dinner. Little did we know the tragedy that struck the Kleins after we left. Sarah, who had complained of a headache all day, suffered what they believed to be a cerebral hemorrhage and died.

Fred and I joined Temple Beth Israel which was the only reform temple in Houston at the time and is where the Dannenbaum and Klein families belonged. However, in 1944, Nathan Klein came to our home one day to persuade us to join a new temple he and some others were forming out of protest to a new Beth Israel resolution entitled *Basic Principles*. Among other things, the resolution denied voting membership to anyone who supported the creation of the State of Israel. We proudly became charter members of the new temple - Temple Emanu El - which hired Rabbi Kahn as its rabbi and elected Nathan Klein its first president.

#### **Fred and the F.B.I.**

In 1939, Mama was still in Germany trying to get out. She had some trouble getting her passport because the Germans wanted her to sign over the deed to the apartment house in Driesen that she had inherited from my father. However, for some reason Papa had put a 5,000 mark mortgage on the house in my name. I received a letter requesting that I sign an affidavit giving up all title which needed to be notarized and legalized by the German Consulate in Galveston. Fred took care of getting this done and sent it to Germany by registered mail; however, somehow the notarized papers never reached Germany. We received another letter requesting the receipt

from the registered letter and another affidavit, once again to be notarized and legalized by the German Consulate, and this time mailed directly from them in diplomatic mail. The German Consulate in Galveston had closed, so Fred sent it all to Consul General Wiedemayer in New Orleans.

Two years later after America entered the war, Nathan Klein called one day and asked Fred if he knew anyone in New Orleans. When Fred said "no," he asked if I knew anyone there. The next day Fred ran into Nathan who informed him that the F.B.I. was investigating him and that they were on the line when he had called. It seems that the F.B.I. had become aware of Fred's correspondence with the German Consul in New Orleans who was considered an enemy agent and suspected Fred of also being one. It took Nathan Klein and a letter from Nathan Dannenbaum enclosing copies of Fred's correspondence with the German Consul to convince the F.B.I. otherwise. Fred also had another run in with the F.B.I. when he left the state once on business with a permit good only for travel within the state. During the war, all German citizens had to get a permit to leave town.

### **Mama and Others Arrive in Houston**

Mama finally arrived in October 1939 and lived with Irma and Nathan for a while. She later got a job taking care of two little girls, Blanche and Etta Davidson, whose mother had died. Blanche and Etta became part of our extended family. They grew to look upon Mama as their mother, calling her "*Omi*" (grandmother), as she was called by her own grandchildren and eventually by almost everyone who knew her.

Ilse's brother Rudi also came in '39. In 1940, *Tante* Hilde and Uncle Philipp Lewy arrived, fortunately having been able to wait in Sweden until they got their visas. If you hadn't left Germany before 1940, there wasn't much chance of getting out. However, Uncle Philipp died two years later, and *Tante* Hilde moved to New York and later to Sweden to be with her niece Helga. In 1942, *Tante* Betty and Uncle Ernest Dannenbaum (a son of Uncle Julius Dannenbaum) arrived, having waited in Spain for their visas. Their sons, Heinz (later called Joe) and Werner, had come in 1938, with Werner having waited in Brazil for several years. Nathan Klein sponsored all of us except Ernest, Betty, and Heinz Dannenbaum who were sponsored by Maurice Dannenbaum, a grandson of Joseph Dannenbaum.

### **Tante Martha**

It was wonderful having all of us together again and getting to spend time with *Tante* Martha who loved having us to speak German with. She also loved to sing

German songs, and whenever it was cold outside, she'd call me singing "*Oh wie ist es kalt geworden*" ("Oh how cold did it get"). Her health was failing, and she died in April 1940, exactly one year after her daughter Sarah. During that last year, we'd go visit her every Sunday and bring her flowers like Sarah always had done. I'd also sometimes stop in to see her before and after work. She lived on McGowen at Caroline, and Klein Ice Cream was on McGowen at Brazos. I'd walk from our apartment, first at Bagby and McIlheny that we rented for \$20 a month, and later from Hamilton and Elgin where we paid \$25 a month.

*Tante* Martha was a big woman. She and her husband must have made a funny couple because Morris, who had died the year before I came, was very short. In fact, I've heard that she referred to him as "my little man." *Tante* Martha was a real matriarch and kept tight reins on her two grown sons Ike and Henry A. who didn't marry until after her death. Her grandson Edward Klein tells the story that once *Tante* Martha answered the phone and a young woman asked for Ike. When the woman wouldn't give her name and said only that it was a friend, *Tante* Martha replied "only whores have no names" and hung up the phone. She also wouldn't let her sons use the family car at night. So Henry A. bought an old car for himself and kept it parked down the street hidden from his mother. *Tante* Martha just had old-fashioned standards and even refused to rent out duplexes she owned to any woman who wore pants or smoked. All of her duplexes were made of wood because as she would always say to me, "My child, don't ever buy a house made of bricks because if something goes wrong, the bricklayers charge a lot of money."

### **Tante Therese**

Papa had another brother, Adolph, who had come to Texas in the 1890s, but died before I immigrated. I had heard that he fled Germany to avoid serving in the German army and that he tamed and sold wild horses in Texas. And according to his granddaughter Elaine Proler, he was a horse trader for the American army during the Spanish-American War. It seems that all three Levy brothers were horse traders.

Although I never knew Uncle Adolph, I did get to know his widow, *Tante* Therese. So I now had two *Tante* Therese's, in addition to two *Tante* Martha's, two *Tante* Rosa's, two Uncle Julius's, and two Uncle Joe's. When I arrived in Houston, *Tante* Therese was living in Boling with her son Joe, his wife Mary, and their children Elaine and Bubba. Joe owned a grocery store there, and my brother Joachim worked for them for a while. One Sunday after Fred and I were married, Max Rosenbaum drove all of us to Boling to visit them. Most of us didn't own a car yet, but Max was working as a chauffeur for a Mr. Freed at the time and had the use of his boss's car on Sundays. *Tante* Therese came to visit us often and made the best gumbo. One time when she was staying with

me and the children while Fred was out of town, someone died and she wanted to go to the funeral. I really didn't want to go, but she insisted, saying that if you don't go to funerals, no one will come to yours. During that same visit, I gave her the brown wool suit that I had worn when I came to Houston.

### **The Palmers, the Beckers, and a Sailor**

My good friend from Germany Margot Becker arrived in Houston at the same time as Mama, having come over on the same boat with her. She and her wonderful new husband Henry Palmer stayed with us for a while at our apartment on Hamilton, sleeping on the sofa bed in the living room. Our only bathroom was off of our bedroom, so in the night when they had to go, they went outside in the bushes rather than disturb us. Margot and I went downtown one day and bought our very first pair of slacks. Henry went in the service and after he got out, they moved to California. We remained close friends until they died.

Also arriving in late 1939 was a Becker family from Berlin (no relation to Margot). From the description Fred heard, it sounded very much like Hugo Becker, a friend of his from Berlin. The Becker family did not have a phone, so one Sunday Fred walked over to their apartment on Holman and knocked on the door. He has never forgotten the surprised look on Mr. Becker's face when he saw his old friend standing on his door step. We invited the Beckers and their two daughters Margot and Steffe to dinner one night. I invited Mama to join us, but that presented a problem - I only had dishes for six. So I walked from our apartment on Hamilton over to Irma's on Tuam to borrow a set of dishes for seven. Of course I couldn't just borrow one place setting because it wouldn't match mine. I then walked to Weingarten's on Main at Alabama to buy my first turkey for \$.19 a pound. But when I got home I saw that the turkey was too big to fit in my little blue roaster, the only one I had. So I had to cut up the turkey and bake it a few pieces at a time. And then, after having gone to the trouble of getting matching dishes for seven, Mrs. Becker got sick and couldn't come.

Another funny story about dinner company happened during the war. One evening when Fred and I came out of a picture show downtown, it was raining so Fred went to get the car while I waited undercover at One's a Meal. The movie was a very sad war story with Joseph Cotton that had made me cry. A good-looking young American sailor approached me, noticed I had been crying, and tried to comfort me. He somehow noticed my German accent, and we struck up a conversation because his father had worked for Mercedes Benz in Germany. When Fred drove up, I invited him to come home with us for dinner.

## **Jobs, Homes, and Children**

Fred had a hard time finding a job at first. He finally landed one at Byrd's Men's Store, but was fired after not showing up for work on *Rosh Hashanah* and after having suggested that they let him earn commissions like everyone else. The manager, who was Jewish, said that he didn't like a refugee telling him what to do. He then traveled for a while with Pincus Juran who was a manufacturer's rep until *Tante* Martha told him of an opening in a business next to their damaged freight store on Preston at Louisiana. So in late 1939, Fred started work for B & N Sales, a wholesale business for carnival supplies, drugs, sundries, toys, etc. He worked 57 hours a week for \$15 and by 1941, he was manager. In 1946, he bought the business for \$5,000 cash which he already had been able to save, with some more to be paid out during the next year. Fred always has been a good money manager.

