

The Writings of
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LIFE'S SUNS AND STORMS

by Ilse Friedman-Golbert

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Even though I can't remember the day I was born, I have to start my story that day of January 1, 1914, because I had such a special feeling about being born on New Year's Day: It was my birthday and the whole civilized world was celebrating this day. I was born in Bebra, a very small town of about 6000 inhabitants. The second and last child of my parents, the little sister of an 8 year old brother, my dear brother who always introduced me to people as his "little" sister even after I thought I was grown up.

Our town was so wonderful in those early days. Most of our relatives lived about one or two blocks away on the main street. There were very few cars driving through then, but a lot of chickens and geese and ducks waddled in the middle of the street, some of the geese viciously chased me, even taking an occasional nip at my legs. My father's oldest brother lived in the old family house. The house must have looked the same when his parents had it, because he never changed anything on it. The entrance hall and the kitchen still had stone floors and how cold and drafty that house was in winter. Also they still used the old outhouse in the back yard and I always made sure before I visited there that I did not have to use it. That revolting stench gave me a vision of falling in there sometime. In the back yard they raised chickens and goats. I never went to their house without my little brown earthenware pot to take some goat's milk home. Besides that there was always an apple or some other goody for me when I visited. They were simple,

poor, good people who still wanted to give to others. Next to the cold kitchen was their little living room. In this tiny room was more living done than I have ever seen in any room since then. It had a dining table with chairs, a sofa and a chest of drawers, and in the corner of the room stood a large bath tub. There were no faucets or a shower, just a tub was there. The water was heated on the coal stove once a week, and that night everybody in the family took a bath. Thinking back now, I keep wondering how they ever got the water out of the tub.

I was a roly poly little girl, with long blond curls hanging down my back, looking healthy and well-nourished, a little on the obese side. When dinner time came I was hardly interested in eating. My mother worried about that, even took me to the doctor's 'till one day at a family get-together the puzzle was solved as one family after the other of my relatives related how I came around every day before dinner time inquiring what was cooking and eating some of the offered food. As I had a lot of relatives in town, no wonder I wasn't hungry at dinner time at home.

As far as I know and could feel, my parents had a very happy marriage and this reflected on our family life. I will never forget the wonderful weekend afternoons when my mother played the piano and we all stood around and sang, and when I felt especially the closeness and love of my parents to us and each other.

My father came from a poor family and was orphaned early

in life, while my mother's family was very wealthy and prominent. Father, who was 10 years older than my mother, knew her when she was a little girl, but then he went away for many years. When he finally came back home he met mother who in the meantime had grown up to be a very pretty girl of 17 years. They fell in love but could not get married at that time, because my mother's family was dead set against it. Not only were her parents against the alliance because she was too young to get married, but one of her uncles nixed it because a girl from such a wealthy family could marry a doctor or a lawyer and did not have to put up with the son of a poor widow who had just started a business of his own. Often I heard my parents joke about this later, but at the time when I was old enough to hear and understand about it, my father had been my grandparents' favorite son-in-law for a long time.

My grandfather was a city councilman and for many years the mayor of our town. He worked very hard and accomplished much good for the community. Since people had no plumbing in their houses and had to carry well water, he went around with experts investigating how water could be brought more easily into every kitchen. This was finally achieved by water pipes.

He was also the "Schiedsrichter" (mediator). People came to him when they had family spats or quarrels with neighbours. I remember the old hotel. It was on a corner lot, ten steps up to a terrace leading to the house entrance. Inside, a large foyer led

into the "Bierstube" (beer bar) every hotel in Germany had. From there were two more connecting rooms. When my grandfather did his mediating, he took both parties into the third room, closed the door, and took a bottle of "Schnaps" (brandy) with him. When I heard excited voices coming out of that room, I tried to listen at the keyhole. Ultimately the battling parties emerged smiling. I am not sure if they had resolved all their difficulties or if they had had a few glasses of brandy, but my grandfather was known as the best mediator around.

We did not live with my grandparents 'til they had retired, still I spent many happy hours and holidays in their house: The 12th of March will never be forgotten as long as I or any of my cousins live. This was the day my grandmother, my father and his older brother had their birthday, a big family holiday. My mother's two sisters came from nearby towns and her brother, a doctor in Wiesbaden, wouldn't miss that day. They all brought their families. In the afternoon the relatives who lived in town came for coffee and cake. The festive table extended through several rooms. The patriarchs sat at the head of the table, then came all their grown children and we little ones sat at the end. Once, I can't remember if in March or on grandfather's birthday in November, these festivities were repeated. Grandfather and his sister Lena sat at the head of the table. Aunt Lena reached for another piece of cake. Raising my voice, I called to her for everyone to hear, "Aunt Lena,

that is your fifth piece of cake!" She jumped up and left the party, embarrassed, or insulted. I could not tell now if I was too young to know what I had done or if I did it on purpose. I know I did not like her.

The Passover holidays were wonderful milestones in my childhood. They were always celebrated in grandparents' house. Their living quarters were right behind the beerstube and desiring privacy that night, we set the table in a guestroom on the second floor. Room number one was especially suited as it contained a large table and a huge sofa and chairs. For grandfather there was a billowy feather pillow to lean on, a symbol that his family was free and not slaves in Egypt. We never realized that we would soon be enslaved again, but not in Egypt. I was allowed to help grandma set the table for the Seder. It was covered with the best white linen cloth and matching napkins. The Passover dishes were like new since every year they were used only eight days. Shiny silverware and glistening crystal wine glasses were specially treated for Passover. After the table was set, we prepared the silver platter by placing three whole matzos on it, a piece of horseradish, parsley accompanied by a small bowl of salt water, a roasted lamb bone, an egg and a mixture of grated apples, nuts and wine. A cup of wine for the prophet Elijah was next to the Seder plate. At sundown family and friends sat down to read the Haggadah and celebrate. Every year my grandfather interrupted his reading at the same

place, telling my grandmother, "Rosa, put the Matzoballs in the soup." Whereupon, grandmother pushed the bell over the table, the sign to the kitchen to do just that. As it took 20 minutes to boil the Matzo balls, we knew it was near time to eat. Finally the steaming chicken soup was brought to the table and the best part of the evening began. All eyes were shining partly from the wine, partly of the late dinner hour. The rumblings of our stomachs told their own story. After the soup a stuffed fish was served, roast chicken, vegetables, salads and of course the traditional Matzoshalet dessert. The Shalet was molded in a high cast iron pot, resembling the high hat my father wore when he went to synagogue. After dinner came the fun part. Grandfather started looking around for the Afikomen, a piece of Matzo which we children had hidden earlier. He had to pay a ransom to get it back, and he paid with pleasure. After dinner we thanked god for the good food he had provided and for letting us celebrate another Passover in peace. Toward the end of the reading we sang Passover songs, the best being the "Hagadah" (the lamb). We children never tired of the story. After singing, it was read again. This ceremony was repeated year after year, sometimes with unexpected happenings. One year, when we picked up the Seder plate, a little mouse jumped out and my mother ran out of the room screaming. Years later when in the process of building our new house and celebrating the Seder in part of the old house, a chicken strutted in instead of the prophet Elijah. Next day began

the eight day celebration which to us children meant eating all the Passover foods which we did not have any other time of the year. The first few days were fun but we got tired of it very soon and craved a slice of bread. The last night of Passover we were out at sundown, eagerly searching the sky for the first star to appear in the firmament, a sign that the holiday was over.

During my childhood my family lived in a flat, about one block away from my grandparents' house. The landlord lived downstairs and also had his leather business on the ground floor. The brown raw leather had a wonderful smell and until this day, whenever I smell leather, I see the picture of that house in my mind. The landlord was nasty, and his redhaired wife stingy. There was never any light in the lobby or on up the stairs. In the early dark of the winter going up those cold stairs was scary. Breathless, I used to arrive upstairs with all the furies of hell after me. We children had to be very quiet going upstairs or the nasty landlord would be furious. That was the first time in my life that I learned what repression was like. I also found out when things get too hot the lid blows off: One day we took our sweet revenge. My cousin Kurt from the city was visiting and with his and another boy's help, we put a huge tree trunk across the landlord's dark lobby, rang his doorbell and started a mighty noisy racket in the back yard. His son came running out, not seeing the tree and took a flying leap out into the yard, landing head first on all fours. Surprisingly he didn't

break his neck. He was limping for quite a while and nobody ever found out who caused his accident.

My cousin Kurt was three months older than I was and spent every vacation in our house. Through him I learned to play football and other boys' games. My parents paid for a number of broken windows and as no little girl would dress in pants at that time my dresses were often torn.

The memories of our old flat still make me feel warm and comfy. The large coal stove in the kitchen with a water kettle constantly steaming, the familiar food smells and the large pot bellied soup pot slowly simmering in the rear of the stove; the ecstasy of a cake or cookies in the oven, some of which I had kneaded with my own little hands. When it was too cold to go outside in winter, the kitchen was my playground. Often I was sitting on a little footstool with my cat curled up in my lap. The living room stove was never lit 'til just before my parents came home from their store. Sometimes we put apples on top of the stove to bake for dessert. Oh, the sweet scent of the apples baking in the warm room and the glistening white snow outside the window!

My nursemaid was with us when I was born and brought me up 'til I was seven years old, while my mother and father were in business. Dad had a drygoods store and never got involved in the hotel business. My Christine finally left us to get married and eventually had five children of her own, but always thinking of me

as her first born. In my teens when I spent several months in Hamburg, she couldn't stand the separation. With her whole family she traveled by train to that big city to see me. It was an eight hour train ride.

Some sunny day in August 1914, I was eight months old, my parents went into the woods surrounding our town on a picnic, they told me. My nine year old brother and I were left in the care of my nursemaid. After all, at seven months I wouldn't have enjoyed a picnic.

That was the very day when the world suddenly changed and dark clouds appeared in the lives of people all over the world; the crown prince of Austria was shot in a little town in Serbia that nobody had ever heard of before, and Austria declared war on Serbia. It didn't take long for the flames to spread involving most of the European countries and finally America. My father was called to arms immediately and mother had to manage the business by herself. At the time everybody was sure that the war would not last longer than a few weeks and the German army would then return victorious. Time went by, a few weeks--- a few months--- and the people at home heard of one German victory after another. Only one pessimist in the town didn't believe all these great reports saying that our army would win battles but lose the war. Of course nobody listened to him: "God was on our side, how could we lose!"

My father who had done all his own bookkeeping at home

and who had a beautiful, clear handwriting, was ordered to an army office in Kassel, a larger town next to ours, and he must have come home quite often to see us. As the war went on food became scarce and my mother, besides running the business, walked long distances in the dark of night with a rucksack on her back to buy chickens, geese, butter and flour from the farmers. Part of her loot went to father's commanding officer and as long as he was supplied he recommended that father stay in his office instead of being sent to the front. This went on for a couple of years until the officer himself was transferred to the frontlines in France and took my father along as his official scribe, since the German army did not have typewriters during the war.

The war dragged on and on with the German army being defeated on many fronts. After my father had been in France for about two years the fighting finally ground to a halt. He was one of the few soldiers who was not wounded or captured. With the German army utterly defeated the Kaiser and his staff fled to Holland. The German officers went into hiding as they were hated by the soldiers to a degree endangering their lives. The leaderless army was milling around facing either imprisonment by the French or fleeing towards Germany and possibly facing trial for desertion. My father who was as eager to get out of France as all the others, decided to act. He wrote discharge papers for all soldiers who asked for them, stamped them, and signed them with the name of

his commanding officer. He didn't forget to discharge himself also, then taking the first available train out of enemy territory, he was the first service man to come home in our town. With his action also illegal, he saved a lot of men from imprisonment.

On Saturdays all the Jewish stores were closed. My parents and all our relatives went to temple and immediately after services, before the noon dinner, one either received visitors or paid visits to relatives and friends. When my parents came home the table was set and dinner was ready. There was a maid to cook and clean house. Not that my parents were wealthy people, but it was the custom in every middle class home to employ a maid.

