Rudy Hirsch

589th Field Artillery/HQ
106th Infantry Division

My Life:
The Diary of Rudy Hirsch

In the Schnee Eifel. The Command Post of the 589th Field Artillery Battalion, near Schlausenbach, 12 December 1944. Private Rudy Hirsch, Headquarters Battery, beside his gun.

Memories, the most beautiful paradise from which one
can never be expelled.
~ Jean Paul Richter ~

FOREWORD

I began to write this story of my life on the first day of my retirement, in the spring of 1987. My main motivation was, of course to get our son acquainted with his origins. At several occasions, individual segments of the past had been discussed, mainly when in context with a person, a place or certain circumstances. Children and young adults are mostly not terribly interested in what they flippantly file away under "Ancient History." Of course, nothing could be more important for them than the present and the future. I must agree, but I think, while maturing progresses, the interest in their roots will stimulate their inquiring spirit and history will find its proper place.

Since Claude came into our lives and brightened our days, we had an excellent relationship. While we, the parents were thoroughly involved in the process of "Making a Living," his growing up filled every spare moment of our lives. But I can't free myself of a certain guilt-feeling, that we have been too busy and preoccupied for more frequent and intimate communication. I doubt it, that we have talked enough with and to each other. I do hope at this late date, I will be able to fill that void and to establish a more meaningful bond.

While rereading my previous writing over and over again, I notice a certain absence of feeling, which I am trying to correct now. But, at least, looking back, I have known moments, no, ages of despair. However, they have been diluted by so much love, kindness, goodness and affection which I was able to harvest on my walk through life. How can I not be grateful and believe in a God up there, or wherever our hearts will place Him? To my last breath will I thank Him for the protection he has extended to me and those I love! My belief is rooted deep within my feelings. It produces a sense of soothing security.

Recently I read a quotation by Camus, which impressed me very much:

"To protest against a universe of unhappiness, you have to create your own happiness."

But, luckily, I do not have to create this happiness, because it has always been there, and all the difficult situations have come to acceptable solutions.

No way shall I keep all this for myself. I just have to try to put all this on paper. I'll take my chances that nobody will ever read this! Then, at least let it be a silent recording of my gratitude to all those, who have contributed to give meaning to my life.

It has been said, that young people are building ladders to climb up, while we, the older ones are raising fences to keep out developments. But times and outlooks have changed. All I want to do is to help tearing down the fences and help our younger generation to erect their ladders on the solid ground of past experiences.

It is important to know our roots. We have been tremendously influenced by our ancestors, their beliefs, their cultures and customs. Never will I dismiss my heritage to which I have been solidly anchored, although I have wandered far from our geographical point of origin. I feel it almost my duty to pass to my son, his legacy and especially to bring back to his memory his beloved mother, which he lost too early in his and her life. The trauma of loosing this outstanding woman, probably reproaching her for having left him, has possibly erased much of her from his thoughts.

Historical narration can not really pretend to be history, because the writing of the past events requires their maturing through the process of many decades. I can look back to a time not comparable with today's technological advances. I still remember horses pulling freight through the streets. In the mirror of my mind, on a visit to his native village with my grandfather, I can still see a communal wood burning brick bake oven, lighted once a week, where the women lined up to bake their delicious black-crusted bread and cakes. And next to it, the public laundry, where they pounded the bedding which was later spread on the grass for drying to a

resplendent white. Quiet a change from today's appliances. But then, what we would call inconveniences, were as naturally accepted as our push-button world.

In the chronological order of my story, some of the events seem to be unbelievable, but there will not be one iota of fiction. Sometimes I am surprised to remember my first day of school in 1925, but, being blessed of still having friends from this era, I was able to bring back those memories. Dates of historical events have been thoroughly researched for correctness.

And now, after all this philosophizing and preparing my reader for the worst, I guess it is time to start. How will I go about it? Good question! I have read so many autobiographies, but never my own. Some are starting at the end with flashbacks, but I rather start at the beginning.

All right, here we go, and may the chips fall wherever! (And I beg your indulgence, dear reader, for any mistakes you might find).

A SHELTERED CHILDHOOD

I was born in "Saarbrücken" on September 15, 1919, almost a year after the end of "World War I", and the defeat of Germany "Germany" by the Allies. (Detailed descriptions of my hometown will follow) Shortly before this important date, my parents had moved there from Koblenz "Koblenz", a very pretty town on the river "Rhine". Many times, before the event of "Hitler" and his fellow criminals, had our parents taken us there on visits to old friends. The last time I passed there, was after another German defeat in the spring of 1945, as a member of the "United States" Army. At that time, this once-so-lovely-town was almost completely leveled by our artillery and air bombardments. Then, this was a common sight, and nobody shed any tears about all those destructions. It also happened that we passed the house where my brother Fritz was born in 1914, or rather, the debris which were left of it.

To observe the chronological order, and having mentioned my brother and myself, I will certainly have to explain how this all started. While our mother, Toni Kahn was born on March 11, 1893 in Saarbrücken, our dad, Max Hirsch arrived on the last day of 1878 in Saffig, a tiny village, not far from Koblenz, the youngest of thirteen children in a rather poor family. And here, the fun begins. Father's oldest brother, uncle Herman, at least 20 years older than our dad, was married with Ida Baer, a sister of my mother's mother, my grandmother Paula Kahn. In those years, parents did not send their offspring's to summer camps, or "Abroad" to learn the languages. It was lots easier, to have them spend their summer vacations at sister's house in the country. The air was better than in the city, and it was lots cheaper too. When my mom was what we call today a teenager (but I just can't see her this way), she got quickly bored with the green fields around her. To get a little excitement, she fell in love with her uncle Herman's youngest brother Max. Seems that this was nothing new in those days, but probably handled with more discretion than today. Only many years later was I told about this, for me, very lucky story.

It seems that my grandmother became rather nervous about this development, feeling that her daughter was too young for such a relationship. As usual, she made a quick decision, and packed our mom off to a finishing-school for young ladies in Frankfurt. But our good, old dad did not get discouraged. Every weekend, he put on his only "good" suit, waxed his handle-bar moustache and bought a fourth-class roundtrip ticket to Frankfurt. When it was a matter about a pretty girl, no trip was too much for our dad. There, in the parlor, under the watchful eyes of a chaperon, he was allowed to hold hands with our mother. Must have been frustrating. Each time, grandmother got a report about these visits, and she did not appreciate at all this state of affairs. Then too, all Jewish mothers had the ambitions to have their daughters marry doctors, lawyers or other assorted professionals. It finally took grandfathers urgings to agree that her only daughter would marry an ordinary Cattle-Dealer.

My parents settled in Koblenz, and Fritz was born there, barely nine months after the wedding. Many jokers made insinuations about this short pregnancy. But how could anything have happened in that parlor with the chaperon always present?

Father was in partnership with his brothers in the cattle-business in Saffig. Grandfather David started this trading when he got married, but he was not too successful. His greatest achievement was to keep Grandmother Miriam pregnant

until number thirteen. I don't believe, tax deductions was a reason for this activity. Beside that, he was not too ambitious, and it seems, that grandmother was the one, who kept hunger away from her children. When the oldest boy, Herman finished elementary school, he started immediately to help his father in his business. The other brothers too, after finishing their rudimentary education helped to raise their to a higher level. Dad was the latest to be included, and by the time our parents got married, the "Gebrüder Hirsch" *(Hirsch brothers)* was a successful business with an excellent reputation in the region, which lasted until its tragic end at the time of the rise of the Third Reich.

At the beginning of World War I, on account of his age, father managed to stay out of the army for the first two years. But then, finally he was caught and was shipped for basic training to Camp Elseborn. It must not have been pleasant at all there, and he told us about a song: "Oh Elseborn, oh Elseborn, dich schuf der Herr in seinem Zorn!" *(Oh, Elseborn, God created you in his anger!)* Well, 28 years later, the U. S. Army, including yours truly took an awful beating there (Battle of the Bulge, December, 1944). It wasn't funny at all. After training, father managed to get a soft job close to home and was discharged before the end of the war. A year later they moved to Saarbrücken and that must have happened before September 15, 1919, because otherwise, I would have been born either in Koblenz or on the train.

While our grandfather, Max Kahn was a traveling salesman all his life, Grandmother Paula had built a very prosperous tobacco business in Saar-brücke. Towards the end of the war, she started to have problems with her eyes, which progressed, and left her totally blind when I was in my teens. They decided to retire by the end of the war, when their boys would be back from service in the German army. The oldest son, my uncle Rudy went at first into partnership with an old friend, Simon Salomon, (whom I was lucky to acquire as a father-in-law almost half a century later). It was said that Rudy was not much of a businessman, while Simon was a very efficient "Go-Getter" with a vision, and of course such an association was doomed from the beginning. Our smart grandmother knew her boy's shortcomings and therefore urged our Dad, who had proven his commercial achievements, to join Rudy to continue and improve an organization in which she had poured so much hard work and foresight. During the years of their partnership, father had a perfect relationship with our uncle Rudy, and while Rudy took care of all the bureaucratic details,

Dad was happy to take care of business with his sleeves rolled up. Mother had two more brothers. Ernst was two years younger and Hugo followed five years later, the baby of the Kahns. I do remember Hugo very well and he will reappear again in my story until his tragic disappearance. He was the most handsome and charming of the three boys, very much in demand by the young women of our town. Brother Ernst, went to Argentina probably not long after my birth. He was the adventurer of the family, and for at least ten years, we never had a sign of life from him. I do remember the first long letter from him came in the early 1930's. The grandparents booked his long trip home and uncle Rudy went to Le Havre, to fetch his brother. How is it that railroad stations jump so vividly back into my mind? Could it be, that I have experienced so many sad separations but also so many happy reunions in my life? But there was this large family waiting for the train from Paris to pull into the station, to welcome the long lost son. It was a day of great joy and pride. I remember my uncle Ernst as a great story teller. Fiction or not, eagerly did we children listen to his yarns when he was a "Gaucho" herding cattle on the

Argentinean pampas. It did not take long before he became restless again, and he returned to his beloved Argentina. I have a feeling that he was not urged to stay because his siblings were not eager to share with him.

Now, that the account of my ancestry, and that business of being born has been established, I can talk about myself within the town, the family, friends and my growing up in these surroundings. Ours was a very large and close-knit family with many aunts, uncles and cousins. There were no degrees in relationship. Second and third cousins, for us children were uncles and aunts and their children were our cousins and playmates. Back then, Saarbrücken was a small town, with about half the population of today (200,000 in 1980). With a relatively large Jewish community, my parents had a large circle of very good friends. Very close and enduring friendships have been formed there which have lasted to this day. My mother and her brothers were all born there and, of course, went to school there. Many were Fritz's and my classmates whose mothers and fathers shared school-benches with our mother and her brothers.

Everybody in town knew us and it was hard to remain anonymous. We were known as the "Hirsch Buwe" *(boys)*. How often would I have preferred not to be so well known? How often did it happen when one of us, mostly I, behaved badly on the streetcar on our way home from school, and, on a later trolley the ticket-collector would report to father on his way home for lunch? This was mostly done in a loud voice, to let the other passengers hear about my terrible misbehavior.

I spent the first fourteen years of my life in Saarbrücken. Always trying hard not to grow up too fast. With no worries in the world, it was easy to keep the slightest earnestness out of my philosophy. But still today, I can look back, with bitter-sweet feelings on this happy and wonderful childhood. I have traveled far from the shores of the river Saar without any regrets, but the feeling of belonging will never leave me. Those roots which I have carried in my luggage, and which I have tried to plant in newer soils have never anchored as solidly as they were back there.

For Fritz and myself, our years of growing up were most pleasant ones. Actually we were kept inside some kind of a cocoon, completely isolated from the many turmoil's of the outside world. Our parents, somewhat straight-laced and a little rigid, weren't really very strict with us two boys. Like all our surrounding, they considered themselves as real Germans, and they instilled us with a more or less relaxed Prussian discipline. While brother Fritz followed the rules almost to the letter, I was a lost cause in that field. Until the end of his days, our father was an extremely frugal man. He was not self-centered at all, with a tremendous sense of humor and without the slightest egoism. Extremely polite, and rather self-effacing. I believe that we have inherited some of this trait from him. But above all, he was such a good father, only interested in the wellbeing of his family.

This abundance of affection was not only reserved for his wife and children, to his entire family and friends. On his side of the Hirsch-clan, I had twenty-three first cousins, and they all considered their uncle Max as somebody very special. During the "Terrible Years," he was the sole survivor of his generation and became the head of the family. Always with a sympathetic ear and ready to help any possible way, he was the fountainhead where to replenish their hopes and energies. We have every reason to be proud of our father. I did get disciplined and spanked by him, but I don't think it happened as often as I most probably deserved it. Far into adulthood, I

feared him somewhat. It might have been a desire to find approval in his eyes. But he always reciprocated my love and affection for him. He was, even in his high age, a modern person, entirely tuned to the times he was living in; while there have been earthshaking changes and events during the ninety years of his life. He had a perfect understanding for young people and their deviating from his moral concepts. With his good looks, eminent and well groomed appearance, he gathered the respect of everybody who had ever known him. He was a real gentleman of the old school.

And our tiny mother, what about her? Whoever had ever known her just couldn't help being fond of her. I have to shorten the list of adjectives to describe her. How about loving, loveable, affectionate, sincere, generous and understanding? My feelings for her were less complicated than those I had reserved for father. Maybe, thanks to good old Oedipus, I probably loved her more than him, or let's rather say that there was less fear in my relationships with her. Actually she was more severe with us than our father. I do still remember her spankings, which turned to be mostly hilarious, with her chasing me around the kitchen table, brandishing a large wooden mixing spoon. Fritz probably forgot those episodes, because he hardly ever got himself into trouble, while I was just begging for it.

Right now, while reminiscing I feel so very comfortable, to relive the rather few years we have lived together and how good she was to her boys. She concentrated on stuffing the "right" food into us. Nowadays her concept of nutrition science would certainly be contradicted. The quantities of starchy dumplings we had to eat were unbelievable, and I'm still not very fond of them. But she was an excellent cook and especially her cakes and cookies were out of this world. The weeks before Chanukah-Christmas, she was always very busy baking enormous quantities of cookies. To our sorrow, most of them were given away and securely locked up in the buffet. One afternoon, when mother was out playing bridge, Fritz and I moved this heavy peace of furniture away from the wall, unscrewed the back panel, and gorged ourselves with her delicious confections. When mother checked on her hidden treasures she noticed a sizeable quantity missing. After the traditional chase around the table, we confessed and were subjected to the mixing spoon treatment. But we found out that she spread that story around, rather proud of her two boys initiative and inventiveness.

If I keep on straying from the main subject, by talking about dumplings, cookies and other assorted foods, it might be preferable to switch from autobiography to cook-book. So let's get serious and talk about Saarbrücken, my hometown. Risking to be boring, I just have to list some of those, who will again appear in my story.

My parents had oodles of friends and on the top of the list were the Salomon's. At the time of this writing they had become our family. After the death of my wife Hedy, we were more than fortunate when their daughter Renée agreed to accept me as her husband and became a devoted and wonderful mother for Claude. How many of all those lovely people, who formed my world are gone from us. It's frightening. But let's not forget, I'm no youngster either anymore.' But as I am a firm believer in "Life Eternal," I can see them all sitting around a large table up there in heaven, having a great Kaffee-Klatsch and looking down at us affectionately.

With so many aunts, uncles and cousins, it seemed that everybody was a relative of ours. I am certain, that in those days of my childhood, thoughts of the importance of these kinships did not cross my mind. But in my subconscious, they must have

added to my feeling of security, which I can still sense today.

The most important were of course our grandparents Kahn. They were mother's parents, as mentioned before. I have never known my grandparents Hirsch, having passed away before I was born. Mother's oldest brother, Rudy, father's partner in business, was married with Aunt Lucy and their son Hans was born in 1924. I have mentioned brother Ernst from Argentina, who had spent only short time with us. I will talk again about Uncle Hugo, with his wife Edith and son Walter, the baby in the family. A tragic end befell them in the Holocaust. Almost like our big sister was Cousin Irma, the oldest daughter of father's brother Herman. Not only were they living five minutes away from us, but we were very close with her and her husband Adolphe Friedhoff and today we are still bound to their daughter Juliette and her lovely family. Mother's cousin David Kahn, with his wife Anne and daughter Lilo were, of course also members of the clan. And let's not forget father's nephew Ed Aron, still so dear to our hearts, who, after finishing his apprenticeship joined the family business as a salesman. He replaced at that time mother's cousin Otto Kahn, who started another business with a friend in our town. Uncle Herman and Aunt Martha Hirsch, father's cousins were living in Roden, about fifteen miles from Saarbrücken. The closeness they had with my parents was continued by me, until we laid them to rest in Vineland (New Jersey). Sunday visits to Roden were always a great pleasure. They were such good and kind people, and what made Uncle Herman especially dear to me, was his collection of books by Karl May, a German author, who wrote mainly adventure stories about our Indians and the Far-West.

But to come back to that scale of importance in my life, I have to come back to those, so dear grandparents. Officially they were that, of course, for Fritz and myself as well as for Walter and Hans. But that was not enough for them; they also played the role of acting-grandparents for the other children of our relatives living in Saarbrücken. While grandfather was a very quiet and kind man, grandmother was the outgoing type, spreading that terrific charisma around her. Shortly after their marriage, in the 1880s, grandmother opened that first tobacco store with very modest means; while her husband was a traveling salesman in textiles, out on the road all week long. With their combined effort, success was not far away, and when our dad and uncle Rudy took over that business, it was very well and solidly established, with a very respectable reputation for its integrity. As grandfather had many brothers and sisters living in the area of his origins, a rather poor region of Germany, called Hunsrück, about sixty miles from our town, where they made a hard living in the cattle business, they helped them, by opening their home to some of their sons and to having them enter the Gymnasium (high-school) in Saarbrücken. No wonder, that my mother considered these cousins as brothers. I will talk again about my beautiful grandmother, when, for the last years of her life, she shared our home.

At this time of writing, hardly anyone of all those lovely people is still among us. But they remain part of myself, and I find it hard to describe my fondest memories and my love for them. I do hope that my writing will bring an affectionate smile to my readers, and that I will be able to have them living within these lines.

And now, having disposed of some background, I'll have to get into the chronology of my life. But at this time, I would like to point out to my dear readers, that usually I am not the person to be in the foreground of things. I don't think that I am self-centered, but I am writing my own story which obviously puts me on center-stage. I

do not consider myself as important as all the persons and facts which have surrounded me, and played a role in my life and influenced it.

It might sound surprising, but I do remember my first day in school in the spring 1925. In Germany at that time, the school-year was from Easter to Easter. Bismark-Schule was just one bloc away from the house I was born. Mother took me there with all my brand new clothes and equipment, to introduce me to my first teacher, Herr Lehrer Becker, *(Mister teacher)*, who was a son of one of my mother's teachers. I remember him as one of the most pleasant ones I had during all my schooling in Saarbrücken. We, very proudly carried our supplies in a satchel on our back. The most important item within was a wooden framed slate board with horizontal lines for letters while the reverse side was squared for numbers. There was a rectangular box for the slate-pencils and also, matching in color a small box for the sponge, to clean the slate. I think, in the third grade, we began to write on paper, and were permitted to dispose of the slate.

My classmates were mostly boys from the neighborhood, whom I had known from "way back." So there was nothing strange for me there, which made my four years in elementary-school a very pleasant period for me. Actually, it was a lot of fun, which was anyhow my sole purpose in life, and I managed to 'enjoy it thoroughly. Between you and me, learning was not uppermost in my mind and I concentrated lots more energy and imagination on play, sports and just plain mischief. I managed to stick to that philosophy and with a certain success until after my thirteenth birthday. So, it's not surprising, that this made me a very average student. How I managed to pass every year from one grade to the next, and even to gather some wisdom is still a puzzle to me. Brought up with some Prussian discipline at home and school made my behavior somewhat manageable. But barely. To sum it up, it seems that I fell under the category of a likeable brat. At least I hope it was so.

At Easter of 1929 I graduated from elementary school and was admitted to the Gymnasium. The most important part of this event for us students was the uniform-cap. Colors were according to grade. The first one was the Sexta, and it was a dark red, and at the beginning I wore it almost day and night. After a while, of course the novelty wore off to flare up again a year later. At graduation time, if one was certain of passing, a new cap was bought and worn before the end of the term. Fritz always did, but as my passing used to be slightly questionable, I had to wait until after the distribution of report cards. After graduation exercises, the old caps were thrown into the river, in front of the school, and one could see hundreds of different colored hats flowing down the Saar river.

While in elementary school, one single teacher was in charge of our entire education, but now in the Gymnasium, we had different Herr Professors or Herr Studienrats who taught their specialties like languages, maths, sciences, lit or other subjects. Most of them maintained a strict Prussian even military discipline, and did not hide their nationalism somewhat tainted by a certain anti-Semitism. With few exceptions they kept themselves unapproachable, and beside the curriculum there was no rapport and communication with them. They were nicknamed "Pauker," which is the German word for a kettledrum player. Indeed, they tried to drum some wisdom and knowledge into our young brains. Most of them were feared, even hated, but I must give them credit that, all in all, they were excellent pedagogues, having little in common with today's teachers. I had the pleasure of following Claude's education, mostly at Long-Beach, which at that time was rated among the

top school- systems in this country. Comparing my education with his, at the time he entered college, I can state honestly, that mine was superior to his from every point of view. As an example, in Long-Beach there was a choice of either taking French or Spanish, not a bad idea at all. In Saarbrücken, the first year at our Gymnasium, French was obligatory and the following year English was added until the end of schooling there.

German literature was a most important subject and it was treated in depth. Whatever one's feeling about Germany and their people might be, (mine can't be put on paper) they can be proud of their writers, poets and philosophers. They have produced some highly humanistic and liberal ideas, but also some nationalistic and Teutonic interpretations. Our teachers found us very receptive for these approaches, to bring out our patriotic feelings and form us into "Good Germans." (Actually I still doubt that there is such an animal). But let us not forget, that we, the Jews of German origin were ardent patriots and there is no denying, had it not been for the Nazis violent anti-Semitism, we would have offered ourselves and lives to this Fatherland in 1939 the same as our previous generation did in 1914.

Before I go any further, I have to give here a political and geographical description of our not so beloved homeland. The Saar territory, called Saarland in German and La Sarre in French covered about 1,000 square miles, with about 900,000 inhabitants while we were living there. The territory as political unit came into existence in 1919 when the Treaty of Versailles detached it from the German Reich. Its autonomy was supervised by the League of Nations and administered by the French. The rich coal mines were exploited by the French as a reparation payment for the devastation by Germany of the coal mines in the North of France. A plebiscite was planned in the year 1935 to determine the final destination of the Saar. There was a rather friendly, low profile military occupation by the French, and the higher echelon of the police was international. Finances were integrated with those of France and their Franc was our currency, which contributed to certain prosperity. This was in contrast to Germany, which in the second half of the 1920s went through a devastating monetary inflation. This produced tremendous unemployment, poverty and hunger, which came to the United States about five years later. The ensuing social and economic upheavals were a great boost to Hitler and his murderer's coming to power. At least, after the Second World War, the mistakes, made in the Hall of Mirrors of Versailles were not repeated. Something had been learned.

The French influence, while low key was quiet solid and the geographical vicinity helped a lot. From our house to the French border was about two miles and a ride on the streetcar of less than an hour took people from the center of Saarbrücken to Forbach the nearest, sleepy county seat in France. As the workers were paid by French wage standards and also in their currency, there was a certain prosperity in our small territory. While their counterparts in the Reich had to endure great privations, created by the astronomical devaluation of the Reichsmarks, the miners and the steel mill hands in the Saar were blessed with a standard of living superior to the one before the First World War. Of course they accepted with pleasure the generosity of France, but there remained a gnawing guilt feeling caused by the suffering of their brethren in the Reich.

I find it hard to believe, that in the early 1930s I should have developed a certain interest in politics. Couldn't be! My greatest fascination was rather related to

mischief and what we would currently describe by "goofing off." But on the other hand, when Hitler came to power in 1933, we all understood that politics East of the Rhine would be a matter of life and death for us Jews. As I have read in the last fifty years about every book I could lay my hands on of the politics in the twentieth century, I have a pretty grasp of all the events during that time period.

The Saarlanders, especially the blue-collars were rather Liberals. Before the deluge of Nazi propaganda, which began to brainwash them, they voted Socialist and even Communist lines. At that time, the Soviet-Union was considered paradise on earth for the working classes. How erroneous was the belief which pictured the Soviet Union as a classless heaven of equality with a complete absence of rich and poor. My own sympathies were rather on the side of Communism. They lasted until that fateful 23 of August 1939, when Stalin signed the infamous non-aggression treaty with the Nazis. Less than two years later, when the German scourge invaded Russia, I changed my feelings and concurred with Churchill, when he proclaimed to be willing to even make a pact with the devil to defeat the Nazi criminals.

I am meandering again, and have to come back to my education. At this impressive age, our teachers succeeded to bring out our nationalistic feelings. It was no easy task for them to counterbalance the economic prosperity brought in by the French, who, after all were still considered the old enemy. Most of them were veterans of the War, mainly ex-officers, firmly believing the cause of their defeat was the misleading 'Stab-in-the-back' doctrine. How many times during his lectures about the 8th century and Charlemagne, and entirely out of context, did our history professor bring up the shame of the Treaty of Versailles? I still feel, that the Germans had it coming to them, but I fail to understand, how the victorious Allies could have inflicted those almost impossible conditions. So much counter-productive hatred was created, and it took only 21 years, when we had to harvest the bitter crop. Our professor of Physics taught, that the inventions of Ampère, Volta, Lumère and even our Edison, were copies of German theories. Professor Wefels, who taught French and English (quiet well) found it easy to slip in some statements of French decadence. Later he changed that into French-Jewish-Negro decadence. I hate to admit, that they succeeded to convince our young, absorbing minds that there was only one Deutschland Uber Alles. *(Germany above all)*. (10 years later, Wefels begged my dear friend Charlie, a high officer of the French occupation, to help him to get his job back).

Six days a week, classes started at eight to last until one, sometimes two in the afternoon. Once a week we had Phys. Ed. from three to five, when one hour was devoted to strenuous gymnastics and the other to mainly ball games. Soccer was everybody's favored sport. There was also Schlagball, slightly comparable, with our Softball. Personally, I put lots more effort into these games than I applied to the academic subjects. Once a week, the gentile students had an hour of religious instruction, given by a Catholic or Protestant clergyman. During that hour we, the Jews were "goofing off" in an empty classroom, or playing ball in the schoolyard. This of course, caused a lot of envy to those who had to listen to their preachers. But we had to go to Hebrew school, which was taught by rabbi and cantor one afternoon each week. All this kept us pretty busy, but I managed to make the most of the free time available. I had the, now, doubtful wisdom to restrict my time of homework to an absolute minimum. No wonder that each year there was that large question mark about my promotion to the next grade. It really seemed that I would

never get serious and grow up.

How could I forget those beautiful summer days of my very early teens? Without the slightest care in the world, they were filled with hiking, biking ball playing and swimming in the Saar. A great treat was tennis, which became especially challenging when, on our way home, we were frequently attacked by our less fortunate contemporaries, which sometimes ended with bloody noses on both sides. Coming home then with my dirty whites did not please my mother at all. We also had a very nice indoor swimming pool where we spent many afternoons competing with our skills.

Winters were also memorable. For months on end there were frozen ponds and streams. The tennis courts were transformed into smooth ice skating rings. I do remember the record cold spell of the winter of 1929, when the schools were closed for lack of coal. The Saar was frozen solidly and open for skating. What a holiday that was! One afternoon at twilight, Fritz probably looking at girls, did not see a hole in the ice and fell into it. Fortunately with the help of other skaters he got out of it. As it was only a five minutes run from our house, everything worked out fine, with only a few days in bed with a heavy cold. Our town is nestled in a valley, and the surrounding hills were ideal for serious sleigh riding. Around the corner from our house was Petersbergstrasse, one of the steepest and most winding streets in town. One day, prone on my sled and racing one of my buddies, I ran head first into a parked delivery truck. I ended up in bed with a concussion and had to promise not to get on a sled for the rest of that winter. One more promise which was never kept.

Further ahead in my story, I will talk of some terrible winters I had to endure, to the point that the sight of snow would make me sick. Today I can again enjoy the beauty of a winter landscape. Memory brings me back when all the youngsters were assembled on the snowy slopes and the skating places. Many innocent flirts started there and it was the ultimate of puppy-love to race hand in hand with a pretty girl over the ice. And if they weren't so pretty didn't matter either, just as long as it was a girl.

But it was also the time of so many holidays. With its Christmas decorations all over town, the city took on such a cozy and warm look. On Chanukah, in our large family, the highpoint especially for us youngsters was the evening when the Chanukah-man, a Jewish version of Santa Claus, mostly our uncle Hugo distributed the presents. As a family tradition, this party always took place at the grandparents house, and nobody, young or old ever walked out empty handed. The presents were for me more important than the religious background of this holiday. Then there was also the big Chanukah party given by the synagogue. We, the students of the Hebrew school prepared songs, skits, and dances, but there always was also a play. Rehearsals began many weeks before, and some ladies volunteered to produce the costumes. Most of the years, Fritz had the lead roles. Well, he had built up a reputation of a good actor, and he was much liked. He still is. With the great circle of friends, it was no wonder that there were forever birthday parties. The ones I remember the most were Charlotte's (my sister-in-law) in February, close to Purim and Mardi-Gras were mainly masquerade parties.

There was a relatively large theater in our town with an extensive repertoire of operas, operettas, plays and concerts. Trying to fill us boys with some culture, our good mother dragged us there frequently. I can't say that then I was terribly

impressed with the performances, but I enjoyed bragging about it to my friends. Now I am glad to admit in retrospect, that our mother was right and I can still remember my first Carmen, Rigoletto, Fledermaus and also the works by Goethe and Schiller.

In those days, I was an accomplished expert in goofing off, playing and mischief and the question comes to my mind, how and when I found the time to do so much reading? Believe it or not, I really did. Not only was I an expert of Karl May and his Redskin Indians, but I also read the German classics and the contemporary bestsellers like Thomas Mann, Emil Ludwig, Emil Edmond, Remarque and more. Something doesn't add up correctly! Oh, I got it at that time; comic books had not been invented yet. Does anybody really believe that otherwise, I would have turned to serious books? No way. But I am glad that I did and I still remember them. They were a great help in opening my mind.

Father was a passionate hiker and he enjoyed to take his boys and some of our friends on Sunday excursions. Saarbrücken is surrounded by hilly woodlands and scenically quite attractive. As for myself, I could gladly have done without all that walking but it usually ended at some inn in the woods where we stopped for refreshments. My most vivid recollections are the walks to a large restaurant overlooking a small lake, called the Deutsch-mühlenweier, where we also went skating in the winter. The hike took about two hours and was quite a procession: Charlotte, Renée, Fritz, some other youngsters and myself in front. The boys always resented having to walk with the girls. The fathers behind, controlling our behavior. Closing the column were the mothers comparing notes about their offspring's. Once at our destination, we as well as our parents met more friends, and the girls, fortunately left us for their own friends.

I'll never forget a week's hike, when father took us through the Eifel, a region West of the Rhine river. My recollection is quiet vivid, because sixteen years later I had occasion to get reacquainted again with that area when we, of the U.S. Army took a tremendous beating by the Nazis in the "Battle of the Bulge (Dec. 16, 1944). With father, we hiked from one village to another, sometimes interrupted by a short ride on train or bus. Each night we spent in a different Gasthaus (Inn), in most of which father was known from the time when he was in the cattle-business. As he was always well liked and remembered, we had some royal receptions. The most outstanding one was at a small brewery in Niedermendig, whose owner was an old army buddy of our dad. In May 1945, we "liberated" a truckload of beer there, and the reception was not comparable with the previous one. (They all were a bunch of Nazis anyhow).

Our excursion ended in Saffig, the cradle of the Hirsch families. This was my most beloved village. I don't think it had more than five hundred inhabitants. Among them four Hirsch families. My uncles Isidor, Herman, Moritz and Aunt Lehnchen all had their own large, comfortable farmhouses, with barns stables and adjacent gardens and fields. The "Hirsch Brothers Inc." was a large cattle business, and the stables were full of cows to be traded. There were also a few horses and many chickens ran around the courtyard. When I was about ten years old, father taught me how to milk the cows, and I enjoyed it as much as he did. There he was always a different man and his happiness of being in his old surroundings was infectious. Evenings I was allowed to ride one of the horses to the well in the middle of the village, and there

was no prouder horseman around.

The vacations there have been unforgettable, even more than a half century later, and there I acquired my love of nature, the earth and agriculture. Most of the time, we arrived by train, and a cousin or one of the hands were expecting us, with horse and buggy at the station. I was trusted with the reins for the two miles trip. This was already an exciting beginning for the beautiful carefree times ahead. The first things were the greetings and hugs with those many aunts, uncles and cousins, crossing the village from one end to the other. In a pastoral setting, this was such a cozy, tiny town. I know that it was not a very prosperous one and being off the beaten track.

There was hardly any traffic beside the horse drawn wagon on their way to and from the fields. The arrival of a car or a truck was almost an event. So, we children were allowed to circulate freely from one Hirsch house to the other and compare the quality of the cakes and cookies in the different households. As I was the youngest of two dozen cousins, I played mainly with their children, my second cousins.

We also took more mundane vacations. An unforgettable voyage to the Belgian seashore helped me to acquire a great liking for the vastness of the sea. But mostly we went to some of the more modest mountain resorts in Switzerland. Those were small villages, and with the exceptions of a few hotels, they were comparable to Saffig. But, beside the background of the snow covered mountains, they rated for father and myself way behind our beloved village in the Rhineland.

I have presented to you, my dear reader so many persons and places, but have only hinted about my dear brother Fritz. Could it be that those twenty years of my growing from childhood into a man, he was not there when I might have needed him to lean on? If this should be a reason, then it is completely whipped out by now. I should think that deep down within me, that brotherly love was always present. How many adjectives to describe him? To his last day he was always such a modest, quiet and unobtrusive person, very compassionate, warm and generous and I am not the only one to portray him such. But I must admit that there was a slight undercurrent of jealousy within my feelings. And, from my point of view how could I not be? Me, the pest, like Dennis the Menace, having to live up to this perfect son, a good and ambitious student, a trusted friend liked by everybody. Not surprisingly, all my many misdeeds were usually compared with his perfect behavior. Far into my adulthood, my parents had him placed on a pedestal. While my wife and I were working hard to struggle out of financial restraints, he was fully established, prosperous and successful. I am certain that my parents did not love me any less, but they reserved more pride for him than for me. It took many more years and sad events for them, to elevate me on the same level with him. Today, all this is more than unimportant. He has always been an ideal and perfect brother and I could never have wished for a better one. Not only did he cover up my mischief's, but lots of times he took the blame upon himself. Being so terribly lazy and annoying, I was everything but a good student. The fact that I barely passed from one grade to another was mainly due to his help with my homework and by tutoring me towards the end of the term. I don’t think that I have ever shown him my gratitude and appreciation.

In 1935, right after we all left Saarbrücken, Fritz emigrated to his present home in South Africa. Then, there were only letters, and when, more than twenty years later we met again in Strasbourg, all those years faded away and my brother was reborn

to me. He had been such an abstract for me, At the railroad-station, where we had embraced so many years ago, time had melted away. Today, I am just thrilled about this warm relationship between our two families. Seeing my dear brother surrounded by his lovely tribe when we visited him at his home (1986) was one of the great events in my life.

The last of the great family reunions in Saarbrücken was my Barmizvah on September 24, 1932. Not that I was very overwhelmed by the religious implication of that solemn day, but I was rather impressed by the piles of books, fountain pens, wallets and other useless items. Seems that in those days people had never heard of hard cash and savings-bonds. I do remember an elegant catered affair in our home with about thirty people, of which I still have a photo, given me by Renée's mother.

This picture represents the end of an era. After this, with hew political developments, everything changed. Those wonderful families were separated and disbanded all over the globe. At the time of this writing only three of us from this last picture are still among the living. After this joyful reunion, a lot of suffering and pain took its beginning. A few months later, the sun went down for more than thirteen years.

I have no special recollection of the fall and winter 1932, but I would think that it was still the same routine of pleasures and problems. At school the situation became serious. As we got into a higher level of Mathematics I stepped into my greatest weakness. Believe me, in the other subjects; I was not so terrific either. Let's be honest, this was all due to my laziness and total lack of ambition. At a meeting with mother, Professor Lehmann, my Math teacher suggested his son to tutor me in this topic. I could not say that my understanding of Algebra and Geometry improved greatly, but at least my grades recovered somewhat. Wasn't it peculiar, that some of the problems Lehmann-junior worked out with me in the afternoon popped up in next day's examination?

I have to stop here for a moment in order to take a deep breath. I am arriving at the end of the first chapter of my life's story. This is a turning point. Today, over half a century later, some of the events as well as the people who personalized them are still vividly etched in my memory. Up to now I have never given much thought to those earlier years, and it makes me aware how wonderful my childhood was. Why did it take me so long to delve into those fabulous memories? It is so good and satisfying to make some kind of inventory of all the happiness, goodness and affection which has crossed my path. I owe so much gratitude!

To open this new era of my life, I have to come back to historical and political facts. Let us not forget that everything which happened to our families, friends and myself for the coming twelve years was conditioned by the developments of that great conflict and upheaval in the world.

There was a lot of talk about politics at home and we began to become concerned about the events in the German Reich. With anxiety we watched the bloody street fights between Hitler's storm-troopers against Communists and Socialists. Of course this was before television, but the newsreels in the cinemas and photos in the newspapers showed the increase of the Nazi's aggressiveness and cruelty. Anti-Semitism, which had been rather dormant, began to show its ugly fangs and became organized. Our nationalistic Saarlanders felt that they had to copy the behavior of

the Nazis in the Reich. But thanks to our International administration, Hitler's followers were greatly restricted by official censure of the press, a ban of public demonstrations and prohibition to wear Nazi uniforms and insignias. By decree all Nazi organizations like the S. A., the S. S. and the Hitlerjugend *(youth groups)* were outlawed. But they managed very well to go underground and did hardly hide their presence.

On the 30th of January 1933, Hitler became the German chancellor and it took him less than six weeks to abolish all, so short lived Democratic processes in Germany. With one act, absolute power was entirely in his hands and those of his henchmen. For over twelve years, first Germany, then the rest of Europe was precipitated into the maelstrom of their murderous reign.

The Nazi butchers organized the greatest and most perfect propaganda machinery ever seen before. Unfortunately for the entire world they were more than successful. Of course the German Reich felt sorry for those poor, poor Saarlanders who had to suffer so much under the "Diktat" of the treaty of Versailles and those 'cruel' French who enforced it. The population did not actually know what they were suffering of and from. They never had it so good! That was the subject of Nazi propaganda to prepare the prospective voters for the plebiscite of 1935. At election time, there would be three options, union with Germany, union with France or Status-quo, which would maintain our existing form of government. Bitter fighting, verbal and in the press and even physical clashes started between the parties of the two opposite directions. A majority of the decent blue collar workers were supporters of the Social-Democratic party. Witnessing from afar the persecution of their brethren in the Third Reich, they started a rather weak campaign, promoting the advantages of a union with France at the time of the plebiscite. Of course, it was easy for the Nazis to label those Liberals as traitors. I have to admit in all honesty, that the Saarlanders are real Germans, and even the many times in the past five hundred years that this spot of land had been dominated by the French, its inhabitants kept their Germanic character. Due to the background of our nationalistic education, it is easy to understand that the slogan: "Heim ins Reich" *(return to the Reich)* took greater meaning every day and was the leitmotif of the election campaign.

Mixed into the fascist propaganda came a good portion of anti-Semitism. It was there all the time, but now the roots grew bigger and stronger. At school it became first noticeable among the students, and then from the teachers. It was still subdued, and we, the Jewish students suffered little, but it became unpleasant. It seemed that more and more of our gentile friends became thoroughly involved in the Nazi movement and found hardly time for the former Jewish mates. While in Saarbrücken, I have never witnessed any anti-Semitic demonstration and only heard of them. We considered the participants as hoodlums, not to be taken seriously. Nobody ever thought that this debased class of people would possibly be capable to impose their will and philosophy on the cultured and well disciplined Germans. How wrong we were! We had to find out the hard way.

On the first of April (1933) Hitler declared a boycott of all Jewish businesses in the Reich. It was not terribly successful, and the German in the streets still showed some common sense. For the last time. Subsequently most Jewish government employees were dismissed. Activities of professional people like doctors, lawyers, judges, scientists were greatly curtailed. World renowned intellectuals, leaders in their respective fields lost their high positions and decided to leave Germany. Bloody

persecution of the Nazi's former adversaries was accelerated. Many were the devoted Socialists, Unionists and Communists, who had to answer a midnight call by the Gestapo (secret police) or the Brown-shirts and brutally taken into what they called "protective custody" many of them never to be seen again.

A word, never heard before popped into the daily vocabulary: "Concentration Camp." Luckily, nobody among our relatives and friends in the Reich had been arrested yet, but through the Socialist grapevine we heard of famous and prominent people who had been incarcerated.

END OF INSOUCIANCE AND BEGINNING OF NAZI SCOURGE

This spring 1933 seemed to be the end of a careless life. While we, in our snug enclave, protected by the League of Nations from the persecutions across the Rhine, I still remember vividly the arrival of the first refugees in Saarbrücken. It was still rather easy for these unfortunate people to escape from the Third Reich to find a first haven in our midst on their tragic exodus. We had not understood entirely what was happening over there, but now the fear for our own destiny began. We could not help but to identify with those poor fugitives. United as never before, the Jewish community organized a mass action of help. Everybody pitched in. Our guestroom and the couch in the living room were forever occupied. They were not only relatives and friends, but also total strangers, Jews and Gentiles alike. The Nazis had, by now passed laws prohibiting all export of currencies, which forced most of their victims to flee with none or very meager funds. It was heartbreaking to see these poor people, who were used to financial ease to be suddenly destitute.

Our father, always a great pessimist, became even more so. He was the first one to give up hope that the situation could still turn around and he foresaw the worst. Then, most people still felt, that in the land of the "Poets and Thinkers," the excesses could not possibly prevail, and Democracy with peace and justice would be back again. Many patriotic-nationalistic Jews still felt that the Fatherland could not do anything wrong. Father considered them fools and morons. Unfortunately his judgment was correct, when he predicted that we would have to leave after the plebiscite in less than two years. Father was always a very liberal citizen of the world and his belief in the German's efficiency never faltered. Even, twelve years later, when they were totally defeated and destroyed, he still predicted their rise again. Once more, he was right!

If nothing could take me out of my insouciance and my egotistical concern with only myself, this new situation certainly did. Was this the end of a wonderful childhood? Observing the events, and with fear increasing daily, the warm and affectionate family circle drew closer together, trying to gain strength from each other. Forgetting the petty differences and fights, but sharing so many worries of the moment and those ahead of us. Up until now, I had considered myself the most important person in the world, with my friends taking second place. All of a sudden, I discovered that there were other people, whom I had taken for granted so far. Something I had never done before, something I had absolutely refused to do, I began to think. I became compassionate and thoughtful, and miracle of miracles, my grades in school improved. It dawned on me, that a good education would be the best luggage to carry into the unknown which expected us.

My brother had spent several summers in France to learn the language. Now, the family-counsel found it urgent for me to get also fluent in French. I was sent to Tours to take courses in Language and Literature at a school for foreign students. I boarded with a very nice family in Saint-Symphorien. The Bonnets had a beautiful house surrounded by a large garden on a hill overlooking the river Loire. Madame was an excellent cook, and I think that I learned more French at the dinner table than at school.

This was one of my unforgettable summers. After classes there were excursions to the famous castles, who dotted this beautiful "Garden of France." But that was not all to impress me. There was also a lady schoolteacher from Austria, who gave me an introduction to the beautiful world of sex. She put me through a most enjoyable apprenticeship in this subject. I had to write a book report on Flaubert's Madame Bovary, and she offered to help me in her room. And she sure did! This activity I used to do mostly by myself, but also with friends in the locker room. Once my father gave me a lecture about masturbation and warned me that it would result in a softening of the brain. My new teacher did not agree with my father's opinion, and I was too glad to let her convince me. She must have been in her late twenties, and I don't remember her as the perfect female, but she had all the necessary equipment, of which, so far I had only been fantasizing. As she had a fiancée back in Vienna, and wanted to keep something for him, she refused to go all the way. Even so, it was a most pleasant experience, and I fell deeply in love with her. Would you believe, she bluntly refused to marry me. I don't think my parents would have approved anyhow.

These few weeks ended too quickly. Going to Tours and also on the way home, cousin Martha Kirchbaum helped me to transfer from the Gare de l'Est to the Gare d'Orsay and vice versa. There was enough time between trains for Martha to take me to her home for a bite. What I saw of Paris was most impressive and it was the largest town I had ever seen. When they fled Germany, Martha and her husband Hans had spent several weeks in our house before moving to Paris. They had a tiny bedroom with kitchenette in a rundown, shabby hotel in Ménilmontant. There I saw for the first time what it meant to be a poor refugee. Martha told me how hard it was for her, coming from a rather luxurious apartment in Germany to be thrown into their present living conditions. Later, I have seen worse, and we had to make do with less amenities.

Back home, with only sixteen months left to January 1935, the mood had darkened, and all optimism had disappeared. Nazi propaganda became more forceful and aggressive. The French seemed to be asleep and totally silent, and the one third minority of the Socialist and Communist parties very barely audible in all that Hitlerian noise. The Catholics, while watching their organizations restrained in the Third Reich were shouting "Heil Hitler with their Paternoster. And why shouldn't they? Their Nazi-loving future Pope Pious 12 just finished signing a Concordat with the godless criminals in the Reich. An international police force, to maintain order in this upheaval in the Saar had been sent by the League of Nations. A contingent of about four thousand men had come from Italy, England, Holland and Sweden. I still remember the splendid uniforms of the Italien Bersaglieris and the spit and polish of the Limeys (God bless'em). They managed a certain calm. Newspapers whose writings became too aggressive and insulting were suspended for varying lengths of time.

During my absence, plans had been made for my future. I was very proud, when my father took me for a hike, for a serious talk with me. At a League of Nations conference in Rome, guidelines were established for the three options of the coming plebiscite. As we did not count with any other result but the return to the Reich, we were only interested in the directive, by which France would accept us, who did not opt for Germany. Also a period of sixteen months was instituted, during which we would be allowed to leave with all our furnishings and liquid assets. I have mentioned further back, that the refugees from the Reich were not allowed these latitudes. A rush to liquidate businesses and real estate had began already and with so many houses on the market it was a great opportunity for the buyers, and prices were tremendously depressed.

Father explained this situation to me. He always considered himself as a not very well educated man, but he had a gift to sort out a situation with the simplest but most explicit words. There was no doubt that we would move to France, and he thought, once there, he would go back to his first love, the cattle-business. His logical idea was, not only to trade, but also to raise cattle. Apparently, he had played with this idea for quiet a while already and he had his plan very well worked out. On this walk, he succeeded in brainwashing me to join him on his return to the earth. He told me about a talk he had with an employee of the French government in Saarbrücken, whose son was going to an agricultural school in Lorraine.

Well father sold me on the idea, and he was thrilled that he was able to convince me so easily. An appointment with Monsieur Espariat, the principal of the school in Château-Salins was arranged, and the next Sunday, which was my fourteenth birthday, Fritz, the favored brother and chauffeur drove us there, a ride of about two hours. Thanks to Tours, my French was pretty fluent, and the interview ended by my being accepted. In France, then, the school-year started early October, to end on July 13, which meant that I had to be back there in little more than two weeks.

This was a hectic fortnight. A new vista opened up for me, and I don't think that I was too happy with the unknown ahead of me. I must have been frightened to leave our large, lovely family, a large circle of friends, and also the school which, without being too fond of, had, after all become a part of my life. Let's not forget, this was the town I was born in and where I knew almost everybody I met in the streets. I thought that the summer in Tours, away from home had given me a certain sophistication. Far from it! But the events threatening us had given me a degree of maturity, to accept the present solution as the best available. All my closest friends were Jewish, and most of them also left the Gymnasium around the same time as I, to go to the French Lycée in Saarbrücken or at Sarreguemines.

The day before school opening, Fritz drove us to Château-Salins for the checking in. After a good French lunch in town came the tearful leave-taking from my so dear folks. Later in the afternoon, I became acquainted with my new schoolmates. Most of them came from small rural communities of the Alsace and Lorraine, many from the German speaking parts of these provinces. While their schooling had been entirely in French, they all spoke the German based dialect at home. That made me almost as fluent in the French language as them, and my accent did not stand out. This was a great advantage to me and I silently thanked my parents for this past summer. But to start off, there was one thing I had in common with my new friends: they were just as homesick and scared as I was. After lights out on this first night, there was a lot of crying in our dormitory. Starting the next morning, we were kept

so busy to leave no time to feel sorry for ourselves. By bedtime, we were too exhausted to start crying again.

It is with great pleasure that I remember two happy and rewarding years at the "Ecole Régionale d'Agriculture." It was a large, four-storied building on a hill, overlooking a very pleasant, gently rolling countryside Below, on the left was the train station, with the small town behind it, stretching to the other side of the valley. On three sides, our school was surrounded by extensive gardens, orchards and fields. The "Ecole" was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture and, at the same time functioned as a testing station for plants, seeds and fertilizers. The manufacturers and producers of these products were under contract to subsidize our school, which then endorsed or rejected, after comparison testing. With that financial help, the school was well endowed and the tuition was rather reasonable. Everything was well, but why, oh why was the food so terrible? And this in France, the country so well known for its excellent cuisine.

On the ground-floor were most classrooms, offices, and the dining hall with the kitchens. The second floor had all the dormitories and bathrooms with teacher's quarters in between. On top were laboratories and more classrooms. Our bedrooms were large wards with about a dozen army cots and metal lockers. Not that I had ever given it any thought, but this kind of austerity was something new for me. But I did not find it hard to get used to it. In the basement were large blacksmith and carpenter's shops. Also storage for fruits and vegetables. They grew mushrooms and endives there, all year around, and they forever found their way on our plates, but they managed to spoil the taste of what, today we consider as delicacies. The fruit cellars were always carefully locked, and I still ask myself how we were able to steel so many apples, pears and even grapes, hung up in paper bags.

At six in the morning, the wakeup bell shook us out of sleep. Under the watchful eyes of a monitor or a teacher we had to make our beds. After the rather abbreviated ablutions we got dressed. Then breakfast, followed by about fifteen minutes of calisthenics in the schoolyard. Then we were free to play or study until the start of classes at eight. At first, I was assigned to the third form, but after a week, I was skipped ahead to the second form. Nobody, least of all myself, would have believed such a promotion could possibly happen to me. What a boost for my ego that was! But I must say, that, for the first time in my life I took something seriously. I went to that school with the intention of earnestly taking advantage of the education offered to me. This school with its agricultural orientation, in this pleasant, peaceful setting gave me the incentive for a profession, which my father had sold me and of which I did not have the slightest idea. Most of my schoolmates who had grown up in this environment, were sent to our school to acquire more sophisticated and modern theories and procedures.