During that time, both Sarah Lee, named after Sarah Klein, and Lorraine were born. Sara, as she later liked to be called, was born in 1941 while we still lived on Hamilton, and Lorraine in 1943 right after we moved from a duplex on Rosedale into a duplex we just had bought at 2614 Palm for \$8,000. Fred was earning \$6,000 a year by then and was able to get a mortgage from Gibraltar Savings which was owned by Mr. I. Friedlander, an uncle of Blanche and Etta Davidson. He paid off the mortgage within five years. And all during that time, no matter how little he made, Fred always sent money to his parents in Israel, as he had done while still in Germany and continued to do until they died. In addition to helping out his parents, he always lent a helping hand to any relative or friend in need. After selling the business in 1948, Fred once again became a manufacturer's rep, a job he worked at until he retired in 1981. In 1952, we bought a brand new house at 2134 Mac Arthur where we still live today.

## Chapter 7

### NATHAN KLEIN AND THE HOLOCAUST

#### Nathan Klein

Thanks to Nathan Klein, and indirectly to *Tante* Martha, I, my immediate family, and many other relatives were fortunate to get out of Germany. And in addition to our family, Nathan sponsored countless other Jewish refugees, approximated to be over 100. He had to sign affidavits guaranteeing that each of us would never be a burden on the country, having to submit financial information including tax returns to show that he would be able to support the refugees if necessary. In addition, the U.S. government sometimes required that he deposit money in bank accounts in the name of the refugee. In the case of Uncle Philipp, who had a heart condition, Nathan had to deposit \$3,000, later reduced to \$1,200 irrevocable credit; and Uncle Philipp, who was married to a cousin of my mother's, was not even related to the Kleins. We just found all this out when reviewing some of Nathan Klein's papers that the Holocaust Museum and Education Center, being built in Houston, is collecting.

We also just discovered in those same papers that Nathan had tried, but unsuccessfully, to get other family members out - *Tante* Therese, Uncle Julius, *Tante* Martha, and Maexe Levy, and Uncle Arthur Dannenbaum and his family. The U.S. Consulate kept making it more and more difficult for Jews to come to the states and, because of the large increase in the numbers of people trying to get out, it took many years to become eligible for a visa. In Uncle Arthur's case, Nathan had tried in vain to get him out for at least two years and even had set up, as required by the U.S. Consulate, a Houston bank account in Uncle Arthur's name with \$2,500 irrevocable credit.

According to Uncle Arthur's daughter Eva Moeller, in September 1939, her family had their tickets to leave, but one hour before they were to leave, Germany invaded

Poland, and World War II broke out. They continued to try to get out, but in 1942, Uncle Arthur, *Tante* Cilly, and Eva's sisters Ilse and Gerda were picked up. Uncle Arthur, Ilse, and Gerda died at Auschwitz. *Tante* Cilly survived by saying that she could sew and sewed Nazi uniforms at Theresienstadt throughout the war. And I just found out from Eva that *Tante* Therese was at Theresienstadt when *Tante* Cilly arrived. She was in the clinic with pneumonia and that is where she died. It gave me some comfort to know that she did not die in a gas chamber. Eva had married, and she and her husband were hidden in a cellar of a house in Berlin until the end of the war, at which time the Nazis were actually on their rooftop shooting at the approaching Russians. Eva (divorced), her son Warren, and *Tante* Cilly came to Houston in 1952, and after Eva remarried, they moved to Corpus Christi. *Tante* Cilly, who just died in 1988 at the age of 96, was truly an example of the endurance of the human spirit. Despite all she had been through, she retained her warm loving nature, her sense of humor, and that incredible laugh that came from deep inside her soul.

### **Family Who Died in the Holocaust**

Those in my family who I know died in the Holocaust include on my father's side *Tante* Therese Levy, Uncle Julius and *Tante* Martha Levy and their son Maexe (Rudi and Ilse came to Houston), Uncle Arthur Dannenbaum and his daughters Ilse and Gerda (*Tante* Cilly and Eva are discussed above), *Tante* Rosa Dannenbaum (Uncle Heinrich's wife) and their daughter Edith (Uncle Heinrich died before the war; their daughter Ruth was sent to Sweden on a children's transport and immigrated to Corpus Christi in 1953), and Irma Silberschmidt (her mother Martha died before the war; her sister Hennie had married and immigrated to America).

The Holocaust took a much greater toll on my mother's family who didn't have the benefit of a Nathan Klein, with the exception of *Tante* Hilde and Uncle Philipp Lewy. The majority of Mama's family perished, including *Tante* Grete and Uncle Paul Heide and their son Wolfgang (Kurt was sent through O.R.T to England, and Ruthchen had married and moved to Buenos Aires), *Tante* Lachotzki (Uncle Philipp died before the war), *Tante* Grete and Uncle Leo Gumpert (Helga was sent on a children's transport to Sweden and Gunthie to England, moving to Sweden after the war), *Tante* Bertha Sommerfeld, Uncle Isidor and probably Uncle Philipp Sommerfeld, *Tante* Betty Lewy (Uncle Louis Lewy died before the war; their son Isbert escaped to Spain and after the war immigrated to New York), Uncle Sally and *Tante* Claire Lachotzki and their daughter Hannelore, and Uncle Willy and *Tante* Ellen Lachotzki (they and their children had gone to Israel but didn't like it, so they went to Amsterdam where Willy and Ellen eventually were picked up; Robert and Rita successfully hid in Holland, and Heinz went to England and served in the English army; at the end of the war Heinz was in Berlin looking for his parents, fell in love with a German girl and stayed there, Rita moved to



California, and Robert remained in Amsterdam).

Fred also lost many relatives. However, he has no way of knowing how many because his parents came from such large families (his mother was one of 24) that they had lost touch with most of their relatives.

## EPILOGUE

At the time this book is being written in 1995, I feel very blessed to still have with me my husband Fred of 56 years and my two sisters, Ruth Simon and Irma Dannenbaum, all who helped in providing the information for this book. And I feel especially blessed to have here in Houston with me my two daughters, Sara Astrich and Lorraine Wulfe and her husband Ed; my four grandchildren and their spouses, Steve and Becky Astrich, Stephanie Astrich, Sondee and Bobby Hatcher, and Karin and Gary Gerstenhaber; and five incredible great-grandchildren, Bobby, Jordan, Marissa, and Samantha Astrich, A.J. Gerstenhaber, and baby Hatcher on the way.

## SCHNEIDEMUEHL - 1930 to 1934



Me at the Landes Theatre where  
Fred took me on our first date



Irma on our balcony in Schneidemuehl



Me, center, & Irma, to the right, partying in our apartment  
with Polish diplomats who rented rooms from us



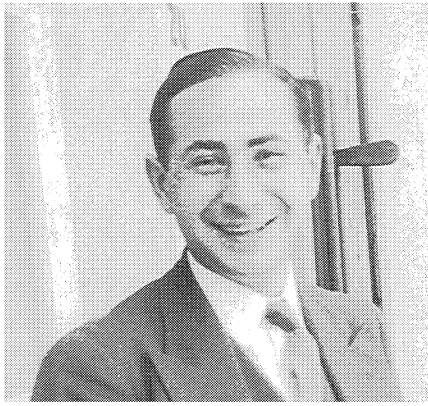
Me & Margot Becker with one of the Polish diplomats



Fred with Recha Levy, in front, at an outing of the  
Jewish youth group sponsored by B'nai B'rith



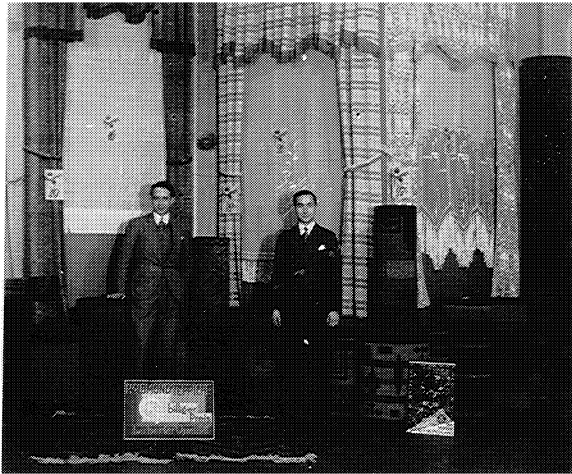
Fred with Herta Starkman & Annie Krueger who later  
had her head shaved by the Nazis for dating a Jew