Father was a handsome man with a big blond mustache and I remember best his long, well-shaped hands and always clean fingernails. We could feel his love for all of us and his respect and admiration for mother. He was strict with us and when he called us home with a certain whistle that was different from any other I ever heard, we ran. I couldn't bear the look in his eyes if I disobeyed him. Whenever I displeased him he had a way of looking over his glasses at me that made me want to crawl into a hole and hide. Only twice in my life can I remember him angry enough that he punished me physically: It happened the first time the night before my fourth birthday. In the early evening when it was already dark outside, my brother was sent to get some milk at the farmer's. I immediately said that I was going too, but my mother objected

because it was cold outside. I stamped my foot and announced that I was going anyhow. At this moment my father entered and just caught me stamping my foot in front of my mother. Without any further questions, he put me over his knees and gave me a good thrashing. He may have just paddled me a little, but to be punished in such a way by my father was terrifying. From that time on, I knew better than to disobey my mother when my father was around. Oh, I wasn't always perfect, but when Mutti, as I called her, punished me it wasn't impressive as it happened more often. Having lost his father when he was 14 years old, he did not have any formal education but, through experience, had accumulated a lot of knowledge. At that time there was very little information about nutrition and my father had his own ideas about health. On hot summer days when we came home from school or play, he would allow us a little sip of water: "Don't drink too much, you only have to sweat it out again, and that will make you hotter than you are." Nobody else I knew was as smart as my father. What a terrific idea!

I was all of 16 years old when I displeased my dad the second time. Earlier that year I was permitted to attend dancing school to learn ballroom dancing and other social graces. The first night there I saw the boy whom I had admired from afar every morning on the train to school, and as the dancing lesson progressed, we fell deeply and hopelessly in love. At the end of the last lesson we had a party with all the parents present. He came, dressed in

his best outfit to call for me, bringing a beautiful bouquet of yellow roses. I wore a pale green evening gown which by the style of that time had a wide skirt, short in front and gradually lengthening in the back. We walked the length of the town, I with my roses cradled in my arm. He was tall and handsome and I was the proudest young lady in town. About two weeks later we went to a party and while playing some parlor games he kissed me for the first time. Fireballs exploded in my head. The sensation of his kisses was very different from my mother's. After he took me home I couldn't sleep all night for happiness and doubts. The next morning I went crying to my cousin, who was ten years older than I was, and confided in her that I was certain I would have a baby because my boyfriend had kissed me. She assured me that I couldn't become pregnant from a kiss, and with that worry out of the way, we went right on seeing each other. My mother and father, being not different from other parents, worried a lot about our relationship. Dancing together at the school was one thing, but for me to continue the friendship after the course was over, was embarrassing to them. After all he was not Jewish, came from a different background, his father being "only" a railroad conductor, while my father was a well-known businessman and shame over shame his aunt used to be a servant in my aunt's house. Somehow all this didn't concern me. All I could think of was that we were in love, and the whole world better adjust to us. When none of my parents' arguments could

persuade me to break up with him, my father finally forbade me to see him again. I kept right on meeting him and one night when I came back from my secret tryst, my father angrily greeted me in the hall and slapped me. The second time it wasn't as shocking as when I was 4 years old, and the next night I saw my friend again, a typical case of a teenager defying her parents and society. When the Nazis came to power we had to break up. Even though he never became a party member he managed to get into a lot of trouble after high school. He committed a crime and served time in jail. During World War II, he was killed when his whole regiment was wiped out in Russia.

It took three days out of every month to do the laundry. This was a major operation of washing clothes accumulated over four weeks. An extra person was hired to help. The maids soaked clothes the night before laundry day in big wooden tubs in the wash kitchen. Yes, there was an extra room where all the laundry equipment was kept, and there was a cold water faucet with drainage hole in the floor; also a huge kettle under which a fire was built. Laundry day started at 5:00 in the morning. First the clothes would be wrung out and thrown into the big kettle in which soapy water was heating. It was then boiled. The wash kitchen would be the warmest place in the house during the winter and the hot, steamy air felt good. Inhaling big gulps of it in my lungs, I felt as though in a steam bath, only I didn't know of the existence of those. Later

with long rods, the women fished the hot clothes out of the kettle, threw them into a wooden tub, scrubbed them on a washboard, then threw them into rinse water. After hours of backbreaking work, they wrung them out and the laundry was carted off to our garden, one block away. Piece by piece it was spread out on the green lawn where the hot sun bleached it snow white. Every time it got dry, it was soaked again with a sprinkling can. At sundown, all the clothes were carted back to the house, soaked over night, wrung out the next morning, carted back to the garden and hung up on clotheslines to dry. Only in winter was it hung in the attic. There the big sheets froze so stiff that it would hurt to run into them. On the final day, another woman came to help with the ironing. For this chore, heavy irons were heated on top of the kitchen stove. Only men's shirts were sorted and given to a professional ironer.

During the summer the garden was my best playground. It was large, half of it was lawn and a great old weeping willow tree was growing there. In its cool shadow we played and often napped. The other half of the garden was planted with all kinds of vegetables, juicy red strawberries and fruit trees. Around the vegetable plots grew gooseberry and current bushes. When they became ripe there were so many bright red raspberries and green gooseberries that we children could eat to our hearts' content and there were still enough left for canning. One day my cousin and I took on a whole berry bush each to see who could strip it faster. I can't remember

if we ever finished stripping them or who won but we both ended up with a tummy ache. We played endless games under the old willow tree, sometimes built a tent and slept in it. All our vegetables and fruit were grown in this garden. There was so much that a great deal of it was canned, and a lot of the root vegetables were dug in sand in the cellar for use during wintertime. People had to depend on their canned goods during the winter when there was snow and ice outside and the ground was frozen hard so that nothing could grow. That was also the time when we ate a lot of carrots, turnips, beets and other vegetables which we could now dig up out of the sand in the cellar. Most of the cabbage which we grew was made into sauerkraut: the cabbage was sliced thinly, salted and stamped into a high wooden tub and stamped 'til the juice came running out. Then it was covered with a clean cloth, wooden boards put over it and weighted down with heavy rocks. The tub was then taken down in the cellar for storage. Our cellar reached through the whole base of the house. It had cement floors, walls and ceilings. One of the rooms had shelves in it for apples. By this storing method we had fresh apples almost all year around. Once in a while there were some rotten apples in between and had to be picked so that the rot would not affect the rest of the fruit. One day we children had a good idea how to dispose of this rotten fruit: On a nice crisp winter day when the sun set around 5 P.M. and it was dark early, we took a bag full of these rotten apples and draped them around the door

knobs of peoples' entrance doors. As there were no street lights in those days in our little town, the entrances were dark and visitors opening the doors from the outside felt the soft rot oozing out of their hands before they could see what it was. Even after they stepped into the lighted entrance hall did they not recognize immediately that the brown mess in their hands was only a rotten apple.

All good times end, I had to start going to school when I was six years old. I was sent to the local Jewish school, there were only 30 Jewish families in town and there were about 30 children from 1st to 8th grade. We were all in the same room with only one teacher. On weekends our teacher also served as the local rabbi. The year I started school, the first grade was unusually large with 6 children. It is customary that on the first day of school each child is presented with a large cardboard cone (Zuckertuete), brightly decorated and filled with goodies. That first day of school was a glorious event followed by four years of dreariness. The poor teacher did his best to teach 8 different age groups at the same time, but too often we had to sit and just practice writing or quietly read. Entrance exams to high school were not easy after this kind of education. Children who had gone to regular school were far ahead of us. Fortunately, my parents were always ready to help at home with reading and spelling and so I passed the exams. Everything connected with high school was very exciting. The school was

in Hersfeld, about 14 kilometers away and all high school students took the early morning train. My days should have been filled with studying but the truth was that I only studied in winter, but in summer I found it more important to go swimming and my studies would suffer. Almost every year during Christmas vacation my parents received a letter from school informing them that I would not be transferred to the next grade by Easter if my grades would not improve. Then I studied hard all winter and by Easter I had a perfect report card. We had no dances or parties in school. Every school day started with Lutheran prayers and church songs, as church and state were not divided and that was a constant embarrassment for the children who were not of the same faith.

By the end of my high school days the Nazi party had become stronger and there were a lot of unpleasant situations. Teachers showed up in school dressed in Nazi uniforms, some of my best friends joined the Nazi youth movement and were not allowed to associate with me any longer. Hitler became the prophet for all people who were out of work and for every crackpot who thought he had an axe to grind or hoping to better his lifestyle. Hitler, their savior promised everything, his followers swore that they would give their lives for him, unaware that the time would come for most of them to die for his ideas. When the next election time came around there were more than 60 different political parties competing against each other on the ballot. People were mixed up,

didn't know who they were voting for or for what. Most of them stayed away from the polls, but Hitler's party members went full strength, they were ordered to. The Weimar Republic, our Democratic government, was weak from the beginning and at that particular time in complete chaos. The Nazis held meetings in cities as well as in every little town and village. Hitler was a dynamic speaker, hypnotizing his audiences, 'til they were not sure any more which of his fanatically screamed words were true and which not believable. People joined the new party in large numbers.

On election day the few people who still held on to the Democratic party assembled in our dance hall to hear the election results over the radio. During the evening, county after county reported overwhelming results for the new party. It was a stunning victory for the "Fuhrer." Already the next morning those so-called Social Democrats who were in our house the night before climbed on the bandwagon, strutting around in Nazi uniforms. Every newspaper that had ever written against the Nazi party was immediately banned from publishing, and hoards of young party members smashed their presses, beating up editors as well as Jews, trampling people to death in the streets. We were all of a sudden subhuman without any rights. It was alright to kill a Jew in public in the streets, cats and dogs had better protection. There were victory parades with hoards of people singing mostly inflammatory songs of how the Jews would be killed and their blood would run in the streets. One thing

which I never understood to this day was that not only the hoodlums were marching and singing, but that I saw educated people, those who should have known better, marching and really believing that all this was perfectly alright.

On the day of Hitler's victory my daily life turned upside down, everything was changed completely: Swimming in the Fulda, the river near Bebra, which I had done most of my life, was forbidden, going to a movie, to a park for a walk or any place else, was forbidden to Jews, little by little one thing after another was forbidden. It seems wherever I turned it was forbidden, forbidden, forbidden. I was still in my teens at this time and cannot imagine today my feelings when all my non-Jewish friends turned away from me. I had finished high school and planned to go to college and study dentistry, but there was no school who would accept Jewish students.

My mother wanted to leave Germany at once like a lot of our friends did. It would have been easy to go to America, and it was still possible to sell all our holdings and take the money with us to start a new life. My father, who was a German patriot all his life, would not hear of it. He was so sure that the Nazis would leave him alone. Hadn't he fought for his country during World War I? Wasn't he a veteran? So our family stayed. On May 1st 1933, the government started the first official action against the Jews: A guard with a loaded rifle was stationed in front of every

Jewish store, shop or factory, so that no "Arian" as they called the German people, was allowed to enter the premises. This action was only for one day, but it scared people away from us. Even after that the family couldn't make up their mind to leave.

After a short time the Germans marched into French occupied Rhineland, our hopes soared, now the French wouldn't stand for that, we hoped. Nothing happened . . . Hitler aggressed more and more against other countries, the rumor was that America would fight against him, but nothing happened. In the meantime more and more of the Jewish people lost their jobs and not making a living, they left Germany for America or Israel. This country had a strict quota system at the time which was soon filled. People then had to go on a waiting list to come here. Besides that, you had to have an affidavit from a U.S. citizen guarantying that you would not be a burden to the country after coming here. Our family had no relatives or acquaintances in America. So it seemed hopeless at the time. We stayed not knowing from day to day if we would not get arrested and taken away, or even killed in our own home. In those days you found out who your friends were: Even though non-Jewish people were forbidden to associate with us, some of our neighbours and friends came to see us after dark, bringing food and tending to our needs. There was a bakery in town. The owner helped wherever he could, but somebody reported him for giving milk to a Jewish friend. Immediately his bakery was closed, and he could never

open again 'til the Nazis were defeated. More and more people got frightened, but whenever there was an air raid exercise, and there were many, the streets were dark and people kept slipping in our back door. One of our best friends at the time was the president of the farmer's organisation. In public he was known as a long-time party member and that is why the Nazis had appointed him to his post. He was our neighbour and any chance he got he slipped in and out of our house attending to our needs. I met him again 33 years later when I went back to Bebra. He was a very old man then and we were very happy to meet again and it gave me a chance to thank him. These were only a few single incidents. Most German people were true, confirmed Nazis. The worst ones were people who never had any possessions in their lives, never held a job or wanted to work. They saw a chance to enrich themselves. They were the ones who held the best government positions in the new Germany, disowning the Jews who had no way of fighting back as the law of the land was not applicable to them any more.