I could not say, that my new teachers were more knowledgeable or better educated, than those whom I had just left behind in Saarbrücken. But what made those French "Profs" so different was their total lack of that superior "Prussian" attitude of the German teachers with their insistence of almost military discipline above everything, for both studies and behavior. Would you believe, I remember my new educators fondly and with great respect. They did not dictate their knowledge, but they tried to convey it to their charges in a gentle and intelligible way. This produced such a relaxed atmosphere which contributed greatly to my successes. Don't think there was no discipline, but our teachers had such a subtle and pleasant

way to inspire respect. Nevertheless, there was plenty of mischief going on.

We had a very diversified curriculum, and here are some of the many subjects I took: Geometry and Algebra, French History and Literature, Botany Zoology, Physics and Chemistry, and of course purely Agricultural subjects. I did not find it hard to absorb all that I was taught and I found so very interesting. But I must also admit here, that the discipline, acquired at the Gymnasium came me to good stead. While criticizing the German professors, I felt that they did a pretty good job on me. In this region, which only fourteen years ago had been taken back from Germany, French patriotism was subtly included by all the teachers. It was not an over-whelming nationalism, just a gentle drawing of attention to things and ideas, prominently French. Of course, "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" were always present. A great affection and love for France began to take roots within me, and they have grown to this day. We have seen the hospitable open arms, with which France has accepted the poor refugees from Hitler. Later, when the real flood began, it became more difficult to enter into this lovely country.

Many were the weekends and holidays in the coming fourteen months, when I went back to Saarbrücken. Family and friends always gave me a wonderful reception, and I was thrilled to be home again. Everybody spoiled me and with pretty good report cards, my parents showed me their pride. And there was mother's cooking, with only my favorite foods. I would even dig into those foods, which, previously I did not like at all. After the food in school, I was not spoiled at all anymore. But the mood at home was somber. Our father, always full of jokes was very depressed, and until the end of the war he felt somewhat responsible for what happened to us. The news from our relatives in the Reich was not promising at all. Unfortunately they were only getting worse. But so far, nothing had changed yet at home. It was still that warm and hospitable place, with many people at table and every spare bed and couch taken. Most of these poor refugees were well educated and, if rarely cheerful, conversation was always very interesting.

During those vacations, I never failed to visit with my closest friends. Charly Abraham, Charly" (now Baudoin) and Walter Gernsheimer who, later was killed by the Nazis) commuted daily to the Lycée of Sarreguemines in France. We discussed our schools, and we agreed that we found the French school-system preferable to the one we had gone through together. I still went to meetings of the Jewish Boy Scouts, and did some dating with some very mild petting, but nothing like Tours. But I fell each time hopelessly in love and, back in school I wrote passionate love letters and some of the girls even replied.

Coming home for my first Christmas vacation, my report card had arrived by mail before me. It left everybody speechless. They thought it was a mistake. How could this be mine, with nothing but good marks? My parents had not been used to such results from me. From my brother, this was not unusual. During those two years in Château-Salins, I always scored second in my class. I do think this system is too competitive, discouraging the lower ratings. For me it was the best thing which could have happened, motivating me to an even greater effort. I am grateful to my teachers there, because they have introduced me to hard work and made me like it. I don't think that from then on until my retirement I have ever given up this principle. I can't say that the results were always outstanding, far from it, but I can honestly state that the greater effort has never failed to give me a certain

satisfaction.

Before opening up a new chapter in my life, I have to state again my gratefulness to my parents, my brother and all those dear relatives and friends for all they gave me to fill those younger years. I can still feel that symbolic cocoon, with which they have enveloped me. They all have contributed to a wonderful childhood, never to be forgotten, and I will take that gratefulness to my grave.

My last vacation in Saarbrücken, Christmas (1934) was a sad fortnight. Nobody had any hopes that the coming plebiscite could possibly turn against reunification with Germany. The Liberal left-wing parties were only a small minority. The French did not make any propaganda effort against a return of the Saar. Recently, I uncovered a very upsetting chapter in a book "World in Trance" by L. Schwarzschild, (1942), where he states, that both France and England agreed that a German victory of the plebiscite would be desirable. The former French foreign-minister Louis Barthou, who was assassinated in October 1934, had established a secret fund of several millions of Francs to be used to check Hitler. His successor, Pierre Laval, who was shot ten years later for collaborating with the Nazis and treason, refused to do anything at all against the Germans. That secret fund has never been accounted for, and it was certainly not spend in the Saarland. The same article also stated that the British police, assigned to supervise the voting showed marked sympathies for the Nazis.

The mood at home was more than gloomy. Our having to leave was an accepted fact. Liquidation of a lifetime had been almost completed. The business, which grandmother had brought to a solid level was sold and so were our homes. Arrangements with the movers had been made. It was heartbreaking. Right after New Years Day, I went back to school. The next time I had a short glimpse of my hometown, was ten years later, when our convoy of the victorious United States Army whizzed through a seriously destroyed Saarbrücken on our way home to "God's country."

January thirteen 1935, was the day of the plebiscite. The next morning, the result was announced all over the world. To nobody's surprise, a majority in the high ninety percent opted to return to Germany. After hearing it on the radio, one of my teachers gave me the news: "Of course you have nothing to worry about, you are with us."

Up to a year ago, France had been most hospitable for the refugees from Germany. But now, yielding to the pressure of right-wing and anti-Semitic elements, the previously so generous government closed the border to the persecuted. Visas were required from now on, and they were issued on a selective base. Due to the global economic recession, the unemployment rate had soared, and the unfortunate refugees found it almost impossible to secure working papers. But the French government did not renege on its promise to hold open the doors for the Sarrois. However at the beginning of our exodus, they kept the three provinces of Alsace-Lorraine off limits. Less than a year later they lifted these restrictions. Within the coming ten years, you will find me criticizing France at one time or another, but let me set the record straight and state that at the start of the Jewish persecution by Hitler and his henchmen, France was by far the most generous and hospitable among the larger nations. How strictly did our great United States observe their restrictive immigration laws! I'll be reproaching to the end of my days my country

and the immortal F. D. Roosevelt: "You could have saved millions."

It took our families less than two weeks after the plebiscite to leave their cozy homes. Storage for all the house furnishings had been prepared previously in Forbach, the first county seat in France, just a few miles from Saarbrücken. Our grandparents were brought to the hospital there. Grandfather had been suffering for quiet a while yet. At first one leg was amputated. I don't remember what was wrong, but mentally he was relatively well and his great wish was to move to Luxembourg, but unfortunately it was not meant to be. My uncle Hugo, mother's youngest brother was living across the street from the hospital. A year ago they had moved there and had opened a small factory for leather goods. He was a very dashing and handsome fellow, forever broke and in hock to the entire family. With his charm and good looks his greatest success was with the ladies. Aunt Edith was a very quiet and subdued person who did all the hard work in house and factory. They had a lovely boy, Cousin Walter, who must have been about four years old.

Fritz found the closest town to establish official residence half way between Forbach and Paris at Chalons-sur-Marne. While mother went back to take care of the grandparents after getting her residence permits, father, Fritz together with uncle Rudy, aunt Lucy and cousin Hans took rooms at the Hotel d'Angleterre. I went there for my Easter vacations and it was quiet pleasant for me. A few more old friends had joined my parents there, and I remember the communal evening meals mainly soft boiled eggs and cold ham. Lunch was a daily occasion in the elegant dining room of the hotel. What a tasty change for me from the terrible food at school. I had very pleasant vacations there but everybody was very nervous and at loose ends with an uncertain future ahead. Father and I went to inspect several farms with a realtor, but they did not fit into father's plans, because this was not cattle raising land, and the famous vineyards of the Champagne were not more than a few miles away.

I'll have to turn back a few months in time. All this moving from Saarbrücken while I was in school, and snugly tucked away here in Château-Salins, I had not realized the great changes in our lives. The fact that I would never return to the home where I grew up had not as yet registered. On a cold, snowy winter's day, my parents came to visit me. When I heard the train whistle I went to the window, and there, an old, old couple was walking, oh so slowly up the snow covered hill. Were these my dear beloved parents. Arm in arm, bent over. Even my father, always straight as a ramrod, wearing a beret instead of the usual elegant hat. Mother with a scarf covering her head and part of her pretty face. What a change. Both broken by fate.

It was a tearful reunion, and I shall never forget it. They were so terribly depressed and homesick, and I tried to cheer them up with, help from one of my teachers, who praised my progress in school with some exaggeration. I was quiet close to tears, but managed to keep a stiff upper lip, and I think this made them feel a little better. We went to lunch with a friend of mine to an excellent small restaurant. When time for their train came, I think they and I were glad that this upsetting visit was over. They were not really old; father fifty-seven, and mother forty-two, but these past weeks had taken their toll on them. But after a while they managed to recuperate from the first shock, and prepared, to face the new situation. They were completely uprooted but with a heavy heart they made the best of their new lives in a strange country. There, of course was also a language problem. While mother's French was pretty good, father only learned to understand, but hardly to speak.

In May 1935, Fritz called me at school to come immediately to Forbach for grandfather's funeral. Lately, as mother wrote, he was in great pain, and his passing away was almost considered a relief. For me this was the first funeral I had ever attended and it affected me deeply. I could not say that I was as close to this good and decent man as I was with grand' mother. He was a link within that chain, formed by our families and it was hard to accept, that this chain started to be broken up. I was overwhelmed by a great sense of homesickness and loss, and for many years I found it hard to shed these feelings. The sense of security was gone. I believe this complex remained until the birth of our Claude.

This sad occasion was the last time that most of our dearest relatives and friends were together. There was mother's cousin Adolfo who came for the funeral from Barcelona in Spain. Many years ago he was partly raised by the grandparents and he graduated from the Gymnasium in Saarbrücken. He considered them as his second set of parents and he always remained very attached to them and their children. He had been living for the past twenty-five years in Barcelona, where he had built up a very prosperous textile business. His wife was a very beautiful Spanish lady and as they remained childless, he was looking for a younger associate, and he offered that position to our Fritz. As my brother was at loose ends and father was willing to finance this partnership, he was too glad to accept this generous offer. But uncle Rudy managed to talk Cousin Adolfo to take him as a partner. I know for a fact, that Fritz never had a reason to feel sorry about that switch, but Adolfo did. So, before the end of that spring, Lucy, Rudy and Hans moved lock, stock and barrels to Barcelona. And the great breakup of this intimate family had begun.

With the consent and approval of everyone concerned, it was decided that grandmother was going to live together with us. On account of the difficulties with the French language, father went to Strasbourg, trying to get a residence permit there. With the help of an acquaintance, who had an empty house in the suburb of Wolfisheim, he made an application to be allowed to move there. As no fast action was to be foreseen, they went to Mondorf-les-Bains, a small spa in Luxembourg, to expect their permit for Strasbourg there. (Mondorf became very famous ten years later, when the top Nazi war criminals, like Göring, Streicher, Jodi etc. were incarcerated there in the largest hotel before their trial and execution in Nürnberg).

Apparently the stay there must have been rather inexpensive, because price tags were very important to our father. To his last day, he always was a very frugal man and thriftiness was of prime importance. For himself he was downright stingy, but I can't complain, and he was always available for all my needs. He just hated to spend money on himself, and in a very subtle way, he managed to pass this negative philosophy unto yours truly. But then, I could very well understand. In his present situation, this so very good man who had made a decent living since his teens was now forced to live on his savings. My brother and I were no help yet, and our dad did not stop worrying how to take care of his family. While my parents stayed in a modest, comfortable guest-house, grandmother and her companion were in a large Jewish hotel. There were several former Sarrois staying also in Mondorf, and at least they did not lack company. I remember a few days of vacations, when Fritz and I had room in grandmother's hotel. With windows opening over a large terrace, Fritz put his overcoat over his pajamas and climbed out of the window to pay a visit to the daughter of the owner on the other side of the terrace. Early in the morning, he returned with his mission accomplished. Would you believe, not once

did he invite me to take his place. Some brother! But I have forgiven him.

When we left Saarbrücken, the Sarrois were allowed to apply for French citizenship, while the government waived the five year waiting period. Some of our relatives managed to get in touch with some higher-ups in the Justice Department, who consented to accept a not very small gratification, and secured the naturalization documents. That money, our dad refused to spend. Then, it would have helped a lot. Ultimately, it did not make any difference. After the defeat of France, only five years later quiet a few people I knew were stripped of their French citizenship by the anti-Semitic Pétain government.

In July 1935, I graduated with honors from my school. As number two of my class I received a diploma, and several books as prices. The diploma was considered the equivalent of the first part of the Baccalaureate, and the educational level could be set above the American high school diploma. Of course my parents were very proud of this achievement, and so was I, because I had, honestly put a lot of effort into this. There was one more year available in preparation for the admission exams to an agricultural college. Many candidates competed to enter these institutions; hence the requirements were very hard. If admitted there, the curriculum lasted three years, to be rewarded with a degree of Ingenieur Agricole. While for French students, the fees were very reasonable with many scholarships available, the costs for foreigners were rather steep. For thrifty father, money was the stumbling bloc, and he was not ready to make plans for the next four years. I had no doubts that, after one more year of preparations at Château-Salins, I would have been able to pass the required exams. I also felt secure in my school, which by now I obviously considered as my only home. For many years I resented this setback, but I never showed it to my parents. They had enough worries and I certainly did not wish to add mine to theirs. At the end, this most probably did not make any difference either. The remembrance of this disappointment at least taught me, more than thirty years later to let our son make his own decisions about the future professional path in his life.

I was transferred to another school near Metz. This was an important government run agricultural testing station with classes during the winter months only, while from April to November there was an internship program, where students from the higher colleges earned additional credits and practical experiences. We had to work hard, at least ten hours, six days a week to earn our room and board. On this large farm we were kept busy in the fields, the stables, the barns and in the chicken coops. Then, the cows were still milked by hand, and twice a week was on stable duty. There were a few milkmaids, who, when the milking was done were very demanding in the hayloft. What an enjoyable bonus! They could never get enough, and neither did I. This was my first encounter with the real thing, and it was no comparison with my experiences at Tours. How none of the girls got pregnant, and nobody caught any V. D. remains a puzzle.

During that summer and fall I went several times to visit my parents to Mondorf on a mini-vacation. But I remember them as rather depressing. Everybody was waiting for a solution for where to settle and what to do. Poor Fritz tried desperately to find some employment, but everything turned out to be negative. Through some recommendation, he was offered a managing position in a five-and-ten store in the centre of France. His application for a working-card was refused by the local authorities, and he came back to Mondorf completely frustrated. But at least he had

the girl across the terrace to console him.

Finally, in the late fail of 1935, father obtained the residence-permit for the Alsace. At Wolfisheim, a small village about five miles from the center of Strasbourg, an apartment was waiting for them. The furniture was shipped there from Forbach and when the van arrived, we realized that those were the contents of two large households, ours and the grandparent's. The movers piled in everything as best they could, and there was hardly a place left to turn around. The ladies went to a small hotel across the street, while father, Fritz and myself began to make some order of this pile of boxes and furniture. A day later we had made enough room in the kitchen for mother to produce her first home cooked meal in almost a year. In all this clutter it was not only delicious, it almost symbolic, and we were hoping that our real resettlement had begun. To dispose of all our surplus furniture, we advertised in the local gazette. It did not take long to dispose of the excess furniture, because this was not a sale, but rather a great giveaway.

After this busy week, I was glad to have helped my parents to get settled in their home. But I also did not mind at all to get back to school. I was rather upset about father's complaining about all the money he had to spend, without having any earnings. Until the end of his days, he was the most frugal person I have ever known. Actually I have no right or reason at all to complain, because as long as I was financially dependent of him, he gave me most generously everything I ever needed. I of course did not like to ask him and kept my demands to a strict minimum. I have never talked about this subject with my brother, but I am certain that his feelings were the same as mine. But instead of criticizing this good decent man, let's see the reasons the way I see them. As I have mentioned before, at the age of thirteen, our father started to help his older brothers to lift their cattle business out of the poverty in which grandfather David had left them. Having known need, and having always very well taken care of us, and now, being without earning possibilities, I can very well understand his frustrations. We were not poor, but he was overwhelmed by his responsibilities towards wife and children. Right now there was only one word for him: "Saving." Oh how I hated it, but my esteem for him could never falter. He has instilled that frugality-complex into me and there were many times, that I silently thanked him for this legacy. But I must admit that it has handicapped me, and not only in my thinking, but also in many decisions. It has reduced a lot of pleasures I could have enjoyed and passed on to my surrounding. Many times have I burdened my dear ones with this vice. It was not too long ago that I was able to shed the actual pain of spending money, which was not absolutely necessary for daily living.

Fritz had been trying desperately to find some satisfactory occupation, but was not able to get a working permit. With his friend, and future partner, they decided to emigrate to South-Africa, one of the few countries which still welcomed the refugees from Hitler; this was a most impulsive decision, and he never had to regret it. For Fritz, the great worrier, it was surprising that he was able to make this resolution at a moments notice. He left us in February 1936 with fear, and leaving heavy hearts behind him. It took me more than twenty years to see him again. But in the terrible years we had to live through in Europe, it was always a consolation that at least one of us was out of harm's way.

Right after Fritz had left; I started to work as a "stagiaire" at the estate of Baron de Turckheim. I was hired as an agricultural intern, if one likes to call it that; but

actually, I was just a glorified farmhand without pay and working for my room and board. Truttenhausen was a beautiful property in the foothills of the Vosges Mountains about fifteen miles south of Strasbourg. A thirteenth century belfry was flanked by two stately manor houses in the midst of flowerbeds and well manicured lawns. The farm buildings, stables and barns were at the edge of the forest. I had a very attractive attic room in one of the mansions, and on a clear day, I could see the spires of Strasbourg's cathedral with the Black forest in the background.

I did spend about nine months there and they were thoroughly enjoyable. It was hard work, but pleasant and satisfying. I got along very well with everybody and I was well liked, being a good and willing worker. There were several maids to take care of the Baron's family and household, and they helped me to fill the loneliness of my evenings. This obviously was a most welcome and unexpected fringe benefit.

About every other week I went to see my parents, always with a big basket of fruits, vegetables, butter and home baked bread, supplied by the Baron's wife. Several times, I took time off to appraise some farms with father, mainly in the north of France. It was our luck, that we did not find anything acceptable, because less than four years later this region was invaded and occupied by the Nazis, and we would have lost, everything.

This idea of becoming farmers was finally shelved, and father went back to his first love, the cattle business. Cousin Adolph Friedhoff, who had obtained French citizenship, set up a corporation under his name, which allowed father to work. This was a wonderful solution and father was quiet content and improved his outlook at life tremendously. Lately he became very much influenced and dependent of Adolph's counsel and opinions which he gave freely and without any ulterior motives whatsoever. Being excellent at times, they did not always come to a satisfactory conclusion.

At that time, Adolphe suggested that I too should abandon agriculture as my future career. He was not alone to feel that a trade or craft would be more marketable for me. They were influenced by a joke, which went around in Israel at that time. A well to do man went to a marriage broker for his daughters. The broker had a long list of doctors, lawyers and many other academicians. Whereupon the anxious father asked if he did not have any plumbers, carpenters or bricklayers. An acquaintance gave a recommendation to Robert Geng a master-electrician, who agreed to accept me in his shop as an apprentice. A relative of his who worked in the police department was able to secure a work permit, and here I was ready to switch into something different and unknown. I can't say that I was too happy about this change but I took it rather philosophically, and after not too long a time, I began to like what I was learning and doing. In retrospect, and reconsidering the uneasy times we were living in, I can honestly admit that this switch was a pretty good idea. Geng's was a small machine shop, specializing in repairing, rewinding and rebuilding electric motors, transformers and generators. My boss was an excellent and tough teacher, who made the task so much more interesting by dealing out responsibilities from the first moment on. In the first year, I earned only a small pocket-money for a forty-five hours' week. For my personal needs, this was perfectly sufficient, after all, I had at home, the best room and board one could wish for. The following two years, I got periodic raises, and as father refused my offer to contribute to the household, I was able to make some savings. This was my first self-earned money, and it was a great relief not to depend on my parents, for my

modest little luxuries. To take mother to a movie with coffee and cake afterwards was a proud and wonderful feeling for both of us.

Shortly after I started work at Geng's, father and I were summoned to the Gendarmerie (police) at Wolfisheim. The Brigadier (corporal), the same who had bought grandmother's dining room for his daughter) informed us that we were ordered to leave Alsace for the center of France, away from the border region. Officially no reasons were given, but our nice Brigadier volunteered. At less than a half mile from our house, there was a bunker of the Maginot-line, and an officer on his way there, a few times a day, heard the ladies, sitting on the terrace, speaking in "Hoch-Deutsch." This in contrast to "Alsatien," a German dialect spoken in that area. After investigating, he found it dangerous for national defense, to have German (?) nationals so close to a military installation. They could be spies. (If only those idiots would have looked out for the real spies.) The Brigadier however was helpful to secure a residence permit for the city of Strasbourg, and it was well worth the small carpet he got for his troubles. It was easy to find a nice apartment in the Rue de Verdun. Quiet a few of our friends from Saarbrücken were living just a few steps away. Among them was one of my best friends Walter Gernsheimer, who was a classmate since the first grade. All in all, this was a happy move, because Wolfisheim was off the beaten track and for my blind grandmother it was especially rewarding, because now, most of our old friends came very often to visit her, especially to get her advice for their many problems.

This silly spy story made me aware that here, in this France which I loved so much, we were not more than tolerated foreigners, without any rights. But let me confirm that beside the many problems of a bureaucratic nature, we were left alone and not troubled at all. From our sidelines, we observed the great ideological struggle between the parties of the Left and the Right. Especially, the recently elected Prime Minister Leon Blum, a Jewish Socialist had an extremely hard stand against the Rightwing capitalists. He had just introduced the most revolutionary changes for Labor by introducing the 40 hours work week and paid vacations for all workers. The extreme factions of the Right demonstrated consistently against Jews and foreigners. We all tried as hard as possible to disappear within the crowd, and to hide the fact that we were refugees and foreigners. My language skills in French as well as the Alsatian were almost perfect, but I am still ashamed that I hated to talk to my dear parents in public, because their accent gave them away immediately. Later, here in the U.S.A., I noticed the same feelings among the children of friends and relatives. Oh yes, no way to deny it, there was quiet a bit of anti-Semitism, especially here among the rather Germanic Alsatiens. The feeling of being a foreigner and a Jew kept on gnawing within me. Actually that dormant xenophobia was not sanctioned as it was across the Rhine, and nobody ever hurt us, but the insults, printed in the anti-democratic press and the demonstrations were present. With the exception of a short time while in the French army, I was never able to shed this complex of being a not very desired foreigner, until eight years later, I became a citizen of the U.S.A.

Up to the present day, it has become some kind of obsession for me to read again and again about the events of the years from 1935 to 1945, which I call, to imitate Victor Hugo, the "Terrible Years." But, before cataloguing all the happenings, let me say now and here, that there were times who brought friendship, affection, fulfillment and about all, a great love. To get back to the events and politics which affected our lives so tremendously, I never stop being amazed about the physical

and moral weakness of both France and England in the face of the upheaval in Europe, created by the Fascists. While, after Churchill's taking over the English government, their policies and outlook changed drastically, Pétain's France sunk deeper into the cesspool of Axis-Europe.

But let me interrupt, with some very rewarding friendships. I met an old friend from Saarbrücken, Heinz Jacob, who was in a class above mine in the Gymnasium. He had a good job as an upholsterer in a furniture house. We got together, and he brought along Jean Hirschen, whom he had recently met in a restaurant where they had lunch daily. A great friendship started and we spent all our free time together, and this association was for me most rewarding. Heinz, still is, a very gifted musician, which he later proved by ending up as the dean of music at the University of Missouri and changed his name to Dr. Henry Orland. Jean was a clerk in the largest bookstore. He was an outstanding salesman, and after the war he became the head of the greatest publishing house of Switzerland. He used to supply us with the latest and best books, which we then discussed at great length. Of the three of us he was the most enterprising, and he managed to get free tickets for concerts, theaters, sports events, and dances. Several times we had paid jobs as walk-ons and I never forget my carrying a spear in Aida. In order to make this look like a tremendous army, everytime one reached the end of the stage, the helmet was changed, and one had to race to the other end. Strasbourg was still as it was then a culturally very active town with lots of entertainment going on.

We were politically quiet sophisticated and went to many meetings, mainly of the Left, but also to those of the opposition. I still remember the one, where the Colonel La Rocque, an admirer of the criminal pair, Hitler and Mussolini, sprinkled with many nasty anti-Semitic remarks. It ended with shouts: "A bas les Youpins" *(down with the Jews)*. This of course cured us of our curiosity for this fascist direction. We were definitely leaning towards the Communists and Socialists who, we felt could do lots more for us, the underdogs. We accepted their description of the Soviet Union as the Eden of the working classes. Didn't they know, or did they purposely forget that people were starving on the collective farms and that protests ended them in the Gulags (concentration camps) of Siberia or facing a firing squad. It took many decades before the world heard about Stalin's terror regime.

Late in 1936, Cousin Charlie came to join father in his cattle business. We had rented a stable behind a pub, near the train station, just two blocs from my place of work. Many were the times, that father, a helper and I went to the freight terminal to unload a boxcar of cows. There were usually eight of them, which we then walked through the still dark streets to the stables and frequently, after work, I had to go back to milk the cows, by hand of course. We gave most of the milk away in the neighborhood, but we also took a lot of it home which, to my horror, mother converted into all kind of dairy dishes. Can't say, that this business was a rousing success, certainly not in proportion to the hard work we all put into it. But at least it took father out of his depressions, and that alone was worth it. A year later, Charlie married Thea, and moved to ChâteauSalins, where he joined his in law's business. Of course, the volume went down, but Charlie, helpful as ever, continued to do the purchasing in his region, which worked out perfectly well.

But this rather pleasant situation did not last for long, and we were once more overtaken by the political events of the European caldron. Previously, in the spring of 1936, flaunting the treaty of Versailles (and others too), Hitler had his army cross

the Rhine, into the zone, which was supposed to remain demilitarized. And two years later, the German criminals again violated treaty after treaty by annexing Austria. But all those violations were no problem for them. Hardly were any protests from the democratic, free world to be heard. For France and England, father had only one word: "Cowards." Strong language, but the truth of it was amply documented not much later. The distance from our house to the German's fortifications was less than three miles in a straight line, and we did not feel safe at all, when that now, inevitable conflict would begin. We began to consider leaving Europe. Of course our first choice was to join Fritz in South-Africa. But that country, so hospitable when he immigrated there, had by now closed its doors. And it was the same in the U.S.A., because did not have any relatives there at this time. But amidst the darkest forebodings we felt quiet comfortable in Strasbourg and trusted our safety to the French army, which paraded so splendidly whenever there was a patriotic occasion. Remember how well they were prepared to keep all "Enemy Spies" away in Wolfisheim !

As the developments proved, we were living on borrowed time. At home we drew closer together and tried to show each other more kindness and understanding. We used to sit around the table father, mother, grandmother, my two friends and I, discussing politics and the daily changing events. Once, leaving a Communist rally, we decided to enlist into the International Brigade to help in the Spanish civil war. Actually we did not know too much what was going on, but we thought we just had to help the "Rojos" *(the Left-wing Loyalists)* against their Fascist adversaries. The French government was leaning towards the "Rojos," but the most they did was to agree with the so called Democratic nations to "Non Intervention" which was nothing more than rhetoric. The fascist Germans and Italians were ardent and active supporters of the insurgent Franco. Hitler used this war to test his planes and tanks, and just a few years later took advantage of the newly acquired strategies and logistics. The Soviet Union and the International Brigade, of course supported the Rojos, but were not able to stop the tide of the Dictators. In contrast to the Nazis, the Russians did not learn a thing there. While the rest of the world did not seem to be very interested in that conflict, we followed the news of this fratricidal war very closely. After all, we had our own relatives there. Almost weekly we had mail from them. They had bombings, political fears and food rationing. With our frequent and regular food parcels we helped them as much as we could. After the totalitarian regime of Franco was extended over all of Spain, they were living in fear, until the successes of our Allies in Africa, Italy and Stalingrad, the "Caudillo" turned away from his Nazi mentors. Because father talked us out of joining the International Brigade, my two friends and I always had a certain guilt feeling for not helping the only forces who were fighting the Fascist scourge.

A great joy for us were the almost weekly letters from brother Fritz. They were always cheerful and interesting. He had such a pleasant style to describe his new life and surrounding. While working very hard he was on his way to success. At least one of us was finding fulfillment away from this wretched continent.

Here I have to insert a little story, which sounds unbelievable, the first in several more to come. One day, I received a letter from Fritz at my place of work, telling me that he has fallen hopelessly in love, and intended to marry that girl. He wanted my opinion and was afraid of what our parents would say, especially since she was older than him. Can you imagine how proud I was of this confidence? Well, he came to the right person, an expert of the subject of "Falling in love." This had happened to me almost every weekend on some park bench (luckily all my offers of marriage were

always rejected). Because Fritz asked me to keep that matter under my hat, the first thing I did was to read that letter to grandmother. Predictably, she was of the opinion, that nobody could give Fritz better advice than Fritz himself. She then dictated a letter, in that sense, rather wishy-washy, with my best wishes to whatever his decision would be.

But now, let me tell you the conclusion of this crazy story. Mother and her friend, Mrs. Lieser, used to consult a card-reader, and most of the time she came home with some alarming predictions. But this time, that gipsy-lady told her of a letter, somewhere in our apartment which would be of the highest importance for her to find. Of course, sloppy me left Fritz's letter in the drawer of my dresser. This piece of furniture acted like a magnet and, Bingo, all hell broke loose. By the time I came home, a letter was already on its way to Fritz How could he even dare to think of marriage at the early age of twenty-four? And, horror of horror, with such an old woman. Of course I was in the doghouse and so was my grandmother. The nerve of her to think that Fritz could possibly know how to fashion his life. Well, that was my parent's philosophy, to direct their children. By the time I came to this point, their outlook had turned to a more liberal and understanding point. However, Fritz broke up with this "Old Lady" for other reasons, and about a year later he married Eva and by then, everybody was pleased and happy.

Before going any further I have to describe my beloved grandmother. Even today, almost a lifetime later, I remember her with great pleasure and affection as a role-model. When she came to live with us after grandfather's death, a beautiful relationship began between the two of us. She was already blind for several years and I spent many hours reading to her, writing letters for her and taking her for walks in the park. She had such a lovely gift to tell the story of her younger years and the many trips she took with grandfather after their retirement. It was easy for me to be a good listener, which she, in turn enjoyed highly.

What a beautiful person she was. This white-haired, smooth-skinned grandmother had a way of following one's voice and let her deep, meaningful blind eyes look into one's soul. Warmth and goodness radiated from her. She was good to and for everybody she came in contact with. This venerable lady had nothing but kindness in her heart, and dozens of pages would not be sufficient to describe all the good deeds she had done in her life. She had this rare gift of sharing joys and sorrows and she radiated her so humane wisdom and common sense.

Grandmother had no favorites. I am talking of the last three years of her life, when most of her children and grandchildren were scattered in far away lands. I was in my late teens, and the only one of the younger generation around, and I am glad to say that, I willingly arid proudly accepted the affection she heaped on me.

She talked a lot about grandfather, and it was a new experience for me to learn about her deep love for her husband and how much she missed him. Until then, it never occurred to me that parents, relatives and generally speaking of married grownups, could be "in love." While I considered myself to be an expert about that subject, I didn't really know a lot about it. What little knowledge I had gathered so far came from the movies, cheap fiction and last but not least the few torrid flings, mainly on nightly park benches. Since, I have read many, many books discussing this universal subject from every angle. Some of them were even well and thoughtfully written, but nobody has given such a simple and meaningful narrative

as grandmother did. She tried to convey to me the existence of the bonds between husband and wife, growing in intensity while sharing the problems and joys of life together. Only four years later, when my real love affair began, did I understand this wonderful lady's feelings.

One nice spring morning, grandmother did not wake up. She left us as quietly as she had lived. It was a great loss for all of us. During those few years when I needed her so much, she was there to guide me. Then, she was my best friend. I hope that I was able to make her aware of how important she was for me and how much I loved her.

PREPARATIONS TO DISASTER

On September 30, 1938, in Munich, France and England, who had helped to create the Republic of Czechoslovakia in 1919, sold this unfortunate country to the Nazi-monsters. They had pledged help and assistance but reneged on their treaties and promises. The man with the umbrella, Neville Chamberlain proclaimed with joy his famous "Peace in our times." Only twenty years ago, the Allies had shed oceans of blood and lives to save the world, just for peace? And now they let themselves be scared by a rabble-rouser. Just a week before that infamous meeting, France had started to mobilize its armed forces. It was the general belief that war was inevitable, and nobody thought this cowardly yielding in Munich would be possible. Only my father lacked faith in the steadfastness of the two Allies. How right he was. To his and our sorrow.

It was a known fact, that the entire civilian population of Strasbourg, and all along the border would be evacuated. After all, the center of town was not more than three miles from the enemy's guns. We decided not to wait for the last moment and packed two large trunks with warm clothing, bedding and cooking utensils. I remember taking them to the station on a handcart, to ship them to the Salomon's farm in Normandy, where they had promised to hold them. Then the four of us took the train to Paris, taking along as much luggage as we could carry. We stayed at a small hotel near Irma's, and spent most of our time at her house, where we also took our meals. On the 30th of September 1938, a proud French prime-minister came back from Munich, and all of France cheered, that peace was saved. As long that there would be no war, let those poor Czechs fend for themselves. And this, in that France, which had introduced our American ideals of liberty and self determination in Europe. Well, the bitter harvest began eleven months later.

Of course, we returned immediately to our home, and some day later the Salomon's sent back our trunks. While France was jubilating, the good people of Strasbourg were rather subdued. So very close to the Nazi-Reich, their faith in peace had been shaken. The clock seemed to move faster ahead, and the imaginary writing on the wall seemed to grow and grow in size.

November 9th the savages across the Rhine showed again their hatred and cruelty. Almost all the synagogues went up in flames. Many Jews were assassinated and thousands ended up in the notorious concentration camps. The whole world stood by, voicing a few feeble protests, but basically, they did not seem to care more about the fate of the Jews, than for the valiant Czechs, and before them for the Abyssinians and the Spanish Loyalists. In recent researches, I have perceived, that some of the more sophisticated world leaders, started to realize what kind of

murderous enemy they might have to fight in a not very far future. Our FDR called home his ambassador, and never replaced him afterwards.

Like the quiet before a thunderstorm, an uneasy stillness charged the air with a certain electricity. The underground German propaganda gnawed its way into rightwing organizations and their publications, who proclaimed openly: "Were it not for the Jews, the Socialists and the Communists, we could find common ground with the Germans, and clean up our country!" "Dehors les joupins et les métèques !" *(Jews and foreigners out!)*

I was not able to obliterate, like everybody else, the fear and uncertainty from my mind. My life had not changed much, and I still had my share of good times. Towards the end of spring, our friend Heinz left us. The lucky guy had obtained a visa for the U.S.A., to settle in Chicago. He did write frequently and made us envious with his first impressions of his new country. There, in that great nation, his greatest satisfaction was the fact, that nobody cared about his origins, and whether he was a foreigner, something we tried to hide so very much.

We made the most of this hot and beautiful summer, with the premonition, that it might be the last one for a long time. We went swimming a lot in Rhine, while we could hear the noise of the heavy construction machinery on the opposite side, hidden behind boards and screens. The Nazis were putting the last touches to their fortifications. Day and night, they worked feverishly on their preparations for war, and the French soldiers were frolicking with their girls while on relieve from their guard duties in blockhouses of the impregnable (?) Maginot line.

This last month of August, news on radio and in the press precipitated new developments every day, yes almost hourly. And then, on August 23rd, the infamous Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact was signed, shattering the little hope for peace, which was still left. Since then, I have read so many different opinions from a world of historians about this treaty, and I can almost understand the Soviet's position. After the mistrust of the Franco-British alliance, and the stupid stand of the Polish government towards the Russians, this was at that late hour all that was left to Stalin, a shrewd dictator. How dearly his poor people had to pay for his arrogance. That's all I needed to cure me from my left-wing ideas. Two years later, out of necessity I joined in the prayers for their successes, and cheering at the victory at Stalingrad. But up to the event of Gorbichov, I have never trusted them.

On that same day, the French started in earnest to call their reservists into services. Jean and I went to the recruiting office to volunteer our service against the Nazis. But things were so terribly disorganized, and we were sent from one office to another. There were many foreigners like us, and this flood of volunteers was not foreseen by the French authorities. In their constant distrust of aliens, they had no idea how loyal we all were towards "la belle France." On our way home, we passed the Officer's club, when my former boss, Baron de Turckheim came out in his captain's uniform. As reservist, he was called the day before. (I heard much later, that he was shot while trying to surrender his outfit of Engineers the day before France's surrender.) We told him about our predicament and he asked us to wait while he returned inside. Shortly afterwards, he came out with a pleasant (very) elderly colonel. He had him briefed about our special situation, and the colonel found our attitude very generous and commendable. Of course, had we been French citizens, we would by now, most certainly be in the military. But as former Germans,

we fell now into the category of enemy-aliens. The only thing to do at this time would be to enlist into the Foreign-Légion for the duration of (only) five years. Nothing less. "Now, you wait here, not more than five minutes, and I have somebody to drive you to the appropriate office, where you sign up for the five years. The driver will then take you home, and I make arrangements, that you'll present yourselves tomorrow at noon for your shipment to North-Africa." With the promise to be back the next morning, we thanked the two officers very politely. Well, I'm grateful to Jean, who was less impulsive than I was, because I would have enlisted right then and there.

At home, my father was absolutely against it. How could a son of his have such crazy ideas? "Look, I have seen the Germans in action in the last war. Once they are let loose, nobody and nothing will be able to stop them. Look around yourselves and see how unwilling people are to fight. So far, neither the French nor the British have ever made the slightest move to stop that maniac. You know, my hate is not any less than yours and I foresee terrible times ahead, especially for us Jews. Don't force the hands of fate. If they ever settle the first confusion, the French will only be too happy to make use of you, the young people." How right he was!

The next day, gas-masks were distributed and the outline of a plan for the evacuation of Strasbourg was given. Like last year, here again we packed the trunks for shipment to the Salomon's farm. Jean, who had by now moved in with us, and I, convinced our parents to leave immediately with some of their friends. With their heavy load of luggage, we saw them off on the train to Fraize, a tiny mountain resort in the Vosges Mountains, about seventy miles southwest of Strasbourg. It was really a heartbreaking farewell. They looked so bewildered and helpless and I felt so terribly sorry for these two darling people. Less than five years ago they had to leave their home and now again. Of course, we promised to join them as soon as possible. Jean and I were kept extremely busy at both our places of work. With the help by the authorities, the many establishments worked frantically to ship merchandise and equipment westward out of the path of war. In our workshop we tried to finish as much as possible of the work on hand and to dismantle the machinery, to be trucked to the boss's second home in the Vosges.

WORLD WAR TWO HAS STARTED

September 1st, 1939, before daybreak, I turned on the radio: "The German army has crossed the border to attack Poland." While hurriedly dressing, we heard loud-speakers, installed on army trucks, passing slowly through the streets, proclaiming the order to evacuate. "All habitants are to leave this town immediately. All municipal vehicles as well as those of the army will assist you and take you to your designated points of assembly. There is no limit on luggage, only your ability to handle it. Food will be available at all times and on arrival at your destinations, shelter will be provided. Municipal employees of the police and the utilities will remain. La France will take good care of you."

What an unbelievable situation. The picture of 120,000 people leaving their homes is hard to describe. To say the least, it was heartbreaking. By now, all the men, up to the age of forty-five had been called into the services in the last two weeks, and their children, wives, parents and other dependents had to fend for themselves. But the soldiers involved in this sad operation were absolutely exemplary. It was touching how helpful they were towards their charges. Most of them were reservists

with families of their own, some of them in far away provinces, which gave them so much of this compassionate understanding for these people who had to leave their homes behind for an uncertain future. Indeed, many of the Strasbourgeois were never to see their beautiful town again. It took me six years until I drove there from a defeated Germany. It was an unforgettable event in my life, and I can still now relive those days very distinctly. Never had I experienced how adversity can bring out the very best in human nature. In the midst of such great sorrow, there was so much warmth, helpfulness and friendliness. The Alsatiens are known for their sense of humor, and the words got around: "Don't worry; we'll all be back home before the cold weather! Our boys will be in Berlin before Christmas !" (And France was still debating with the Nazis, and still had not declared war yet, which should have happened the very same moment when Hitler's army rolled into Poland.)

When my boss's truck was loaded, Jean and I, including our bikes, left with him to his new location. At a snails pace, all traffic went westwards. Not hundreds, but thousands of cars, trucks even horse or cow-drawn carts of every description, all loaded to the rafters. And still, this exodus was orderly and well disciplined. The patience, the friendliness and compassion were unbelievable. Everybody trying to be helpful and hiding their great sorrows and fears. After unloading and an excellent meal, we said goodbye to the Geng's, and mounted our bikes for the long ride to rejoin my parents about forty miles from there. In the middle of the night, we arrived at that small hotel in Fraize, and there was mother waiting for us. She had a feeling we would come and could not sleep. All rooms were taken, but she had made arrangements for us to sleep on the couches in the lounge. Of course they made us get up early in the morning, but who could sleep soundly with that terrible tension in the air. After cleaning up in the parent's room and then a lovely breakfast, we went for a walk in the village. As we were the only young men around, we perceived some dirty looks, and one lady asked us outright, why we weren't in the army. So, we decided to stay out of view of the villagers.

Next day, September 3rd, 1939, the French prime-minister, Daladier proclaimed on the radio: "A state of war has been declared between France and Germany, and may God help us!" No, France was not ready for that at all, and it was to last for sixty-eight months.

On that same afternoon, a Gendarme (similar to a State police) came to the hotel, to confiscate all our papers and to declare us to be enemy-aliens. Not my parents, but Jean and I were put under house arrest, after a solemn promise not to leave the premises. This sounds worse than it was, and after explaining to this good man that we hated the Boches most probably more than himself, he almost apologized for doing his duty. Later in the afternoon, he came back with my parent's papers (they were over age), and over a friendly drink, he handed travel orders for Jean, another old friend, Sieg. Meyer and myself, to report next day at an assembly point for enemy aliens at Epinal.

By which irony of fate did we now become the enemy? We, the Jews, who had to leave that cursed country across the Rhine. We, who Hitler had pledged to destroy. The average Frenchman did not know very much about what was going on and all they knew before yesterday's declaration of war was, that they did not want a war. Last week we read the headline in one of the better newspapers how unwilling they were to: "Mourir pour Danzig" *(to die for Danzig)*. Later, to my surprise I found out, that mainly among those who fought in the First World War, had forever a very

great hatred of the Boches. But I have to give credit to the people of France, that now, they were willing to give their everything to defeat the dictator. But we'll find out later how little they were prepared for this predictable confrontation, and how much suffering was expecting them. But at this time, we were convinced that, once our background and loyalties had been checked, they would be too glad to let us participate in their fight.

Next morning, another painful "Au revoir!" We took a bus to St. Dié and there, at the railroad station, we met four cousins of mother's and several other acquaintances, some of them from our home town, all on their way to Epinal. Cousin Otto, who had left Saarbrücken at the same time as we did, had moved to St. Dié, where he had opened a new business. Only a few months ago, he had obtained visas for his three brothers who were imprisoned in a German concentration camp. Now, they were on their way to another internment camp. I don't think they were sympathizers with Germany.

My uncle Hugo Kahn, mother's youngest brother, was a sergeant in a quartermaster battalion in Epinal, and mother thought he could help me, not to be locked up. His barracks were very close to the station, and we, about ten fellows decided to try to see him first. We found him in the orderly room, very busy, doing nothing. After explanations, he went to talk to his captain (one of his former customers, who also had gotten him his sergeant stripes). After several telephone calls, the good captain suggested, that Hugo should take us with a truck to our destination. "And if they don't want them, bring' em back here, we are in dire need of some strong guys, so we won't have to work so hard." (I was surprised that they still remembered the word "work").

After a short ride, he delivered us at an abandoned factory building on a large empty lot, surrounded by a row of carelessly strung barbed wire, with an armed guard at the entrance. A very young, elegant officer was sitting at a long trestle table under a large tree. Very correctly, uncle came to attention, and introduced himself with a snappy salute: "Mon lieutenant, I hope you are not going to lock up these gentlemen. I hold myself responsible for every one of them. This is my sister's son. These four here are first cousins of mine, they are Kahn's like myself. And the others are good old friends of mine!" Very seriously, the officer looked through our papers, and then: "Mais mon cher sergeant, what do you want me to do? They all are Boches! They are our enemies now and I am under orders to lock them up. But you can do something for them and myself too. Here we don't have any supplies at all, for over a hundred men, no food, no blankets, nothing. You, who are with the quartermasters, would do me a great favor, if you could help me out." Indeed, later in the afternoon, he came back with a truckload of blankets, cases of sardines, "singe" *(spam)*, bread, biscuits, and, of course the inevitable "gros rouge" *(red wine)* This was the last time I ever saw my uncle, whom we always liked very much. Him, my Aunt Edith and Cousin Walter ended up within the statistics of the holocaust.

After the checking-in procedure, we entered our new home. Well, we did not expect the Grand Hotel! A big barn of a place, dirty cement floor, a few very small windows, electricity was not connected yet. One toilet and one sink. Fortunately, a small mountain stream was flowing through the lot, with rather clear water for our ablutions. By sundown, there were already about eighty prisoners checked in, most of them refugees from Germany, like us. But there were also a few, who turned out to be real Nazis. They were the bargemen, who carried freight on the canals

between France and Germany. Oh yes, late that afternoon, I saw my cousin Eddy walking towards camp. He came to the wire fence, and when we explained what we were doing here, he decided, that this was not for him. He turned around and run back to where he came from. But one of the guards saw him and caught him, to bring him to our lieutenant. So, good, old Eddy became one of us. It was at least some consolation to be among so many relatives and friends.

Nobody was prepared for these kinds of accommodations. I remembered my days in school, devoid of any and all frills, but this here was something new, for almost everybody around me. But we accepted it with a sense of humor and made the best of it. Of course we were completely cut off from our families, and for most of my mates who had wives, children and others, left in uncertain circumstances, it was especially hard. There were no telephones and while we could write to our heart's desire, we did not get any mail in the first three weeks. Large shipments of food arrived the next day, but the commander did not accept the meats, because there were no cooking utensils. As a matter of fact, we had no warm food, not even coffee as long as we stayed at this location. But there was enough to eat at all times. Beside that, our guardians treated us very kindly, especially after they realized that we were rather their allies than enemies. They were all mature reservists with families of their own, some even veterans from the "Grande-guerre." To show how efficiently this was organized, half of those soldiers were still in their civvies, waiting for the uniforms to be issued. One more proof, how very poorly they were prepared for war. But in my eyes, my beloved France could not do anything wrong at all.

About ten days later we were taken by trucks to Mirecourt with deluxe accommodations in the auditorium of the local high school. After the bare cement the wooden floor with some straw on it was very much to our liking. In the large courtyard, a field kitchen was improvised, and we were ready for our first warm food, since our incarceration had begun. Our dear cousin Eddy volunteered his culinary skills, and he gave the daily servings of rice his personal flavor by burning it slightly. But by now, we weren't spoiled anymore. But the inactivity was hard to take, and we were bored to tears. We were offered work on the outside on a voluntary base of course, and many of us accepted with pleasure. Jean and I were put into a painting detail. Indeed, at the time of general mobilization, all non-essential motor vehicles were requisitioned by the military. Outside of Mirecourt, on a large field, hundreds of cars and trucks were parked. Our job was to paint them over with an earth-colored camouflage-design. Less than a year later, they fell into the Nazi's hands and they drove them to many of their victories. Five years later, on the battlefields in Germany, I saw many Peugeots, Renaults and Citoens showing the original paint under the camouflage design, and I thought that Jean and I didn't do such a terrific job back in Mirecourt.

We were a very congenial group, and I felt quiet comfortable with more than a handful of cousins around. But the others also were most pleasant people, mostly businessmen, former lawyers, even a rabbi and a doctor. (This dear doctor, Willy Katz brought our beloved Claude into this world, twelve years later). Not all were Jews, and some of them had fled the Third Reich on account of their Communist or Socialist affiliations. We even had a former member of the German Reichstag *(congress)*. That small minority of Nazis in our midst, who, at first were very arrogant, had quieted down by now. With anti-Semitic remarks they had provoked a fight, where I ended up with a bloody nose, but some of them also. We, the refugees, as well as our guardians ignored them completely. Our keepers, by now

had understood perfectly what our stand towards the real enemy was, and why our hatred towards the Boches surpassed theirs. This whole situation was not a picnic at all, but, considering what others had to go through, this was nothing to complain about. I was young, and I could take it.

When the cold weather started, our hotel was needed for the French army and we were taken out of our quarters. After a march of about a dozen miles under a light snowfall we arrived at an abandoned, old mill, isolated high up in the hills of Harchéchamps, sad looking, dilapidated place, with mostly broken windows. Our guard platoon was as helpful as possible, and their quarters were hardly any better than ours. We collected money to buy supplies in the neighboring village, and everybody pitched in to make this place somewhat habitable, including the guard's rooms. I was able to repair an old generator, driven by the millwheel, and we had lights all over. It was the start of a very severe winter and we suffered a lot from the cold, icy winds, which still penetrated after all our repairs.

IN THE FRENCH FOREIGN LÉGION

Towards the end of November (1939), we were given the option to enlist in the Foreign-Légion for the duration. They had finally come to the conclusion, that very few only would enlist for five years, and they had a tremendous pool of foreigners, who were too glad to offer their services and their lives to "la belle France." To mention an example, only a few months ago a tremendous flow of Spanish loyalist soldiers had fled to France, and by now, they were disgusted with their living conditions in their temporary camps. They, of course were not within our category of "enemy-aliens," but they were in the greatest of hurry to get their hands on the Fascists.

For the induction, we were marched to another camp, outside of Lunéville, about ten miles away. We met cousin Charly, who was interned there, with some other acquaintances. Charly, however did not enlist, and he did not miss a thing! As predicted, after hardly a physical examination, everybody was accepted, and we were driven in army trucks to the barracks in town. Now, this was the lap of luxury.

Mattresses on the floor, riot too cleans and with the normal complement of bedbugs. But the rooms were heated, and, Nirvana, hot showers and very decent army food. The next morning we were issued horizon-blue uniforms, left over from, World War I. Poor France wasn't well prepared, and they had neither socks, underwear nor shirts for us.