Fred



Me wearing the silver necklace  
that Fred gave me



Fred, on right, at Rosenbaum's Department Store



Fred & me on the beach in Swindemunde, 1934



Irma at a costume party in Schneidemuehl

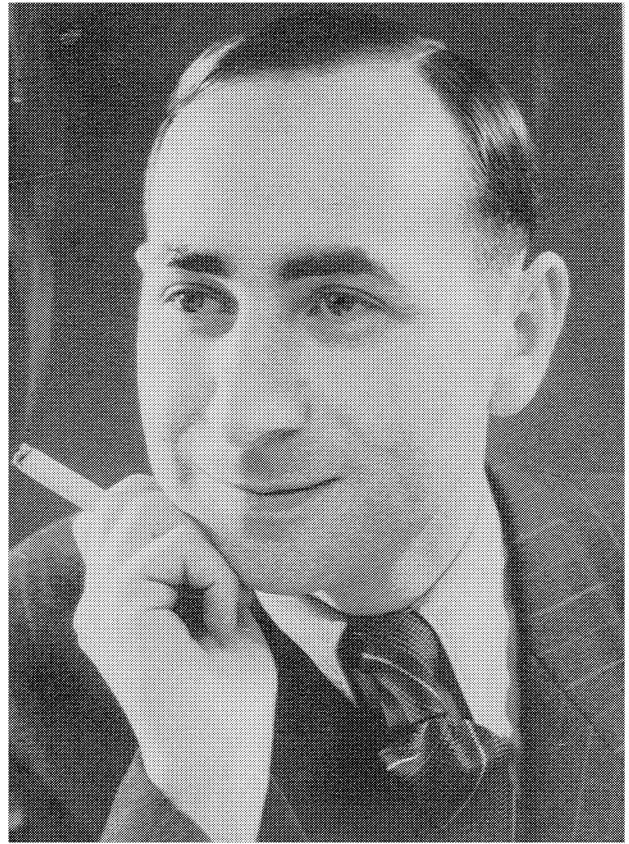


Ruth & Herman at the same party

1935 to 1938



Me in Berlin



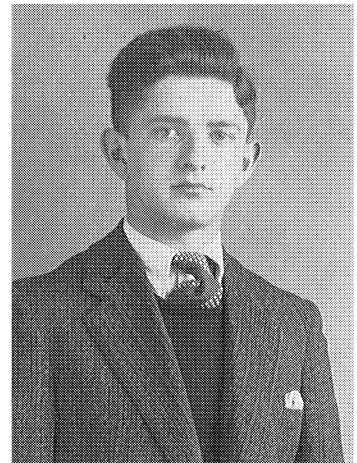
Fred in Berlin



Me & Fred with my nieces, Evelyn & Margit



Tante Hilde & Uncle Philipp Lewy, 1937



Joachim apprenticing in Jastrow

# FRED AND HIS FAMILY



Fred's parents, Rosalie & Salomon Itzig



Fred, his mother, & sister Herta in Labischin, 1916



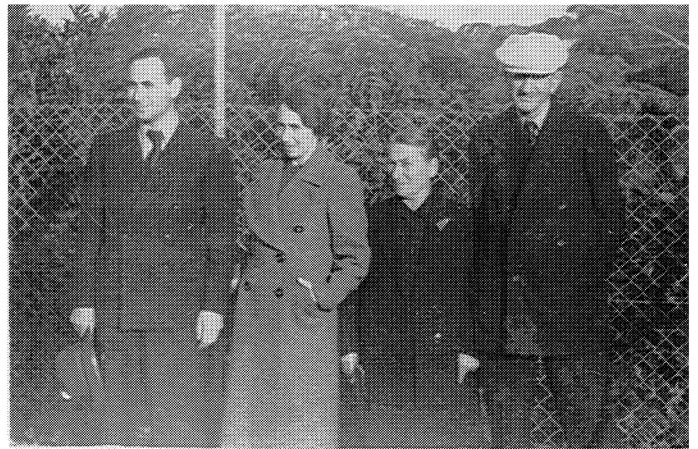
Fred's father in World War I



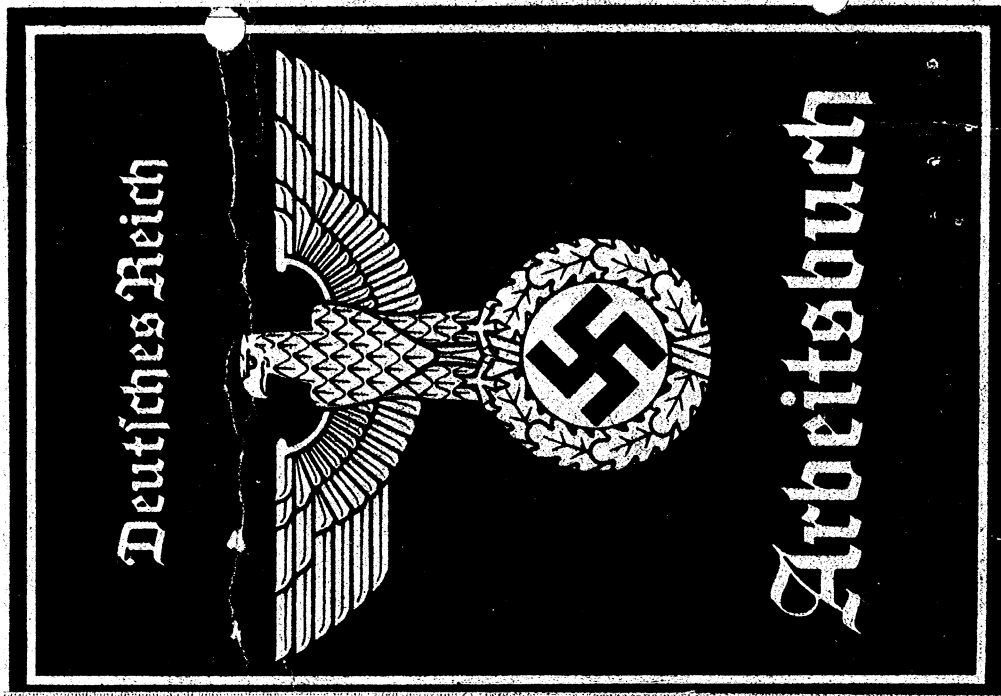
Fred, age 11, in Labischin



Fred, age 15, on his own in Riesenburg



Fred, his sister Herta, & his parents in Palestine, 1939



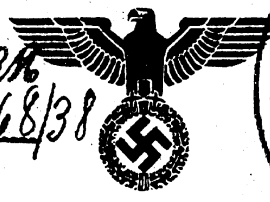
Eintragungen der Unternehmer

1 Name und Sitz des Betriebes (Unternehmers) (Firmenstempel)	2 Art des Betriebes oder der Betriebsabteilung	3 Tag des Beginns der Beschäftigung
<p>Handelbuch am 20. 8. 1938            Handelsbuchmäßige Besorgung der auf dem Handel betrieb            zusammen werden, steht dem Handelbuch durch das Handlungsbuch            auf dem Handel.</p>	<p>Handelbuch</p>	<p>20. 8. 1938</p>
2		
3		
4		
5		

Fred's *Arbeitsbuch* (work permit) stamped in June, 1938, that he could no longer accept employment

DEUTSCHES REICH

Gebühr 3.- RM  
Geb.-Buch Nr. 5668/38



**J** REISEPASS  
Nr. 11/304/38

NAME DES PASSINHABERS

*Siegfried Berg*

~~BEGLEITET VON SEINER EHEFRAU~~

*TC  
3*

~~UND VON KINDERN~~

STAATSANGEHÖRIGKEIT:

DEUTSCHES REICH

Dieser Paß enthält 32 Seiten

Fred's passport, reissued after *Kristallnacht* with a red "J" stamped on it



# AMERICA



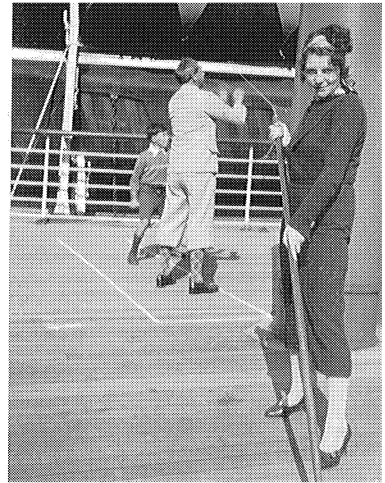
Sarah & Nathan Klein



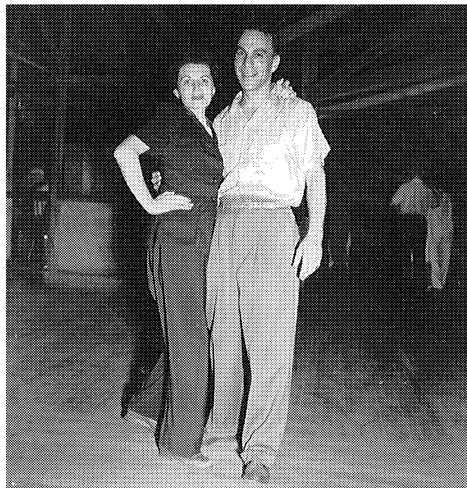
Tante Martha on her porch on McGowen



Sarah Klein with Ernest, Edward, Shirley, & Martha, 1934



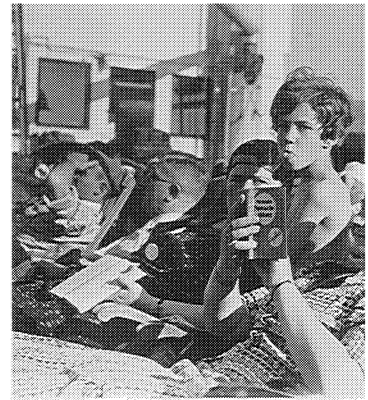
Irma on ship to America, Oct. 1934



Irma & Nathan



Frank & Irma



Herman, Ruth, & Evelyn  
on ship to Cuba, Nov. 1939



Margot Palmer & me in our first pair of pants at our apartment on Hamilton



Together again in Houston,  
FRONT ROW: Reinhard, Ilse, Margit, Frank, Evelyn, Judith, & Joachim; BACK ROW: Ruth, Me, Irma, Nathan, Tante Rosa, & Max



