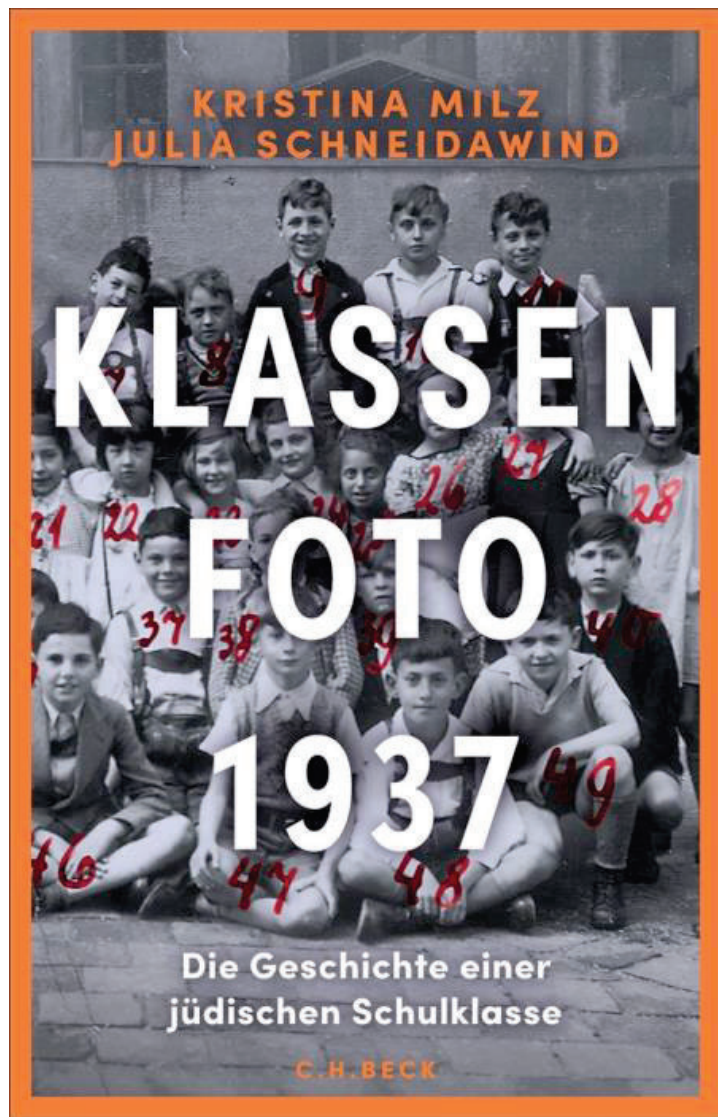


Memoiren von Hugo Holzmann



Kristina Milz & Julia Schneidawind
Klassenfoto 1937

Die Geschichte einer jüdischen Schulklasse

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W O M A N C O U R A G E O U S

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF HUGO W. HOLZMANN

DEDICATED TO A COURAGEOUS WOMAN

ANNA HOLZMANN

The famous German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had this to say about bigotry:

***Wir sind gewoehnt dass die Menschen verhoehnen
was sie nicht verstehen...***

***We are used to that people ridicule
what they don't understand...***

Mark Twain: *“It is curious – curious that physical courage
should be so common in the world, and moral courage so rare.”*

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P R E F A C E

In writing this story I wish to honor my mother, Anna Holzmann. Prima facie, her story is also my autobiography, her son Hugo. I will tell of our trials and tribulations during the Nazi times, especially the war years, in Munich, Germany. I will tell about the courage my mother showed during those difficult times, and how she steadfastly refused to give in to the demands of her Nazi tormentors as they tried to apply the Nuremberg Laws to her, those laws made to restrict and harass the lives of the Jews in Germany and to bring about the Final Solution, their physical extermination.

This is not a book about the Holocaust. My mother, my sister, and I were not forced on the death trains. Heartrending accounts were written by a few who survived. Above all there is the Diary of Ann Frank, that young, gentle girl whose lyric innocence touched us all. One of the best accounts, if we can call such a book on human tragedies “good”, or “best”, is by Elizabeth Jarany, “The Flowers from My Mother’s Garden”. Recently I came across Victor Klemperer’s fine chronicle of his experiences as a Jew in Germany before and during the war years.

What I can offer that is different is the story of a Jewish boy. My life – during the Nazi era before and during the war years in Munich, Germany.

History books count us all up: six million murdered, not many survivors. But human beings live as individuals. Each of us faced these dangers separately. Each of us was called upon to face the threat of extermination in our own way, under different conditions. Each of us has a story to tell.

I was ten years old when the war began in 1939. My mother and I lived in the Theresienstrasse in Munich, a few blocks from the Nazi hierarchy, government and

party headquarters and Hitler's *Braune Haus*, where he ruled. We lived there enduring on the one hand the Nazi terrorism and on the other the bombing of our friends, the British and Americans, the former much more sinister. But the most unique part of my story is how my mother stood up to the Nazi administration in Munich and the Gestapo, boldly, stubbornly, refusing to fall in with their plans.

My mother was not born into Judaism, could have opted out when things became difficult. Instead she expressed her deep love for her husband, first by converting from Catholicism to Judaism, and then, despite the abuse she suffered at the hands of the Nazis never leaving the Jewish faith. I believe she may be the only convert in Nazi Germany who never left officially the Jewish faith and the Jewish community. This caused a real problem for the administrators of Jewish affairs.

The Nuremberg laws (so called because they were first introduced at a Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg) which gave official sanction to the restriction and harassment of German Jews, were promulgated in 1935 and revised and refined continuously throughout the Nazi period to accomplish their evil purpose: The elimination of the Jews in Germany, Europe, and possibly the world. And these laws made no provision for a woman like my mother was – an Aryan Jewess.

Nothing shows as clearly the corrupt racial policies of the Nazis as their attempt to classify Jews by blood-line and not religion.

Victor Klemperer, in his book 'I will Bear Witness', tells how, when he married his Christian wife Eva, he changed his religion from Jewish to some Protestant

denomination. He was not a religious man. Neither the Chanukah candles nor the Christmas tree held any religious significance to him.

A professor at a teaching institution in Dresden, he hoped that his conversion would satisfy the Nazis and he would be spared from persecution and dismissal. Naively, he believed his adoption of Christianity would make a difference in his civil status. It did not. As far as the Nazis were concerned, he was a *Volljude*, a fullblooded Jew, as Klemperer found out in 1935, when he was dismissed from the university in Dresden. The Nuremberg Laws were written to identify Jews by blood-line, not by church affiliation.

The persecutions began with the Nazis taking power in 1933. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws became effective. In January 1942, Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of the SD, *Sicherheits Dienst*, Security Service, summoned the various ministers of the German government to Wannsee in Berlin, for implementation of the Final Solution, the destruction of European Jewry. Heydrich had been given this task by *Reichsmarschall* Goering in July 1941, and Chief of the police and SS, Heinrich Himmler. Those two had received their orders from Adolf Hitler.

Fourteen of the most powerful Nazi bureaucrats came to the Wannsee Conference. Heydrich declared that the Final Solution of the Jewish problem would now be implemented under the auspices of the RSHA, *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, or National Main Security Office.

Each delegate had been informed prior under top secret seal. And every delegate had his plans ready to correlate them for the destruction of an entire people. It was of staggering proportions. Many million people to be uprooted, held in collection camps, and

transported to the death-camps, and then to dispose of their remains. Truly a challenge to German efficiency. The count of Jews in Europe, as stated by Heydrich, included 330,000 Jews from England, 4,000 from Ireland and 6,000 from Spain.

No further laws were needed. It became a matter for the Gestapo to round up the families, the *Deutsche Reichsbahn* 'German Rail Service' to take them to their respective execution places, and the *Einsatzgruppen* 'special units' to shoot them. Or when later taken to the death-camps to dispose of them according to more efficient methods of killing people, by gassing.

The Nuremberg Laws first of all defined who was Jewish. *Reichsleiter*, or as his title translates as National Leader, Alfred Rosenberg was the authority on racial matters. The problem for the Nazi Racial Department and for Hitler began when one parent, or even grandparent was Jewish – the so called *Mischling* or half-Jew, quarter-Jew and variations thereof. Similar problems they encountered, or made for themselves, was when an Aryan was married to a Jewish person.

By Jewish Orthodox law I was a Jew, as my mother converted before her marriage to my Jewish father, and therefore my sister and I were born of a Jewish mother. By Nazi law I was a half-Jew, a Mischling first degree. The name Mischling, meaning half-breed, was first applied to the off-springs of French Colonial soldiers occupying the Rhineland after the First world War, and German women.

After Bismarck extended civil rights to Jews in Germany, successive governments granted the same rights to Jews who had become integrated into German life. Being a

Jew meant to be of the mosaic religion, and race or blood-line had nothing to do with religion. Love was permitted between a Jew and a non-Jew.

During Nazi-times to be considered an Aryan you must be able to show a pedigree of Christian ancestors as far back as records permitted, for an SS officer back to 1750.

The Nazi racial department, under *Reichsleiter* Rosenberg, came out with classifying those with an immediate Jewish ancestor, at least back to the grandparents.

A Mischling first degree was a person who had one Jewish parent. If the off-spring was then raised Jewish (and the boy circumcised) he was then classified the same as a *Volljude*, a Jew. All Nazi Laws against such Jews applied with the exception that they were not at once slated for deportation and death. I fell into this category. Those who had one Jewish grandparent were classified as Mischling second degree.

It became a more personal matter for a Nazi official to treat or mistreat the Jewish husband or wife of a mixed marriage, or as Nazi officialdom called it a *Mischehe*.

FATE

No human being on earth has a choice to be born or not, or what his parents are. The Nazis made it a crime to be born Jewish, punishable by death. Nor did those born with one parent Jewish had a choice, or for that matter to be raised Jewish or Christian.

And I was not guilty of anything being born Jewish and raised such, nor was the Mischling who was born of a Jewish parent and raised Christian, guilty.

It was with this group of people that the Nazis had their real problem.

As the minutes of the Wannsee Conference show this was a major problem they could not solve and never would. The 14 invited participants to the final solution, quickly and without any voice raised in protest, agreed on killing all Jews and discussed the mechanics of arresting, deporting, the killing and deposing of them.

As far as the Jewish raised Mischlinge, Otto Hoffmann, chief of the SS Race and Resettlement Office, urged the sterilization of them and also for the Jewish partners of mixed marriages. In early 1942, we heard these frightening rumors.

But what to do with the Christian raised *Mischlinge* and those in a mixed marriage?

More than 150,000 of them served in the *Wehrmacht*.

Many were high ranking officers. Field-Marshal Erhard Milch, second only to Goering in the *Luftwaffe* was a half-Jew. General Gotthard Heinrici, who was an army commander, and later conducted the final battle of the Oder and Berlin, was married to a Jewess. Half-Jew commander Paul Ascher, was Admiral Lutjen's first staff officer on the Bismarck battleship. There were many Mischlinge who held the highest military decorations, such as half-Jew Colonel Walter Hollaender, decorated with the *Ritterkreuz*, German Cross in Gold, EKII and EKI, Wound Badge, Infantry Assault Badge and Close Combat Badge. And many, many more. Half-Jew *Gefreiter* Werner Goldberg, whose photograph in uniform and *Stahlhelm* was used in a Nazi propaganda newspaper with the caption "The Ideal German Soldier."

There was a second Wannsee Conference on 6 March 1942, and it was a continuation of the first one. The final solution was carried out but the dilemma was still what to do with the Mischlinge. All those participating were in agreement to sterilize the half-Jews,

then deport them to Theresienstadt concentration camp for better control. But again the problem was voiced what to do with the Mischlinge serving in the Wehrmacht. Then there was the problem of medical facilities. And once more, the problem of the Mischling was not resolved. No “wish or will” from the Fuehrer.

Perhaps Hitler was influenced by a letter his closest collaborator on the Jewish question wrote to him on 7 March 1942.

Joseph Goebbels on the *Endloesung* which he fully approved, but...”*what is to be done with the half-Jews? What with those related to Jews? In-laws of Jews? Persons married to Jews?*” Amazingly the fanatical Goebbels came up with his own solution, at least the Jewish partners of mixed marriages. In February 1943, as *Gauleiter* of Berlin, he had two thousand Jews of Aryan spouses arrested to be deported East. For one week, day and night the wives, children and friends protested in front of the Rosenstrasse prison and finally Goebbels had them released.

A third Wannsee Conference took place on 27 October, 1942. It was more of the same unresolved problems. The foreign office under Joachim von Ribbentrop introduced a plan whereby half-Jews would be given the option to let themselves be sterilized or be deported – meaning murdered. This proposal was widely supported by the Nazi hierarchy but Hitler declined as he felt it was not the right time. At this time Hitler was already engaged in receiving daily requests by *Mischlinge* to be declared “*deutschbluetig*, of German blood. Only the Fuehrer could give this “*Deutschbluetigkeitserklaerung*” or declaration of German blood. And he did give a number of such declaration. How he selected them nobody knows. He would peruse the

accompanying photographs to see who looked Aryan or Jewish, also the service in the *Wehrmacht* and what decorations were received. It was like a fascinating hobby he enjoyed, and did so until the end of the war while outside his *Third Reich* was crumbling.

25 September 1942. OKW (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*) reported that the Fuehrer had ordered the discharge of all half-Jews still serving in the armed forces. Many of them were sent to concentration camps on such trumped up charges as having lied on their induction reports (some had not been aware that a parent or grandparent was Jewish); cheating - since when promoted they received higher pay. The Gestapo's favorite charge was that he committed *Blutschande*, defilement of blood, if his girlfriend or fiancé was Aryan, or married after 1935.

The discharged soldiers and officers were kept in a limbo as to their fate until 1944, then Hitler ordered them into OT (*Organisation Todt*) and forced labor camps.

In December of 1942, Hitler added another decree. Any Aryan woman who had been the wife of a Jew and no longer was by either death, divorce or the spouse residing in a concentration camp, was forbidden to marry a German soldier.

Hitler finally decided to postpone the question of the *Mischlinge* and mixed marriages until the end of the war.

I don't know who gave the order at the begin of 1945, to round up the Jewish raised *Mischlinge* and deport them to the Terezin-Theresientadt concentration camp – which would have included me if I had been available to the Gestapo. This camp, supposedly

for privileged Jews, was the transshipping point to Auschwitz. The privilege was a 3 months stay before being shipped to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Auschwitz by then in Russian hands and so were all other extermination camps in Poland. There were last minute plans to build gas chambers – never built. With the influx of ten thousands of prisoners from other camps in death marches - few survived, brought in open railroad cars - with most dead, Theresienstadt had swelled to over 65,000 inmates. With the small detachment of SS men commandant Karl Rahm had as his disposal, it was impossible to shoot all prisoners. Those who did not die of starvation and typhus survived.

HITLER'S FINAL SOLUTION

If Germany had won the war he would have exterminated all Jews including the Mischlinge, at least those who had one Jewish parent; these are the Mischlinge 1st degree. Those with a Jewish grandparent, 2nd degree Mischlinge, would have been sterilized and sent to Theresienstadt until their end. Mixed marriages would have been separated and the Jewish partners killed. Those half- and quarter-Jews and mixed marriage partners who had become 'favored', Hitler would have aryanized.

His *Endloesung* fulfilled.

(For these comments see "Hitler's Jewish Soldiers" by Bryan Mark Rigg.)

Due to pressure by the Nazis, many Aryan wives divorced their Jewish husbands, or at least if they had converted to Judaism, left the Jewish religion after 1935. And all had done so by the beginning of the war, in 1939, except my mother.

ADDED INFORMATION

We are now, in the year 2005, two generations removed from the Nazi Regime, the one thousand year Reich that lasted 12 years. Many of the younger readers will not be familiar with the agents of destruction employed by Hitler. Before coming to power in 1933, Hitler used the paramilitary organization of the SA, the *Stormtroopers* or brownshirts, as his bands of thugs to terrorize others. Their nominal leader was Ernst Roehm. Roehm had the ambition to make his SA into the German army, or later when Hitler took power to incorporate the army into his SA.

To counter the influence of Roehm and his SA, Hitler formed another paramilitary organization, the SS or *Schutzstaffel*, protection unit, the blackshirts. The man he put in charge of the SS was the part-time farmer from Landshut, Heinrich Himmler. A man with good organizational talents, rather uninspiring to look at, definitely not the Aryan type as his SS were. Also known as *der treue Heinrich*, the loyal Heinrich. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect, described Himmler as "half schoolmaster, half crank."

The black SS were volunteers, indoctrinated with Nazism, race superiority and complete obedience to Himmler and the Fuehrer. Here is a good word to describe their loyalty, and it was a silent joke making the rounds in the 30s. *Kadavergehorsam*, meaning obedience even as a cadaver. Morbid? That is Nazism.

No doubt, the SS were physically the most handsome and fit. All good athletes. Well trained in goose stepping and most of all brainwashed in racial superiority. The super men. They became robots without a heart or soul and knew not what compassion,

mercy, or plain humanism meant. As a kid in Munich I saw many parades, soldiers of the army, air force, navy, auxiliary units such as the *Arbeitsdienst* ‘Labor Service’, the SA in their brown uniforms, women auxiliary units, Hitler Youth and their girl counterparts. None were frightening to me except the Black SS.

The *Allgemeine SS*, as the Black SS was called; had many service units attached to it just like the SA, even an auxiliary service of physicians. The ice-water and low pressure experiments performed on concentration inmates were conducted in Dachau by these doctors – doctors? If the prisoners didn’t die in agony during the experiments they were shot afterwards. A friend of ours, Professor Traugott Baumgaertel of the medical school in Munich, could only conduct his research of finding blood in feces by joining the SS. He might have been the inventor of the Hemocult Test or contributed to it. We had fun calling him a Black Nazi. Which he was not. His only connection with the SS was his annual membership renewal and trouble after the war as he was a prominent member of the SS.

The Black SS were the concentration camp commanders and guards. And of course Hitler’s private guards – his *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*. When on the front exhibiting both valor and committing the worst atrocities.

At the beginning of the war Himmler took some of his SS units and made them into the *Waffen SS*, literally ‘Weapons SS’ By the end of the war Himmler had expanded his *Waffen SS* into many divisions. They became the best equipped and probably best soldiers. The most fanatical fighting and ruthless soldiers, giving and receiving no quarters, at least in Russia. They became soon infamous. Incidents we shall always

remember them by; in 1940, murdering captured British prisoners of war. (Troops of the SS *Totenkopf* Death's-Head brigade gunned down 100 prisoners at Le Paradise, France, on May 27th, 1940.) In 1942 razing the town of Lidice in Czechoslovakia. And during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, troops of the SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* shooting down over 60 American prisoners of war in Malmedy on December 16. And many other atrocities in the occupied lands.

In 1936, Hitler elevated Heinrich Himmler to be *Reichsfuehrer of the SS*, Chief of the SS and Chief of the Police. Himmler in turn took one of the most ruthless men in Germany, or rather he became under Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, as his Chief of the SD, *Sicherheitsdienst*, or Security Service.

The SD was responsible for the security of the Reich. Ferreting out opponents of the regime, and generally spying on people and gathering information on their mood and morale. Goebbels was one who made heavy use of the information supplied by the SD as is shown in his diaries. Simultaneously, Heydrich became the Chief of the Sipo, *Sicherheitspolizei*, Security Police. We come back to the Sipo and *Ordnungspolizei*, later as their killer commandos were responsible for the mass shootings that took place after Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

A split-off of the Sipo was the Gestapo, *Geheime Staatspolizei*, Secret State Police. Since they were the arresting agency and then the questioners and torturers of people, and many died in their chambers, the Gestapo became well know both in Germany and occupied lands. The name Gestapo instilled as much fear in Germany as in foreign countries. The Gestapo at its peak employed 20,000 agents. The SD and Gestapo were

expanding a great deal of energy competing with each other. But that was true for the way Nazi Germany was governed. Government agencies versus party agencies.