While people were waiting to be admitted to other countries the Germans started herding them into concentration camps. Most of them were Jews, but there were also other so-called "undesirables." Those were sometimes people whose children were told in school about all the "wonderful" things that Hitler did for the people and who may have told their teacher that their father had told them just the opposite. The teacher would report that to the party, the man

would be picked up and never heard from again. Families were torn apart all for the "good of the party." Any retarded or permanently sick person was taken away and killed "to strengthen the German people and make them pure." In 1935, we still had the hotel but only Jewish people were allowed to come in, and we were not allowed to hire non-Jewish personnel. We all worked very hard to keep the place up. One day while waiting on customers, I met my future husband. He came in for lunch and I waited on him. As he came to our town on business regularly he was back a week later and from that time on every week. We got acquainted and started writing to each other. As there was absolutely no social life for me, his letters became the highlights of my life. I grasped for every opportunity to at least talk to the opposite sex. For me he was like a savior who had come to take me out of my drab existence. To make my fortune even greater he had relatives in America. We got married on December 14, 1936, and went to live in his home town of Buttstaedt near Weimar. We, his parents and his uncle's family, were the only Jewish people there.

We met in March and got secretly engaged in June, right after he attended his sister's wedding. The reason to keep it a secret for the time being was that Willy was only 23 years old and it was not customary for a man in Germany to think of marriage before he was 28 or 30 years old. A man had to be able to make a living for his wife in the style that she was accustomed to. Most

women at that time did not work but it was also necessary to employ a maid, and at our standard of life, also a nursemaid later when children arrived. Making a living was no problem for Willy, but at his age he was afraid to tell his mother of our plans. So he found all kinds of excuses to come to our town on business. After a while his parents began to wonder why all the cattle he bought came from our county while there were places where he could have found cows of much better quality. Trying to find out what his hang up was, they discovered that it was not a cow at all that made him return to Bebra again and again. As they kept losing money on the poor quality of merchandise that he purchased, his mother finally took the bull by the horn and came to see me. Her intent was to break up this "affair" or if that was not possible, get us married so he would stay away from that place when he went on buying trips. She came to tell us that her son was much too young to think of marriage, but after she met my family she changed her mind and left at the end of the day inviting us to come and visit them soon. So after some time elapsed my mother and I went to visit them. They lived in Buttstaedt, Thuringia, which was about 3 hours by train from our town, very far away in those days. Willy called for us at the station in Weimar, as transportation to Buttstaedt was inconvenient, and it was a 15-minute ride to his house. Entering the house we found my future mother-in-law on her hands and knees scrubbing the tile floor in the hall. When we at home expected company the

house was cleaned the day before and we were dressed and ready to receive our guests. She also had enough help not to scrub the floors herself. I never saw her do it again, and wondered if this wasn't her way of letting me know that if I married her son I would have to work hard or even a gesture to discourage me from marrying him at all. She always was used to directing everything in her family: She picked out Willy's clothes and tried to arrange his entertainment. She had already picked out a wife for him from a very wealthy family and was furious when her plan did not work out. Towards the outside she did not show her disappointment, on the contrary, she did the best she could to help us and make us comfortable after we were married. She not only rebuilt her house, so that we would have a nice apartment upstairs, but she furnished it completely while we were on our honeymoon, even putting the groceries in the pantry. Living in this place was not always easy. It had to be kept up as a showplace and all her friends were shown around and told at length what she had done and how and why she had picked out each piece of furniture personally. We only lived in the apartment a short time, and then had to leave town.

There was very little propaganda against us, so our business was going good. My father-in-law imported Clydesdale horses from Belgium and Denmark into Germany to be used for workhorses on the farms and the farmers kept coming and dealing with us. This peace didn't last long. As the Nazis weren't able to keep the farmers

from doing business with us, they just closed our business down. My father-in-law, being a wealthy man, decided to retire and live on his income; but as we were young, we decided to try to get out of Germany and build a new life for ourselves. Through my husband's relatives we received affidavits guarantying that we would not be a burden to the public after coming here. Then the long waiting started; waiting to be called to the American Consulate to receive our emigration papers. It was very hard to just wait, so we started taking trips to neighbouring countries, thinking if our American visa would not come through we could settle in one of the other European countries. Little did we realize that those countries would be overrun by the Nazi hordes very soon. Finally we decided to visit America. We applied for and got a visitor's visa. The difficulty then was to get any money to travel outside of Germany. Under the new regime nobody was allowed to take more than D. M. 10.00 out of the country, which amounted to \$2.50. The American Express travel agency, which had branches in all major cities, arranged a trip for us where we paid in German money. When we arrived in New York all our needs were taken care of from hotels to food and sightseeing tours. We also received \$2.00 per day cash for the time we were here.

While we prepared for the journey the German Army marched into Czechoslovakia. The English prime minister, Mr. Chamberlaine, had agreed to let the Germans take over that country to buy peace

for England. To this day it is still not clear to me how England could give away a people and a country which they did not own. Again we were hoping some country would step in and stop those bastards, but nothing happened. That night with the troops marching toward the border, my husband left the country thinking the war could break out any minute. Being young and inexperienced, I stayed behind waiting for two of his new suits which the tailor had not ready. If a war would have broken out that week I never would have been able to leave, I would have perished like the rest of my family. Luckily war was avoided at that particular time and I set out to meet my husband in Holland. At the border check, the S.S. guards came into the train and took every Jewish person off. But, as the Nazis were taught to believe that all Jews had dark hair and long noses, I was not bothered with my straight nose and blond hair. Besides, my name was Friedman, which is a Germanic name. Those people who were taken off the train were submitted to all kinds of chicanery, doing odd jobs. One of them was that they had to scrub the station platform with toothbrushes on their hands and knees. They arrived the next day just before the ship departed. After 6 days traveling across the ocean we saw with great excitement the Statue of Liberty and I swear to this day she had her arms stretched out to receive us. Going through customs, we tried our feeble knowledge of the English language on the customs officials. When one of them asked me if we had only one pair of field glasses,

I answered him, "We have it together," and about a year later I finally comprehended why everyone laughed at my answer. Not mastering the language better made life very difficult at first. We did not like to make phone calls, but when it was unavoidable, we both crowded into a phone booth. The reason was that my husband was afraid to talk but understood English better than I did. So when we phoned, I was the one who would talk, then immediately give him the receiver to listen to the answer, translate it to me, so I could talk again. It was a riot, but we managed.

In New York we were taken to a nice hotel and treated like human beings. This in itself may not make sense to the reader, but we had just escaped from slavery and it was not easy to believe that we were free and able to walk into a good hotel without being arrested. For two glorious weeks we went everywhere in New York; to the theaters, opera, sightseeing, all things that we had not done for a long time. With our limited knowledge of the English language, we were talking to people without having to look over our shoulders for danger. We were in this country about two weeks, it was October 1938, when the Nazis staged "Chrystal night." The newspapers were full of accounts of people driven into concentration camps, of Synagogues being burned and so on and on. We received a telegram from my in-laws not to return. The realisation hit us that we could never go home again, never see our beloved family again, with only one more week paid up at the hotel, we were home-

less and penniless. There were organizations in New York that offered help, but we were young, healthy and able to work and we did not want to accept charity. While we were still living at the hotel, I found a job taking care of a child. The only trouble was that I did not know enough English to understand her nor did she understand me. This was the reason that I got fired after only three days, but my employers were nice enough to pay me a week's salary of \$8.00. At least that money enabled us to rent a room for \$7.00 when we had to leave the hotel, which left us \$1.00 for food. We also sold some of our belongings like our field glasses, a camera and some of my jewelry. I found another job cleaning house. My husband having more language difficulties than I had, and having no usable trade, wasn't able to find any work for quite some time. In this second job I considered myself very lucky: My employers cooked fresh broth several times a week but were so spoiled in their eating habits that they never made any use of the soup meat: I was permitted to take those so-called throw aways home. This meat kept us from going hungry. We ate soup meat almost daily and I invented all kinds of different flavored sauces to make our meat more palatable. One day we met a man who owned a dress factory and he hired me as an operator. Even though I had assured him that I could sew, as soon as those fast machines started running, I couldn't even get my hands near them. My boss, realizing my distress, placed me in another part of the plant where I could

work and earn \$16.00 a week, which was at that time good pay. Every lunch time I sat at one of those monstrous machines. To me it seemed like taming a wild animal. I was afraid, but had to get used to it. I was determined to become a machine operator and I did it. I became so good at it I could sew about 8 dresses a day and we were paid \$0.70 for each dress. Gee, I made enough money now for our rent and food bills. After several months my husband found a job as a night watchman in a movie theater. He worked nights and I during the day. Every morning we met at a certain subway station, he on his way home and I going to work. We were so proud to earn a living that this didn't bother us too much. I went to night school for a time but I was too tired to benefit from it. As Willy received two free passes to the movies with his paycheck every week, I had a great opportunity to learn new language skills through the films. We were so happy to be in this country and making a living that we sometimes could forget all the worries we had over our family still in Germany, and also our own precarious standing in this country. We were still here on a visitor's status, we had no permission to work and by just making enough money to eat we were breaking the law. Every time we got mail from the Immigration Department we were fearful that it could be an eviction notice for us to leave the country. So one day when we were asked to come to Ellis Island we panicked and ran away to Richmond, Virginia. We had relatives there but they were so poor that we

again had to find work which meant breaking the law. After thinking over that we could not run away from the authorities and could not hide for the rest of our lives, we reported to the Immigration Bureau in Norfolk, Virginia. The official there was the most understanding man we had ever encountered. He put us very much at ease by informing us that the authorities in New York merely intended to extend our visitor's visa, when they asked us to come to Ellis Island. Before we had an official hearing he advised us not to disclose to him how we made a living. Realizing that we had found a friend in him we decided to stay in Virginia for the time being.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, we were sitting in our rented furnished room playing cards and listening to a concert, when the program was interrupted and we heard of the disastrous bombing of Pearl Harbor. We were stunned, but also knew that this country now had to take steps to eliminate Hitler, something we had hoped and waited for for such a long time. We were so elated that we immediately started to make plans for Willy to join the service. He was talking about how he knew Germany so well and how he would lead the victorious troops into Germany. Early the next morning we both went down to the Navy enlistment office, only to be informed that with our German passports we were enemy aliens and would be arrested any moment. All the enthusiasm drained out of us, nobody wanted our help. For the second time in our lives we were outcasts. We went back to our room waiting for somebody to come

and arrest us. We did not have the strength to run away again, there was no place to run, and the country was at war. We waited a long time with our belongings packed ready to go, but nobody ever came. Probably the Immigration authorities had investigated us and knew we were harmless. One really good thing happened after war was declared. We got permission to work. So we went back to New York where I resumed my work in the clothing factory and as we still were denied work in war industries, my husband found a job in a delicatessen store. Time went on and after a few months we got a letter asking my husband if he would be willing to fight for this country. When drafted, he was only too willing to serve. He went for his physical examination, and after that we waited for a long time for him to be called up. In the meantime we heard from our friends and even former landlords that the F.B.I. was asking about us. It seemed they started another investigation before he could join the armed services. About one whole year after his physical he was finally asked to report to the Army. For three months he was trained in Abilene, Texas, then transferred to Camp Stoneman near Pittsburg, California. Camp Stoneman was a processing station for men going to the Pacific. When he got his first leave he phoned from Oakland asking me to come to California as soon as I could, as he wanted to see me before going overseas. I had only about \$100.00 in a bank account which I took out and bought a railroad ticket. Buying the ticket was the easiest part of

of the journey, getting on the train was much harder. The trains were full of servicemen. They were admitted to the train first and if there was any room left civilians were allowed to board. While waiting for the gate to open I had talked to a soldier, telling him of my need to get to California before my husband would be sent overseas. When the gates opened he pushed me through with him telling the agent that I was his wife. Unfortunately, we both had to change trains in Ogden, Utah, going in different directions. Determinedly, I pushed myself on the train to Oakland there but sat and slept on the floor of the ladies' lounge until my arrival in California. All together I was traveling for four days and three nights. Nothing else mattered but coming to California and I had arrived in time.