Mama in Houston



Mary, Joe, Bubba & Elaine Levy in Boling



Tante Therese Levy,  
widow of Papa's brother Adolph



Sarah Lee, Lorraine, & me in 1944

# MY FAMILY TODAY



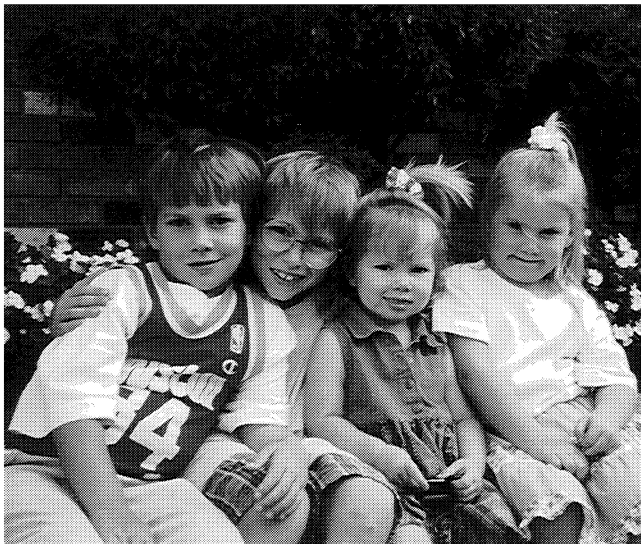
Fred & me with our children Ed & Lorraine Wulfe & Sara Astrich, & grandchildren Gary & Karin Gerstenhaber, Bobby & Sondee Hatcher, Steve, Becky, & Stephanie Astrich



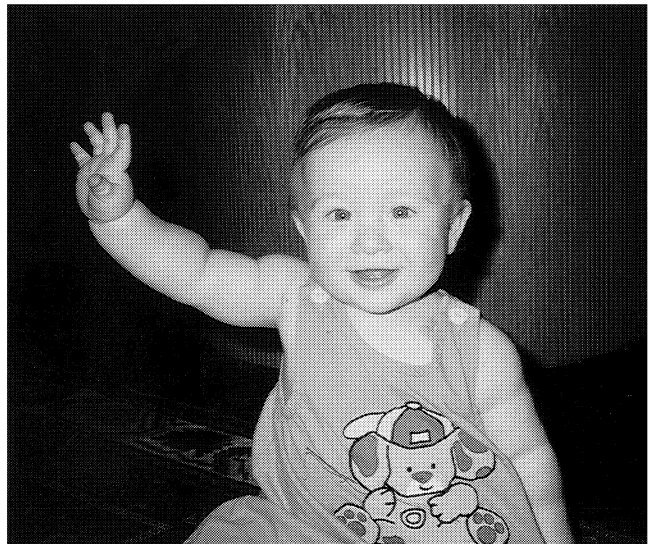
Irma, Ruth, & me



Me & Fred on my 84th birthday



Our great-grandchildren Jordan, Bobby, Samantha, & Marissa Astrich



Our youngest great-grandchild, A.J. Gerstenhaber

## RETRACING FAMILY FOOTSTEPS

### A Personal Report by the Author

As I worked on this book and listened to my parents' and my aunts' vivid description of their life in Germany, the area came so alive for me that I wanted to see it for myself. So Ed and I planned a trip to Eastern Europe centered around visiting Schoenlanke and Schneidemuehl, now Trzcianka and Pila,<sup>3</sup> Poland, respectively. (I will be using the names interchangeably). And what a trip it was! Ed had expressed concern that my expectations were too great and that I would be disappointed. However, not only was I not disappointed, but I discovered and saw things that I never would have dreamed of finding.

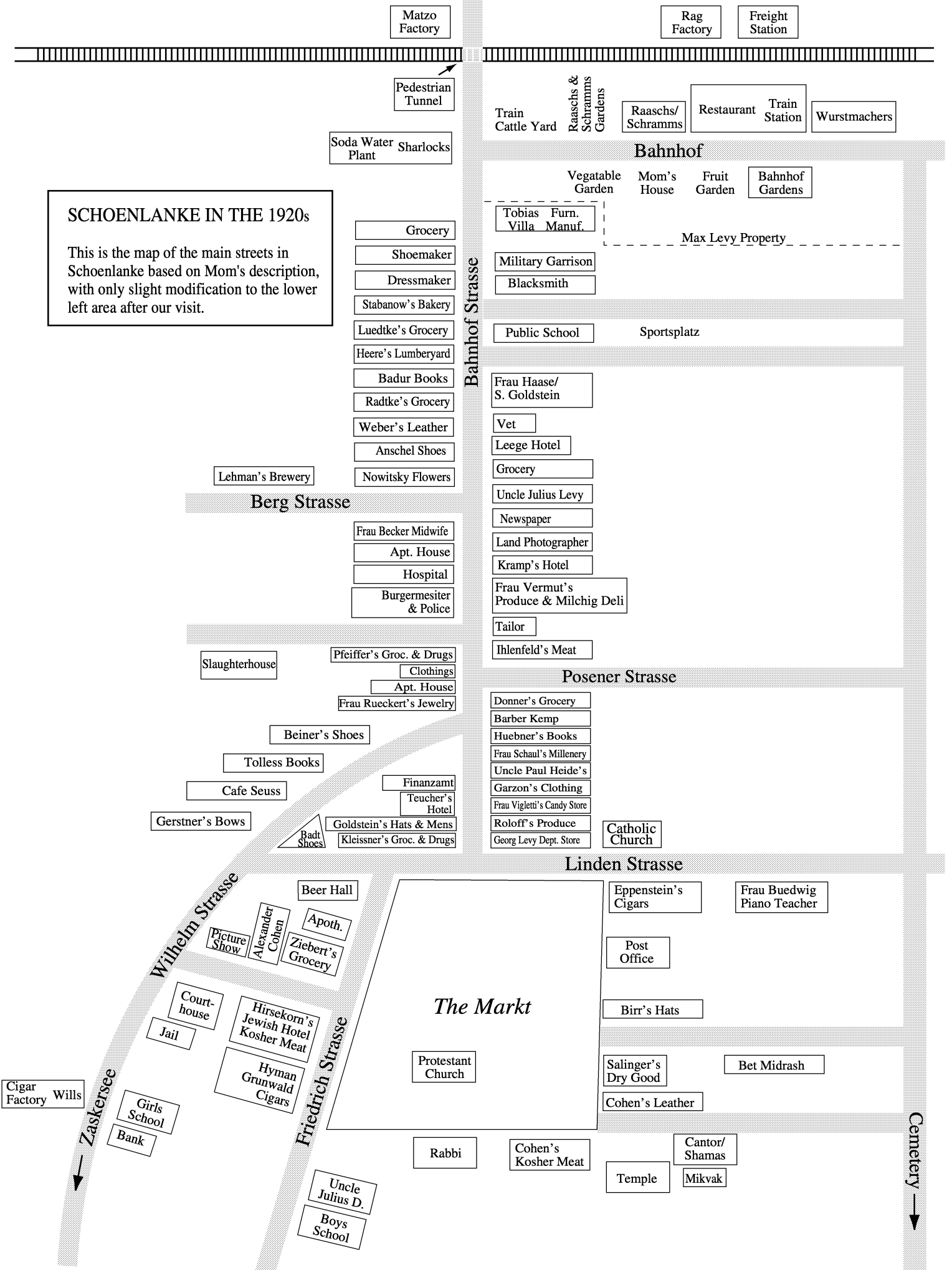
As we already knew from Kurt Heide's visit in 1975, Schoenlanke was not bombed during the war, and many of the buildings were still standing. But it was unbelievable just how little had changed in the 65 five years since Mom and her family left. Before leaving, I had made a map of Schoenlanke based on Mom's description. It was uncanny how accurate it proved to be. Once we arrived in Trzcianka, I could easily find my way around based on that map, even though all the street names had been changed. The first place we went was to Mom's old house where we met Janik Henryk, one of the residents who had lived there since 1945. As Mom had suspected from the picture Kurt had taken, the house had been divided into four apartments after the war by the Russians who had confiscated all of the property. She already thought it looked bad in the picture Kurt had taken, but it looks even worse now. In fact, it was almost unrecognizable from the old pictures, mainly because it no longer has a front door. The beautiful beveled glass windows had already been replaced with plain glass when Kurt was there, but just a few years ago, according to Janik, the beautiful beveled glass front doors were removed and the doorway plastered over, supposedly because of people coming over from the train station. I guess people still wanted to touch the beautiful beveled glass. The only entrance now is the back door which is only a single door instead of the big double doors with the big iron key that they used to stop nose bleeds. The back porch where they had fed the beggars also was gone. When Janik moved there in 1945, there already was no vegetable or fruit garden; however, the

---

<sup>3</sup> The "l" in Pila has a wavy line through it, a letter peculiar to Polish, and thus Pila is pronounced "Piwa."