If we can envision the command structure of these destructive agencies of Nazi terror:

The Fuehrer and Reichs Chancellor

Adolf Hitler

Chief of SS, Chief of Police

Heinrich Himmler

Head of the Kripo (Criminal Police), Sipo, SD

Reinhard Heydrich

Later Kaltenbrunner

Head of the Gestapo

Heinrich Mueller

In 1939, when the war began by attacking Poland, Himmler ordered Heydrich to set up special commandos to follow the army and arrest/kill the intelligence of Poland; aristocrats, clergies, government officials, teachers, physicians and anyone on the list

the SD supplied – according to Hitler’s dictum that “whatever we find in the shape of an upper class in Poland will be liquidated.”

In 1941, when Germany attacked Russia, these units were ready to follow in the footsteps of the *Wehrmacht*. In June of 41, Heydrich had received the order from Hitler/Himmler to begin the Final Solution. The annihilation of the Jews. The mass shootings began in Russia and the Baltic Nations.

To oversee these task forces another new government agency, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, or RSHA – the Reich Central Security Office was created and placed under Heydrich’s command.

Heydrich entrusted this mission of mass killings to mobile SD and Sipo, Security Police & *Ordnungspolizei* detachments, that bore the innocuous name *Einsatzgruppen*, or task forces.

Heydrich formed four of those task forces, designated with the letters A through D. They totaled about 3,000 men. Most of the officers were veteran SD, Gestapo and police agents selected for their ruthlessness. Much of the rank and file consisted of ordinary policemen and from the SS.

It is beyond human comprehension how these German men could shoot down children and their parents by the thousands each day. Reports of the slaughter piled up on the desk of Heydrich. By the end of 1941, in six month’s time, 900,000 innocent civilians had been murdered. Many of these shootings witnessed by soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*. The *Wehrmacht*, which in its victorious campaigns in Europe and Russia, made it all possible, and turned its back to what was happening in the territories they

captured true to the dictum of the three monkeys displayed in Nikko/Japan: *Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil.*

These then are the agencies of wholesale murder we will encounter. However, this is not a book about the holocaust. The only atrocity I shall write about is the thousand Jews taken from Munich in November 1941, and upon their arrival at Fort IX, in Kovno Lithuania, shot in less than an hour. Amongst these families were all my classmates and friends, and my first love – Ilse.

To remember my classmates who were like family to me I include our class picture here.

PICTURE TAKEN IN 1937 OF THE THIRD GRADE OF THE JEWISH PUBLIC SCHOOL, IN MUNICH, GERMANY



The asterisk denotes the children shot by the SS on 25 November 1941, in fort IX, Kovno, Lithuania
 ** My dear friend Bertel Sandbank was deported to Izbica in April 1942 and most likely died in the gas chamber of Chelmno shortly after.
 * Manfred Pollak was deported to Riga and shot there.

INTRODUCTION

Before I begin with my autobiography of our life in Germany before and during the war and our flight to the country I like to introduce in Chapter 1, my mother's brief story.

When her courage in defying the Nazis became known after the war the Historical Commission, taking evidence of persecution by the Third Reich, asked my mother to write down her experiences. Her story was published in May 1948, with many other accounts of camp survivors in a book entitled "From the Last Extermination" – Journal for the History of the Jewish People during the Nazi Regime.

In my mother's own words then; her words in simple truth:

[For clarity and proper time sequence I shall add comments, as is appropriate, in brackets.]

CHAPTER - I

Experiences of an “Aryan” Jewess

By Anna Holzmann

From birth I was a Christian. In 1924, married to a Jewish man, I became a convert to the Jewish religion as my husband wished it.

In the following writing I shall tell of my experiences during the Nazi regime who regarded me as a full Jewess.

Until 1938 it was not too bad and most of the malicious and spiteful remarks came from the public; neighbors and people in our neighborhood who knew me as Jewish. Verbal abuse and occasionally someone would spit at me. But one had to tolerate that, as one was completely helpless.

Things became worse after November 1938, and for me very bad in 1939, and later. What happened was that one day a woman came to my apartment and said, “I am sent at the personal invitation of Staatsminister Wagner [government official with the rank of Minister]. This is a Jewish apartment, and I want it. I am looking for a small place, and I like yours. Vacate the premises at once so I can move in.”

Something in her snooty behavior got me mad, and I told her, “You tell Staatsminister Wagner personally that there is a mistake and my apartment is not free.”

A few days later a couple men came to our place. They identified themselves as Geheime Staatspolizei [Gestapo]. “Get dressed and come with us,” they ordered.

They took me to the Reichskanzlei [government ministry, also known as the Fuehrerbau], in the Arcistrasse and straight to Regierungsrat Horn.

"You are the Jewess Anna Holzmänn," he said.

I said "Yes."

Then he was ranting and raving at me and calling me all sorts of dirty names. How dared I be so fresh with that woman who wanted my apartment. And he ordered me to leave my apartment at once.

I did not leave my apartment. I thought I was at least entitled to the official notification for vacating which all the other Jews received when they had to leave.

Sometimes later the same thing happened. I was taken again to Regierungsrat Horn at the ministry. Minister Horn was even madder at me this time, but not so much about my not moving out of my apartment as that I was not a born Jewess and had not told him so. He called me a lot of bad names and said I was totally 'verjudet.' [Ah, the precision of German. How do you translate that. 'Verjudet' To be totally imbued with Judaism.] At the end he told me he would pass this matter on to other authorities. "You will hear from us," was his parting warning.

[They let my mother wait for a while. Sometimes months passed between these summons. It is now in 1940.]

The same process repeated itself, only this time I was brought before Regierungsrat Schwingenstein. Horn was bad enough but Schwingenstein was like a madman. He received me with the following words: "With me you came to the right place. I come from the school of Streicher. Do you understand what this means?"

I thought it was all over for me anyhow, so I replied: "Yes, one can see that you are one of those who eats Jews alive." A stenographer was sitting with him and taking it all down.

The minister continued. "We have fully informed ourselves about you. Why did you not renounce your Judaism as the others did?"

I told him I would not do that.

First he became very angry again. Then he made me the proposition to direct a Gnadengesuch, or mercy-petition to the Fuehrer, with the request to be reinstated into Christianity. I refused to do that too.

Next he gave me the advice to separate myself from my boy, to leave him with the Jews and his fate, because he was regarded as a full Jew and therefore could not be saved. He added that it is now time to solve the Jewish problem, and radical measures would be employed.

[How I wish my mother had given a date for this interview. It was in 1940, which is quite early for Schwingenstein to express such horrible notions as : "leave him with the Jews and his fate, " and "it is now time to solve the Jewish problem and radical measures will be employed." I can only assume that Schwingenstein knew what was going to happen. Took a leaf out of Hitler's utterances, specifically the threat of annihilation of the Jews. And possibly there were already discreet preparations made for "the Final Solution of the Jewish problem," of which Schwingenstein was aware of. He belonged to the Reichs Chancellery, which was the highest level of the German government. I am still amazed that he expressed this view so openly to my mother.]

I told him, "You think that I would abandon my child to save myself? I would not have a moment of peace if I did such a thing. No mother would do that."

He yelled at me, "Then you are not completely Judaized; every Jewess would do it to gain an advantage."

I replied, "Not a single one would do that."

He went on, "I know the Jews. I have read their Talmud."

I replied, "I have not read the Talmud. But I know the Jews better than you, and I say that not a single Jewish mother would forsake her child to save herself. And I will not do so either."

He was through with me. "Then you cannot be helped," he told me.

After some time I was again called to Schwingenstein's office. A petition had been prepared for me to sign. I refused to sign it. He became very angry and shouted, "With you we make short shrift. We know that you sent your daughter to America to spy. Since she doesn't look Jewish, she can have access to anyone. We are fully informed."

[My sister Herta went to America in 1938 under the auspices of an organization set up to save Jewish children from Germany.]

I told him, "You are so full of hatred that you cannot think right. Otherwise you would realize that one does not send a fourteen-year old child into the world to spy."

[What nonsense of Schwingenstein. Who was my sister suppose to spy for?]

He responded, "She has Jew-blood in her and these people are already trained as children for everything. But even in America she will be lost, because America will certainly lose the war. Then we will clean up with the Jews in America just as we do in Europe. This had already been decided. The Jews will cease to exist. We will free the world of those parasites."

Then he said, "You can still save yourself if you sign."

I refused to do so. He insisted on knowing the reason for my refusal. I gave him the following explanation: "I just cannot give up every feeling of decency. As long as all was well for the Jews I was with them. Now, when the Jews are persecuted, I am supposed to abandon them? I cannot do that."

So he said to me, "From your point of view I can almost understand your refusal. But you must also suffer the consequences of your behavior."

I replied, "So far I have always shouldered these consequences, and I shall do so in the future."

He let me go – and wonders never cease, he accompanied me to the door.

Some times later I received a summons to the housing authority. I thought for certain that now I would be evicted. When I arrived, the official placed a call to the office for expropriation of Jewish housing. After his conversation he told me, "Mrs. Holzmann, your eviction notice has been rescinded. At least I am 90% certain of that."

No one could have been more surprised than I was. We stayed in this apartment until it was demolished in a bombing attack.

During the following months I was frequently summoned to the infamous Jew-baiter Mugler, Wegener and Schwartz, all officials dealing with Jewish affairs in Munich. Mugler really got into a fit when he realized that I had not renounced my Jewish faith as all the others had done and resisted doing so. He screamed at me, "I have a mind to give you a good beating. Besides that, I will see to it that you will be 'extra erschossen werden.' [How to translate that? To be shot extra?]"

This Mugler also came to the apartment one Sunday evening at half past six, to check on our wearing the Jewish star. He sent someone into our house, to both Jewish

families, and ordered us down for inspection. We had to form a half circle and he stood before us. We were five persons, three from the other family, my boy and I. A crowd of people gathered around us, some laughing at our predicament, others remaining silent. Mugler gave us a lecture on how we would be punished if we were ever caught without wearing the Jew-star. Then he took a pencil and poked around each star to see if it was sewn on correctly. A woman with him took pictures of the scene. Mugler was known to come in the middle of the night and rouse people from their beds for his star inspections.

I also had trouble with the local Ortsgruppe [local party office]. A neighbor in our apartment house who was a 100% Nazi hated the other Jewish family in the house who were also the owners. If you look for something to harm someone else, you can always find a reason. The Nazi apparently knew that there was a slight discrepancy in the fixed rent I had to pay. It had something to do with pre-war and wartime rental charges. It was a difference amounting to pennies. I was summoned to the Ortsgruppe with my rental book.

I had no idea what they wanted from me. There was an inspector from the criminal police present. He wanted me to sign documents accusing the Lewins of rent gouging so that they could prosecute them. I did not sign and they were very angry with me. Once I was summoned to the police station and the same inspector asked me if I felt cheated by Frau Lewin. I told him no. He asked if I would sign the documents. Again I refused. He screamed at me "raus!" Get out.

Of course they were quite mad at me in the Ortsgruppe, and I had to go there many times for interviews. One time they let me stand in the cold corridor for four hours.

Once I was told, “never dare to have an affair with an Aryan man, if you do, we will accuse you of “Rassenschande” [defilement of race]. A Nazi crime that was punished with concentration camp, and in some cases, immediate beheading. And there was similar talk they made me listen to. For these kinds of nasty talks and threats I had to go to the Ortsgruppe often in 1941 and 1942.

After many repeated harassments of that sort, I took heart and did not go anymore when summoned. So they assigned a political supervisor over me to watch my every move and report everything to the Ortsgruppe. They forbade me to take anything out of my apartment, and every package I carried was reported. I was also watched to make sure I wore the star correctly and did not try to hide it.

That we Jews all had shortened ration cards is well known. But not that my boy and I received only these shortened cards.

At least in other families, one or the other received the more adequate Aryan cards. One could not live from these curtailed cards. Jewish cards had meat products stamped “ungueltig”, void, and the same with dairy products, milk, butter, cheese and eggs. Fat rations were reduced to a little bit of margarine. And all special allocations were marked void such as for fruits, fresh vegetables, fish products, etc.

I had to carry everything of value to the farmers to barter for food. It was very difficult for my son Hugo. He was thirteen then, and the school closed. He had to work as a forced laborer for a gardener from seven in the morning till six, and sometimes longer.

Our reduced rations were after ten months increased on account of Hugo’s hard labor, to 100 grams of meat, and ten rolls a month. But eggs and milk we never received

again. We also never received the clothing card, or the stamp to buy stockings. We got an especially printed slip to buy for twenty Pfennigs worth of thread – quarterly.

My boy would come home all wet and freezing from working outdoors in bad weather. I asked him, “Hugo, are you sorry that we are Jews?” And he answered, “No, I am not sorry. I am proud to be a Jew. I don’t want to be anything else.”

My boy was the only “Mischling” who did not put in a petition to leave the Jewish religion. On the seventh of January, 1945, at night, our house was totally demolished in an air raid. At the Ortsgruppe, where we had to report when bombed out, I was told, “For you we have no quarters.” Not even food was made available, and with our Jewish ration cards we could only buy in a selected store in Munich. No restaurant would sell us anything for those JEW marked stamps. We were not permitted to leave the city – or for that matter get on a train – but the same day we left Munich secretly.

My boy was taken in by a strange family and well taken care of, although they knew of course that he was Jewish. I was in a different place, on a farm. I worked in the fields and kitchen, and I also was well taken care of.

Only at the end of the war did I face real trouble again. A few days before liberation a German “Flak” battery set up their emplacements on our farm. They had their headquarters in the kitchen where I was working. On Sunday noon, April 30, 1945, eight days before Germany capitulated, the battery chief gave the order to fire. I had heard him say to direct the fire at Goben, the road junction across the river from us. At that junction were two little houses, in one of which my boy was.

I went to the officer and begged him not to fire directly at the junction, as my boy was living there.

He replied to me that “in this war many people have already died. A few more won’t matter.”

And so I had to watch as the cannons fired over to that target where my boy lived. But almost at once a plane came over us. And shortly after that a bombardment started to hit us. Like a miracle the shots came either over us or exploded short. The German battery left at once. I was very happy, but not for long, because the SS arrived to build a resistance line right by our farm. They had machine guns ready to fire at the oncoming Americans. The mayors of the surrounding villages came and asked them to stop. But to no avail. They answered, “We have seen many villages burn.”

I had to cook for them. I didn’t want to but they threatened me. While I cooked, the artillery began again, very close to the farmhouse. Their leader yelled, “They are shooting good now. Schnell, Schnell! Into the cellar!” And they ran all over each other trying to get out of the house. The farmer’s wife and I had to laugh.

We came outside after they had run into the cellar but I did not go down there. I ran down the hill, with fountains of dirt spurting all over the hill and only a few dirt clumps hitting me. I ran into the village and hid in a cellar there. Now, at least I did not have to cook for the SS. Later, that SS unit got orders to move out, because the American were coming. Many of them threw their weapons away in the forest nearby where villagers found them later. At last the Americans came and it was all over!

One thing I am glad of, that the Nazis did not conquer me, even though it was very difficult at times, and that they did not see how intimidated and scared I was and trembling inside. These were my proudest moments.

[This is the end of her story]

[How did this unprotected widow get away with defying these Nazi officials, some of them of rather high rank? I did not understand it at the time, or even know the details until I read her story recently. I knew only that she came home sometimes nervous and saying she had had a difficult time. Her hands would still be trembling.

In hindsight I realize there were a number of mitigating factors, one of which was that she was still a beautiful woman. Also she was blond and probably looked very Aryan to her interrogators. Nor, in spite of the fact that she was defying them, was her demeanor grating. My mother was a gentle woman. When she smiled when told that she would be “extra shot,” her smile was not insolent. Though trembling inside, she was genuinely amused at the ridiculous concept of being more than dead. When she told the minister that he hated Jews too much that he wanted to eat them alive, she used simple, dialect language. “Sie hasssen die Juden so viel dass sie sie mit Haut und Haar fressen wollen.” “You want to devour the Jews with their skin and hair on.” In her simple, naïve way, she may have struck home, and the Minister may even have appreciated her comments.

More serious was her refusal to sign the petition of ‘mercy’ to the Fuehrer. One way for a Minister to come to the attention of the beloved, and all-powerful Fuehrer was to submit a petition. No wonder the Regierungsrat was angry with my mother. The Ortsgruppe officials were the only ones who abused her physically. I remember little of her trials with them, she never told me details, but one evening she came home crying, and I knew she had been slapped around, although she does not refer to this in her story. The officials told her she would have to face the consequences. But as good,

law-abiding Nazi officials, while they readily carried out the orders for the persecution of the Jews and then the Final Solution, they also followed the letter of the law. .

However, there were no laws pertaining to my mother's status.

Like all dictators, Hitler was fond of dividing power amongst many individuals and organizations, and counted on rival jurisdiction to counter one another and balance their powers: the SS versus the SA, the Waffen SS versus the Army. Hitler's official title as leader of Germany was the same as Bismarck's. He was "Chancellor" of Germany. But he was also Fuehrer, primary leader of the Nazi Party. He himself wore both hats, but his underlings had separate, designated powers, often rivaling and interfering with each other. Moreover, Hitler created a great many systems that duplicated systems already in place, and they did not meld. There was dual administration to govern the country: the Reich Chancellery and the Partei Chancellery, or Party Headquarters. One hand frequently did not know, or want to know, what the other hand was doing. The Reich Chancellery had its Minister to govern; the Party had the Reichsleiters as counterparts. For example, Joachim Von Ribbentrop was Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs, but Alfred Rosenberg was the Chief of the Nazi Party's foreign policy office. Reich Minister for Labor, Franz Seldte would be spinning his wheels while Reichsleiter Robert Ley governed the labor forces in Germany.

This enormous parallel system was, of course, expensive, wasteful, and inefficient. It was a source of continuous quarreling between the offices of the state and the party. Press chief Otto Dietrich said in retrospect that "Hitler's dual system of governing was the greatest confusion that has ever existed in a civilized state." I beg to differ with Dietrich on the use of the expression "civilized state." Dietrich added that "Hitler

systematically disorganized the higher departments of government so that he could wield the authority of his own will to the point of despotic tyranny.” In this respect the government of Nazi Germany was like that of the Soviet Union. In Russia too the party ruled and not the civil servants.

In Munich these competing offices of government maintained separate administration buildings, in fact they were next to each other and differed not in size or style.

The Reich Chancellery, to which Ministers Horn and Schwingenstein both belonged, where all the official business of the Reich was conducted, was along with the Party Chancellery in the Arcisstrasse, fronting the big Keonigsplatz, a huge square ideal for parades, speeches and public gatherings; and for us kids to ride our scooters and play. On one end was “Das Ehrenmal”, the mausoleum of the sixteen Nazis shot by the Munich police in 1923. Behind that on the Briennerstrasse, Hitler’s residence when in Munich, the Braune Haus. And further on Gestapo Headquarters.

The Ministers of the Reich Chancellery were given the task of being in charge of Jewish Affairs in Germany, unless interfered by the party henchmen, the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters (district party chiefs). And who knows what game they were playing in letting my mother off the hook. In my mother’s case the ministers probably thought the Gestapo would take care of her. The Gestapo, knowing that the ministers were handling her case, did not want to do anything without specific orders. My mother just seemed to slip between the crack of Nazi laws and Nazi officialdom.