I saw Willy the first time in uniform at the station in Oakland, impatiently waiting for the train to pull in. All trains were late during war time. Fortunately his uncle living in Oakland let us stay with him. We didn't have enough money left to rent a chicken coop much less a hotel room. The important thing was that I was here, and as we hadn't seen each other for so long, we were as happy as on our honeymoon. Only in back of our minds was always the realization that there was a war on and that we had to part again soon.

Willy had to be back in camp the next morning. Camp Stoneman was located near Pittsburg, California. I went along with him, hoping we would find a place to live there. My first impression of

Pittsburg was that I wanted to turn around and run as far away from there as possible. The place gave me the impression of an old gold rush town. There were bars and liquor stores every place and throngs of servicemen and civilians milling around the streets, it was hard to get through.

Before the war, Pittsburg was a village of about 6000 people. Most of them were of Italian descent, as the town was originally built by Sicilian fishermen. With the war came the industries with their big smokestacks and their pollution. As soon as the war started the steel mills as well as the chemical factories went on an around the clock schedule, employing more and more workers. People, the skilled as well as the unskilled, came from all over the U.S. to work in those factories, needing housing and food. New stores opened up, but housing was scarce as there was no civilian building done during the war. The town was already bursting at its seams when the government decided to build an army camp nearby. Camp Stoneman was the last place to stay for the men before going overseas. About 4000 men were sent from Pittsburg to the docks in San Francisco by boat and trucks daily. This was the situation when I arrived looking for a place to live. After a few days of frustrating search we found a room. By that time we did not care what the place looked like as long as it had walls and privacy. The local people did not like servicemen nor did they trust us, but charged exorbitant prices. We judged ourselves very lucky to

have found a room in the worst part of town. The house we lived in was completely rented to servicemen. Our so-called room was partitioned off from the next one by a plywood wall, our clothes hung along the wall on hooks for lack of a closet. There was a bed with a broken down mattress and a small chest of drawers. Five couples lived in the house, sharing the living room, kitchen and bathroom. The bathroom had a tub, but no shower or sink, so everybody had to brush their teeth over the bath tub. We really took advantage of our uncle in Oakland those days. Whenever we could get away we visited him just to take a bath. When we rented the room we were also shown that there was a washing machine for us to use, only to find out later that the thing did not work. We were given one set of linens which I washed by hand, but only on days when the sun was shining, as they had to be dry by the time we went to bed. The room was so dismal that we spent most of our time together at the U.S. O. There we found a lot of company, mostly couples who were in the same circumstances, like ourselves just happy to be together, watching as others parted when husbands were sent overseas. We were among the lucky ones as Willy's orders had been changed and his outfit stayed here for the time being. His outfit was trained as a medical company who would eventually man a hospital ship. As his record showed that he once worked in a delicatessen store, he was trained as a cook. That he was only delivering for the delicatessen and had never cooked in his life didn't seem to matter much.

After a while to our surprise, his and mine, he found out that he really enjoyed cooking. After only a few months as a cook he was made a corporal, went to school and got the rank of sergeant. As long as he did not have to go overseas so soon, I rented out my apartment in New York and stayed here in California with him. Even though our living conditions were abominable and we were in a war, this was the first time since arrival in this country that I felt completely comfortable with American people. We belonged here with the rest of the American G.I.s ("government issued"), as the soldiers were called. All our new friends here were in the same boat as we were, also living under the same circumstances, some were a little luckier to have apartments. At least we did not have to be afraid of deportation anymore, as my husband became a U.S. citizen after serving three months in the Army. What a proud day it was for both of us as he stood in front of a judge in San Francisco swearing loyalty to this country who, by accepting us, had saved our lives.

After settling down in Pittsburg, we had to find a way to pay our exorbitant rent. We paid \$9.00 per week and that was more than we could afford on our \$50.00 per month government pay. I applied and got a job in Camp Stoneman at the Post Exchange. I found out later that there was quite a controversy over my being employed there. Some people at the personnel office objected to it on the grounds that I was German and as such an enemy alien, a threat

to the security of the camp. Fortunately the officer in charge of all the P.X.s in Camp Stoneman was a Major Livingston, whose family came from Germany in the 19th Century and who was familiar with our plight, so my job was pretty secure. Now with the money I earned and the G.I. pay we were able to make ends meet and I could stay in California.

Our household expenses were very nominal as we bought all our food at the camp commissary, and we both ate our main meal at the nurses' mess where Willy was stationed as a mess sergeant. After being in Pittsburg for a while we also were able to move into government housing. It was a small apartment in Columbia Park for which we paid \$17.00 per month, right outside of camp and in walking distance from the commissary. It was very important for us to live near a shopping area, the post office and the camp, as we did not have a car nor could we afford to spend money on buses. After living in a single room in substandard housing, moving into this place seemed like living in a palace to us. The place was sparsely furnished, we had a living room-kitchen combined, a bedroom and our very own bathroom which we could use whenever we wanted without waiting for somebody else to vacate first. The living room was furnished with a table, an arm chair and two regular chairs, and a day bed. As far as I remember now the bedroom had only a bed in it. Two open closets held our clothes and some linens. The place was quite adequately heated by a gas stove. The kitchen

had a double sink, one side for dishes and the other for laundry, overhead were open shelves for dishes. The apartment size stove was next to the sink and the water heater was in the corner. This same arrangement of a kitchen was probably in every housing project in the country, as there is now one displayed in the Oakland Museum. Having to depend so much on our own, we became very inventive in those days. We got orange boxes and papered them colorfully. They were used for night tables in the bedroom as well as for end tables in the living room. From some old material that Uncle Maurice gave us, I sewed curtains and a spread for the day bed, greenery we grew out of sweet potatoes. We bought the most inexpensive dishes, flatware, pots and pans that Woolworth had to offer, only a few pieces at a time as needed. Sometimes when another soldier was leaving for overseas the couple divided their household goods between their friends. This way we acquired a coffee pot, baking pans and some pots. As we knew our bliss wouldn't last and that we could be separated any day, we made the best of the time we had. It may sound strange, but this time was probably the happiest time in our marriage. We had a lot of fun at parties, and on these occasions the couples who lived nearby brought their chairs, others living more distant brought dishes and silverware. Food was somehow gotten together. We were young, and for a few hours we would only live in the present, forgetting the war and the near future.

About this time we decided to fulfill our most important dream, to have a child. As the government would pay the hospital expenses for every baby born to an enlisted man, there would be very little expense and thinking so typical of young people, the future would take care of itself. Miraculously, it usually does. Two months later when I had only the merest feeling of being pregnant, I went to the Army hospital for a test and when it was confirmed that I was, we were so elated that we immediately announced it to everybody who would listen. I was in my third month of pregnancy when my husband got orders for overseas duty. He had been transferred from the hospital platoon to the transportation corps and was to be stationed on a transport ship as a mess sergeant. Now we had to make a decision about what I was going to do after he left. Should I go back to New York where I had the support of Willy's family or was it better for me to stay here and deliver my child at the Army hospital. We knew that Willy's ship, the "Sea Snipe" was coming back to San Francisco about every three months, and in the end that persuaded me to stay. As it turned out that was probably the best decision we ever made because we were to stay on in California after the war was over.

Transporting troops overseas was a very dangerous assignment. Enemy subs were always lurking in the vicinity. Even though the troop carriers were going in convoys, once in a while some were torpedoed. Their departure and arrival time were top secret.

After a while we learned to recognize certain signs, like seeing provisions or troops being loaded. Especially when the troops started getting on board we started saying goodbye every morning, and if Willy came home in the afternoon the ship was still anchored. The next morning the same heart-breaking process of leaving repeated itself, sometimes this went on for several days. Then one afternoon I waited and he did not come home. The ship had left for unknown places far away, and the long, lonesome vigil of waiting for his return began.

Besides being in constant danger of being torpedoed, Willy had it easy on board ship. Every deck was loaded to the rafters with servicemen, and there was not too much work done in the kitchen. The troops were fed mostly on sandwiches. Every outfit had to send men for kitchen duty and Willy only supervised the operation and kept the unused food under lock and key. Even though he kept an eagle eye out for the dishes and silverware, after every trip it had to be replaced, the men on kitchen duty had saved themselves the trouble of dishwashing by throwing the dirty dishes out the porthole.

At the time Willy was transferred, leaving his old outfit for the transportation corps, his rank of sergeant had to stay with the hospital unit and he started in his new position as a private again. This was soon rectified. On board ship were three officers who enjoyed playing bridge in their spare time. They needed a fourth player and Willy was such a good bridge player that they waved all

regulations of officers not associating with enlisted men. They also made him a sergeant as it was a little more excusable for them to justify playing bridge with a non-commissioned officer than with a buck private. He also earned his stripes as he was very conscientious and took his work very serious. I am sure the men going over didn't suffer more than he did that circumstances prevented him from feeding them better.

We hoped that he might be home in between trips at the time our baby was expected. By the code we had devised, I could figure out that his ship would probably come into San Francisco the first week of January, and we expected the birth of our first child around January 15, 1945. On New Year's Eve some of our friends had planned a party. I knew by our code that Willy was on his way home, but couldn't even tell my best friends. So I pretended not feeling well, not wanting to leave my house, hoping the ship may come in early. But when night came all our friends descended on my house, bringing food and drinks to celebrate the New Year with me. My best friend, Ethel Bandel, brought red roses and a birthday card for me which my husband had asked her to do. They had been with me for about an hour when the door opened and Willy walked in with his duffle bag full of dirty clothes as always. This time the convoy had sailed a little faster than usual, probably with a little less precaution, because the men not being able to be with their families for Christmas, wanted to be back for New Year's at least. Not

having seen each other for so long our friends decided *that we didn't* need company and they took off to continue celebrating somewhere else. At first we were happy that the ship had come in early, but soon we started worrying about Willy not being home for the birth of our child. Usually the ship only stayed in port one or two weeks. The second week Willy was home he noticed the ship taking on provisions. Everyday he got gloomier, expecting to leave, until one day he came back happy and relaxed. The ship, almost ready to leave, had sprung a leak, so it had to be unloaded and go into dry-dock. For us a miracle had happened. Now we could be sure that our new pappa would still be here on January 15. Yes, he was but the baby did not arrive as expected, she took her time. She also did not arrive on the 16, 17, 18, and many days after. The ship was back in harbor, started loading and our worries started all over again, still there was no baby. Finally, 12 days late our daughter put in an appearance and Willy was still here. He was so happy and elated that he didn't even mind that he had to wash the dirty diapers while I was in the hospital. Diaper service was unheard of during the war. We called our daughter Ruth Hanna. The first name after my unforgettable grandmother Rosa Fackenheim and the second name after Willy's grandmother Hanna Freimark.

Willy's ship left when Ruth was ten days old. I had come back from the hospital the day before, and was lucky enough to have found a woman to stay with me and teach me how to take care of a

baby. No time in my entire life have I felt happier or more fulfilled, than in the years I had my children, watching them grow up to become good, intelligent and useful human beings. Mentally I grew with them. As they took their first step into life I seemed to take my first steps to understand my new homeland better. As they went to school, learned how to spell, I went right along learning to read and spell English with them. As they went to college I was right there, listening and learning, my mind was growing.

Coming back to the time when Ruth was an infant and the war was still raging, with Willy overseas, the long days and nights of waiting didn't seem quite so long and bad anymore because I was busy taking care of my baby. Sometimes I woke up very hungry in the middle of the night, I had forgotten to eat. My daily worries were having Willy overseas and not knowing what was happening to my family in Germany. All communications were broken when the war started.