### SCHOENLANKE IN THE 1920s

This is the map of the main streets in Schoenlanke based on Mom's description, with only slight modification to the lower left area after our visit.



Matzo Factory

Rag Factory

Freight Station

Pedestrian Tunnel

Train Cattle Yard

Raaschs & Schramms Gardens

Raaschs/Schramms

Restaurant Train Station

Wurstmachers

Soda Water Sharlocks Plant

Bahnhof

Vegetable Garden

Mom's House

Fruit Garden

Bahnhof Gardens

Tobias Furn. Villa Manuf.

Max Levy Property

Military Garrison

Blacksmith

Public School

Sportsplatz

Frau Haase/S. Goldstein

Vet

Leege Hotel

Grocery

Uncle Julius Levy

Newspaper

Land Photographer

Kramp's Hotel

Frau Vermut's Produce & Milchig Deli

Tailor

Ihlenfeld's Meat

Posener Strasse

Donner's Grocery

Barber Kemp

Huebner's Books

Frau Schaul's Millinery

Uncle Paul Heide's

Garzon's Clothing

Frau Vigletti's Candy Store

Roloff's Produce

Georg Levy Dept. Store

Catholic Church

Linden Strasse

Eppenstein's Cigars

Frau Buedwig Piano Teacher

Post Office

Birr's Hats

Salinger's Dry Good

Bet Midrash

Cohen's Leather

Protestant Church

Rabbi

Cohen's Kosher Meat

Temple

Cantor/Shamas

Mikvak

Beer Hall

Apoth.

Picture Show

Alexander Cohen

Ziebert's Grocery

Courthouse

Jail

Hirse Korn's Jewish Hotel Kosher Meat

Hyman Grunwald Cigars

Girls School

Bank

Cigar Factory Wills

Uncle Julius D.

Boys School

Cemetery

brick horse and cow stalls and other buildings in the back were still there, but were later torn down. Today, the only thing still standing in the *Hof* is the door to the underground cellar. And on what used to be part of the *Hof* and the field behind the *Hof* are two office buildings.

Other buildings that I was able to identify based on Mom's map were the train station, the *Volksschule* which is now a college where students go after completing eight years in grade school, the *Realschule* which today is one of three public grade schools (there are no longer private schools), Mom's school which now is a technical school, the hospital, the mayor's office, the post office, the jail, the courthouse which is now the police station, the Catholic church (the Protestant church as well as the Protestant cemetery were destroyed by the Poles), the houses of Uncle Julius Levy, *Frau* Haase, the Wills, and the Tobias family, and the apartment house on the *Markt* where Rabbi Bamberger had lived. None of the businesses are the same as there are only a few Germans left. According to Helen Rosenbaum, Max Rosenbaum's widow who is from Poland, four million Germans were forced to leave all of the areas of Germany that became Poland after World War II. Nor are the many industries, such as the cigar and furniture factories, still operational. In fact, although the population has grown from 10,000 to 16,000, there seemed to be less business and industry in Trzcianka today than there was in Schoenlanke 65 years ago. It really is remarkable how much Schoenlanke had in Mom's day for a town of 10,000. Like Mom said, "It didn't feel like a small town - we had everything."

The highlight of our visit to Trzcianka, though, was the afternoon we spent with Marek Kups, a local county official. I had written to the mayor of Trzcianka, Pawel Kolendowicz, before we left to let him know that we were coming. When we went to call on him, he was meeting with Marek to whom he had turned over my letter, evidently because Marek knew some English. The mayor gave me some booklets with pictures of old Schoenlanke, and I gave him my latest draft of this book for their library. Marek then insisted on spending the afternoon with us. He took us to a museum where I was overwhelmed to find a display case devoted to artifacts from the synagogue that was destroyed on *Kristallnacht*, including two *Menorahs* and the tablets that hung over the Ark. I also found a Jewish record of some kind in which my great-great-grandfather, Abraham Casper Levy, father of Joseph Levy, was listed. But my favorite find was a book written about Schoenlanke by *Buergermeister* Froese, my mother's mayor, in 1930, the year she and her family left Schoenlanke. And you can imagine my surprise and delight when the director of the museum let us take the book, along with a hand-drawn map of old Schoenlanke, to the post office to have them copied. Mom, Irma, and Ruth have loved reading the book which even has a chapter written by Rabbi Berlinger about the Jewish community which, according to the book, had 396 Jews after World War I. It also states that the synagogue was built around 1880 with

# SCHOENLANKE (NOW TRZCIANKA, POLAND) 1995



Mom's house, on left, looking even worse that it did in 1976, on right, when Kurt Heide was there; the front doorway had been closed in, the entire stone exterior plastered over with stucco, and the cobblestone sidewalk & street paved..



Me, our driver, and current residents in the back of Mom's house



The back of the train station across the street from Mom's house



The Tobias's villa



Uncle Julius Levy's house



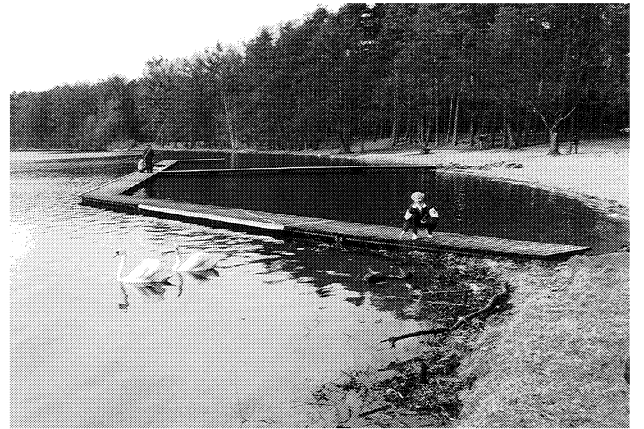
The *Volksschule*, today a college, and Frau Haase's house



Mom's old school, today a technical school



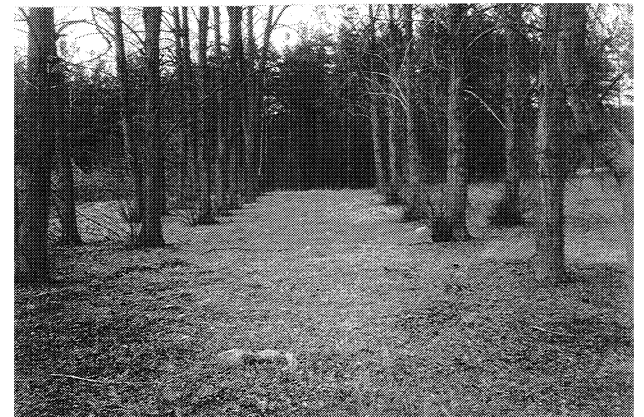
The *Realschule*, today a public grade school



The *Zaskersee*



The *Markt*, now planted with grass;  
the tallest building is where the rabbi lived.