But our narrow escapes might not have lasted forever, especially with me fifteen years old, too old to be kept out of the Germany army or labor service. Maybe what really saved us was the good fortune of having our house destroyed in the air raid in January

1945. Without a place to stay in the middle of winter we had to get out of the city. And we were saved again by good people who defied in their own way that evil regime.]

CHAPTER II

Where was God?

Most survivors of the holocaust do not want to discuss religion publicly. It is too painful a subject, and also very private. But I think they must all contend with the fact of their terrible persecution and wonder why their God allowed it to happen.

It was all so simple when I was a boy. In our Jewish public school we were given religious education for one hour every other day, from first grade and up. That is when I became aware of what Jewishness meant. I learned to love the traditional holidays and festivals. Since I stayed after school at the *Hort*, like a day-care-center, I celebrated holidays and festivals there. For Purim we dressed up and marched around and acted out plays. For Sukkoth the housekeeper, Herr Eitelhuber, built the traditional hut covered with branches, and we all sat inside and listened to the stories.

We Jewish children did not believe in the Devil or Satan, or, for that matter, in heaven and hell. I did not think about death, kids avoid that aspect of life. To die was permanent. If anything came after, I did not know about it and did not give it any thought. I believed that when God said He formed us in His image, it meant that there is goodness in all mankind. A religious upbringing is good in any faith, provided it is not obsessive and its children are not led to believe that their view of God is the only right one, and that people who hold other views are bad people.

When I was a child, on Saturdays, Mom took my sister and me to the synagogue in downtown Munich. That big, beautiful temple was built of red brick and had towers and cupolas and stained glass windows. The Ark, which held the Torahs (the books of

Moses) was ornate; its velvet covers were red, and changed according to the holidays and festivals. The temple had a huge organ at the back which had a deep beautiful resonance when it was played. Mom and Herta sat in the woman's section up in the balcony. We boys sat with the men downstairs, but off to the side where during the rabbi's sermon we could sneak out and horse around in the courtyard.

This beautiful temple was torn down in 1938; its site was made into a parking lot. I did not know then why it was demolished. I guess the government did not want this showpiece of Judaism in Hitler's city of Munich. In November the Nazis would have burned it down anyway. At least the organ was saved – and reappeared in St. Korbinian Pfarrkirche (Catholic Church).

After the pogrom in November (Crystal Night) we received a new synagogue in the Lindwurmstrasse. Not a new building, just a large meeting hall converted to a temple.

For me as a child religion was a wonderful experience, and there was God the Almighty to say your prayers to, and you knew that he would protect you from serious harm. In bed, before turning over and going to sleep, I would say my little prayer of thankfulness and ask God to protect me, my mom and sister from sickness and bad things.

And of course, He did. God protected me throughout the Nazi terror and the bombings, even though I did not expect to live when the war ended. I had many close calls and yet I was saved each time. Yes, I had been protected all along, but dear God, where were you when all the other children needed you?

It was not until the years of 1955 to 1958, when I was stationed at the U.S. Army base in Fort Dix, New Jersey, that I really found all that had happened during the Second

World War. At the base hospital, where I worked, the library had the complete volumes of the Nuremberg War Trials; many volumes, each as thick as the Yellow Pages. I felt I owed it to the victims of Nazism to read them all, and in those pages I descended into the abyss of human bestiality and depravity. A killing frenzy unequaled in the sordid history of man's inhumanity.

The trial documents listed facts: over one million children murdered, newborn babies torn from limb to limb, toddlers and young children flung alive into flaming pyres, children executed by German firing squads by the tens of thousand.

The thousands of innocent people who were gassed day after day in Auschwitz, Treblinka and Belzen suffered in agony. In the “showers” the gas was dropped in pellets which dissolved into gas slowly and caused an agonizing death. In the end the mothers could no longer hold their children in their arms, and the little ones fell to the floor to take their last, choking breaths without even the comfort of being held by their mothers. Try to imagine yourself and your children in this hellish charnel chamber, condemned, for accident of birth, by the *Grossdeutsche Reich* and its super race.

The crimes committed too terrible and brutal to put into words of any language.

When Hitler and the Nazis imagined that in a thousand years the world would speak in awe of the Third Reich and its glory they will instead speak of its shame, and wonder how it could have ever happened.

The question we all ask, unless we are faithful believers or atheists, IS THERE THIS CREATIVE FORCE WE CALL G O D? Many of us do not know. It becomes a relative matter based upon our knowledge and experiences. We cannot create a single flower or blade of grass, not even a single organism of cell division. Creating life is beyond our

intelligence. Prove that there is a creator who has made life - us? It seems logical. My personal problem is that if God created man He has a responsibility for us and the Holocaust must not have happened. If God abrogated his responsibility, or is powerless to interfere, then He is not the merciful and omnipotent God of my religious teachings and believes. Yet my personal experiences showed me that I was protected. My Guardian Angel has helped me numerous times in mysterious ways, some of which I related in my autobiography, and in other situations which I did not write about. Is this then proof of the all powerful God?

For me it cannot be as I ask God "Where were You when all the other children needed You and Your Guardian angels?" Therefore I cannot accept my rabbi's teachings of the omnipotent God - his God. I rather think of God as the spiritual influence that made man different from the beasts. With consciousness and a desire to be a civilized human being. With compassion and mercy and goodness and all the other traits which make us civilized and not just be man-animals living by instincts alone.

CHAPTER III

A Jewish boy in Nazi Munich.

I can take you back to Germany during the Hitler Era, the War Years, and I think I can tell you how the German people were indoctrinated by Nazi propaganda so that they went along with it readily and willingly. I lived amongst them as a street-wise kid, and unless I knew a person, everyone else was an enemy to me. I kept my secrets but I listened to theirs. Now I am seventy years old and I write with hindsight as I try to explain why it all happened, but I write also through the eyes and mind of myself as the boy Hugo. For some parts I have notes and portions of a diary I kept. Most had been destroyed when our house burned down.

I guess everyone starts his or her autobiography at the beginning, when one is born. Let me begin with my ancestors first. My being born can wait.

On my mother's side the ancestors were all Reiters. Most German family names have a meaning which usually refers to someone's profession or trade. A *Reiter* is a man on horseback. Most of my mother's ancestors lived along the Danube, either in Passau, the three-river city, or in Vilshofen thirty miles away. Since records are kept in towns and villages of birth, marriages, children born and death, I have seen that some remote ancestors of mine were shipbuilders on the Danube and tradesmen plying the river with their boats. Unofficially, apart from the records, I was told as a kid that our family had an illustrious bishop as one of our ancestors, and an equally famous but not so illustrious, bandit chieftain for another.

My mother was born in Vilshofen in 1895, and I knew my mother's parents, who had a fruit and vegetable store in Vilshofen. I made many pleasant visits to my maternal grandparents.

On my father's side, the name *Holzmann*, which means woodsman, is an acquired surname. Wolf Holzmann, my paternal grandfather, whom I never knew, came from southern Russia in the nineteenth century, most likely from Odessa, a port on the Black Sea. When he was called up to the Russian army he ran away. The Tsar's Russian army was well known for its anti-Semitism and brutality. Jewish soldiers caught hell in that army. My grandfather went to Tuchel, a town in what was then East Prussia, where he started a family and took on the surname Holzmann. Maybe he was a logger, or in the lumber business. Then he moved his family to Berlin.

Wolf Holzmann in his long life had three wives, and with each he had many children.

My father Martin, was of the third wife, Jeanette. Martin was born in 1884 in Tuchel. As a young man he went to Munich and into textiles. He was also at one time in the boiler making business, even making the large boilers for steam locomotives.

Regardless, one time he bought a pair of gloves in a store in downtown Munich, and that is where he met Anna Reiter, my mother. Before they were married in 1924, my mother converted to Judaism. They lived in a large apartment across from the Englischer Garten, a big and beautiful park in Munich.

My father must have been quite well to do, for my parents employed a cook, a maid and a nanny when my sister Herta was born in 1924.

I was born in 1929, and lived for a few years in that nice apartment. Not that I can remember any of it.

In the early 1930s, my father became very sick, a lingering TB, which resulted in consumption and his death at age 50, in 1934. He had been one of the first in Munich to volunteer to serve in the German Army in 1914, when the First World War started. He must have been one of those naïve Jewish men who were just as nationalistic as the gentile Germans, and served in the 1st Bavarian Reserve regiment on the Western Front. He was a gung-ho soldier as he received a bunch of medals for bravery, including the Iron Cross 1st Class, and the Hanseatic Order, and was promoted to *Vice-Feldwebel*, sergeant.

In 1918, in the Battle of Flanders, he was wounded and captured by the British and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner of war. In camp he contracted TB.

While in the hospital in Munich, his business partner absconded with the kitty. That and his medical bills left our family as paupers when he died.

By then we had already moved from our nice, elegant apartment to a two-room flat in the Theresienstrasse, and that is the place where I grew up and remember.

Our poor people in America, unless they live in some rural shack, have no idea in what conditions poor people in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe, had to live in. This two-room apartment we had on the third floor of a four-story apartment house had neither a bathroom or running water. The toilet was a half flight down, where there was also a spigot to get water in a bucket to be used for cooking and personal hygiene. We washed in the apartment in a small metal basin – nice, refreshing cold water, and mom would heat a little water for mouthwash. Waste water had to be taken down to the toilet.

Always my chores, fetch clean water in a bucket and take down dirty water to flush. For cooking and heating we had the conventional iron coal stove, and for convenience a two-ring gas plate. When one came into our apartment, one stepped as once into the kitchen-living room. Next was our one bedroom. I guess it was hard living for my mother and sister who had seen better conditions, but as I knew nothing different, it was to me a good place to live, and a happy home.

In 1932 my father's TB became acute, and my parents were advised that it would be better for us children not to share these close quarters with our sick father. My sister and I were placed in the Jewish orphanage, the *Kinderheim*.

I guess everyone tries to remember back as far as one can, even if these memories are only the first, vague, discontinuous impression of a very young child. My memory goes back to 1932. I was three years old and they came to take us to the orphanage. I remember hiding under our big kitchen table and having to be dragged out. I remember that incident but strangely, as though that little tyke Hugo were not me but another little boy.

I do not remember my father very well – an instance were our parents visited us and I walked with my father in the Englischer Garten. Or when visiting at home I was playing in the building out back with a boy and my father called me through the window to come home for tea.

In 1934 my father was in the hospital from the beginning of the year and died in April. I was a patient in the same *Schwabinger Krankenhaus* hospital for four weeks with whooping cough and pneumonia, and shortly after I was discharged, he died.

By the way, in the 1930, there was no effective treatment for TB, especially about the later stages or open TB. Nor was there for whopping cough and pneumonia. Cough syrup for one, a mustard plaster for the other.

There are several incidents that I remember clearly about my illness which I would like to share.

It must have been late February or early March in 1934. One early evening, our guardian-aunt took a small group of children for a walk around the block. It was cold outside and snowing and she wanted to let us experience a little walk in the snow before we returned for supper at six. We walked down the Antonienstrasse, where the orphanage is located and along the Kunigundenstrasse where there was a small farm. Typical Munich, the provincial capital of Bavaria, that you could find a farm in the city. It had cows and calves, chickens, ducks and geese and sometimes we could go in and touch the smaller animals, a thrill for us children. And then by the farm we saw a man light the lanterns. In this part of the city they still had gas lanterns that must be lit every evening, and I guess it was a job for someone to do that and return in the morning to turn them off. We watched him doing it. He had a long pole with which he unhooked one side of the lantern then pulled on a chain to let the gas flow. He jerked on a wire attached to the pole which sparked the end and the gas mantle began to glow and then burn brightly. It looked so pretty that lantern lit up with a warm yellow light and I could see the snowflakes swirling by.

Why I remember that so clearly? I guess I was just struck by the whole atmosphere of it.

The farm that shouldn't have been in the city with cows mooing in the dusk. The old fashioned lantern lighter doing his duties. The snow falling in the evening chill. It just felt *gemutlich*, cozy. Then around the block and back to our warm home and supper.

I don't remember feeling chilled. But I started to cough and that little excursion might have been the cause of developing whooping cough and pneumonia. Then I got real sick and was examined by a doctor who had me taken to the hospital.

When I was brought into the hospital in the early evening, I smelled chicken soup made from powder. There is nothing as powerful to jog ones memory as smells. Whenever I inhale the odor of artificial chicken soup the hospital flashes into my mind. In regards to the care we got from the nurses, or lack of care, I must have had a high fever at times. I remember "burning up" so thirsty. Were there juices or soda water in a German hospital? There were no such amenities. I guess I got milk in the morning, and maybe thin tea at supper, but there was nothing to drink during the day. Maybe they thought it would not be good for me to drink too much since I was so sick. I had already been taken to the *Sterbezimmer*; the room they put dying children in. In any event, when it rained I would go out unto the balcony at night and lie down and suck up the puddle of rainwater. That was refreshing, dirt and all.

Another event I remember distinctly was that I turned five years old in the hospital. My mother came to visit me on my birthday and brought me a little fire engine and from her friend, our neighbor Frau Maurer, a pot of tulips. The pot and tulips were made of chocolate and covered with colorful tinfoil. I loved the fire engine and played with it, but I was not about to eat the flowers. You saved something as pretty as that. But it had disappeared when it was time for me to leave the hospital.

Many years later, in Philadelphia, when my mom was already in her seventies, she, my sister Herta and Gail her daughter and I reminisced about old times. I told mom how I remembered when she brought me the fire engine and the flower pot made of chocolate for my birthday and how the flowers had disappeared. And there my old mother sat crying her eyes out. Here, after almost forty years, she confessed that she took the chocolate pot home secretly because she remembered that my sister would have her birthday a week later and she had no money to buy anything for her. We all just cried along with her, while also laughing at mom's tale of absconding with little Hugo's chocolate flowers. Being poor means being poor!

The two years in the orphanage and my life there I remember fondly. I think if children in orphanages are treated nicely, while it is nothing in comparison with the loving care they receive from their parents at home, it is for them a good life and education. It was for me.

Of most of my life there between the ages of three and five I have no recollection, but some events, I do not know why, stand out as if they had just happened recently. The food, I remember, was good and adequate. Everything went according to a strict schedule. Every Friday afternoon we little ones lined up at the stairwell to go upstairs to the bathroom and get our weekly bath. When I went into the bathroom in my turn, there was the tub with a little warm bath water and a *Tante*, our Auntie, which we called our guardians, would wash and scrub me. Then I was given a clean set of underwear and outer clothing. After we were all bathed and freshly dressed, we had Friday evening dinner, beginning with the ceremony of the Kiddush, candle lighting, breaking of the bread, a prayer and songs. Friday evening the food seemed to be best. There was

chicken noodle soup (real); it is still my favorite food. And *gefillte fish*, a fish dish made up of ground-up carp mixed with something else.

There was a big garden in back of the orphanage where we could play. There were bushes to hide around, and many fruit trees, so during the season we had sweet cherries, apples, pears and lots of berries. The older children tended the flower garden and the vegetable patches. We young ones stole the berries, which was at least as much fun as eating them, unwashed of course. The fruits of the trees we got only when they were ripe and fell off, although one tree had branches low enough for us to pick the apples. We picked them and ate them green, then lined up at the toilets a day later.

We celebrated all the Jewish holidays. Chanukah was our favorite. We all sat around the activity room and waited for the lighting of the candles, the songs, and finally the presents and cookies and the one time we got candies.

I remember how we little ones, the preschoolers, walked as a group, always in twos, holding each other's hand. At that age, three to six, boys don't mind walking with a girl and holding her hand. God forbid when they are ten.

Near the orphanage was the Englischer Garten, that beautiful city park with creeks, and a lake with swans. Many wild flowers grew in the meadows and we learned their names.

There were bees looking for nectar. We were afraid of bees because they could sting. We were told to leave the bees alone and they would not bother us, but nobody told the bees, and sometimes one of us got stung. Most of all, I remember how much fun it was to walk under the shady trees and sing the lovely old German songs we had been taught:

Die Voglein im Walde, The Little Birds in the Forest, and *Das Mannlein Steht im Walde*, The Little man in the Forest – meaning the mushroom, *Der Fuchs der hat die Gans Gestohlen*, The Fox Who Stole the Goose, and everyone's favorite, *Muss I Denn zum Staedtele Hinaus*, Must I Leave The Little Town. There were about fifteen of us, some of whom I attended class with me later, others a grade higher or lower.

All of these beautiful and gentle children I was with, all of them without their parents but happy children. On the 25th of November, 1941, in the early evening with the sun setting, by then the children eleven, twelve, or thirteen years old, were led to Fort IX in Kovno, lined up before an open pit already full of the bodies of those shot before them, and executed by Germans with machine guns that literally tore their young bodies apart. I was not with them, having left the orphanage to live with my mother, but I remember my little friends.

Another distinct memory I have is of a boy with whom I became friends. We remained close during the war years. His name was Salo; he was a year or two older than I was. When in 1947 I emigrated to America with my mother, Salo soon followed. I went to live with my sister in Philadelphia, Salo went to New York. Then we worked together during the summer of 1947 in a hotel in the Catskills. I joined the United States Army in August of 47 and was sent to Korea and later to Japan. And yes, one day in 1951, I heard the bell ring at the window of the pharmacy where I worked and there he stood, Private Salo Neuwirth, my dear old buddy.

I made the Army my career, but Salo did not like the army and went to Florida, where he worked all his life as a waiter, and where he passed away in 1995. Before he died, I had a chance to see him earlier that year when my wife and I visited Miami. He was

then sixty-seven years old, a very old man, stooped over like a hunchback, and frail, he who once was such a superb athlete, a great soccer player, much better than I was. When he stood there, hunched over, and poured me a glass of whiskey, tears came to my eyes. What aging does to some people!

The way I remember Salo first was that we were both in cribs next to each other at the orphanage, and we loved to just stand there, rattling the railings and laughing at each other. Why was he in the orphanage? His Jewish father had died, his Aryan mother did not want him. We shall hear more about him, as we spent a lot of time together during the war years.

All in all, I do not have any bad memories of being in the orphanage. I think little children like to have their immature lives regulated; they like knowing what to expect next. It is the inconsistencies that hurt children of all ages, and unfairness. In our orphanage we had good caretakers, the “Aunts”, who would take a child into their arms and comfort it when sad or hurt or sick. They could not offer a mother’s love, or a father’s mantle of security, yet they were loving to each of us and many of the children there had never known the greater intimacy of parental affection.

Shortly after I came back to the orphanage from my hospital stay, my father died. I remember clearly when my mother came to reclaim my sister Herta and me from the orphanage. We were walking home, carrying our things -- Mama did not have the money for a streetcar -- when she stopped suddenly, crying, she told us that our father had died. I was just five years old, and while my sister cried, I did not. I had not known my father and was innocent of what dying meant.

I lived as a happy boy in our small apartment with my mother and sister. Herta was five years older than I. The inconveniences did not mean much to me. In winter the place was warmed by the coal stove; the closer you sat to it the warmer it was. But the windows all iced up in beautiful crystal flowers. At night in winter, when the fire in the kitchen went out, it got so cold in the bedroom -- my mother would always open the window a crack to let in fresh air -- that the narrow tunnel I left under the featherbed to breath was a channel of ice. But Mama would heat one of her cast irons before we went to bed and with a towel wrapped around it warmed the foot of our beds. There is nothing like a warm, cozy featherbed when it is cold.

Then...brrrr, in the morning when we got up, IT WAS COLD. We washed in cold water but Mama made warm water to rinse the mouth. Then we had hot tea or coffee. Never coffee made of beans; ours was made of roasted malt with milk and sugar. How does malt-coffee taste? I don't remember. I would probably think it was terrible today, but then it was hot and sweet.