Willy was just home again between trips when the big news of D-Day reached us: Germany had surrendered, the war in Europe was over. People were dancing and rallying in the streets, strangers were embracing and kissing each other, it was a wild and happy melee. There was a vague hope that I might hear from my mother and brother again. News seeped through that there were people found that had lived through the Nazi onslaught against Jews. I kept hoping that I would hear from my family, but it took a long

time until I finally received some Red Cross messages that had been written sometime before the war saying my family had been working in a home for old people but had been sent away with all the oldsters to a concentration camp. Much later I received a letter from my sister-in-law, my brother's wife, that she was the only one of the family who was still alive. Lotte told me in her letter she, my brother and my mother were lucky enough at first to be shipped to the same place, Theresienstadt. They stayed there for a while and were happy just to be together. This happiness did not last long. My brother was the first one who had to leave; he was shipped out with a transport for young men under the pretense of going to a work camp. In reality they were taken to Auschwitz, and killed as soon as they arrived. Lotte went on a transport the next day, hoping to be reunited with her husband only to find out on arrival at Auschwitz that he was dead. Of 200 women in her transport only two were picked out for slave labor. She worked in a factory seven days a week, 12 hours a day. By the end of the war the Americans found her, starved and near death. Eventually she came to America and remarried.

After Germany surrendered the war went on against Japan which would not give up 'til America finally dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the first one dropped in history, and thousands of civilians were killed and maimed. One can only hope that it will never happen again, but at the time it was the only way to stop the

fighting. In the long run this saved the lives of our men.

The war was over, Willy came home and became a civilian again. Thanks to his training in the Army he was now able to get a job as a cook. Later on with more experience and more training he became a chef. He enjoyed what he was doing and was very conscientious in his work. He had his first steady job working as a cook at Pittsburg Hospital. At the time we were still living in government housing which had become dilapidated after most of the Army population moved out, and as veterans we were entitled to a very low interest rate on a bank loan, we decided to buy a house. We felt like genuine Americans buying our house with a G.I. loan just like all the other young families. Soon it was brought home to us that we were still not like the others. We were not born here, had no ties and consequently no credit standing. As we had never bought anything on credit nobody could be sure if we would meet our obligations. We were called into the bank president's office and given a lecture on how important it would be for future dealings to establish credit. It took us about a month longer than other people to get the loan. The house was not yet built when we signed the sales contract. After signing it, we went to the lot everyday and saw the house go up. When it rained, we were disappointed as it meant waiting longer for it to be ready. After moving in, we had only the barest furnishings as we had left our furniture behind in New York and it was too costly for us to ship them to California.

The first items we bought were a stove and a refrigerator, and having learned our lesson about credit well, we bought both appliances on credit and made our monthly payments conscientiously every month for a year. When our debt was all paid up, we were so happy we hung the receipts over the stove and right on the refrigerator door for all to see. We had a roomy but cozy kitchen with a corner sink with two windows above it where the light streamed in all day. There was also enough room for a dinette with two more windows overlooking the back yard. A door from the dinette led into Ruthie's room. This was 1948, and Alan was not born yet. From the street to the front door, one crossed a small front yard with lawn, flowers and shrubs. The entrance door opened directly into the living room where one door led into the kitchen, the other to a hallway and the three bedrooms. The first year we lived in the house we planted a lawn and some fruit trees and I had to have a weeping willow to remind me of my wonderful childhood days.

When our lovely Ruthie was about two years old we decided to have another baby, but it did not happen for a long time. We gave up hope when a doctor informed me that we probably would never have any more children. When the opportunity came we went into business for ourselves. We bought a run down delicatessen store, working seven days a week very long hours. We managed to bring in trade, but every time we thought we could make ends meet, the refrigeration broke down and we had a lot of repair bills.

Also, Willy was a much better cook than businessman, giving credit to everyone who told him a bad luck story and we could not afford the losses on these accounts.

More and more business troubles began to pile up for Camp Stoneman had closed and most of our customers left town. Our little store was in the same building with a movie theater, and during showtime was our busiest time. People coming out of the theater bought their lunch meats for the next day. Before the afternoon performance, children bought candy and pickles right out of the barrel to take with them to the theater. It was a fruitful time for us but didn't last long. Slowly, television began to appear in homes, people didn't frequent theaters any more and had no reason to patronize our store. Finally, we were not able to pay our bills and had to declare bankruptcy which was very shameful to us. Never before had we failed to pay a bill. Everything we possessed was confiscated; we even lost our car, and without it, Willy couldn't find work. Most of our so-called friends turned away. Unexpectedly, Charlie Mahon, a casual acquaintance, turned out to be a friend indeed. He found a fairly good used car for us for which we paid only \$100.00 so we could begin a new life. How many times can one start over? It was not easy with two small children, but after a while we managed to pull ourselves together to make a living and slowly pay off our debts.

In the midst of all our business troubles, I found out that

I was pregnant. Even though it came as a complete surprise, and at the most inconvenient time, I wanted another child and was glad it happened.

Our son, Alan Leo, was born one day earlier than we expected on April 24, 1953. At first he was the exact image of his father. His first name Alan was taken from both his grandfathers and Leo was my brother who had perished in a concentration camp. Willy's mother came to be with us when he was born, and when we needed her help afterwards, she stayed with us a whole year taking care of Alan while I worked. For Willy, it was hard at this particular time to reconcile himself to the idea of having another child when we had so much to worry about. A year or two later he was as happy as I was about our son. He had a bad working schedule and could not spend much time with Alan, and when he came home late at night he used to sneak into the baby's room just looking at him, trying to communicate. Of course this method didn't do Alan much good. While he was growing up, I was the one who took him to the basketball games, swimming, sometimes even to Boy Scout events where I showed up with all the other dads.

Almost since birth Alan had a mind of his own. He showed this tendency already in the first few months of his life. When we moved into the house on Bruno Avenue, he cried for about three days constantly with very short periods of reprieve for sleep. Our new neighbors asked if we had a sick baby and offered their help.

Sick he was not but help we could have used, we were ready to move and leave Alan in the new house. No, not seriously! We loved the little fellow with his ferocious appetite too much. Only two weeks after he was born we found out that mere baby formula was not enough to satisfy him, he had to have meat in his diet. As he grew up there were numerous incidents when it became necessary to spank him. I hated that kind of punishment and found an effective way to avoid it. I don't remember ever really spanking him with my wooden cooking spoon, but he was really afraid of it. Any time I couldn't come to terms with him I just took this spoon out of the drawer and my naughty child would change into a very well-behaved boy immediately.

Taking care of Alan and staying home with him constantly was not easy for me. I became restless and nervous and that didn't do him any good. So when I learned that the local school cafeterias had openings for part-time workers I applied. After taking an exam and stating my former experiences working in the family restaurant business and of running a delicatessen store, I was offered a job as assistant manager in a kitchen.

My start in school food service was rough, to say the least. I guess that most of my co-workers resented that I did not start on the bottom of the ladder and thought I was not able to do the menial jobs that they had to do every day, so I decided to show them; I started to help them by washing pots or dishes once in a while and

helped them scrub floors, often on my own time, but it helped my relationships. I made friends, and they came around helping me, and believe me I had a lot to learn. There was one particular thing that I had trouble with, namely, realizing that schools were a non-profit organization. I, coming out of the restaurant business, could not understand that everybody was working so hard without showing any profit in the operation. On the contrary, quite often we were in the red. Much later, I came to realize that when you work for children it has nothing to do with profit but service to humanity. We were teaching these children some very important facts for their later life: We were giving them good eating habits and nutritional standards. It gave me great personal satisfaction when the children asked for recipes of their favorite dishes so their mothers could prepare them at home. Some of the younger ones even brought their mothers to school to meet me, for some of the little ones I had become a very important person, a mother substitute.

I had a very strict boss and it took me a long time before I realized how much I had learned from her, and even though she almost never smiled, she could be very helpful in any problem. I worked under her for 10 years and when she retired she gave me the idea to apply for a higher position in some other district.

After I worked for the Pittsburg district only three months, a new school opened up and as they couldn't find an experienced manager for the cafeteria, I was given the position. Even though

I was really afraid of all the responsibility, I took the job. It meant a promotion and with it a better salary and we needed money desperately at the time. Even though I made a lot of mistakes in the beginning, I enjoyed my work very much as I was now almost my own boss and could make my own decisions. The responsibility that goes with working on your own weighed so heavily on me that I often couldn't sleep or dreamed about my work. I had nightmares of children having food poisoning, but fortunately, this never happened. Once I woke up in the middle of the night from a miserable dream; I dreamed that I had forgotten to defrost meat that was to be used the next day for lunch. I awakened my husband, we got dressed, and went to the school about 3 A.M. in the morning. Like two thieves we sneaked into the back door of the kitchen, unlocked the refrigerator and there was the meat defrosting. My husband didn't take too kindly to my nightmares from that time on. Things worked out better and I enjoyed my work more as I got more experienced and I became more perfected in my profession. I decided to go to school to learn more about nutrition. I usually went during summer vacation, and as the children were still too young to be left alone, Willy took his vacation at that time and the whole family came along. We stayed at a motel with a pool, and while the children enjoyed themselves under Willy's supervision, I went to school. Later when Ruth was old enough to watch her brother, I could go off to school and leave them at home. I think she was only about 12 years old when she

took on the responsibility of taking care of Alan. Once when I was away, Alan came down with the mumps and she implored her father not to let me know, so I wouldn't interrupt my studies.

As I became more knowledgeable, I became less satisfied with my work. I knew I had the knowledge and education to do more than just run one kitchen. Now I felt that I was ready to manage a district. As I had not had a college degree, a large district wouldn't hire me, but sometimes there was an opening in a smaller district. When I heard that the Emeryville Unified School District was looking for a cafeteria supervisor, I applied and was hired. This new job was quite a challenge for me. I was in charge of all the cafeterias. True, there were only three in the district, but I had to take care of everything and of every problem myself. I did all the buying, bookkeeping, training of personnel and hiring which in larger districts were done by a staff of people. I also helped with the cooking and had the responsibility over the incoming cash. I often worked 10 hours a day. There was a peculiar situation in Emeryville. While the district had a lot of income from industry the population consisted mostly of common laborers, who were out of work and unable to feed their children properly. With the ample funds I had at my disposal I could give these children at least one nutritious meal a day.

I wasn't working there very long when I realized that a lot of children came to school hungry in the morning and the noon lunch

was the first and for some of them the only decent meal they had all day. I begged the school board to let me serve breakfast to those children. At first it was an uphill battle because at the time nobody had even heard of serving breakfast in school. I kept coaxing, enlisting the help of the school nurse and principals, and when we still couldn't move the members of the board, I called on the health department and the teachers in the district for support. I campaigned like I was running for President of the United States. Finally I got permission and limited funds to serve free breakfast to the students! I believe we were the first district in California to achieve this. That was the highlight of all the goals I attained in the years I worked for the schools. Soon I received glowing reports from the teachers of how much quieter the children had become during the morning and that they seemed to absorb more of their teaching after they had had a good hot breakfast. The reason I wrote so much of my work in Emeryville is that this job with all the work and the many headaches that went along with it was the most satisfying I ever held in my life. Besides earning a living, my work was a way of helping others, of educating children in nutrition, hoping to be instrumental in their state of health for the rest of their lives.

The first few weeks I worked in Emeryville I commuted every day from Pittsburg and back, which after a while became too strenuous. Willy was still working in Concord but was willing to make a change and find a job in Berkeley or Oakland. Also the schools

in Pittsburg had deteriorated to a point where Alan in junior high school kept up a running battle with his teachers. He was bored and dissatisfied with school, so instead of doing his homework, he went to the library and studied subjects that interested him. The result was that he got bad grades and we decided to move to Berkeley where at that time, 1968, Ruth and Scott were living. Now we could also be near the young couple.