The site of the old Jewish cemetery





The Mayor's office



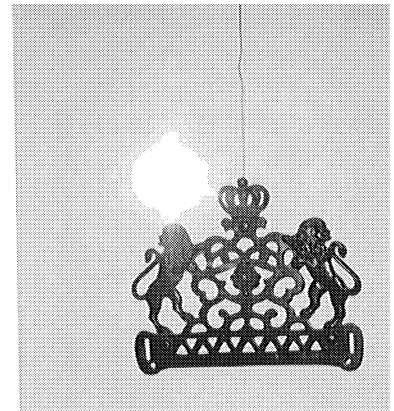
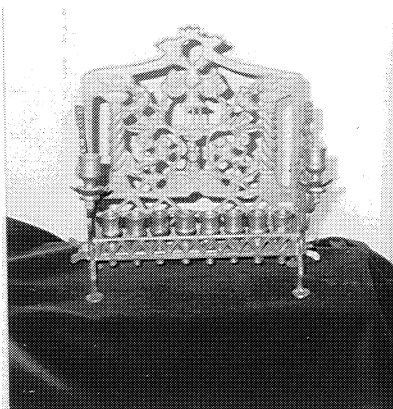
Me & the Mayor of Trzcianka exchanging a copy of Mom's book for booklets on Schoenlanke as Ed & Marek Kups look on



The museum in a 300 year old house

4	38	Levi Elzer	Trzcianka	2000	700	1	
5		Marcin Lewy	Trzcianka	700	650	1	
6	10	Adamian Schwaner	Trzcianka	1500	250	1	1/1/12
7		Stann Suthardski	Trzcianka		100	1	
8	11	Abraham Casper Levy	Trzcianka	300	450	1	1/1
9	12	Hegmann Rich	Trzcianka	150	50	1	
10	13	Anton Schmann	Trzcianka	60	30	1	1/1
11	14	Mathias Sigmund	Trzcianka	150	60	1	
12	15	Joseph Kranitz	Trzcianka	200	100	1	1/1
13	16	August Kuntmann	Trzcianka	400	250	1	1/1

A Jewish record listing my great-great-grandfather, Abraham Casper Levy, father of Joseph Levy



Two Menorahs and the tablets that hung over the Ark in the synagogue in Schoenlanke destroyed on *Kristallnacht*, on display in the museum in Schoenlanke

400 seats. Two previous wooden synagogues had burned down, the first one having been built in 1756.

Marek then drove around with us and our Polish/English speaking driver, and I was surprised and moved by his knowledge of where things of Jewish interest had been, such as the synagogue and cemetery. He also pointed out to us where he had been told the rabbi's house and Jewish bath house had been. However, according to Mom's map, he was wrong, and he insisted on having a copy of her map for future reference. He then took us to the Zaskersee (now called Sarcz), the lake to where Mom and her sisters so often had walked on weekends. When we told Marek goodbye, it was very clear how moved he too had been by our visit and that our goodbye would not be a final one. We since have faxed each other letters - yes Trzcianka has fax machines - and not only has he promised to send me copies of some other documents the museum director has found of possible interest to me, but also he has generously offered to personally do some research for me on my ancestors.

Our visit to Schneidemuehl, now Pila, Poland, was equally moving. Pila today is a city of 100,000, a significant increase from the 30,000 in 1930. On the advice of the deputy mayor, we also went to a museum there. We met a wonderful man at the museum by the name of Marek Fijakowski who invited us into his office, opened up his file cabinet, and commenced to take out the following: a piece of *Torah* parchment that he personally had found after the war in Lobsens where Uncle Paul Heide was from; *Tefillin* (leather box and straps worn during morning prayer) found in the Lodz Ghetto; a 1931 address book from Schneidemuehl listing both my father and my grandmother; and most incredible of all, 8 x 10 glossy photographs of the synagogues in Schneidemuehl, Schoenlanke, and Charnikau, all of which were destroyed on *Kristallnacht*. He even had a picture of the interior of the synagogue in Schoenlanke. By this time, I was overcome with emotion, and then became totally overwhelmed when Marek insisted that I take the photographs. I assume that the museum must have had other copies. We also got from Marek booklets with pictures of old Schneidemuehl and a book that had a chapter he personally had written about the Jewish communities in the towns in that county before the war, including Schoenlanke. I can't begin to describe the feeling that overcame me to discover that both in Pila and Trzcianka, there were people who cared enough to preserve Jewish history and artifacts. In my mind, in some small way, it keeps Hitler's final solution from being so final in this area in which there are no Jews left.

When we walked out of the museum, I noticed that it was at the end of a park. I was so excited to learn that it was *Stadt* (City) Park because Mom also had helped me make a little map of the area in which she lived in Schneidemuehl, and *Stadt* Park was near her apartment. Once again, based on her uncannily accurate description, I was

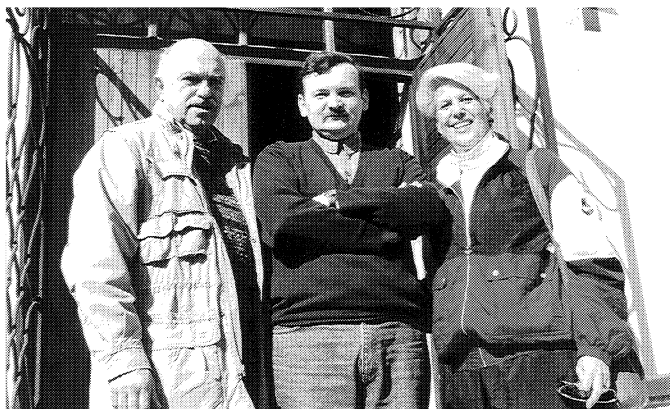
## SCHNEIDEMUEHL (NOW PILA, POLAND) 1995



View from our hotel showing the block where Mom lived on *Neuer Markt*; Ruth & Herman lived on the site where the high rise is.



Ed & me in *Stadt Park*



Ed & me with Marek Fijakowski at the museum



Piece of *Torah* parchment from Lobsens



Picture from the museum of the synagogue in Schneidemuehl; house on left is the Gumperts'

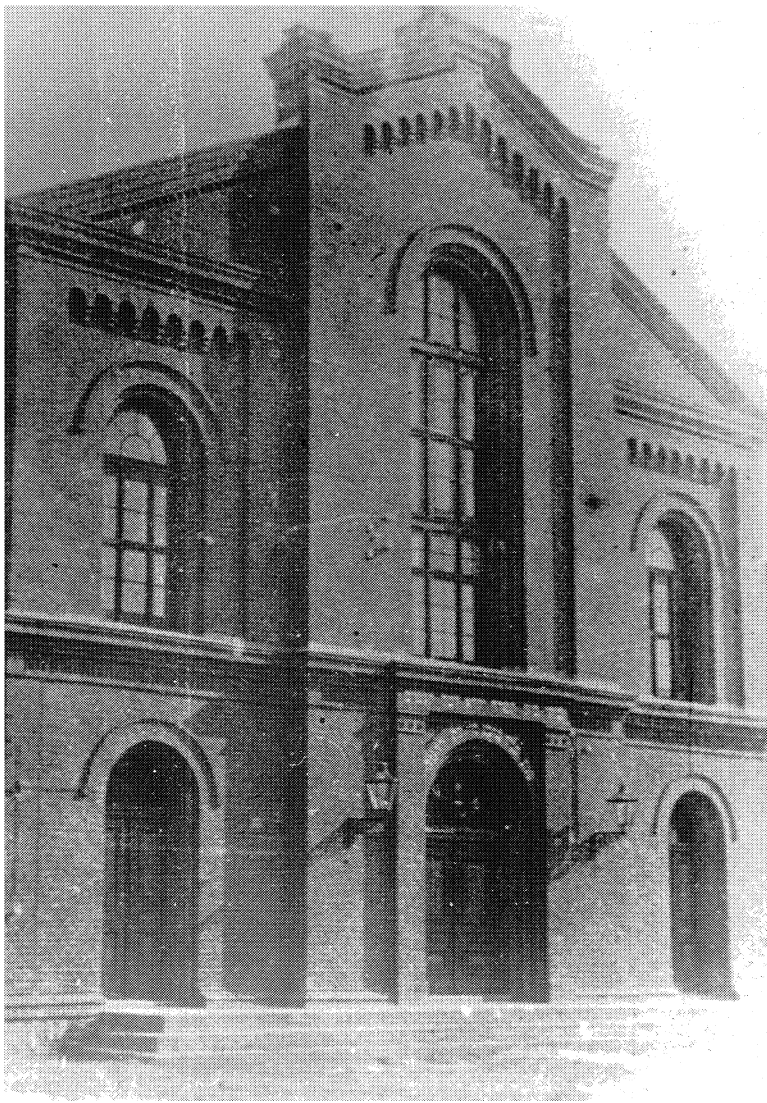
able to walk through the park and find the block where she, as well as Ruth and her family, had lived, although, like in Trzcianka, all of the street names had been changed, and her apartment house, as well as all of the buildings on *Neuer Markt*, had been destroyed in the war. What was really uncanny, though, was that the hotel where we had spent the night was near where Mom had lived, and that very morning as we were leaving the hotel, I had asked Ed to take a picture of me. He didn't particularly like the spot I had picked because the sun wasn't on my face, but I insisted that I wanted that particular background. Well, it turned out that the particular background that I had insisted on was the very block where Mom had lived. We walked around the whole area, but none of the landmarks my parents or aunts had told me about were still standing. *Posener Strasse*, where all the shops had been, still seemed to be the main shopping area, but the street had been closed for pedestrians only. We also walked to what had been *Wilhelm Platz* in the center of which the synagogue had been. It no longer is a plaza, and a street runs through the former site of the synagogue. We didn't go see where the Jewish cemetery had been, but Marek had told us that there are just trees growing there now and that no building would be allowed. The same was true for the site of the Jewish cemetery in Trzcianka.