Winters in Munich could be not only cold but snowy. I love snowy weather, I guess most kids do. We had a wooden sled that my mom would pull around with me on board. Later that sled would come in handy for picking up a sack of potatoes or coals and bringing them home. Then we could take the stuff down into the cellar in buckets.

When my father died, there was nothing but debts. His long illness, inability to work and his partner's theft had put us into a position of poverty. The only income we had was a monthly welfare check from the Jewish community which paid for our rent and had to be stretched to pay for food and clothing. Schooling, even elementary school, had to be paid for by the parents in Germany, Jewish or Gentile. Our schooling was paid

for and we received monthly passes good for using the streetcar from our place to our school.

My mother was good at knitting, and she made shawls, gloves, and sweaters, and such things and sold them. Mom was always knitting. And it seemed to take so long for me to hold my arms out with the yarn around my hands while she whirled it off into a ball. We had lots of knitwear.

This might be a good time to introduce the inhabitants of our house and back building, as they represent a fair sampling of the average German population, and to show who was or was not, infected with Nazism.

Our house was number 128 Theresienstrasse, in the section of Munich called Maxvorstadt. The house next to ours was the corner of Theresien and Augustenstrasse, the streetcars going downtown stopped there. Across the street was the Tempo, a small department store I enjoyed browsing around. Diagonally across, at the corner, was a bank; that is where I had to take streetcar number 2, to go to school. Here also were the news sheets displayed, with I read so avidly once I learned how to read. By 1936, I was then seven, I knew how to read well as I remember reading about the Olympics in Berlin and the fabulous Jesse Owens.

On the ground floor, or as we Americans would say, the first floor, there was an inn, the *Ludwigshof*. In German the inns - Gasthaus to many former soldiers – and beer cellars carried only one brand of beer for which they had a concession from the local brewery. The Ludwigshof carried Hackerbrau beer. Besides that, most major breweries had their facilities where they made beer in the city, and usually had a beer cellar with it. Now

what is a beer cellar? Really a Munich institution. Next to the brewery would be a large restaurant, and outside, under chestnut trees, was the beer garden. It was the custom in Munich for families to spend Saturday or Sunday afternoon in the beer garden, eating, and drinking, and listening to the big “Humpa” band. You could even bring your own brown bag as long as you bought the beer. By the way, it was also customary and traditional in Munich, and all over Bavaria, that kids got their own little glass of beer. I do not believe there was a legal age limit, but by custom youngsters were eight or nine years old before their own glass of beer was ordered. Or a *Radlermass* was ordered by the family, a combination of dark beer and lemonade. Quite refreshing in summer and then the little ones also got an occasional sip.

Not far from us, maybe a twelve minute walk, was the famous Loewenbrau with its brewery and beer cellar. Under the brewery was a large and well built air raid shelter which my mother frequented during the latter part of the war, and really became her home away from home.

The proprietor of our inn, the Ludwigshof, was Herr Sepp. Herr Sepp was not a Nazi, he was very friendly to us. One time, he gave me a bunch of old phonograph records, among which was a song satirizing Hitler. After all these years I still remember most of the words, and present here the refrain, in German because they lose their point in translation. Briefly, Hitler meets a Jewish man by the name of Sigi Cohn in the Hofbrauehaus. They drink together, sing together, Hitler gets tipsy and embraces Sigi Cohn and says to him that Sigi should fall in love with him!

Hitler und der Sigi Cohn

kennen sich seit Jahren schon.

Aber schon bei der dritten Mass

werden Hitler's Augen nass,

Einmal gingen sie zusammen aus Er umarmt den Sigi Cohn
in das Munchner Hofbrauehaus. und singt...

“Warn Sie schon mal in mich verliebt?

Das is das Schoenste was es giebt.

Haben Sie schon mal von mir getrauert?

Da haben Sie wirklich was versauemt...

It goes on and on, but this is just a taste of the satire and you, the reader, if you understand German, will get a kick out of it. I still wonder why Herr Sepp gave me this record. This kind of satire was hot stuff, and strictly forbidden once Hitler came to power. Possession of that record would mean long incarceration in a concentration camp, and worse for a Jew. I imagine he wanted to get rid of it but did not want to throw it away, and thought I was one who might appreciate the song, which I did. I kept it and even played it for selected friends. It was destroyed with everything else in the air raid. Herr Sepp was in his mid forties, a tall man. Why he was never drafted into the army? It could be that running an inn was important to the war effort. At least in Munich where beer was considered “liquid bread.”

No, Herr Sepp was not a Nazi. Anti-Nazi? If you weren't a Nazi then you had to be against them. But you better not show it. Everybody was afraid of a *Spitzel*, a denouncer.

To get into our house one took a broad public walkway that led under the house into the courtyard, and just before, the staircase went up to the right. Along the broad walkway Herr Bieringer had his newspaper and magazine shop, a wooden shack where

he stored everything overnight. During cold weather he could even sit in his little house and warm himself and let the customers pick their newspapers or magazines or paperbacks. Very few people could afford to have newspapers delivered. Come to think of it, I do not even know if it was possible, I never saw papers delivered. So Herr Bieringer had a thriving business. Occasionally I would buy a Rolf Tarring paperback from him for twenty Pfennigs, a dime. Rolf Tarring was a fictional character, an adventurer who roamed the world, getting into trouble but always coming out the winner. There was no bias against Jews in these novels; in fact, the author never mentioned them. No bias against the American or English. The bad guys could be anyone. I liked to read these paperbacks as they took me all over the world.

Herr Bieringer was always friendly to us and the Lewin family, the other Jewish family in the house. He was in his sixties, a little man. Maybe that and his age kept him out of the army. He was not a Nazi. Of course, you really could not always tell Nazis by the way they acted, the way they talked, showed a frown or friendly smile towards someone who was Jewish. But there were times when they had to wear their party uniform or at least party badge, and then it came out into the open that they were Nazi party members. Most Nazis did not hide their party affiliation. They were proud to be Nazis and followed their beloved Leader wherever he led, even into ruin and destruction.

I think I should define what I mean by Nazis. I use the term for those Germans who were followers of Hitler, his war of world conquest and his program of extermination of religious groups – Jews, Jehovah's Witness, the clergy of Poland, and ethnic undesirables such as Gypsies, Slavs, and really anyone who opposed him, including

“decent” Germans. Belonging to the Nazi Party or even the SA or being in the German army did not necessarily make a person the type of Nazi you and I commonly think of. Most Nazis were bad without a doubt. But I encountered some good Nazis, like my boss in the horticultural nursery where I was forced to work as a slave laborer.

My boss was the Schindler type of Nazi who was an early party member, and wore his brown uniform of the SA and party badge openly but was also decent to the Jews who had to work for him. Or perhaps more farsighted than most? Professor Baumgaertl who was in the Black SS, and not even a Nazi. A friend of mine who was drafted in 1943 but got a year deferment if he then joined the Waffen SS. He thought the war would be over by then, and wound up in the SS. I had friends who were in the HJ, Hitler Youth.

But in this book, when I talk about “a Nazi,” I mean the despicable German who was a follower of Hitler and his war of conquest, and the German government’s genocide policy.

To return to Theresienstrasse 128 and its inhabitant. On each floor there were three apartments. The one in the middle could be a one-room apartment. Up to the first floor then. In the middle lived an old man. He did not bother anyone. To the left? I cannot remember. To the right lived the Siegel family. They were Nazis. The daughter always in her brown BDM, *Bund Deutscher Madel* uniform, the girl’s equivalent to the boy’s Hitler Youth. I avoided the first floor, or rather, I walked quietly by.

On the second floor there was no middle apartment as that room connected to the apartment on the right to make it larger. To the left lived the Koerner family. Herr Ludwig Koerner was a musician and played the violin at a nearby cabaret, the *Mahlkasten*. He was not a Nazi but rather a womanizer. Being good looking (in his

mid-forties), and fiddling to the dancing and prancing of ladies, he had always female visitors. For a long time I did not really know which of the ladies was his wife. But I got to know her one time when she asked me to get her some sweet orange marmalade at the store. I think I was nine or ten years old at the time. She had an open jar for me to carry it in, and just before arriving at her apartment I fell on the stairs and half of the marmalade was all over the dirty wooden steps. What to do? I swished it all back in with my hand. I guess she made herself at once a slice of bread and found all sorts of little things, maybe even tiny slivers of wood, certainly lots of dirt, in the jam. So she called the police and told them that the Jew-boy had poisoned her marmalade. The police came to arrest me. These were the Green Police, that is the regular police, not the Gestapo. When I told them what had happened and showed them the sticky spots on the stairs, they laughed and left. No, Herr Koerner was not a Nazi. He was the Bohemian type, wanting a life of fun and not marching in step. I don't know about his screwy wife. But she did not live there for very long.

On the second floor to the right lived the Lewin family, the other Jewish family in the house and also the owners. The Lewins were Lithuanians and their German was fluent. Herr Lewin had been a *Rittmeister*, a titled officer in the Lithuanian cavalry and still stood straight and tall, he was a handsome man. He was also aloof; I never got to know him. His wife, Laura, was a friendly and cheerful woman, well liked in the neighborhood. Well, not by all. She was the doer in the family, and probably responsible for the family owning the house and a shoe store in the Augustenstrasse.

The Lewins had four daughters, one prettier than the other. Rita moved to England, Hilde and Gerda to Los Angeles. Ilse, their youngest girl, stayed with them. Ilse was

three years older than I, such a pretty girl. We were the greatest of friends. Ilse was the first girl I ever kissed. She was then eleven and I eight. Puppy love I guess.

The house and store became the nemesis for the Lewin family. By 1939, when Jewish people were frantically trying to get out of Germany and could not for various reasons - usually not enough money to emigrate to the countries that were accepting well-to-do Jews, Australia, China (Shanghai), Cuba – the Lewins could have sold everything and moved to Timbuktu if they wished. There was one other country Jews could move to in those days, Switzerland, but only if they could put millions of Marks into Swiss banks. The Lewins did not have millions, but they had enough money to go to Havana or Shanghai. Naively, like so many other German Jews, they thought things could not get worse. In this case, they also thought they had the protection of the Lithuanian government. They did until June of 1941, when Germany conquered Lithuania. Then they became *staatenlos*, stateless; as then all Jews living in Germany lost their German citizenship.

The question people are bound to ask the German Jews: after the edicts of 1935 and the restrictions imposed upon Jews in Germany which made life miserable for them, after the pogrom of Crystal Night, why did any Jews remain in Germany?

The answer is that most Jews would have left if they could. Albert Einstein left in 1932. There was no future for a Jewish scientist in Germany. Those who denied this, who thought that things would get better, like our landlords the Lewins, like Victor Klemperer, were naïve and foolish. Bearing goodwill toward all people in their hearts, they could not believe that others of their fellowmen harbored none of this generosity. In

his book 'I will Bear Witness', Victor Klemperer writes that he could have joined his brother in the States but felt himself to be a German first and foremost, and that Hitler would not last too long, that even if it came to war, things would get better for the Jews after the war. Neither Klemperer nor anyone else in the world had any inkling of what Hitler had in mind. Genocide was a word coined after the war. Mass shootings of families? Labor camps where people were forced to toil day and night until they dropped dead? Death-camps with huge gas chambers? Not in their wildest fantasies did people think of such crimes. And yet there were a few of those who knew what was coming. The details of the mass killing they did not imagine, but they believed the Jewish people would be destroyed in Germany. I was one of those!

During the first week of February 1939, I went to the movie. I remember that day very clearly because what I saw and heard frightened me. I never forgot Hitler's words.

January 1939, Hitler made a speech to the German people, his annual Reichstag speech as chancellor of Germany to the national legislature. I went to the *Marmor Palast*, a cinema right around the corner from us. By that time it was forbidden for Jews to go to the movies; a big fat sign at the entrance warned, *Juden ist der Zutritt verboten* -

Jews are forbidden to enter. I would wait until the show began and people had gone in, then buy my ticket and go in when it was dark that nobody saw me, and slip out before the movie ended. When I came in that afternoon, the *Wochenschau*, a weekly news show, had just begun. There was Hitler in the Kroll Opera House – in front of flags and standards and his Brownshirts, making his speech. What frightened me then and throughout the war years was when he said he will annihilate the Jews if they start another world war. I believed he meant it. And when the war began after that, I never

thought I would survive. I was then almost ten years old and I understood. I did not talk to anyone about my awful conviction; I did not even share my living nightmare with my mother. But I never forgot.

And later, with every transport of Jews that left Munich for “resettlement in the East” I knew those people would never return. It is true that even I did not think in terms of mass shootings or production-line killings. I thought they stuck us in a camp, locked the gates, and then let us starve to death. Which, by the way, the German army to its everlasting shame did with three million Russian prisoners of war.

At least after the Crystal Night, November 9, 1938, when their shoe store was smashed and looted, the Lewins should have left. They were Lithuanian citizens. They too must have heard Hitler's speech two months later promising destruction to the Jewish people. On November 25, 1941, the Lewin family along with another 994 women and men and 165 children from Munich, arrived at Fort IX in Kovno, and were shot within the hour. My best friend Ilse, poor, beautiful child Ilse, was executed by a German firing squad.

Until 1935 it was comparatively easy to sell one's belonging and just move, but once the Nuremberg Laws went into effect, it became ever more difficult for Jews to sell their possessions. After 1938 all houses and stores owned by Jews were sold through a German law called *Zwangsverkauf*, or forced sale. The properties were judged to have a low value and the money received was put into a blocked account with German banks from which only a pittance was permitted to be withdrawn monthly. It became impossible for Jews to liquidate their assets and buy tickets to travel abroad, much less to carry out the funds necessary to be a welcome guest anywhere except Palestine. Then immigration to Palestine was closed off by the British due to Arab pressure.

Even if one had the necessary funds, perhaps sent by a relative from abroad, there were few countries accepting refugees from Germany at that time. Amazingly, China did, and Cuba and Australia. The United States held to a strict immigration quota which permitted only a certain number of immigrants from specific countries to enter. The quota for German immigrants, I believe, around 20,000 persons per year. German Jews did not get any preferential treatment just because they were “on the endangered species list.” Someone applying in 1938 for immigration to the United States might expect to be called to the American consulate in 1940. By then the war had started.

Furthermore, to be accepted as an immigrant, one had to have an affidavit of a relative or sponsor who would guarantee to take care of one’s needs in every respect, so that there was no financial burden to the United States government, and the relative or sponsor had to prove that he had the financial means to fulfill his guarantee. In reality not even half of those who moved to the top of the immigration list could provide their own travel funds, or furnish the names of sponsor with the necessary proof of financial responsibility.

The United States in the late thirties was isolationist, and still suffering from the depression. There were many Americans then who believed the way Pat Buchanan does now. “Let’s not mess with Hitler” they thought. “To hell with the stupid British and French for starting a war because of the Poles.” “If Hitler is nasty to the Jews and Jehovah’s Witnesses and other minorities, it is not our business to interfere.”

I give thanks to the really stupid ones, the Japanese, for attacking the United States at Pearl Harbor and forcing war on the US. And then for Germany to declare war on the U.S. Their greatest blunder!

Back to the apartment house. As we come up to the third floor, the apartment to the left was that of the Rau family. Herr Rau I never met. He either died or Frau Rau divorced him. Maria Rau was to us a nice woman. She always invited me over at Christmas when they lit the tree with candles and sparklers and had a plate for me with cookies and an apple and tangerine. Frau Rau was not officially a Nazi. As manager of the apartment house she worked for the Lewin family. She did not belong to the party or any of its auxiliaries, but I know she was proud of the accomplishments of the German army, of what I think as the 'rape of other countries'. She had her Swastika flag out like many others did in our house (but not all) for Nazi festivals. None did after 1944. More important to my story is her son Willi Rau. Willi was four years older than I. We were always good friends and had real fun times together. He also was a good friend of Ilse and protected us from nasty kids who called us Jews, Jew pigs, et cetera, and wanted to beat us up. Not with Willi around! Perhaps it was because of us that Willi never joined the Hitler Youth. Which puts a lie to those Germans who said that every boy in Germany had to belong to that group.

Willi was not the type anyhow to conform or march in cadence. He was a little on the wild side, causing his mother a lot of grief, I am sure. But he had to march in step when he was inducted into the German army. Captured by the Russians, he was kept prisoner of war until 1950. In 1951, when I was stationed in Germany with the U.S. Army and had a chance to visit Willi, I played a most delightful prank on him.

I was first stationed in Stuttgart. Had gotten my car over, a Nash Rambler, stuffed it full of the best the PX had to offer and drove to Munich. He was married and lived in a little cottage near the '1860 soccer stadium' on the edge of the city. I drove out to his place

but no one was home. I had to go somewhere else so I stuffed a big can of tobacco and a nice pipe into his mailbox and placed the shopping bags with goodies at the door of his cottage.

His wife Lena arrived home first they told me later. It was she who found my surprise in the mailbox and then the bags of goods. That evening, while Willi puffed his new pipe, they looked at each item: cans of coffee, cans with hams, cheeses, chocolate galore -- all stuff from America. Where did it come from? Lena thought Willi's mother must have a new boyfriend, an American. Willi guessed Hugo. But he knew I had just come back from Korea and Japan and they surely wouldn't send a soldier right back overseas. He hoped, however, and as Lena told me the next day, the very thought of it made him cry.

At 128 Theresienstrasse, the middle apartment on the third floor, of two rooms, belonged to the Holzmanns, to us.

To the right lived the family Maurer. Here we have Nazis and anti-Nazis all in one family which really was not that unusual. Herr Franz Maurer was a Brownshirt – SA. He also had a lucrative plumbing business, and through his Nazi connections received many contracts out of town and even out of country. He seemed always to be gone, even before the war, and this suited his wife Margaret just fine. She was a beautiful, elegant woman, and he a stocky, brutish man. It is amazing how such different people find each other and want to live in marriage.

It was also surprising that a well-to-do couple would live in our rather simple apartment house without the amenities we all expect today. There was no central heating or hot water. In the cold Munich winters you heated each room separately with a coal stove.

And while their apartment had a nice bathroom with a tub and water heater, even they had to use the downstairs toilet which our family also shared. The Maurers were the only family in our apartment complex who had a telephone! and a car.

The Maurers had a son, Hans, much older than I was. To me Hans was always a grownup. He had been in the Hitler Youth and when old enough, though war had not yet broken out, joined the *Kriegsmarine*, the Navy. He served on the famous battle cruiser Prinz Eugen. That was the cruiser that accompanied the battleship Bismarck during its encounter with the British Royal Navy. The Prinz Eugen turned back when the Bismarck tried to make it to Brest in France. And as we know, the Bismarck was sunk by the British. The Prinz Eugen was bombed later in the war and Hans wound up on one of the torpedo boats.

Was Franz Maurer a Nazi? Yes. His naval son Hans? I don't know. Frau Maurer? No! Frau Maurer, with other help she gave us during our difficult times, arranged for my mother to be employed in her plumbing business as a cleaning woman to keep the Gestapo happy. A Jewess cleaning up in a plumbing workshop, that suited them just fine. But for an occasional visit, so the workers got to know her, my mom never worked there. Frau Maurer did not pay my mother for her non-work, but she paid her dues to the various agencies every worker had to contribute. It was a real phony arrangement and quite risky for Frau Maurer. We shall meet this gracious woman many times in my story as she was a true friend to us.

We move up to the fourth floor. The apartment to the left is where the Spitzelberger family lived. Herr Joseph Spitzelberger, in his '60's, was a mason, a somewhat reserved man who was friendly to us and did not mind when his wife Maria fed me sometimes.