The decision was easier made than finding a house in Berkeley. Those that were available were either very old or unaffordable. After intensive searching, we found one in Kensington. It had the kind of layout that we had always wanted. The trouble was that it was run down and the basement was not finished. The owner had built it 10 years earlier. It sat high up off the street, 20 steps leading to the front door. Halfway up to the left was a patio protected by tall evergreens. Through the front door, one stepped into a small foyer; the doorway to the right led into a large formal living room with a high beam ceiling. To the left, one stepped into the family room with a connecting kitchen. Both rooms had cozy fireplaces. There was a small back yard full of flowers and shrubbery and a little fish pond. The two bedrooms and the bath faced toward the back, and from the front rooms we had a view of Tilden Park. Soon after we had acquired the house, we had the basement finished into a third bedroom. After we moved, we could really see that the house had been built by a layman. The roof leaked, the electric wiring was

dangerously exposed, and although there was a fan over the stove, it was not connected. There was no flue; it was just sitting there gathering dust. The house, after completion, had never been inspected by the county. It was so filthy that it took us several days just to clean the kitchen. By and by it became livable and we loved it. In the evening, the deer came out of the park right to the house and we could watch the raccoons climbing into our garbage cans after dark. At first this seemed like a lot of fun, until we realized that the deer were virtually stripping our front yard of plantation and the raccoons turned over our garbage cans night after night. So our wild little friends had to be restrained.

After living in Kensington for a while, I noticed that the 20 steps leading to our house were harder and harder to climb. I had had pains in my legs for several years and had gone to different doctors without success; none of them found anything wrong. The pains became so bad that I had to stop twice just climbing the steps to the house. When I was in my teens my father had the same pains and the doctors had diagnosed it as heart trouble. I saw him dying slowly. First he couldn't walk anymore; the circulation in his arms and legs became so bad that he was in constant pain. Shortly after I came to this country, he died of gangrene in his legs. He was only 62 years old. Shortly before he died, my parents had to flee from our home town during chrystal night and so he was buried in Frankfurt a/M at the "Neuer Juedischer Friedhof," Eckenheimer

Landstrasse no. 238. Grave no. 5 D 65.

I saw the same symptoms in me that I had watched in my father. I went to yet another doctor and insisted he send me to a specialist. Finally, after the odyssey of going from one to another, I came to a vascular specialist who made the right diagnosis. Tests showed that I had a stoppage in the main artery which was getting narrower. Less blood was coming to the legs and it would eventually lead to my death. Fortunately, there was an operation for this condition and I am well now. This clogging of the arteries can be inherited by future generations; smokers are especially susceptible. By explaining this carefully, I hope to help the future generation of my family.

When Willy became ill and died so suddenly, my going to work helped to cope with loneliness and depression. Six months later, I was able to go on a trip to Europe all by myself, making new friends along the way. When I came back I was ready to start a life of my own and to take care of my own affairs. My children were already grown at the time and made a place for themselves in the world. Each has chosen the profession and lifestyle they wanted, and I can say that I am very proud of both of them. Now I enjoy watching them from the sidelines, adoring my grandchildren Julie and Mark, hoping to live long enough to see Alan and Meredyth have children. After the horrible holocaust, Willy and I started a new family and I am blessed to see my family grow. I am especially

pleased with the choice of my children's mates. Besides my family, I also lead a life of my own: Every day is filled with activities. I swim as often as I can, exercise a lot, read, in short do all the things I enjoy doing. Sam and I have a very close relationship giving each other support and enjoying a lot of good times together. I hope we will continue to enjoy and support each other and keep close ties with all our children.

June 8, 1984

Grandma Remembered

by Ilse Golbert

I skipped up the steps of the long porch and with all my might pushed open the heavy front door. "Grandma, Grandma, where are you?" I ran through the empty beer bar into the chilly hall to the kitchen. There she was, big apron tied around her waist which made her look heavier than usual stirring sauce for the noon meal. Her kind eyes smiled at me. I blurted, "You promised to teach me the waltz today." "Well child, if I promised, I'll have to keep my word. As soon as the sauce boils, we can start. Now, where did I put my glasses?" We looked all over the kitchen. I searched the living room where grandma did all her sewing. No eye glasses. Finally, running back into the kitchen, I discovered them nestled way up in grandma's hair. After a good laugh, we started dancing. Over the tiled smooth kitchen floor we moved in unison. "One, two, three! one, two, three! Grandma never disappointed.

I did so well, I was asked to have lunch with her and grandpa. Later I received a big red apple from her tree. My precious Grandma!

The Chanukah Of My Childhood.

by Ilse Friedman-Golbert.

When I was a child in Germany, we celebrated Chanukah a little different than you do in America. Many weeks before, we had rehearsed a Chanukah play. It was about the miracle of the little lamp that had enough oil for one day, but it had burned for eight days. When we got a little older, we had a show in which we were all fighters like Judah Maccabee and his brothers. We wore helmets and armor made out of cardboard and we had swords to fight with. Every child in class took part in the play.

We could hardly wait for the first night of Chanukah. Every man in the family lit candles. I was always allowed to hold the one lit candle for my father which lit the other candles while he said the broche. Then, I lit the candles for him. In our house, we lit a lot of candles. There was my father, my brother and several of our employees. We did not have enough menorahs for so many people but that did not matter. We put candles on wooden boards and after they were lit, we all sang the old songs, like Moaus Zur. After that, all the candles were set on the windowsill with the drapes open and the curtains carefully tucked away, so nothing could catch fire. When all this was done, we finally could open our presents. That was the best time of Chanukah. We got presents only the first night. After supper the parents and grandparents came together in our house. We had a great big hall with a stage. All the children were excited. We were the actors who performed the Chanukah

play. Afterwards, there was honey cake and punch for us. The next seven days, we celebrated at home.

In Germany, it was very cold at that time and there was a lot of snow on the ground. In the corner of our living room, the big potbellied stove was glowing with the heat inside and we put apples to bake right on top of it. The aroma of the baking apples and the burning candles was strong and sweet. Afterwards we played the dreidle and we paid each other with nuts and cookies. This week was so much fun. It was better than all the other holidays.

My Grandfather Isidor.

by Ilse Golbert

He was highly respected and well known beyond the boundaries of our town. Local people who came to his beerstube never thought of going to the Hotel Fackenheim; they went to Isidor for their daily glasses of beer, to read the newspaper and to talk to him, leaving after an hour or two with a warm pleasant feeling. A daily ritual!

Besides owning the hotel, whose management he left in grandmother's care, he had an insurance agency. Almost every farmer in town bought hail insurance from him and in the process he also sold them life insurance. His insurance business ran smoothly, almost without effort. He was so well known for his honesty that people came to him to buy their policies. He hardly set foot out of the house. I don't think anybody could make a living that way to-day.

He really didn't work too hard during his life time, but he earned enough money to send his only son to college and medical school, and he gave each of his three daughters a dowry and a sizable sum of money when they got married. When he retired, he was in good financial circumstances. He was not a practical man. Every morning, grandma had to help him put his necktie on. He never mastered that 'til he was in his seventies and grandma had

gone. He led a very orderly life, got up at the same time every morning, had to have his meals at a certain time, and, when 10 o'clock came around, grandfather went to bed heedless of how much work was left for grandma to do, or of any other special circumstances.

Within the hotel, my grandparents also ran a dancehall in which most of the weddings in town were celebrated. When one of the rich farmers' daughters got married, the celebration, with all its dancing, eating and drinking went on into the early morning hours. They had extra help for those occasions, but grandma always stayed up all night to oversee everything. Grandpa, of course, went to bed at 10 P.M., mumbling about how he could not sleep with so much noise in the house. Many times I heard my mother tell about one incident when a wedding took place and grandma was in bed with the Flu. At 10 P.M. poor helpless grandpa stomped into the bedroom and stated firmly "Rosa, if you only wouldn't be in bed!" Grandma answered the question: "What would happen if I wouldn't be in bed?" "Well, then one of us could go to bed." Grandma with her kind little smile retorted: "One of us is in bed." Poor grandpa! That night he really had to sweat it out and work hard.

In those days, electric refrigeration was unknown and the beer had to be kept cold with ice. Of course there was enough ice in winter, but my grandpa utilized a system for chilling the beer in

wedding. What had I done! I had tied myself to a woman I hardly knew! After revealing these doubts to my mother, she said: "Have faith, son; it will all work out. after you two have been married for a while and gotten used to each other, love will follow. That is life! Trust me!" Mother was so right. I fell in love with Rosa the minute I saw her walk down the aisle in her white wedding gown and veil, flowers in her arm that mama had ordered and that I had given her. Our love lasted a life time. We had four lovely children. She preceded me in death by eight years.

Yesterday, they buried me, an honorable man. Following tradition, in a plain pine box, a little bag of sand from the Holy Land was placed under my head. I really hadn't needed that new umbrella.



Dementia Peacocks

Peacocks are the most graceful members of the avian kingdom. They are not the usual barnyard variety, but believe it or not, that's what appeared to be the case in my story.

My son was just born, I had come home from the hospital and my mother-in-law who was with me, never stopped telling me how nervous I was. I didn't even think I was upset, because I was very happy with my new baby and thought it was she who acted tense. Even though, I wasn't sure of myself. It preyed on my mind because a friend of mine had had a baby two weeks earlier and ended up in an institution.

One day in May, the sun had almost set. Through the kitchen window, I saw two peacocks walking in my back yard. I was just ready to point them out to mother when my mind turned to ice. Peacocks don't walk around in people's back yards! Mother was right; I was too nervous and now I was going out of my mind. I was sure the paddy wagon was on its way. Taking another shy look out of the window, and still, feeling absurd about seeing peacocks, I weakly suggested to my mother-in-law without mentioning the birds, that she look out of the window. Standing in the middle of the room, she took one look and told me that there was nothing out there. This was all I needed to start me screaming: "No, no I don't want to be taken away, but I am going out of my mind, I see peacocks walking in our back yard, and that can't be true!" Mother, besides holding on to me and trying to calm me, now took a closer look and I heard her say, "There they are! Two live

the summer time. In order to have ice then, an artificial pond was built for the purpose of making ice in winter. This ice was then taken to what we called the ice cellar, a little house located at the rear of their property. It was built with insulated double walls and a strong flat roof. The ice was transported from the pond to the house in big wagons drawn by a team of four horses. Strong men picked up huge hunks of ice with tongs and flung them onto the flat roof in which there was a trap door. Other men hacked the frozen chunks into smaller pieces with pick axes and then shoveled it down through the trap door. When the cellar was full and before the trap was closed, peat was thrown in on top of the ice for insulation. When ice was needed in warmer weather it could be removed through a double door on the ground which led into the cellar. Adjoining the ice cellar was a small ante room with shelves all around it for keeping perishables cool and a low door led to the actual ice room where the ice had by now become one huge lump. With a pick axe, the ice was chipped off into a bucket and transferred onto the copper coils which ran from the huge beer barrel in the basement to the tap upstairs. At the end of the coils the ice cold beer came out of the tap.

What a disappointment it was when I visited the place, after having been in America for 35 years, to see the beer now cooled by refrigeration and the ice cellar of my memories turned into a stable where oxen were kept. It was hard to accept the inevitable changes that had taken place in my old home town.

Man in a Box.

by

Ilse Golbert

The day had been my 91st birthday! One of my children gave me a new umbrella. I thanked her profusely. Little did I realize that this was to be the last year of my life. I didn't need a new umbrella. My old one had a few holes in it and could have lasted, but from this time on, I carried the new one whenever it looked like rain in order to please my family. When it rained, the gift was too nice to get soaked so I used the old one. A little moisture came through and kept dripping on my old hat, but it hardly mattered.

On morning walks, I thought about my earlier life. I had had a pleasant childhood. My mother spoiled and adored me. She kept unpleasantness away and did all chores for me. I grew up to be a dreamer, a very impractical man.

In my middle twenties, my mother sent me to a distant town to mate. I did what was expected. She was a slender girl, auburn hair framing her round, red-cheeked face. She was the prettiest girl I had ever seen and I liked her very much. I wanted to hug and kiss her for she reminded me of my mother. Years later, I found out that my mother did know her family and had already checked her out. Mama needed help with her chores, but also wanted the right person to lead her impractical son. When I met Rosa, my partner of a lifetime, we were engaged after three days. The next day, I started the long train ride back home and we didn't see each other again, 'til the

peacocks taking a walk!" When I heard that I wasn't the only one to see those exotic birds, I slowly came down to earth. In the meantime, the two refugees from somewhere had walked out into the street, been caught by a neighbour, and returned to their park refuge at the edge of town. I thanked God for my sanity.

Ricka Freimark-Friedman

She was born in the little town of Homburg a/Main, Bavaria, one of seven children of Isaak and Hanna Freimark. Her father was a cattle dealer who also had enough land to grow food for the family. As a young girl, she helped to feed and milk the cows and work in the fields with her sisters and brothers. One of the brothers didn't have to work at home, he was sent to college and became a teacher.