While Schoenlanke and Schneidemuehl were the only places in the area in which we spent any time, we also drove through Behle (now Biala)<sup>4</sup>, a five-minute drive east of Schoenlanke, where Mom and her sisters were born and from where the Levy family originated; Stieglitz (now Siedlisko), maybe ten minutes south of Schoenlanke, from where the Dannenbaums originated; and Schrotz (now Skrzatusz), about a twenty-minute drive northwest of Schneidemuehl, where Omama and Opapa had lived, but neither their house nor the stork nest were still there. All three were little villages, with Behle being the smallest. I now understand the difference between a village and a town like Schoenlanke. The one thing we really were taken with in this whole area was the amount of woods throughout and the picturesque tree-lined roads leading into each town and village.

Ed and I then did the traditional Eastern Europe tour of Krakow, Prague, and Budapest. However, we ended our trip in the Black Forest in Germany which I always had heard Mom, Irma, and Ruth talk about and where Mom had been in the sanitarium in Badenweiler. I think we found the sanitarium, but it had been completely renovated and added on to. Badenweiler and the entire Black Forest area were every bit as beautiful as they had been described to me. Our trip also had started in Germany, with us having flown into Berlin. However, we only had an afternoon to do any sightseeing there, and the city had been so badly bombed that little is the same as when my family lived there. But at least I was there and thus visited all the places in Germany that played a significant part in my mother's family's life.

---

<sup>4</sup> Biala also has an "l" with a wavy line through it and thus is pronounced "Biawa."



Pictures from the museum in Schneidemuehl of the exterior and interior of the synagogue in Schoenlanke, built around 1880 with 400 seats and destroyed on *Kristallnacht* in 1939

Tracing one's roots, I'm sure, is always a moving experience. However, being so blessed as to be able to do so when your parents and aunts are still alive and have been able to so vividly describe their homeland and life there, makes the experience all the more incredible and one of almost reliving the past. As I walked down the streets of Schoenlanke, I felt as if I was retracing my family's footsteps, imagining Mom and her sisters walking to temple on Yom Kippur, stopping at Nowitsky's to buy cut violets for their mother; or to school, getting nervous as they passed the jail; or to the Zaskersee with friends on a Sunday afternoon, stopping on the way home at Teucher's to dance. In Schneidemuehl, I could picture Mom and Dad dancing the waltz at the *Goldener Loewe*, or walking through *Stadt Park* with her nieces Margit and Evelyn, or eating their noon meal together at my grandmother's *Mittagstisch*. I started this report by saying how writing this book made the area in Germany where Mom and her sisters grew up come alive for me. Let me end it by remarking how the trip turned this book into a movie for me in which I now clearly can visualize every scene. How blessed can any one person be!

## FAMILY TREES

The purpose of the following family trees is to make it easier to follow the family members mentioned in this book. Therefore, they cover only those generations and families pertinent to the book, and, in the fifth generation, only those people specifically mentioned in the book are listed. On the descendants of Nathan and Ernestine Dannenbaum, only the branches of Henrietta Dannenbaum Levy and Julius Dannenbaum are shown. The other four Dannenbaum children, Joseph (Henrietta's twin), August, Mollie Burchardt, and Pauline Freund all immigrated to America in the 1800s and thus were not living in Germany during the time covered in this book. Included on the trees are years of births and deaths, as well as the year of immigration from Germany. Indication also is made of those who died in the Holocaust, with the name of the concentration camp if known. In many instances, especially among the descendants of Marcus and Rosalie Cohn, dates and names of spouses were not available.

### DESCENDANTS OF MARCUS (1814 -1912) AND ROSALIE COHN

- Ernestine Cohn (? -1931) m. Wolf Abraham (? -1924)  
Hildegard (Hilde) (1888 -1975) (imm.1939) m. Max Levy (1875 -1929)  
Ruth (1907) m. Herman Simonstein (1891-1954)(both imm.1939)  
Evelyn (1931)(imm.1939)  
Margit (1932)(imm.1939)  
Irma (1908)(imm.1934) m. Nathan Dannenbaum (grandson of Joseph)(1903 -1976)  
Frank (1936)  
Nelly (1910)(imm.1938) m. Siegfried Berg (1909)(imm.1939)  
Sarah Lee (1941)  
Lorraine (1943)  
Herta (circa 1915 - circa 1915)  
Joachim (1916 -1971)(imm.1936) m. Elaine (? -1972)  
Margarete (Grete) (1890 -Trawinski) m. Paul Heide (1882 -Trawinski)  
Ruth (1914 -circa 1984) m. Hans Aronsohn (? -?)(both imm. to Buenos Aires before war)  
Kurt (1918 - circa 1985)(to England through O.R.T. before war)  
Wolfgang (1929 - Holocaust)
- Sister of Ernestine Cohn (? - circa 1892) m. Philipp Lachotzki (1850 -1932)  
Betty (? - Holocaust) m. Louis Lewy (? - before World War II)  
Isbert (? -?)(hid in Spain, imm. after war)  
Sally (1876 - Holocaust) m. Claire Levine (1887 - Holocaust)  
Hannelore (1924 - Holocaust)  
Hildegard (Hilde)(1888 - circa 1977) m. Philipp Lewy (1885 -1942)(both imm. 1940)  
Willy (? - Holocaust) m. Ellen Berner (? - Holocaust)  
Robert (circa 1914)(hid in Holland where he remains)  
Heinz (1916 -?)(hid in Holland, returned to Berlin after war)  
Rita (1923)(hid in Holland, imm. after war)
- Rosalie Cohn (? - Holocaust) m. (after above sister died) Philipp Lachotzki (1850 -1932)  
Hugo (? -World War I)  
Margarete (Grete)(? - Warsaw Ghetto) m. Leo Gumpert (? - Holocaust)  
Son (1922 -1922 of blood poisoning from circumcision)  
Helga (1923)(children's transport to Sweden where she remains)  
Gunther (circa 1926) (children's transport to England, after war to Sweden where he remains)
- Nette Cohn (? -? before 1910) m. Sommerfeld (? -?)  
Bertha (1878 -Trawinski)  
Son (? - Holocaust probably)  
Isidor (? - Auschwitz) m. ?  
Lena (? -?)  
Philipp (? -Holocaust probably) m. ?

## DESCENDANTS OF NATHAN (?-1878 or 1898) & ERNESTINE JOSEPH DANNENBAUM (?-1879)

Henrietta Dannenbaum (1837-1913) m. Joseph Levy (1840 -1898)  
Adolph (1865 -1923)(imm.1890s) m. Therese Halff (1880 -1967)  
Joe (1906 -1988) m. Mary Sharman (1905 -1995)  
Elaine (1930)  
Irvin (Bubba)(1934)  
Ophelie (1910 -1989)  
Therese (1869 - Theresienstadt)  
Martha (1870 -1940)(imm.1895) m. Morris Breier (1865 -1937)(imm.1888 from Hungary)  
Rose (1897-1900 Galveston flood)  
Sarah (1899 -1939) m. Nathan Klein (1899 -1989)  
Edward (1923)  
Ernest (1928)  
Martha (1931)  
Shirley (1932)  
Isaac (Ike) (1904 -1972) m. Olga Solomon (1909 -1993)  
Josephine (1902 -1980) m. Sam Stern (1889 -1982)  
Esther (1909 -1991) m. Lou Wagner (1903 -1984)  
Henry A. (1911-1994) m. Eve Tannenbaum (1906 -1966)  
Julius (1873 -1939 Holocaust) m. Regina Grunwald (? -1907 in childbirth)  
Rudi (1907-1952)(imm.1939)  
Rudi's twin sister (1907-1907)  
m. Martha Rosenbaum (1886 - Auschwitz)  
Max (Maexe) (1909 - Auschwitz)  
Ilse (1911-1990)(imm.1936)  
Max (1875 -1929) m. Hildegard (Hilde) Abraham (1888 -1975)(imm.1939)  
Ruth (1907) m. Herman Simonstein (1891-1954)(both imm.1939)  
Evelyn (1931)(imm.1939)  
Margit (1932)(imm.1939)  
Irma (1908)(imm.1934) m. Nathan Dannenbaum (grandson of Joseph)(1903-1976)  
Frank (1936)  
Nelly (1910)(imm.1938) m. Siegfried Berg (1909)(imm.1939)  
Sarah Lee (1941)  
Lorraine (1943)  
Herta (circa 1915 - circa 1915)  
Joachim (1916-1971)(imm.1936) m. Elaine (?-1972)