He was a great help whenever something needed to be fixed, he had golden hands, and built us a new door when ours was blown to pieces by close bomb hits and gave me large cardboard sheets for our windows. He was not a Nazi! I never knew what he believed in. I think he was just a good mason who liked his work of building houses or repairing broken down ones, and did not want to be bothered with all the Nazi stuff. In fact, I can say quite honestly that when Germany reached the peak of success in May, 1940, with the easy conquest of France, Herr Spitzelberger may have been the only German in our house who did not welcome the victories. He said something to me to the effect "Just wait. They will never conquer England."

Frau Maria Spitzelberger was a good and loyal friend of ours, a simple country-woman and a fine one. She came down to us almost every evening to chat with mom. This despite the fact that after 1938, Aryans were forbidden to associate with Jews. (Those neighbors who associated with us before would always do so after these laws were put into effect.) Many Sundays she invited me up to her kitchen and fed me my favorite roast and dumplings. She was not a Nazi. If, with one of her sons in the Army, she was sometimes proud of the army's success, she never expressed any such sentiments to us, knowing very well how we felt about it.

The other son, Alfons, lived at home with his parents. He was in his thirties and excused from service because of his bad feet. He worked in the armaments factory. Alfons was not a Nazi and always made forbidden jokes about them.

The middle apartment on the fourth floor belonged to the Reiters, like our place a two-room affair with the same lack of running water and no toilet. The reader might wonder how did these people all take care of their hygiene. In those days there were

public baths all over the city. Once a week, or once a month, whenever, people went to a bath- house and rented a bath room with a tub for twenty minutes. At least the attendant would clean the tub before letting the water in.

When I was little I bathed in a sort of enamel tub in our kitchen, but that was always a mess. Even just washing ones hair over a bowl on the kitchen table was messy.

When I got bigger I also went to the bathhouse. The public bath was of course off limits to Jews. But then everything was forbidden, and by then I violated all the Nazi laws every day; every minute, simply by being alive.

Frau Reiter was a rather unfriendly, middle-aged woman. Her son, who worked in a war industry, had what we called a *Wasserkopf*, a condition which made the upper part of his head hugely big. Like all unfortunate people in Germany who had a visible deformity (no longer the Aryan type), he was on the racially undesirable list, which made him automatically anti-Nazi. He was a real nice person, but he and his mother kept pretty much to themselves.

The apartment to the right belonged to the Stiegler family. There was again a mixture of Nazi sentiments in one family, pro and con. Frau Stiegler was a party member and wore her party badge when going to official places. After 1942, I never saw her wear it again. But she did never express any anti-Semitic sentiments, or show any affection for the Nazis as her older son did.

Frau Stiegler had four children. The oldest son lived away and was a Nazi but was kind to me whenever he came to visit and I was at their place. I spent a lot of time in their apartment because I was a good friend of the younger son, Hansi, who was four years older than I. Hansi, Willi and I spent a lot of time together, messing around, skiing and

skating in wintertime, going on trips on our bicycles. Hansi was not as big and strong as Willi, but he was like him, a free-spirited kid who was not about to step in cadence with the Hitler Youth. When he was drafted, in 1942, he was soon sent to the Eastern Front, and shortly after died in Welikie Luki of typhus.

There were also two girls, older than I was. Maria, was the older one, she was rather shy. Liesl was my age, maybe a year older, a pretty girl. Neither girl joined the BDM, the girl's Hitler Youth. They, like Hansi, didn't believe in any of that Nazi crap.

Above the fourth floor was the attic where every resident had a little caged-in area for storage. We also had a cellar. From the courtyard, steps led down into the cellar, a kind of rounded tunnel, built so low that adults had to stoop. There were no lights; we always had to carry a candle. The front part of the cellar belonged to the inn and barrels of beer, cases of lemonade and other supplies were kept there. Then, after turning a few corners (and expecting a bogeyman each time when I was a little kid) was the long cellar walk. Everybody had a fenced-in section to keep their coals and potatoes and junk. In the middle was the wash house with running cold water and two huge vats with a built-in fireplace underneath for heating the water. There was a large wooden table to wash and scrub on. In winter it was my daily job to take the ashes and garbage down and bring up buckets of coals from the cellar or fetch potatoes.

At the back of the apartment house, on the far side of the courtyard where we kids played, was the rear building, a two story house. (In Germany every apartment house in the city had one or more buildings out back, sometimes gardens or yards in between. The city blocks were large squares with lots of space in the middle.) The inn's kitchen was located at the right end of the courtyard, emitting those delicious smells only kids

appreciate. At the left end of the rear building was a wall which was broken through with an opening when the war began, to permit transit from one courtyard to the next.

The Schoenhofers lived on the ground floor of the small building out back. They were a young couple from near Vilshofen where my mother came from. So we were friends and the young man worked in a factory, the BMW motor works, and was not a Nazi, nor his wife. Frau Fanny Schoenhofer had two little ones. The boy died when just a baby. People said that Fanny fed him daily many eggs to make him big and strong and it was bad for the boy, but I never heard of egg poisoning before. The younger sister of Fanny came from the country and stayed with them. Resi Dirnhofers was a pretty country girl, a couple years older than I, and we became good friends. Resi was not at all influenced by the Third Reich's racial purity propaganda.

To the right lived an elderly lady, Frau Obermeier. I know nothing about her except she was living there until the bombing attack in January 1945, that destroyed her place and our house in front. Most of the inhabitants had left after the air raids in spring of 1943. The only ones who still lived there after, and until we got bombed out, were Frau Rau, our neighbor, the Spitzelbergers, Reiters and Stieglers upstairs, and in the back the Schoenhofers and Frau Obermeier, my mother and I.

On the first floor upstairs, above the Dirnhofers, lived the Schoenauer Family. They had a little boy I used to play with when we both were little. Then he was forbidden to play with me. Herr Schoenauer was Nazi personified, brutal and virulently anti-Semitic. He caused the Lewin family a lot of grief. Only after Herr Schoenauer disappeared into the cauldron of Nazi rule as some sort of administrator in the East did his wife have her

boy play with me again. However, they were one of the first to be evacuated from the city once the bombing began in seriousness.

To the right lived Frau Hecht. I suppose she was married once, but she lived alone with her two children who were younger than I was. She was an attractive woman and there were always "uncles" around. She was nice, a good woman too, and when the war started and she knew of our predicament with the shortened ration cards, she let me do chores for her, like shopping, getting coals from the cellar, and for payment gave me ration stamps. Later, when she moved to a bigger apartment, and got married, I often went to visit her, bringing her little bouquets of roses or other flowers in nice arrangements I had learned to make, and she would give me a fat sandwich or some cold cuts to take home or food stamps.

These, then, were the inhabitants of our apartment house, and perhaps as typical a sampling of Germans as one would find anywhere. Only the Siegel family and their Hitler Youth daughter, and Herr Schoenauer were real Nazis and true-blooded anti-Semites. Some played Nazis when it furthered their interests, Herr Maurer and his navy son, and Frau Stiegler, the mother of four offspring flashing her party member pin when Germany was winning the war and leaving it off later on. The rest, with the exception of Herr Spitzelberger, were regular Germans, or, as they perceived themselves "good Germans." They were not Nazis at all, but they were proud of Germany military prowess and victories, not giving any thought to the conquered countries whose people were being exploited and enslaved. Herr Spitzelberger just didn't want to get involved with Nazism and anything they stood for. In the summer of 1940 when all of Germany was celebrating the victories over the West, he was the only

who held back. And once he told me not to worry, that things would change, and some day it would be all over with “Them.”

Here we must realize that this “average” apartment house was inhabited by the lower middle class Germans. The *Nazi Bonzen*, as we called them, the Nazi hierarchy, the government and party officials, the Gestapo people and officers of the Wehrmacht did not live in those plain old apartment houses in the city. They had new, modern houses to live in, unattached houses and villas, mainly in the southern suburbs of Munich near the forests and closer to the mountains and lakes, and in the fanciest part of Munich, in Bogenhausen where Hitler had a private apartment.

Who were these diehard Nazis then who joined the movement wholeheartedly? Some were ultranationalists and fanatics who really perceived themselves and their nationality as better than other people. They were the *Uebermenschen*, members of the super race. They felt themselves superior because they were Germans. Many a Britisher, by the way, felt the same about their national grouping. And within the nation Germans cherished a caste system of ranks and titles. How they loved “von” the prefix of nobility, as in von Richthofen, or “*Rat*”, the prefix of high office, as in *Regierungsrat* with whom my mother had dealings with, a title dating back to the aristocracy of councilors to a petty king. Even a physician was a minor god, addressed as *Herr Doktor*, Sir doctor, and his wife as *Frau Doktor*. People with titles were accepted in German culture as superior beings. The businessman was superior to the worker, the worker to the peasant. Even the peasant had status; he was superior to his animals. So it was a good feeling to be a German, better than being an Italian or Frenchman or a Pole. In Bavaria you were better because you were a Catholic and not a Protestant. In Prussia the

situation was reversed. But all German Christians were better than the Jews, or Moslems, or Hindus, and so on. The caste system is not so profound anymore in Europe. It never existed in the United States, Canada or Australia. In the USA we do not even kowtow to the President, and that is as it should be. Nationalism and bigotry were the call of the Pied Piper of Nazism. Even a nobody, a failure, a reject could become a mighty person when the Nazis gave their siren call. A good example is Heinrich Himmler, a part time farmer who became the second most powerful person in the Third Reich, or Josef Goebbels who had lots of education but couldn't get any of his writings printed by newspapers or publishers. He became the mouthpiece of Nazism. Nationalism and bigotry were fortified, built on, the foundations of the old German romanticism of the Wagnerian type. These unhealthy feelings inspired the SS, the Gestapo, the aiding and abetting government official and military men. They were fanatics, and fanaticism for anything is degenerate. As fanatics they believed in racial superiority, as bigots they believed themselves to be better than others. And they were selected, organized, encouraged, sponsored by the government of a powerful nation.

One more type fed the Nazi machine, persons with a criminal mind, men who would as easily have served Stalin as good Bolsheviks, men such as Martin Bormann and the criminal degenerate Julius Streicher. People like these were the officers and soldiers of the extreme groups, the *Einsatzgruppen* and the *Sonderkommandos*, the elite murder groups.

These then were the real Nazis, the backbone of the movement, the fanatical followers of Hitler. And the younger members came from the Hitler Youth where they had been

indoctrinated in their formative years in the spirit of nationalism, bigotry and fanaticism.

Fuehrer, wir folgen dir! Wir glauben an dich! Bis in the Tod! “ Fuehrer, we follow you! We believe in you! Until death!” they cried in unison. Most of them did die before the war was over.

Where was justice? Justice perverted or denied? Here is Joseph Goebbels, mouthpiece of Hitler, speaking for the Third Reich about justice.

Excerpt from Goebbel’s diaries: 20 December 1940.

“Justice alone cannot protect a state. One must always have a substitute to hand, as we have in the concentration camps. What games we played with justice when we were still in opposition. Juristic habits lead to a total deformation of thinking. Sound instinct is suppressed in favor of haggling over every little clause. Woe to the state that falls victim to justice.”

What a devastating denial of justice.

But this hard core of Nazis could have never succeeded without the support of the *Mitlaefer*, those who went along. It is a word coined after the war by the German de-Nazification bureaus. Perhaps the majority of Nazis belonged to this group, most of the people in the army, the regular police, minor government officials, the rich and famous, the industrial giants and little businessmen. And our good professor who could only do his research on feces if he was in the SS.

In the spring of 1935, I started public school, I was then six years old.

From this day on, April 1935, all Jewish children had to leave their neighborhood schools and were permitted to attend only the Jewish public school in the Herzog Rudolfstrasse. This was a grammar school for the first eight grades. There was no Jewish High School. Academic education stopped after the eighth grade for Jewish children. For those who were older and wanted to learn a trade, there was a sort of trade school, a rather primitive center set up in sheds for boys to learn carpentry, electrical repairs, and so forth, and girls learned cooking, knitting, things like that. A house in the Hermann Schmidstrasse was converted to a small hospital as Jews were no longer permitted to be treated in non-Jewish hospitals or by Aryan doctors. Girls could learn nursing there. There was a *Hachshara* in the outskirts of Munich, a sort of small farm where older boys and girls could learn farm work and vegetable growing. This was training for emigration to Palestine, which was permitted by the Germans at that time as they were still trying to get rid of the Jews in Germany by whatever means possible.

Our school was opened in the Jewish community center, converted into classrooms. It was far away from where we lived. I had to take a streetcar, a thirty-minute ride, and then walk about five blocks. Since my sister Herta was also starting at the Jewish school, I went with her. At least for a few weeks. Then I went by myself. Sending a six-year-old boy far into the city to school seems rather strange to us in America. Our grandson Daniel who lives with my wife and me and is ten years old I would not send him alone to school even if it were in walking distance. Kids in Germany, and not just Jewish kids, were much more mature in those days. However, one must qualify that judgment by mentioning that most of the traffic were bicycles; cars and trucks were much less used, and very few people owned cars. Streetcars and buses were the main

means of getting around, and of course walking...always walking. On the other hand, even that traffic was sparsely regulated by lights. A traffic light was rare. Perhaps a dozen existed in all of Munich before and during the war. Downtown, the busier intersections like the Stachus, were controlled by traffic cops. Some intersections had a stop sign, and most of the traffic followed the rule that the vehicle to the right had the right-of-way. Everybody just had to be careful crossing streets. Kids learned to be careful when they were little.

Our school was a long building.. It had been a synagogue and community center before it was converted to a school, the gymnasium on the ground floor, and the beautiful Ohel Yaakov synagogue next to the school. The first four grades were on the upper floors. Grades five through eight in makeshift classrooms in the next building, where our *Hort*, or after school activity center, was.

Most of the kids at the after-school-center, the Hort, were from poor Jewish families, and we got free lunch. I wish it had been the type of lunch our children get in school. Our lunch was vegetables and potatoes, there were never any meat dishes. Now vegetable and potatoes may not sound so bad, but our ladies in that make-do-kitchen cooked the vegetables in water, and only in water. They must have had a contest to see who could cook in the most tasteless way. They would take a big pot of water and drop spinach leaves into it and serve it as spinach soup. They even managed to burn the soup. We had to eat what was put before us. Sometimes the only way we could swallow the stuff was by closing our noses when swallowing. Our favorite meal which was served occasionally, was what we called *Himmel und Erde*, Heaven and Earth; it was a scoop of mashed potatoes and apple sauce.

After lunch we did our homework. Then from three to four we could play downstairs in the courtyard or if it rained did artwork and so forth in the large activity room. We celebrated all our festivals in the big room. We had fun making things for those occasions, worked on plays, learned songs. They even managed to serve something extraordinarily delicious at celebrations, fruit salad made with fresh fruit.

We had school Monday through Friday, for four hours – our school was only permitted to offer classes for four hours daily -- from eight till noon, which meant that we got lots of homework, at least two hours of it. In the first grade we had little slates to write on with a slate-pencil. We did not have schoolbooks. Those that were available were full of anti-Semitic propaganda and there were no Jewish schoolbooks. So the teacher had to write out information from his textbooks and we copied it from the blackboard. The curriculum was basically the same as the curriculum for non-Jewish pupils, plus we had an hour of religion every day where we learned Hebrew and about the Jewish holidays and festivals.

I loved school. I learned how to read. I liked every subject, except spelling. Having a poor short-term memory and speaking in the Bavarian dialect at home, I could never remember how to spell. To learn a poem by heart took me at least a couple of hours where other kids spent ten minutes. I was good at drawing, the best in my class and probably the best in the school. That was a gift I had from my mother; she was also good at drawing.

On a child's first day of school it is a tradition in Germany that the pupil receives from his parents *eine Zuckertüte*, a large paper cone filled with fruits and candies. My

mother could not buy one for me, but when I came home that day, there was a first-day-cone for me. Our good neighbor Frau Margaret Maurer had bought me one. I have a fabulous memory for things long gone by, or kids just remember such pleasant happenings.

For the first two years Herr Behrlinger was our teacher, a very nice man and I guess a good teacher. I learned how to read very fast. And mom didn't have to read me the fairy tales anymore, I read them myself. In the third grade I had a new teacher, Ferdinand or Ferdi Kissinger. Yes, he was a relative of Henry Kissinger, the famous American Secretary of State, Ferdi was Henry's uncle from Fuerth. In fact, we had two Kissinger brothers as teachers in our Jewish public school. Julius taught the kids in seventh and eighth grades and Ferdi the kids in the third and fourth grades. Julius was the nice guy. Ferdi was neither a good teacher nor a nice man. We called him *der Dicke* - Fatty, behind his back as he had a big fat belly.

The reason I said that Ferdi was not a good teacher is that he catered to the students whose parents were rich and famous, the fewer poor boys and girls and the students from the orphanage he plainly disregarded. I mean he ignored us.

From the first grade on I had a good head for math. I always brought home an A, and on all the math tests in Ferdi's class it was rare for me to have a red mark showing a mistake. My numbers were nicely written and I always turned in a clean, neat paper I could be proud of. But when it came to our grades, I received a D from Ferdi every time. In fact, I got a D in all subjects. I knew I deserved the D in spelling. My paper always looked like a cat with red ink on its paws had danced on it. History I liked, a - D. In art, and here, as in math, I was one of the best in class, a D. Only in religion, which

Ferdi did not teach, did I receive an A. I even received a D in sports, were I also excelled.

I remember one time when we boys were having physical education in the courtyard and we had to jump on one leg and go at each other with our arms crossed in front. Whoever landed on two legs or fell down was out. Peter Berger lasted the longest, he had won against all the other boys. Except that Herr Kissinger had never called me up, although I had raised my hand to volunteer for each new bout. I don't think he ever saw me, I just did not exist for him. Of course I was hurt, it hurts to be totally ignored when you are a kid. Then some of the other boys spoke up. "Hugo has not had his turn yet." 'Who in the hell is Hugo?' Herr Kissinger must have thought.

I had given up, but the boys convinced our teacher, so he let me go against his favorite, Peter. Peter very cleverly chose the downhill side and came at me with jumping hops, hit me, and fell flat on his butt. He claimed he had slipped, tried a second time, and fell again. Then the teacher had some of the other better athletic boys go against me. They did not fare any better. Maybe I was a little mad being ignored and hit hard. I like to think I was just good at sports. My grade in sports? The permanent D.

Herr Kissinger was really a mean teacher to some of us. The only time he knew I was in his class was when he was punishing me. Corporal punishment was permitted in all German schools, ours included, but few teachers used the bamboo rod on any boy, and rarely on a girl. If the bamboo rod was used, it was a sharp slap in the palm of the hand, and it stung. Two or even three slaps burned good. I got my share as I was a prankster. I talked in class out of order, made faces or did whatever kids do to annoy the teacher, though I was not the worst. Some of the kids from the orphanage were better

than me. Kids can be cruel, our religious teacher, Herr Finkelscherer, was easy to play tricks on, but he never punished us.

One time I even got my bottom whacked three times by the principal. In some lady teacher's class, where one took greater risks, I had slipped a stink bomb under a girl as she sat down. It began to smell bad throughout the classroom. "Who did that?" The teacher demanded. I did not say anything as I was scared. It didn't smell bad anymore it stank. The classroom had to be evacuated later on.

The teacher asked a few more times and nobody squealed on me. Then the teacher came up with the mass punishment stuff. The whole class would be punished. That was when I admitted to the dastardly deed. She reported it to the Principal and he invited me to a private audience, and administered the appropriate penalty.