Towards evening, with the band in front, playing the "Sambre et Meuse" we were marched to the railroad station. People kept staring at us in the streets, because they hadn't seen those uniforms in a long time. We were loaded into boxcars for the slow overnight ride to Lyon. From there we had a lengthy march to an airfield at Sathonay, where we were camped in a drafty hangar for about three to four days. To keep us occupied, we had to dig ditches during the day. I can't say that we worked very hard, but the icy wind did not make the work very pleasant. Every half hour, our corporal in charge allowed one of us to go to the nearest Bistro, to fill a canteen with hot coffee, generously spiked with cheap cognac. Talking of "We," I mean our family group, who, so far were able to stick together, until a few weeks later in Africa we were separated.

When finally, the processing came to an end, the old blue uniforms were exchanged for brand new Khaki. They also issued helmets, gasmasks, belts, boots and underwear, as well as other military equipment. Then, the most important, our furlough papers for one full week. At the exit of the post, a full length mirror reflected little old me in the doubtful splendor of my French uniform. Proud as a peacock. Then and there I was ready for battle, trained or not, and I would have given up my furlough with pleasure. But this was the time of the "Phony War" when the French army was sleeping snugly in or behind the Maginot line.

Trucks took us to the station in Lyon, where Jean and I were heading due west. He went to Limoges to join his father there, and I went to Périgueux, where my parents had moved previously. Indeed, they had remained only three weeks in Fraize, because they did not want to stay in a place, only about forty hues from the German border, as the crow flies. There, in Périgueux, on the bords of the river Ille, they had rented a house together with the families Kahn and Sulzer, old friends from Strasbourg. These people were slightly older than my parents. The two ladies were sisters, and Mrs. Sulzer was quiet ill, but she had the good fortune, that my mother, in her unending goodness took good care of her. These two families had between them seven sons in the Service, and there were forever at least two of them on furlough. This added a tot to mother's work, but they also turned out a great help. Several times, father was ordered to an internment-camp, but he always had one of the boys with him to go to the Gendarmerie, in uniform of course, to vouch for him, arid it worked out very nicely. There was a very warm and pleasant relationship between the three families, which lasted even after they all took separate lodgings. Unfortunately, of the two lovely families only two sons survived the holocaust.

Here, I have to give a short description of Périgueux, where I was to spend two years later on, and where I was to find the love of my life. A pretty sleepy town of about thirty thousand. For the past few years, the town and the surrounding rural areas were economically very depressed, with a lot of unemployment. The majority of the Périgourdins were blue-collars, leaning towards the political Left. The rest of the inhabitants were a very stuck-up ultra right wing bourgeoisie, who were rather collaborating with the Fascist Right. I have previously described the evacuation of Strasbourg. At that time the entire municipal administration was transferred to Périgueux and the surrounding countryside. Also, after their first stop in the Vosges, the Strasbourgeois were sent to this part of France. All these refugees increased the population tremendously and the Périgourdins felt somewhat crowded. The result was a rather ticklish situation, while economically the region received a much needed shot in the arm. All these refugees, who were used to a slightly higher standard of living than the natives, filled every available room and apartment. The stores could hardly handle all these new customers, and tried frantically to fill up their shelves. The few sleepy banks affiliated with the more sophisticated ones from Strasbourg had to double their staff and their localities. Even the small red-light district had to enlarge.

But Périgueux did not take long to wake up and to take full advantage of this new windfall. With all the money they brought in, the "Intruders" were resented. Why did those "Yahyahs" have to come here, and not have gone somewhere else? They could just as well have mailed the money! This nickname showed how downright anti-Alsatien the population was. They did conveniently forget, that all those poor people, with their stiff upper lips, had to abandon their homes and jobs, and that there was a war going on. After the defeat, of France, most of the Alsatiens returned home,

leaving mainly the Jews, and then the Périgourdins turned easily into anti-Semites. Of course there were many exceptions, and if some friends would not have warned and helped us, we would not have escaped all the coming vicissitudes. We were not in Périgueux by our own choosing, but it was our fate, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to some of its good citizens.

Our military train arrived before dawn, but already a canteen, with volunteering ladies and girls wearing Alsatian costumes, was there to serve coffee and "Gugelhopf" *(a dry Alsatian cake)*. There among all my fellow soldiers, I felt so very comfortable as one of theirs. That uniform did wonders for my ego, and gone was that inferiority complex of being a foreigner and even an enemy. The Khaki gave such a sense of partnership with the other "Poilus."

Asking for directions, two corporals asked me to join them. They knew exactly where I was heading for, because all their life they had been living in "les Maurilloux." After the long night in the overcrowded troop-train, the brisk three miles hike was most pleasant. By the time they directed me off the main road, we knew each other's life story.

At the "Villa Barnabé," through a glass side door, I saw my darling mother in the kitchen, busy at the stove. I was home! I knocked and walked in. And there, she turns around, stares at me, almost unbelieving, and splash, drops the full coffeepot. The crash brings father and a few more people into the kitchen. Hugging, kissing and tears of joy. And I, the center of attraction, proud as a peacock.

What a vacation that was! Only too short. I was shown around to the many refugees friends. Introduced to the butcher, the baker and the barber, whom I needed very badly. Of course, a visit to the local Gendarmerie (National Police) was mandatory, to introduce me there in my French uniform, which made my parents look a little less the enemy-aliens. And I was basking in the love and pride mother and father showed me. Mother, who did all the cooking and baking for this large crowd outdid herself, and after cousin Eddie's burned rice, I gorged myself. The mood was not too subdued and everybody still was confident that "On les aura!" *(We'll get them!)*. Only father did not believe in victory. To me only, he pointed out how poorly France was organized, even now, more than three months into the war, and how unwilling the people were to fight. Not more than six months later, he proved to be so right. He felt good, to vent his disappointment to me, because anybody else would have branded him "defeatist." And how he prayed for victory. But still, I was in a great hurry to take on the Nazis.

Before I knew it, my parents took me to the station. Father gave me last minute's advice: "When they ask for volunteers, you take one step backwards, to make room for the other imbeciles!" These were tearful but proud goodbyes, and it took a full year to be back, defeated and disappointed. Father was right! To his sorrow.

Two hours later, in Limoges, Jean joined me and in Lyon we met again our other friends. There, after a few more cold days on the airfield, we boarded the cattle cars in direction Marseille. Now, we, the German-Jewish refugees were outnumbered by other nationalities. Lots of Italian bricklayers, Hungarian mechanics, Swiss chefs, Spanish barbers and more. In our group, there were quiet a few, like cousin Otto Kahn, Otto", who had served in the German army of the First World War.

On arrival we were welcomed by a detachment of old-timer Légionnaires, wearing white caps, wide blue woolen belts and green epaulets. Besides a few rules of courtesy, like saluting, we had not as yet been introduced to the codes of military discipline, and now, our welcoming committee felt that they had to start with a vengeance. They were less than pleased when they tried to line us up into a marching column in front of the station. But with the help of some well placed kicks and some obscene shouting, they made their point. "You lazy so and so's, you were probably all starving to death in civilian life, and now, by joining us, you think you can fill your empty bellies!" This was a refrain which the staff used as a curse again and again. Many of these brutal "Grades" *(Non-coms.)* were of German origin, and an ordinary sergeant was considered a great military authority and, worse yet, he thought himself just a little bit below God Almighty. How they enjoyed to vent their complexes and frustrations on us.

With a regimental band in front, we marched to the Fort St. Jean, at the entrance of the "Vieux Port" *(Old harbor)*. After a few difficult minutes and a lot of screaming, they got us to march in time to the strains of the "Boudin," the hymn of the Légion. *(Boudin means blood-pudding)*. Arriving at the fort, the new, wary recruit is greeted with a large inscription: "You, Légionnaires are soldiers destined to die, and I am sending you where death reigns," signed Louis Philippe, 1831. Well, some welcome! Nobody was laughing beside our cadre. Fort St. Jean was the sole staging area on the continent. A large, ugly round fortress watching the entrance to the harbor, at least two hundred years old, and about eight stories high. Passing under this cheerful welcoming sign, a wide steep cobblestone road wound its way to the top, with dungeons branching off at different levels. Those were the dormitories and stockrooms, dark, damp and with the smell of ages and poor plumbing hanging above all. We were assigned to settle there, and we did not like it a bit. But the bugs were very happy, and made their presence felt immediately. On the top of this depressing structure, an unexpected surprise. The large mess hall, offices, canteen and library, surrounded by well tended flower gardens, with a picture-postcard view over Marseille on one side, and the deep blue Méditéranée south with the Château d'If of the count of Monte Christo's fame in the foreground. All this under an icy Mistral, the wind of southern France.

During our ten days stay there, they did not know what to do with us, and somebody with a bird's brain must have invented a way to keep us busy. They marched us to a rock pile, about two miles away. Once there, the Corporal ordered everybody to pick up a heavy rock, weighing at least fifty pounds. If this sadistic commander did not think that stone heavy enough, he made you exchange it for a heavier one. Then, about face to the top of the fort, repeating this procedure about five times a day. This senseless stupidity left us exhausted, and some people found hardly the strength to fall on their "lousy" mattress after dinner. If you had any energy left, there was a going rate for midnight passes. The red-light district was right across the street from us, and it comprised the entire "Vieux Port" section. Every race and nationality under the sun was represented here, knowledgeable in every known and unknown specialty. The prices were rather affordable, because it was a volume-business. But the chances one took!

So far, we, our group of friends and relatives had managed to stay together, when we were ordered to get ready to leave. Again, following the band, we started on the long march to the pier. There, up the gangplank to a dirty old freighter, where we had to descent into the hold on a rope ladder. Down in the dark, just the bare floor,

no bunks, no mattresses, no blankets, nothing. Not long after lifting the anchor, we headed right into a violent Mistral. This part of the Mediterranean, the "Golfe du Lion," is renowned as the stormiest part of this ocean. Some of our people started on their seasickness when they first saw our boat, but now, it caught most of us with a vengeance. A few, trying to climb the rope ladder, couldn't hold it in long enough, and had to heave back into the hold, right on their buddy's heads. What a filthy mess, and hardly any water to clean up. Late next afternoon we disembarked in Oran (Algeria), where the cattle cars were waiting for us.

Early next morning we detrained at Sidi-Bel-Abbès, the headquarters of the Légion. The African sun was burning hot, and there we are in our heavy woolen uniforms, smelling to high heavens. And also the reception committee, impeccably groomed, with their German or Russian accented invectives: "you filthy pigs! We'll teach you!" (They weren't so wrong in their description.) Aligned behind the band, we marched to the "Quartier Viennot," to the tune of the Boudin again. Very large, three storied barracks surrounding an enormous parade ground. Everything extremely clean with well tended flowerbeds and palm trees. As a centerpiece, the grenade of seven flames, made of evergreens, surrounded by red flowers, the insignia of the Légion. We were assigned to our squad rooms, and given thirty minutes to be ready for inspection. At least there were very clean washrooms and showers, and everybody was hustling to get rid of all that filth we were carrying around. Then "Fall in" with obscene shouts and kicks, and many who weren't looking presentable were docked for special details.

Up to now, we had some kind of a honeymoon with the military, and the real thing became quiet intimidating. This was not the French Citizen's army, but all made up of professionals. Some of our friends who had served in the German army of WW I claimed this new experience to be worse and tougher. Most of the old Légionnaires, had fled their countries of origin to escape the criminal laws, resented that our only reason to join the Légion was patriotism and thankfulness to France for having accepted us. The fact that we left our families, jobs and positions in France was a thorn in the eyes of these brutes. How they enjoyed the absolute power they had to make our lives miserable. Once, a lowly Corporal, drunk at two in the morning, and not sleepy yet, had the brilliant idea to make us fall in with full pack to double-time for two hours on the parade grounds.

While in Sidi-Bel-Abbès, I had a pass once. Before we were allowed to leave, we were sent back twice, because neither shoes nor buttons were shiny enough. Of course the center of attraction in this Arab town was the very large "Quartier Réservé," like in Marseille with women from every corner of the earth. Only two items were for sale here, booze and sex. Surrounded by a high wall, at the only entrance, the guard-post, your pass was checked, and one had to sign in and out. If a soldier was later infected by V.D. and was duly registered, he was appropriately cured. But if his name was not found on the roster, he had to serve three weeks at hard labor while being treated. Of course with this overhead, prices in the "Quartier" were higher than at the more competitive and risky outside.

After about two weeks, and I don't mean the "Quartier réservé" came the moment of separation from that group of friends and relatives, with whom we had been together since the beginning of the war. We were assigned to our permanent outfits. By sheer luck, Jean and I stayed together, with a new friend who had joined us in Marseille. This was Simon Berger, Simon", who, a year later returned with me to

Périgueux. He was born in Poland moved to Paris in his late teens, where now he left behind a young wife and son. He preferred to enlist into the Légion to being drafted into the Polish army in France with its well-known anti-Semitic leanings. Three years later he was deported, and with him, the Holocaust took a very good friend from me.

Two days of voyage by train and truck took us to Midelt the headquarters of the Second Cavalry Regiment of the Légion, high up in the Atlas-mountains of Morocco. Simon, Jean and myself were assigned to the same platoon. Almost immediately we were issued riding-boots, saddle, saber, carbine, and, yes, a horse. The first night, the three of us had guard-duty at the stables. A few short, barked instructions by the Corporal, we were warned to keep the horses quiet and clean at all times. These were beautiful Arabian horses, extremely temperamental, easily excitable and nervous. They had to be calmed constantly, and one had to walk between them, while they were kicking, to keep them quiet. The saying was: "If a horse breaks a leg, it has to be shot, but if a soldier gets kicked to death, we can always get another one!" In my agricultural education, I was used to handle animals, and I had no problems, but my two friends were terrified, and the horses sensed it. But I helped them as much as I could, and after a while they got used to the routine. The basic training of horsemanship was very tough, and in addition, that stupid "Spit and Polish," especially of animals and stables made it even harder. I must say that the officers, mostly graduates from top military schools were very decent and understanding. But it was easy for them, to just supervise the uncouth Noncoms, and let them do their dirty work. As much as we hated those Corporals and Sergeants, I must admit that they were model soldiers, many wearing high decorations, earned in the pacification-wars of North-Africa. Two years later, lots of them lost their lives in the battles against the Africa-Corps of Rommel at El-Alamein and at Bir-Hakeim. They have earned our debt of gratitude and may they rest in peace.

After four weeks, when we just began to maintain balance on a galloping horse and not to be afraid of them anymore, we were transferred. Unfortunately, Jean was posted to a platoon in the desert, where he talked himself into a soft job in the office, and only went riding for the pleasure of it. Simon and I were among those attached to a motorized battalion at Taroudant. This was an interesting, ancient town in Southern Morocco, about fifty miles from Agadir on the Atlantic Ocean. (35 years later, Renée and I returned there and enjoyed it very much.) Our barracks were outside the high, heavy walls, some adobe huts around the obligatory parade ground. With one single water faucet and two toilets, one could not brag about the sanitary facilities. Otherwise, it was not too bad, and in a group of only one hundred twenty, there was a nice sense of comradeship. At least the German origin noncoms were an absolute minority. Most of them were Spaniards, former "Rojos," who had fled to France after their defeat by Franco's Fascists. They had been locked up in camps near the French-Spanish border, and their only way out of those was enlistment for five years in the Légion. They were a very pleasant and vivacious group, most of them claimed to have been officers. Now they were eager to help defeat the Dictators and to return to their beloved Spain. My memories of Taroudant are not bad at all, but, boy was it hot! Would you believe, that every afternoon, we had two hours off for "la Siesta," even on the many road marches in the desert. Now we had some more tough training with very outmoded halftracks, but I mostly rode a motorcycle with a side-car. Nobody can imagine how it feels to sit inside an

armored truck when the burning sun hits the steel plates.

But things went nicely. We heard about the inactivity's in the frontlines, and the war seemed very far away, and my hurry to get into the almost nonexistent fight was not as urgent anymore. At reveille one morning, the captain asked, very innocently, if anybody present had ever done some skiing. In previous years, I had spent many Sundays in the winter, on the slopes of the Vosges, and teaching myself, I managed finally to remain upright on the boards. Forgetting my father's advice, and together with about another ten imbeciles, I raised my hand. Well, then and there, the Captain congratulated us for having volunteered to help Finland in their battle against the Russians, who had invaded their country. We were not completely ignorant of this war, because we had a very nice bona fide Finn with us, who was a mechanic in Paris. He was overjoyed! Not yours truly. (The poor guy was a terrific skier, but sadly enough, he never came back with us).

This was not the first thoughtless mistake in my life. Only one among many. I am not very proud of this interlude, and I have tried to blot it out of my memories. After some training by a Sergeant of Chasseurs Alpins (elite Mountain-troops), and a long truck ride to Casablanca, we boarded a dirty, rusty freighter on an unpleasant voyage to Liverpool. There, a British troop transport, not much better, the Star of Bermuda took us, around Scotland, with Polish and British soldiers to debark at Narvick in Norway, near the Arctic-circle. Trying to anticipate the Germans there, it was a completely failed operation, which was one of Churchill's poor decisions, and in my book, the allied command had made a complete mess of it. I was lucky, that we spent only few days on that frozen, snow covered Norwegian soil. Beside well directed German artillery, there was almost no protection against the Nazi fighter planes, those vicious Stuckas, which kept on pursuing us, even back on board our ship. Many lost their lives up there. I felt terribly depressed and frustrated, that my running away from the Nazis had begun again. Well, it was not to be the last time.

With three men missing, we arrived back in Taroudant on June 20, the day when poor France had to sign the Armistice with Hitler in Compiègne. The next morning we left on a long motor march, in hellish heat to guard the border between Morocco and the Spanish colony, which at that time was called the Rio de Oro. I never understood the strategic meaning of our building a defense line there, swinging picks and shovels. This was excruciating work, and the tropical heat did not make it any easier. Water was rationed, but the heavy Moroccan red wine was in abundance, which kept us in a permanent daze.

About a month later, we, the volunteers for the duration of the war were taken back to Midelt, where our Moroccan experience had started. Getting off the truck, Jean was standing there, to welcome Simon and myself. The next day we were discharged from the Légion in a ceremony, where a tin-hat Captain, without a word of thanks explained that France was only defeated, because so many foreigners had infiltrated and weakened the French fighting spirit. (What fighting spirit?) But at least we were offered to do something constructive for "la chère France" in helping to build the Trans-Saharian Railroad, and we were trucked to Colomb Béchard in the Algerian Sahara.

This was not at all what we had expected, and we were hoping to be able to return to the mainland. Here we were virtual prisoners again. A camp of filthy, broken down barracks, surrounded by barbed wire. We were still wearing our French

uniforms, and with special permissions we were allowed to leave the camp. But where to? To visit the hyenas in the desert? Again, with picks and shovels, we were now working on the railroad. Well, it was hot as hell, and the work was hard, but we did not overdo it. I understand, that railroad is not finished yet. We all were very depressed, still stunned by the defeat of our beloved France. Only Simon and myself were the sole ones among our closer friends who had been involved in a military operation and had I known the experience of war with its bombs and destructions. We had seen the lifeless bodies of comrades, and only by a hair's breadth, we managed to get out alive. Nobody could even imagine what a failed action we had come from. All of us were poorly informed about all these events, so important in our destinies. Only now, looking on the map of Europe, did we realize how victorious and efficient the criminal Nazis managed to attain these territorial gains. Remember, at the time of the evacuation of Strasbourg, people thought to be home for Christmas. Jean kept saying: "Your father was so right with his predictions!" The surrender of France had taken all illusions and replaced them with fear, fear for our dear ones, for ourselves and for the land, which had turned its back on us, but which we still loved so much, and which was now a prisoner also.

Surprisingly, in all this disorganization, mail still worked pretty well. Letters from Périgueux took about ten days, and mother kept me well informed. No fear and anguish was spared them. When the Nazis started their campaign by sneak-attack of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, father was finally interned in a nearby camp for enemy-aliens for about ten weeks. There, he met a lot of acquaintances, among them Jean's father. They were helpful to each other and became good friends, like their sons. I am sure, that this was no picnic, but I have never heard my father to complain.

In Colomb Béchard, we were finally informed, that with an affidavit of support from the Vichy-zone of France, we would be eligible for residence there. Almost by return mail, father sent the necessary papers. So did Jean's father and Simon Berger received the same documents from his wife, who had fled from Paris to Périgueux with their child. But the red tape took a long time, and it was not long before Christmas, when we stopped working on the railroad.

Trucks, vessel and railroad took us back to the mainland. Disembarking in Marseille, the cheerful atmosphere of this lovely town was no longer there. People looked downtrodden. Mother had written about the food rationing, and had asked to bring back soap, oil, sugar and cigarettes, and we all had invested our meager assets into those commodities, and were loaded with crude bags and packages.

Walking down the gangplank, the Gendarmes checked our papers, supervised by German officers. I hate to admit, that they looked rather decent and well groomed in their elegant uniforms. This was my first close-up look of them. Back in Norway, I saw them only from far away and, out of fright, I always kept my nose buried in the ground.

While the Southern part, or better known as Vichy-France was, per se not actually occupied, the Germans had however certain armistice commissions all over the country, to supervise and control all kinds of activities. Still wearing our uniforms and with valid travel documents we had no problems at all. Passing the Fort Saint Jean, we hiked to the station and after a long wait; we took the train to our final destination. During the night, Jean left us to take a train to Limoges, where his

father was living.

PÉRIGUEUX

Early in the morning, we arrived in Périgueux, which was going to be our home from now on. We took the road to "les Maurilloux," where I had walked a year ago. About half way, who comes towards us? My dear father. What a joy and pleasure! He was on his way to the butcher, to stand in line for a few hours, for the meager meat ration. He had sad news for Simon. His wife and son, who had fled Paris just before the Germans marched in, had decided just a week ago to return there, knowing that her husband was on his way. Poor Simon, who was looking forward so desperately to be again with his family, was devastated. Father told him to go to our home, where mother would tell him all about the arrangements. The joy of seeing mother and holding her in my arms again was somewhat spoiled by my good friend's desperation. After a good breakfast, mother took him to a room in the neighborhood, which his wife had rented for him. She had also left some money with mother. That afternoon, alone with my so very good and understanding mom, he cried his heart out, and admitted that his marriage was not one of the best, and that his very pretty wife liked to play the field.

When the lease of the "Villa Barnabé" was not renewed, my parents found two tiny attic rooms a few blocs away from there. It was rather primitive with a small stove and a kitchen sink without running water. The toilet was in the garden, and so was the pump for the water. The landlords were not the most pleasant people especially Madame Bourlioux. They did not like Jews very much, but they just loved their money. Never did they have an income like now. And with all that, we were glad to have a roof over our heads.

While most of the Christian Alsatiens had returned to their, now German province, they were replaced by the many Jewish refugees from the occupied zones of France, but also those of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Ernest, a fellow, who worked with me at Strasbourg, had a job as an electrician in Périgueux, and, not long before I returned, father met him in town. When he told about returning to Strasbourg, my smart dad made him take him to his boss, and with Ernest's recommendation, Monsieur Gonthier offered father a job for me on my return. That was my dad's quick thinking. A dozen years later, I ran into Ernest at the Strasbourg railroad-station, where he worked at his trade. But now, with one leg only. He told me his story in a nutshell, and how much he regretted, that he did not stay in Périgueux. Shortly after he came back to Strasbourg, he was drafted into Hitler's army. He finally ended at the Russian front, where he was taken prisoner, and his leg was amputated. Only two years after the end of the war was he liberated, and I could not help feeling sorry for him, even if he fought against us. He was a decent fellow, and he got me that job, which was a big help for me at that time.

In October 1940, shortly before we came home, the fascist Pétain government had declared a series of anti-Jewish laws, banning all Jews from Civil-Service, management and teaching position. Also restricting access to legal and medical positions. And they did that without even the urging of the Nazi occupier. At the signing of the armistice, the French agreed to deliver to the Germans all the prominent refugees within their jurisdiction. A former eminent Socialist leader, Hilferding, who had joined the Légion with me, was turned over to the Gestapo, and ended statistic in the Holocaust. There was no doubt, that many were the French

who openly and willingly cooperated with the Nazis. But may we never forget an important minority, which went out of their way to help us, the Jews. Never shall we forget them!

And now, since I took off the uniform, I reverted again to my former status of unwanted foreigners. We were strictly supervised by the police, and without written permission we were not allowed outside the closer suburban area. About a hundred veterans from the Légion were living in and around Périgueux, and we formed a veteran's association, headed by a retired Colonel. This good man tried his best to have a special status created for our protection from the Fascists, but to no avail. The present government did not think it owed us any special thanks for having volunteered to fight for France.

As our living conditions were very cramped, and we suffered especially under the unpleasantness of our landlords, I was lucky to find an entire house just a few blocs away. With the recommendation of my employer, I was able to rent the entire three storied building, and I had immediately two tenants, also refugees, which we knew quiet well. It so happened that my firm did the electric work there, and the owner was pleased to have somebody to run the whole building for him. They had a large farm about six miles from town, very well to do, and I remember them among the nicest and best people I have ever known. They were always most helpful and we became very friendly.

We had two decent size rooms, one was my parent's bedroom, and the other was a kitchen, where I also slept. Our water supplies had to be fetched from the pump downstairs, but the ultimate luxury was a toilet on the same floor, which emptied into a cesspool in the garden, and I had to empty it periodically. That rather large size garden was our joy and pride, and with that free fertilizer, we had the most beautiful vegetables almost year round. Mother was in seventh heaven, not only because we ate so much better, but also was she able to give away some of our surplus to people who needed it so much. We also raised rabbits. With all these fringe benefits, we were able to face the general food shortages which had really taken over by then.

Life in Périgueux was not unpleasant, but that fear of an unknown future was growing daily. The Nazis had invaded the Balcans, and in North Africa, Rommel's Africa Corps advanced towards Egypt and the Suez Canal. The remaining Jews from South-Western Germany were shipped to the camps of Gurs and Rivesaltes in the Pyrenées. Some people were still able to obtain visas for immigration to some countries in the Americas. Mail between Vichy-France and the reduced free world was still flowing, and we were elated when Uncle Herman and Aunt Martha sent us the affidavits of support from New Jersey. The nearest U. S. Consulate was in Marseille, and it took the police three weeks to issue my travel permit. There, after standing in line at the Consulate, I was finally admitted inside to see one of the clerks. After examining carefully my pile of documents (with a fifty Dollar bill concealed among them), he gave me a docket number and an appointment for issuing visas to the three of us, for Monday June 23rd. This left little time to secure exit permits, transit-visa through neutral Spain and of course tickets on a Spanish or Portuguese ship.

Early on June 22, 1941, Hitler invaded Russia in his Blitzkrieg manner. Will the soviets be able to withstand the onslaught? Our sympathy for them had completely

disappeared, when in August 1939, they had signed that infamous non-aggression pact with the Nazis, but now, we had to pray for them. People were hoping this to be Hitler's first miscalculation, and compared this operation with Napoleon's defeat in Russia.

On that fatal Sunday afternoon, the three of us took the train to Marseille. Already the French newspapers wrote joyfully about the un-stemmed advances of the Nazis. But among the travelers, there was almost a holiday atmosphere: "C'est la fin des Boches" *(it's the end of the Germans)*. At heart, even those French who were inclined towards the Axis hated the German's guts. My father did not share the optimism around us, especially when, after a few days the Nazis again demonstrated their successful pattern of surprise attack. Ultimately, and luckily father was proven wrong, but it took almost four more years and millions of victims on both sides before the criminal monsters had to surrender and collected their just rewards.

Early next morning we arrived in Marseille. We were lucky to find a room in a seedy hotel near the station and had just enough time to freshen up before our doctor's appointment. The examination went well and we were impatiently expecting our afternoon's delivery of the visas. The Consulate was on a small square and from a bloc away we saw a great crowd there. A large sign at the door with: "Visa-section closed until further notice." A doorman distributed flyers in English, French and German, explaining that as of today, this office can't issue any visas and all applications had to be addressed by the sponsor to the Department of State in Washington. That half open door was now shut into our faces. We had seen ourselves already on the way out of this warring continent, and now, all hope was gone. So many people from the surrounding camps, who had all the required documents had to go back now to their imprisonment. Not much later, most of these unfortunates were deported to the East and were never to be heard of. This was only a small chapter in the "Abandonment of the Jews" created by the Anti-Semites in our State Department. This was not one of Roosevelt's finer achievements. There, in Marseille alone a few thousand could have been saved, but they had to loose their lives. A stain on my beloved U.S.A. On its President too.

During that night a most frightful occurrence happened, which could have been fatal to us. Before dawn, impatient knocks: "Police, open up!" I jump out of bed to let two unfriendly men in mufti enter into the room. They asked for our papers, which was not an unusual happening with so many foreigners in town. We knew that all those without valid credentials were immediately arrested and taken to the internment camps. Actually all our permits were in perfect order, and we had nothing to worry about. I took mine out of my wallet, and a small slip of paper fell on the table. My heart must have stopped beating for a moment. Oh, my goodness, this is the end! While the cops concentrated on our documents, I managed to place a heavy ashtray on top of this compromising slip of paper, and started to pray silently. Somebody up there must have been listening to me which he had done so many times already. The inspectors left and I could breathe easier. Of course, sleep was out now, and we began to get ready to leave on our way home.

Only many years later did I tell my parents what the reason for my great fright was. I was carrying an ingot of gold, weighing about thirty-five ounces, concealed in a pressing iron from which I had removed all its inside parts. It was against the law for us to own this precious metal. We did not dare to take it with us over the border on our way to the U.S.A., and I had tried to sell it to a black market dealer, who had

agreed to pay about $1,500, which was a lot of money, then. However before finalizing the transaction, he wanted to see the certificate of origin. And that was the fatal piece of paper. If the policemen would have seen it, they would have searched the room and most probably found our gold. Our arrest then and there would have been certain, and all three of us would have ended up in one of the nearby camps, and ultimately we would have shared the fate of all those, who were deported towards the dead-camps in the East. (Father held on to this ingot until his death. Then, against his advice, Fritz and I sold it, not very profitably. If we would have listened to our beloved dad, and only waited two more years, when the standard of $35 per ounce was voided, we would have gotten ten times as much.) Well, it so happened, that my father almost always knew best!

Early that morning, terribly disappointed we took a train to Remoulins, not very far from Marseille, where cousin Charlie, and his large family were living. They had obtained their visa the previous week and were leaving for the U.S.A. in July. After tearful goodbyes, we continued our return trip to Périgueux. Two years later, with their help I was able to join them in New York, and a wonderful relationship began, and much later we became business partners.

After this terrible letdown, we were glad to be back in our modest home. But prospects did not look promising at all.. While the Vichy-government took a census of all the Jews there to make it easier for the Nazis to find us, the deportation of Parisian Jews from the Velodrome d'Hiv had begun. The Blitzkrieg advance of Hitler's hordes into Russia was as stunning and unexpected as the one into France a year ago. Food was hard to get, and as life became harder and harder, the population began to shift their anger and frustrations against the Jews and all foreigners. We all kept a very low profile. In that small town, it was not easy to get lost in the crowd, but personally, I found genuine sympathy among my bosses, my coworkers and our neighbors. But within this self centered population, it was not surprising that we, the Jews were on the receiving end of their dirty looks. They could not vent their anger and frustrations on their Nazi-oriented government and on the victorious Boches who had made life so very difficult for them, through their confiscations of food and consumer goods. Also, another reason for the Périgourdin's animosity was the fact that only very few of the many refugees there were working in jobs or other occupations. Most of all these unfortunates had left their businesses and occupations in the unoccupied zone as well as in the Benelux countries. Also, the cafés were full of them from morning to night, where they were busy with their black-market transaction in foreign currencies and merchandise. Of course, that did not sit too well with the hard working Périgourdins, whose lives became more complicated every day, while many of them had husbands or sons in the Nazi prisoner of war camps.

During that summer, with all his worrying, father had his first heart attack in the middle of the night. With no telephones, I jumped on my bike, to get the doctor, about two miles away. He came right back with me, and with some injections, he helped him over the first critical hours. As there was no hospital bed available, mother nursed him back into pretty good shape, with her unending loving care. To complete his convalescence, he went to Tence, in the Massif Central, where the Friedhoffs stayed and where Juliette went to school. There, he found a place, where later they went into hiding. Later on, in my story, I shall again talk about that so generous and wonderful little town.

Considering all the horrors which went on in Europe during that summer, life was not unpleasant for me personally. My job was pleasant, and my earnings were sufficient to take care of our modest needs. I had some friends, all in the same boat, with whom I shared fears and frustrations. I dated a few girls, and it was similar to my park-bench experiences from before. It became slightly more serious with Denise, a pretty girl, which I had known in Strasbourg. She worked as a secretary for an insurance broker, and as the ultimate in convenience, she had a key to the office. But, I followed my father's advice, who used to tell me: "When a girl starts looking into windows of furniture stores, it's time to stop!" Not that there was much furniture on display at that time, I had to bite into that bitter apple.

Beside these, not unpleasant occupations, we had to spend a lot of time for food supplies. In the fall, with some friends, we went to the woods, to collect chestnuts. At home we peeled them and let them dry thoroughly, and then we ground them up in the coffee-grinder, and with this delicious flour, mother baked cookies. But with mother, it was a hopeless case, because most of those cookies ended up among the kids of the neighborhood. My parents had some experiences of food shortages from the first World War, but even while there was a great lack of fats, meats and bread, we managed pretty nicely. At least father was in reasonable good shape again. And this was only due to mother's excellent care of him, which made him angry and grouchy. But, like all of us, he was frightened, besides being a born worrier from way back.

But there weren't any news, which could have caused any optimism. While the French radio was jubilant about the Nazi's military successes, the BBC (British Broadcasting Co.) was not cheerful at all. They found it hard to conceal their concern. And then, on that fatal 7th of December 1941, those world-shattering words: "Pearl Harbor !" For once, Radio Paris was not too vociferous. Hadn't the Vichy Government just handed Indo-China on a platter to those treacherous Japs ? But with great joy did they announce the total destruction of the greater part of the American navy. They did not even know how close to the truth they were. It was indeed a disastrous loss. When three days later, President Roosevelt declared war on Germany and Italy, people became somewhat more hopeful. Never will I forget when, on the afternoon of December 11 in our workshop, we were all crowded around the radio to listen to Hitler's speech in his so-called Parliament. Of course I was the only one to translate, including his verbal abuse of the Jews when he declared war on the U.S.A. The opinion of everybody was: "C'est la fin de ces assassins!" *(This is the end of these murderers!)* All the older Périgourdins memories had fond of the "Yankés" who, in the last war had a large staging area across the river. The veterans did appreciate, that they had helped them to finish the Boches, even a little late. All over town, the prevailing opinion was, that now, the Nazis having to fight both the Russians in the East and, hopefully soon the Allies in the West, they would be crushed between those two fronts. How much time, how many, many lives did it take to prove them right?

All over occupied Europe, the Jews had to wear the yellow Star of David. Thanks to Roosevelt's Ambassador in Vichy and his influence, we in this zone were still exempt from this. But almost daily did we hear through the grapevine, about the beginning of important deportations of Jews to the East. And this was now also happening right around us, even some people we knew. How frustrating it was, and there was no way for us to help, while our fears grew daily.

FALLING IN LOVE

Mother's cousin, Alfred Kahn, his wife Meta and his two daughters Hilde and Margot were living around the corner from us. They too were refugees from the Alsace. Alfred was a very sick man and beside that, they were not well off financially. Meta and Hilde did work at home for a lingerie factory, and mother helped them with their sewing, but also with food and money. So much goodness and generosity in that little lady! In the worst situations she found happiness and satisfaction when she was able to help the unfortunates. Hilde had a girlfriend with whom she had gone to the Lycée in Périgueux *(High-school)*, and where they had passed the first part of the Baccalaureate together. (Academically slightly above our High-school diploma). Coming from similar backgrounds and having studied hard together they were close friends. And that is where and how I got to know my future wife, lovely Hedy Weill.

Right after she had passed that exam, Hedy had a severe case of pleurisy. As her father had some very serious cardiac problems, they had spent most of the previous summer at La Bouboule, a mountain spa in the center of France. At the time of school, reopening she had a relapse. In those days, treatments and medications were not as advanced as they are today, and the only remedy, was complete bed rest. Hilde went to visit her almost daily and brought her books, which she devoured. As a matter of fact, as I was the only one with a library card, I used to supply all our Jewish neighbors with reading material.

When Hedy was allowed to spend some hours out of bed and as they were living very close to us, Hilde pestered me to come along on a visit to her friend. Do I remember that first encounter with Hedy? Well, it was a friendly, warm reception, and I felt quiet at ease with the three Weill's. But what comes mostly back into my memory, were the news of the BBC announcing the surrender of Hong Kong to the Japs. It was Christmas 1941, and since that sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the news of the successes of the Axis partners, on all fronts were more than depressing.

Once I had overcome my first shyness, my visits to the Weill's became more and more frequent. In those days, etiquette was not as permissive as it is today, and Hedy was always properly chaperoned and we were hardly ever alone. At the beginning, I went there feeling sorry for her, being bored at home, trying to justify a reason to myself. But it turned differently, and everytime I came back from there, I felt more comfortable and attracted to her. I found her very easy to talk to, well read, well educated and thoroughly informed about the disturbing events of the present times. But her optimism was very prevailing and she managed to pull her parents out of their fears.

I became more and more fascinated with Hedy. God was she pretty! Dark hair, olive skin, chiseled face. She was not just a nice looking seventeen years old. Of course, she was that! Everything about her was wonderful. There was nothing set or fixed about her face. It was not just a lifeless, comely icon that could make the cover of a magazine, but a living thing. One moment it was just plain attractive, and beautiful the next. With strength, combined with delicacy, she appeared dour when she concentrated, and then again wonderful when she smiled. Her deep dark eyes were the dominant features, at once conveying an impression of everything she was and all she secretly felt. Not ever could she hide her likes and dislikes, until she closed

those beautiful eyes, who had mirrored her goodness and dignity.

Papa Albert Weill was a tall, heavy set man with a loud voice At times he sounded rather strict, tough and somewhat opinionated. Once I became better acquainted with him, I found out that he was all bark and no bite. He was really, deep down a very good, decent softhearted and charitable person. He adored his pretty "fillette" *(little girl)*, was proud of her, spoiling her as much as he could. His first wife had died at a rather young age, leaving him alone with their young son, Jean. At the time of the Blitzkrieg (May 1940), Jean's regiment was overrun in the Maginot-line and taken to a prisoner of war camp in Germany. His parents and sister, of course, worried constantly about him, but luckily he survived the war, not the worst for wear. It was almost an oddity, that the Nazis did not make any distinction in their treatment between Jewish and Gentile prisoners.

Mr. Weill was born 1872 in Wissembourg (Alsace), which, after the French defeat of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71 had just been incorporated into the newly formed German-Reich. Right after finishing elementary school, Albert's parents sent him to Paris, to begin his apprenticeship with an Alsatian butcher. He remained there for five to six years, and he spoke French like a real Parisian. It seems, there was a slight problem with a girl, and he went to Landau (Germany), not far from where he was born. There, he opened a butcher shop, became well known and respected in the community. He got married, and Jean was born. When World War One began, he managed to stay out of German army thanks to some cardiac problems and his overweight. Due to the food shortage, and especially of meat, he had to give up his butchering towards the end of the war. As a born Alsatian he obtained his French citizenship and with this passport he was able to travel within Europe. He established business relations in Spain, from where he imported sweet wines, which were used to raise the sugar content of the dryer German wines.

Mama Lisa was a very pretty lady, soft spoken but somewhat subdued by her very dominant husband, which did not interfere with their lasting love affair. I got to know this wonderful woman when, after Albert's death, she was living with us for the last fifteen years of her life. Then, Hedy, Claude and I were on the receiving end of her goodness, affection and, devotion. She raised our son, became his slave, and loved every moment of it. She was born Lisa Beisinger in Gondelsheim (in the German South-West) in the year 1888. I don't remember too much of her background. Her father died at a young age, and she did not recall much of him. While her two sons were grown up, her mother moved with her three daughters to Bruchsal in Baden, a neighboring midsize town, and where she opened a millinery shop, where her girls had to help. Some friends who had known Lisa as a young girl remembered her as a raving beauty, of which she retained a lot in her older years. Apparently there was not much money for a dowry, which was mandatory in those days; otherwise such a pretty girl would have been married in no time at all. She told us that, despite these shortcomings she had several serious suitors. But her mother refused to give her consent as long as there was still an older, unmarried sister in the family. Such were the old fashioned conceptions and ideas at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Claude's grandmother was already in her thirties when she met Albert, a widower with a son, and she married him almost immediately, without her mom's permission. Mother Beissinger must have been a difficult lady! While Albert doted on his pretty wife, her relationship with Jean, her stepson was rather difficult. His late mother's

sisters, who had tried to replace her, encouraged Jean in his attitude against Lisa. But Hedy's birth brought some magic into that family. The brother, in his early teens accepted and adored his pretty, little sister, and thought that he had to hide this newfound affection for this gorgeous girl behind certain gruffness. Later, in this country, the aunts accepted the three of us as closest relatives and were most helpful to us in many ways.

Jean and Hedy were both born in Landau, and due to father Albert's French citizenship, they were automatically French nationals. In 1934, indeed, Jean was called to perform his military service in France for a two years stint. On his first furlough, in civilian clothes of course, he was' visiting in Landau, some Nazi-ruffians threw bricks and broke most windows in the house. For ten year old Hedy, this was a frightening experience, and she always bore a scar on her left arm from a cut by flying glass. After an official protest by the local French consul, the town paid for all the repairs and stationed a permanent police guard in front of the house. After this fearful incident, the Weill's decided it was time to leave Hitler's Germany. At that time, the fleeing Jews were allowed to take along not more than a very small percentage of their assets. As the Weill's were under the protection of the French government, there was no restriction to taking out all their goods and assets. They took advantage of that loophole, by taking along virtually loads of their friends' assets on their move to France. They settled at 2 Rue de Kembs at Strasbourg. They spent five, relatively happy years there in their snug home, and Hedy went to school there, and overcame the difficulty of a new language in no time at all. She was an outstanding student, with many friends.

During that rather mild winter of 1941-42, my visits to the Weill's became more and more frequent. I had not given up my little affairs with other girls, but they did not seem as important as before, but one had to keep up a certain status, after all. But it lost its importance, and some new feelings started to be born within me. What happened? Was I hooked? You bet your sweet life! Best thing that could have happened!

Spring started early in 1942, and when the warm sun began to shine through the clouds, Hedy was allowed outside. Among the budding flowers she looked radiant. Finally came the Saturday night, when I could, for the first time, take her out to the movies. I shall never forget that evening. Even now, when I see a chestnut tree in bloom, I can still see, when, on our way home, at the river embankment called l'Arsault, we exchanged our first timid kisses. So spontaneous, so innocent and so very, very important. Something new, something beautiful had come into being. We had reached a milestone! Hallelujah, we were in love!!

That summer remained unforgettable. We were always together. Hedy was blossoming. She was beautiful, and we were proud to show that great happiness which had come into our lives. It was like a vacation and a reprieve before the hard times which were ahead of us. We went swimming in the river. We rode our bikes to the outlaying farms, trying to find some additional food. After work, I took care of our vegetable garden, and Hedy helped me. We were Inseparable. My parents became very fond of her, and made her feel at home in our tiny apartment. And I felt just as comfortable at the Weill's. However much we were accepted, we could sense an undercurrent of jealousy among our parents. They felt, that our great love, which drew us together, was also taking us away from their bosoms. I can understand those feelings so well. One never wants to accept the growing up, or

rather the growing-out-of-the-house of one's children. So much love and affection was heaped on the children, and now, another person will replace all that. And now, our dear parents needed our care and love so much more, arid we were not able to give it to them. But even far away, they never lost our love. Today, with all of them in heavens, I still have guilty pangs for not having done enough for them. They were so self-denying and unselfish and never have I heard the slightest reproach from them.

The future was a great obstacle to our dreams. We had to remain realistic and down to earth. Without mentioning the word, we considered ourselves bound and engaged for ever. Marriage seemed to be just a vision, but it was easy to picture what it would be. But, when it finally happened, after too long a wait, the real thing turned out to be way above our expectations. This was such an easy love affair, and everybody knew, that, if and when we would get out of this dark situation, nothing, but nothing could keep us from this last beautiful step. Thanks, dear God in heavens, ultimately it did happen.

The news of the world was getting worse. Radio Paris and Radio Vichy were jubilant about the military successes of the Axis. Sad defeats of the Allies at Bataan, Tobruk, Sevastopol, and Dieppe. In June, Laval, the French premier declared without shame "I wish for a German victory." It did not endear him to most of his fellow country men. How depressing were the news from the BBC. At eight each evening, we listened religiously to the words from London. They tried to minimize but not ignore, all these defeats and losses, but there was little of a positive nature to report, beside the saturation bombing of German towns by the Allied Air forces. They made allusions of deportations of Jews, and very faintly were the mass killings mentioned. Then, first as a rumor, did we hear about the arrest of twenty thousand Jews in Paris and their incarceration in the Vélodrome d'Hiver. This did not come over the radio, but it was confirmed when, the following Sunday, the Archbishop of Mauntoban denounced this inhumane shame from his pulpit. He accused the French police of having surprised their Nazi masters by the zeal and enthusiasm they brought to this revolting task. (There were exceptions, of course)

While the military advances of the Nazis seemed to be overwhelming, and not to stop, the outlook for us Jews became more and more frightening. We managed to maintain a rather regular correspondence with our relatives in neutral Barcelona, and also with those in the U.S.A. Uncle Rudy advised me to apply for a Spanish visa at the consulate at Pau, in the French Pyrénées. In veiled language, he made us understand, that I might be able to buy a visa there. At the consulate, I was informed by minor employees, that no visas whatsoever were issued for the time being. After begging and insisting, I managed an interview with the Consul, an extremely pleasant and understanding Caballero. I had some kind of affidavit of support from uncle Rudy, but it did not help. However, he advised to hike across the mountains, explained that it should not be too hard to reach Barcelona undetected, and once there, our relatives would find a way to help us not to be repatriated to France. I was very much impressed how candid this gentleman was and it reminded me of the many Spaniards, which I had met in the foreign-Légion. But it did not help me at all.

This did not sound very promising for my parents, who were not physically able to make this long hike through the mountains. Oh, how I hated to come back with such discouraging news. But on that trip I was able to test my new French identity card,

which passed inspection by police in the train with flying colors. Indeed, just a few weeks ago, one of my friends at work, Jojo Faure, who had a relative, working at the Préfecture in a responsible position, supplied us with fake identity-cards. They were issued to Marcel (Max), Antoinette (Toni), and myself, Albert Ehrard, all bona fide Alsatiens. Those cards were usually sold at a steep price, but Jojo absolutely refused to accept any payment I offered him. With those documents, my parents were able to leave Périgueux a few months later to Tence, and save their lives. In my book, this decent Jojo belongs among the "Righteous Gentiles" at Yad-Vashem (Jerusalem). He was a veteran of the First World War, and he rejoiced in the excitement of hoodwinking the Boches. Well, let's never forget, that quiet a few Frenchmen are deserving of our gratitude, and without their help, we would probably not be among the survivors of those terrible years. Merci! beloved France.

In September (1942), mother's four cousins Kahn, with whom I had served together (in the Foreign Légion) were deported to Eastern-Europe. After their discharge, they leased and operated a small farm near Agen. The overambitious Vichy-milicia turned them over to the Nazis, and they were never heard of again. My Uncle Hugo Kahn, the Sergeant from Epinal, was living with Aunt Edith and cousin Walter in Aix-en-Provence. Mother used to send periodic little food parcels to her nephew, but late in September, the last package came back with "Moved. Address Unknown." The demise of my aunt and cousin was confirmed to me about forty years later. My uncle, it seemed, was shot by the Nazis, while in the Resistance. Hedy had two aunts with husbands, who were interned in the Camp de Gurs, in the Pyrénées, and from here a parcel came back, and by now, everybody knew already what terrible fate was happening.

Can you, dear reader realize how we felt about our prospects? Beside the sadness and our frustrations, there was nothing for us, to help all those unfortunate people. Then, we did not quiet know and we could not conceive, what murderous monsters those Germans were. French radio hinted that the deportees would be resettled to work in the East. The BBC hardly mentioned the mass deportations. For political and strategic reasons, the top Allied leaders did not, want to believe the truth. Since, almost a half century later, I have read thousands of pages about the abandonment of European Jewry, by the Allied nations. I will remain ashamed forever of the lack of action of my beloved U.S.A. And my idol, President Roosevelt, who listened to his anti-Semitic people in the State Department using the cowardly excuse: "Let's win the war first." But even Jews in this country, could not believe the incredibly cruel news about the Camps, because they were just that.

A most trustworthy member of the Polish government in exile, Jan Karski, had succeeded to infiltrate his unfortunate country, and returned to London in December 1942. He had witnessed the fate of the Jews in Eastern Europe, and obtained phantastic statistics of their extermination from leaders of local underground organizations. He traveled subsequently to Washington with his eye-witnessed reports. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, a Jew born in Vienna, remarked: "I can not doubt your words, but it seems so unbelievable." People did still not see the criminal and cruel Nazi in the presumed cultured and civilized German. (Jan Farski, after the war became a professor at. one of the prestigious universities and has lectured several times on TV about his war-time experiences, and his ignored cries for help.)

Talk about leaving France became more frequent, but officially there was no way out. Borders to the two neutral countries, East and South were shut. Some of our relatives fled to Switzerland. A few were escorted back to France, but most of them made it to the safety of a Swiss internment camp. The rumors from the Spanish border were more promising. My good friend, Jean Firschen came from Toulouse to spend a weekend with us, and of course, most of the conversations were about "Getting out." On his way back, Hedy joined him to go to Perpignan. Her father had an old friend from his hometown in the Alsace. Many years back, Albert did him some favors and they had stayed in touch. In September 1939, he had opened a small hotel with an Alsatian restaurant in Perpignan. It was decided, that Hedy would take the long and unpleasant trip to inquire about a safe and clandestine way to cross into Spain. It turned out to be the right place, because the lady of the house had excellent connections with smugglers which plied their trade between Spain and France. The three days, that Hedy wan traveling seemed like an eternity. Now, I really was hooked!

Early on a fatal Sunday morning, the 8th of November 1942, I was digging in our garden, when a neighbor was passing on his bike: "T'as entendu, les Américains ont débarqué au Maroc?" *(Americans have landed in Morocco)* "Dis donc, tu blagues?" *(Are you kidding?)* "No, I swear, London just made a special announcement!" I ran upstairs, and tried every station on the radio. Nothing. My skeptical father was laughing: "That joker was pulling your leg. You believe everything." Later at Hedy's she greeted me with the news from Radio Paris, announcing a landing attempt of the Anglo-Saxons in North, Africa, stopped cold by the courageous French army there. Hundreds of American and British ships destroyed. It sounded again like another defeat for the forces of goodness. But, finally the next day, the BBC came out with an understated message: "Successful landing of Allied forces under command of General Eisenhower. French regular army ending resistance and joining our contingents in our fight against the Nazi-scourge. Vichy declaring war on the Allies." And then, typical Churchill: "This is not the end. Not even the beginning of the end. But it is the end of the beginning!"