One day, visiting her married sister in Erfurt, Thuringia, she met her future husband, Arthur Friedman. When they were married, Arthur and Ricka also started in the cattle business, worked very hard, and eventually became quite wealthy. After World War I, they dealt mostly horses and by the time I came into the family they may have been the largest importers of horses in Germany. They had two children, a son, Willy and a daughter, Ilse. Ricka never got over the fact that her first child was born only nine months after they were married. She hadn't planned it that way and wasn't ready for motherhood. This was one of the few things in her life that didn't go according to her plans and she was quite bitter about it. I think she blamed her husband and even the poor baby for it. Two years later, a daughter was born and she absolutely adored her. The first born, Willy, later called William in this country, became my husband, and daughter Ilse married Fred M. (Manfred) Bauer from Stuttgart.

My mother-in-law was the queen in her family; everybody

looked up to her. She ran the house, the servants and the business with an iron fist and lots of energy. Besides that, her home was often full of visitors, many from out of town, and she enjoyed nothing more than being a gracious and elegant hostess. Her visitors never knew that before their arrival she had baked and cooked and supervised the maids in cleaning the house from top to bottom.

She gave advice to her family and friends equally; they didn't have to ask for it.

Her husband was drafted during World War I. She ran the business by herself. With a horse and buggy she made the round of the farms to buy and trade. In order to save time she chose a fast horse, an animal which only she could handle and nobody else could get near.

The family lived right across the railroad station in Buttstaedt. The rail going through town was an unimportant branch line, which ran twice daily through a lot of little villages to the nearest city. The conductor and engineer coming through every day and also the station master admired "Ms. Friedman." Whenever Ricka went to the city, she was habitually a few minutes late. When the little train came puffing into the station, whistles blowing, brakes screeching, mother was never ready. She sent a caretaker of the stable across the street telling the station master to hold the train. The train with all its passengers would then wait 'til she was ready. After she boarded, and only then would the station master give the signal for the train.

When Hitler came to power she wanted to leave Germany

immediately with all their assets, which was still possible, but Arthur wouldn't hear of it. Like my own father, he hoped things would change for the better again. After a couple of years, he was ordered by the government to sell his business to a "deserving" party member of their choice. By that time the borders of most countries were closed and they had no place to go. This did not discourage Ricka: She went to the U.S. for a visit, found long lost relatives and got affidavits to secure entry visas for her whole family. Her ship left from Holland and she flew from Germany to Holland, a feat hardly heard of in those days when public air transportation was in its infancy. This was in 1938. By the end of the year, conditions became intolerable for the Jews. My father-in-law was ordered to work for the sanitation department; this man, who used to be one of the outstanding citizens of the town, who was always willing to support any action for the community good, was ordered to collect garbage! As soon as he could get released from that job, he and Ricka left town to live in Berlin where nobody knew them. Now they tried everything possible to get out of Germany. She went so far as to pay some shady character to secure an illegal visa for them. He was caught and arrested and implicated father as having dealt with him. My father-in-law, who had never done anything dishonest in his life, was arrested and put in jail. He was lucky that he was held in Berlin and not sent to a concentration camp. They finally secured the only visa still available, namely, to Cuba. When he was ready to leave Germany, he was released from jail and they both left Europe by ship shortly

after the war had started.

Ricka knew that her children were struggling in America to get a foothold and that she couldn't and would not expect to be supported. She was in her middle fifties, but this did not deter her from trying to support herself and her husband in a strange land. As she had done all her life, she took a chance by renting a large apartment in the best part of Havana and took in boarders. Thus she eked out a living for two people during their two year stay in Cuba. In that time she learned enough Spanish to make herself understood when she went shopping. After they finally came to America, settling in New York, she went to school immediately to learn English. Since they emigrated after the war started, everybody was needed to work, and they both found jobs immediately. She worked in a glove factory and her husband found work in a shoe factory. In this country, again, they did not have to depend on their children and were very proud to make a living.

When their first grandchild, Ruth, was born in Pittsburg, California, their happiness knew no bounds. It was a pity that they were so far away and couldn't see their grandchild. There simply wasn't enough money for both of them to make the trip across the country. When Ruth was two years old, we had enough money saved to buy one ticket for me and little Ruthie to fly to New York for a visit with the grandparents. They made so many plans for their grandchild, but a few days before we were supposed to leave, grandpa died suddenly, never to see his grandchild. So instead of us going, Willy had to use the ticket

to attend his father's funeral. Mother who had planned their activities all their married life simply couldn't accept this stroke of fate. She couldn't understand how something so sudden and unexpected could befall her. She fought so hard against her fate that she had a heart attack shortly after the funeral. A few weeks later I took Ruthie to New York to get acquainted with her grandmother, and shortly after that returned with grandma for a visit with us to California. It took her a long time to adjust to a life by herself, but in the end she was successful with this problem like everything else in her life. After returning to New York, she began seeing her old friends and making new ones. Frequently, she traveled, stopping off here in California with us every second year for three months. At these times, our house was alive with visitors and dinner parties. She loved to entertain, and when she visited after we moved to Kensington our house was teeming with guests as long as she was there. A few years earlier she actually had stayed with us for a whole year helping to raise Alan the first year of his life.

As she got older her heart bothered her more and more, and she couldn't take the New York winters any more. From then on she spent her winters in Florida and the summers either in New York with her daughter, or with us in California. The High Holidays were celebrated in New York. One night in Miami when she was having dinner with some friends in a restaurant, she suddenly collapsed and died. What a wonderful way to go! She was 82 years old.

Der Alte Ress.

(Old Man Ress)

In Bebra everybody knew each other among the six thousand or so inhabitants. My parents owned one of the four beerstuben (saloons) in town.

Every drunk was drawn to my mother, the patient one who listened with compassion towards the unfortunate. Some of them drank because they came from such families; others to draw their troubles, pickling them in special juices, pushing their troubles into dark corners in order to get on with their lives.

Old man Ress was not the usual backstreet bum. On the contrary, he was one of the pillars of the community, but he broke down once in a while under the many sorrows of his miserable home life. His beloved wife of 40 some years was sick, and he knew she was dying. She had suffered all through their married life. Their only child a son, physically developed but mentally retarded, had married a woman with a similar disorder, and they merrily produced a child each year.

Mr. Ress was a railroad worker and a very fine carpenter. He made furniture during his spare time.

Once a month, when he simply couldn't bear life any more, he broke down and went on a drunken binge which lasted about a week. Then he came crying to my mother to tell her his woes. Sometimes I listened, and sometimes his problems were discussed around our dinner table but I knew I couldn't breath a word of it in public.

One day the poor old man in one of his stupors, tears running down his face, told about his wife: She was such a good mate, always cooking and baking for him, but the cake he used to like so much was hard to swallow now. It seemed that her eyes were getting weaker and she could not distinguish between the flies on the table where she rolled her dough and the raisins. In order not to hurt her, he tried to eat the result of her efforts but he would have to squish it down with quite a bit of brandy. This in turn set him off on another fit of wild life, making her so angry that she told him to get out and not come home 'til he was sober.

Now after years of suffering, his wife was near death, weak but still conscious. The old carpenter, not being able to please her much during her life time, decided to make her happy one last time. He made the most elaborate coffin for her and when it was finished,

and while the pastor administered the last rites, he brought the box to her bed: "Look, what a nice little home I built for you, so you can rest for eternity."

Later, sitting with my mother again, he begged her to help him understand why the minister had gotten angry at him and kicked him out after he had brought her such a wonderful gift. He asked, "Do you think the minister wanted me to make the little home big enough for the two of us?"

Going To The Dogs.

By Ilse Golbert.

When Michael was along in years and had worked hard all his life, he decided to retire. He turned over his farm to his daughter and her family and he moved into the little place over the barn. He still helped with chores such as feeding the chicken and geese, and worked a little plot in the nearby garden where he grew flowers and berries for his grandchildren.

There was one special day that he looked forward to all year, the day before the pigs were slaughtered. Then he would go over the mountain through the deep snow to the nearby town of Bebra to buy all the necessities for making sausage. After he had purchased marjoram, salt, garlic and string to tie the sausage, he would go to buy the most important product, the sausage casing. Carrying several packages all wrapped in newspapers, as was customary he would deposit the package with the casing in the inside pocket of his overcoat. Now all his chores would be done, including the purchase of chocolate for his grandchildren, and then would come the best part of the trip: going to Isidor's beerstube to chat with him. Their acquaintance went back a long

time. When Michael had inherited the farm he had also taken over the payment of the insurance and Isidor had been his agent; and when the crops were harvested, Isidor would buy his grain. While he was in town he would go to his friend's where he got the best beer and met other farmers who had come to Bebra for similar reasons. There they would spend a few hours drinking and having a good time. Isidor kept an eagle eye over his customers, for he had a respectable place and wanted to make sure nobody went away drunk. When Isidor thought that a man had had enough to drink, he would take him by the arm and lead him out into the street and send him on his way. Sometimes, with all the care that the tavern owner devoted to his guests, he could'nt prevent some tipling.

That afternoon, on his way home with his supplies Michael, already half potted found himself in front of a bar called "Golden Lion". He dropped in for just one more drink. Inside he met a few more farmers he hadn't seen in years, so he had to sit down and chew the fat with them for a couple of hours, never noticing how the host was refilling his glass. It was necessary for him to leave about four o'clock, for the sun set early in winter, and deep snow would slow him down. He set out to get home before dark, only to find a

third bar on the edge of town. It was already pitch dark when he stumbled out of this last place, but he knew his way home and wasn't too worried. He fell into the snow a few times but never hurt himself. When he finally got to the top of the hill, he was exhausted. He fell flat on his face into a ditch in a drunken stupor right in front of the old cemetery. After a while some stray dogs smelled the fresh meat aroma of the sausage casing and began to sniff into the inside coat pocket of the drunkard and pull out the casing. Some more hungry dogs came along and they had a feast. Before the animals devoured all the food, a lady passed by and chased them away. When she saw the bloody casing appearing to come out from inside the body, she ran all the way to the police station, hysterical, sweat running down her face, screaming, "A dead body at the cemetery! The dogs are tearing out his guts!"

She fainted but never forgot the experience.

My Unruly Keys

Keys, keys, I hate keys. When I took piano lessons there was always a war between the black and the white keys. They never harmonized.

Now that I am older but not wiser, keys still baffle me. They avoid, ease and enrage me. I open the front door to enter, but they slyly stick to the lock and stay outside, advising all who wish to enter "come in, be our guest", I can almost hear them say. There is a constant stream of visitors in our house. All our friends and the rest of the world know that the door is always open, 'til I force the culprits out of their hole and put them where they belong.

I just have to step out of the door in my slippers and robe, hair disheveled, when the wind suddenly slams the door closed. The wind you think it was? Oh no, I hear those criminals singing on the inside: "We did it again, boys!"

Hours later a locksmith admits me to my own house. There they are, miserable, metal monsters sticking in the lock. They fairly ring to welcome me when I enter. This time I cannot forgive and forget. Shaking with rage I scream at them: "Get lost, keys". They promptly do and the search begins all over again. Oh, what fun, for them. After turning me into a nervous wreck they suddenly show up, tingling "now you see me, now you don't". This time I put them in their place.

Next morning I reach for my keys on the nightstand, only to come away empty handed. They were not there, the little devils.

"Surprise, they shout from the dresser, exactly where I had placed them the night before, but who would have thought they would stay there.

So we keep on dueling without rhyme or reason. Key spelled backwards says Y E K, and Yek to all of you, you little fiends.

Waves of Pain

It was a warm sunny day, a breeze gently blowing on the calm coast of the Atlantic. Little waves tumbled all over each other, their heads crowned by silvery, murmuring crests, singing, finally shouting in ecstasy when they reached the coast, to no avail for the tide regulated their movements pulling them right back into the vast ocean of oblivion. No matter how hard mother Tide tried, her little ones couldn't be controlled. Rolling in again and again, endless multitudes, to be pulled back without ever succeeding.