Most punishments were, however, the kind where you wrote a sentence spelling out your misdeed one hundred times at home and bringing it back with a parent's signature, which really hurt more than a few swishes with a stick. Herr Kissinger had his own method of punishment, which he used only on boys from 'the other side of town,' like me. He would take my hand by the wrist and smash it down knuckles first on the desk. That really hurt, that was mean. However, I am deeply anguished that Herr Kissinger, his brother Julius with his family, were with the thousand Munich Jews deported to Fort IX in Kovno.

We had our class picture taken with teacher Kissinger in 1938. It was the only one we ever took of our class. I shall write about it and give the names of my classmates as I remember them. Many of the classmates of mine went to Kovno. In fact all of them who had not emigrated by November 1941. I would like for them to be remembered.

1936, my second year in school, was the year of the Olympics in Berlin. It was the year I saw my first motion picture, *Kirschen im Nachbars Garten*, Cherries in the neighbor's garden, a comedy with a pair of comedians from Munich, Karl Valentin and his sidekick, Liesl Karlstadt. Karl Valentin was the funny guy, a Buster Keaton type, straight faced and saying the dumbest things in a heavy Bavarian dialect. You had to be from Munich to love the guy. I guess, if they showed his movies in Berlin, he would have been booed.

Munich was really not a typical German city. It was strictly bourgeoisie and Bohemian and very provincial – liberal Catholic, if there is such a thing. If you were from Munich, regardless of your religious affiliation, yes, even Jewish, and you spoke the Munich dialect, you were 'one of us.' You were also accepted if you came from somewhere in Bavaria; in that case you were at least a *Bayer*. If you came from anywhere north of the Danube you were a Prussian, worse than a foreigner. That I could speak in the native dialect saved me from a lot of troubles and perhaps even my life. It did nothing for me in school, however, where High German was spoken and written.

It is amazing to me that Hitler could ever have started his movement successfully in Munich. Munichians were usually not the heavy romanticist Hitler appealed to, or people who love to march hell-bent behind drums into war. However, even in easygoing Munich, around 1919 and thereafter, when things were in turmoil and nationalists vied with Bolsheviks, royalists, socialist, the Christian right, and military groups, there were enough screwballs and fanatics to give Hitler and his Nazi Party a base. Besides, Hitler did not start the National Workers Party, he joined it.

As a child I loved to go to town, with my mother or alone. Those are wonderful years for a child, from six to ten, years of wonderment, discovery, deep impression of all manner of things, and yet innocence. I was the greatest window-shopper. I never desired anything; never bugged my mom to buy anything for me. I owned things, or the impression of them, just by looking.

I loved books. By the time I turned 7, I could read. The fairy tales of Brothers Grimm. Max and Moritz by Wilhelm Busch. Germans, Europeans and many Americans are familiar with Wilhelm Busch. Or his two nasty boys Max and Moritz causing a lot of mischief and getting into troubles themselves until in the end the baker from whom they stole his sweet goods, rolls them in dough and then bakes them, shreds them and feeds them to the chickens. Busch was in his own way a genius. There were two fat books full with drawings, some funny, some not, and accompanied by the story told in rhyme. I mean he was good. The only bias one could discern in his caricatures and poetry was his obvious dislike for Catholicism and rich people. Busch was a contemporary of Richard Wagner, the famous composer. What they had in common, besides both being genius in their respective endeavors, was their virulent anti-Semitism. Amazingly, Busch never showed his bias against Jews in his rhymed drawings and stories. So we Jewish kids loved his Max and Moritz stories. It was not until I read his collected works which my sister had bought in America that I came across this little rhyme:

Und der Jud mit krummer Nas und langer Hos'...

Tiefverderbt und seelenlos...

Which is to say: And the Jew with crooked nose and long pants...

totally rotten and without a soul...

This is pure poison. You show that ugly jingle to a public, like where my mother came from in lower Bavaria, where the Catholic Church still attacked Jews for killing Jesus, and you have church-inspired anti-Semitism growing like a dung-nourished weed. I threw all my Max and Moritz books into the garbage can.

I bought and read the Rolf Topping adventure paperbacks, they cost twenty Pfennigs. My mother convinced me to go with her to the lending library. For twenty Pfennigs I could check out a whole book. "Read the Karl May books" mom suggested, and I did. Karl May wrote seventy books of his adventures all over the world. Most dealing with the Wild West in America and many in Arabian countries. Books with good Christian ethics; short of 'love thy enemies', but kill your enemy only in self defense.

I read were even Einstein sometimes pulled out a copy of Karl May and relaxed with it. Of course Jules Vern's books were popular and a German science fiction writer Hans Dominik I enjoyed reading. My favorite book to shop for through the window was The Universum, a series of books for youth about science. They never had it in the lending library so I could only look at the covers in the bookstore. I think a volume cost six Marks, way out of my reach. I earned my money as a kid and paid for my own books; mom could never afford to give my sister and me pocket money. But six Marks was just not visible. Six Marks might be comparable to a book bought in America for three dollars then – prewar times.

I loved to visit our biggest department store in Munich, the Tietz. In the basement was the delicatessen, stocked with all the good rich food that gives middle aged women and men in Munich their big bellies; that and beer. The smell of Hot *Leberkas*, a freshly

backed old-fashioned loaf pervaded the whole downstairs. Not that I ever got any. On the fourth floor were the toys, a boy's paradise, my delight to just look around.

Around the corner from our school was the elegant Maximilianstrasse. One end led to the Maximillianeum, a structure like a huge monument, where the Bavarian Parliament sat. And the other end was the National Theater. You could see both ends from the middle of the street where our school was. And just around the corner was a confectionery shop with fine candies and chocolates. My sister showed me that for five Pfennigs you could buy a small bag of *Abfall*, which literally means garbage. Old chocolates that turned white, pralines that were chipped and broken pieces of candy that could no longer be sold. Herta showed me with the promise that I buy her a bag too, she never had any money. Across the street was the Italian ice cream parlor. Italian ice was really water ice with a rich, fruity flavor like our sherbet. My favorites were lemon and strawberry.

Another shop in the elegant street was a gun shop. I was fascinated with handguns. I was really a warlike kid. I could play war for hours. I had no toy soldiers, so I just made little ones out of modeling clay. I built fortification with simple wood blocks. Sometimes I built a lake on our kitchen table. I would use books for a frame and cover it with mom's waxed tablecloth, then poured water into it for naval battles. German militarism infected even a little Jewish boy.

With Willi and Hansi I played cowboys and Indians, or, after we had seen Western movies, cowboys and bandits. We liked those with Tom Mix. Our courtyard was our main playground. We kids used it almost daily in doing our things within our own groups. Willi, Hansi and I together. Hansi's two sisters Maria and

Liesel with Ilse. The smaller kids together. Sometimes some of our friends were over. Hansi had a couple weirdo friends who came by often, the limping Karl Seitz and the hunchback George. I might have one of my Jewish friends over, Freddie who lived in the next building or Fritz Durst. We all got along fine.

Why always in our courtyard? Because the owner of our house, Frau Lewin, liked kids and let us mess around which other owners or their manager did not permit.

We played the usual games kids play all over the world. Playing ball, and once the end wall had been broken through to make a doorway we had a fine goal. We no longer needed to climb over the wall when the ball landed in the neighbor's yard. Ring throwing was a favorite. Games were we made chalk marks on the flat stones and then hoped along picking up a pebble. And we didn't need to wipe our chalk off; the rain would do that occasionally. Rope jumping even with the girls.

The staircase going up to the first floor was external and had its own slanted tin roof which we could reach from the window between floors, climb out and slide down.

Then climb monkey wise down to the courtyard using the long horizontal wooden pole which was there for people to hang their rugs on and beating them clean with a woven bamboo stick. There was the cellar to go down to and scare each other and the wash room for secret meetings.

There were other activities going on in the court yard which fascinated us kids. Street musicians would come by and play music and people would throw down change wrapped in paper. It was fun to try to catch the little packages or we just picked them up and put them in the hat the musicians always placed before them.

Craftsmen came by with their tools to make minor repairs or bring in a foot-operated grindstone and sharpen knives and scissors. Street merchants who set up a small stand and hawked some newfangled items not sold in stores; like I remember glowing toothpaste. (it really contained thorium and was not realized as dangerous. The Berlin Auer company marketed it as a means to make your teeth glow white.) Or some new soup powder, or a new tool to slice radishes. These were the *Hausierer*, as we called them, wandering salesmen. I never saw beggars in Germany, forbidden by the Nazis. Totalitarian regimes don't permit beggars. As much of a nuisance they might be, it is a sign of democracy.

I loved to walk; to save money I only used the streetcar for faraway places. The *Bahnhof*, main railroad station was a half hour walk away. A kids imagination going wild. Express trains to Milan and Rome, or Paris. The Orient Express going to unimaginable places. The steam engines of these trains were huge, the massive wheels painted red. I looked at the trains going into the mountains, just as magic names. How I wished I could see the mountains from close up. One could see the Alps from Munich on a clear day, I loved nature. What a delight it was just to take the streetcar to the southern end of Munich, to the Grosshesselohe or Gruenwald and walk through the forest and green meadows where flowers grew wild that I could pick and take home to mom.

I remember one time Willi and his mother's new husband took me along by train to the Schaeftlarn Monastery, and then we walked the six miles back to Gruenwald. Willi picked *Zittergrass* for his mother, long blades of grass that seemed to quiver in the slightest breeze. I found *Glockenbluemchen*, purple campanula, for mine. Then we got

caught in a thunderstorm and were drenched to the skin and shivering. In Munich when it storms the temperature drops right away and it rains for three days.

One time, near the Maximillianeum, I rolled down a grassy hill we played on. It was fall and the leaves had turned. I picked up a beautiful, many colored leaf and looked at it with the wonderment only a child can appreciate. I was so deeply pleased in beholding this work of God's nature that I hoped that when I grew up to be a man I would still find this simple joy. No! As an adult one cannot see through the wondrous eyes of a child.

Munich was in my childhood a beautiful city of many parks, museums, a zoo, fairs and the Oktoberfest. For *Fasching*, carnival, we kids dressed up like Americans at Halloween. I had a clown's outfit, Willi was a cowboy, Hansi a vagabond, his usual getup. Willi, Hansi and I would go into inns and restaurants where Willi would play the accordion while Hansi and I sang popular melodies and songs. It fell to me, the youngest, to collect the tips which we then divided up.

Yet, there was this shadow of not belonging. I, the Jewish kid, was unwanted by many. I was made to feel somehow bad and evil. I knew I was a good kid and never, or almost never, hurt anyone. My Jewish schoolmates and their parents were all good, nice people. Why did so many people dislike us, hate us even? When I visited my grandparents in Vilshofen and kids found out that I was Jewish, most would not care, but some called me bad names. The Fathers in their Catholic Church had told them that the Jews had killed Christ. That I should get blamed for this two thousand years later seemed unfair and stupid. Might as well blame the Italians too since they were the descendents of the Romans who actually crucified Jesus and put the Christians in the

colosseum. I remember one boy saying to me, “You can’t be Jewish. You don’t have horns sticking out of your head.” I had never seen a Jewish person with horns, or any other person, for that matter.

I certainly did not like to be called a dirty Jew or some such thing, but in most situations I was helpless to respond. But I remember, once I was confronted by two boys in Vilshofen, a little older than me and real bullies. When one called me a Jewish something or other, I hit him as hard as I could so that his nose was smashed and bleeding, and, as bullies do, they ran away screaming.

I know it is easier for children than adults to adjust to persecution. While a child cannot understand why it is singled out and made to feel different, the child is really not as troubled. A child lives for the moment, or maybe the next day. As long as you give the child a chance to survive physically, it will adjust. I remember reading an account of the Warsaw Ghetto how this group of Jews were hiding when the Germans came looking for them and the woman told her child not to cry, the bad people were outside. And the child stopped and was hardly breathing. And after they had left the mother told her child, “now you can cry again.” The child will not survive unmarked. Its soul, its psyche, is scarred. Mine was. It is much more difficult for adults, especially if the prejudice has been institutionalized by the government with unending laws and edicts to harass them. Adults do understand when there is no future, no way out. We pity children more because they are so vulnerable and helpless, but they will adjust more easily than adults, as long as you don’t murder them.

It was sometimes in the summer of 1937 that our mother got very sick. She had bought a pair of earrings, not of gold but some amalgamation of gold like looking stuff

and she got blood poisoning. She had to go to the Schwabinger hospital and Herta and I were back at the orphanage. Except for worrying about mom, and they kept her for four or five weeks, we were back at our old haunts. Since it was summer and school was out we were full time there. And like before when I was just a little kid I enjoyed my stay at the orphanage. Three of my class mates were there, Erich Kupfer (he would join his uncle a year later and then come back when his uncle emigrated to America) Manfred Pollak and pretty Ester Berger. Of course Salo was there, my old crib mate, and some other kids in my age group whom I knew from school. Mary Gabor, Esther Cohn, were still there. Esther had polio as a little girl and wore all sorts of metal braces on her legs but hobbled along and was always full of smiles. Every day a therapist came by and exercised her legs to put some strength back but I don't think it really helped. Mary and Esther perished in Auschwitz. Someone must have carried Esther to the gas chamber as all the *schnell, schnell* could not have made her move any faster.

I quickly got back in the routine of doing things. The orphanage run by the aunts, the same ones I remembered from earlier times, in a strict and no nonsense manner but also treating us with compassion and kindness. Being 8 years old now I found out that all older children were involved in doing certain chores. Already the second evening my name came up for shoe shining. Another boy and I went down in the basement and cleaned and then polished the shoes of the smaller kids. I think there were about 16 pairs of little muddy shoes to clean and smear polish on and then shine them. And since there were brown, black and white shoes we had to switch cans or use the neutral polish for shoes that had an unidentifiable color. The way we worked and horsed around it took us a good part of the evening and another 15 minutes to clean our hands.

During the day we had other chores to perform of which the best one was to climb up the cherry trees and pluck the ripe cherries - and taste them of course.

But most of the time we were free to play in our large garden if the weather was nice.

Sometimes I formed my own little army and drilled them, it was fun. (It wasn't that much fun when ten years later I took basic training in the US Army.) When the weather was bad we played board games in the activity room, pretty much the same kids play now. Our favorite game was *Muehle*, we call it '9-men-Morris' in the States but few kids are familiar with it. My sister worked mostly in the laundry. They had these big washing machines like they have in commercial places. Big drum-like affairs for drying. Girls her age did most of the ironing, folding and sorting. The girls also sat the tables and got the food from the dumbwaiter and returned the dishes to the washroom. Older girls and boys did the washing of the dishes, pots and pans. After eating at the Hort I really enjoyed the food at the orphanage. Of course it was kosher, meaning no pork and no mixing of meat and dairy dishes.

Friday evening, after our weekly bath, which we older kids took by ourselves now, we got the freshly laundered clothing, and gathered in the dinning room for the Friday evening ceremonies of Kiddush, blessing the beginning of Sabbath, lighting of candles, eating the specially baked white bread, songs, and by then all starving, had our great dinner. I knew one thing, the cooks of the orphanage and those of the Hort didn't go to the same cooking school.

We had our walks in the nearby Englisher Garten. Walking further now to, and around the lake, the Chinese Tower, the Monopterus - a sort of Roman edifice where we played hide-and seek or catch. And the carousel where we could watch other children getting to

ride the merry-go-round. (I got to ride that carousel many times later when I had a bicycle and could ride to the Englisher Garten. That carousel had a small electric motor that wasn't strong enough to get it turning. The owner had boys pushing it to get it going fast and then we could jump on and ride it for free.)

We did our walk in the garden now with the older children and we no longer held hands with each other and the girls. If we held a girl's hand, like Ester's, it was done secretly and affectionately. It was really an enjoyable summer vacation my sister and I had.

Herta and I were permitted to visit our mother and we could take the streetcar to get there. For that we got the money from Aunt Bendix.

What treatment our mother received at the hospital for her blood poisoning to make her well again I don't know. I guess compresses and sulfa drugs were the method of treatment in 1937.

When our mother was well again we came home. Mom was real mad at my sister as she had money to take the streetcar home and I didn't, I had to walk carrying my bag of clothing. It didn't bother me. I was thriving on adversity as a kid. No problem too big to overcome I thought. I would soon learn differently.

CHAPTER IV**1938****The Last Year of Peace**

Happenings in 1938:

February: British Foreign Secretary Eden resigns in disagreement with Prime Minister Chamberlain on how to conduct business with Hitler. Chamberlain believes he can deal with Hitler.

Hitler dismisses War Minister Blomberg for marrying a former prostitute. Army Commander-in-Chief Fritsch is sacked on trumped-up charges that he is a homosexual, Fritsch opposed Hitler's war aims. Following the Anschluss, annexation, with Austria Fritsch is cleared of all charges and retired.

Hitler reorganizes the Wehrmacht, German Armed Forces, doing away with the War Ministry run by the Army. The Army becomes just one department of the OKW, Armed Forces High Command, under newly appointed General Keitel, the 'yes-man' in the OKW.

March: Hitler annexes Austria. On March 13, Austria is proclaimed a province of Germany, the *Ostmark*. Mussolini, who previously opposed Hitler on annexing Austria remains silent.

September: The Munich Crisis. Konrad Henlein and his Sudeten Germans clamor for annexation to Germany. The Czechs control the situation and Henlein flees to Germany. Hitler threatens to make war on Czechoslovakia. The French support the Czechs. War drums in Europe. Chamberlain flies to Munich and signs an agreement with Hitler to

divide Czechoslovakia. Hitler gets the Sudetenland. Chamberlain returns home, waving his agreement with Hitler, which he calls “Peace in our times.” Six months later Hitler takes the rest of Czechoslovakia.

November: The *Kristallnacht*. Jewish homes and businesses are attacked by the Brownshirts (SA Nazi thugs) in the evening.. Every display window smashed and the shards laying in the streets like glistening crystals. Everything in the stores dumped outside or looted. All Jewish men from sixteen to sixty arrested and taken to concentrations camps for three months. All synagogues burned down.

December: France signs a friendship agreement with Hitler similar to Chamberlain’s. Hitler disavows any designs on Alsace-Lorraine. A year and a half later Hitler incorporates Alsace-Lorraine into Germany.

1938 was an exciting year for me. Both good and bad things happened in my life. In April my sister Herta left for America. Jewish organizations in the United States, England and Holland sponsored children from Germany to get them out. And for once it included even children from poor families. In the case of the United States, if parents were willing to adopt these children, they were permitted to enter under a special allocation in addition to the yearly number of visas issued. The sponsors for my sister were a rich and childless family from Philadelphia. Herta was fourteen years old when she left my mother and me and went to join her new family in America. When she was eighteen, she left her Philadelphia family as she wanted to make it on her own, and went to work as a dental assistant.

Early in 1942, my mother and I wrote a note to Herta on one of the Swiss Red Cross response cards. She could write her reply on the second part of the card and send it back to us, which she did. We received her response late in 1944. For two and a half years this card was in the international postal system and never got lost. Communications may have been severed when Germany and America went to war, but the postal bureaucracy in its slow but unceasing persistence came through.

Herta and I were close and yet we had our sibling fights, about what I cannot remember. Maybe about money. I always had money. Not that mom ever had any extra to give us pocket money, and the chores I did for our family, like lugging the ashes down and bringing up coals were freebies. I earned nickels and dimes by doing chores for other people. At least several times a week I walked our neighbor's dog, Lumpi, and got twenty Pfennigs. On Saturdays I often went to the municipal *Leihamt*, a sort of city-sponsored pawn shop where people in need of money could take their valuables and pawn them; so important during Carnival and the Oktoberfest. Many came on their bicycles, and I would offer to clean them while the owners went in to transact their business. In fifteen minutes I had their bikes shiny. Usually I got a nickel. Sometimes a dime. A quarter made my day. A half dollar was Christmas. But that only came once a year.