How right he was. But there still remained thirty-one months of "Blood, Sweat and Tears." In the streets, in the stores, at work, there was happiness on people's faces, more stance in their walking. But the joy was subdued. The great euphoria from the tine of the Russia invasion was not repeated. We had witnessed so many German victories. So much water between Africa and Europe. But, I don't believe, that there were many who did not pray for Allied successes. The news of the French Army joining the Allies brought back some pride. It allowed people to forget that French volunteers in German uniforms with Tricolore insignias were fighting on the Nazi side against the Russians. We were holding our breath, because nobody believed, that the Boches would take this affront of the French Army in North Africa without retaliations.

It was a short wait. November 11, Armistice Day, used to be a national holiday, but under German pressure, it was of course abolished. On my way to work, early that morning, there was a Nazi armored company parked on and around Place Francheville. Looks as if the occupation had started. I was not surprised, but it was no small shock to see the enemy at such close range. Life went on as if nothing had changed. I hate to admit, they looked well groomed, well fed, well behaved, and rather friendly. Their equipment was spotless. Much later, I was told that all these soldiers were no trouble, however, now under the orders of the Gestapo, Pétain's

Militia executed the commandments of the Nazis with the greatest of zeal and enthusiasm. They exerted pressure on young Frenchmen to "volunteer" for work in Germany, which was rather coercion. Rumors among the Jews made their rounds in a frightening way. At that time, it seemed that all those over the age of fifty, with legal residence permit were still protected, but nobody under this age.

A few days later, after lunch, my friend Jojo said: "get out!" He just talked with his cousin from the Préfecture, and this was to be taken seriously. He offered to safeguard our few valuables and after the war, not a piece was missing. The same day, Hedy received a veiled message from Perpignan, informing her, that a passeur *(guide)* was available, to take us over the Spanish border through mountain trails. My parents were not willing to take this risky hike, and Hedy's refused absolutely to leave France, as long as Jean was still in a prisoner camp in Germany. But hard as it was for them, they insisted that Hedy should leave. I found myself in a terrible predicament. All of a sudden, the responsibility for Hedy terrified me. To dream, of someday being married and together for ever was one thing, but to be dependable to each other was something new. For the past two years I had taken care of my parents and that was no burden at all for me, but to walk now into this great uncertainty with a "wife," was hard to grasp. There was no doubt in my mind that Hedy was the only one for me, and our feelings for each other were not just the ones of a short flirt. But for the formalities, we would have gotten married immediately, and a lot of heartbreak later on would have been avoided.

The danger to be arrested, especially for myself, became more acute everyday, and I did riot dare to sleep home anymore. With another friend, we spent our nights in my boss's tool shed, close to our house. The preparations for our depart were not many, but mentally we were not ready at all, and we might not have left, if Hedy's parents had not insisted so urgently. They did not think of themselves, but thought that their girl's chances of survival in staying were not great. Poor Hedy, never away from her parents, spoiled, always cared for, and now on her way into an uncertain world at war. There were no plans for the future, and all we had to take along that road was that great love for each other. Our parents took for granted, that we would get married as soon as possible. My parents did not have the slightest hesitation to accept Hedy as their daughter. Mother and Hedy had become quiet close, and mother admitted that I would never find anybody with Hedy's qualities. Even in later years, she was never jealous of my wife, while my father was. For him, I always was the little boy, and he found it hard to forgive her, that she made a husband of me. And with all that, he just adored her. For him, I grew up to be a responsible adult only after I lost Hedy.

We left Périgueux on a late afternoon train on November 25, 1942. Will we ever see this town again? Those were heartbreaking goodbyes, and I do not wish to remember them. For Hedy, it was the last time, that she embraced her father. Early on that rainy, unfriendly morning, which underlined our mood, I checked our heavy backpacks at the station. I left work early, and everybody there put their arms around me affectionately, promising to pray for us. Well, we were in great need for those prayers. My father took Hedy to the station at the other side of town, while I entered the train with our bags at the main terminal. Hedy did not want her parents to see her off, but from the window I witnessed the emotional parting between her and my father. All seats in my compartment were taken, and, without seeming to know me, she sat down in the next one. Little later, she joined me in the corridor, where I was smoking. And, there, in the sight of the other travelers, two strangers

started a conversation. Could they see how much love there was between us?

At Agen, three hours later, we had to change trains, and, of course I helped my new acquaintance with her bags. As we blended in so well with the other voyagers, we decided to stop that silly playacting, and we were lucky to find seats together in the next train. We settled down at once with arms around each other, and for our fellow travelers we were just a couple of young lovers. They just did not know how much we were that. After the next stop, somebody said: "Les Boches are coming to check papers" Hedy was trembling, not for herself, but horrified about my phony documents. A gruff mannered French gendarme asked for identity-cards, while two friendly looking, elderly Germans, carrying machine pistols could not care less what was going on. Again, my counterfeit papers passed inspection. What a relief! Drained by fear, we fell asleep in each other's arms immediately. Surrounded by strangers, this was the first time we ever slept together. How innocent but how unforgettable. After a couple of hours, we both woke up at the same time. "Alors, les amants, on a bien dormi?" *(Did the lovers sleep well?)* A very friendly fellow traveler had broken the tension in that compartment and everybody was smiling. Hedy was laughing, the first time since quiet a while with that special warm laughter of hers, tears rolling down her cheeks. Hedy had such a special gift, to appreciate any good deed, any kind word, even from total strangers. She had a grace to love life, even in such precarious situations.

At Toulouse we left this train, where Hedy had to change to the one for Perpignan. I had planned to stay overnight, to convince friend Jean to join us on our escape to Spain. But he absolutely refused. He had opted to try to get into Switzerland. He figured, that from Spain, we would have to go to either North Africa or Israel, and he wanted to remain in Europe and to rebuild his life right after the war, which he thought could not be too far away. He was lucky, and made it, not without difficulties to a Swiss internment camp. Somewhat later he found his wonderful wife and after a few struggling years, prosperity and fame were his in that beautiful country.

Toulouse just became headquarters of the occupation forces, and the town was full of Nazi troops. Tanks, armored carriers, self-propelled guns, jeeps and other ordnance were parked all over this otherwise peaceful looking town. We spent the night in the apartment of Jean's friend, because he did not dare to come near his own, afraid of the French Militia, which had been very busy arresting Jews. Next morning we made our goodbyes, with the promise to remain in touch. (After ten years of many letters we met again and only his death interrupted a wonderful friendship). Yes, we were very close friends.

That afternoon, at the station in Perpignan, Hedy was waiting for me. How wonderful to hold that pretty and lovely girl in my arms again. We could not go to that place of her father's friend, called the Taverne Alsacienne before evening, and as it was raining very heavily, we wandered from one café to another. At least we were together again to share our fright. But we managed to stay inconspicuous, and the good thing in France is the fact that two lovers do not attract any attention. We both were very nervous and Hedy told me how depressed she was before my arrival. The first time all alone in her life. So suddenly cut off from the love and affection with which her parents had always surrounded her. Having to deal with this void, within fear and uncertainty. And my anxieties were not any less than hers. My new sense of responsibility for her seemed almost unbearable. Was it sufficient to offer

her beside my great love nothing but an ambiguous future? Now, I can still feel those jitters. Was I overcome by an exaggerated sense of prudishness or morality? Did I realize at that moment that our relationship was not just a passing fling, but that we were bound together by fate and love? But apparently this was deeply and solidly embedded.

Never, neither in thought nor in deed have I ever betrayed Hedy's trust. When I suggested to look for a room, she declared with tears in those deep, revealing eyes: "No, no I don't ever want you to leave me alone. I want you more than I thought I did and I don't have any problems with you, with myself and the whole world!"

FLIGHT FROM THE NAZIS

That evening, after picking up my bags at the station, we stole our way into the Taverne Alsacienne through a backdoor. There was a tiny maid's room under the gables with an iron bed, a washstand and rather cold. Madame had given instructions to stay out of sight, keep the blackout curtains drawn, and make as little noise as possible. She brought us some food, and locked the door. But the house was very noisy, and it seemed that the restaurant and the few rooms were full of Germans. Lots of singing and drunken shouting. The rooms beneath us seemed to change occupants quiet frequently. But we could not have had a better protection from police searches. The French Milicia did not dare to enter where only the occupiers were frolicking.

And there, with this background was the beginning of our very own night, the launching of our fulfillment. Did it come up to expectations? No, it was not! It was better and it was worse. Two young people at the bursting point of passion. At the edge of mental exhaustion, constantly aware of the dangers surrounding us. With the echo of the hobnailed jackboots of the enemy patrols reaching our room from the street, it was still up here, the language of one body to the other. Of love's soothing pledge for eternity.

Early in the morning, when Madame came to unlock the door, we were ready, fully dressed and the room impeccable. After a very hearty breakfast, we offered to help around the house, which was gladly accepted. Business must have been very good last night judging by the oodles of empty bottles I carried to the bin. We really gave those Alsatiens their money's worth. After a delicious lunch we had to leave, because the help was expected then. By the way, food at the Taverne was excellent. As Madame was catering to the Boches, she had no problems to fill her larder.

Madame had arranged a meeting with Monsieur Xavier, our prospective passeur *(guide)* in a certain café. Almost on the dot a nice, decent and friendly looking farmer walked in, looked around and came straight to our table. "You are Mr. Albert!," then introduced himself and in a very businesslike manner came right to the point, sparing no words. On a crudely drawn map, he traced a mountain path from his house in Arles-sur-Tech to Spain, and described our plan of escape from France. On Monday (Nov. 30, 1942), Hedy should take the bus at noon for Arles, and I was to follow with a later one that afternoon. He did not think it prudent to travel together. Right after my arrival we would have dinner at his house, rest a few hours and leave at midnight. He was hoping there would not be any snowfall, which would make the climb more difficult. He described the trails as tough and primitives. From his house, at an altitude of 1,200 feet, to the border, a point called Roc-de-

France would be an ascent to 4,300 feet, and about eight miles through rugged mountains. (I went back there recently, just to verify these topographical figures) At the border, he would point us in the direction of the first Spanish village, while he was continuing on a different path. He thought, we would need five to six hours to reach Massanet. He warned us that, not too frequently there were border patrols. If they were Boches, he could bribe them to let us go, which apparently he had done already. But the French milicia would let him go, while, certainly they would arrest us, to turn us over to the Nazis, to show them what good "Collaborateurs" they are. The price he mentioned, and I do not remember at all, was to be paid half at his house and half at the border. He drained his glass with an: Au revoir. "Au revoir! A mardi!" *(See you on Tuesday)*

And just like that, he walked out. We were perplexed, not able to utter a word. Then, very timidly, Hedy broke the silence: "Does not sound very encouraging, but the man sounds honest by not hiding, the risks. Actually, that is all we have and I think we can trust him."

We left the café, and to get out of the rain, we joined a line at the nearby movie-theater. After a few minutes, looking at the back of the queue, I saw a young man wearing a leather coat, with a pretty girl on his arm. I pulled Hedy away, and said: "Let's get out of here." Hedy was all surprised, when I directed her to another bistro.

There, I explained my sudden behavior. Yesterday morning, on the platform of the Toulouse station, I was waiting for the train to Perpignan. With my heavy knapsack, and clothing showing the wear and tear of the past three years of the war, I looked quiet inconspicuous among the few civilians in a crowd of mostly Nazi uniforms. A heavyset and tall young man, wearing a long leather coat, a beret and also a backpack, began to draw me into a conversation, in slightly accented French. An alarm went off in my mind: "I bet this is a Gestapo agent, he certainly looked it. Careful! Actually, some of these monsters do resemble human beings." If he would ask me for my fake papers, would they stand muster? If he were one of them, I was finished!

A very profound, intellectual chat began, with earth shattering subjects like the weather the food shortages and other banalities. But then he shifted to this innocent remark: "So many people are going South." Well...so did my heart, way into my shoes. "Oh yeah, you don't say! I am going to Carcassonne, where I have a job as an electrician." And then, luckily, the train arrived, and in the assault on the seats, I managed to loose him in the crowd. And now, I explained to Hedy, that Mr. Leathercoat, with the pretty girl on his arm, was my presumed Gestapo from the Toulouse station. Hedy had seen him too, and she pegged him, correctly as I later found out, as a refugee like us: "I think he looks too nice to be one of the Nazis." (And here I have to ask you, dear reader, to join me into a jump into the future).

Two months later, in the exercise yard of the prison in Barcelona, feeling a hand on my shoulder, I turn around, and there stands this very Mr. Leathercoat, and without preamble: "Why didn't you react to my hint? Are you stupid or something? Was it so difficult for you to understand that I was trying to escape too?" "Eh, say, who calls whom stupid? Didn't you know that talking to strangers is most dangerous for your health, with all those Nazis around? They are all over Europe to trip guys like us!" "Well, you certainly are right, but it took me several weeks until I found a 'Passeur.'" Only for a few more days did we meet on our short, once a day exercise

periods, and then he was gone. Lucky him.

His name was Bob, and despite of his looking like an Arian Nazi, he was a full-blooded American from the state of Indiana. In September 1939, when war started, he was studying Art in Paris. At the time of France's surrender, he fled with his school to the unoccupied Vichy-France. He intended to return to the U.S.A., but when he heard about the start of the Draft lottery in October, 1940, he thought it more pleasant to remain in France, instead of exposing himself to the Draft, and being inducted into the military service, upon his return home. But after the Allie's landing in North-Africa, and Pétain's declaring a state of war with them, Bob realized that he would be interned as an enemy-alien, and decided to join the exodus to Spain. Once securely in jail, there, he managed to reach the U.S. consul, who had him repatriated to: "God's country."

In August of the following year (1943), I was a patient at the Army hospital of **Camp Atterbury** (Indiana). During my entire stay in the American Army, I was known by my nickname "Frenchie," and one day, a nurse told me about a paralyzed Sergeant in her care who, hearing my name wanted to meet me to speak French with me. When I entered the room, the bed was in a corner by the window, I heard somebody shouting:

"No, that's not for real! I don't believe it!" But I was not any less flabbergasted. It was Bob. "What are you doing here? I thought they threw the keys away when they locked you up in Barcelona !" Good old Bob. Always the joker even paralyzed from the waist down. This unbelievable encounter made the rounds of the wards. We became celebrities, and everybody wanted to know, if we were on the same chain-gang.

We filled each other in with our rather adventurous experiences since February of the past year. After his discharge from the jail in Barcelona, he was repatriated to his parent's home in Indiana. But the draft board did not give him much time to relax from his travels, and he was almost immediately called to serve in the Air force. After training as a tail gunner in a B-29, he was shipped to England. Returning from a successful bombing mission over Northern Germany, they were attacked and damaged by a pursuit plane. As the ballad said: "They made it home on one wing and a prayer!" But poor Bob was hit by a piece of shrapnel in his spine. When his condition had somewhat stabilized, he was flown from the hospital in England to this one, which was the closest to his parent's home.

And that's how a fickle fate had brought us to meet again. A far way from the Toulouse railroad station to the almost center of the United States. My visits to his room always drew a large audience. While my descriptions were rather dry, his were embellished by a large dose of exaggeration helped by his indestructible sense of humor. I got to meet his very nice parents, and also quiet a few very pretty girlfriends, who came to visit him. When he was ready to graduate to a wheelchair, the doctors did not think he would ever be able to do without it, but he used to laugh off these sad predictions. After my return to duty, I visited him many times until we left for Europe. I then wrote to him frequently, but the first answer came many months later in a letter from his mother. She told me, that during a trial visit at home, he developed some serious complications, had to return to the hospital, where a few days later, he passed away. The end of a very short friendship. Like so many, he gave his life to our country, and we owe them all so much gratitude. "May

they rest in peace."

But now, back to Perpignan, where our fears had not been alleviated by our conversation with Monsieur Xavier, I had the address of a Rabbi, who, with help from American-Jewish organizations (the Joint) was assisting refugees, mainly from the neighboring Camps where they had been incarcerated, to escape. This of course was a secret underground operation. When I rang the bell I had to submit to some safety precautions, like reading from a Hebrew book and dropping my pants. Then somebody agreed to talk to me. I told him about our meeting with our prospective passeur, he asked me his name. They knew him, and recommended him highly. He also advised to get in touch with the Joint, and recommended to drop our assumed identity in Spain. To my great relief, he also stated that lately, the Spanish authorities had not repatriated any fugitives to France. (Something the Swiss did.) With this encouragement our prospects looked somewhat brighter, but the fear was still there, and we knew that it would not leave us until securely locked up in a Spanish prison.

To get in shape for this long route to freedom, we took a hike to the beach *(le Canet)* a roundtrip of more than ten miles. The rain had stopped and it was a mild day. The view of the beautiful Mediteranée would have been lovely, but it was spoiled by the German constructions crews building their fortifications there. But holding my pretty bride's hands made me forget for a fleeting moment, the predicament we were in. Overcome by fear, loneliness and anxieties, I still did not know where to find courage and energy to go through with our flight to a questionable freedom. But I could not tell Hedy about these negative feelings. I was also overwhelmed by my responsibilities towards her, and my doubts about how I would be able to take care of her. But her confidence and optimism helped both of us. I can never be grateful enough that she refused to share my low spirits. Again and again, she assured me that this was her choice, soberly taken, because there was no other way to escape a fate more terrible than we could even imagine at that time.

Tuesday, December 1, 1942 was the fatal day. To lighten Hedy's bag, I put as many of her heavier things into mine, but hers was still very weighty. These were all our possessions in this world. My friend Simon Berger, had sewn some gold coins, into Hedy's handbag and two hundred dollar bills into my old army belt. It was not much, but still more than other fellow refugees had. After breakfast and after helping in kitchen and yard like the other days, we made our goodbyes to our hosts. They did not want to take any money from us, and after insisting, they made a ridiculously small bill. These Alsatiens were bona fide collaborators, but they were most helpful to us. After the war, we tried to contact them, but they seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. I would not be surprised, if they were shot after the Nazis left. I helped Hedy with her heavy backpack into the midday bus. German soldiers were lounging around the terminal, and we both felt our hearts beating in our throats. Would they ask for our papers? Would they ask for our destination and the purpose of this trip? Even with answers rehearsed again and again we could not help being frightened. "Good bye, my love! Let's hope everything will work out all right."

After a listless wandering about town, I took the later bus. I blended in well with the other passengers. This bus was called a "Gasogène," with a large charcoal burner mounted on the back. The gases from that combustion were directed into the

carburetor. There was no gasoline available for the poor French because the Nazis had requisitioned every drop of it to run their war machine. One must complement the French for their ingenuity, to be able to keep up some kind of traffic and communications with shortages of everything needed for that. A very slow ride of two hours, who seemed to me as an eternity, scared out of my wits. The snow covered mountains of the Pyrénées, on my left, very steep I, rugged and not a bit inviting. Those we will have to cross this night. If Hedy were not waiting for me in Arles, I probably would have left the bus at the next stop. Later, she told me that she had the same thoughts.

Arriving at Arles, I found Monsieur Xavier's farmhouse easily. What a pleasure to see my lovely again. In those few hours, she became quickly acquainted with this large household, and was helping to set the table for "la Soupe" *(Dinner)*. Sitting close to her, and the good food helped us both to lift up our spirits somewhat. Right after cleaning up, everybody went to sleep. We shared a mattress in front of the fireplace, but nervous tension kept us awake.

It was not for long. After some breakfast at eleven o'clock, we shouldered our rucksacks and left this peaceful and friendly home. Exactly as our guide had predicted, it was a clear moonlit night, cold and dry with a biting wind. He started out at a brisk cadence, on a well trodden and gently rising cow path. It was still easy to match his speed. He knew every stone and rut on this trail, which he apparently took every once a week. Besides being a farmer, he was also a smuggler, following in the footsteps of his ancestors, and he too was carrying a heavy backpack with his contraband, to be exchanged in Spain for other merchandise to take back to France. Now with so many people trying to escape from the clutches of the Nazis, his routine trips across the border brought in an additional nice income.

Turning into a narrow and rocky trail, walking became more difficult. At this higher altitude, the air had thinned, and Hedy's breathing became heavier. During a short rest, our guide tied her rucksack on top of mine, and it was not easy for me to keep balance with this heavier load. But Monsieur Xavier was not willing to waste any time, and he was eager to get to the border before daybreak. The effort made Hedy cry silently, but she courageously maintained a stiff upper lip. She was operating on sheer willpower, which was one of her so many qualities. Our guide tied a heavy rope around my waist for Hedy to hold on to. Knowing how hard it was for me, she tried desperately to make herself as light as possible. (Something she kept doing until the end of her days). Just the thought of helping my beloved made it a little easier for me, and gave me some satisfaction. By now, we reached the snow, but we could see the top of the hill with the border of France and Spain.

Hedy was the first one to see three silhouettes against the still dark sky, but our guide had seen them too. Not I, with my load bent over the path. In a low voice, he said: "Les Boches! Quickly behind those rocks over there, where they can't see us!" from our hiding place we saw them walking casually along a trail, parallel with the border. We heard them talking and laughing, and they seemed very relaxed and not threatening at all. Waiting for them to disappear gave us a much needed rest.

After another half hour of painful climbing to the crest, we finally reached the unmarked border. We were somewhat behind our guide's timetable, but it was still dark. He pointed out the direction to Massanet. We settled our finances with him, and after some encouraging words he was off to his destination. He was honest and

fulfilled his unwritten contract to the letter, contrary to other passeurs, he did not abandon us in the wilderness. He left us only when he was certain that we would not get lost in those mountains.

Up there in the snow at 4,300 feet, it was still too cold to rest and sit down for more than just a few minutes. On a southern descent we continued now at a slower pace, and the snow began to thin out and a new day started. With the sun rising into an azure sky, our spirits also lifted. In the early morning sunshine, the mountains, so threatening yesterday, looked so peaceful now. And there, next to me, hand in hand, walked that beautiful girl. Those deep, dark eyes were reflecting the rays of the raising sun. There was a calm and serenity about her, which I will never forget. The pain of the effort during our ascent seemed to be behind her. We were walking on a cloud, even knowing that complete freedom and liberty were not in the cards for us yet.

Walking in a southeasterly direction, the sun was warming our faces. Hedy insisted to carry her own bag again, and our re-born optimism was lessening the weight of our burden. When the dew on the grass had dried off, we stopped near a tiny mountain stream. With the delicious farm bread and apples, a gift from Madame Xavier, we drank the crystal clear water of the icy brook. We had a feast and fell asleep right after the last bite. But the sub consciousness of a still long walk ahead of us shortened this rest period.

The downhill path, which dropped to the same altitude as our ascent of the night, seemed to be more comfortable. At least we could walk at our own pace, and we did not have to follow Monsieur Xavier's quicksteps. It still was a long hike. When the sun had turned into the western sky, around a bend, we passed the first fenced in fields and pastures with some sheep grazing peacefully. There appeared a church steeple over the roofs of what we were hoping to be Massanet. Before we saw anybody, we heard people talking animatedly, and laughing. And then, around a sharp curve in the path, two uniformed men and a woman between them appeared. The men were carrying rifles and black, lacquered three cornered hats. When the lady saw us she shouted in perfect French and it sounded almost like a joke: "You are escapees? No? Don't be afraid of these policemen, they'll just arrest you, but won't harm you!" Coming closer, they immediately handcuffed Hedy to me. Then came the rather relaxed introductions and surrendering of our papers. We were expecting something like that, but could not help being terrified. The lady translated and explained what, by then we realized that we had been arrested by these Guardia-Civiles because we did not have a valid entry visa into Spain. Earlier that afternoon, she was arrested with two escapees whom she had escorted across the border. She had requested to be repatriated to France, and she told us, that taking fugitives across the border was a weekly routine for her lately. Then: "These Guardias love French money, and if you have enough of it to pay for food and a night at the hotel, they'll leave you there until tomorrow afternoon, when they'll take you to the jail in Figueras (county seat in the province of Catalunia). And don't worry, they won't repatriate to France unless you ask for it as I did."

And with that she continued with one of the policemen on her way to the border, while the other Guardia, after checking our funds, took us to the village. We walked through a poor, not very clean looking community and arrived at a rather rundown looking hotel. The inside looked surprisingly neat and clean, and the Senora luckily spoke some French. The Guardia and her divided our remaining Francs between

themselves. It was a worthwhile investment, and I am sure, it was not much at all. (We had hidden some Spanish Pesetas, which I had bought in Toulouse, successfully) The policeman insisted that we stay in the inn, after removing the handcuffs.

After some Café au Lait for the four of us, a long forgotten luxury, she took us to our room. And now, a half century later, closing my eyes, I can still see it. How this small white room, with a white bed, a large dark crucifix over it, surrounded us and our love. There was, of course, no bath nor shower and the toilet was in, the yard. But they let me pickup many pails of water for our last thorough ablutions in a long time to come. We had arrived at a state of such utter exhaustion, mental and physical, that we were hardly able to relax. As we could not sit still, and were not allowed outside the house, we got busy to help in the kitchen and yard, which was highly appreciated. After working off some of our frustrations, back in our room, in a light embrace we went over the events of the past few days, and we were relieved to realize, that the danger of being caught by the Nazis was at least, hopefully, not as intense any more. But we both shared the guilt-feeling of having left our helpless parents behind in that danger. WE remained burdened with that complex for a long time yet. We composed a letter to my relatives in Barcelona, to advise them of our arrival in Spain, and our new address in the Figueras prison.

They called us for "la Cena" *(dinner)*, and in the taproom we met our fellow prisoners, whom that French lady had brought here. A young man, my age, and his uncle, a physician in his mid-fifties, of German-Jewish origin, they had escaped from a Camp near Perpignan (Rivesaltes). The rabbi, whom I had seen a few days ago, had arranged that Passeur for them. After exchanging our experiences we shared our joy and satisfaction that we had made it so far. The simple dinner was excellent, and it was the last one for a long time also. Then, dead tired, but very wound up, we went early to bed. A night of love and belonging. A night of being "One." How compelling this compassionate affection can be, when set in motion in such precarious conditions. For ever cherished memories. Never to be forgotten.

We both awoke before dawn, too nervous to stay in bed; we went out to help around house and yard. The work was almost a tonic. Much later our newfound friends came out and we had breakfast with them and our Guardias. Our bags had been repacked, with Hedy's things in hers and mine in my own. After very cordial goodbyes, the Senora had a large package of food for all of us. She invited us to come back after the war, which, of course we promised to do. But Hedy, after that tough hike did not think, she would ever want to see mountains again. (Twenty years later, crossing Switzerland from North to South, she declared that the sight of the mountains made her nauseous.)

Here I have to stray from our story somewhat, to give a short explanation of the people's compassionate feelings for us, the underdogs. In the summer of 1936, a fratricidal civil war had erupted, to last for almost three years. Under Franco, the Caudillo, the Fascists were fighting against the socialist/communist Rojos. Hitler and Mussolini, while testing their new armaments, helped Franco to defeat his adversaries. Of course for this assistance, he had to sell his soul to those criminals. The poor Spaniards, on both sides suffered tremendously, and there was no end to murder, destruction, deprivation of human rights and hunger with shortages of most necessities for life. And now, three years later, under the Fascist totalitarian domination, the population had not recovered yet from that cruel war. But while

volunteers of the "Division Azul" were fighting on the Nazi's side on the Russian front, Franco managed to maintain a shaky neutrality, playing to both sides of the belligerent powers. We were more than lucky that he cooperated with the Allies as far as we, the fugitives were concerned. But officially, the authorities never let us forget that their sympathies were with the Axis powers. But they also were smart enough to realize, that the probable victory of the allied Democracies, and the "left" leanings of most Spaniards, their brutal Fascist government will see its end. As we were victims of the dictators, like the people in the streets, they shared our hatred and also our fears of criminals like Hitler, Mussolini, Hirohito and, yes, Franco also. There was a mutual understanding between them and us.

PRISONERS IN SPAIN

An old decrepit bus picked us up at the door. Handcuffed again, the four of us with our friendly Guardia took the rear seats. It was a long, not very comfortable ride, but we were in no hurry to be locked up in prison. We were glad with every mile which took us a little further away from the French border. People boarding the bus were not surprised to see us, and apparently they were used to see those prospective jailbirds for the last few weeks, since the border crossings had turned into a mass exodus.

It was dusk when we arrived in Figueras. It must have been a hilarious sight for the onlookers in the street. After the darkness of war where we came from, we were swallowed by the lazy, swarming crowds. Sidewalk cafés were packed and the streetlamps poured cascades of light over the crowded pavement. The actors in this show did not seem to know about the apocalypse in which the world was involved at that very moment.

A walk of about a mile brought us to the Jefature de Policia *(Police headquarters)*. There, after removing the handcuffs, our Guardia turned us over to the desk-sergeant. He recommended us as "Gente muy symphatica," *(Nice people)* as if we had been great friends for a long time already. Then he walked off after shaking hands with every one of us. Back in Massanet, he probably went to collect his commission, and with his colleague they considered this a profitable day.

At the police station, the policemen were rather friendly and understanding, taking us into a large, crowded holding cell. We were not the first ones there. We were welcomed by a French couple with two very unhappy, but very pretty girls of eight and ten years of age. Also there were a one-legged bona fide Canadian, two young Dutchmen, and two local women who were caught trading in the black market. Our jailors brought us some coffee and bread, and we shared our lunch-bags with our fellow prisoners. Then, one at a time we were interrogated by the Sergeant, speaking a reasonable French, who made up our files and arrest records.

We spent long hours of that evening, huddled together in a corner, knowing that soon we would be separated. Holding each other tightly, crying silently, dozing off, overcome by emotions and fatigue.

After midnight, "Arriba" *(on your feet)*. On with the cuffs again, and two policemen marched us off to the local jail through those still vivacious streets. At the "Carcel de Partidos de Figueras," after the big portals slammed shut behind us, it was: "ladies to the right, gents to the left!" A last heartbreaking goodbye. Outside the whole

large world, riot a pleasant one at all, but at least with some hope left. And in here, one could feel already suffering, filth and hunger creeping into one's bones and soul. We were informed that for the first ten days we would be quarantined within our cells, incommunicado from the outside world. One postcard per week. Watches and valuables were confiscated, only a small amount of Pesetas allowed. (Hedy had all our remaining Spanish money well hidden, and I had none at all. Then, after a gigantic haircut, literally every hair of our bodies was clipped, we were sprayed with a strong smelling disinfectant. This probably to make room for the establishments own crop of bugs and vermin. (Later I heard that the ladies were spared the haircuts, with the exception of the black market operators).

An empty and filthy cell, about six by ten feet, with a sink, a toilet bowl and nothing else was now our home. No blanket. Nothing else. Dead tired, without undressing we settled on the cement floor. Only our overcoats for protection against the bitter cold. This was not a new experience for me and I had gone through similar accommodations while in the internment camp and also in the army. So, I had no problem to fall asleep almost immediately.

It seemed like minutes later when a trumpet blast, amplified to a high pitch by the public address system, woke us out of that so much needed sleep. The daily prison routine was about to begin. I suppose, only in jails and hospitals they wake you up before dawn to do absolutely nothing all day long. A trusty came in to serve a brownish, awful looking liquid called coffee. With that, they distributed a piece of bread, about an inch thick. And it was delicious. But they warned us that this was our daily ration and it would have to last until the next morning. During my long stay in two prisons and constantly hungry, I had the greatest difficulties to succumb to the temptation to devour my daily ration at once. After that frustrating breakfast, we took turns to wash ourselves also, in full view of the other cellmates, at the toilet.

And then, the lights went out, due to a constant shortage and rationing of electricity. With only a small barred skylight high up, we were kept in a semi-darkness all day long. So, what else was there to do, but to curl up again and get some more of that much needed sleep. But there was no rest for the wicked. The door opened, and with a strident: "Arriba todos en seguida" we had to get up. A Senior Official, impeccably uniformed, wearing a large pistol, dating from the last century, and in a pretty good French laid down the rules of this charming establishment. No sleeping, no playing cards or games. The only activity was the cleaning of our cell, and if at the daily inspection a speck of dirt would be found, etc., they'll probably punish us by putting us into jail. What else?

Now, I would like my dear readers to imagine how nine men fit into an eight by ten cell. Sitting on the cement floor wasn't so bad, but laying down at night was like sardines in a tin can without the oil. We were so close, that, when one turned around, everybody else had to do the same thing. We had ample time to get acquainted and to know our biographies, which turned out to be quiet interesting. The two Dutch Jews, after hiding since the occupation of Holland, had recently escaped from their native country. They made their way through occupied Belgium and France, and now, much relieved to be locked up here. Two Algerians, who did contract work for the Germans in a French factory, to feed their large families in North Africa. They were slated to be shipped to Germany but managed to escape before being caught. They were hoping to make their way home with help of

the Americans, which they ultimately did. The Canadian, from Québec, was wounded in last summer's unfortunate raid on Dieppe. Fluent in both French and English, he was hidden by the Résistance, had a leg amputated, and they helped him over the border. Then, of course, there were our friends from Massanet. I became the closest with the (almost) Frenchman. Indeed, George was the oldest among us. A Jew from Bulgaria, he began his studies shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. He volunteered to serve in the French army, and he had the scars and the medals to prove it. After resuming his studies after 1918, he taught for many years Latin and Greek at the university at Montpellier. There he married a teacher, Solange and he legally took her very French sounding last name. When somebody denounced his Jewish origins to the Vichy authorities, he was dismissed from his position, and on top of that he was deprived of his French nationality. He had a good background of the Spanish language, and he was very much in demand for the weekly postcards. In the lady's section, Hedy had settled down with his wife and two daughters, and as they became very close, so, evidently George and I became that also. Our girls had managed to bribe a trusty to pass little notes between us. At least we were able to describe our living conditions and to remain in touch with those so close to our hearts. The distance between their cellblock and ours was almost nonexistent, but it could have been hundreds of miles away. They were locked up in a large dormitory with thieves, prostitutes and black-market operators. With filthy mattresses on the floor, they had the luxury of a thin blanket for two. With the same starvation rations as ours, their hunger was probably greater than ours, because Solange and Hedy shared part of their servings with the two little girls.

This was indeed my first encounter with real hunger. During the past two years, with serious rationing in France, meals were not as abundant as they used to be. In the good, old days eating was such a pleasure, and stuffing oneself beyond one's needs was not considered a luxury. With our homegrown vegetables and a little black-market on the side, mother managed to produce some tasty and healthful meals. They were not as abundant as before, but we did not really suffer. After two days in jail, this new sensation started. An unending craving for food produced a physical and mental weakness and most of my thoughts concentrated on meat and potatoes. And so were my dreams, from which I woke up brusquely, realizing that this was only a mirage, with the hunger pangs becoming more painful. In our long conversations to fill our boredom, we tried as hard as possible not to dwell on food, but there was no way to ban this subject. Everything seemed always to come back to eating.

Beside that questionable breakfast, we had soup for lunch and dinner. It was always the same watery broth with some vegetables and a few pieces of "baccalao" *(dried codfish)* swimming in it. It smelled and tasted of long ago deceased fish, and I would have fought a pig to take it away from. Much later did I find out that the working people on the outside were not in a much better condition, with food rationing as bad as in occupied Europe, and, yes, in England too. Of course the affluent who could afford the astronomical black-market prices were still able to splurge. In our cell, we shared everything, and when soup was served in one dirty tinplate for two, nobody ever cheated his meal-partner by a single drop of soup. If all went well, and we managed to obtain a few cigarettes, we passed one at a time around. But what we had in abundance were the "Piochos" *(fleas and lice)*. Almost daily, we were sprayed with an awful smelling bug killer, and we inspected our clothes constantly, but this vermin multiplied faster than we were able to destroy

them. Luckily it was not quiet as bad in the lady's section.

When finally the ten days of quarantine were over, we were allowed twice daily into the yard. There was the luxury of a washroom with an ice-cold shower, a few sinks and toilets. These hours broke the monotony and we had a chance to get acquainted with some of our other prison mates. There were about sixty escapees like us. A polyglot group, fugitives from almost every European nation, Poles, Yougoslavs, Dutch, Belgians, Tchecks, Greeks and stateless people like us, the refugees of German extraction. The largest group was the French, from every province and every state of life. They were the most idealistic of them all, having only one desire, to join de Gaulle in his fight against the Nazi oppressor. Numbers like 25,000 have been mentioned, probably more, who have passed through Spain. Many of these young people escaped from being shipped to Germany for obligatory labor there. Now they were running to offer their lives to help defeat the hated Boche. Heroes, all. Resistance organizations, who had helped them on their flight to Spain, had instructed them to claim Canadian nationality. This was not only on account of the language, but also, not to fall under the jurisdiction of the Vichy-France diplomatic representation, who considered them as traitors and deserters. However, British and American delegations tried by all means to support these masses of all the occupied nations, and, after the first onslaught, to organize their orderly transfer to North-Africa, and there, to join the armed forces of the Allies.

On Sundays, all the prisoners had to be present at the Catholic Sunday mass. Standing in the large, drafty rotunda, I was hoping to see my Hedy, when the women were installed on the side of the altar. And there she was in the first row. So lovely. So beautiful. Too far to communicate. I felt transported far away from this awful place, and eye contact helped to convey to each other that great love, which nothing and nobody could ever take away from us. Those fascinating deep, dark eyes spoke to me like a book. I could have stood there forever. But that half hour peeled away like seconds, while the memory of it stayed with me for a whole week, to be refreshed the next Sunday.

Towards the middle of January (1943), our underground liaison brought a short message: "We are ordered to be ready within an hour, to be taken to Caldas de Malavella, where we will be in supervised residence under the auspices of the Joint" Dist. Commity." We'll write immediately. Love and kisses!" What wonderful news. We were happy that our girls would be now out of this depressing prison atmosphere. What a relief! But no more Sunday mass.

Only a few days later, the first two postcards arrived. They had to be written in Spanish, to be passed by the censors. They had no problem to find a fellow inmate to translate for them. Between George's card and mine, we got a pretty good picture of our girls' new surroundings. Hallelujah, they had hit, relatively speaking, what could be called a jackpot and it was the first improvement since the prison doors were shut behind us. The "Joint" had taken over a hotel in this small resort town for women and children regardless of their religion, who were not cared for by any other diplomatic representation. They had to do all the housekeeping chores, like cleaning, laundering, cooking, etc., and after the deadly boredom of prison, they were overjoyed, to be able to work out their frustrations. Every morning the police came for a roll call, however they were allowed to circulate freely within this small town, to which they were restricted. There, Hedy met a Mrs. Klein from Barcelona, who was a volunteer worker of the "Joint". She knew our relatives there, who shortly

afterwards came to visit Hedy. Later in Barcelona, Hedy became very friendly with the Kleins after my departure, and enjoyed their hospitality and compassion. Here I must add, that we both, and thousands of other refugees have greatly benefited by the unselfish work of this wonderful Jewish-American organization, and that our gratitude to their contributors is without end.

To know Hedy was out of this filthy prison alleviated some of my worries. Not that it took us out of our uncertainties. As she described the new living conditions, they had improved considerably to an acceptable level, after those six weeks of hunger, boredom and lack of privacy. I never ceased marveling at her ease to accept and absorb. The, so many times, difficult circumstances in her life, and her matter of fact philosophy, mixed with an unsinkable optimism. I missed her so very much, and all my thoughts were filled with our wonderful love affair. But a gnawing guilt feeling about having left our parents behind, did never diminish.

At the very beginning of February, 1943 the prison officials became suddenly lots friendlier to us, the refugees. Through the grapevine, we heard of the surrender of the Nazi 6th army to the Russians at Stalingrad (January 31, 1943). The Communist-Socialist Spanish inmates were elated, especially when they heard that the volunteers of the Spanish Division Azul *(Blue)*, were among the victims of this, the Fascists greatest defeat. (Some of the intelligentsia, imprisoned with us, were later, after Franco's death in 1975, to be among the nucleus of a new, democratic regime).

For the following events I have difficulties to establish an exact date, but it must have happened towards the end of February, when, at three in the morning, a guard opened the cell door, shouting: "Rodolpho, get dressed and pack your things on the double!" "Qué passa?" *(What's happening)* "Volver a la Francia." *(Back to France)* "Nothing doing. I won't go. You'll have to shoot me first." Meanwhile, my cellmates, wide awake by now, joined me in my protest. The turnkey had to admit to a misplaced, weird joke, and explained that, for some unknown reason, I was being transferred to the Carcel Modello in Barcelona, and he advised me to take a good look around, because I would never have it that good again. (He wasn't too far off the mark). A quick goodbye to my friends. A much needed delousing. On with the handcuffs, and, entrusted to two policemen, we were on our way to the Figueras train station. How delicious the; fresh air felt, without that permanent smell of disinfectant and urine. In the train, those two nice guardians took off the handcuffs, knowing rightly that I was too scared to try an escape. They even shared their bread, cheese and wine with me.

By now, I was able to maintain a conversation in pidgin Spanish, without the slightest knowledge of grammar. It seemed that these two employees of a totalitarian state hated Fascisme as much as I did, and their sympathies with their leader was at a zero point. After giving them the few Pesetas, which Hedy had sent me the day before, I asked them if we could pass by my uncle's business. Arriving in Barcelona, the cuffs came on again. At the station, they asked a local cop how to get to 30 Calle Balmes. He directed us to a certain streetcar, and we got off a half a bloc from the store.

I think I have warned my readers of the most incredible situations and what's to come is one of them. Talk about slapstick with Keystone Cops. Entering a store with shelves on three sides, counters in the middle and a mezzanine with the offices. A

secretary looks down at this peculiar trio and shouts: "Don Simon, su sobrino!" *(your nephew)*. He came right down, and after a rather frigid greeting, hardly concealing his embarrassment and indignation, he asked my cops, if they were willing to come to his house and have some refreshments, before delivering me at the local clink. The Spanish government assented with delight. A taxi was called, and my aunt was informed of the doubtful pleasure which was in store for her.

Ten minutes later, we got out of the taxi in front of a rather elegant apartment building, where a uniformed, very flabbergasted door-man opened the door. For the, luckily only few onlookers in the street, this presented a picture not often seen in this ritzy neighborhood. The first one ducking into the foyer was my impeccably groomed uncle Rudy (now Simon), followed by Guardia #l, sloppily looking, with his old rifle at port-arms. Then, the sad-sack yours truly, followed by Guardia #2, looking like the twin of #1. Before I go any further, I have to give a physical description of the prisoner (never convicted). Nowadays I see hobos in town, who look better than I did coming out of that taxi. Skinny, pale prison complexion, wearing an old, dirty, wrinkled overcoat, which I had been using as a blanket, and heavy, dull looking French army boots. On top of this a shaven head, not too well washed, and emanating a faint odor of rancid butter.

Upstairs, a perplexed maid opened the door, and backed away out of fear. My aunt, speechless at first, and then, airing her thoughtless reaction: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself to show up here like this? Look at yourself! I have never seen anybody that filthy!" (only a slight exaggeration). I must hand it to my uncle, without him calming her down, she would have slammed the door in my face. I like to think, that the last time we had seen each other, almost five years ago, I looked like a clean-cut fellow. But then, I must admit, that my guardians and I had a real feast with delicacies from the black-market, which I had not tasted in years. (Later, it didn't sit too well.)

Unfortunately, this gargantuan meal could not go on for long, because my body-guards had to get rid of me and catch the train back to Figueras. Another taxi was called to take me to my next hotel, the Carcel Modello. This short breath of liberty did not last for long and the handcuffs came on again. After all, we could not arrive in prison, as from a picnic, which this actually was. After not putting my encounter with my relatives in a very favorable light, I must add here for the record, that it was them who had applied to the prison authorities to have me transferred to Barcelona.

Once over the threshold, and the big portals shut tight behind me, the admitting procedures were identical to those experienced, when my prison career began back in Figueras. But here, everything was on a larger scale: the smells, the filth, the bugs and the boredom. After all this jail was twice as large as the previous one, but the food rations were even smaller. The quarantine was to last ten days, and then we would be entitled to one visit each week. It was early afternoon, and I was locked up in an empty cell, but before the day was over, it was filled to bursting with more escapees, who had succeeded, to get undetected to Barcelona, where they were caught on the steps to the British consulate. The first ones were three very pleasant Moroccan-Arabs. Then came three Serbs from Yugoslavia, arid to squeeze into the little space left, walked in three cheerful young Frenchmen from the Midi. In no time, we became a most genial group, trying to help each other through all the deprivations. The Serbs kept very much for themselves, as we had no common

language to communicate with them. After a few days, we began to receive food-parcels. The Moroccans were aided by the consulate of the U.S.A., the others by the British, and I, who had no consular protection from my uncle. We shared everything of not much at all, but it was a little help. The Yugoslavs did not cooperate, so we more or less ignored them too.

Only a few days later, I received a letter from Hedy. A holiday for me! Beside myself with joy, I could hardly believe it. She had come to the Carcel, hoping to be permitted a visit, but was refused. Softening a guard's heart with some tears, he gave her a sheet of paper with the promise to deliver it to me. He also told her when, next week she could come for a visit. The previous afternoon, Hedy had arrived in Barcelona, where under the tutelage of the Joint, she was assigned to a small Pension *(boarding-house)* at the Via Layetana, sharing a room with Rita, a relative of my aunt Lucy. There, she heard that I was now in the same town with her, and of course, she tried to see me as soon as possible. Which turned out to be a big disappointment. But with her fatalistic philosophy, she was able to handle this too.

At the Pension, those two girls were together for more than a year, and became very close and good friends. The living accommodations were spartan, but clean, and the food was at par with the shortages all over Spain. Hedy accepted all those conditions with gratitude, thankful to be safe and relatively free. Never have I heard her to complain. With that beautiful, positive outlook on life, until her very last breath, hers was an almost divine mentality, the way she adored life. Not ever did she bury her head in the sand, nor did she let the so many problems overwhelm her exuberant cheerfulness and optimism. I'll never stop wondering, how her sunny personality was able to cope with my inbred gloominess.

Finally the quarantine period was over, and I could not wait for the big event: visiting day. My cellmates, who had nobody on the outside, shared my excitement and impatience. Counting back, I must have had about ten visits, but this first one remained most vividly in my memory and, closing my eyes, it seems like an old slightly distorted film. Each visit was a most frustrating and unsatisfying experience. Please, don't misunderstand me, and let me explain the scenario. On the screen and TV I see constantly prison visits. In some of them, the prisoners have picnics with their wives and children on the prison grounds. Others, not so liberal and with more security, where glass partitions separate prisoners from visitors and they can converse by separate telephone in full view of each other. Well, in Barcelona, we did not have any one of these luxuries. A long narrow room divided lengthwise by a wire fence from floor to ceiling, with, on each side a long iron bar, running parallel to it, keeping the visitor about fifteen feet away from the inmate. Only one person per prisoner, but apparently, small children were allowed with their mothers. All and all, on both sides a poor and depressing looking crowd. But there was one person standing out, almost chimeric. More beautiful than I had seen her in my dreams. A picture of loveliness, sweetness and perfection. I had to pinch myself to make certain that this was not just an illusion. But, yes, there she was standing, with a deep suntan and well groomed, looking in my eyes stylish, wearing the few clothes from her knapsack with an easy elegance and panache, doubly so in its simplicity. Due to the distance between us and our visitors, everybody had to shout louder than the neighbors, and this high ceiling room reverberated an infernal noise. I could hardly hear my own voice, let alone Hedy's and vice-versa. And at this so long hoped for moment, where we had so much to tell each other, the pandemonium

around us, and the excitement left us almost speechless. What a letdown! The visit was almost over before it began. But the vision remained forever, and we were able to isolate ourselves from this noisy and unruly crowd. Those magic eyes of hers generated and renewed feelings of love, of belonging and intimacy, not comparable in their purity with those arousing moments way back in Perpignan and Massanet.

While about half of the prisoner population were common criminals the rest were all "Politicos," members of all sorts of Anti-Fascist organizations, which by now were outlawed. They were sworn opponents of the Franco government. Former Communists, Socialists and Freemasons, some of whom held high positions in the defeated Left oriented, liberal regime. Many of their group had already been executed, and those left were hoping and praying, like us, that the Allies would soon be able to free the world of the Dictators. For them, as for us, El Caudillo (Franco) was in the same category of criminals with Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito. Through their underground news services we heard about the considerable Allied successes: defeat of Rommel's Africa Corps, withdrawal of the Japs from Guadalcanal, and the Russians relief of Leningrad and Kursk. The officials, while maintaining strict prison discipline and routine considered us somewhat less as the enemy, as they did before. Well, we would have preferred a larger bread ration.

Completely shut off from the outside world, I was floating in a mental vacuum, only living for those too short weekly visits from my beloved. Apparently my relatives had applied for my release to different authorities, but I did not think they would be successful. One day the prison's chaplain came to our cell. He explained that my Novia *(fiancée)* came to see him with her landlady, who was a parishioner of his, on the outside of course. He asked me to give him my real, original French identity card, which I had not surrendered and kept hidden. With complete confidence in Hedy's efficiency, I did not hesitate for a moment. Later she explained, having heard that men, or rather boys below the age of eighteen would be eligible for discharge, if they could prove admittance to another country.

When, three months ago, my relatives here in Barcelona received my message from Massanet, they did some quick thinking, for which I could never be grateful enough, and which was instrumental in giving our lives a direction never to be regretted. My uncle cabled a message to my relatives in the U.S.A., asking them to undertake all necessary steps to get an immigration visa for me. Without hesitation, my cousin Charly together with Uncle Herman forwarded the required affidavits of support, almost by return mail, but unfortunately not for Hedy. Due to slowness of wartime postal services, they arrived just a few days after Hedy got to Barcelona. By then, she had talked with so many refugees like us, and had learned from them the tricks and strategies to improve our situation. She took those priceless affidavits to the U.S. consulate, where she was given a waiting number, stating that a visa was applied for, and after processing and investigation might be approved.

After Hedy received my French papers from the chaplain, she altered the year of my birth from 1919 to 1925, which was absolutely possible because, old snapshots show me looking at that time more like seventeen than twenty-three. Cousin Adolfo had arranged for Hedy to meet with a police inspector, a neighbor of his. Equipped with the French and U.S.A. papers, she went to see this extremely pleasant Spanish Caballero, who promised to look into the matter "En Seguida" (*immediately*, which in Spain means, maybe in two to three weeks) (After all we were in the land of Manana). Hedy did not tell uncle Rudy about the fraudulent alteration, because she

had pegged him correctly when she thought that in his German correctness and single-mindedness he would object vehemently to this deceit. But she told Adolfo, and earned an approving chuckle. After my release, he took me aside and said: "You better stick to that girl. She has guts and you'll never go wrong listening to her." Eighteen years later on our visit to Barcelona, he and his wife Pilar took the three of us to lunch, and looking at that beautiful, elegant and sophisticated Hedy, he kicked me under the table, and mumbled: "How right I was…how right I was." (The greatest understatement of the twentieth century).