The teenaged boy sat in the warm sand, a light breeze playing with his unruly curls which hadn't known a comb for weeks. More and more he felt drawn back to the place where he had spent many hours of a happy childhood. Here he hoped to find the answer to seemingly insurmountable problems.

His first memories were of once sitting in this sand, digging a little shovel in and filling up a toy bucket. When it was full, he would carry it to where his mother, bikini clad, was soaking up the rays of summer sun, and he would pour sand, in a yellow stream all over her. Mama would pick him up and kiss him in delight.

On weekends, papa would come to join them. "Daddy,

Daddy! You have come; we've been waiting for you so long!" He would pick his son up and swing him around in a big circle, then his son secure on one arm, he would put his free arm around Mama and kiss her. They were happy in their own little world. His father would stay two days and the next morning Mama and he would be alone again. "Somebody in the family has to make a living," she would tell him. A living? What did that mean?

He remembered how close he felt to his mother after the first day of school. He had returned with tears streaming down. His teacher mentioned that he was small for his age and all eyes seemed to be looking at him. Maybe they didn't believe that he belonged in Kindergarten. His mother explained to him that valuable things often came in small packages. "Remember when Dad gave me that beautiful ring for my birthday, and I mentioned that the bow on top was bigger than the box?" He understood, and many times since he had thought of that. He also suffered for it, like the time in the second grade when he came home from school with a black eye. Some kids had called him a liar during recess because he insisted that he was in second grade: "I may be a little smaller than the rest of you, but I am much more valuable than any of you," he had hollered in his rage. That kind of talk resulted in a fight. He defended himself valiantly and some bigger kids received two black eyes. Later, talking

about the fight, his mother admonished him never to think of himself as being better than anybody else. How hard life seemed to an 8 year old. He wanted to grow up fast and to become a teenager. The magic age, he thought, when all growing pains would be automatically resolved.

Today he was 13 years old and he didn't understand what had happened to his once happy life. His parents had changed. His mother didn't wear bikinis; she had gotten fat, had some wrinkles on her face, and the curls around her forehead showed gray. Dad had lost some of his wavy, bushy hair. What was left, he tried to comb over the bald spots. Nowadays, they weren't talking about making a living any more. Dad worked harder than ever but it was, "to send my only son to a prestigious college! Nothing but the best for my son!" This was where the trouble started - his grades weren't that good. He wanted to please his parents but he really had no desire to go to college. Why didn't they leave him alone? He couldn't even talk to them any more; they had become so dumb. Several times he had started to tell his father about the funny feelings he had when he saw the girl next door, but he felt his parents would not listen and a lump seemed to come in his throat that wouldn't let him talk. He felt like screaming at Dad; he really needed some answers.

To-day he had come to the place where all his childhood troubles used to be resolved, but all he could think of was to run back, find the girl next door and take her in his arms and kiss her. But he knew that the minute he would see her, he would hide; he wouldn't dare to speak. Maybe he could take dancing lessons, so he could ask her out. Oh, how they would glide over the shiny waxed floor. But he didn't have the slightest idea how to ask. He would probably act like a mouse crawling back in it's hole without even nibbling on the cheese.

Looking out at the ever moving sea he promised himself -- some day, some glorious day we will dance together and then I will reveal myself to her.

A Fairy Tale.

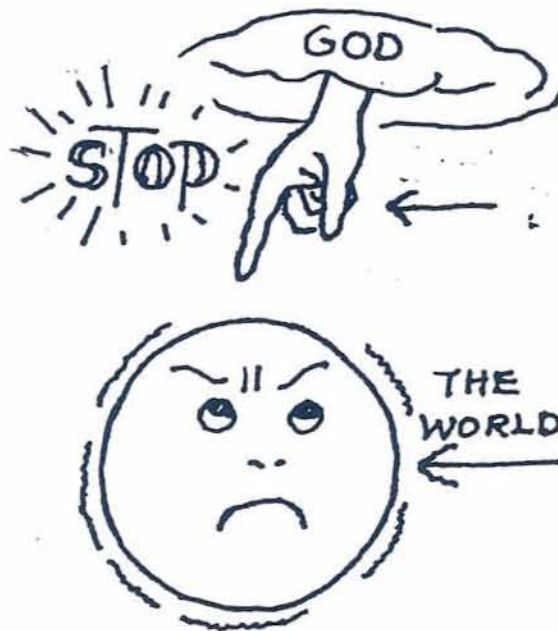
Once, God got tired of all the fighting, robbing, cheating and drug abuse in the world She had created for her children. So, She decided to make a new world on another planet so far away that man had not yet discovered it. But not every one on earth is bad," She thought to herself, "a few good people are left. What could be done about them? What could be done about the animal kingdom ? Certainly, they were not to be abandoned."

Meanwhile, more people were being mugged and murdered. Finally, the Holy one decided to forgive Her children and try to straighten them out. First, She stopped the world from spinning. The great big ball came to a screeching halt! People flew helter skelter. There was so much confusion and whoever could, hid in their homes, in caves, or in bomb shelters. Crime and drugs were forgotten. People threw their guns and knives into the ocean. A few of the murder instruments were still around. Even Dianne Feinstein couldn't outlaw those and she was God in San Francisco!

Mother God divided the earth into squares, light squares and dark squares. The dark were for the bad people and the light for the good ones and for animals. There was a serious overcrowding in the dark parts and very little food grew in the darkness. In the light area there was plenty of food and all the necessities of life. The wealthy

tried to buy their way out of the darkness but they could not cross the border without God's blessing. Money became worthless; poor bad ones were equal to wealthy criminals. Only people who honestly repented could cross the line to the lighter world. Little by little, people became wiser and mended their ways to find light at the end of darkness.

After a long period there was only a handful of humans left in the darkness. They were locked up; the keys thrown away, they became forgotten people. There was peace on earth again. The world began spinning on it's usual axis. Joyous songs of praise reached the haevens and people could not remember that it was ever any different.





A Sad Loss

by

Ilse Golbert

They had had a terrible fight about a week ago. It started rather innocently when Frank tried to improve their relationship which had deteriorated since their first year of marriage. He asked, "why don't you pin up your hair the way you used to, take a bath, dress up and we will hire a baby sitter. As a surprise, I bought tickets to the new play, "How to be happy forever".

"That is no surprise. It's pure bull, "How to be happy forever" that's a bit late for us, don't you think? Yesterday you called me a fat pig, and to-day you come with those damned tickets to a comedy trying to make up. It just won't work that way. Enough is enough." Her voice grew louder. Eyes burning with hate, she yelled, "you want to take me to a comedy when our marriage is a tragedy!"

He became so incensed as she screamed, he threw the tickets in her face, slammed his fist against the door so hard it broke and left his nuckles bleeding. He exited without another word and headed for the nearest bar.

One morning a week later, the police picked him up and threw him into the drunk tank to give him some time to think. Frank rubbing his unshaven rough chin, reflected "That whole right was ridiculous. No wonder she gets riled up when

I come with peace offerings. Maybe if I told her, I love you, I haven't told her that for many years.

Suddenly he remembered his mother barging into his room an hour before the marriage ceremony. With her usual smile, she had apologized. "Son, I have something very important to say. You are young and confident, but do you know how to treat a sensitive young girl like Carol? Every day of your married life show her in gestures and words that you love her. A woman needs to be told that, it will avoid some of life's pitfalls. And and ----- if you have any other questions ask you father!" Her face flushed, she fled the room, closing the door. He heard her running down the steps as if furies were chasing her. "Dear mom" he thought, for you that was probably the hardest thing to do."

During the early years while establishing himself, money worries and child rearing made him forget his mother's advise. He thought back to their first year of marriage, Carol's velvety skin as he stroked her and her urgent responses to his love making. Why had it all ended? at this moment he blamed himself. As soon as he was released, ^{he hurried home} for he couldn't wait to talk to her. He ran the last stretch home, bursting into the house. "Carol, Carol I'm back!" No response! There was an ominous looking letter on the kitchen table. Afraid to open it, he felt his heart skip a few beats. He understood. The house had become too big, the roof had fallen in. He grew cold and lonesome. He had lost her.

The Cat's Last Meow.

by

Ilse Golbert

The following was told to me by my good friend, Marilyn, and I promised I would not tell a soul, but did I promise not to write about it?

For years Marilyn and her husband had been friends with two other couples. They played cards together, occasionally traveled together and once a month went to the theater. Before the performance, they usually met in one of their homes for cocktails and a bite to eat. In the night in question, it was Marilyn's turn to entertain and as she knew she would arrive home too late to prepare dinner, she ordered a whole cooked salmon from Spenger's restaurant. She got up early that morning, and before leaving for work, set the table for dinner, and washed all the fixings for the tossed salad. At the end of her workday, she left a few minutes early to pick up some items at the store. She arrived home at the same time the delivery man came with the fish. Spenger's could always be depended on. It was a magnificent red salmon on a large platter, resting on a bed covered with greens and garnished with tiny shrimp. However, the platter was too long to fit into the refrigerator and, as the guests were due, Marilyn decided to keep the fish on top.

She had forgotten about the presence and agility of her cat. Peter, the cat, was a beautiful animal. He was bigger than the usual variety. Marilyn wasn't too fond of him, but since she had no children and Peter was her husband's pet, she put up with the animal.

After putting the finishing touches on her dinner, she had just enough time to dress for the theater, when the door bell rang. The first guests arrived and she and her husband were ready to receive them. After a pleasant cocktail hour, the guests seated themselves around the table and Marilyn went into the kitchen to serve the masterpiece. Entering the kitchen, she gasped. There on top of the refrigerator, was the feline thief munching away at the salmon. He looked up long enough for one of his grins as if to say, "how did you know that salmon was my favorite dish?" Then sensing that he was in the wrong, made one leap off the refrigerator and scampered through his little trap door out of the house. Marilyn was aghast. With nothing else in the house to serve her guests, and looking at the salmon, she realized the cat had just nibbled away at the top side of the fish. So she quickly acted and scraped off what was left of the sauce, then, with a wide spatula, she flipped the fish over spread the sauce on the good part, then replaced the shrimp. She did a good job and none of her guests ever noticed anything. Proudly she served the repaired salmon taking care not to touch the underside. Everybody marveled over the meal, but her husband noticed the tight smile on her face. Marilyn was not her usual self and he resolved to ask her about it later.

When it was time to go to the theater, the two visiting couples drove together and the hosts went in their own car. Driving out of the garage, they found the cat stretched out in the driveway, motionless and dead! Marilyn was beside herself. Hysterical, she screamed at her husband, "Peter ate some of that salmon and probably died of food poisoning. We will all be dead within the

next hour!" Her husband went into action, pushed her into the car and raced after their friends. He flagged them down, halfway to their destination, where Marilyn confessed what had happened. In confused stress, they all went to the emergency room at the hospital where they got their stomachs pumped. They were assured that nothing much would happen now. Later, driving up to their home, they saw their neighbour waiting for them: "I have to make a confession" he apologized, "earlier this evening when I backed out of the garage, I accidentally ran over your cat and killed it." "Oh my god," Marilyn shrieked, "our poor cat! Our poor stomachs!"



Say Cheese

by Ilse Friedman

Cheeeeezzze! Certainly not my favorite Food,
Yet I cannot do without it.
Strong odor! It stinks!
For a soft feeling on my tongue
The French are the masters;
Suave, smooth and tranquilizing Brie. Ah!
Danes and their crumbly Bluecheese
Should be deported
unless they promise
to make salad dressing only!
Switzerland! Snowcapped mountains,
Deep blue lakes, goats and cows grazing,
Alpine meadows all like dreams.
But somebody ought to teach them how to make cheese!
Theirs never seems to jel,
Holy cow, it's full of holes!
Goosestepping Germans never throw anything away.
They cook their cheese, mold and all,
Abracadabra, it's reborn.
Call it Kochkaese; it tastes so good.
Americans industrialize everything.
We can make anything better,

Even cheese milk and cream
Out of syrup and coconutfat
Cows and goats are passe.
Pay them off;
Don't let the moo-ing and baa-ing be heard,
We outsmarted them, maybe ourselves?
Our milk is bottled
With synthetic vitamins thrown in.
"You are what you eat" is our motto,
We are the masters of junkfood!