Of course I needed money for the things a boy needs. In the bakery they sold single sticks of chewing gum for a Pfennig. A gummi bear cost the same. A pastry cost five Pfennigs, what – 3 cents. As did a bag of old chocolates. The Rolf Torring adventure booklets cost a dime, and checking out a book from the library the same. I needed carfare to go on Sunday's to the big soccer stadium, buy a ticket, and a program.

Movies for students and unemployed cost two dimes. I saved up for an air rifle. There were fairs to go to and the Oktoberfest. Circus Krone had shows in town, their permanent building was in Munich. Then there was Mother's birthday, Mother's Day, a nice Chanukah present for mom. Herta never had any money. She would borrow from me and never pay me back.

Another thing about Herta drove me crazy. We had a guardian given to us, a sort of foster-father, Leo Flaschen was his name. He had a business selling chinaware to restaurants and hotels, and part of his work was to visit these places in the evening. Often he took mom along, which left 'chicken sister' and me home alone. When Herta had to go to the bathroom in the evening, or before bedtime, she was scared to go down the stairs alone and sit in the bathroom we shared with our neighbor. No light in there so she took a candle along. If it had been up to her, I would have sat next to her and held her hand. Now the light on the stairwell came on for two minutes when you pushed a button. So, until Herta finished her business, I had to stand outside our apartment and keep pushing the button. And I could never understand what took her so long.

I was afraid too, sometimes. Fear in older siblings or parents carries over to younger children. With Herta so afraid of a boogie-man, I started to be afraid too. When she had left for America and I was alone at home, I became afraid. The door to our bedroom was closed; who was behind it? Sometimes I was brave enough to enter the room and search around, even under the beds. But then, alone in the kitchen and staring at the door, I wondered who was there now? I would have my air rifle, loaded with pellets, beside me, just in case.

It is interesting to understand why and how children learn to be afraid. The German word *Angst*, which is a noun, is a better word to describe fearfulness. It means being in a state of fright, anxiousness. From a mild feeling of apprehension to being in a state of terror. *Angst* is all encompassing. We Jewish children were in a constant state of being afraid of the Nazis though it must have been very individualistic of how we experienced this fright. To me personally as a child it was less being scared of some person I knew as the omnipresent power of the authorities, the government which might manifest itself in seeing Herr Schoenauer in his SA uniform or the marching by of the Black SS troopers. This was more the apprehensive type of fearfulness. A personal contact, with perhaps the Gestapo, was terror.

However, the normal scarceness children experience is rather learned by observing adults or older siblings. Therefore my being afraid of a boogie-man, who existed only in the imagination of my sister, I picked up from her.

Similar, I was not really afraid of thunderstorms and we had some severe ones in Munich. Looking to the west, I could see the sky turn bluish black and then the storm came with hail, downpour, lightning and thunder. I saw that my mother liked to look out the window (the windows of course closed) and watch the fury outside and I began to look in awe but not fright at the storm.

Often, walking Lumpi the dog out at Oberwiesenfeld, I would see the storm come, let it come over me and then run to the shelter of the Kaserne. But once I got a real scare, just as I was about to cross the Schwere Reiter street a bolt hit the overhead wire of the street car. The poor dog made a somersault. It happened right in front of me and it was a

shocking experience. The lesson I learned was not to go near overhead wires during a thunderstorm.

It was a year later when one time mom and I were on our Sunday walk to the cemetery and we got only as far as the Josefsplatz when the storm broke. Mom and I took refuge at the entrance to a house looking at the little park in front of us. Then a lightning struck one of the trees. Mom jumped and took my hand as if to reassure me. I felt her trembling, she was frightened. A thunderstorm was something to be afraid of and I became afraid of lightning.

Children learn to be scared by natural phenomena and experience but perhaps even more so by the action or reaction of siblings, parents or whomever.

Certainly I was sad to lose my sister Herta. We were a good brother and sister team, even though Herta was five years older than I and had her own friends. Ilse, the other Jewish girl in the house, was a friend to both of us.

I remember being with mom at the railroad station to bid Herta good-by, most of her class was there too. It must have been hard on our mother to give up her daughter to adoption just to get her out of Germany. Mom crying and my sister too.

As a nine-year old, my thoughts were on the candy box Herta had dropped under the train and could not get to. I thought she was a lucky girl to be able to go to America and leave this country where more and more signs were appearing all around: *Juden sind hier unerwünscht*, Jews are not wanted here. Then the train pulled out and there was a lot of waving and more crying, and I could climb down and rescue the box of chocolates. But I was sorry when she left. With all her sisterly faults I loved her.

Then the big surprise! From the railway station mom took me over to the department store Tietz, up to the toy section in the fourth floor and told me to pick out a scooter. I could spend twenty Marks, about ten dollars. I know Frau Maurer gave her the money. I picked what is called a *Trittrroller*, a scooter that has a floorboard you step on, up and down, and that propels the scooter at a pretty good speed. It was blue and even had a bell on the handlebar. I remember holding that big thing proudly in my arms when we went down in the elevator. I was in glory! That is what a boy's happiness is about. My sister was forgotten.

From the department store we went to the Koenigsplatz on the way home, that huge square with old buildings, art museums in Grecian style all around it, and on one end an arch with many columns where we used to play catch or hide-and-seek. At the other end was the *Ehrenmal*, the mausoleum for the followers of Hitler who were shot by the Munich police in 1923, when they made their coup and marched to the *Feldherrnhalle*. Hitler got away unharmed, he was the first to hit the ground. Fat Goering got shot in the leg. Munich police killed sixteen of the Nazis. Now there were enshrined in this mausoleum with a guard of honor, Black SS, standing there all the time. Another guard of honor was also present at the place where the shooting took place in the Residenzstrasse. Anyone who walked by was required to give the Nazi salute, and the Gestapo was there most of the time to see that this was done, or else...they would write you up and send you an invitation. Just before the two SS guards there was an alley where you could swing around and avoid saluting. We called it the *Drueckeberger Gassl*, or, in good English, 'the avoiding it alley.' The walk-by traffic was heavier through the alley than past the guards. Typically Munich.

Koenigsplatz was paved with huge stone plates, nice and smooth for riding a scooter, and there I was gliding around in boyish joy, ringing the bell for the world to know my happiness. Of course I always had to carry that treasure up and down three flights of stairs whenever I used it. On the scooter I learned to enjoy having my own transportation. I saved up nickels and dimes and later that year I bought an old used bicycle.

Another good event in 1938 came in June when I was invited to visit my uncle Richard and aunt Johanna Holzmann in Wiesbaden. They owned a nice house there and lived in the rear building. I think I spent three weeks with them, wonderful weeks. Aunt Johanna made me keep a daily diary on her typewriter, so I learned to type with two fingers. They took me around to see the sights, to the famous *Opel Bad*, a beautiful swimming pool with slides and all sorts of attractions. At the entrance a sign proclaimed, *Juden ist der Zutritt verboten*, a stronger message than was usually posted in Munich where Jews were not wanted. Here entry was forbidden. But it did not matter to me. I had a wonderful vacation with lots of good food. Food was always important to me, because during the week I had to eat that slop in the care center, and mom and I just ate cold in the evening. The main meal is always at noon. My mother did not have the money to buy expensive food. She was a great cook, and weekends, when I ate home, the food was all delicious. The only thing my mother did not cook well was Sauerkraut. She called it Weinkraut, cabbage flavored with wine. Only she did not have any wine; she used vinegar instead. I guess nobody is perfect, not even my beloved mother. She was a perfect mother to me in every other respect. I give her a 99 because of her vinegar Sauerkraut. To our poor people in America let me say that we never had the money to

buy a chicken. What meats she bought were the cheapest cuts. For soup she used beef bones.

Uncle Richard was a wonderful man who liked me a lot, and I him. He taught me to play chess. Do not teach a young boy with a good logical mind how to play chess unless you don't mind getting beaten. Uncle Richard did mind, and when, after a couple of weeks I won a game, he never played with me again.

We also visited relatives in Frankfurt, Mainz and Hoechst. Then in the fourth week they sent me to Berlin to visit my grandmother Jeanette and my aunt Hertha. I was nine years old, but traveled all over by train alone. Kids were more mature in Germany than American kids are, I knew how to take care of myself and stay out of troubles. And riding trains, looking out of the window was just great. I am one of those who still loves train rides. (This spring we took an Amtrack train from San Diego to Washington D.C., Philadelphia to visit my sister, and New York City. And back again. Our grandson and I had the greatest time. My wife said she will never get on another train.)

Leaving Wiesbaden for Berlin, I had to change trains in Frankfurt, and being early got a window seat. At one point I went to the toilet and when I came back a man had moved into my window seat. "This was my seat, if you please."

"You should not have gone away," he said.

"I just went to the toilet."

"Get away kid, now this is my seat."

That nasty man. But I knew what to do. I had to accept the situation because there was nothing else I could do. I had already turned my back on much nastier people. And this was not even a case of my being a Jew-boy; that man just loved being nasty to kids.

My grandma and aunt lived in Berlin together. My grandmother I loved, she was a fine, gentle old lady in her nineties. Since my father had been her youngest son, and I guess her favorite, she was never told that he had died in 1934. Every Hanukkah she would send him, or us, a smoked goose breasts, a real delicacy which my father must have loved. Being poor herself, she always played in the lottery so she could send him the money to visit her. I had to be careful when she asked me about my father. Aunt Hertha I did not get along at all. She had never married and had no idea how to treat kids. My uncle Heinrich had a liquor store in Berlin. He took me out to a fashionable outdoor café in the Tiergarten. Here too, big signs that Jews were not wanted.

Recently, in 1999, a distant relative send me a picture he took of my grandmother's gravestone in the Jewish cemetery in Berlin. She had died in 1939. On the stone was also inscribed "In Memory of her daughter Hertha and son Heinrich killed by the Germans in Lodz in 1942, while being transported in a gas-van." My aunt and uncle.

When I returned to Munich, I spend only one night at home when mom packed me up and sent me to Vilshofen to her parents and sister Centa. There was a polio epidemic in Munich. I spend another four weeks on vacation, took another fun train ride from Munich. How I loved the view when we crossed over the Vils river on a trestle bridge, and there below me was the town of Vilshofen.

In Vilshofen I always stayed with Aunt Centa, she had the first floor of the small house. On the ground level lived my maternal grandparents. On the top floor lived Uncle Schmidt and his wife. Uncle Schmidt raised pigeons for eating and selling. Roasted pigeons taste good, I guess like chicken, so they said.

The old three-family-house was in a long alley next to the Vils river, a short distance away the Vils flowed into the Danube. The house was primitive as all old houses were. At least it had cold running water in the kitchen. The bathroom was an outhouse built into the hallway downstairs.

There were a bunch of boys my age and older in Vilshofen, and we did things boys like to do. We went fishing under the Vils bridge where no one could see us. Fishing was only permitted for licensed fishermen. If we caught a fish, we went into the woods, built a fire, and roasted it on a stick. Not that we were hungry, we did it for fun. If we failed to catch a fish, we went into the sugar beet field, and stole one, and ate it. We made bows and arrows, and one time got adventurous and went after chickens. We saw this bunch of chicken way down behind a barn and sneaked close to shoot our arrows. To our misfortune (or maybe good fortune) it turned out that the chickens were white undies laid out to dry. So we shot a bunch of those. I really had a good time with the small-town boys. While they knew I was Jewish, they accepted me as one of the gang.

In the morning I had breakfast with my grandparents in their vegetable and fruit store across the bridge. A place called *Hundszipfel* and I better not try to translate that. On the other side of the store was a bakery and in the morning you could smell those fresh hard rolls. I would have a couple of those and fresh milk. For supper grandma would give me a large tomato, a hunk of bread and a nickel. With these in hand I went to the butcher shop and used the nickel to buy *Leberkas*, and old-fashioned meatloaf. Some days the butcher had made a variation of *Leberkas*, made with veal which was especially delicious. On Sundays we had our best meal. While Grandpa went to the

church, I helped Grandma in the small kitchen in back of the store where she did her cooking. She would make a roast and bread dumplings with lots of gravy.

The fair had come. A German country fair is similar to an American one. There are rides, and stalls with all sorts of goods for women to buy, and food places with lots of barbecued chicken and Bratwurst. Then there is of course the animal fair.

To get to the fair I had to walk through the main street of the town, under the old town gate still standing, out past the school, and along the country road to the fairgrounds. There was a small church along the way where I would go in when it was hot because it was so quiet and cool inside. Along the walls were frescoes depicting the crucifixion of Christ. Whoever made these paintings did so in gory details, and they made me shudder. Is that what people liked to look at when going to church and feeling holy?

At the fair I had no money, so I enjoyed myself looking around, enjoying the sights and the smells. Then I had a great idea! I had seen boys like me drive a cow from the fair to the rail station. I went over to the animal fair, and sure enough, a farmer asked me if I wanted to take the cow he had bought to the Bahnhof. So with the rope to hold it and a stick to guide it I took the cow to the Bahnhof. My grandmother made big eyes when she saw me go past her store. I got a Mark from the farmer, lots of money to spend at the fair.

There was a big swimming hole in the river by the mill we frequented. I loved to walk across the big Danube bridge and watch the river boats go by, lowering their smoke stacks to get under. Then there was the monastery Schweiklberg up on the hill. Always a nice walk to go up there. The monks were famous for making a liqueur of herbs which was supposed to be good for your health. All it did for me was to burn my

tongue and mouth. (Not long ago I found a bottle of that particular treasure in a liquor store, called *Schweiklberger Geist*. The inscription told of all the herbs that went into it. Directions: Use ten drops in water. Taking a swig from my grandmother's bottle was definitely wrong.)

Those were good times in Vilshofen. I always enjoyed visiting there as long as my grandparents lived. None of the Reiters ever became a Nazi. Aunt Centa was married, but her husband soon after drafted and killed on the Eastern Front. Centa was the youngest of my mother's siblings and I guess her favorite sister.

At the beginning of September I returned to Munich and my home. I went back to school, my classmates and friends, and teacher Kissinger, being ignored, getting my knuckles worked over, and Ds in every subject. Mom and I were alone now, I missed my sister. You take a close-knit family of three and remove a child and there is an irreplaceable void. I don't know how my mother felt but it must have even been harder on her. The type of family we were we never showed emotional ups and downs or discussed our feelings. And while I missed Herta terribly I was happy for her too be out of Nazi Germany. I had mom to be with but whom did she have? Not her daughter. Oh, I had friends but they never replaced my sister. During the week I was with my school mates and due to the Nazi persecution we all endured, even in 1938, we became closer, welcoming each school day to be together.

Weekends were the worst part. Sundays even more so then Saturdays were at least the stores were open and I could go downtown to the large department stores and there was that big, wonderful toy store Obletter to browse around in. And the Bahnhof to watch the trains come in or leave. Sunday was the worst part of the week, all stores closed.

Mom and I would do our weekly track out to the cemetery but what fun was that? A two hours hike out to Freimann. With Herta along we siblings could talk or at least have a good fight. With mom alone it was pure drudgery. Mom preferred that we take the streetcar first and then walk home. I was the type of kid which does the more unpleasant things first and then be able to enjoy the more fun things later unencumbered.

What really soured my mood on Sundays was the church bells ringing at the *St. Josephskirche*, the St. Joseph church nearby. Ringing early in the morning for first mass, then later for another mass and at noon for 12 o'clock. With the north winds drifting down the sounds of the bells - it made me feel even lonelier. Sometimes I would wind up our old gramophone box and play records just to dispel the lonely feelings. We all change as we become older, and now I love church bells ringing. Not the chimes we hear from our small churches here in the United States but real and resonating bells of different sizes giving a virtual concert.

The only nice things to look forward to on Sundays were mom's good cooking for our noon meal. And the glass of lemonade I got after our visit to my father. Then home by streetcar and to my books which transported me to far away places, even to America and the Wild West.

One day, walking with Lumpi, our neighbor's dog, out to Oberwiesenfeld Saturday afternoon, I saw soldiers moving out with their horses and wagons, cannons, all heavily armed with rifles, gas masks, and all the other paraphernalia of war. It all looked so awesome warlike that it gave me the shivers. Who wants war? The idea scared me. There was the threat of war with Czechoslovakia.

Up to that time I was not interested much in what went on in Germany, in the world. This war scare changed all that. I began to read the two bulletins displayed by the bank where I waited to take the streetcar. One bulletin was of the *Muenchner Nachrichten*, the daily of Munich. The other of the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, or People's Observer, the newspaper of the Nazi Party. Both carried the daily news pretty much the same, the by-lines and editorials were different. Lots of people read these bulletins in lieu of buying a newspaper, we at least could not afford to buy the daily paper. We didn't even have a radio. Once I read these bulletins, first the Munich paper, and if I still had time the party paper too, I also began to read the two showcases they put outside of our school.

One was of the *Stuermer*, Julius Streicher's publication from Nuremberg. There were four sheet displayed in a glass case fastened to the wall of our Jewish public school. Julius Streicher, number one Jew-baiter. His *Stuermer* best described as gutter press. Inflammatory articles against Jews and the worst caricatures one can imagine. The other publication displayed in a glass cage, a two page edition, was of *Das Schwarze Korps*, The Black Corps, the newspaper of the Black SS. Why I wanted to read those papers? To know thy enemy.

Oberwiesenfeld was a huge training field for the soldiers who were stationed in Kaserne, stone barracks bordering the field, on the Schwere Reiterstrasse, or "Heavy Cavalry street." At the end of the field was a small creek, and beyond the Munich airfield. Oberwiesenfeld was a twenty-minute walk from my house, and we boys loved to play out there. There was a little cove of trees to which we gave a special name (not printable); this was the soldier's playground - with their girls. We used to play Indians

sneaking up on them. We also used the cove of trees to smoke cigarettes. For a nickel we could buy a pack of four cheapies from a dispenser, Zuban cigarettes. None of us liked to smoke; we just puffed - showing off. There was also a large hill and four smaller ones where we rode our bicycles up and down.

In wintertime we skied there. Sometimes we bathed in the creek, but it was rocky and rather shallow. On the way home we would stop at the barracks and ask for *Kommisbrot*, hardtack. We were usually really hungry and wolfed down the hard black bread. Sometimes a kind soldier on duty would give us a hunk of Limburger cheese. If any reader is acquainted with this cheese, he knows how good it is -- and how smelly. Sometimes a not-so-nice soldier would drench us from the window with a bucket of water.

This huge field is where Munich dumped half of the city after the war right on top of our hills and made the *Schuttberg* or rubble mountain. In the 70s they built the Olympic stadium on what was Munich airport. The airport was moved out to the north.

Rosh Hashana came towards the end of September in 1938, the Jewish New Year. The dates of the Jewish festival change each year because they are based on the lunar calendar. Mom always saved during the year pennies to buy a goose for Rosh Hashana. I remember going to the Viktualienmarkt in town with her, I loved to go to that big market, there was lots to see. Many of the stands belonged to farmers and they sold fresh farmer's butter and cheese, eggs, milk and all the other dairy products, plus chickens, ducks and geese. So mom and I checked the geese. The idea was to buy the fattest goose one could afford. Mom bought one for twelve Marks, about six dollars.

Then for the holiday she roasted the beast. The constant drippings of fat she spooned off for later use as a bread spread. Goosefat on black bread with a little salt and pepper makes a delicious snack or lunch. Roasted goose with dumplings and a side dish of red cabbage was always my favorite. I guess that big goose was a bit much for the two of us; we had it all week.