At her last two visits, Hedy kept on shouting, without any further explanations: "I'll get you out soon!" I was puzzled how she could be so sure of herself, because I did not know at all about all her undertakings in my behalf out there, on the other side of the prison walls. Lately, almost daily, some of the Allied nationals were released into the custody of their respective Consuls. But who was looking out for me? Nobody! And that's where I was so very wrong. I did not know what a wonderful and efficient advocate I had in the outside world. But as Hedy sounded so sure of herself. I knew that she would never give me any unfounded hope. (To Franco's credit: Mainly yielding to pressure of the U.S.. ambassador, the Fascist Junta became tolerant towards the refugees. Tens of thousands were allowed to join their respective armies in North Africa).

History has a way of repeating itself. Again, very early one morning, a guard woke me out of a sound sleep, ordering me to get dressed, and to pack my bag. "De prisa!" *(Hurry up!)* And then, an unending wait in the entrance hall, together with about a half dozen Spanish prisoners. Finally, two Guardias came to handcuff two and two together, but at least they had the decency not to keep us in suspense, and told us, that we were headed for the Jefatura de Policia *(Police Headquarters)*, for possible release. And then those giant prison gates slammed with a great bang behind us. And there, we marched out into the still dark world. Could this really be my way to liberty? What was this heavenly smell? Was this the road towards freedom? Only a few early birds passed us on their way to work. And there was Calle Balmes, my relatives business. A left turn and we passed the beautiful fountain at the Plaza Cataluna. Another right turn, and while the dawn is coloring the sky into a light red, I see a street sign, which tells us that we are entering Via Layetana. And here is number 22, with up there behind all those windows, my beloved is probably still asleep. No, she wasn't, as she told me later. The day before, she was instructed to pick me up from the Jefatura, sometime in the afternoon. She could not close an eye, and in all her excitement, she also kept Rita awake.

Only a bloc further was Headquarters. Off came the handcuffs, and we were locked up in a dirty holding cell, way down in a dark, smelly basement. I did not think, anything could be worse than the quarters I left just an hour ago, but this was. Not a word was spoken, and I was praying that I would not be forgotten in this 'airless cellar. I did not have the slightest hint, how and why I was taken here to be discharged.

I fell from one uneasy catnap into the next one, and it seemed to me that I had already spent several days here, when a policeman shook me awake, and asked me to follow him with all my things. He took me up to an inspector's office, and there, SHE was standing, with Mr. Klein. As a Spanish citizen and a representative of the Joint, he was to sign me out, accepting the responsibility, to see that I would be leaving the country as soon as possible. He also agreed, that his organization would

provide for my needs, and that he would make certain that I would not entertain any aggression against the Spanish government. I was also given a temporary residence-permit, which had to be stamped every week by the local police-precinct. My uncle had arranged with Mr. Klein, that he, instead of the Joint would support me.

And there, I was standing in front of the inspector's desk. Speechless, motionless. Was this nothing more than a dream, over in just a few seconds, and I would wake up again in a prison cell? But no, it was reality, and Hedy was hugging me with tears of joy. Even the hardened official had a big satisfied smile. Lucky that I hadn't forgotten my manners and found enough words to thank those two gentlemen, "Con todo mi corazon" *(from the bottom of my heart)*.

Walking out into a beautiful, warm afternoon with a brilliant sunshine exploding in my eyes. When was the last time that I had seen such a blue sky? The trees of the Avenida loaded with emerald green leaves. Neatly dressed people on the sidewalk. But all this was only a stage, designed to surround the beautiful girl I was holding in my arms. Kissing greedily right there in front of the Jefatura. People must have been staring at us, and thinking: "Look at that dirty hobo, with this gorgeous, neat girl."

A bloc further up the Avenida was her Pension, and I was eager to go with her to her room. But she explained that this was not possible, as her landlady would not allow me in, because we were not married. Oh, I was not even disappointed. What more could I have asked for while I was walking with her, with arms tightly around each other. Her warmth and softness were penetrating my body and my soul. At a nearby park, we sat down on an empty bench. She had some sweet rolls and fruit, knowing that I would be hungry. While we were eating, she explained our situation. Her life since she was discharged from Fiqueras. What she had undertaken for me, to be sitting here together right now. Unbelievable for such a young girl. She regretted as much as I did, that we would not be able to live together. It was decided that I would stay at my relatives as their guest, while she was to remain with Rita in her Pension. And I was sitting there with my beloved, letting a wave of bliss envelop my whole being, talking until we had to prepare to go to my uncle's house for dinner, and where I was to meet Rita.

She knew already about my previous visit with my two bodyguards, and I agreed with her, that I could not go up there in my present disheveled get-up. But she had foreseen that, and her planning was perfect. Just a few steps away was a large underground public toilet with showers. In my bag, I had my only good suit, somewhat shabby, and after so many months wrinkled like an accordion. While I washed away the prison's grime under the shower, she took my suit to a cleaner's shop where it was pressed. She then handed it to me at the door of the bath-house. She also had bought an inexpensive white shirt, which with my weight loss was too big, but still better than anything I had.

At least, I looked somewhat presentable, but still in great contrast to my fiancé. I'll never forget her with a navy-blue suit, a white blouse and her only Spanish acquisition, her first high heels. And all this, crowned by her serene, pleasing and likeable face, dominated by that special feature, her dark expressive eyes. During our short ride in the Metro *(subway)*, she urged me to thank them profusely for all they had done to obtain my release. They did not know, that it was Hedy's schemes which brought us today's results, and we both agreed, to be diplomatic, that we

should let them enjoy the credit for it. (As a matter of fact, this was Adolfo's suggestion).

At 362 Calle Balmes they were forewarned and prepared, not like last time. The reception was impeccable and the dinner was superb, especially after all those months of hunger and deprivations. Also, my aunt was an excellent cook. At the end of this perfect evening, all I could do was to escort those two lovely girls to the Metro. During our stay in Spain we had a most peculiar relationship with Aunt Lucy and Uncle Rudy. While they were extremely correct, they did not, from the diplomatic point of view, "recognize" Hedy. My mother had written to them right after we left Périgueux, introducing Hedy as her future daughter-in-law, considering our marriage as a fait-accompli, only delayed by present circumstances. As Hedy was cared for by the "Joint" her needs were more than modest, but we had literally to beg for the few Pesetas we needed for pocket money. We did not tell them about the few Dollars and gold coins we had hidden, some of which Hedy sold during the year of her stay in Barcelona. They never forgot to mention the risks they were taking of ever being reimbursed for the money they advanced us. Many friends have passed through Barcelona on their flight to freedom and their demand for help fell on deaf ears. Only a chosen few who were known to be financially well off got all they asked for, with, of course a promise of repayment, mainly in the U.S.A.

For a long time we carried our bitter feelings toward them, but like every thing else this too was overshadowed by more important things and events in our lives. It was completely buried after our visit there in 1962, when they rolled out the red carpet and gave us an almost unbelievable reception. Before we left, Aunt Lucy had a long talk with Hedy and, with tears in her eyes recognized that she had treated her more than shabbily and apologized. Who could still hold a grudge after this? We had known all along that the strained attitude towards Hedy was created by a large dose of old fashioned and prudish narrow-mindedness A few days after I had moved in, my aunt made a most astonishing statement: "I must tell you, that, bringing your girl-friend to Spain embarrasses us very much in front of our friends." When I asked for the reason, she answered: "It is Unanstaendig" *(indecent)*. Today, more than half a century later, this Victorian attitude seems unbelievable, but the "permissible society" was not born yet.

We were fortunate to have neutral Spain as a mail-drop between occupied France and the free world. There were several small letters from both our parents. They were very carefully worded on account of Nazi and also Spanish censorship. Hedy's were still in Périgueux and did not have any intentions of leaving, while mine had fled to Tence, which was more or less planned when we left. It was not hard to read between the lines that they were living there hiding in precarious conditions with only bleak illusions about their future. I'll come back later in greater details about Tence, its compassionate people and what a blessing it was for all of us. Glad as we were about these news, which we read with heavy hearts, it did not help much to alleviate our guilt feelings, which remained with us until the liberation of their areas, and for which we still had to wait another fifteen months. The fate of the Jews in all of the German-occupied lands was no more a secret. It was surprising to read in the Nazi-sympathizing Spanish press not only about "Resettlement" of Jews in the East, but also about the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. At the "Joint" office, they had some knowledge of extermination camps and gas ovens. But nothing on the BBC. They hesitated to believe that the "cultured" Germans (?) could possibly commit such atrocities. Today there is no doubt that both the British and American

governments knew about the unbelievable treatment of Jews and other adversaries by Hitler and his criminals, but they tried to hide it from their people. "Let's win the war first" was their inexcusable motto.

But we also had some pleasant and encouraging messages. Brother Fritz, who had been informed by my uncle about our whereabouts offered help and asked what he could do for us. I think that my Barcelona relatives must have had mixed feelings when they read how very sincerely he welcomed Hedy into the family. But it did not inspire them to accept her. Not even when my parents began their letters by: "My dear children." But the most pleasant news was a cable where Fritz announced the birth of their daughter Ann. In those terrible times it was a breath of fresh air. A new life in our family. A sign of continuation. To this day, Ann remains a symbol of some resurrection and hope.

From our relatives in the U.S.A. we received not only the required documents for the visa but also a very sincere invitation, saying that they were waiting for me. But there was no mention of Hedy. It took a lot of joy out of my newly gained freedom. I wrote of course immediately with my thanks and imploring them to help my fiancée. While I was very disappointed that Hedy's chances looked so bleak, she did not let these negative prospects shake her optimism. For the time being she had set her mind that, first I had to get out, and then, from across the ocean I would be able to take care of her. She was almost reconciled that we might be separated again, an idea which I refused to even imagine. She had arranged an appointment at the U.S. consulate for me. Her high school English was far from perfect, but lots better than mine, and people up there knew her by name already and we had a friendly reception. She had asked many, many questions previously, but later on unfortunately most of those good sounding answers proved to be wrong. They thought it would be easy for me to get a visa for her as soon as I would be earning living wages. It took an awful long time. There would be no problem for me in finding a good job in the U.S.A., as an electrician, because so many qualified workers had been called into the Services. This was right. To a question if I would also have to join the Armed forces, the response was that they did not draft foreigners. Oh, how ultra wrong they were! And, yes, my visa would be delivered in just a few weeks. And that was an answer I was afraid of. They advised we should get married!

After that, we hurried to the French consulate next door, where we wanted to apply for a marriage license. After all, Hedy was a French citizen and had a passport to prove it. But unfortunately, this office was still under jurisdiction of Vichy-France, and they considered all the fugitives as enemies and traitors. Not only did they refuse to marry us, they also showed us the door rather unceremoniously. A year later was Pétain's representative replaced by one, nominated by the foreign minister of De Gaulle.

We had to have our papers stamped weekly at the police station, and while correct, they let us, feel that we were unwelcome foreigners. And all the pleasant people in the street considered us as a drain on their inadequate food supplies.

Social attitudes in Spain were extremely puritanical, and to prove it, Hedy's landlady hardly allowed me to wait for her in the foyer. But otherwise, she was very nice, helpful and understanding during the many months that Hedy and Rita had a home there. So, it was not surprising that my relatives acted the same way. They were living in an every day's world, and could hardly identify with us. But we had to

take this in stride, and it was most frustrating for both of us, that intimacy was denied to us. It was not possible, because Rita shared the room, and if there would have been any cheap motels around, we would not have had the money for it anyhow. A very few times, could I manage to sneak in there on an afternoon when Rita was not there and the landlady was out shopping. But on the sly, and with the fear of being discovered, the ultimate act of love was completely overshadowed. How could a temporary release of this insufferable urge accomplish a blissful melting with each other? But we had tasted before what it could be, and it made the still long wait both bearable and unbearable.

My few weeks in Barcelona, alas, were among the most memorable and beautiful ones in our too short years together. It was almost a continuation of the preceding summer in Périgueux, where we dwelled in our newfound love. Walking up and down those elegant, tree-lined Avenidas, a vibrating and soothing electricity was pulsing from hand to hand. Under a gorgeous azure sky, with a warm caressing breeze blowing up from the Mediterranean, Barcelona is a beautiful town. Lively, colorful and interesting. We spent most of our time walking in those pleasant surroundings. In parks and on the beach we met a lot of our co-refugees and it was easy to get to know each other. Conversations spun around the daily news and events. About projects, what to do, where to go. Some tried to just survive the war right here, the ones of our age were eager to join the fighting Allies. We had to trust our fate and tried to enjoy one day at the time. We knew in the back of our mind, that once out of this oasis of peace, this no-man's land; there would be a return to the mortal maelstrom of war and cruelty.

It was too soon, when we were taken out of this sleepy wellbeing by the summons to the Consulate. I was instructed what to bring along: result of medical examination, photos, steamship ticket and Spanish exit-permit. As I had no passport, I was issued a travel document by the U.S. consulate with the immigration visa. In New York, Charly had secured a ticket on a Spanish liner leaving from Vigo, in North-Western Spain on July 14th.

But I was not at all prepared for this new turn of events. Well, I could not say that it was not to be expected. So far I was trying to put this out of my mind, hoping that this fatal day would not arrive. While everybody congratulated and envied me, I realized that the treat of having to leave Hedy was there all the time. And when finally, my head came out from that sand of a certain insouciance, I decided not to leave without her. But I had not expected her more than angry reaction: "Are you insane? Do you want to ruin our only chance to get out of this war torn Europe, and make a new life in the U.S.A.? I thought you had more brain than that." Oh, what determination! There were two other alternatives. At the British consulate, I could have reenlisted in the Foreign Légion. They would have shipped both of us to North-Africa, where we would definitely be separated. The other possibility was Israel (Palestine, then) where we might have gotten visas, but we were not at all Zionists. Among all the arguments, this was our first fight, but, let's be honest, deep down I was probably expecting that she would talk me out of not going away. There was only one place she wanted to go to, and she had decided, that, once I were in the U.S.A., I would get her visa immediately. She was basing her optimism and hope on the fact, that I had obtained my permit in a relatively short time. She convinced me, that we would be together for good, before the end of the year. If we would have foreseen, how long it took what would we have done?

There are times, when nothing works out the way it should. But that was not the case at all this time. The formalities and a few minor difficulties fell in place like magic. I was not only terribly depressed, but on top of it, I was just plain scared of this step. Since the beginning of the war, almost three years ago, I had no great problems to make decisions, not to worry about the next day, and to just cross the bridges as I arrived there. But this time, I considered myself responsible for Hedy, and I did not see how I could acquit myself of this duty. Whenever I told her about these feelings, she pooh-poohed my concerns with: "Haven't I proven, so far, that I can take care of myself!" And how well she did, even for me too. And when she noticed that I was slightly hurt, because up to now, I was virtually tied-up and was not able to do the slightest little thing for her, she just switched the subject to plans together in that country across the Atlantic. Contrary to me, she was full of enthusiasm: "And then, you'll take care of me and spoil me for the rest of our lives."

VOYAGE TO GOD'S COUNTRY

The hourglass was emptying at a vertiginous speed. Before we knew it, came July 9, 1943, and the train to Madrid was leaving this afternoon. I had a royal send-off. Not only all my relatives, but also, many of our newfound friends were there. How much I would have liked to spend those precious, last moments with my beloved. She agreed with me, but she thought, that we could not slight all these well-meaning people. "When you'll be gone, I'll need their friendship, because that's all that remains for me." Of course, she was right.

There are a few events in my life, of which I still have some kind of a tape in my head, to be played back. Even if somewhat faded after so many years of usage, I am grateful that my memory lets me come back to those important moments, some happy, some bittersweet, and some even tragic. Looking out of the train's window, mesmerized by the picture of my bride: Tears welling from her beautiful eyes, and streaming down her cheeks. A whistle blow, a jolt and the train starts moving, and there, at first, seeming taller than life, but as the train goes faster, she is getting smaller, and then, disappearing in a mist of steam, as if wrapped in a cloud. It took too long, for her to step out of this haze and into my life, again.

I sat down and dried my tears, while my guilt-feelings began again to gnaw their way to the surface. Who did I feel sorry for? Was it Hedy, or my parents, or all the persecuted? No, it was for myself! Did it make me feel better? Hardly! Well, I could have refused to leave, and I did not. The clatter of the train lulled me into dozing off, seeming to say over and over again: "You didn't, you didn't." After a long night of nightmares, I arrived in Madrid. Near the terminal, I had to check into the office of the "Joint," where I was introduced to my new traveling-companion. He was born in Russia at the beginning of the century. After or during the revolution he made his way to Paris, where, after some studies, he had a good position in a brokerage house. His way to Spain was similar to ours, and he also spent some time in a jail. To kill the time, we went sightseeing in Madrid, and all I remember was that I was terribly depressed and miserable.

Late in the afternoon, we took a dirty, rickety train to Vigo. Terribly hot, with open windows, we were covered by the soot from the coal-fired engine. But I was glad not to be alone, and we managed to stay together until we arrived in New York. He was a very pleasant, quiet and intelligent person, and I am sorry that I got out of touch

with him.

The next afternoon we arrived at our last stop in Europe. The Joint had booked us into a small hotel with full board across the street from the port. Today, I would probably make a detour around it, but I was not spoiled at all. At least they had a cold shower at the end of the hall, and it felt good to get cleaned up after a twenty-hour train ride. At night, we heard guests getting in and out of rooms, after short stays, but that can be expected in a hotel near the waterfront. Well rested, according to our instructions, we checked in at the offices of the Compania Trasatlantica, where we were told that our ship would be arriving during the night, and we were to embark the following afternoon. But also, that we had to obtain "Navicerts" from both the British and, horror of horrors, the German Consulates. "Now, what is that?" It is not more than a statement by both belligerents that they had no objections about my traveling the open ocean on a neutral vessel. We had to give them to the purser, who would hand them to be inspected, in case his ship would be stopped by any naval patrol. In Vigo, a small port city, all the important offices are around the port, and a few steps brought us to the British consulate. A very English and pleasant Vice-consul, gave us what we came for after a few questions and examination of our other documents. I told him that I was shivering in my boots to go to the Nazis. So he answered: "If you feel that your reception here was correct, you'll see the Boches will be more than helpful." What a surprise, he was right. We could not help feeling, that maybe these Germans, far from their home base, had been somewhat humanized. The employee knew my hometown and began chatting about it. Without any questions he handed the navicerts with good wishes. Might there have been a few decent ones among those criminals? He shook hands with us. (I washed mine under the fountain across the street).

Nothing to do in this small town and we walked around like sightseeing tourists. Two German pocket-battleships and a big U-boat were tied to the wharf, and the cafés around the port were full of their sailors. Not to let us forget why we were here, the sight of the arch-enemy never ceased to upset me. No need to fear them on this neutral ground. My feelings towards them, half a century later has barely changed. Here they seemed inoffensive, while their brothers, their cousins, their friends were doing their murderous deeds all over occupied Europe. Now, I was in a hurry to get out of here.

Coming back to the hotel (or whatever else it was), what a joy, what bliss! A long letter from Hedy. She must have mailed it a few days before I left Barcelona, with a special surprise, a photo of her. What a letter! In the years of our separation, there were many, but none with so much love and so much affection. How can anybody find such simple and easy words to express one's feelings so explicitly? How did I deserve all this? Me, the guy who ran away so many times already. And she so candidly put her hopes in me to get her out of this continent. We could see from our window, harbor side, the Nazi flags on the ships in the harbor, and hear the Boche sailors singing down on the terrace of the café: "Oh Vaterland magst ruhig sein." *(know that we'll defend you)*. (They really did, but then, we licked them). I wrote my last letter from Europe, but with tears in my heart, I was not able to express my feelings like she did. Compared with hers, my sentiments must have sounded as if they came out of the freezer. (Her letter stayed with me, until I had to loose it in a foxhole in Belgium. But the picture is still looking at me).

During the night, the Maggalanes had docked. An impressive ship. Gleaming white, with the Spanish colors largely painted on both sides for identification as a Neutral vessel on the high seas. At night it was brightly illuminated for the same reasons. The higher class passengers were boarded first, and we, of the tourist class were admitted in the afternoon. The Guardia Civil were present for very thorough inspections. First came the travel documents, then the luggage, followed by body searches for money and valuables. Only few Peset, as were allowed but no foreign currencies of any kind. I had a bad moment, but they did not find the Dollars I had concealed in my belt. The purser was related with uncle Rudy's secretary, and she had given me a letter of introduction for him. He gave us a small cabin for two, in the bow *(front)* with the luxury of a private shower, while the tourist's class was in large dormitories. As we were on top of the machineries, the heat and noise were not pleasant, and we spent many a night on deckchairs in the open breeze.

On schedule, two tugboats pulled us out of the harbor. All the passengers were on deck. Everybody very, very quiet, subdued and buried under their own thoughts. There was no joy for me at the moment of leaving this suffering and bleeding continent. There was always that last image of Hedy, disappearing in a cloud at the station in Barcelona. As the ship was heading into the sunset, Europe behind us was shrinking away. The flags on the Nazi battleships were waving a farewell. And there I was, running away again. How many times yet? I felt such a coward. But heading into the West, and where that brilliant red ball was sinking into the ocean, there was that great unknown for me. Will I find what I am yearning for? What did I know about that land of the Star Spangled Banner? My knowledge of the language was just a bit above basics. "The Jungle" by Sinclair, Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" and Beecher's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" were not very encouraging. In my high school days, I was an expert about cowboys and Indians from the books of Fennimore Cooper and Karl May, but I don't think that will be a great help. Here and there I have read a few little details of current politics, and all the people, striving for freedom and peace had Roosevelt and Eisenhower in their prayers.

It was a long voyage, and the almost four weeks on board must have been boring. But I do remember a pleasant assortment of fellow travelers. There was a large group of Cuban diplomats, who had been sequestered in a resort town of the French Pyrénées. After their country's declaration of war against Germany and then Vichy France, where they had been affected, they were to be exchanged in their home country against German diplomats. They were a happy and well educated group, and with their Latin exuberance, they showed their joy of going home. One of the ladies gave daily Spanish and English lessons. She did not bother with a lot of grammar, but rather taught the "Spoken American," and I have learned quiet a bit from her. Being born in the U.S.A., she also told us a lot of what to expect there. The ship was stopped en route first by a German and a few days later a Canadian patrol. These inspections were extremely correct. The passengers had to remain in the dining rooms, while the search parties inspected the ship for contraband.

And finally, land was sighted: America! This was Trinidad. In Port-of-Spain, a large team of British Naval Intelligence came to interview every passenger and member of the crew. They wanted to know where I had been since the beginning of the war, and were impressed with my experiences, fighting on their side, with the Légion in Norway. I was very proud when the British captain shook hands with me. But the most beautiful sight for me, were the many ships in the harbor, flying proudly the flags of Holland, Poland, Norway, Free France, U.S.A. and many more of the Allied

Nations. Yes, we were away from the dictators, from the enemies! Yes, this was where I belonged. And against this background of the Allied solidarity, we heard of new developments, with the tide turning against the Fascists. Landing in Sicily. Mussolini deposed. Russians winning biggest tank-battle, ever near Kursk. Day and night bombing of Hamburg, Essen and the Rumanian oilfields. Did not look so good for the Nazis anymore. (But they still held out for 20 more months)

After a few days, we continued our voyage within a tropical heat. I lost track of time, but we finally reached Havana, the final destination for most of our traveling companions. Those Cubans were really most pleasant, but now they could not wait to leave the ship, and we could watch them walk into the arms of their families and friends. There were less than a dozen of us left. Civilian volunteers of the police came aboard to guard the ship and keep us incommunicado. What a nice and friendly group. They did this duty, in lieu of serving in their army. One of them an acting-lieutenant, informed my cousin Marianne, who came to Cuba two years ago, and she came to pay me a visit. But she was not allowed on board, however, we had a conversation, with her and her little girl Jacqueline on the pier and I standing high above on deck. The first relatives in the new world.

On the morning of our departure, a well dressed group boarded. They were the Nazis, who were interned in Cuba, and now, having been exchanged for our Cuban friends, started their road back to their cursed land by way of Spain. For Germans, they appeared fairly subdued. Members of the crew told us, that they were rather apprehensive of the bombardments which expected them. They had been living a life of plenty and luxuries and were not pleased to give all this up in their beloved Deutschland. Outside Havana harbor, our friendly Cuban policemen were relieved by a detachment of U.S. coastguards, who kept the Nazis mainly below deck, because out in the Caribbean, there were now many armed vessels to be seen.

LIFE IN THE U. S. A.

Just before sundown, on August 14, 1943, we had the first glimpse of our new country. A moment full of emotions and expectations. The beginning of another love affair, which is still going strongly at this moment. Surrounded by several armed cutters, the Magallanes steamed slowly up the mighty Mississippi. We spent the night on deckchairs, but could not sleep with all that happy excitement. My bag was packed, and after breakfast, and after a month's voyage, we were ready to walk down the gangplank onto the "Land of the Free, and the home of the Brave."

Our documents had been inspected by immigration officers, who had come aboard when last night we entered the river. There was only a very thorough inspection by custom agents left to pass. My little bag was finished in no time. I had nothing to hide anymore, and I showed my hundred dollar bill, which I had taken out of the belts because I now needed it for spending money. Today, this is not much, but then it probably had ten times the buying power than it has today. When I showed it to the inspector, he held it up for everybody to see, and exclaimed: "I haven't seen one of these for a long time, and you won't be able to use it here!" Well, that made me penniless. Then, he explained painfully, that this was a "Gold certificate, which had been taken out of circulation about ten years ago (President Roosevelt removed the Dollar from gold standard April 19, 1933). There were two ladies from the "Joint" who had volunteered to welcome and escort us, and one of them called her husband, a banker, who instructed her to give me the cash for it, because he would

recuperate that amount from the Federal Reserve. I was rich again!

She and her friend drove us in her big convertible to her luxurious home and a good lunch. While I have completely forgotten the town, New Orleans, I still remember this cordial welcome and the kindness and understanding of these nice ladies, who fortunately spoke some French. Discussing later this short interlude with my friend, we were both surprised, about how little these two ladies, intelligent and well educated, knew about the suffering which was going on in the world. Late afternoon, they drove us to the station, where they helped us to buy our tickets to New York City. We thanked them profusely and made our goodbyes.

We should have come earlier, because there was no empty seat to be found. After all, here too, it was time of war. But it did not look at all like a train terminal in Europe. Many uniforms of course. People looked well groomed and well nourished. Not the haggard, drawn and worried faces of the lands where we just came from, and where the deprivations of four years of war had taken their toll and left their imprint on people.

Walking towards the end of the train, we found an almost empty coach, where we made ourselves comfortable on four seats. After the lack sleep for the last many hours, we both fell asleep almost immediately after the train began to move. In the middle of the night, a furious conductor woke us up: "What do you two think you're doing here in this coach? Take your bags and get out of here!" Not that we understood much of his southern drawl, but, being well trained Europeans, we bowed to the voice of authority. After all, he was wearing a uniform. Out came our tickets, and all the other documents. Then, it must have dawned on him that we were just a bunch of greenhorns, and, pointing to the few passengers in the coach he tried to make us understand that this carriage was "For Blacks only." We had to leave our comfortable seats to go to the "White" section, where we had to stand up for many hours, until at the next stop, Birmingham, we could sit down again.

This was a real culture-shock. Uncle Tom's Cabin or, whatever I remembered of it came back to my mind, also what I had read about segregation. Coming out of jails, from restricted civil liberties and from fear, I was not prepared for this. Here we were traveling through a country, which had originated the ideas of "All men are created equal," and whose cry had been adopted in France, first, and in other European states later. I had to put this state of affairs in the same bag with Nazi-doctrines. There it was "No Jews and dogs admitted," and at the next station I saw toilets and waiting rooms for Blacks only and for Whites only. I was to see lots more of this segregation, and it took thirty more years before the Afro-Americans obtained, however reluctantly, their equal civil rights.

Forty hours of a long, hot voyage. Miles and miles of fields, woods, pastures and just as much uncultivated lands. Here and there some rickety wooden houses with black people working in the nearby fields. A few stops in the center of some small towns. Many times, the train was diverted on an other track to give right of way to some unending freight trains, loaded with guns, tanks, trucks and more engines of destruction and war. Oh yes, rush these tools East and West as fast as possible, to free the world of the scourge of mankind! On August 17, midmorning, the train pulled into Penn Station in New York City. I have reached the end of my long odyssey. Is this the end of my running and my nomadic wandering? Will I be able to

begin again a normal and productive life with my dear girl?

And there at the gate, those two familiar, kind faces, my dear and generous cousins, Thea and Charlie. Thanks to them I was here now. What a warm and sincere welcome. We passed a group of about thirty men, carrying overnight bags, escorted by two sergeants. Charly pointed to them and said: "You'll be going that way too, soon." He explained that they are draftees being inducted into the service. I responded that, according to the Consulate in Barcelona, aliens were not taken. "But now they are," and he told me, that our cousin Hans had been drafted a few months ago. This was an unpleasant surprise for me, and the memory of Africa and Norway dampened my good spirits. Charly himself was luckily dispensed as he had reached the age limit. Apparently, in view of the heavy losses in the Pacific, North-Africa and now in Italy, they needed more cannon-fodder.

I entered starry-eyed into this city and into my new life. Into the unknown. I could only hope that this country would absorb me, and that in five years I might be a citizen of this great democracy. (It went lots faster than I could have dreamed). In a taxi, Thea and Charly took me to their home at 81st Street and Broadway, which they shared with their lovely five years old Nicole, Thea's parents, as well as her sister Lotte, her husband Issy and their daughter Doris. I had known all these good people for many years, and I was greeted like a long lost member of the family. They made me feel at home, and so did my other relatives. From her office, cousin Gretel came to pick me up to take me home to Queens, where I was to sleep. Her parents, Aunt Francisca and Uncle Isidore, my father's brother, were waiting for me with a superb dinner. They were rather depressed, because they had just received a letter from their son Hans, to tell them that he was coming home for a few days, before being shipped to some war zone overseas. How well could I understand their feelings, and I could not sleep all night long in Hans's bed, worrying about my own fate.

Next morning, on her way to work, Gretel took me to Manhattan, and explained the subway system to me. I went to Charly's factory and he went with me to a lawyer, where he had made an appointment for me. Mr. Blecher, who had some connections in the Immigration Service, was instrumental in getting my visa, and I wanted him to do the same thing for my Hedy. Charly, of course was willing to give his affidavit of support for Hedy, but Blecher did not think this to be sufficient, because he had pledged for my support. It would take a few months of my working and earning, before I could make out an affidavit. He called a client of his, a foreman in a large electrical enterprise. Alex, a Hungarian, who had studied in this field in France, came to this country with his family in 1940. On the phone, in French, I gave him my short resume, and he hired me right then and there for a tryout, and as he was in great need of help, he asked me if I could start next morning.

So, for the remainder of the day, I had to take care of the process of settling down. A call to a Mrs. Stern, secured a room for me. This very nice lady ran a small rooming house in her large apartment at Riverside Drive and 100th Street; where also Issy's father was living. On my arrival in New Orleans, I was instructed to register immediately at a Draft board. When Charly took me there, across the street from his business, I did not have the slightest idea what this was about, but I found out soon enough. Filling out several forms, he asked the lady in charge how long it usually takes before they send out the induction notices. When she pointed to the

middle of October on her calendar, and my heart sunk into my pants, he whispered to me: "You are lucky that she did not look at her watch instead of the calendar!"

I started my job downtown the next morning. The work was nothing new for me, and after testing me for a few hours with little things, Alex started me on some serious work, with which I was completely familiar. When I inquired about my earnings, he asked me to give him a few days for evaluation, but he gave me a nice advance: "And if you need more before the next payday, just let me know." At more than one dollar per hour plus overtime, I was a top earner. This was not surprising, as there was a great demand for my craft. My father was right, when he insisted that I should learn a trade. Thanks dad!

I still marvel when I think of how fast I had stepped into my new life. But at the same time, I must gratefully admit, that up to now, somebody "Up there" has been very good to me, and I was more than lucky. I was pushed by that one and only purpose, to get my girl as fast as possible over here. Doctor Willy Katz was a nephew of Hedy's father's first wife. At the time of "Crystal Night" (11/9/38) he and most Jewish men were taken to the notorious Dachhau Concentration camp. With a visa to France, which his uncle Albert had secured for him, his wife Mary, daughter Margret and mother Aunt Risa, he was released and they all were permitted to leave Nazi Germany for France. Back in 1935, when the Weill's moved to Strasbourg, they took along in their moving-van a lot of Willy's valuables, original paintings, antique furniture, and his priceless stamp collection. The Nazis could not stop Albert, a French citizen from taking his property to France and thus, he saved the Katz's properties from Nazi greed. In late 1939, Willy took all these things with him to the U.S.A. Hedy had written to them, and shortly before I left Barcelona, they wrote back, offering their help. Calling them, Mary invited me to come for dinner on the next evening. When I arrived at their apartment in Flushing, what a surprise, Willy and I were campmates in the fall of 1939, when we were interned at Mirecourt. In all there were three Katz's in that camp and it never occurred to me, that he could have been one of them. This of course broke the ice on my "Begging expedition" very pleasantly. I'll enjoy giving Hedy an affidavit. We owe her parents so much, and we are delighted, that we can do anything at all for them." A few days later, the lawyer had Willy's documents on his desk. This was the beginning of a wonderful friendship with the entire Katz family, and we owe them a great debt of gratitude. Among the many things they have done for us over the years, the most important and wonderful was when Doctor Willy brought our beloved Claude into this world. Of course, Hedy helped a lot. So did I. Not that it was much; however it was most pleasant and enjoyable. If you know what I mean.

With my affidavit, certified by my new employer and Willy's the lawyer filed a visa-application. Apparently, he had some good connections, because he had a summons in no time, to appear before a Senate Committee of immigration on September 20, 1943 in Washington. I went there with great hopes, but a week later the lawyer told me that my demand was rejected without reason given. But he pleaded to keep the file open to be reconsidered if I would be drafted into the military services. He thought that then, they could not possibly deny my request. But it took too long yet.

Returning from Washington, I received my first letter from Hedy. We had promised each other to write one each week, but half of our letters to and from Spain were lost. But the few which I received were a treasure. She put so much love, affection and understanding into them. So positive and repeating again and again, that she

believed fully, the end of our separation to be near. I don't think that my dear reader has any doubt about my state of mind when I received the news of the rejection. I just could not find the words to inform her about this disappointment. There was no way to tell her to shelve her hopes, and to wait to the end of this blasted war. As a subterfuge of the truth, I told her that I had not received any answer yet. This was the only time in our short life together, that I lied to her. Only when I was called into the service, did I explain. And that letter was also among the many lost ones.

Up to now, all my thoughts were only concentrated on getting Hedy to this country. With this dream shattered, I began to think, how I could best stay out of an eventual induction, feeling that I had more than my share of the war. After all, the few days I had been in the real fighting in Norway were sufficient for me. As I was slightly underweight, I tried desperately to keep it this way, but my willpower was almost nonexistent. With so much food around and the memory of the last lean years it was almost impossible to resist. My Aunt Lucy, Lucy" 's brother, a doctor in Brooklyn, in his early thirties, and, surprisingly not in uniform, when I asked him how he did that, answered: "just lucky." He examined me and beside the weight, found me in perfect condition. The only thing he could think about was a pierced eardrum, and for that I was too much of a coward. Somebody suggested I should declare myself as a homosexual, which most likely would have ended me in jail.

The fifteen weeks as a free man in New York were thoroughly frustrating. My letters to Hedy were not honest and beside that outright lie, I did not mention anything about my military prospects. I tried to keep my letters cheerful and not to betray my fears, which must have made them seem shallow and with a lack of feeling. But I tried to make the short time available as profitable as possible. I took a second job, and every evening after work, I went to a restaurant (Schrafft's) where I became a part-time factotum, from dishwashing to cleaning and deliveries, and even a few times as a cashier. The pay was not much, but I had a free dinner included. Between my two jobs, I took home what were considered very nice earnings then, and some of my relatives even envied me. I reduced my spending to a bare minimum, and the happiest moment of the week was, when I sent a money-order to Lucy's brother, Otto, to pay our debts in Barcelona. After a few weeks we were in the black, and Hedy could afford a few very, very modest luxuries.

Of course, everything I could do for my girl made me enjoy my work so much more, but also the pleasantness and friendliness of my employers, and my fellow-workers contributed to it. An elderly black man had decided to take the "Greenhorn" under his tutelage. When I told Barney about my experience on the train from New Orleans, and my unpleasant reaction to it, he gave me a thorough introduction into racial discrimination. He told me about his anger and he was as happy as can be, that he had such a good listener. When I explained to him how Jews were treated in the Nazi occupied countries, he declared: "At least you can understand my people's frustrations!" He prepared me to what I was going to experience below the Mason-Dixon Line, as far as the treatment of the Negroes was concerned. Not that they were so much better off, up here, with less segregation. As this was his favored subject, he pointed out one day, how "You, the Jews" were discriminated.

I found this hard to believe. We were working in a uniform factory, when the owner, a Mr. Rubinstein passed by to say hello, Barney said: "Mr. Rubenstein, my greenhorn here can't believe, that some hotels in the mountains are not admitting

Jews." "Boy, you better believe it. They rather go bankrupt than to take guests with names like yours or mine." I really had a lot to learn. While, this country and the Allies were fighting a war to end all these prejudices it did not do anything to take some of their own citizen from their second class standard.

The few weeks as a civilian flew by too fast. But I had been very busy working from seven in the morning to ten at night, six days a week, on my two jobs. Sundays, I was mainly invited by my many relatives and family friends. They all competed to make me feel at home, and they most certainly succeeded. I had a wonderful welcome at our good, old friends and neighbors, the Salomon's. On my first visit there, when I told them about my fiancée, Mrs. Salomon was rather disappointed. At that time, she had two marriageable daughters, Charlotte and Renée, while Ellen was only thirteen. Well, after life's unpredictable turns, Renée is now my wife. Lucky me!

And then, on October 24, 1943, I received that famous letter, which I opened with mixed feelings. Greetings from the President of the U.S.A. to this humble foreigner. He summoned me to present myself at my draft-board on November 10 at six AM.

Well, that was it. They must have thought they could not possibly win the war without me. This was not figured in the plans that Hedy and I had made when I left Barcelona. While I did not cherish the idea, to serve in a second army, my outlook had changed by now. As my reapplication for Hedy's visa was depending on my induction, I became anxious and not as fearful as I was. Also, at that time, the newspapers were full of the Nazi's atrocities, which were no secret any more, and I felt it as my duty to contribute as much as possible to their defeat. While here, I was still far from harm's way, and lady luck had not abandoned me, my parents were still in great danger. I thought that I would feel better about myself by doing something useful and to stop running away from fate.

On that early morning, we were about eight fellows at the draft board, and they gave each of us ten cents fare to and from Grand Central. A lot of inductees were standing in line in front of several desks. Some sergeants, feeling very important were directing the typical, ages-old army procedures: "Hurry up and wait." Where had I experienced this before? It was hardly different from the Foreign Legion. No, there was a little more courtesy. After undressing, again long waiting in our birthday suits. A young doctor was examining my heart, while having a conversation with his colleague on the next table about last night's "hot date." How could he hear what my ticker was doing? Then the universal check for hernia (head to the left, and cough). Eyes: 20/20. Throat, nose and ears: if a light into one ear did not shine through the other ear, you were "In." Hardly anybody was rejected. (Were things really going that badly at the different fighting fronts?) After a very unemotional swearing-in ceremony, I was given written orders to report on November 30 at 7 AM at Penn Station.

This left me twenty days of civilian life. I went immediately to the lawyer's office at Times Square. He made a copy of my orders and promised to have it added to Hedy's file. Then I went to work. Everybody congratulated me and applauded as if I had accomplished something special. Somebody passed a bottle to celebrate. I was puzzled, and I didn't even like scotch. When I finished the machine I was working on, they asked me: "How can you concentrate on work on a day like this?" And in

the evening at my second job, it was almost the same.

And here, at the receiving end of this show of friendship and good wishes, I was in a very somber mood. I was not thinking too much of my future, and I accepted in a fatalistic way my military prospects. But I was worried that, in less than three weeks, my nice earnings would shrink to a G.I.'s pay of forty dollars a month. How can I then take care of my girl in Spain? Well, one way was to help win the war as fast as possible. That was the standard propaganda. But my life long absence of confidence in myself, as far as money or rather the lack of it was concerned, remained with me until not too long ago.

But now came a very difficult task, which I could not postpone any longer. I had to stop my phony lying and tell Hedy the truth. Writing to her was not difficult, with so many events and things in my life to describe. I found it easy to fill many pages with my impressions in the new land, new people, new customs and of course of our old love. Her few letters sounded always so cheerful and affectionate, but between the lines, I could feel her tears, her loneliness and her homesickness. News from our parents were very sparse, but we were lucky to at least hear from them. But it did nothing to stop our concern for them. I wrote and wrote, trying desperately to pour all my heart into it. After mailing it, I would have loved to fish the letter out of the mailbox again. I was scared of Hedy's reaction, thinking it was cold, without feelings and phony. About two months later I had my answer, and it was much better than I had expected. Hedy took it like the good trooper she was all her life long. Cheerful as always and full of hope and optimism. She had heard that by now, foreigners had to serve too, and she accepted it philosophically, with the fervent wish, that I would get through this situation as unharmed as possible. She was confident that my luck would not run out. Instead of my giving courage to her, she gave it to me. Why was I afraid to tell her the truth? Did I know her so little? I think, that the short time we had spent together was so overshadowed, not only by that budding passion, but mainly by the fears and uncertainties of the times we were living in. I thought that we had given ourselves completely to each other, but I had to admit, that she was the all giving one, and not I. It seems that I remained frugal and stingy with my feelings. Always saving them, like money, for a rainy day. After I realized these complexes, I believe, a change began within me. This might be a good time to mention, that I have never been unfaithful. The opportunities were present many times, but when willpower seemed to weaken, I saw only this so very sad and beautiful girl, as she disappeared in that cloud of steam on the platform at Barcelona.

THIS TIME A SOLDIER IN THE WINNING ARMY

My second military career started on a cold and rainy morning, and was to last for twenty-eight months. In contrast with my colleagues, who seemed rather distraught, a certain numbness seemed to have taken over my thoughts. I had resigned myself and considered this new development as one more unpleasantness which comes up from time to time. Looking back on my past experiences, the internment camp, service in the Legion, and the Spanish prisons, this could not be much worse, beyond doubt there remained a factor, that this could turn out to be life threatening.

By now, with more draftees from other parts of the city, our group had swollen to more than a hundred men. A few rather friendly sergeants assembled us in ranks,

and guided us, still civilians down to a waiting train. While I had no idea where we were heading for, and could not care less either, everybody else knew that our destination was Camp Upton on Long Island, the induction center for all New York State draftees. From there we were to be assigned to various centers all over the U.S. for Basic Training. My seat neighbor, a man my age, when he heard my heavily accented and not too fluent English had pegged me correctly as a greenhorn. His name was Bob Gioelli of Italian descent, and he told me about the many people in his family, who did not speak any English at all. At the station, I had seen him, making his tearful goodbyes to a lovely lady, his young wife. On this ride to the Camp, we became good friends and, with short interruptions, we were fortunate to be together during our entire stay in the service, and even after that.

When boarding the train, my first surprise were the clean coaches with comfortable seats for everybody. I guess, that I was expecting cattle cars like in the French army. Must have been a slow ride, because on arriving, we were marched straight to the mess hall for lunch. How I enjoyed that first meal, and most of those which followed. Well, I wasn't spoiled at all. Not like my buddies. Bob, hardly eating anything, watched how I dug into my chow, said: "You seem to like that slop. He was already missing his wife's and his mother's Italian fleshpots. After the war, we were invited for dinner at mother Gioelli's in Queens, and found out why Bob gave army food his critical judgment and called it slop.

During the following four to five days, we were kept busy with medical and I. Q. tests, military and political orientations, double-timing from one place to another and then, waiting for hours in long lines. We also received uniforms and equipment, and I shed my old, not very nice, European suit, which had come with me such a long way, without regret. When I looked at myself in the mirror, wearing my new O. D's, I liked what I saw. By now, the Noncoms began to raise their voices, with some cursing here and there, especially when they tried to make us march in step. Even when intermixed with profanities, this was all rather like parlor language against what we had to listen to in the Legion. In my section, I was thrown together with a nice, pleasant group, all fighting their first bout of homesickness. I was not in much better shape; only mine had been present for years already and for my buddies this was now something new. Most of them had never left home before. That old, dull pain in my chest was to remain there until my reunion with Hedy. Among my comrades, only a few were younger than I and most of them were in their thirties, who until now had been exempted for one reason or another.

Early afternoon of our last day in Camp Upton, we were ordered to "fall in" with our duffle bags. Marched to the terminal, we were to entrain for a twenty hours trip. When the train pulled in, I thought that I did not see right. But there was nothing wrong with my eyes: we were stepping into Sleeper coaches. Is that how this country of "E Pluribus Unum" is treating its defenders? A kitchen car was in the rniddle, and for dinner we were marched there, to fill our mess kits. But the greatest surprise was, when porters came in to make up the berths. We were told that our destination was Fort Bragg in North Carolina. Somebody produced a map, and I saw, that I must have passed there on my way from New Orleans to New York.

Most of us recruits were assigned to the Field Artillery Training Center (FARTC), and I was relieved, that I was not put into the Infantry. Now, our cadres were all business, and the friendliness from up North was gone. But let me say now, that the great majority of our instructors and also later other non-coms *(sergeants and*

corporals), were civilians, drafted like me. In their toughness, they were decent fellows, showing a lot of understanding, in contrast to the few career men which have crossed my path. Especially during the first few weeks, they tried by all tricks of that trade, to chase us out of our civilian lethargy, and to transform us into soldiers, to operate on command and to get us into a more martial frame of mind. I had no problem with "Spit and Polish" neither with "Hurry up and Wait" attitudes. I had seen worse.

The physical part of the training was very demanding, at times painfully so. They tried to build up our bodies and to toughen us. Most of my buddies were overweight, while I was rather skinny, and did not find the calisthenics too hard. What appeared to all of us as the most senseless were the "Night problems." (This has nothing to do with bed wetting). Our cadres found a fiendish pleasure to rise us out of our first sleep with whistle blows: "Everybody outside with full pack in ten minutes!" There was a general scrambling out of beds. Jumping into one's clothes. Packing the bag. Carbine and entrenching tools. Lining up in front of the barracks. With special sensitivity they mostly nicked a rainy or snowy night. "Double time. Forward march!" Five to six miles to a bivouac-area in the middle of the pine-barrens.

Drenched to the skin, we dug foxholes and slit trenches, before pitching our pup-tents. If not on guard-duty, one could try to sleep. Three to four hours later, those blasted whistles and the whole routine in reverse again. Because we were so well rested, we had to double-time again, to arrive at the barracks by half past six. Our generous sergeant gave us thirty minutes, plenty of time to get cleaned up, range the equipment, and get all the sand and mud out of our quarters, which we had brought in out of the rain. Then the routine of an ordinary day started again. And this we had at least once a week.

I accepted all this soldiering resignedly, and even drifted into a phase of indifference. With all the physical efforts, I felt fit and well. I was well fed and dressed, while all my needs were provided for by our "Uncle Sam." But among that entire well being, I could not shed my guilt-feelings, about all my dear ones, Hedy and my parents, whom I had left so far away, in dangerous and unpleasant conditions. With my comrades, I had a very pleasant relationship. After a few weeks, we knew each other's life's story, and when they heard mine, which they found adventurous, they considered me with a certain respect. I was given the nickname "Frenchie," which I kept even after the war, and very few knew even my real name. Without boasting, I can say that I was well liked, and I am proud that I was good friends with almost everyone. However, they could not understand that: "How come you're never bitching?" Something they all had such special talents for lots of times with good reasons. As far as I was concerned, I didn't have it that good in a long time!

My lawyer had told me, to see the Jewish chaplain as soon as possible, to get endorsements and letters of recommendation, which he would add to Hedy's visa application. This Rabbi, after I told him our story, became very involved. He showed me copies of letters, mailed to Mr. Blecher from himself and my commanding officer, very strongly recommending issuance of a visa for my bride. The lawyer wrote to me, that he was very pleased, and was counting, that the committee, who had refused once, would now lean backward, to be helpful to a G.I. He warned me however, that it might not go too fast, as this was an election year.

March 15, 1944 turned out to be another most fateful day in my life. Earlier than usual, that darn whistle woke us up. Hardly awake, with full pack, we double-timed to the rifle range. I had just qualified as a marksman, when a clerk from the orderly room came to pick me up with a jeep. He took me first to the barracks, where I had to change into my clean uniform, then he dropped me at Headquarters. He did not know why. There, a truck, with about a dozen soldiers was waiting. Climbing aboard, I asked the others where we were going. "We are heading for the courthouse in Fayetteville to be sworn in." That was beyond my comprehension, and when I asked for the meaning of this: "To become American citizens, dummy!" If anybody would have hit me with a feather, I would have keeled over. This was the farthest from my mind, and I had never thought this could happen.

In an old, wood-paneled courtroom, a white-haired, fatherly looking judge was presiding. When bibles were distributed, a young, Second Lieutenant of our group, wearing Jewish Chaplain's insignias told the judge very politely, that he could only take the oath on an "Old-Testament." His honor agreed, and while an attendant was sent to the nearby synagogue to pick up "Jewish Bibles," he took advantage of the delay, to talk about our new citizenship. He explained about the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights and the Constitution with its amendments. And then, I was terribly impressed, even understanding only half of what he was saying: "Don't ever forget the first words, WE, THE PEOPLE! Look at the world in fire and torment. But WE THE PEOPLE of these blessed United States with the help of our gallant Allies will liberate this earth from THEM, THE DICTATORS. You new Americans are to uphold our Government with its Constitution. And don't ever forget Mr. Lincoln at Gettysburg: Government BY the people, OF the people and FOR the people shall not perish from this earth." Then we were sworn in.

An unforgettable experience, which left me emotionally very stirred up. For ten years, I have been a stateless foreigner. In spite of many disappointments, I have always felt a certain attachment with France, and still do. I had to pinch myself to find out whether I was dreaming or not. Am I now really a citizen of this, the greatest Democracy? Was this the day when I became such an ardent patriot? Or was it on the day, when I became the father of the first American born in our family? What does it matter? Right or wrong, I love my country, so perfect to me despite its many imperfections. "Oh, country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty!" So many contrasts. So many iniquities. Walking out of this courthouse, somebody pointed to a special entrance, a segregated seating area, a drinking fountain and a toilet: "For Blacks Only." How about the "Bill of Rights," the good judge just explained? How does it all add up?

On the first weekend when we were entitled to passes, friend Bob's wife was taking the long trip from New York, but he was ordered to K.P. *(kitchen duty)* for that Sunday. He tried to get excused for another day, but, nothing doing. I proposed to replace him, and our Sergeant agreed to let him go. He offered to pay me which, of course I refused, as we had become real good friends. On that Saturday afternoon, I had been on a pass to Fayetteville, but two hours later I was back in camp. I did not like it at all. Thousands of soldiers letting off steam, and trying by all means to have a good time by getting drunk. On the following Sunday, another buddy asked me to take over his K. P. for the going rate of ten Dollars. Not showing him how eager I was, I let him beg a little bit. From then on, I did this every Sunday and sometimes Saturday afternoons until we went overseas and it gave me a great satisfaction, from the fact that I could add this to what was available for Hedy. Then,

ten Dollars was "Money," (A pair of shoes cost $5).