Julius Dannenbaum (1844 -1915) m. Laura Zanders (1851-1929)  
Joe Henry (1878 -1932)(imm.1894) m. Rosa Dannenbaum (daughter of Joseph)(1877-1939)  
Joe Henry, Jr. (1903 -1948) m. Edith Jarrett (1905 -1991)  
Sarah (Sister) (1905 -1989) m. Bruce Fagan (1905 -1973)  
Laura (Lollie) (1909 -1973)  
Martha (1878-1917) m. Adolph Silberschmidt (? -?)  
Hennie (circa 1903 - circa 1989) m. Lewith (? -?)(both imm. before war)  
Irma (circa 1905 - Holocaust)  
Ernest (1881 -1944) m. Betty Cohn (1885 -1957)(both imm.1942)  
Werner (1913)(imm.1938) m. Faye Passes (1919 -1988)  
Heinz (Joe) (1919)(imm.1938) m. Vinnie McClune (1919 -1986)  
Rosa (1884-1950)(imm.1939) m. Gustav Rosenbaum (1879-1918)  
Max (1910-1972)(imm.1937) m. Helen Krakowski (1924)(imm.1946 from Poland)  
Reinhard (1912-1972)(imm.1937) m. Ethel Seligman (?)  
Judith (1918)(imm.1939) m. Nathan Mayer (1911 -1995)(imm.1920 from Poland)  
Heinrich (1886 -1934) m. Rosa Pinkus (1896 - Auschwitz)  
Edith (1921 - Auschwitz)  
Ruth (1925)(children's transport to Sweden, imm.1953) m. Bernard Kane (1918)(imm.1948 from Czechoslovakia)  
Sally (1889 -1914 World War I)  
Arthur (1891 - 1944 Auschwitz) m. Cilly Levine (1891-1988)(survived Theresienstadt; imm.1952)  
Ilse (1920 - Auschwitz)  
Eva (1922)(hid in Berlin; imm.1952) m. W. Besser, div., m. Gary Moeller (1908)(imm. 1941)  
Gerda (1925 - Auschwitz)



# GLOSSARY of GERMAN WORDS AND JEWISH TERMS

## German Words:

*Abitur* - graduation certification  
*alte* - old  
*Apfel* - apple  
*Arbeitsbuch* - work permit  
*Aufmerksamkeit* - attentiveness  
*ausgeputzt* - overdressed  
*Bahnhof* - train station  
*Bahnhofmeister* - train station master  
*Baeume* - trees  
*Betragen* - behavior  
*Blaubeeren* - blueberry  
*Boden* - attic  
*Broetchens* - rolls  
*Buergermeister* - mayor  
*Buntenteller* - tray of sweets and fruit  
*Carbonade* - pan fried rib veal chops  
*Centrifuge* - machine that separates milk  
*Confiture* - candy store  
*Dampfwurst* - a kind of sausage  
*Dienstmaedchen* - working girl or maid  
*Erntefest* - after harvest celebration  
*Evangelische* - Protestant  
*Fabrik* - factory  
*Finanzamt* - German equivalent of the I.R.S.  
*Fleischerei* - meat market  
*Flieder* - lilacs  
*Frau* - Mrs.  
*Fraeulein* - Miss  
*Fruehstueck* - breakfast  
*Gaense* - goose  
*Gardrobe* - wardrobe  
*Garten* - garden  
*Gasse* - narrow street without sidewalks  
*Gemuese* - vegetable

**Grieben** - crispy pieces of skin from a goose  
**Gueter** - freight  
**gute** - good  
**Herr** - Mr.  
**Herren Schnitt** - man's haircut  
**Hexel** - machine that cuts up straw  
**Hilfsverein** - an official German Jewish migration agency  
**Hof** - farmyard or other type of yard  
**Holz pantoffel** - wooden shoes  
**Huehnerstall** - chicken house  
**junge** - young  
**Kaffee Klatch** - a get together for coffee and talk  
**Kastanien** - chestnut  
**Kaufmaennischer Verein** - equivalent of a retail merchants association  
**Kirche** - church  
**Klassen Muetzens** - class caps  
**Knecht** - farm servant who sleeps on the premises  
**Knix** - curtsy  
**Kochkaese** - cooked cottage cheese with caraway seeds  
**Koenig** - king  
**Kolonialwarens** - grocery stores  
**Konditorei** - coffee house  
**Kristallnacht** - "night of broken glass" when Nazis destroyed synagogues and Jewish businesses  
**Kuechenmaedchen** - kitchen girl  
**Kuhscheisse** - cow manure  
**Kuhstall** - cow stall  
**Kunst** - art  
**Laube** - gazebo  
**Lebkuchen** - cake made with chocolate and dried fruit  
**Lehring** - apprentice  
**Lumpen** - rag  
**Maedchen** - girl or maid  
**Magdalenen Kuchen** - a kind of cake  
**Maigloeckchen** - lily of the valley  
**Markt** - plaza or town square  
**Marzipanpueppchen** - term of endearment, favorite little doll made of marzipan  
**Matrosen** - sailor  
**Medecinalrat** - a superior doctor  
**"Mein Kampf"** - "My Battle," Hitler's book  
**Mittag** - noon meal  
**Mittagstisch** - noon meal table  
**Molkerei** - dairy

*neuer* - new  
*Oberbett* - feather comforter  
*Obst* - fruit  
*Pfefferkuchen* - kind of cake  
*Pferdestaelle* - horse stalls  
*Pflaumen* - plum  
*Pflaumenkuchen* - plum cake  
*Pflaumenmus* - plum preserve  
*Platz* - plaza  
*Preperanden Anstalt* - preparatory institute  
*Realschule* - private school for grades 4 through 12  
*Rechtanwalt* - lawyer  
*Rhabarba* - rhubarb  
*Rolle* - roller  
*Schinken* - ham  
*Schmaltz* - fat  
*Schneegloeckchen* - snow bells  
*Scheune* - barn  
*Schuppen* - shed  
*Schwester* - sister  
*Soehne* - sons  
*Speicher* - granary  
*Spickgans* - smoked goose  
*Sportsplatz* - sports field  
*Strasse* - street  
*Stube* - room  
*Stubenmaedchen* - room maid  
*Suppe* - soup  
*Tante* - aunt  
*Tanz* - dance  
*Taubchen* - little pigeon  
*Unterbett* - covering for box springs  
*Veilchen* - violets  
*Volksschule* - public school  
*Walzer* - waltz  
*Waschkueche* - wash kitchen  
*Wissenschaft* - knowledge  
*Wuerstchen* - wienies  
*Ziegen* - goat  
*Zigarren* - cigar  
*Zylandar Hut* - high hat

## **Jewish Terms - Hebrew, Yiddish, and German Words:**

***Bet Midrash*** - house of study

***B'nai B'rith*** - Children of the Covenant, a Jewish organization

***Chanukah*** - eight-day celebration of the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple by the Maccabees

***Deutsch Juedischer Jugendbund*** - German Jewish youth group sponsored by *B'nai B'rith*

***Esrog*** - citron used during special blessing at *Sukkos* along with *lulav*

***fleischig*** - containing meat

***Haggadah*** - prayer book for Passover *Seder* telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt

***Haroses*** - traditional Passover dish of chopped apples, nuts, wine, and honey

***Kaddish*** - memorial prayer

***Kaepchen*** - *Yarmulke* or Jewish skullcap

***Lulav*** - palm, willow, and myrtle branches waved with an *esrog* at *Sukkos*

***“Ma-oz-tsur”*** - “Rock of Ages,” a *Chanukah* song

***Matzo*** - unleavened bread eaten during the week of Passover

***Megillah*** - Book of Esther read on *Purim*

***Menorah*** - candelabra; a nine-branched candelabra for *Chanukah*

***Mikvah*** - Jewish ritual bath or bath house

***milchig*** - containing dairy

***Pesach*** - Passover, eight-day commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt

***Pesachdik*** - kosher for Passover

***Purim*** - commemoration of the saving of the Jewish people from destruction by Haman

***Rosh Hashanah*** - Jewish New Year

***Seder*** - religious service and festive meal on the first and second nights of Passover

***Shabbas*** - Jewish Sabbath which begins Friday at sundown

***Shamas*** - temple caretaker

***Shochet*** - ritual slaughterer of animals

***Simchas Torah*** - yearly celebration of completion and commencement of rereading of the *Torah*

***Strietzel*** - *challah*, traditional Jewish braided bread

***Sukkoh*** - hut covered with greenery and hanging fruit built for *Sukkos*

***Sukkos*** - eight-day festival giving thanks for harvest and commemorating the 40 years in the desert

***Tallit*** - Jewish prayer shawl

***Tefillin*** - leather straps and box containing biblical passages worn during morning prayer

***Torah*** - scroll containing the Five Books of Moses

***Yarmulke*** - Jewish skullcap

***Yom Kippur*** - Day of Atonement on which Jews fast

Note that all nouns in German are capitalized. While Hebrew and Yiddish nouns are not necessarily capitalized, they would be in Germany and thus are here to be consistent with the text.