Mid-April was our graduation from Basic Training and, on our way to new assignments; we were given a week's furlough. I spent half of it in Vineland, NJ", busy doing all kinds of repairs and a thorough cleaning of the chicken coops. While they spoiled me with their affection and food like my mother's before rationing, I took a lot of their chores away. I was glad that I could do a little something for them. Not only did they post an affidavit for my coming to this country, they were very good to us all the later years. The rest of my leave was spent in New York, where all my relatives welcomed me with open arms. They all were struggling new immigrants also, and they were proud to have a soldier in the family. All these warm receptions were a balm for my ego, which I needed badly, because the news from Hedy and also, through her, from my parents were very sparse. I also went to see the lawyer, but he had no response yet for my renewed visa application.

Hardly begun this vacation was over in no time. I met most of my buddies at Penn-Station, where we all took a train to Indianapolis. Most of us were ordered to report to the **106th Infantry Division at Camp Atterbury.** It was pleasant to share this long voyage with old friends, and also to get acquainted with other GIs on the train. On some of the more important and longer stops there were always many local ladies offering free coffee, sandwiches and other snacks for the hungry soldiers. So much good will and appreciation was shown us and it produced such a warm feeling of belonging. Yes, this country was standing solidly behind its Armed Forces. Indeed there were few families who did not have their own GIs. Back in 1939, in France, I experienced an outpouring of support for their Trouphiants *(soldiers)*, but not at such a generous scale as here.

At Camp Atterbury, out of the veterans from Fort Bragg, six of us were assigned to the 589th Field Artillery. (Of these, one was killed, two were taken prisoners, and we, the remaining three returned to New York when the war was over). Hardly off the train, and after some no-nonsense processing, more military routine and training resumed almost immediately. More spit-and-polish, but it was rather businesslike and not unfriendly. I had accepted the fact that I was now in the army, and I found no reason to join my comrades in their eternal griping. The pain of my separation from Hedy was constantly present, and it did not make any difference where I was.

According to our previous training, Bob and I were placed into the wire section. Our main duty was laying telephone wires from the gun positions to different command posts and also to the outfits who were supported by our 105 millimeter Howitzers *(cannons)*. Each time the weapons changed position, the wires, of course had to be changed and follow them. And all this "on the double," to reestablish communications as fast as possible. The camp was on the edge of a tremendous range, consisting of woods, fields and hills, where all the maneuvers were held day and night. It was a hot summer, and many were the nights we had to spend in the swamps. Our officers did not give us many chances to sleep, but neither did the mosquitoes. During long, sleepless nights on guard duty, with fellows from all different parts of the country, I got to know more about my new homeland. Most of my buddies were like myself in their teens during the Depression era, which lasted almost the entire 1930s. Only the global rearmament, which began seriously after the Munich sellout (September 1938), brought the terrible unemployment to an end. After long, lean years, those fellows had just begun to recuperate from their frustrations, privations and even hunger. And now, they had to give up their good

jobs, to don the uniform. Describing those long hard years brought out their pathological fears, that the end of the war could bring back the depression-era, which had touched so many in this country. On long, lonely nights in the field, conversations began as usually with bragging about "back home," wife, children, parents, jobs and in many cases about the family farm. Always drifting back to those terrible years in the 1930s. "You can't imagine how bad it was. No work, no money and never enough to eat." So, the "Grapes of Wrath" were not entirely fiction. And those were the years when we were kicked out of our cozy home. When my protected childhood came to an abrupt end. But, unlike my new friends, I had never experienced any lack of material things, maybe with the exception of the time in Spain.

When it was my turn to talk about my experiences during those years, some of them seemed unbelievable to my buddies. They could hardly understand my worries and concerns about all those I had left behind in that continent in shackles. They had no idea at all what was going on in the world. There was a daily session of indoctrination, when an officer commented on the news and developments, trying to instill a reason why and what we were fighting for. I did not need any additional motivation, but very few shared my knowledge. Of course, there were newspapers, but their reading was confined to the sports section and the cartoons. The few information to make an impression came from the movie newsreels. And there they booed when my idol, President Roosevelt came on the screen, almost as much as when the Japs and the Krauts were shown.

We had a few "Hillbilly's" and real "Indians" from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kentucky in our outfit, and I was amazed to find out, that some of them could hardly read and write, when one of them asked me, if he could dictate a letter to me. What a joke! Why me with my poor English. I wrote many letters to his wife and also to his girlfriend. When one of the other fellows asked him if I were writing in French, he answered: "No, he writes in lousy hillbilly, but half of it, he doesn't understand and at least doesn't make fun of me." This earned me a few more non-paying customers. Less than six months later, I lost most of those uneducated, boasting nice drunkards.

Beside these few, most of my comrades had more or less of a high school education, and I was amazed how scant their learning was. I have hardly ever seen anybody reading a serious book. But even some of the officers, all college educated, who probably were good and efficient in their fields, I found otherwise limited.

As if it would have been yesterday, I remember a long conversation with Corporal Julius, while operating the switchboard during a hot night in the field; it remained so deeply embedded in my memory, because it opened a window to look into the philosophy of the people and their way of thinking. Julie began: "What nationality are you?" Remembering my ten years as a foreigner in France, there was no question which could make me more uncomfortable than this one. With no uncertain terms, and not hiding my annoyance, I, of course pointed out that I was a full American. After all, this was about the third month that I was this at that time. "Hey, hold your horses, jerk! No doubt, we all are Americans, but see, I'm a Polack, because both my grandparents came here from that God-forsaken country. I hope that someday, after the war, you can come to visit me in Michigan, and you'll see that most of the people in the street are speaking Polish, and my grandparents are speaking a worse English than yours." Was this supposed to be a compliment? Look

at your buddy Bob Giorelli, he's a Wop (He gladly explained that this was a disparaging name for Italians) Walter Hart is a Kraut. (Walter, a steel worker from Pennsylvania, spoke fluent German, and he hated the Nazis as much as I did. Not too long ago, I have seen his grave in the American Military Cemetery in Luxembourg) With my heavy accent, my poor English my European manners, Julie found it easy to accept me as one of theirs. What a country! What a beautiful people!

But this was not the end of our conversations. When I came to the point where I told him that I was Jewish, he cried out: "Couldn't be. You're not the type!" So, I let him have it: "For crying out loud, what do you know about Jews? What have they ever done to you?" And then came that centuries old cliché about the Jews owning all the banks, the newspapers, the big stores. Having weaseled their way into the top places in the sciences, arts, medicine, music, the movies and of course into government, even influencing "that Cripple in the White House." Julie was well brainwashed about that subject, and he repeated what he had heard in his Polish surroundings all his life long. When I asked him how many Jews he had come in personal contact with, he could almost count them on one hand. Here in the Battalion, beside myself, there were. Major Goldstein and Sergeant Feinberg. Back home he knew a Doctor and a grocery owner, who both had been most generous, granting credit to his mother during the Depression years. "If all the Jews were like the few I know, there wouldn't be any problem." Will he, someday, in a discussion with his anti-Semitic Polacks think of us?" Hardly!

Within our Camp, there was a large stockade for mostly German and a few Italian prisoners of war. They were kept busy repairing highways and general maintenance. They had the same accommodations as ours, and also their food was the same. They were all over the place, and I hated to see them so well fed and clothed, with their arrogant self-confident allures, so typically German. For them, the war was over and they enjoyed to wait for its end in the land of milk and honey. They did not look defeated and they walked around with an air of insolence. A Sergeant of the guard platoon, a Jewish-German refugee, told me that at the inception of the camp, they had some thoroughly ingrained Nazis, who tried to organize the inmates along party doctrines with Nazi salutes and songs. But the leaders were shipped to a work camp in the Arizona desert, where life was not as soft as here. Apparently, after the landing in Normandy, the mood changed, and some of the prisoners dared to show their disenchantment with the criminals in Germany.

During all that time, I never neglected my efforts to obtain Hedy's visa. A great help was that wonderful Major Goldstein, the Battalion Executive, who showed me so much understanding until the last day of the 589th. He arranged an appointment with the local head of the Red Cross, and I had many sympathetic listeners. It was no secret, that we were not too far away from being shipped overseas to join the action. I feared that, once out of the country, I would not be able to do anything to expedite that visa request. I had nothing positive to offer to Hedy, but to wait, and my greatest fright was that she would get disenchanted with my empty promises. The few letters from her, which were not lost, were as always so full of warmth, affection and upbeat. She had more confidence in me than I had myself. Again and again, I kept reading those lovely letters, and I knew them by heart. They are all lost. What would I give now, to still be able to read her soft words.

On June 6, (1944), at about four in the morning, we were thrown out of bed, to fall into formation with full pack. Over the loudspeaker a bugle's blast and our commanding General Jones read Eisenhower's proclamation of the landing in France. Then, in honor of the invasion, we went on a daylong speed march. The progress of the invasion was broadcast almost hourly, to make us realize that this was not an easy operation. I have never stopped to marvel about the feat of stamina and organization and I feel that we owe a debt of gratitude to all the Allied participants, who opened a new dawn in Europe.

Finally, the Red Cross handed me a summons to appear in Washington at the Immigration Commission on July 5. This was IT. They had already obtained a leave from my Colonel, and I was all set to take the train on the next afternoon. Very early I arrived in our capital, waiting at the Office building to open its doors. I believe, it was on account of my uniform, that I was the first one to be called into the hearing-room. When I saw, that most of the committee members were officers, I walked in there like on a parade ground, stiff as a ramrod, I came to attention with the snappiest salute I have ever given. "At ease!" said the chairman, an elderly very likeable looking Colonel, while looking through a file. "Your Major seems to rate you as a very good soldier." "Only doing the best I can for my new country, sir." A few unimportant questions followed by a conversation with the other members of the board, and then, I could hardly believe it, what I was praying for a whole year already: "OK with you, gentlemen?" And they all joined in the sweetest chorus: "Absolutely!" Then, that godly looking Colonel turned to a secretary: "Consul in Barcelona to be instructed to issue visa immediately." And to me: "We thank you, soldier. Good luck to you, and may God bless you." What was that? Did he really thank me? And there, forgetting all military courtesy, I am just running out of that room, without a thank you, and turning my back to all these wonderful people. The first really good news in a long, long time.

Walking on a cloud into the waiting room to pick up my bag, my lawyer was there with another client. He had planned to be with me also at the hearing, but the train was delayed. "I can see in your face what happened to you. Congratulations!" Asking for the nearest telegraph office, I was directed to Union Station, where I was heading for anyhow to take the train to New York. I was in the greatest hurry, to share this wonderful moment with Hedy. (That cable got to her long after she received a message to come to the Consulate.) In the train I begin to write my longest letter ever. It was terribly hot, but I did not feel a thing. All that unbelievable joy and satisfaction came bubbling out of me, and I filled the lines with my great love. It was a kind of liberation from my frustrations and guilt-feelings. Will my bride be here soon? But sober calculations dampened my new emotions and I had to realize, that I might not be here to welcome her.

In New York, my relatives shared my great joy with me, and they all promised to welcome Hedy if I should not be able to do so. I made many arrangements with the Hias, to get Hedy on a Spanish or Portuguese ship, and they prepared me that this was not an easy task. But I trusted my luck. Nothing could diminish my optimism.

The next afternoon, I entrained on that long hot ride back to Indiana. After this bout of exhilaration, I felt completely drained. Was this a psychosomatic reaction to those good news? Arriving at camp, I could not move my neck, and I must have looked like a ghost. All I know, was, that I woke up, two days later in the hospital, coming out of some kind of a coma. The doctors had a hard time to determine what

was wrong with me. For several more days I was kept under sedation, and I slept most of the time. They called it neuritis, just to give it a name. After a week, I started to feel better, and I decided to stretch my symptoms somewhat, because by now, I found my stay in the hospital rather pleasant. I made good use of the well-stocked library, and had some kind of a vacation. Among the doctors, there was a Major, who spoke a fluent German and a Captain, who's French was absolutely perfect. When I asked them, how they acquired these languages, I discovered a most distressing truth about my new country. They both were Jewish, and they explained about the quota system of, especially the better medical schools in the U.S.A. The first one got his degree at the University of Basel, in the German part of Switzerland, and the Captain graduated from the University of Toulouse.

Hardly any letters from Hedy came through, and it took many more weeks, until I had any reaction to the news of the visa being granted. Hedy was elated, and she found the most beautiful words to express her joy. Getting a berth on a ship did not seem easy at all. I was not too proud about my stretching my stay in the hospital. A sense of duty was gnawing on my conscience. I read about the capture by the Russians of the Maidaneck death camp. By now, the truth about those places of extermination was not hushed up anymore, shown in newsreels and the press. Even some of the, alas, too few survivors gave eye-witness's reports. No, I can not keep shirking my duty, and I decided that I had to do my share, and hope that my luck would not abandon me.

A few days later, I was back with my outfit again. But things were very hectic. Training and more training. Day and night. New clothing was issued, from head to toe, but the best was a ten days leave. On my birthday I arrived in Vineland, where I was welcomed with open arms. A severe hurricane left the area and the properties, seriously damaged. Their neighbors, mostly Jewish refugees, all helped each other to repair their houses and barns. Of course, I pitched in immediately, and I spent four busy, hard working days there. But they were extremely rewarding, and I enjoyed to be useful to my relatives and their friends.

The remains of my furlough, I spent in New York. From the train station I went to the Hias. The good news was that Hedy had a booking on a Portuguese ship. But there was no sailing date set yet, and this might still take six to eight weeks. The prospect of at least seeing Hedy before our departure to "Overseas" did not look good at all. I was terribly disappointed, and there was even a possibility, that our paths might cross in the middle of the Atlantic.

News from the fighting fronts were very good. Indeed, the Allies were advancing on all fronts. Paris had been liberated almost a month ago, and so was a greater part of Southern France. Tommy's and G.I.'s had broken through the Siegfried Line. The Japs were being chased from many of the Pacific islands. With the total defeat of our enemies not too far away, I just had, to write to Hedy, whether she would not prefer to return to her parents, which looked quiet possible now, and to postpone our reunion until the very end of the war. As all mail was censored, I could not mention that I was almost on my way to some battle zone. I was terribly afraid that she could interpret this letter as a denial of my intentions towards her. How little did I know this marvelous girl. Many weeks later, I received her answer in England, when she confirmed that nothing, but nothing could keep her away from me.

Back at the station, about half a dozen 589ers from the New York area met for the return trip to camp. Three of them took their wives and girl friends along. (Not both at the same time) They wanted to spend the little remaining spare time together. My paid services were in great demand, permitting those fellows to be with their, wives. I did not mind the additional work, because I needed the money now for my Hedy.

After a full night of packing and cleaning the barracks, we were ready for our departure. But not before the General (McMahon) came for inspection. Next to the door of our quarters, there was a full size mirror, with a big, raw hamburger stuck in the middle of it. He did not say a word, but you should have heard our Colonel. Lucky that the train was waiting for us, and we had to leave. When that mishap got around, the 589th became the laughing stock of the division, and we acquired our private password, which even survived after the war: "Who put the meatball on the mirror?"

The train was a sleeper again, but the service was terrible, and there was nobody to make our beds. It did not take long to find out that we were heading East. The next morning we were standing on a siding outside of Elizabeth (New Jersey), to make room for a long freight train, loaded with tanks and guns, to make life difficult for Hitler and Hirohito. Our Sergeant, Mike Cenco, his head out of the window, shouting: "Mom, Mom!" We were standing right in back of his parent's house. Nobody in that house could possibly have heard him, but a nice looking middle-aged lady opened a window. Mike keeps screaming in Ukrainian, and Mom seems to be screaming back. Impossible to understand a word, but we all were involved in this interlude, and for these fleeting minutes, mother Cenco, was for us the mother of the world with a fare-well blessing to her sons. Mike was a Regular Army man, with many years of service under his belt. A real tough guy, but when the train continued, he was crying like a baby, and his tears were not the only ones. I think, most of my buddies, who had never before left home and country, were realizing for the first time, that we were heading for an uncertain fate. How many times had I experienced these feelings? But I could never get used to them. (We lost Mike in the Bulge).

It was late afternoon when the train rolled into a large installation. Powerful loudspeakers greeted us: "Welcome to Camp Myles Standish. This is a secret military base, and you are absolutely prohibited to mention to anyone its name and location!" Well, with the railroad steaming into it, and tens of thousands of soldiers passing through, it did not look too secret to me. We were half way between Boston and Providence, and I remember a pass to Boston, where I got terribly drunk, and I'll never know, how my friends got me back to camp.

On Tuesday, November 7, 1944, from reveille, to next day's, we were issued 24 hours passes. I did not quiet understand, when somebody explained, that I could go to New York, to vote. "You mean to say, that I can cast my ballot for Roosevelt ?" "Yeah, go ahead, and help that cripple to stay for another four years in the White House." This would be the first time in my life that I ever voted. What a delight to do it for that wonderful man, who, especially in occupied Europe, was just one step below God Almighty. Watching him lately on the newsreels, on his election campaign, I was more than annoyed, when more than half the theater goers were booing him. The disapproval came mostly from Southerners and Mid-Westerners, and when somebody pointed out, timidly, that he got the country out of the depression, he was always shouted down that this Jew lover got us into the war.

How easy it was for them to forget Hitler and Hirohito, and to knock down my idol. Since that time, I have studied his life and his achievements, quiet thoroughly. There were many flaws, and like a real dealer-wheeler, he has handled the Constitution and his power to his liking. If it were not for the abandonment of European Jewry, I would find it easy to have him share a pedestal with Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. Like every self-respecting American, he was not without his prejudices, and many of his subjects hated him for the sake of hatred.

Right after breakfast, by bus to Providence, and from there, the train in early afternoon arrived in New York. At 125th Street, the wife of Ed Plenge was waiting for him, to take him home to Passaic. They dropped me off on the Westside. The polling station was in the lobby of the building where I was living before my induction. My landlady, Mrs. Stern had to certify that I was living there, and then came that solemn moment for me to cast my vote. My President won by a smaller margin than in his three previous elections. But I am glad that I was able to contribute to this, his last victory.

On my way to Charlie's I was praying for news from my Hedy. I was greeted with: "Hedy is on a ship!" Into the subway to the Hias on Astor place. "Come on, Hurry up. Why is that train so slow?" Lots of people waiting. Thanks to my uniform I was shown in immediately. I could have kissed that lady, when she told me that Hedy was on a Portuguese ship, the Serpa Pinto, due to dock in Philadelphia on Friday or Saturday. Only three or four more days. "Call me on Thursday towards noon, and have the number of your Red Cross office for me. I will then call them, to get an emergency leave for you." This conversation took barely ten minutes, to end a wait of fifteen months. No, it wasn't the end. I could hardly believe it. My bride so close, almost in front of my door, and it was more than possible, that I would not be there to open it for her and to take her in my arms.

Back Uptown to the Washington Heights. Cousin Emmy was overjoyed with the good news. Of course, she would be at the pier. As she had only a small apartment, she made arrangements with a neighbor, who would lease a room for Hedy. Their affection and promises gave me at least some satisfaction, and I knew that my Hedy would be in good hands. Emmy was quiet a bit older, and had known Hedy as a baby, and now, she was looking forward to have a substitute daughter. Her boy, Freddy was waiting eagerly for this big sister.

At midnight, I met the 589ers at Grand Central, to take the train back to our "Secret Camp." They all came with wives, children, parents and I was the only one who had nobody to send me off. They all knew about Hedy, and everybody wanted to know if I had any news. Two ladies asked me for Emmy's number, to call Hedy. What nice sympathetic people. (Hedy found two real good friends in them). We took our seats very silently in the train. Everybody quiet and subdued buried in their own thoughts. Then that coach turned into a rolling dormitory, until, still dark outside, the conductor woke us up before arriving. Back in camp, I asked to see Captain Beans, and he promised to talk to the Battalion Commander. A little later we were called into formation, and our Colonel Kelly announced that we were restricted to our area, incommunicado with the outside, packed and ready on moments notice to move to the port of embarkation. While all the public phones were disconnected, my Captain called the lady of the Hias, who in turn called the Red Cross in camp. But that afternoon, the Colonel called me and told me, that he would not let me stay behind. He must have needed me badly to win the war for him. (It so happened that

I did, while he was in a Prisoner of War camp in Dresden). The next day, while I was on K. P. the Red Cross lady came to the mess hall, to tell me, that Hedy was arriving in Philadelphia next afternoon, and that cousin Emmy was informed.

A sleepless night. Hedy only few miles from these shores. So close but so very far away. My dear reader will understand my feelings and my terrible disappointment. Way back in my mind, I had counted with the possibility of this development, but I had concentrated on the thought, that it might not happen. I pictured my Hedy, in the customs shed, searching for me in the crowd. Have I failed her again? Much later, I read her first letter, describing the so very warm reception from Emmy. Of course, the letdown that I was not there was a great shock for her, but she switched her thoughts and prayers for me to come back safely to her again. Then, not to dwell on our mischance, she told of her enthusiasm about this new country. Again: "This was my Hedy." I don't want to fail to mention here, that my comrades showed me so much understanding and genuine sympathy. I was fortunate, that I was surrounded by such a nice and decent crowd of friends. My story became theirs, and they did not stop cursing the Colonel, who had never tried to endear himself to us.

November 10, 1944, Reveille at one AM. Big cleanup of our quarters. Colonel's inspection. (This time without the meatball on the mirror). Then, with our heavy duffle-bags, double time to the terminal. Of course, there was no train yet. This is the army: "Hurry up and wait." Standing in a freezing New England rain. Finally, soaked, the train arrives and we are boarding. With all window shades drawn, the train leaves the "Secret Camp." Everybody asleep. Shunting back and forth and we detrained inside Boston's harbor. Nice ladies from the Red Cross served the traditional watery coffee with soggy donuts. It's pleasant and so very American. Most of them are mothers with soldiers like us in the service. When they say: "Godspeed, soldier," it comes from the bottom of their hearts. It's a moral-builder, for us as much as for them.

A short hike to the pier, and there is our transport, the former luxury liner "Manhattan" now called the "Wakefield." As each name is called, we are marching up the gangplank. Nothing luxurious on that ship. We were assigned to E-deck, just above the fish. It was so crowded, that one could hardly move. Canvas hammocks, four high on both sides of narrow aisles. By the order we walked in, I got the top bunk. Less than a foot from my nose to the ceiling. Without all my heavy equipment, this would have been adequate, but millions of G.I.'s didn't have it any better. Everybody was griping, but I considered this as a luxury in comparison with my voyages while in the Foreign Legion. I was almost grateful for my former, not the most pleasant experiences, which made the coming hardships so much easier to digest.

BACK TO EUROPE...AND THE WAR

As soon as our ship left its moorings, we were allowed to take some fresh air on the deck. Only few lights from fading away Boston pierced the darkness. And there, into the night, disappeared my new, my own, my so beloved country. For ten years I had carried a deep longing for an abstract home, and now, leaving it after such a short stay, my homesickness for this blessed land made sense. I knew, that almost at this moment, my beloved bride was setting her foot on this country. So far, I only wanted to help to defeat the tyrants and murderers, but now, like my comrades, it was also to defend our home. At this time of my life, somebody "Up there" has been

good to me and has protected me, and my deep gratitude will never end. Now, with Hedy "Here," however far from me, home, love family and affection blended into one overwhelming feeling. All of a sudden, that deep, un-solving homesickness did not seem so hopeless anymore. Maybe, it was because for the first time I was not running away from fate and danger. Yes, I was sailing into another uncertain destiny, but it was a run toward that criminal, who was in his last desperate throes.

It was a terrible crossing. Maybe a preparation for the things to come. The weather could not have been worse. With heavy storms over the Atlantic, everybody, from the General to this humble Private was seasick. Even the ship's crew, in spite of their sea legs did not fare any better than us landlubbers. As miserable as we felt, my section was detailed to keep the "Heads" clean at all times. Those were the bath rooms in Navy language, and with the epidemic of seasickness, which had taken over the ship, we were kept extremely busy. Not only did we clean up after our customers, but we also joined them in their endeavors. On the third day out, when the ship's Captain saw his cooks unemployed, because nobody came to eat, he ordered everybody into the chow lines. He gave a pep talk, explaining, that only after lining our stomachs with food again, would help us out of our miseries. He was not entirely right, but the fish were kept very happy.

On the early evening of November 17,-the Wakefield docked at the pier of Liverpool (England). More than four years ago, we passed here to and from that unfortunate expedition in Norway. Then, there were some old, dirty warehouses, and now, only ruins from the bombardments of the Luftwaffe were left. It was good to march again on solid ground, to a waiting train, about a mile away. On that short hike, with destructions right and left, we found ourselves, for the first time, projected into war and its meaning. Very quietly, and without the usual jesting, we boarded the old, rickety train, which took all night to Gloucester. There, we had to march again through a lot of ruination, but this time those were mostly residential building, and there were no doubts left of how much the civilian population had to suffer, under the monster's bombs. We took over the barracks of the Gloustershire regiment, an outfit famous for its courage. All I remember of England are the cold, the fog and the never ending rain. As coal was severely rationed, our squad rooms were heated only a few hours each evening. But seeing how worse off the Britishers were, nobody was for once, complaining. We spent two, very busy weeks there, being outfitted with all our heavy equipment, which we drew from enormous depots. I had never in my life seen so many guns, tanks, trucks and sundry war utensils. Mind boggling. And this was only one of the many pools in the U.K. We thought that if Hitler could just see this one, he would surrender. Fat chance! As we had to drive on the left, and not being used to it, generated many accidents, including yours truly. Fortunately, nothing serious.

A full day's drive took our miles long convoy to the coast of the English Channel, outside the harbor of Weymouth. After a long, cold and wet night in our trucks, we drove onto a LCT *(Landing Craft Tank)*, which raised its anchor at dusk. Three days of terrible weather, with the ship tossed like a weightless shell, most everybody had a new bout with seasickness. To get us out of our boredom, two Nazi planes attacked us mid-channel, but when the Anti-aircraft guns let loose on them, they turned around quickly. One of them however splashed down near our LCT. Our sailors made sure that they would not have to pull any Krauts out of the water, by spraying the area with heavy machine-gun fire. Finally, we reached le Havre, and cruising up the Seine, we finally drove off the ship at Rouen. And now, I was back in

Europe which I had left behind me barely sixteen months ago. Within that short absence, I had accomplished quiet a lot. So far, I had escaped the Nazis and saved my life, acquired that new country and its citizenship. Everything pointed to the fact that I was now on the winning side.

I was very much in demand as an interpreter, and the French people we encountered were extremely friendly and treated us as their liberators. It was, of course not the same euphoria as last summer's and they still had many, many problems, which were to last for many years yet. But they were glad to be rid of the Boches. It was a long, slow drive through cold, snowy Northern France and Belgium. Every night, we spent on the road, I managed for our section to sleep in farms, stables and haylofts. The farmers were more than glad to be helpful.

But let's leave that miles long convoy somewhere near the border of Belgium and turn back to that lovely French girl in New York. Every other day almost had I written to Hedy, and so did she. But the mail was more than spotty. Just a few days before leaving Gloucester, the first load of mail reached the 589th. It was a big holiday for all of us. I had a handful of letters, and for a while, it was heaven on earth. But it was just about half what she had mailed, and I had to use a lot of imagination, to fill in the missing pieces. But they were exactly what I had expected and needed so badly. Written during her first three weeks in New York, they were cheerful, happy, content, without bitterness, sincere and full of love. But, between the lines, I could see her tears. Didn't I feel the same way? She seemed to have forgotten the empty months of loneliness and deprivations in Spain, when she was overwhelmed by the warm welcome cousin Emmy and my relatives had reserved for her. Charlie and his family, whom she had not known before took her into their arms, and a sisterly bond with Thea (Charlie's wife) was formed, never to be broken during the coming, too short twenty years. But with her natural gift to make herself liked by her surrounding, she was loved by everybody who ever knew her.

Just a few days after her arrival, she found a job as a nanny through the French consulate. Actually, she became a glorified maid, but that did not faze her at all, and it turned out to be just perfect at that time. The Silverman's, French speaking diamond dealers from Belgium had a lovely three year old, Joycie, and, as both husband and wife were busy all day in their office, and also many trips out of town, they needed a very reliable person to take care of their daughter and also the household. When Hedy came for an interview, they sent her home to get her things, and she moved in immediately. This was a wonderful arrangement, for both Hedy and the Silverman's. She was accepted there like a member of the family, they trusted her, and relied entirely on the efficient way how she organized their household. Hedy earned one hundred dollars a month, with everything free. This was a lot of money for us, poor refugees, and she started to build her nest egg immediately. But I found out only much later, that it was hard work, especially, because Joycie did not sleep very well, and there was hardly a night, that she didn't wake up Hedy, to play with her.

Since that rewarding mail call in Gloucester, we were able to learn more about each other, and especially the fate of our dear ones. France was now almost entirely liberated with exception of Alsace and Lorraine, and, however spotty communications were, we were able to hear that our parents were relatively well. What a relief it was to know them out of the Nazi's clutches. Of course, the wartime conditions, especially the food situation had not improved at all, especially in

Périgueux, where Hedy's parents were living.

On the 8th of December (1944), we took positions within the fortifications of that damned country. In the fall of 1939, at the outbreak of the war, a famous song, in both French and English was: "We'll be drying our laundry on the Siegfried Line !" Poor Tommies and Poilus never had a chance, and if we would have done it, it would have frozen stiff as a board. There was a lot of destruction around us and the icy wind brought sounds and smells of war. We took over the positions of the very glorious 2nd Infantry Division, which was pulled back for a more than deserved first rest since they landed on D-Day in Normandy.

Our section moved into the cellar of a half-destroyed farm together with the owners and their children. The name of the nearest hamlet was Auw and, looking at the map, we were not more than about fifty miles from the village, Saffig, where my dad was born, and where, as children we had spent so many unforgettable and happy days.

On that first afternoon, we received our baptism of fire. Bob Gioelli and I were ordered to run a telephone wire to the O. P. *(Observation Post)* on top of a steep snow covered hill. We were advancing rather carelessly, when, with an earsplitting noise several mortar shells exploded around us. In a split second we hit the ground, but the snow was no protection, and the earth was frozen solidly. With goodbyes to the world and life, I thought this was the end. And then, a deadly quiet! We were lucky, that those were the worst shots in the whole Kraut army. "Bob, are you still there?" "I doubt it. Stay down, Frenchie!" Then, somebody shouts from not too far up: "Are you two jokers taking a nap down there? If you would have been up here a little sooner with your f...g wires, we could have wiped out those Nazis !" (Indeed, as there was radio-silence, and if the telephones would have been connected with the gun positions, the O.P. could have directed fire on those mortars). I had a big scratch on my right hand, which bled profusely, but some band-aids did the trick. Beside a big lump in my throat, I had a bigger one in my pants, and so did Bob. When the phone was finally connected, the crew of the O.P. directed fire on the area of the German mortars. Twelve powerful 105mm howitzers spew their hot shells as ordered five times. Nothing happened. "They must all be in hell by now" said the Lieutenant. Later, at dusk, six Krauts were observed running into the neighboring woods. That was our first, far from brilliant action. Nothing to be proud about, but Bob and I had all reasons to be grateful to have gotten away, practically unharmed.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

On a cold, dark and foggy morning, December 16, 1944, shortly before five o'clock, the Nazis mounted their last desperate try for victory. They gave it the codeword: "Wacht am Rhein" *(watch on the Rhine)* (We were at less than fifty miles from that river). For us, it was the famous "Battle of the Bulge." Hitler tried to reach our substantial fuel depots, and to cut off the entire First army in a "Bulge," and then, reach Paris and re-conquer part of France. This operation was extremely well organized by von Rundstedt, the commander of the German corps. They gave us a very hard time, but at the end, we didn't let them lick us. For the few 589ers, who were left after the first week of this unforeseen attack, (thanks to the inefficiency of the Allied intelligence services) it ended when, on March 23rd we supported the crossing of the Rhine at Remagen. This was definitely the rout of the "Wacht am Rhein," and six weeks later, the monsters surrendered at Rheims, and so, ended the

"Thousand Years Reich" (Which lasted only twelve years).

I was on guard duty at a machine gun post on that fatal morning. Thanks to the icy wind, I was fully awake when all hell broke loose around me. Just a few yards away, my buddies were all asleep in the cellar of the farmhouse, but they were quickly awakened by the infernal noise of the shells exploding all around us. Fortunately, the barrage was not very accurate, and subsided an hour later. But they had accomplished to interrupt all our communications and we were ordered out to repair the wires. In a ditch, off a trail, I just connected with A Battery, when I saw the barrel of a tank's gun coming up slowly from the other side of a hill. Just time to shout my position into the phone, when this "Tiger" opened up on us. And then, a miracle, the tank took a direct hit from those wonderful gunners of A Battery, and blew up with nobody escaping. Another tank, behind it made a quick retreat. Too bad, that our line was out again, otherwise we could have gotten that one too. But we lost our first comrade, Corporal Mike Scanlon, a wonderful fellow. We fixed the wire again and ran back to our position. There, we reported to our Captain Beans, who asked immediately for volunteers to go after the tank which had gotten away, and to find out if there were more of them. But there were no takers. I was scared to death, but something told me: "Do you want to keep running forever? Here is your chance to face those bastards." When I raised my arm, Bob joined and another friend, Quinn also. He was carrying the radio.

Returning to the blown up Tiger, we followed the tracks in the snow towards the village of Auw. The Captain directed fire on the hamlet, but they must have seen us from there, and opened mortar and machine gun fire on us. Quick as lightning, we jumped into a crater, filled with freezing water, but our Captain from Texas did not leap fast enough and was hit into his lower back. When the fire around us stopped, the three of us tried to carry him back, but, frightened as we were, we could not muster the strength to move his more than two hundred pounds, over six foot frame. Good old Quinn called for a stretcher, and when Tuttle, our Medic came, he first gave him a shot, then we rolled him on a stretcher, and dragged him back almost three miles. This was a very hard task, because, in order not to be seen by the Krauts, we had to crawl. But we made it. Captain Beans was evacuated to France, where he got himself a one-way ticket to Texas and out of the Army. We didn't miss him.

The first day of that battle drew to its end. Cold and soaked, hungry and scared, no, petrified, I was still in one piece. But our losses had begun, with a dozen seriously wounded and good, old Mike dead. The command was taken over by Lieutenant Hochstead. He took me to the side and said: "That business with the tank this morning was a nice piece of work, and I'm putting you in for a Bronze Star." "You must be kidding. What did I do?" Ultimately he did it anyhow. That same evening, we withdrew over the border into Belgium. But the Nazi's tanks crept closer, but we scored a few hits to cover our retreat. Several crews were not able to get their howitzers out of the deep snow and frozen mud, and to keep them from falling into the enemy's hands, they had to be destroyed. Individual groups, like the one I belonged to, had to improvise stands to slow down the Kraut's avalanche. This was the time, when some S.S. Commandos in GI uniforms, and speaking good English under the command of their General Skorzeny, managed to infiltrate our porous lines, and did more physiological than strategic damage. When caught, they were shot as spies. One night, while repairing a line, when I reached a rear headquarter, I heard the switchboard operator: "Sarge, I got myself a f…g Kraut on

the line!" From this day on, my buddies did not allow me to speak to strangers anymore. (Not very flattering after a year in the Army, speaking English only).

Five days of fighting retreat, inflicting many casualties, did not improve our situation at all. The two Infantry regiments, which we were partially supporting, hopelessly surrounded, were given permission to surrender or withdraw. Our group of 589ers were all too terrified as I was, to give up, and we managed not to be detected when the Nazis were rounding up most of our comrades. Don't anybody tell you, that there were and later too, any heroics involved. Nothing of the kind at all! It was a mixture of fear, dread, panic and a good dose of self-preservation. I just could not conceive to be a prisoner of the Nazis, and that fear was even greater than the one from the bullets and explosions around me.

Heavy snow kept our armor from stopping a more experienced and, yes, better equipped adversary. Our small group managed to sneak through to Salmchateau, in the north-eastern Ardennes, to meet the few survivors of the 589th. With so many friends missing, it was a sad reunion, and everybody was surprised that we made it through. Remember Colonel Kelly, who did not want to go overseas without yours truly? He was on his way to a P. W. camp, and Major Parker took over the command. Very much to everybody's liking. With our new boss at the head of a small strike force, comprising a handful of howitzers, we drove to the hamlet of Baraque de Fraiture, at the crossroads of the strategic highways from the Dutch coast to Switzerland and Italy, with the one from Paris to the Rhine. The entire village was not more than half a dozen farm houses, deep in snow and surrounded by frozen marshes. Since, the shell scorched ruins have been rebuilt, but in our memory, as well as on a marker there is engraved: "Parker's Crossroad, with the compliments of the 589th FA Bn" And there, with the enemy all around us, and very sparse radio communication with the rear, a few, very scared, cold and hungry guys held up a very strong and determined enemy for more than five days. Long enough to strengthen some defenses, which denied this brutal foe any more westward advance.

It seems, that I am always on guard duty, when the most critical scenes of that mortal play are deployed. Trentakosti and I were shivering in a large shell crater, with a heavy machine-gun. As usual, Trent was asleep, when I saw a group of Germans, pushing their bicycles, coming out of the early dawn's heavy fog. A kick into his side, and good, old Trent let loose with his 50. Cal, while I call for help on our phone. Bless that gun-crew, they were right on top of those Krauts. Nothing left, but a pile of dead Germans and equipment. Most of them, must have escaped, probably to come back with reinforcements. And indeed, they did. If they would have known, how small our contingent was, we would not have been able to push them back. But the ring around us became tighter while the few radio messages urged us to hold on a little longer, promising relief. Soon. Not soon enough! Now, for five days, there was no food, and we were living on concentrated chocolate bars and water. But we kept those bastards from overrunning us. We were lucky, that we had to fend the attacks of very inexperienced troops of the Volkkstrum, a reserve army, made up by oldsters of fifty years of age and older, as well as teenagers. It was not a very pleasant spectacle. Indirectly, we helped our valiant defenders of Bastogne. (Where General McAuliffe responded to the Nazi's order to surrender by one word "Nuts.")

Bad weather and dense fog with zero visibility kept our Air forces grounded. But, thanks God, on Christmas Eve, the miracle happened. At midmorning, a few rays of sunshine began to pierce the fog and the clouds, but very timidly. And then, they asserted themselves, and an hour later, a clear, blue winter sky appeared. We had not seen one like this since we left home. A short, terse radio message: "Keep under cover." And while we were in the midst of a Kraut attack, a beautiful sight up in the sky, the first time since we were up here in the Ardennes: our beautiful Air Force. Those bombers did not know our positions and began to flatten everything in sight, friend and foe alike. For us, it was not too soon, and they stopped the Nazi's skirmishes in their tracks. But how many of our good American boys became their victims too. With clearer weather, we could look forward to more support of our Flyboys. No tank would dare to come in the open, and the "Wacht am Rhein" would be stopped. It happened, but it was not easy!

But still, Jerry was all around us, shooting rather aimlessly. An authorization to abandon the position came through. But they did not tell us how. In the middle of the night, we left in small groups. We had Major Goldstein in ours, and he caught a shell fragment in his calf. After bandaging, he could hobble on one leg, and we relieved each other to support him. It took us all night through the snow covered woods, dodging the snipers. It was slow going, stumbling many times over dead Germans, but also some G.I.'s.

After ten hours, and covering not more than about twelve miles and great efforts, we reached Vielsalm, where the remnants of our division had withdrawn. After less than three weeks on the fighting front, the 106th had shrunk to just a few thousand men. After those terrible losses, we were now known by the nickname: "The Hungry and Sick." But it was good to be in contact again with the outside world. And Uncle Sam's fleshpots tasted like gourmet cuisine, after weeks of cold food and chocolate only. After hot showers, we were issued clean clothing, from top to bottom. Our old, lousy things had to be burned, and we too were sprayed with DDT. I had lost all my personal belongings, and I grieved for those few, beautiful letters from Hedy, which were my most treasured belongings.

While in Vielsaim (Belgium), we were waiting impatiently for more of our buddies from the 589th to come out. Not more than a handful managed to sneak through the German lines. Most of them were taken prisoners by the Krauts. Actually, the encirclement of the Bulge was not broken yet, but a few narrow lifelines allowed a small trickle to escape. With brighter skies, our flyers, our paratroopers, and, of course, General Patton's tanks caused havoc in the Nazi's lines. But, talking of tanks, I hate to admit that the German's equipment was better than ours. Even after five years of war and the tremendous destructions of their armament industries. We did not have anything to match their Tiger tanks. And their wicked 88mm howitzers were superior to our 105mm. Let's not forget about their "Buzz Bombs," those wicked V-2's, their secret weapon, the precursor of today's guided missiles. Boy, were we scared of them, because we were right on their path on the mortal run against Liege. Fortunately, they always exploded some distance from us, but it was each time breathtaking, even for us, who were used by now, to all kinds of explosions.

At this time, nobody could answer questions about the whereabouts of our comrades from way back in Indiana and even Fort Bragg. I quote here from the book "The Bitter Woods" by John Eisenhower (son of Ike): "Of the original 116 men

of the 589th, who had gone to Parker's Crossroad, only 44 managed to get out." Most of the men from the Division were taken prisoners, but the death toll was still too many. The famous author, Kurt Vonnegut in his book "Slaughterhouse Five" describes his time in captivity during the bombing of Dresden. How lucky was I, to have escaped, and I can never be grateful enough.

We, the survivors were attached to a mobile Artillery Brigade, to be employed all over the sector. But almost everybody was raised in rank, even two of our comrades ended up with battle field commissions. I was made the head of the wire section, and I had only Corporals below me. But within that nice group of friends, rank had no meaning. We had experienced numerous hardships together here in the Ardennes, and we mourned the loss of so many of our mates. All this had produced a certain closeness. I have asked myself many times, how I could have neglected those friendships after the war. But then, Hedy and I were too busy, concentrating on our life and love together.

While in Belgium, I was called many times to translate from French into English, and when the pursuit of the Nazis brought us into their blasted country, I did the same from German into our language. As an interpreter, it happened several times that I entered on the first vehicle into some German village to accept their surrender. I can still see the white bed sheets waving limply from broken windows, and the feeling of satisfaction, to have them practically lick our boots, remains with me forever. The receptions were almost triumphal, and the Nazis celebrated their defeat just as they had their victories. (I remember a picture in the Stars and Stripes: "Sergeant Helmut Isenberg accepts the surrender of his hometown Saarbrücken [March/45] for his commanding officer) (Helmut and I went to school together, and so did our mothers already).

When recently we too took back some Belgian villages, the reception there was more subdued, than later, in Germany. This was their second liberation from the Nazis. When they came back in December, these rotten criminals punished the Belgians for their delirious welcoming they had shown the Allies, for ending almost five years of bondage. Many were the atrocities committed there by the Waffen S.S., executing scores of hostages. My section was among the first to arrive at the scene of the "Malmedy massacre," where, on a snow covered field, the bodies of more than seventy GIs were discovered, some of them with their throats slit. They had surrendered to an S.S. unit, who killed them in cold blood. After the war, the leaders of these animals (Pfeiffer) were condemned to hang, but the U.S. Senator McCarthy, of dubious fame, had the judgment annulled on a technicality.

I translated with the greatest care, the tales of the Nazi's atrocities to my comrades. Up to that point, there was no predominant hatred of the Germans. Of course, they were the enemy, but not much more. After what we saw and heard, a great repugnance for a savage foe replaced a certain sportsmanship, even among those of German roots. When, in February, the Russians captured Auschwitz, the unbelievable conditions in that death camp and in others too, were widely published in the Stars and Stripes and also in the newsreels. Now this was graphic truth and could not be considered as just propaganda anymore. There were no more doubts about the perversity of our foe, even for the most skeptics. Many roads which we traveled were now lined with dead Nazis, frozen stiff and neatly stacked crisscross like woodpiles. Some bore crudely made signs: "These are now GOOD Germans." Later when the snow started melting, the stench of decay and war became

overwhelming.

As we were constantly on the forward run, and mostly not in touch with the rear, the mail did hardly catch up with us, and on top of all, a lot of it got lost in the confusion of the Bulge. I have to admit here that "constant forward run" is highly exaggerated, but a little altering of the truth boosts one's ego. Actually, the advances were not as spectacular as those of last summer from Normandy to the Rhine. Many were the days, that we were completely pinned down by the desperate enemy and there were many "strategic retreats," which was an euphemism for just giving up a position, in order to find more protection a few miles to the rear. Running away.

We were without mail for close to two months, and my disappointment never ceased, especially because I had not too many chances to write either. But when I finally received a few letters from my bride, it was a joyful holiday for me. Hedy was fine and content with her life in the U.S.A. My two New Yorker friends, Bob and Maurice had given Hedy's number to their wives, Mary and Dot. With common interest in their three soldiers, a friendship began, and Hedy was delighted. They exchanged and analyzed the little news we were allowed to write about. They had a terrible scare, when on about December 20th the Daily News had a headline, "New York area boys almost completely wiped out!" Their fears were hardly alleviated, when, in the next day's edition, the press downgraded their report to just "Heavy Losses." Actually, the first statement was not far from the truth. Dot Wexier, who worked for a Federal agency made daily calls to Washington, but could not get any answers about us. Some relief came finally for them, when Mary Gioelli received a letter from Bob, in which he wrote that the three of us were together not the worse for wear.

And finally, And finally I had some direct mail from both our parents. While mine came out of hiding relatively well, I had this so very sad letter from Hedy's mother, with the news of Papa Albert's death. Since we left, the problems with his heart became more and more acute, and his wonderful wife nursed him all alone, until he slipped away from all of us at the beginning of the year. Maman just could not bring herself to write to Hedy and tell her about this sad loss, and she asked me to inform my bride. I tried and tried, but could not find the right words.

So I finally decided to ask Thea and Charlie to do this hard task for me. Apparently they did that in the most caring and affectionate manner. It took Hedy a very long time to get over her terrible loss. She loved her Papa so very much, and she was devastated by guilt feelings. She wrote immediately to her Maman, pouring the most beautiful feelings into her letters. My parents had asked Lisa to join them in Tence, in order not to be all alone, but she refused to leave Périgueux until Jean would be back from captivity in Germany. This is what Papa would have wanted her to do.

Since that almost unbelievable coincidence, our leaving Boston the same day when Hedy arrived in Philadelphia, there was hardly anybody in the entire 589th who did not know about my wish to get married as soon as possible. I had that great urge to have our relationship legitimized. I wanted us to be for the whole world, husband and wife. Also to allow Hedy to collect my family allotment, which the army paid to our dependants. Our good Major Goldstein, a lawyer in civilian life, investigated about Proxy marriages. He drafted a letter to New York's Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, which Maurice Wexier typed and I signed. He must have responded almost by return

mail, according to the date, but it did not reach me until much later. He wrote that Proxy marriages were not possible in the state of NY, and the closest would be Kansas. He added the address of Judge Tucker in Kansas City (Kansas), who did these things for servicemen. There were about ten of us, quartered in and almost totally destroyed farmhouse, and after that letter had made the rounds, all my buddies became involved in drafting my letter to the Judge. It was almost hilarious, and touching how they argued about the wording, and when I began writing in longhand, because Maurice had lost his typewriter, they were standing behind me, spelling every word. How lucky I was with those good friends.

VISIT TO MY PARENTS, AND THEIR MIRACULOUS RESCUE

I was actually in combat for almost four months. There were days and nights, hiding in foxholes and dugouts, trying to find shelter, not only from the enemy, but also from the icy wind, snow and then, rain. But in between, there were also inactive waits, sometimes snug as a bug in partly destroyed houses, with a stove roaring to warm the place. Many times, we broke up the furniture to feed the fire. Not a nice thing to do, but, as they said: "There is a war going on." But, considering that we were involved in one of the toughest battles of that war, and also the last effort of those beasts in Germany, I did not come out of it too badly. I will never forget my dear comrades who lost their lives in those cold woods. It was also the greatest blunder of Eisenhower's intelligence services. I should think that he was not proud about this part of the European campaign.

On March 23rd the 589th was positioned about two miles west of Remagen, from where we supported the first crossing of the Rhine by Gen. Courtney Hodge's First Army. This was our last day, or almost of combat for us. Around midnight, we climbed on trucks, for a trip of less than two hundred miles to St. Quentin, north of Paris. Arriving there at dawn, we were billeted rather comfortably in an empty school. While settling in, about ten of us were called to the makeshift orderly room, where the other fellows were instructed to be ready at 4 a.m. for a three days pass to Paris. I was handed Orders for a ten days furlough to Tence. A few weeks ago, the Major had asked me if I had news from my parents, and promised to get me a furlough whenever possible. And there it was. This was almost a miracle. You should have seen those rough and tough buddies of mine. Everybody had something for my parents: chocolate, soap, cigarettes, razor blades. "Got enough money?" I was just about to fall asleep on the floor, when somebody kicked my legs: "Watch it, stupid!" "Shaddap, hide this for your Mom!" That big Texan cowboy of a Mess Sergeant, with a big bag of coffee. Touching. Who ever said, Americans are not soft hearted? When we climbed on the truck for Paris, I could hardly lift my duffle bag.

In the early morning, we got off at the Place de l'Opéra, where at the offices of the American Express was the assembly point for all GIs. There, the local command assigned hotels for the stay in Paris. (They also handed out prophylactic kits.) As I was taking an evening train, I was on my own. The rear echelon "Pencil-pushers" also came here, to buy souvenirs from the frontline soldiers. I had two Lugers *(German semi-automatics)* for sale, and collected eighty Dollars, and became a rich man.

Knowing that my cousins, the Friedhoffs were back in Paris, I took the Métro *(subway)* to Ménilmontant, where I asked for Adolph's factory. It was just around the corner. How good to see him again. They had spent the last two years in a Swiss internment camp. They were the ones who had urged my parents to come to Tence,

and as far as I am concerned, they had saved my parent's lives. I'll never forget that. The Nazis had taken over his factory, and equipped it with the newest machinery, and that was the best thing to happen to him. He gave me instructions how to get to the Rue Lépic in Montmartre, where they had a tiny furnished apartment.

When I rang the doorbell, Irma and her daughter Juliette were about speechless. The reception and the thrill to be together were overwhelming. My relationship with Irma was something very special; best described in one of her last letters, where she addressed me as her little brother. And Juliette, I still remember her as a beautiful baby when I was in my preteens. To me, they both looked wonderful, even if not exactly overfed. The food situation in France had not improved at all since the liberation, and it took several more years before it got back to normal. Rail and road communications were overburdened by the Allie's transportation needs. I went shopping with Juliette, and with the help of a package of Camels, the butcher produced a nice roast. We also went to the post office to send a cable to my parents announcing my arrival. We had a wonderful lunch, which tasted like at my mother's. There was so much to tell and talk about. They had spent two years in Switzerland, where Juliette went to school, and where she had met her George Bridel, one of the nicest and most valuable persons. I have ever met.

Hours just flew away, and it was time to leave for the Gare de Lion. Mother and daughter insisted to accompany me to the station in the Métro; we were quickly surrounded by the many GIs in there. With my two attractive girls, I caused an uproar. "Hey, Mac, where did you find those gorgeous chicks?" "How you going to handle two at one time? I gladly take any one of 'em off your hands, just to do you a favor." But when I answered: "Thanks, fellows, but no thanks, they are my Sisters!" they quieted down, and, even more or less drunk, they became polite and respectful, and I was proud of my comrades again. They, of course were all strangers to me, but the uniforms made us all brothers. We were all partners and coworkers in the same task to defeat the Nazi monsters. In Paris, with soldiers of all the Allied nations, I had such a good feeling of belonging to that great family, trying to accomplish victory over evil.

After taking leave from my two lovely escorts, I went to the U. S. Army Transportation Office. After checking my Orders, they issued a First-Class ticket roundtrip Paris-St. Etienne, including a seat reservation. Entering the compartment of six seats, mine was still vacant, and I settled in for the long ride. Shortly afterwards, a middle aged civilian walked in and showed me his seat reservation. So, I showed him mine, and he insisted that I should give up my seat. A French Lt. Colonel, sitting across from me, and whom I had saluted very correctly when I walked in, suggested to call the conductor. After thorough examination, he declared that, according to the dates, mine was "Non valable." Pointing to the stamp of the U. S. Army, I told him that "mon armée" had paid for my seat, and I was not inclined at all to give it up before arriving at St. Etienne. The conductor, with the full importance of his exalted position with the French railroads turned to his unhappy client with that typical Gallic shrug: "Ah, voyez Monsieur, les Américains! I am sorry, but my hands are tied and there isn't a single empty seat on this train!" With a deep sigh, he meant to demonstrate, that on his own fragile shoulders, he was carrying all the miseries France was going through. And now, with the Boches chased into their own blasted country, all the remaining suffering was the fault of "les Américains." Let me explain here, that, at this date, nine months after the landing in

Normandy, all of France had been liberated with the exception of some small pockets, where the Germans had not surrendered yet. Of course, legions of our administrative and supply units were all over France. While our GIs were only helpful to the French, they did not interfere whatsoever in the civilian's life. But the still suffering people could not help but being jealous of all these, not too well behaved Américains. As the saying about GI Joe in England went: "He is overpaid, overfed, oversexed and over Here."

Shortly after the train left the station, the Colonel asked me: "Vous êtes Sergeant, n'est ce pas?" *(Aren't you Sergeant)*. According to the rules of military courtesy, I stood up, introduced myself and offered my hand, which he ignored. Then he asked me, how come I was traveling First class, pointing out, that in France, only officers were entitled to those seats, while the poor mortal troops were banned to the still existing Third Class. I just had to tell that conceited "Tinhat" about the sleepers we took from camp to ship. I also enjoyed to add that, without fraternizing, we had a both cordial and respectful relationship with our officers. After that satisfying speech, I fell asleep, until my neighbor woke me up next morning, as the train was pulling into the more than half destroyed station of St. Etienne.

It was a cold, damp midmorning. St. Etienne was, and still is an important center of French armament industry and during the Kraut's occupation was entirely working for them. For the past two years, it was a great point of attraction for Allied bombers, and their destructive power was visible all around. They however failed to stop arms production entirely, but sabotage by the Résistance was helpful. At the terminal, I was told that the afternoon bus to Tence was sold out. When I showed my Camels, the agent remembered his charitable instinct. As my stomach was growling, he directed me to a restaurant which he recommended highly as having been frequented by "les Boches" There, the first question was for ration-stamps. They fell all over themselves when good, old Camel came out of my pocket and I had an unforgettable meal. Before leaving my outfit I was paid in French Francs at the rate of fifty to one Dollar. Officially, we were not supposed to own U.S. currency in order not to oversupply the French black-market. Indeed, in the Street one Greenback was worth one hundred Francs, for which we could buy a money order of two Dollars, a hundred percent profit. I had sold the eighty Dollars, from my two pistols to Adolph for eight thousand Francs, for which I bought a hundred-sixty Dollars money order for Hedy, when I got back to the 589th. She in turn, included a five Dollar bill in all her letters, for similar transactions. This was not terribly legal, but a nice beginning of our nest egg, and I hope that my reader will not hold it against me. Anyhow, there is a status of limitation.

After lunch, a little walk, and then it was time for the bus. It was an old, rattling charcoal burner, similar to the one in Spain, which took Hedy and me to prison. Heavily loaded with freight and passengers, it never went over fifteen miles up those steep hills. Impatient to see my parents again, it did not go fast enough for me. Standing in the overcrowded bus, I did not feel a bit tired with the joyful expectation at the end of the line. A man asked me about my rank, I told him that I was a Sergeant-chef *(Staff Sergeant)*. He was a former soldier and all surprised that I wore my stripes on the upper arm, while the French noncoms wore theirs on the lower sleeve. When I replied very proudly: "Je suis Américain" his next question was: "And how come you are wearing a French uniform?" And now it dawned to me what he meant. In St. Etienne I had seen a platoon of French soldiers marching through the avenue, and a policeman told me, that they all were equipped "a

l'Américaine." I must admit, they wore our ODs with a certain panache. And I am glad to add, that they used our equipment very efficiently to the greatest detriment of the Boches. When another passenger said that he knew my parents, who had told him about a son in the U. S. Army, they all believed me, and when I sacrificed another pack of Camels, they cried: "Vive l'Amérique!" As this region was liberated by the French Résistance exclusively, it was bypassed by the regular Allied troops, and they had never seen a GI.

It was almost dark, when the bus stopped in front of the former railroad station. And there, what a touching picture, arm in arm, my tall handsome father with my tiny, so pretty mother, surrounded by a crowd who wanted to see the American. Early this morning they had received my cable from Paris and the news of my arrival had spread in this small town. A very distinguished gentleman, a teacher of the local high school welcomed me to Tence in an almost flawless English. I thanked him, which I found lots easier in French. I expressed my gratitude to the good people of this hospital town for the help they had extended to all the persecuted people, by hiding them from the Nazis. I added that less than three days ago we were still firing at the Boches across the Rhine, and that there were no doubts, that we had them on the run for good. People were applauding, and again I heard: "Vive l'Amérique!" This was a very proud moment in my parent's and my life, and the three of us were not the only ones with tears in their eyes.

Before going any further in my story, I have to explain what this blessed town means to us. Tence is a concept of goodness, of compassion, of charitable understanding. A small town with a giant, warm heart. Tence is a tiny enclave in a sea of malevolence. Tence is a little piece of earth, in a world of hate and war, created by the good and merciful lord to save five thousand Jews from the deadly fangs of the Nazi monsters. And this good lord made an excellent choice when he selected this small paradise, because he knew, that he was well assisted by the wonderful people of this region.

Tence, with about 2,500 inhabitants, is about 350 miles South-East of Paris. On a plateau of about 3,000 feet, part of the "Massif Central" it has a very scenic surrounding and is completely off the beaten track. Having no strategic importance and the compassionate attitude of the population were the main factor in saving the lives of my dear parents and many other Jews. Most of the inhabitants are members of the Calvinist-protestant church, who, like the Jews are a minority in Catholic France. Under King Louis XIV they were heavily persecuted and many of these Huguenots; fled to North America in the century before our Independence. Napoleon was the first to introduce religious freedom in France and the lands he conquered, and granted equal privileges to Protestants and Jews. With this historical background, the good people of this region had inherited a special compassion and understanding for all the persecuted. Even more so, when a majority of Catholics closed their eyes and ears to what happened to the oppressed of other religions. Very few outcries were heard from this direction. However, let us not forget that many priests, nuns and laymen risked their lives to help and hide the persecuted. But what could be expected, when the highest authority, the Pope, could have raised his voice and at least threatened the Catholics among the murderers with excommunication. But with his moral weakness, he was afraid of them.

At Chambon-sur-Lignon, three miles south of Tence, Pasteur Trocmé, a Protestant clergyman influenced the entire population in his help to the hidden Jews in this

area. His clandestine organization helped many of the persecuted to find asylum in Switzerland, among them some of our cousins. Books have been written and films have been made to praise, document and to enumerate the unbelievable acts of love and humane understanding of these beautiful people. The name of the good Pasteur is inscribed among the "Just Gentiles" at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and I think every person of this region should also be memorialized there. I have revisited Tence, and looking with awe at people of my generation there, they all seemed to be wearing a halo. Yes, indeed, in my eyes, they all were Saints.

But now, let's get back to that beautiful moment, when the three of us could finally embrace after so many years. Tears of unrestrained joy seemed to erase the sorrows and worries of our long separation. My parents were living at Les Mazeaux, about a mile away from the center of Tence. They had a room above the bakery, and the baker with his wife embraced me, as if they had known me forever. This was not a typical French welcome, because the brave Frenchmen are usually quiet reserved and stiff towards outsiders. But during the difficult times of the occupation, these good people had shared my parent's fears and grief. Expecting an American soldier, they were surprised that I was wearing, what they called a French uniform. Their son, who was drafted into de Gaulle's army, was home on furlough a few weeks ago, and he forgot to tell them that he was actually wearing Uncle Sam's uniform. They insisted that I should sleep in his room. My parent's apartment was a large combination living room, bedroom kitchen, all in one without any frills. It was not much, but my so very modest parents were more than content and grateful, and for me during those few short days, it was something I had not had in a long time: it was home.

My cable from Paris took my parents by surprise. By way of Spain, they knew that I was in the U.S. army, but due to strict censorship, they did not have the slightest idea that I was in Europe. But after five years of war, nothing could startle them any more. They had worked feverishly to prepare a wonderful meal. Father started with a Kiddush, something he had never done before. It was extremely touching, and at the same time an expression of our great gratitude to someone up there who had protected us. It was such an exuberant moment because, during our years of separation, our hope to be reunited again was fading more and more, as the terrible news from occupied Europe leaked through the borders. We were still ignorant about the fate of many of our relatives.

On that long, warm, intimate and affectionate evening, I felt so secure, surrounded as never before by my parent's love. Only three days away from the fighting front, the war seemed to be on another planet. Skipping from question into another. Trying to complete that large jigsaw puzzle which was composed by our long separation. Putting the void of these hard years together again. Through our relatives in Spain, we had sparse news from each other, at least they confirmed that we were still alive, which in itself was quiet a luxury in those times. And now, here we were sitting reporting about the events since Hedy and I left Périgueux. Two days after our departure in November 1942, "They" came to my parent's house to arrest me. Indeed, before sunrise, two French Miliciens *(Vichy's police)* and a Kraut to take me along. After looking around, they accepted my mother's statement that I had left for an unknown destination. Later that same day, they went to inquire at my place of work, with no better results. But, immediately after they left, this good, old Jojo Faure jumped on his bike to warn my parents. Don't let anybody tell you, that there weren't any decent, good Frenchmen. For me this simple

workingman, Jojo is a prince. These people are the unsung heroes, who are the backbone of "la grande France." As Hedy's parents, French citizens, with a son a prisoner in Germany, were still somewhat out of danger, my parents went into hiding there for a few days. Papa Albert secured tickets for the long ride to Tence, where they arrived exhausted after a three day voyage. There, my cousins, the Friedhoffs helped them to find a refuge in the house of these helpful bakers.

The Cévennes were an ideal hiding place. While the French Résistance in the Vercors, about fifty miles south kept the Nazis very busy. Up here, the plateau, crossed by unimportant secondary roads, was of little importance for the occupant. They had however a convalescence center for the Wehrmacht at le Chambon, and they did not pose any problems. During the two years before the liberation, there were several search actions by the French militia, but some charitable, unknown person managed to warn the hiding Jews of the impending danger. Father showed me a drafty, broken down shack where they had to spend long hours until the "All Clear" was given by one of the good people of Tence. But in the winter before France's liberation, a large group of refugees were ordered to assemble the next morning at city hall with warm clothing, food and blankets to be taken to unknown destinations. Mother was on that list, but not father, on account of his advanced age. But he had decided not to let mother go without him. With tears in his eyes, he told me: "In all my life, I had never really prayed, but during that night, I never stopped." After midnight, a light snowfall became heavier and heavier, and at dawn, there were about three feet on the ground. Tence was snowbound and isolated. A Gendarme on skis came to the bakery and told them to stay home until further order. Late that afternoon, a farmer with a pack mule came to take my parents to his farm, hidden about three miles in the dense woods. They stayed there more than a week, helping in house and stables, until somebody came to tell them that the danger had passed, and they could return to the bakery. This all sounds almost like fiction, but the good Lord was there when he was most needed, and those wonderful people, up there in those rugged hills, helped him to the utmost. When, after the Allie's landing in Southern France, and the Nazis began the retreat, our folks were still living in constant fear, because they committed many atrocities on their run. Today, half a century later, France is still haunted and divided by so much collaboration with the Boches. May they rot in hell, and let us praise those many, who have been so generous in their help to our beloved ones.

On that first morning, father was eager to take me to their good Samaritan, the farmer in the woods. It was about an hour's hike, but he wanted mainly to get me away from mother, to reproach me that I had not yet gotten married with Hedy. It seemed that they had discussed this subject many times, and apparently, mother had begged him not to bring it up now, in order not to spoil our few days together. When I tried to explain our difficulties, he hardly listen to what I had to say, and actually accused me of behaving like a little boy, by not accepting responsibilities. How little did he know what my real feelings for that so very beloved girl were. And then came his next command: "You have to go and visit Hedy's mother." Oh, what a relief this was. Of course such was my intention, I just did not know how to break to them, that I was going to shorten my stay. Well, once more I noticed that "selfishness" was not a word in my parents' dictionary. When I reported to Hedy, in my letters about my conversations about her, and especially my father's criticism, she really fell in love with my parents. Thinking back of the relationship between both of my wives with father and mother, they were marked by affection, caring and

mutual understanding.

Arriving at the farm in the woods, I had again a reception, as if I were a member of the family. My thanks for all they had done for my parents were just about shrugged off. "What else is there to be done, but to help people who were persecuted?" End of that subject. But, Monsieur, a Cannoneer from the "Grande Guerre" (War of 14/18) was all excited to discuss Artillery with a young buddy. He had yesterday's newspaper, with a small map of the Remagen crossing. I showed him the approximate location, where our guns were dug in, to fire across the Rhine, keeping the Boches from the eastern bridgehead. Then, he brought out faded pictures and medals, at which he had probably not looked for a long time, and now, with some pride, he showed a great happiness and satisfaction. He told me about Verdun, and I could only assure him, that my hardships were nothing, compared with his, only twenty six years ago. That "Poilu" *(soldier)* had a ball, and he kept on filling our glasses. I had a hard time to make them accept some coffee and cigars, and after very sincere embraces, powered by alcohol, we staggered home to mother's lunch.

That afternoon, the three of us hiked to town, to visit some friends, and to go to the Gendarmerie *(police)*, where I had to register as a foreigner. When asked about my nationality and I could proudly answer "Etats Unis," we all had tears in our eyes. My parents could hardly grasp the fact, that I was already a citizen of this idolized country. They also gave me more than double the ration tickets I was entitled to. Right and left, and then in the Café also, people were eager to shake hands with l'Américain. Somebody had seen, in the newsreel that Le Président Roosevelt did not look well at all. (Only a month later, we lost this great man.) I was asked so many questions about my new country, and I realized how little I knew about that blessed land, where I lived only eighteen months. They wanted to know about "le Ravitaillement" *(food situation)*. Let's not forget, this was France, and this was a very important question. When I explained about the rationing of meat in the butcher shop, but in restaurants it was not, they considered this as "marché noir" *(black market)* (In comparison with France and other European countries, this was really not much of a hardship).

"What is the attitude of les Américains towards the enemy, les Boches?" A good question, I was able to answer and elaborate. Lubricated by the many drinks I was offered, I pointed out, that previously, hatred of the Japanese was greater as the one directed against the Nazis. I repeated from conversations with my army buddies, that for those, who traced their ancestries to countries overrun by the Krauts, like Poland, Russia, Greece, Italy and France, the Germans were considered as the greatest evil. The great majority of American families had a soldier fighting East or West, and their concern and hatred was centered against the enemy whom "Their" GI was fighting at that time. Among my friends, their attitude towards the Nazis changed to a very aggressive one, when, after the second liberation of the Belgian Bulge, we heard about the atrocities which the S.S. had committed there against civilians and our GIs. I had very eager listeners, and I found, even here in this isolated small town, people well informed by radio and the press. They also showed more interest in daily events and politics than our Americans. I could add, that we, the "Soldats Américains" did not mind at all, helping to liberate Europe from the Nazi scourge, and now, that the end seemed to be near, all we wanted to do, was to finish the job, and to return as fast as possible to that wonderful concept

covered by a simple word: "Home."

And yes that was exactly the way I felt too. Here, surrounded by my parent's love, and the friendliness of the people. I was extremely comfortable. But my real home was now over there, across the Atlantic. It was neither a house, nor an apartment, but it was that lovely girl waiting for me. So far away, but with the bonds getting stronger and tighter every day. We talked a lot about Hedy, my favored subject. To hear, how much they had included her in their hearts brought me closer to my parents than ever before. They had more mail from her and she had described the difficulties which made our marriage so complicated. i had a hard time to dissuade them from their belief, that those problems were more or less some stalling of my part. While father insisted, almost angrily, that I should seriously concentrate on getting married, mother tried to soft pedal, by giving me a sales talk in praising Hedy and stating, that she could not even think, not to have her as a daughter in law. Actually, there was not anything nicer they could have scolded me with, and my heart was bursting with joy. Now, in this warm, cozy room, all three out of danger, they did not think that after six years of war and terror behind me, I had not matured enough, and I had remained their little boy. I don't think I have ever loved my parents as much as on that evening. Never before. Never afterwards.

For the last six months, my parents and the other refugees were free of fear and persecution. As aliens they still had to submit to controls by the police, and needed special permits to travel outside the district, but the authorities were more than friendly and helpful. The refugee's were less restricted than before the war. Due to the tremendous destructions of roads, bridges and the railroads, travel was still most unreliable. The parent's plan was to wait for an improvement of communications, before going back to Strasbourg. Father had everything worked out, with the intent of getting back into the cattle business. Only the following summer (1946) did they move back permanently to the Alsace. They however took several trips there during that time, and were always glad to return to their pretty Tence. My parents, the most frugal and modest people I have ever known, did not mind their spartan living conditions, especially after seeing all the devastations and poor food supplies on their trips North. They made a very wise decision to remain in these blessed hills, with few food shortages. With poor transportation for the agriculture products of the region, lots of milk, cheeses, poultry and vegetables were left for local consumption. While France was hungry, they mailed food parcels to our relatives, in Paris and Strasbourg.

PÉRIGUEUX AGAIN

At noon, on the fifth day of those lovely vacations, it was time to say goodbye. Now, we could really say "Au Revoir," because, the chances of seeing each other again were not as questionable as they were when I left them thirty months ago in Périgueux. Victory was so close at hand, and there was every reason to look forward to eternal peace on earth. Even father was optimistic, and they both were full of pep. Only six years later did I get to embrace them again, but with weekly letters, we participated in our respective lives from afar. (To his last day almost, father kept on giving advice to his little boy, and I regret now, that I did not follow all of them).

The same, rickety bus took me back to St. Etienne, but my luck with good connections on the French Railroads seemed to have left me. I had to hang around a

cold, drafty station beyond midnight, until the train, with standing room only arrived three hours late. At Montlucon, where I had to change in the morning, I met one of my former prison mates from Barcelona. Another unbelievable encounter. At least it took some of the boredom out of a slow voyage. Issy Lifchitz, Issy" was wearing a British uniform, with a Polish cap and a Lieutenant's Pip on his shoulder patch. From the Spanish jail, he was shipped to Algeria, where he joined the Free Polish Army. He saw a lot of fighting in Italy and Southern-France, and he complained bitterly about the rampant anti-Semitism in his army. He described his comrades as excellent and devoted fighters, but with low IQs. The Jews, with higher intelligence and better education, through petty jealousies and religious prejudices, found it almost impossible to move upward in ranks. Only very recently did he obtain his commission, after some higher Allied commander stepped in, and insisted that the Polish Generals stopped their discrimination. Fighting in Italy along our GIs, he was full of praise for them.

It was late afternoon, when I finally got off the train. I had to pinch myself, to make sure that this was not just a dream. There were times when I would not have believed that I would ever see Périgueux again, especially when I left it with Hedy. But as I had never any deep roots in any special places I had no longing to return to the different localities I had ever been. But this town stands as a very important milestone in my life. In our life. This is where our great love affair had started. Even now, separated by time and oceans, it had never ceased to grow and grow. I can hardly believe that I am here, of all places, proudly wearing the victor's khaki, with my heart overflowing with gratefulness to that generous God, who has protected us.

I stepped into those familiar streets. The town had hardly changed, but it seemed to have aged, more tired and neglected, not different from what I had seen in England, France and Belgium. But it was spared the destructions by bombardments, which I had seen elsewhere. The people seemed haggard and sullen, showing the results of the food shortages. Some of these men and women, used to show their contempt for the Jews and refugees, while some of them are the cause of our survival. Passing the place where I used to work, I of course went in to be welcomed like a hero. There too, I had to explain that I was a GI and not a Poilu, which they believed only when I pointed out the American eagle on my buttons. The main reason of my visit was to have a drink with that wonderful Jojo Faure. He did not grasp that he was one of the main factors in saving our lives, especially by providing us with the fake identity papers. He did not understand my interpretation, because he considered what he had done as such a natural act of helping some human beings. I had, again, a hard time to make him accept some of my remaining goodies.

On my way to Les Maurilloux, I could not help being apprehensive of my first encounter with Hedy's mother. When I last said farewell, I still called her Madame Weill. But now, only a "de facto" member of the family, how will "Mother" feel to me, and sound to her? I also knew that I would be all alone with a person in deepest mourning, and I could only hope that I would be able to bring her some comfort. Will I be accepted by her?

But there was no need for me to worry, and that first encounter was by far not at all what I had expected. She had been waiting for me impatiently, because in my message, I could not give her a time of arrival. And there was that sad, pretty lady, looking at me with Hedy's soft, deep and dark eyes. A smile crossing that lovely

face, probably the first one in a long time. Then, in my arms, with tears of joy and relief, I found it so natural and easy to call her mother. My pleasure to give that good woman some happiness was overwhelming. There was no awkwardness. Just a joyful, emotion filled homecoming.

But, before anything else, I had to settle down to read a letter from Hedy, which she had received this very morning. This was some extraordinary news. Unexpected, it could not have been any better. She had received a letter from Judge Tucker, informing her that he has mailed some papers and power of attorney, to me, to be signed and witnessed. Upon return of these documents, our marriage could be arranged as soon as the bride could be present at the courthouse of Kansas City (Kansas). At least now, I did not have to justify why we had not been married yet, like I had to, in Tence. Lisa was not aware of these difficulties, and after my explications, she joined me in my great joy: "If only Papa Albert could have lived to hear such wonderful news!" Of course, they too had been distressed by our forced separation by an unwanted fate.

There was so much to fill in those fearful, empty years. After my parents had left Périgueux, Lisa and Albert had hardly anybody to look after them. Most of the Jews from the neighborhood were either in hiding, or deported. Only father's sickness had saved them from the "Final Solution." The last few months were the hardest for poor Lisa. She had to nurse her husband day and night, and she had only rarely help, to relieve her to get a few hours of an uneasy sleep. Some of her neighbors called her "une Sainte." In the last few weeks, Albert was only talking about his children, but his last wish to see them once more remained unfulfilled. Twenty years, to the day, by the Jewish calendar, on the 21 of Shewat, his beloved little girl joined him up there, where only the best are reunited in life eternal. He was burned in the Catholic Cemetery of Trélissac, with only three Jews present. A year later, his remains were taken to the Jewish cemetery in Strasbourg, and given a ritual burial.

After a good night's sleep in Hedy's bed, I took her bike, to get information about the next train. There was one announced for midnight, which would have given me enough time to report in Paris before next afternoon, as ordered. We took a walk to Papa's grave, her first since she had burned him. She wrote to Hedy later, that this visit had given her a great satisfaction, and the means to accept his death as a relief from his suffering. The previous day's message about our forthcoming marriage, and my visit had taken away her empty feeling of loneliness, and given her the courage to wait for Jean's return. (He was back two months later) During our long conversations, to bridge the gap of the years with only few information about each other, she confirmed that they too had the same feeling as my parents had, at the time when I left Spain for the U.S.A. They thought that I had abandoned their girl. How could anybody know how much I loved Hedy. They put aside those fears only after they received a postcard from Lisbon, where Hedy announced her same day's departure to rejoin me.

Late that evening, I left on my trek to the station. By now, my bag was almost empty, with all my buddy's generous gifts spent. They had caused a lot of joy. This road, I had taken so many times with my darling girl, and my thoughts were with her. Especially at l'Arsault, where we had kissed for the first time. How long ago this was. How much has happened since. When will I be with her again? At the station, an angry crowd was just informed that this particular train was not running, and the next one would be on the following afternoon at four. This was about the same time

I was supposed to report in, Paris. Impossible! I was in trouble! The U.S. army had no sense of humor when it came to being AWOL *(absent without leave)*. The station-chief gave me a note, certifying the delay, and on my way back to les Maurilloux I stepped into the Telegraph office to send a cable to my outfit. It arrived there two weeks later and did not help at all.

I had to wake up poor Lisa, but she was delighted to have me there a little longer. The idea of my prospective problem once back at the 589th kept me from sleeping, even if it was in Hedy's bed. But there wasn't anything I could do, and spending another day with Lisa, made me almost forget what was expecting me.
This time, the train left as scheduled and I was lucky to find a seat. With slow going, I got out at the Gare d'Austerlitz after midnight. With subways not running anymore, it was still a long walk to the American Express, place de l'Opéra. And there, with Yankee efficiency, my name was already on the AWOL roster, and a Lieutenant of the MP's arrested me right then and there. Well, this was not the first time this had happened to me, even here in France. Let's hope it won't last as long, as the previous times. He listened politely to my explanations, then called another MP to drive me to a hotel at the Porte Maillot, where I was to be restricted to quarters until the 589th would pick me up.

I slept fitfully until early afternoon, when one of my good friends, Jim Harrison woke me. Ten minutes later I climbed on his truck, where two of our old-timers and a handful of replacements were stretched out, trying to sleep away too much cognac. I thought we were going back to St. Quentin, but while I was gone, the 589th had been moved to an airfield outside of Rennes in Brittany. Jumping off the truck, there I went immediately to report to Captain Huxley, and explained my unwanted delay. He almost apologized that my lateness could not be ignored, and the Colonel had already ordered my demotion to Corporal, but nothing else. I was lucky again, but I regretted the reduction of my pay more than my loss of rank. All I could do was to thank my officers.

Here, in Rennes, we were about to restructure the so badly mauled 106th Division. The figures were pathetic. We, the old-timers, the survivors were not more than twenty five percent of the twelve thousand who began their fighting in the Siegfried-line. Still, something to be very grateful for. But some very ugly rumors went around, and none of the higher brass tried to deny them. As the defeat of the Nazis seemed to be only a few weeks away, it was whispered, that we would go into very intensive training with our replacements for a couple of months, to be shipped as a full division to the Pacific. Up to now, as far as the fight against the Japs was concerned, most of our interest did not go much further than the headlines, but nevertheless, we respected our fighting Allies in that theater and considered their enemy as even tougher as the one we were facing. Especially in the last few weeks, where the Kraut's strategy was mainly concentrated on running. Many of our self-proclaimed experts of Klausewitz, *(German General, father of strategic teachings)* predicted an early victory in the Pacific, while I agreed with the more pessimistic experts, that victory won't come before the end of the year. In the end, I'm really glad that I was not right. On April 12 (1945), a big ceremony for the official reactivation of the good, old 106th Infantry Division. On one side of the runway, we, the few survivors, facing the huge formation of new replacements. Flags and guidons were passed from us, the old-timers to the new members of the reborn "Hungry and Sick." I was among the few to be decorated with the Bronze-Star, and two of our 589ers received battlefield commissions. Nobody ever deserved them

more than these two! Then, taps for those who gave their lives in those cold woods of the Ardennes. Right after dismiss, called back to fall in again. With tears in his eyes, General McMahon announced the death of our President. I could not believe that my idol, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, could not live to see the crowning of his career, victory over the Nazis. (Only 25 days later). Speechless, we looked at each other, and there was not a single dry eye, even among those, who never stopped to curse my beloved President. Next day, in the streets of Rennes, people approached us with their condolences. The free world was in mourning!

On my return from Périgueux, several letters from Hedy were waiting for me. Some of them almost two months old. But who cares! How she could write! She was happy and had apparently blended perfectly into her new surroundings. And between those affectionate lines, I could almost see that lovely face. But the greatest pleasure, which wasn't news for me anymore, because I read the letter to her mother. Only now, she elaborated. The judge had asked her to find a stand-in for me. Apparently my aunt had friends in Kansas City, and she wrote immediately to ask Mr. Cohn if he would be willing to be my proxy. Even better than expected, he responded immediately and invited Hedy to stay with them.

SURRENDER AT LORIENT…END OF HITLER'S 1,000 YEARS REICH

We were training at Camp Coetquidan in Brittany (maneuver grounds of the French Military Academy St. Cyr), when, on April 26, the document from the court in Kansas City arrived, all ready for signature only. It was a "Power of Attorney relating to Proxy Marriage," in which I appointed "Mr. Sigmund Cohn, my true and lawful attorney, to do all things necessary and proper, to be done in order to affect a state of marriage between myself and Henriette Weill." Ouf! Finally! I can hardly describe my joy when I signed this beautiful document. Three good friends, Corporal Maurice Wexler, Sergeant Frank Dobbins and Lieut. Walter Coates signed as witnesses. That same day, those documents were in the mailbag, on their way to that good judge in Kansas City.

The next day, we broke camp and moved westward to surround the port of Lorient. As an oddity, several Atlantic ports, especially those with heavily fortified submarine bases were still in German hands. Up to this point, the Allies had decided not to waste lives and time to capture them. They were solidly surrounded by the French Résistance, and cut off from supplies, and were slowly starving to death. But so did the poor citizens of Lorient. But now, it was time to bring this situation to an end. It was a piece of cake, and after a good barrage with our new howitzers, the white flags began to come out all over town.

As interpreter, I was among the first ones, to move in there and accept the Kraut's capitulation. This was a rather friendly operation, and all those German soldiers and sailors were more than happy, that the war was over for them. They had already stacked their weapons and were ready for our commands. We put them to work at once, to remove the minefields, and even had the officer's pitch in, with their shiny boots and their freshly pressed uniforms. The submarine pens, underground in the cliffs were an awesome sight. It was the homeport, for all those wolf packs, who attacked our convoys, unfortunately, very successful lots of times. An enormous amount of armaments were captured, from revolver to battleships. For us, the most important bounty were a few truckloads of liquors, wines and even real Scotch, which all came in very handy, just a few days later, to celebrate VE day. Their

supplies of food staples was, however, very low. We opened them immediately to the French population, and witnessed a riot among those poor, starving people. The Boches were not exactly overfed, and it was now their turn, for a good while, to go hungry. After a few days, they were fighting each other for a piece of bread. We had about three thousand prisoners, and it was a beautiful picture, to see the Master race behind barbed wires. And now, they were applauding their defeat almost as much as they had celebrated all those too many, and unbelievable victories in the first three years of their merciless war. The Krauts had an officer's mess in the girl's high-school, which we had half shot to pieces just the day before. We opened an orderly room in there, to register, at first, all the officers. While they were standing in line, some of the enlisted prisoners painted a big P.W. on the back of their custom tailored uniforms, while others were cutting off the eagle with the swastika from their breast pockets. In the past few months, we had many Germans surrender to us, and I was always involved in their interrogations, but I never had such an exhilarating feeling and satisfaction, as here in Lorient. Gone was their arrogance and their overbearing superiority. How I enjoyed the day, when a Major came to attention, addressed me as "Herr Kaporal" and asked me for something to eat. And this lowly Corporal gave him a Hershey bar, and told him in his most flawless German, that he was a Jew, born in his blasted country. As silly as it might sound, but I thought, that I owed this to the millions of their murdered victims. I could not stop thinking of them and felt grateful to God, that he had spared me and my closest ones.

On May 7, 1945, in the very early morning hours, in a schoolhouse in Rheims, "They" signed the final surrender document. This was the end of the war against the lowest criminals who ever crawled on this earth, the scourge of mankind, the dregs of humanity. For ten years, they have never stopped to defeat me. How can I ever forget the sad retreat from Norway. How can I ever forget the terrible beating we took in the Bulge ? I always thought that I hated them, but it was only fear. The dictionary defines "Fear" as: great agitation and anxiety caused by the expectation or realization of danger. How true! Out of danger, I was left with nothing but detestation and abhorrence for "Them." How proud I was of my uniform, the garb of the winners. We had a tremendous victory celebration, and all the liberated alcoholic liquids helped to make it a boisterous revelry. If the Kraut prisoners would have made an attempt to brake out of their stockade, nobody was sober enough to stop them. They could have started a new war right then and there.

FINALLY MARRIED…AND I WASN'T THERE !

While interrogating prisoners, on May 15, I had a call from my friend Maurice, who was also the mail clerk. There is a cable from Kansas City. May I open it? "AM YOURS FOREVER, LOVE HEDY!" Oh, thank God in heavens! Finally it has happened. In all our frustrations and despair, our most important wish came to fulfillment. And there, across from me in that makeshift office stood those who had caused our long separation. But on the other hand, I might never have met that lovely girl, which was now my very own wife. On that day, I did not do a very good job, and I was not able to come down from that cloud on which I was floating.

Later, back in our tent area, the entire 589th was already in the know about this wonderful news, and heartily sharing my joy. Beside all the good wishes and congratulations, I was also the target of an unending, good natured ribbing. Many of my buddies wanted to know how my proxy, Mr. Cohn was enjoying my honeymoon.

But those jokes were easy to take from those good friends, with whom I had shared so much in the last few months. During the long hours and days, we got to know each other, our lives, our families, our hopes and ambitions. And Maurice was standing there, waiting to send a response to my Hedy. The whole section contributed to the wording, arguing about how to bring out my feelings. I was grateful for their help, because I was still numb in my happiness. To think, that I have never asked Hedy for her hand, but now, I had everything. It had taken a long time, but now, finally, we were husband and wife. Hallelujah!

On her long return trip to New York, Hedy wrote a lengthy letter describing "our" wedding, which I received about ten days later. After receiving my proxy papers, Judge Tucker fixed an appointment for Friday, May 11. Wednesday afternoon, Hedy embarked on her long voyage into matrimony. When she left Europe, seven months ago, she was so full of hope and anticipated joy, only to be so terribly disappointed, when I was not to welcome her into my arms. But at least this time, with the war in Europe ended; all her hopes and expectations took her to Kansas City. Arriving there, next evening, Mr. Cohn and his wife were waiting for her, and took her to their home. After a sleepless night, the sun rose on our wedding day. At the courthouse, the good Judge performed the civil marriage, with a few warm and appropriate words, and the Cohn's kissed the bride.

Then after lunch, it was time to take the train back. Finally, the new Mrs. Hirsch had caught me, and she was as delirious about it as I was. For that she had to spend more than two days on hot and dusty trains. It was priceless for me, but I had only twenty years to make it up to her. Never to let her regret all her efforts and sacrifices.

Even while I was reading her lines and holding a copy of the official marriage certificate in my hands, it did not seem real to me. It was still too abstract with that great distance between us. We had never profoundly discussed or written about the deeper meaning of our marriage, because we considered such a fact of life in our love affair, without any "ifs and buts" about it. Of course, without writing about how to break the bureaucratic obstacles to our union, we would not have arrived at this happy conclusion at this time.

Shortly after those wonderful events in my life, the jurisdiction over our sector was handed back to the French government, where it belonged, and we began our trek East to that despised and defeated country. We passed the first night in a field outside Rambouillet. Contouring Paris, we slept the following night under a freezing rain at the airport of Luxembourg. Next morning, we passed the famous sign: "Here ends the civilized world! You are entering Germany ! Fraternization prohibited!" Then through Trier, where the famous Roman ruins were surrounded by the destructions of Hitler "Thousand Year Reich" (which lasted only twelve years). Along the scenic Moselle river, then a swing North into the woods of the Nurburg-Ring. This automobile racing track had been used as a training ground by the Kraut army. And this was the place, where we were supposed to get ready for the battlefields of the Pacific. Not a pleasant project to be looking forward to. Camping in our pup tents, the nights were rather chilly, but it was not too bad. We began training immediately with our new replacements. The young officers, the "Ninety day wonders," right out of Officer's schools, tried to impress us, the old warriors, with their military knowledge. But after some slight coaxing and some fatherly advice from that good, old Colonel Parker, they caught on to our friendly and relaxed discipline. With the

respect we owed their shiny, new bars, we ended up with a very pleasant relationship.

While involved with some rather tough training in those woods, we still managed to do quiet a bit of sightseeing. In my section especially, we became fairly productive in inventing all kinds of important missions. Among the very few valid ones, was the salvaging some of the thousands of miles of telephone wires, which our advancing units had strung out. Usually, we cranked up about three drums with two miles of cable on each, and then we proceeded to our main purpose, described by "goofing off." But at times, we had a bona fide mission, like buying firewood, wine or beer. Actually, "buying" was not the right word. I did give our unhappy suppliers receipts from the Military Government, but most of the time, the purchase (?) was rather "liberated." I remembered this region still very well from the times, when our father took us wandering right around here, in the good old days before Hitler. One day, we went to a brewery in Niedermendig, which belonged to one of father's friends, and where we had visited about fifteen years ago. After settling our purchase of three barrels of beer with a M.G. voucher, I introduced myself to the owner, and that, probable Nazi, was overjoyed and invited the three of us into his house for drinks. (This actually was highly prohibited by the Non-fraternization order). Then, with Nazi chutzpah, he asked me to pay him in Greenbacks. No way!

Several times, I was called to our Division Headquarters across the Rhine in Bad Ems, for interrogations of some Waffen S.S., who had been involved with the "Malmedy Massacre," with one of our new, young officers, who spoke German quiet well. We used to pass about two miles from Saffig, my father's place of birth, but I did not dare to take the little detour, because, on account of that non-fraternization ban, I did not want to get into trouble, after having that AWOL problem on my record. But on our last mission to Bad Ems, where the Lieutenant left me alone to do our job, he went off in search of drink and sex, and he was quite stewed on our way home. He agreed gladly to turn off to Saffig. At that time, our families were still in the dark about the fate of father's two sisters, Helen and Susan, as well as his brother Moritz with his wife, Emma and son Ernest, who were Charlie's parents and brother. The acting Mayor of that tiny village, who, after I introduced myself, declared that he was a classmate of my father's and welcomed us with open arms. To the Lieutenant's delight, a bottle of schnapps *(liquor)* appeared immediately. (Then, I was only a very occasional drinker) The Mayor knew exactly what I wanted to find out. He began to tell us, that, risking to be denounced to the Nazis, he had helped our relatives until that fatal day, when they began their journey to the extermination camp. In January 1942, his predecessor received an order to be forwarded to our dear ones. In it, the Gestapo made him responsible, that our relatives will present themselves the next day at the railroad station of Weissenturm, about ten miles from Saffig. "You know, they, all five of them were not very well, so I took them there with my horse and wagon. Since, we have never had a word from them. In Weissenturm, I was told that they would be resettled in Poland. But now, I should hope that they will be back soon." My Lieutenant, who had been extremely busy with the bottle, and did not say a word, began: "I think that Nazi SOB wants you to thank him for his great kindness to your old aunts and uncle. Go and take him behind the barn and use your gun. I won't see or hear a thing!" What can one say? What can one do? It made me the bearer of these terrible tidings to our family. Of course, they never returned, and only several years later was their cruel fate officially confirmed.

But before the end of the year, the actual helpfulness of this man was collaborated, when my father and cousin Adolph went to Saffig. (It's hard to believe, but there were actually a few decent Germans) We knew that after the infamous Kristallnacht (Nov. 9, 1938) where all remaining Jewish properties were seized by the Nazis, my uncle Moritz had thrown about fifty gold coins down the chimney. So, when father came, the first thing the Mayor said was: "I was waiting for you, to take out the gold from your brother's chimney." He could have done this himself long ago, and this showed that he was honest. When I visited my parents for the first time in 1951, I took those coins back to Charlie.

TRAINING TO FIGHT THE JAPS …AND, IS THIS THE MASTER RACE?

On our travels in Germany, it was easily visible, that the population had to endure a lot of suffering during the years of war. And it was not over for them yet. And why not? For the first three years they celebrated victory after victory, but then the retreats began, and at the end? The war was right on their front doors and backyards. For the last two years the visits by our bombers became more and more frequent. Not only in the larger industrial towns, but all over the rural areas. Now they were harvesting what they had been sowing all over Europe and North Africa. They were applauding the bombardments of London, Belgrade, Warsaw and more. Now they are crying. They did not realize how much they asked for it. Go and thank your Fuehrer. May he rot in hell.

Traveling southward along the Rhine, in a picture postcard valley, every field and every meadow were transformed into prisoner of war stockades. With hardly any buildings, the Master race had to live in the open, and had to dig into the earth to find some protection from the elements. Luckily, it was a mild, dry summer. Nothing but the barbed wire around them, which our GIs patrolled constantly.

When, at the end of the battle of the Bulge, the Kraut armies retreated into their blasted fatherland, they were followed by masses of civilian refugees. Now, they were on their way to their homes in the West of the country. Very few railroads were rolling, having been seriously destroyed and also for lack of fuel. Most highways were clogged, and the MPs had the hardest time, to keep our military traffic rolling. Most of these refugees were walking, dragging their meager possessions on their back or pulling small carts. A few lucky ones were on horse drawn wagons or bikes. It reminded me so much of the exodus from Strasbourg, at the outbreak of the war, which they had imposed on the world. While I could not feel sorry for them, I can still remember these haggard faces with their sullen and hopeless look, dragging their tired and sore feet, not knowing what was expecting them, when they'll reach their homes, of which many were destroyed.

How can I ever forget what the Germans have done? How right was Eli Wiesel, when he said: "Not all the victims were Jews. But all the Jews were victims." And all that suffering humanity on the roads was still carrying that cancer called Nazism. Can they ever be cured of it? But, in all fairness, I have to exclude the small children, and hope, that they have not been infected by their parent's virus. (Almost a half century later, statistics have proven, that most of those children have become decent, law abiding and democratic citizens).

Our compassionate GIs, including myself, shared food with those hungry people. For my buddies, the killing and hating part of the war was over, and with their

inbred sportsmanship, they could shake hands now with the former opponent. I had given an orange to a little, blond girl, something she had never seen. What will she be in a dozen years from now? On an evening, when her father is coming home from a meeting with his veteran's organization, wearing his medals, will she ask him "What did you do during the war, daddy?" And when he answers: "I proudly followed orders at Baby-Yar, in Lidice, Auschwitz and Oradour-sur-Glane!" Will she then say: "You scum!" "You murderer!" Hardly.

Talking about attitudes of the defeated Germans, I like to make a jump forward in time, where in the late summer, the village of Sollingen (Baden) was under our jurisdiction. One day, the entire population was ordered to view a filmed documentary. Distributed by the Military Government, it was a composite, made at the time of liberation of several death camps, by British, American and Russian film crews. The narration, in German was spoken by well known anti-Nazis. As far as I can remember some, they were Thomas Mann, Marlene Dietrich, the future Chancellor Conrad Adenauer, and Willy Brand, who became the Mayor of Berlin. Our burghers of Sollingen were not too eager to see that film, but being used to blind obedience, they filed very reluctantly and sullen into the Kino *(movie theater)*. The soundtrack was low, and these well cultivated voices were subdued and solemn, underlining the tragic of the moment. The screen filled with images of skeletal men and women with, in the background, the gas chambers and crematories. Mound upon mound of naked cadavers, whose sticklike arms and legs gave the appearance of jumbled piles of driftwood. Germans, pressed into burial details, holding their noses, and tractors pushing the dead into mass graves like contaminated refuse. This went on for almost two hours.

At first, the audience was fidgety and whispering, but as the screen filled with those pictures of an unbelievable hell proceeded the silence became oppressive. When the crescendo of a final funereal dirge filled the auditorium, there were sobs and murmurs, followed by a chorus: "No, no, I don't believe it! It's impossible! This can't be!" And then the standard comment: "Davon hatten wir keine Ahnung!"*(We were totally unaware of these atrocities)*. And then, a furious voice from the rear: "You phony liars!" It was the Mayor, a Socialist, who had spent time in jail for his anti-Nazi beliefs. And he continued to berate his constituents: "You should be ashamed of yourselves, to dare to say, that you did not know about these terrible things, which your beloved Hitler had decreed!" Pointing to a woman in the audience: "Didn't your fallen husband, on his last furlough tell you about the killing of Jews he had seen in Russia ? He certainly mentioned this sitting in the bar with, pointing at some men, him and him and him. Have you people forgotten the trains passing through town? The cattle cars dripping excrements, with its crying humanity locked inside. There were even a few charitable souls among you, who handed food through the barbed wire openings. Wake up! We are all responsible, including myself! Let's be dignified and ask the world for forgiveness!"

Emotionally drained, they filed out in total silence. Heads down. Visibly shaken. But not more so, than I was. And I had seen some of these pictures before. Now the Allied newspapers did not hide the atrocities anymore. Counting the few survivors (added to the many millions who had been murdered by the Germans. Yes, Germans! Let's not give them the excuse, that this was only the cause of the Nazis. What did the Mayor say? "We are All guilty!" And I agree. I have to add too many relatives, and it is my sacred duty to take them out of anonymity. Please, dear reader, help me to have here a memorial for them. They were my people, and not

statistics. Let us never forget them.

My uncle HUGO KAHN, his wife EDITH and son WALTER.
My uncle MORITZ HIRSCH, his wife EMMA and son ERNST.
My aunt HELENE KLEE.
My cousin MAX KLEE, his wife JOHANNA.
My cousin HEDWIG KAUFMAN, her husband JOSEF, children HILDE and FRED.
My cousin ELSE STERNSCHUSS, her husband and son (names unknown).
Mother's Cousins, OTTO, HUGO, JULIUS, MYRTIL (my buddies from the Légion).
Hedy's aunts and uncles BEISINGER, HERZOG and SAMSON.
My friends WALTER GERNSHEIMER and SIMON BERGER.

I still remember most of these dear, innocent victims. Some of them are my blood relatives. May they all rest in peace, and may their memory be a blessing for all of us.

Mail call! What a pleasure to hear my name. Lately, I was really spoiled, and there was hardly a day on which I was not among the winners. But those were not only the letters from Hedy, but also some from my parents and Hedy's mother. It was such a relief, to be in touch with all my beloved ones again. All the news were good, enough reasons to be most grateful. My "Wife's" - I still could hardly conceive it - were so full of humor, joie de vivre and optimism, overflowing with her sunny cheerfulness. She found it easy to find the most affectionate words to describe her elation of finally being Mrs. Hirsch. Unfortunately, in my letters, I never found those fond and uncomplicated phrases of hers. Of course, I never mentioned my fears of having to go to the Pacific, which made my lines, I suppose, somewhat less enthusiastic as hers. Not knowing about that, Hedy in her unbounded good spirits did not consider our final reunion as "If," and she predicted the "When" to be soon. She had a peculiar gift of intuition, which she followed always, and in this case, thanks God, she was right. Sooner than we could have dreamt.

Hedy's letters were our honeymoon. They built a bridge between the two of us. I don't think, that even during the too short years of our life together, a firmer link was ever forged. But that bond did not need any reinforcement at all, because it was there, and it was as strong as could be. I still wonder where she found the simple words to express so very comfortably her wonderful thoughts and feelings. Her happiness and contentment was bursting out of her lines. With a philosophy, rarely found in older persons, she had accepted the vicissitudes of the past three years with great wisdom. She enjoyed her job and became quiet attached to Joycie and the Silbermans. She also got along famously with all my relatives, and on her visits to them, she never failed to take Joycie along. She felt liked, respected and loved by everybody. Well, this did not sound surprising to me. For the summer, her bosses had rented an apartment in Long Beach, and she enjoyed the many hours on the beach very much. Even, while taking complete charge of the household, she considered that summer as a vacation without care. Describing this small town in her letters, she expressed the wish that someday, she would love for us to be living there. Well, I can say with the greatest of satisfaction, that her wish was fulfilled, when we moved into our own little house there six years later. It was a modest home, but for us it was a palace.

At the beginning of July, with some geographical adjustments in the Occupation Zones, we exchanged our area with the French, to take over a part of

Baden/Wurtenberg. A drive of about hundred miles South along the East bank of the Rhine, took us to a former German bivouac area between heavily damaged Manheim and Heidelberg, outside the town of Mingolsheim. I was in the head jeep with Major Goldstein, when, at the entrance to the town, a revolting sign greeted us: "Mingolsheim ist Judenrein." *(M. is clean of Jews)*. We stopped at the city hall, where the Mayor and his entire Council was ready to welcome us. Before they could say a word, we ordered them to come with us with pickaxes and sledgehammers. We marched them to that abominable sign, and with many villagers congregated around, we made these town officials pound it into small pieces. It felt good to see them in their Sunday's best all dirtied up. The town had been occupied by the glorious French 1st army, and it seemed surprising, that they had never objected to that leftover from the Nazis. It so happened, that the population was happy to have us as their occupier, because, the French did not treat them with the same fair play as we, the Amis did. For one thing, while we had our own food supplies, the poor French, who had so little of it, were partly living off the land and had to requisition a lot of German food products. How could those good French soldiers have the slightest sympathy for this enemy, after all the suffering the Boches had inflicted on them, their families and their country? By the way, the Mayor and his clique swore that they had never been members of the party, which, after rummaging through some Nazi records, I proved to be a blatant lie. They also declared that they had always been helpful to their Jewish neighbors. Well, the sign, which was just reduced to slivers showed how much. What phonies!

A few days after settling in, at three in the morning: "Everybody wake up and fall in!" twenty minutes to get ready fully armed, for "Operation Tally Ho" The entire territory held by the 7th Army was submitted to a systematic search operation to find hidden members of the S.S., war criminals, POWs who were not duly discharged and concealed weapons. The town was surrounded allowing nobody in or out. All inhabitants consigned to their homes. This was something new for our GIs, imbued with that democratic sense of respecting other people's privacy and property. At the beginning they were a little reluctant, but then they got into the pace of things. I told my group, that these early morning's knocks on the door was an invention of the Gestapo, with which they terrorized all occupied Europe.

Teams of five or six men armed to the teeth, knocked at doors and woke the inhabitants out of sleep. Scared out of their wits, they were herded into a room, mostly the kitchen. While one or two fellows kept them under watch with the automatic at ready, the others searched every inch of the house. As interpreter I was kept busy all over town and I got a great satisfaction to do unto them, what they had done to millions of good and decent people. The 589ers did a good job all over town. Not very neat, with a great mess left behind. We found a small amount of arms and ammunition, and the owners were arrested immediately. The juiciest catch were five S.S. men, recognized by a tattoo under their armpits. Late afternoon, we finished the operation, the S.S. were taken to prison in Heidelberg, and the two truckloads of prisoners who had concealed weapons were taken to a French stockade in Ludwigshafen, across the Rhine to their family's consternation. I went along on that trip, also as interpreter, and the French Captain accepted them with pleasure, and he told me that they would be shipped next day to France, to help repairing the war's destructions. "Ne vous en faites pas, on ne va pas les maltraiter." *(Don't worry, we won't mistreat them)*.

Back in camp, my buddies displayed the results of a hard day's work. Most of them had developed a case of sticky fingers. To put it more elegantly, they did a lot of "liberating." If I would not have been busy translating all over town, I would have joined them too. In some houses, they found quiet a lot of perfumes, liquors and silk and hosiery, which the sons or fathers had brought home, when they came on furlough from their occupation duty in France. They had been looted, and considered to be contraband. I don't remember if the Military Government considered it as such, but we did. On the black market, they would have brought a nice profit for the owners. Everything was shared, and the stockings helped many GIs to have a good time with the Frauleins.

PEACE ON EARTH…(WISHFUL THINKING)

Our training exercises continued, but they were not too demanding. After all, being on maneuvers here, in the now peaceful countryside, was much preferable to the hazards of war in the Pacific. And then, on August 10 1945, the Japs offered to surrender. Hallelujah. Our celebration began right then and there, and came to its highest pitch on the 15th, the official end of World War Two. For me it had lasted two weeks short of six years:

Thank you, dear Lord, who has kept me in life, and has preserved me, and enabled me to reach this wonderful moment!

A time of great rejoicing! The final liberation from fear and anxiety, from terror and oppression. The forces of "Good" had brought those dictatorships, who had set the world aflame, to its bloody end. Look what you did to your countries, to your imbecile followers, you, the merciless, the egoistic rulers. Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, and all those puppets who kissed your feet and held on to your devil's tails, may they all rot in hell. Death alone is not good enough for you!

Since we knew that we would be sent to the war against the Japs, we got more interested in that theater of operations, and lately, we were able to appreciate some very impressive successes. Our boys and the Allies too, did a terrific job over there. But only later on, through conversation with veterans from the Pacific, from books, did I realize that those wonderful fighters had a tougher war than ours. I have talked since, with many, many veterans from the Pacific, and against their experiences, I did not even dare to talk about St. Vith, the Siegfried Line, Parker's Crossroad, and the Roer Dams.

Explanations of the Atomic-Bomb seemed more than abstract. But, I did not try to understand. It was, and still is, as far as I am concerned, a piece of ordnance which did its purpose: It ended my war and it finished my personal enemies. Whether they were one thousand, or ten thousand or a hundred thousand, does not make a difference to me. However, I too mourn the innocent victims. But what was my aunt Helen? What was my cousin Ernst? What were my friends Walter Gernsheimer and Simon Berger, Simon" ? No, as much as I can enjoy the German's misery at this time, it does not make up for my loss. My loss of men and women, who I still love. Today, fifty years later, there are still great discussions of "holier than thou" people, who think, that there was no need for this bomb. To hell with them! Harry Truman was right! Anything to save American lives! A few years ago, I talked with a French friend about our president Harry, and he said: "Il avait des couilles au cul."(Please excuse the translation: *"He had balls"*) My Harry Truman, as far as I am concerned, was terrific! His many, many opponents used to call him Truboy *(in*

opposition to man). He followed in the footsteps, reluctantly, of my idol FDR.

Now, we the Americans were the strongest power in the world. Will this predominance enable us to impose democracy and lasting peace all over the universe? And will it liberate the still grieving people of this earth from starving, suffering and bondage? And now, fifty years later, I remember with sadness our great expectations of a world at peace, and of equality of all races. Of an end of hatred. How little of our hopes have been fulfilled? In our streets, there is still hunger sickness and homelessness. And in the world, fighting has not stopped. Korea, Vietnam, Yougoslavia, Iraq and so many other places of the world. We have tried so hard, to help the world. We have assisted our former enemies to rebuild their shattered countries, and now, we have arrived to the point of being the greatest debtor nation in the world, over passed financially by the Krauts and the Japs.

On my trip back from my last furlough, I was sitting in the dining car with a few GIs. Across from us, a group of prosperous, middle aged civilians, who apparently had quiet a few drinks under their belts, were loudly bragging about their exploits in the first great war. A young sailor, with an empty sleeve, was sitting at our table. After listening for a while, he got up and very politely said: "Excuse me, gentlemen, if you did such a perfect job, then, why did I have to lose my arm?" They left after that very quietly.

On the afternoon of the victory celebration, I was included in a forward detachment to Sollingen, about ten miles south. We were ordered to requisition billets for Headquarters of the 589th, which was to follow the next day. This small town, about six miles south of Karlsruh was a farming village on one side of the tracks, while on the other side was an agglomeration of pretty comfortable bungalows for the affluent commuters from the big town. This was going to be our residential sector. Nothing but the best. An ideal setup, and we have earned it, after camping outside since last winter. We went from door to door, and informed the owners, that their houses had to be vacated by midmorning, next day, everything left clean and neat, with beds freshly made up. We urged them to take out their valuables, and gave passes to one person in each household, to come in each morning for the cleaning. A large Wirtschaft *(restaurant)* was taken over as our mess hall, and some women were hired as KP's. At that moment, I was the only German speaker, so everything was left to me, and when the expellees asked where they should go, there was but one answer: "Raus!" *(out)* They all had to double up with the farmers and workers on the other side of the tracks. Even, thinking back how often my parents had to leave their snug homes, to live under primitive conditions, and now seeing what we were doing to these former Nazis - not all of them - did not give me a great satisfaction any more. My hatred had not diminished, but revenge was not foremost in my mind anymore. There was so much talk about the Nuremberg tribunal, and I could only hope, that every criminal would get his deserved punishment. Once our good natured GIs were settled comfortably, they all treated our landlords with the greatest of consideration. They allowed the women to bring along their children, when they came to do the cleaning, and let them do their own cooking. They spoiled the youngsters with candies, and allowed some of the ladies, mainly wives of prisoners and widows, to share their own beds. It was a most gemütlich *(congenial)* arrangement.

During our month there, a lot of time was spent guarding and patrolling our area, but a few of us were heavily involved in the Military government's Denazification program. I was the chief interrogator, and every inhabitant of our area, which went beyond the village, had to fill out a very detailed "Fragebogen" *(questionnaire)*. They were to list all affiliations with any organization, whether political, religious, social or anything else within the last twenty years. The signature was a sworn statement to the exactness of the declaration, with the warning that perjury would be persecuted. Our Colonel dropped in a few times daily, with always the same question: "How many Nazis have you found yet?" None, sir, I don't think there were any of them in all of Germany." That is somewhat exaggerated, because a very few acknowledged some unimportant affiliations. But with that typical German "Ordnung" *(orderliness)*, I found many records and membership lists intact. After matching these information with the statements on the "Fragebogen," the fellows brought in about eighty liars. The few bonafide S.S. and S.A., were taken to the Military Government's Headquarters in Karlsruhe. One among them was declared a war-criminal by the French, having been the High Commissioner for the German Department of Agriculture in France. (I much later heard, he got twenty years) (Probably freed after three). The others, we locked up in a few barns for two days, just to show that we meant business, and were fined for perjury.

While in Mingolsheim, Major Goldstein took me along on an assignment to Bingen as his interpreter. Before his being commissioned into the army, he was one of the many attorneys in his family's law firm in Atlanta, which his great-grandfather had founded right after the Civil war. My Major was a real southern gentleman and he seemed to me as if he had just stepped out of "Gone with the Wind." He told me, that his ancestor Elliot, fresh out of Harvard, came to Atlanta as a Carpetbagger. Of course, he had to explain that term, but it was useless. Now, I do understand the meaning. By the way, the Major's first name was also Eliot, and he too was a Harvard graduate.

AMERICAN JUSTICE

Two fresh replacements in one of the Infantry regiments, the 422nd, right out of basic training, had been under arrest after shooting two German civilians, and our Major was ordered as their defense counsel. It seems that this was the first judicial experiment for the army in our occupation zone. From the highest echelon, a command was given to make this a show trial, in order to teach the Germans how we, in the U.S.A interpret the meaning of democratic justice. This was before the start of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials.

On our long drive to Bingen, around shell craters and the rubble of destruction, Major Goldstein described the case to me. He did not have many facts yet, and he needed me to interrogate the German witnesses. The little which he knew made this case seem to me as almost hopeless. My knowledge about law came from numerous detective stories, where the guiding principle was: "Innocent until proven guilty!" He thought this was all I needed, but then he gave me a lecture about: "Habeas Corpus, Due Process of Law, Probable Cause, "as written in the Constitution. Poor Major, I hardly understood what he was trying to teach me. It took me about another forty years until I caught the meaning of these terms.

Arriving in Bingen, a charming medieval town on the west bank of the Rhine, with little destruction, we were billeted in a large villa. Among the vineyards, we had a

picture postcard view over the narrow valley of the Rhine, but we had little time to enjoy this beautiful scenery during our week's stay.

The Provost-marshal at the stockade outside of Kreuznach, brought in the two prisoners and introduced them to our Major. They came to a snappy attention, but the Major put them at ease. He explained that he was appointment by the high command to defend them, and to forget the gold leaf on his shoulder, and confide in him as they would to a favored friend. They both came from the hills of Tennessee, just off the boat from training camp. They certainly did not realize the seriousness of the accusation against them, even after the Major explained it to them without mincing any words. He, however assured them, that he was there to ascertain that all their Constitutional rights would be protected, and that he would try to find as many mitigating facts as possible. They kept on repeating their only comment: "Somebody put a Mickey-fin into our drinks, and we both were too drunk to remember anything." We found this hard to believe, and the Major called for psychiatric evaluation.

The arresting MPs had prepared a very extended report about the case. We went to the place of the crime, to talk to witnesses. This was where my real job began by translating for the Major. Now, the story came to life. The two soldiers, in an advanced state of intoxication came into the large courtyard of a wholesale wine merchant. With Non-fraternization rules in effect, GIs were not allowed to socialize or trade with Germans. Of course, these regulations were broken routinely, but the risk of penalties was greater for the civilians than for our soldiers.

They knocked on the door, and motioned the proprietor to come out of the house and give them some drinks. By gesticulations and sign language, he tried to explain to them that he was not allowed to do that. In the trial, it was brought up, that through those gestures, the boys felt threatened. The first soldier pushed the man to the ground, while the other one raised his rifle and shot the German through the back of his head. A neighbor, who had heard the shot, came running and when he saw his lifeless friend on the ground became hysterical and berated the two soldiers, whereupon the second GI raised his gun and shot him into his face. Then, detached from the world, they entered into the house, coming out almost immediately with several bottles under their arms. Meanwhile numerous people assembled near the front portal, and one of them ran for the MPs. They came almost immediately and called for an ambulance on their radio. The two boys were arrested, and the Medics on a very fast response could only take the two victims to a morgue.

Now, a week later, the dried blood was still visible on the cobblestones. The eyewitnesses which we interrogated were still, understandably, very emotionally upset. This was one time, when I really felt sorry for Germans, especially the wine merchant's wife. This was a dastardly act, and I could not conceive, that an American soldier would be capable of such criminal actions. My Major, who understood a little German, commended me for the tactfulness I used toward these bereaved people.

The trial took place in a century old courthouse, half bombed out. A Brigadier General, two Colonels, and a freshly de-nazified German judge headed the court. The German prosecutor, and his assistant, the Mayor of Bingen, had just been reinstated, after spending several years in a concentration camp, on account of their Anti-Nazi leanings. Four interpreters from army intelligence handled the

simultaneous translations, and earphones were supplied to all the participants and a small audience of civilians. Major Goldstein kept me on his side as his personal translator and also to refill the water glasses. I was more than glad, that I had almost no responsibilities and could concentrate on the proceedings.

After all the hectic preparations, the trial was anticlimactic and rather boring. After the two accused's plea of "Not Guilty," came a long line of German prosecution witnesses, and made the case look more than hopeless. Two psychiatrists, an American and a German testified both to the low intelligence of the two GIs. Their defense attorney was brilliant, and his eloquence, was outstanding. He tried to confuse some of the prosecution's witnesses, pointing out certain inconsistencies. He used the low I.Q. of those two soldiers, and the fact of their indoctrination, to distrust and hate our enemies. These accused were scared to death and were trained to use their weapons in time of' danger. Weren't we, like the enemy soldiers taught, to shoot first and ask the questions later?

Next day we heard the verdict, which was to be expected: "Life at hard labor at Fort Leavenworth." There were no emotions on the condemned's faces. The Major explained that they would be eligible for parole in about fifteen years. A few days later, they were flown to the States to begin their long sentence. (I think it was five years later, on the bottom of a New Year's card, from "Mister Goldstein," he wrote: "Our two fellows from the trial in Bingen have recently been paroled. And why not? Our Military Government is releasing German war criminals, which have killed thousands of victims).

After the court adjourned, the Mayor invited everybody to a small subdued cocktail party, and the Germans did not stop praising the fairness of American justice.

Back at the 589th, the Major found a promotion to Lieutenant Colonel waiting for him, and apparently his job was highly appreciated by the upper brass. He was chosen on account of his experience as a trial lawyer back in civilian life, and I think the Military Government could not have made a better choice.

BACK IN MY SAD-LOOKING,
BUT STILL BEAUTIFUL STRASBOURG

Hedy's brother Jean, of course had been liberated from the German prisoner of war camp, and was back in Périgueux towards the end of May. He and mother were waiting anxiously to get their traveling orders to return to Strasbourg. On a day, when both Bob Gioelli, and myself were off duty, we piled into his jeep, trying to get to visit Hedy's mother and brother. A fifty miles ride towards the west, we were stopped at the border point between the U.S. and the French occupation zone in Rastadt.

The good Frenchmen apologized, that without special orders they could not let us proceed. When I explained the situation in perfect French, and with the help of two packs of Camels, a Sergeant pointed out, that at the bridge, they would not let us through. However, if we promised to bring him back here in the evening, he would come along and help us through other checkpoints. Another twenty miles, through flattened Kehl, we came to the American built pontoon bridge; the old ones were blown up by the retreating Krauts. True to his word, our Sarge went to see the French Captain in charge, and after his cock and bull story, we were waved across.

On the other side, there was again a new sign, first installed in November 1918: "Ici commence le pays de la liberté." *(Here begins the land of liberty).*

Before our eyes, in a blue sky, the elegant spire of the beautiful cathedral from the thirteenth century. Still the rubble of war on both sides of the road. Here too, so many Allied boys had to give their lives. For me, this was a roundtrip of six years, through danger and frustration, Leaving as a stateless refugee, and now, back, one of those, who had helped to rid the world of the Nazi monsters. My beautiful Strasbourg. How I love that town. Still today, fifty years later.

And now, here we are in front of 2 Rue de Kembs, my beloved's home. Never before have I been here, never have I seen this stately house, but Hedy's descriptions made it look so very familiar to me. I rang the bell, and upstairs, a lady came to the window, telling me that Lisa and Jean had not returned yet, but were expected any day. One block away. Hedy's schoolmate, Marianne was living with her parents. There again, I would have found her blindfolded. After the liberation, Lisa had corresponded with them, and Marianne's dad, a city official, was instrumental in expulsing the illegal tenants, and even was able to recuperate some of the Weill's furniture. I introduced myself, and I had a most cordial reception.

In her letters, Hedy had described me to Marianne, and these nice people treated me like a long lost friend. I had a good size bag with looted scavenged, and begged for food, soap and cigarettes, which I left there to share with my relatives of their return, and to tell them, that I would try to be back next week, if possible. Then the three of us went sightseeing. In the center of town, there was quiet a lot of destruction, but miraculously, the cathedral was still standing in all its beauty, but showing age and neglect. Two packs of Camels paid for a wonderful black-market lunch in a very old and well known restaurant "La vieille Douane" *(the old customs-house)*. On the way back, we dropped our newfound French friend, but at the border, our MPs tried to make some trouble, but when I explained our sentimental journey, our good natured GIs waved us on our way.

Back at the 589th, I was told that the Colonel needed me. "Oh boy, here comes trouble!" But I decided not to lie to him. He needed translations of some German documents, and when he asked me where I had been, I told him the whole story. After listening with great interest, came his feared comment: "The next time you go visiting there, see me first, I have so much candy, soap and things, which I want you to take along to your relatives." Well, that was my Colonel Parker. There is no doubt in my mind that I have served with the nicest people in the entire U.S. Army.

A week later, as planned I went again, and Maurice Wexler came along. Everything perfectly on the up and up, with signed travel orders, and supplies from the Colonel, and others, we took off. At Rastadt, the French greeted us as old friends, but we did not need their help this time. Two others came along for the ride. This time I was in luck. It was still early when we walked into the house. And there, I was holding my darling mother-in-law in my arms. For the first time I met Hedy's brother, waking him up. Our two Poilus went visiting, and promised to be back by three o'clock for the return trip. Mother invited Maurice for lunch, and all happy to be with such nice civilians, he accepted with pleasure. To leave us some privacy, he went for a walk in the neighborhood. Jean and Lisa were overjoyed and accepted me as son and brother with the greatest of affection. Lisa, happy to have Jean back with her, was lots more relaxed than five months ago when I was in Périgueux, and she looked

much better. They came back from there the same evening of my last visit here. Not knowing when I would come, they were very well prepared, and Lisa began immediately to prepare lunch. I don't know where they got all those goodies from, but she really outdid herself. When, a few months later, in New York, Maurice met Hedy he greeted her: "If you're half the cook your mother is, Rudy is a lucky guy." When our Poilus came to pick us up, there was still time for a few drinks with my new found brother in law, then we left, leaving two very happy people behind. But so was I. I had such a wonderful feeling of satisfaction, and Maurice remarked how very comfortable he felt with my folks.

CAN'T BELIEVE IT! ARE WE REALLY GOING HOME?

The next day, a rumor started. First as a whisper, then roaring to a crescendo: "The old-timers of the 589th together with other members of the 106th are slated to be rotated to the States." Sounded too good to be true. My Colonel admitted that something was going on: "But don't hold your breath. Wait till you are halfway up the gangplank. By now, you all should know how the army is operating!" Without losing a moment, I wrote about the gossips, but especially to report about my trip to her mother and brother, and the wonderful visit we had. I never received an answer, because, against expectations, things started to move rapidly. On Monday afternoon, an Artillery outfit from another division came to take over our duties and positions, as well as our heavy equipment. Also our beds and we spent the night on the floor. Nobody slept that night.

Before daybreak, our trucks were loaded, and the routine process of "Hurry up and wait" began. Well we all were conditioned to that. But there was an unbelievable joyful excitement in the air. At Karlsruh, before crossing the Rhine, we joined a six miles long convoy, and on the other side of the bridge we entered the French zone. Soon, we crossed familiar towns in the Saar territory. Lots of damages, due to the heavy fighting, which was going on here until the middle of March, when Patton drove out the Krauts. At about midday, we had our hourly stop in my home town, Saarbrücken, right at the beginning of my street, the Feldmannstrasse. When I asked the Lieutenant, if I could go and see our house, pointing out a shortcut to the old French border, where I would rejoin the column, he agreed. After all the destruction we had seen so far, I was surprised, that in that section of town, there was not much of this to be seen. But everything looked neglected and run down. After explanations to my friends, one of them said: "So, that's where you got your Jewish ass kicked out ten years ago?" And after my yes, he ended the subject: "Boy, ain't you lucky!" How easily I could agree with him. I found myself without any emotion. Of course, never will I forget my wonderful, protected childhood here. But now, I was only passing through on my way, to this beautiful place called "HOME." After a few shortcuts through fields where we had played cowboys and Indians, we rejoined the 589th at the old border, and entered again my beloved France.

On a well remembered highway (route nationale #3), we continued trough Lorraine to our overnight quarters in a bug-infested barracks in Metz. The following night, the accommodations in Soisson were not any better. But who cared? After three days, which today could easily be covered in about eight hours, we arrived at Camp Lucky Strike at Ste. Valerie en Caux, our final destination before the great boat ride. The weather was terrible. Drenching, never ending rain, with mud to our ankles, we could hardly leave our tents. Heavy storms kept the ships away, and the two weeks we spent in camp were among the most miserable ones of the war.

Nothing to do, no mail, impatience, boredom and frayed tempers in the cold dampness.

When the deluge stopped, we took our last ride on the Continent through the beautiful Normandy countryside, with cows grazing peacefully next to the wrecks of war. In the open trailers of the "Red Ball Express" we were squeezed in like sardines, freezing, but the usual complainers did not say a world. Considering where we were heading for.

And then, on the dock at Le Havre stood our dreamboat, the USS West Point. Even with her war paint, she looked like a luxurious liner. Twenty seven months ago was I standing on the stern of another ship, watching this tortured continent disappear in the dusk. But, heading West, the sun dipping into the ocean, ending with a glow to this invisible land, our "Home sweet Home." With so much love waiting for me there, and I did not even know how much of it.

It was a calm and uneventful crossing. While very crowded, conditions were lots better than on the USS Wakefield on the way into battle. But the ship was lots too slow, and this time I joined the chronic complainers with all my heart. Some of us 589rs were detailed to work in the officer's mess, and near the fleshpots it was a pleasant distraction. A large group of Nazi prisoners also took their meals there, after our Yanks finished theirs. They were mostly high ranking officers and civilians, mostly rocket expert, who were yanked out of Germany before the Russians could get them. Among them was Werner von Braun, who became the father of our guided missiles. We did not treat them very courteously.

BEGINNING OF "FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE"…UNTIL

On October 11, still in darkness, a cry echoed all over the ship: "There is the good old U.S.A!" Everybody, half dressed, or not at all rushed to the deck. The lights on the Virginia shore waved a welcome. Nobody had to tell us to get ready. In no time, we had cleaned our quarters. Ready as ever we were standing on deck. Shoes shined to a high gloss. Freshly shaven, perfect to pass muster. Several gangplanks were lowered.

A band was playing on the pier under banners and streamers: "Welcome Home. Well Done. God bless you all." And then, in cadence with the music, "Forward March!" Down the gangplank and setting foot on God's Country.

What a glorious feeling. This is my country. Never will I stop to be a great patriot. I'll never be a foreigner again!

A train was standing there, ready for boarding, and to take us to Camp Patrick Henry. Arriving there at lunchtime, we were marched directly to the mess hall, where among the welcoming decorations we were served a luxurious meal, the best land my buddies ever had while in the service. While digging into this delicious food, famished because we had no breakfast, clerks came to the tables to put us into groups according to our final destinations, and assigned us to our respective quarters.

The Red Cross offered free calls to our families, and the race for the phones began. I had never run that fast, only when the Krauts were behind me. But there was already a long line, and why did my buddies talk for such a long time? What a stupid question! Finally came my turn. After two rings, a little girl's voice, and I said: "Hello

Joycy." The receiver seemed to have fallen on something hard, and I heard her: "Hedy, Hedy it's Rudy!" And then, out of breath, this soft, so familiar voice, which I had not heard for such an eternity. There was so much to say, but the words, at first did not find their way. After a few starts came the gusher. Both of us speaking at once, not knowing where to begin. I can't remember the conversation, but that warm, affectionate voice will remain with me. Then, my time was up, and I promised to call every day. Later, Bob and Maurice, who had more intelligent conversations with their wives, told me that one of them had read about the homecoming of the Golden Lions of the "Golden Lions of the 106th" and together planned to come to Virginia, but they were advised not to. It was better this way, because we would hardly had any time together. At least, now we could call and talk.

Next morning we had to parade the last time as a unit, followed by deactivation of our division. The few survivors of the 589th received the French Croix de Guerre, and it was an emotion filled moment. We were proud of our outfit, of which Montgomery had said: "They stuck it out against terrible odds." Goodbye 106th Division. Finis the Hungry & Sick.

After three days of unending waiting, we boarded a late night train to Fort Dix (New Jersey) and arrived in time for breakfast. There, a Sergeant explained the phases of processing which we had to go through. "When can we go home?" "Anytime." One of those typical army expressions, which describes the time between immediately and two weeks from now. I spoke of course every day with Hedy, and our conversations became more orderly and down to earth. We made tentative plans for our honeymoon, but I had to explain the "Anytime." But now, after that long wait, time became unbearable. I was not the only one, and tempers became short. The best friends were snapping at each other, and it didn't help.

Finally, we were standing in a very slow moving line, to get our furlough and reassignment orders. A race to the bus stop. No time to call Hedy. The bus stopped in Front of Trenton station as the train for New York was pulling in. It was October 17, 1945, six long wasted days since we walked down the gangplank, and the train starts to take me on my last leg to my beloved. This moment has been an illusion during the years of our separation, and now it turned into reality. The conductor just announced that we are due to arrive at eight sharp. Why is this train going so fast? Please slow down, I am not ready to meet my new wife. Was my father right, when he thought that I was not mature enough to carry my responsibilities?

Deep in thoughts with my fears, I did not even notice that the train was stopped. "Get up Frenchie, or do you want to go back," and Bob slapped me on my shoulder. Of course not, and I got my courage up again. Into a taxi at the eight avenue exit. "Welcome home, soldier. Where to?" "West end and 90th " "I'm off, you must be in a hurry." Did he really know? How fast again? "I ain't taking tips from returning soldiers and God bless you." A fatherly looking doorman holds out his hand in greeting: "Hallelujah, you finally made it! Did we sweat you out." He knew my whole story and while I was stepping into the elevator, I heard him speak into the intercom: "The army is on its way up."

My heart was beating furiously in my throat. The door clangs open, and there, a glimpse of the most beautiful face on earth. And there, nothing but four arms and two hearts. A mirage turned into reality. It is her I am holding and will never release again. My wife, my very closest, my dearest friend, my everything. Both of us

speechless, but with this wonderful embrace, everything became so easy. But I am still in a daze. Is this only a vision, stepping out of a cloud of steam which escoundered her at Barcelona's station so long ago? No, it is her and I can't keep my eyes off this comely, young woman. How she has changed. Is this really her? How she has changed. When I had last seen her, she was a pretty nineteen years old, and now, she has changed into a sophisticated, poised, smartly dressed, gracefully slender young woman. And dominating this perfect picture were those deep dark, soft eyes, always glowing with love and goodness, reflecting her soul.

For appearance's sakes we had to come back to earth from this unforgettable moment. There was plenty of time to savor our reunion. Hedy had every detail organized to perfection. Her employers, the Silbermann's welcomed me joyfully with a cordiality, which reflected the wonderful relationship they had with Hedy, and the esteem in which they held her. Earlier that evening, Joycie had only agreed to go to bed, after Hedy had promised her solemnly, that I would wake her up to say Hello. What a charming experience, when that lovely, little girl opened her eyes, put her arms around my neck and before going back to sleep, with a deep satisfied sigh, said: "Oh, Rudy, it's you." And that's where I started my love affair with children.

With all the greetings over, we could now make, politely, our getaway.

Hedy had rented a furnished room in the apartment of a most pleasant German-Jewish couple in the Washington-Heights. A quick, silent ride, filled with awkward embarrassment. Hedy's hand so warm, while mine was icy cold. How grateful I was for that talkative, gentle taxi driver. His son had just been shipped to Germany, and wanted to know about conditions there. He never knew how much he helped us to overcome some moments of almost painful bashfulness.

And then, finally, up in that quiet room, after 840 days of separation, two almost strangers embraced. Within my dreams, I had tasted those kisses, but tonight was only for us. It was like a door opening to our past. I had feared she would be a stranger, but I realized then, that she never could be that. Time can not take away what is real, it just dispels the illusions. Our love is an eternal work of art. We tried so hard, too hard, to make this moment an unforgettable one. To make it last forever. Where was that so long cultivated and dreamed of passion? But utter physical and mental exhaustion eased us into a nightmarish sleep.

I woke up very early, next to that lovely girl, no, woman, my wife my dearest one, my very own. The warmth of that beautiful body enveloping mine. How peaceful and precious she looked in her sleep. For a moment's flashback. I saw us in that attic room in Perpignan, long ago, full of fears for an unknown fate. All the dreams I dreamed alone were just that, but now our dreams together were reality. She opened those velvety eyes and I savored her waking. That delicious limbo between sleep and full return to the new day. The senses slowly working into a delicious togetherness. Two souls and bodies welded into one. Finally freed from our longings, from our frights and from ourselves. This was the end of that long nightmare, and the bridge over the empty and missing years was crossed. Oh yes, war is an unbeatable matchmaker. Desperations makes people tolerant, and shared miseries chains them together.

That morning, we woke up with a ravenous hunger for life and its pleasures. I had a thirty days furlough, and we recaptured quickly the bliss, which had been denied

us for such a long time. It was an unforgettable honeymoon. We were reborn for each other, and so was our great love. Walking together, her hand in mine brought such serene happiness, and convinced us, that our's was a very special love affair. Never to end.

Hedy did not feel too comfortable with our proxy-marriage, although it was absolutely legal and universally recognized. But a phobia, dating from the time of our fake and altered documents, brought on her wish to have the marriage formalities done all over again. Truthfully, I did not have the slightest idea, about such a possibility. But, leave it to Hedy, a few weeks ago, she had gone to the marriage bureau, and knew exactly how to proceed. Well, and why not? Might be fun. On that first day, around noon, we took the subway downtown. At City hall, in the licensing office, a large crowd was waiting but GIs were processed immediately, and the usual requirements, like blood tests, were waived, so was the modest fee. In no time, we signed our certificate. This of course had to be counter-signed by a judge or a clergyman.

While not too knowledgeable of the religious part of this second marriage, Hedy was very eager to have our union consecrated, and adhere to tradition. This too was already arranged. Cousin Emmy had Hedy introduced to her Rabbi, and from downtown she called him, and he invited us to come to his house that same evening. I bought her first corsage, and on the dot of six, we rang the bell at Rabbi Schotland's. In his living room he had a Chuppa *(a canopy made out of a prayer shawl)*. He placed us, with two neighbors as witnesses under it, and his wife walked in with my beautiful bride. After the ages-old prayers, I stamped on the glass, and he declared us husband and wife. This wise and devoted man, with a few warm and appropriate words made this a touching occasion. Oh, how I thanked my Hedy, that she had thought of this, and we both were elated about this spiritual experience. There was absolutely nothing better we could have done on that first day together.

To celebrate, we went to the Latin Quarter. I had been in night clubs before the war, but for Hedy this was a first time event. We enjoyed the dinner, the floorshow, and mainly, something we had never had a chance to do before, we danced together. What a wonderful feeling, to hold my beloved wife in my arms, to the strains of the lovely tunes of those days. We got into a conversation with the people at the next table, a GI, also of the good, old 106th and his young wife. After exchanging similar war experiences, we came to tell them, that this was our wedding celebration. When he heard that, he got up, and five minutes later, the M. C. made us come forward, to announce our marriage, and we had to dance to the great applause of the full house. When the waiter brought a small wedding cake, we shared it with the people sitting close to us. Taking the subway home, we were just bubbling over with joy and satisfaction. People were looking and smiling, rightly thinking: "There is a soldier, home from the war with his beautiful bride!"

There began for us, a collection of days and nights, bound in gold in my memory. Elations and intensities, that both of us had not believed existed, and we would ever find. If there was perfection, this was it. We entered this new relationship with an ease, of which we did not cease to be amazed of. The edginess of our first hours together seemed a thing of the past, never to have existed.

The world around us had faded away and those thirty days passed at breakneck speed. Within our more than modest means, but without a care, we were able to

squeeze a maximum of fun and enjoyment. Thanks to my uniform, we received half prices and discounts to shows, nightclubs, restaurants and theaters. Once we had free tickets for the Opera, and we slept through the greatest part of Tristan and Isolde. We needed the rest badly, but to compensate, we went to a midnight movie. We also visited relatives and friends, who competed to spoil us with meals, the kind we were used from our homes, way back in our childhood. All these good people were all refugees like us, who had arrived in this' great country within the last four to five years. Most of them had just come out of the hard struggle for financial security and a better life for themselves and their children. While those stories of a difficult beginning brought us down from that cloud on which we were floating, it reminded us however, that life was not always a bed of roses. We still looked at our future with rose colored glasses, but we realized, that there could be hard work and many difficulties in reserve for us.

Mrs. Gioelli of Astoria, the mother of Bob and his lovely wife, invited us to celebrate the safe return of her son to a tremendous Italian dinner, together with two other 589ers with wives, Ed Plinge and Maurice Wexler. It was a wonderful reunion, and Mama Gioelli, Mama" kept on urging: "Mangia, mangia!" The feeling of friendship with my comrades and their wives was priceless. Why, oh why, in our quest to "make a living" did we ever neglect our relationship with these good people?

To take the traditional honeymoon trip, we went to visit Aunt Martha and Uncle Herman in Vineland. Shortly after arriving here in the U.S.A, they had invited Hedy to spend a weekend with them, and in one of her letters she raved about the gracious reception she had there. They had welcomed her with so much affection and warmth, something Hedy needed so badly at that time and which she did not expect at all from people she had never met before. They were a kind, childless couple and we adopted each other and had a wonderful relationship until their departure from this earth. We helped in the house and the farm to the utmost, and gave them a good rest. We were busy from morning to night and enjoyed working together. Uncle got the biggest kick, when he caught us several times smooching in the loft. The fall weather was mild and we had a very pleasant week in this peaceful countryside.

Since the past summer, the post office accepted parcels for Europe, and Hedy, of course, began immediately to send packages to Tence and Strasbourg. Those necessities were rather inexpensive, and sometimes the postage was more than the cost of the contents. But our parents appreciated our parcels, as shortages had worsened over there. We continued this for several years, and for us, the satisfaction to spoil our parents was more than satisfying. It alleviated us somewhat of our guilt feelings for having left them alone, exposed to the dangers of those terrible years. While our parents knew, that our financial means were far from abundant, they accepted this as a proof of our love and devotion.

We talked and talked during those hours and days of an unbelievable togetherness. With so many lost letters it was now time to fill in the voids of our long separation. Hedy could only guess where I had been, and what had happened to me. Of course, our respective parents had written to her about my visits, and she was very eager to hear what I had to tell her about her mother and brother, whom I had seen just about two months ago. But in her cheerful letters, she never hinted of the unpleasant and difficult times she had in Barcelona. Even now, she told me only

about her less disagreeable experiences. Eventually, after I prodded her to be more specific, she admitted her hard times. The food in her boarding-house was everything but generous. But, as I mentioned before, all of Spain, no, all of Europe was hungry, and only those who could afford black market prices left their tables without hunger pangs. Then, there also was her lack of money, because our relatives made it so unpleasant for her, when she had to ask them for money even while I had repaid them promptly here in the U.S. She rather deprived herself but of the barest necessities. She knitted sweaters for some of her refugee friends who supplied the wool and paid her very little for her work. Her roommate Rita did some sewing on the landlady's sewing machine for the two of them and outsiders also.

But the beginning of her voyage to the U.S.A was a nightmare. In the train from Barcelona to Madrid, the police came to check the travel documents of passengers, and her's was short a certain stamp. She was arrested and locked up in an empty compartment with another delinquent passenger. Arriving in Madrid, handcuffed to the other "criminal" a representative of the Hias, who was to escort her, apparently recognized her and approached them. He was told by the Guardia, that he was taking his prisoners to headquarters at the Puerta del Sol, where they would be detained, it took the Hias three days to get her out of that terrible and filthy jail, just the day before her ship's departure from Lisbon. Luckily, they found a seat for her on a small plane, and she reached the boat at the last moment. The flight in very stormy weather must have been a terrible experience, and ever since, Hedy had a phobia about flying. (With her tremendous willpower, she managed to overcome those fears, and the many business trips she had to take, even a few around the world, did not cure her completely).

She also described her arrival in Philadelphia as one of her greatest disappointments in life. That I would not be there was something unthinkable for her. But with the wonderful reception by our relatives and their explanations, she resigned herself to this unexpected turn of fate. And then, so little time after she became philosophical about this unexpected continuation of our separation, came the news of her beloved father's death, and the hard fact, that she would never see him again. But now, the two of us together for always, she was able to put her sorrows into the past without rancor. How lucky we both were to have outlived this terrible war. With her sunny and orderly disposition, she classified everything into its proper context, looking forward to a good life.

But time was flying, and in our bliss, we did not realize how fast. Until the calendar tore us out of our unconcerned merriment. We tried not to think of that so feared date, but here came the brusque awakening. Ed Plenge and his wife, coming from across the river picked us up on the way to the station. There were quiet a few of the old 589ers, and by now, Hedy knew them all. I suppose, we all looked somewhat subdued and tired, but the leave taking was by far not as tragic as a year ago on Election day, when we knew that we were on our way to join the war.

This time we did not think that our separation would be a long one, and with the points we all had accumulated, we could look forward to be discharged from the service in a not too far future. At least we were in the same country, with telephones, and then, the mail was faster than it is today.

We all had to report at Fort Bragg, where most of us had our basic training two years ago. Again, unending days of processing, and finally reassigning. As if by

special purpose, we were dispersed all along the East, between Florida and Maine, no two of us together. This time, it was a final leave taking from my good friends. It was the end of a wonderful relationship, and of a buddy-system, which had worked well.

All alone, I had to travel to Columbia (South Carolina), where I was attached to a Field Artillery Battalion at Fort Jackson. There I was made an instructor in communications, and as the outfit was scheduled for occupation duty in Germany, I also had to teach German. Although I had to participate in all training exercises and field problems, it was a soft job. But it did not make much sense to me, and I did not derive any satisfaction from just marking time. I did not find the comradeship, to which I was used in the 589th, but, while getting along very well with everybody, I did not try to make any new friends. I made good use of a lot of free time to write to my Hedy, and we took advantage in our letters to exchange many thoughts and ideas about our future.

If my dear reader remembers last year's Christmas Eve, and how lucky it was for us, encircled by the Krauts, this year's was a repetition of my good fortune. Out of the blue, I and many more of my new comrades were handed twenty days furloughs. Absolutely unexpected, I could hardly believe it. Just a short call to Hedy: "Tomorrow evening, I'll be there to continue our honeymoon." Then a long wait for the train. At the end of our previous vacation, Hedy had gone back to the Silberman's. They had just left for a two weeks trip to Florida for business and pleasure, knowing that Joycie was well taken care of. They called every day, and when Hedy told them that I was coming, their quick reply was: "So, what's the problem? Rudy will move in with you, and Joycie will just love it."

Next day, early evening, after a wonderful welcome from the big girl and the little one, Hedy told me to get installed in her room, and that we were going to stay here until the Silberman's return. After the holiday, I went downtown to my old job, and as they were very shorthanded, they were glad to have me there for the duration of my leave. This was an ideal arrangement, as Hedy was busy with Joycie all day, and I was more than happy with the additional income.

We drifted into a wonderful time of togetherness and that sweet little girl added to the pleasure. On the weekends, we visited relatives and friends, and Joycy enjoyed the attention, which was showered on her. But I remember her very well as a charming little girl, mischievous and pretty as could be. Once, we took four children, Freddy, Nicky, Doris and, of course Joycy to the ice-show at Radio City. Again, a GI with a 106th patch was sitting next to us with his little boy. Of course we got into a conversation, and he asked if these were all my children. I could only reply: "I wish they were." It was then, when Hedy realized how enamored I was with children, she made the statement: "Not yet. Let's first get settled, and establish at least a small financial base." With that, selfish, however realistic philosophy, we kept on postponing, until the most beautiful and rewarding accident happened, six years later, when our beloved Claude came into our lives and hearts.

For the last week of my leave after the Silberman's came back, we returned to our honeymoon room in the Washington Heights. From there we took the subway together to go to work, which gave us an idea how our lives would be after my discharge from the army. I look back with regret, to this lovely interlude, because it was the last careless vacation for a long time to come. But it was also a profitable

furlough. Our minuscule savings had taken a great beating during our honeymoon, but now, with my working on my old job, as well as the Army's family allotments, of which Hedy received back pay since our marriage last May, we were able to consider ourselves as financially comfortable. At today's standards, it was very little.

While I had a relatively high number of "points," towards my discharge, I figured with at least two months, but probably three to four. The points system was an addition of months of service, battle stars and decorations, as well as time overseas. (My Bronze-Star came in very handy).

Hedy had decided that she would not want to be separated from me, if at all possible. "I don't ever again want to be anywhere where you are not."

She had given notice to the Silberman's, and that very nice lady, which had taken over her duties during our honeymoon, agreed to take over the job permanently. It was a perfect solution, which worked out to everybody's satisfaction. We remained friends with the Silberman's, and some years later, Hedy did business with them.

We took the train together to Columbia (South Carolina). It was so nice to have her there in my arms, and see the envious looks of the other GIs on the train, who talked to us. Then, there was still that easy comradeship with other soldiers, especially, when wearing an ETO ribbon (European Theater of War), a conversation began immediately with: "Where have you been?" And then, seeing that pretty girl next to me, pictures came out, with bragging about wives, children, friends and families. I was proud as a peacock with my lovely wife.

Arriving in Columbia towards noon, I checked Hedy into a small hotel near the station with her luggage. I did not think that I would be able to see her that evening; she was going to wait for my call instead. Before dinner I tried to reach her, but she was not in the hotel, and I thought she went to eat. Later, still not in, and I began to worry. Next time, what a relief, she answered, and told me how busy she was all day long. She found a room, and had taken some of her bags there already, to move in the next day. Then, she passed a luncheonette, with a sign: "Waitress wanted." She walked in and talked to the owner, a European refugee, telling him about her zero experience in that field. He apparently liked what he saw and heard, and asked her then and there, if she wanted to try immediately. Well, this kind of talk was right up Hedy's alley, and when I talked with her, she had worked already several hours there. She found it a hard beginning, but she thought that by tomorrow, she'll get into it. The next evening, when I came to town, she was all happy. The pay was not much, but tips and free meals took care of living expenses. Before the end of the week, her boss found it hard to believe, that she had never done this kind of work. In her efficient and friendly way, she had gained the friendship of customers and the other workers. With her French accent, which did not make her a "Damn Yankee," she gained acceptance in this Southern town, which was still fighting the Civil war, apparently.

Almost every evening I was able to join Hedy. I used to leave the camp after five, and we had dinner at her luncheonette, where Hedy had a free meal, and I got a discount. Then we had the evening and the wonderful nights together. Hedy went to work every morning, after I left for camp very early. She enjoyed what she was doing, and especially, to earn our expenses. While these weeks were almost some kind of vacations, I considered them as a waste of time. By now, with all my wishes

and dreams fulfilled above expectations, I was eager to start with the organization of the rest of our lives. With our savings rather on the lean side, we actually did not have a bed to sleep in, nor a plate to eat from. I did not have anything decent to wear, just the little I brought from Spain. There was nothing there, which I would want to wear anymore. Not only was it in terrible condition, because I had not bought anything when I first came to this country, I also wanted to discard the memories of a Europe in wartime, which I was so fortunate to have left behind me.

We spent long evenings discussing the planning of our future. Hedy had decided, that she would again take a job as a nanny, not as a sleep-in anymore, at least as long as we would be established in our own home and household. Then she would like to go to a secretarial school, and she thought that with three languages, it would not be too hard for her to find a position. (Which finally worked out splendidly.) I was assured to get my old job back, and in those days, my earnings there were quiet adequate. One evening, after a lecture at the local Service club about the GI bill, professions, jobs and further education, we had our first serious disagreement. (It lasted a full ten minutes) Hedy was very impressed by the possibility of getting a college education, offered by the Bill. She, not I, asked questions how I could obtain a degree in electrical engineering, and the lecturer had all the answers how I could gain acceptance at a college even without an American high school diploma. She figured that, with her working, and the government paying for school and part of our subsistence, we could make ends meet for the three years at least, it would take me to graduate. I did refuse absolutely, to sit for such a length of time in a classroom, while she was working to feed us. Now, I can only say, that my ambitions were by far not as demanding than hers. She was aiming at a higher goal than I was. In later years, once in a while, I regretted that I had not given in to her. But I am even sorrier, that I never admitted that fact to her. Nowadays it does not make any difference at all, but it brings back the fact, that she was almost always right in her judgments and opinions.

Up in camp, half of the battalion was still on furlough, and there was not much to do. At least, looking forward to my evenings and nights with Hedy helped to overcome the boredom. And then, sooner than I thought, we were given three days to pack up and move to Fort Dix. The outfit was being shipped from there to Germany, and I was being finally discharged. I could not wait to give Hedy the good news, and we started packing her things the same evening. Next afternoon, I got permission to see her off. This time, it was a happy and cheerful parting. We knew it was the last one, at least for a long time. But, as usual in the army, it took two more weeks before we were reunited for good.

Hurry up and wait! Red tape and more red tape! And then came the end, after all. It was in the afternoon of February 20th, 1946, a Wednesday, when I boarded the train at-Trenton-station. With my "Ruptured Duck" (the gold eagle discharge insignia) on my right breast pocket, I wore the uniform for the last time. I was a free man. The first time since I was a teenager. The last time I took this train, I was full of fears of the reunion with my new wife. But now, I was full of joyful expectations of a new life together with that wonderful human being, which had become a part of myself. Together with her, I was ready to take on the world. But I also realized that my own need was simply to care for my Hedy and provide her with a springboard for her own fulfillment. (This time, the train was too slow).

Returning from South Carolina, Hedy stayed at Cousin Emmy's, and with her help she began her search for a place for us. On account of a tremendous housing shortage, this was not an easy task at all. There were so many returning servicemen, who were all looking for accommodations. Finally, she found a pleasant room on 153rd Street and Riverside Drive. With the help of a heavy, under-the-table payment, we had a large, sunny room, overlooking the river. The sparse furniture was everything but attractive, but we were not spoiled at all, and we knew, that with our modest means, we would have to make the best of it. We had to share kitchen and bathroom with two other young couples. Both husbands were recently discharged and they also were newly married. We had a very nice and friendly relationship with them for the year we were living there, before we found our own apartment. We all had the same concerns of building up new careers.

TAKING OFF THE UNIFORM, A FREE MAN AGAIN

On that wonderful evening of my final homecoming, Hedy was on her knees, scrubbing the floor to make that place more livable and cozy. She had bought some pots, plates and flatware at Woolworth, and there was a nice meal to welcome me home. She had made arrangements, to start a new job this coming Monday at friends of the Silberman's, as a nanny. Of course, this was not a sleep in position any more, for six days. I was assured of my old place of work, also six days a week, and our two incomes were quiet adequate, and would allow us to build up a nest egg for the day we could find our own home.

Next morning, at breakfast, Hedy tried again to talk me into going to college, but she knew already, that I was not willing to give in. She knew that I had my mind set to make a living, and not to have her work any more. In months to come, she brought up the subject again and again, but with her keen perception, she knew when it was time to insist and when not to.

And now, it was time to take off the uniform, but, beside my GI underwear, there was nothing left for me to wear. A friend had recommended a certain haberdasher (Wallachs). We liked what we saw in the windows, but inside, one look at the prices made me walk out immediately. We ended up in another store (Bonds), where I bought three suits for little more than the price of one in the first shop. Before leaving Fort Dix the previous day, I was paid my last pay of three hundred Dollars, and our finances were in pretty good shape. Comparing our assets with today's prices, they seem ridiculously little. But then, the buying power of the Dollar was very strong, and keeping our modest expenses to a minimum, allowed us to deposit nice savings in the bank.

We had known the hard way how it felt to be short of funds. Now, our goal was set to have our own home, which still seemed to be far away from our means. We both became obsessed with that quasi-religion of "making a living" and "saving money." I became over concerned with an almost pathological frugality, which I had inherited from my father. I can only be grateful to my Hedy, that she did not share this really unproductive obsession of mine, and kept our way of living in its proper and reasonable perspective. It took me a very long time to overcome this silly paranoia of mine, and it was not very long ago, that I was able to shed an almost physical pain when I had to spend money. I take this occasion to apologize to those of my beloved ones who had to endure this peculiar obsession of mine.

On the first page of my story I have quoted Camus:

"To protest against a universe of unhappiness, you have to create your own happiness."

Well, Hedy and I were ready for it, and we were able to achieve it. We reached the zenith, when Claude came into our lives.

And here, in the spring of 1946, I am about to end the story of that part of my life. At the time of this writing, I have almost fifty more years to look back to. Right now, there are four generations of our families alive, and doing well, thanks God! Among my generation, only five of my first cousins are still with us. I am lucky to still have them, because they are the ones whom the "Ten terrible years" with shared sufferings and frustrations have brought so close to our hearts. To add to my blessings, i still have some of my original childhood friends, with whom, a long cultivated friendship remains still as strong as ever.

Since leaving Saarbrücken as a teenager, way into my "Three scores and Ten," my road in life has not been a very easy one. But, I managed to overcome and accept the many hardships. Pleasures and happiness with its compensations made the struggles and worries look like small hurdles. On many stops along the rocky road, I was able to learn, to accept my fate, to acquire priceless experiences, and especially to gather love and friendships. If I was able to give back some of these affections and feelings, it would give me an enormous satisfaction. Let all those at the receiving end of my giving of, and from myself down here on earth, and up there in heavens be the judges whether I was successful in my endeavors.

I hope that I was able to duplicate for Claude, the sense of security and protection, which that vast circle of friends and relatives has given to me. May he feel as exuberant, comfortable and snug as I do. I have talked about the harsh awakening of myself at the age of thirteen. But so did Claude, when, at the same age he was torn out of his childhood's insouciance, when his beloved mother passed away. How well he overcame his terrible loss, is a tribute to his strong character.

While I am putting my thoughts to paper, I can look back to a good and rewarding life. Trying to give it a certain meaning, I find, that, whatever happens to us here on earth is still part of a great mystery. I fail to find any logic for it, and will never understand. The old philosophers and the most sophisticated computers have not solved those questions yet. But I am absolutely certain, that all of us are forever in God's hands. Deep down, I am a religious believer, and my gratitude to a God-almighty, up there in heavens will never end, probably not even with my last breath.

I look out of my window, and outside, the shining sun, the blue sky and the trees fill my heart with the beauty of God's creation. And it confirms my belief in life eternal.

Long ago, I was impressed by part of a poem of Wadsworth's, and during my reminiscences it came back to me, giving me the idea to use it at this time of closing:

Nothing can bring back the hours,
Of splendor in the grass,

Of glory in the flowers.

It is such a bittersweet thought, and it used to bring tears to my eyes. It probably matched my mood, many years ago.

But today, my feelings have changed. With mellowing and nurturing, I can now end this first part of my story with the words of Jean Paul Richter, a German poet of the eighteenth century:

Memories are the most beautiful paradise,
From which one can never be expelled.

At Riverdale, on the Fourth of July 1995.

Someday in the future, I might possibly continue to write about the next fifty years of my life.

In more than half the pages, Hedy was present in my story. But in 1965, she suddenly passed away, in the prime of her life, leaving Claude an orphan, and myself a widower.

In our greatest despair, the lord was again good and generous to the two of U.S. Like a miracle, Renée stepped into our lives.

With her golden touch, she helped to heal the wounds which were bleeding in our hearts.

Dearest, dearest Renée! How can we ever thank you enough?