Buying that expensive goose meant mom would not have any money when it came to the Oktoberfest, the big Munich fair; I would work for some. September 30th was mom's birthday, always a happy occasion for me to get something nice. Frau Maurer next door, let me walk Lumpi almost every day. I got a nickel a day, and maybe a quarter cleaning bicycles on Saturday afternoon. So I earned enough money to buy mom a pretty coffee cup and saucer. Then at a candy store I bought good chocolates, not the moldy kinds, and put them in the cup, tied a ribbon around it. The card I made myself. Then early on her birthday morning I decorated a corner and put her gifts there.

Oktoberfest extends through the last two weeks of September and the first week in October. The festival was in commemoration of Queen Therese, either her birthday or wedding day in early October. Each year the festival was repeated at the Theresienwiese, this huge park in Munich under the monument of Bavaria. The Bavaria is a bronze lady one can walk up like the Statue of Liberty and have a wonderful view of the city and the mountains. The Lady is supposed to protect Munich, from what I do not know. She did not protect Munich from Hitler, or the bombs. The Theresienwiese is mostly a big open meadow, with trees around the edge. On one end there was even a horseracing track.

Oktoberfest is something every boy and girl looked forward to. Going to it was like going to Coney Island. There was a spectacular roller coaster, a circus and many, many rides. My mother liked to go on the *Crinoline*, that is if she ever went on a ride. It was like a large merrygoround, turning and swinging from side to side. Propelled by men inside who pushed and shoved, a relic from long ago before steam and electric power were used. For us boys it is was too tame of course. My favorite ride was *Das Teufelsrad*, the Devil's Wheel. Inside a tent, with spectators lining the bleachers around, was a large, convex wooden wheel, with a ring of soft barricades circling it. We kids crowded on the wheel, which began to spin, faster and faster, kids flying off in every direction, until the kid in the very middle and top was the only one left. Then they tried to knock that kid off with a large, swinging ball. The idea was to get to the middle, or else just hold on to somebody and start spinning off.

I also enjoyed the bicyclerama. There was a wooden floor in the center of the tent on which bicyclists were doing their thing. During a pause you could choose a crazy bicycle to ride around on. For instance, there were the old fashioned bikes with a huge front wheel; unicycles, and the kind I chose were the wheels were not round but octangular. Going bum-bump, jarring me.

We all loved the *Geisterbahn*, or Spook House. You went through in an electric car like they have at American fairs, but inside was much more scary. There were even people inside, dressed as ghosts, who chased after us, swapping one with a kind of mop.

The cheapest rides cost five Pfennigs, but these were just for little children, The good rides cost a dime. So did a delicious roll with a Bismarckherring on it, or salami.

On weekends mom would take me to the Oktoberfest. She did not have a penny to spend so we walked from home, about an hour's walk. Then my mother would walk around looking for money on the ground. And she always found some, usually under the merry-go-round where people sat on a little seat and swinging around on long chains, and sometimes change would fall out of their pockets. This time mom found one Mark. Enough for eight rides for me and a roll for each of us.

What was unique to the Munich fair were the beer tents. Each of the major breweries erected its own tent, a big affair holding a thousand people easily. In the middle there was a stage with a Hump band. They served only beer inside the tent, in liter stone mugs. The food you could buy on stands outside. Pretzels, rolls and bread, all sorts of wurst and sausages, whole roasted chickens, and barbecued fish on long rods. In the *Oxenbraterei* tent a cleaned out ox was roasted all in one piece. That was one of the festivals special treats. It looked so delicious, not that I ever got to taste it.

I had a close call that Oktoberfest. A motorcycle almost ran me down. He went by me swoosh, I could feel the slipstream. Afterwards my knees were shaking and Ilse, who was with me, was in shock. I sometimes think I have a guardian angel who saves my life from time to time.

There were many happy times for me in the year 1938, but then, I was a child. My mother may have had more than one motive for having me travel all over Germany to get to know my relatives and the relations get to know me. One of her children she could assume, was safe, though far away. Would she ever see her daughter again? What would happen to her boy?

Things were getting ever more difficult for us Jews in Munich, and the difficulties multiplied in the latter part of the year 1938. Jews had to turn in their valuables. Everything from automobiles to silverware. Jewelry if it was of silver or gold or made with precious stones. Radios. And their pets. They were ordered to deliver these goods to the Jewish *Gemeinde*, a sort of administration center. There every Jew was registered with them, from the oldest to the newest baby. Of course the Gestapo had this list too. The Gestapo were the middlemen in issuing orders to the Jews through the *Gemeinde*. They got their orders from the big governments officials charged with supervising Jewish affairs, people like the man my mother had to deal with, Regierungsrat Schwingenstein.

So people brought their cars, radios, valuables to the collection point, and got a receipt, which was not worth the paper it was written on. In fact, the government was engaged in theft. No, not theft. Robbery. And we all know what it means to give up your dog or cat or bird. It was dangerous not to comply. The Nazis were tricky. Before they had issued orders to turn things in they had all Jews fill out an inventory of personal belongings under threat of house searches and concentration camp of noncompliance. We got these notices. Mom didn't make the inventory. Nothing to report. No pet, car, radio, silverware. Her heirlooms from her marriage she gave Frau Maurer for safekeeping. Weapons were on the list to be reported. Was an air rifle a weapon? We decided it was not. I needed that for the bogeyman behind the door. We had an old record player, one of those machines you wind up with a handle. But it wasn't on the list. Besides I needed that old machine to play La Paloma for mom, her favorite song.

So we reported nothing and were not affected by the confiscation, except that the threatening notices of what Jews could not possess kept coming. Each one ending with the threat of severe punishment for noncompliance. And we heard that the house searches had begun.

October came and went, and then it was November 9, 1938.

If the Crystal Night was planned beforehand or happened spontaneously I do not know.

I would guess that the Nazis had a plan for a limited sort of pogrom, and then when the German Deputy Ambassador in Paris was assassinated by a Jewish man, they took this as their excuse to set the plan in motion. They had to have a plan of getting their people together, designate their targets, what to do, and setting a time for it all to begin. It happened not just in Munich, but all over Germany.

The pogrom was executed by the SA (the Stormtroopers) and party members. I do not know if the SS was involved. The military – no. Perhaps some of the older Hitler Youth units participated. Certainly the Gestapo was involved; they had the list and addresses of whom to arrest – all Jewish men from sixteen to sixty from Munich to take them to Dachau. The Munich Police was involved, they provided transportation for those who were taken to Dachau, guarded the Brownshirts that no one disturbed them, and traffic control. The Munich Fire Department went to the several synagogues which were to be burned down to make sure that the fire did not spread to gentile houses. The beating of Jewish men may have been spontaneous, and dependent upon the brutality of each unit's leaders. Since I didn't see any of it I don't know if the SA thugs were in uniform or dressed as civilians.

That kind of coordination of different agencies could not possibly have happened without the specific direction of the German government.

And what was the purpose of it all? Why organize and then unleash all that hatred and bile by poisoned minds, vicious and brutal people? Everyone knew there were plenty of this type among the ranks of the SA. Many Jews had long suspected a mighty undercurrent of hate throughout the population. Who believed that the government of a great nation would organize hatred into a single night when the windows of all Jewish-owned stores were smashed, the goods looted and destroyed? The synagogues defiled and then burned down? When Jewish men were beaten and carted off to Dachau, guilty of nothing? Can pure avarice inspire human beings to try to wipe out one group among them off the face of the earth?

My mom and I went to bed that night knowing of no evil, retiring around nine o'clock as we usually did. I do not know when it all began. Apparently around ten o'clock that night a bunch of rowdy Brownshirts, SAs, went to the Lewin's shoe store to break it apart and loot it. With the door secure and a metal roll-cover protecting the front window, they were unable to break in. They went to the Lewin family in our apartments house to get the keys.

Frau Lewin told them she would call the police, they told her to go ahead and call. Frau Lewin came upstairs to our floor, to Frau Maurer who lived next door to us, and was the only person in the building to have a telephone. The police told her to turn over the keys to the SA. She came back downstairs to do that. Now the Stormtroopers wanted to know where she called from. No wanting to involve good Frau Maurer in all this, and at the same time not realizing the consequence of her lying, Frau Lewin told them she

called from the Holzmänn's phone, that is, the Jewish family living upstairs, middle apartment.

The troopers came upstairs and knocked, then pounded on our door. No answer. I guess someone told them that our bedroom door connected with the other third floor apartment, so they went into Frau Maurer's apartment and knocked and used their clubs banging on the door. Our bed was on the other side of that door, but my mother and I heard nothing. It was as if we were protected from hearing evil and from the harm that would have come to us if we had opened up.

Frau Maurer never believed that we did not hear anything. But it was true, although I cannot explain it.

The next morning I went to school just as I did every day, innocent of what had happened during the night. Along route 2, the streetcar I took, there was nothing to see. But once I got near my school I saw smoke, fire engines – MY SCHOOL WAS BURNING! In fact it had already burned down and was just a smoking heap. The firemen just standing there and doing nothing. Lots of Stormtroopers, most in civies, and Hitler Youth talking and laughing. Just a few children from school milling around. Nobody knew what was going on. Then an adult told us that the SA, Stormtroopers, had burned down our school and we had better get out of there. I found out later that they burned our school because the synagogue was next to it. The Nazis were after our temple and burned our school along with it. Later that year the school was reopened in part in the Hort center and part in the next door apartment building. We could still use the Hort but our nice activity room was now a classroom. In fact I finished fifth grade in it.

Hanukkah came and we celebrated it at the Hort. And then Christmas, when Willi invited me over to his place for candle lighting and sparklers and a plate full of cookies, *Stollen*, a Christmas cake. He played his accordion and we sang carols.

Yes, Christmas in Munich was wonderful. All the shop windows decorated nicely, I was a great window shopper anyhow. The Hertie Department Store had beautiful displays, some animated, to the children's delight. Inside the lobby was a huge Christmas tree reaching up to the fourth floor. I always wondered how they got it into the store. There were street vendors selling roasted chestnuts. For a nickel the vendor picked nuts from the charcoal grille and dropped them into a small paper bag.

Mom took me to the *Christkindlmarkt* near the big market downtown, a sort of fair with Christmas stuff, without rides but with many booths that sold everything for the season from Christmas tree ornaments to Bratwurst to cotton candy. Oh, the smells. Odors can bring back memories otherwise forgotten. Barbecued fish reminds me of the Oktoberfest and sizzling Bratwurst of the Christmas market. When we went in the evening it was even more charming or *gemuetlich*, cozy, with all the booths lit up, and often snow falling like crystal flakes from the dark sky. Maybe from the tower of Sankt Peter's Church nearby a trumpet trio played carols over the city. Life was beautiful. Not even the dark shadows of Nazism bothered me then.

CHAPTER V**1939****W a r.**

1939 was a terrible year. The year Hitler reneged on all his previous guaranties and marched into Czechoslovakia. The year he consolidated the Axis, and even convinced Stalin to agree on a mutual non-aggression pact. The two so much alike, terror governments. Ruling by brute force, the Gestapo and Stalin's GPU, later changed to the NKVD. Hitler's Himmler and Stalin's Beria. One called his movement the National Socialist party, the other the Communist party. Same thing. Terror governments! With Stalin neutralized by the pact Hitler moved against Poland and the two shared the spoils. How scornful Hitler was when the French and British finally girded themselves to oppose him. His lie to the German people was that he had to protect the ethnic Germans there subjugated by the Poles. The war he did not want was started by the Jews in France and England. He will punish them and the bad Poles, meaning the intelligence, government people that opposed him, the clergy of Poland. Himmler sent his *Einsatzgruppen* to Poland. Stalin his killer command to get rid of the Polish officers in the forest of Katyn.

I remember 1939 as the last year of peace. I was in fifth grade, still with teacher Kissinger. I had adjusted to his ignoring me and made the best of things. To him I was an unsatisfactory student who earned straight Ds, but I knew better than that. And so did my classmates, and that was important to me. There was no word from my sister, but we

knew her safe with an American family. We still lived in our little apartment alongside the people we knew. Even our Nazi neighbor, Herr Schoenauer, didn't bother us. There was much to do in winter. We took the streetcar out to Gruenwald to go skiing on the hills there. I had a good wooden sled mom had bought to haul coals and potatoes, but I could use it for sledding. About a half hour's walk from us were tennis courts they sprayed in winter with water to make an ice skating rink. I would screw my skates to my boots and then float over the ice, or watch the old men play a sort of shuffle board, 'curling' with a heavy disk that slid along while they ran ahead with a broom to clean off the ice. If the streets were snow covered and slick, I would skate all the way there and back home. Across from the skating rink was the *Nordbad*, an indoor swimming pool. I only went one time swimming there. While I could wear my swimming trunks under my trousers going there I had to change afterwards which meant taking them off in the common dressing room and everybody would see that I am circumcised, a Jewish boy. And they always had that big sign at the entrance "Forbidden for Jews".

I loved the winter, the snow falling silently in big, soft flakes, or driven by the wind, hitting my face with crystals of ice. I loved coming home all cold to the warmth of the hearth, the iron top of the oven glowing red. Within the secure, comfortable, warmed place of ours, mom reading her stories of Bavarian farmers of olden times and I my Karl May adventure books.

By March all those husbands, fathers and sons arrested during the Kristallnacht pogrom had been released from Dachau, except for a few, amongst them my friend Bertel's father. Bertel Sandbank and her family received the terrible news that her father had died of a heart attack in the camp. He had been a healthy man, just as athletic

as Bertel was. But he was also a free spirit, like his daughter Bertel. Later, from others, the family found out that he had been beaten to death. His death, and the injustice of it, was a real tragedy for my classmate. And worse was to come for her!

The father of Paul Nussbaum, who sat next to me in class, had spent those three months from November to February in Dachau. When he was released he managed to emigrate and take his family to Baltimore later that year. His father had been manager of the Oberpollinger Department Store in Munich. Paul and I had not started out as friends but we sat next to each other in class. I remember having a good fight with him because he loaned me a red pencil and I lost it. His mother apparently asked him to bring one of the poorer boys home after synagogue service on Saturdays for a good meal, and he chose me. I was always thrilled to be invited to his house. Their cook soon knew what I liked and made a veal roast with delicious white sauce and noodles. Then we played with his little cars and blocks, building houses and streets. He had one little car, a black convertible like Hitler's Mercedes. We called it the "devil's car." Usually we ended up fighting because he wanted to play his way and I, as stubborn as he, play my way. We have had this kind of up-and-down friendship our whole lives. We were both glad to see one another after the war but drifted apart again.

My best friend in my class was Alo Hirsch. He and his family went to America in 1940. His real name was Adolf, but nobody in our school wanted to be called by that name. He was born in 1929, as I was, before Hitler came to power. At school we were best of friends but we lived too far apart in the city to visit one another, or only rarely. His father was a butcher and a specialist in making sausages. Oh the joy when Alo's father gave me a long stick of salami to take home.

Once the family had emigrated I lost all contact with Alo until, sometimes in the 70's, I placed an add in the *Aufbau*, a Jewish newspaper circulating in the United States, writing that I was looking for an Alo Hirsch. To my sorrow it was his sister who responded to my add. Alo had died, she wrote, under tragic circumstances, in the 1950s. Escaping from tyranny does not guarantee a happy life ever after.

In the spring of 1939, a Jewish organization called *Hashomer Hatsair*, dedicated to Zionism and the protection of Jewish settlers in Palestine from marauding Arabs, ran a recruitment program in our Hort, where I spent the afternoons after school. Since the German government at that time was still encouraging Jews to leave Germany, the Nazis tolerated this program, which worked in conjunction with the *Hachshara*, the farm out in Milbertshofen. Hashomer Hatsair means "the watchtower guards." We boys got white and blue shirts and marched and exercised to the commands in Hebrew. Used sticks for rifles, I loved all that marching and stuff. This little Jewish kid was just as warlike as my gentile compatriots in the Hitler Youth program, with the important differences that we were trained in self-defense, not to attack and hate other people.

Hitler knew that the future of Germany and his leadership lay in the hand of the youth of Germany, and he set out from the beginning to indoctrinate German youth and capture their allegiance. Hitler came to power as *Reichschancellor*, in January, 1933. Three months later he had already consolidated all German youth organizations into the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls. He made a twenty-one year old, militaristic, fanatical follower of his, Baldur von Schirach, their leader. He gave the youth of Germany this creed:

‘You, Fuehrer, are our commander!

We stand in your name.

The Reich is the object of our struggle.

It is the beginning and the end.’

The words carry associations far beyond their literal meaning. When German youngsters who were used to reciting in church, “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” now they shouted that second line in unison, “We stand in your name”, which really means, “We belong to thee.” And the last line, “It is the beginning and the end”, plagiarized words they had heard all their lives in reference to Jesus, ‘I am the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega, saith the Lord,’ and ‘now and forever, amen.’ Only instead of saying “Amen”, they shouted “*Sieg Heil*”, ‘hail to victory.’ In November, 1933, Hitler declared in a speech, “When an opponent declares, ‘I will not come over to your side,’ I will calmly say, “Your child already belongs to us.” There were Hitler Youth groups in every city, town and village. A group was called a *Rotte*, a pack, like a pack of wolves. They had uniforms, brown or black, with a dagger in the belt, a swastika armband. They could join special interest groups, such as motorcycling, building model gliders, real gliders, then flying them; boating and skiing. They had athletic training, marching, and camping trips. But often their training was frankly paramilitary. They were trained in attack methods, often one *Rotte* attacking another, giving each other bloody heads and bruises. They were being trained not to defend Germany but to conquer others. Along with their training they had weekly propaganda meeting where they were taught the Nazi creed of German racial superiority

and were instilled with hate-filled dislike of foreigners depending on who was on Hitler's list to hate at the time. In 1933, it could have very well been the Italians. Later the Poles, English, Americans, but always the Jews and Slavs.

I had a few acquaintances who were in the H.J., and amazingly they associated with me. One even got me to join the Munich 1860 Sports Club in 1943.

From the entry-level at age eight to the *Volksjugend*, to the exit from the H.J. at age 18, they were taught to obey their leaders, dedicate their lives to Germany and the Fuehrer and to hate those who were different. Most, when they graduated from the Hitler Youth, entered the SA, SS, or became the fanatical officers of the Wehrmacht.

With all the fun German boys had in the H.J., I sometimes ask myself the question, would I have joined if my father had not been Jewish? And the answer would be yes. But, and this is very important, I would not have been a member for long. With my mother, with her gentle disposition towards other people and her strong principles in ethics, and my father, with his straightforward honesty in all matters, as role models, I would never have been able to get along in a group that taught intolerance and hatred toward people with a different birthright.

Apparently most Hitler Youth kids had parents who gave them a different disposition than I received. Let's call it 'value of life.' But there were many good German families too, who gave their sons and daughters a moral upbringing, often religious, whose sons and daughters still became part of the Nazi movement. As individuals, they could choose to form their own opinion about the rights and wrongs of Nazi indoctrination in regards to racial superiority and thinking of non-Germans as inferior - Jews, Gypsies and Slavs

as *Untermenschen*, ‘sub-humans.’ But they better kept such humanistic thoughts to themselves. And therefore I had these two friends from the H.J.

In their fanaticism the Hitler Youth committed atrocities as the SS did. In the Nuremberg War Trial I read accounts of incidents where Hitler Youth boys were given young Jewish children to practice on with their small caliber weapons. Firing at the crying and shrieking little ones until they were dead. Then laughingly check their bodies to see where they hit them. This is rotten. This shows the corruption of the human spirit brought on by the teachings of National Socialism.

When living as a boy in Nazi Munich I did not understand, why so many boys were such Hitlerite fanatics, or for that matter big people. I just avoided them. In fact I always regarded every German, adult and kid, as a danger to me. Few really were. But I never knew. I am certain this attitude helped me to survive.

The propaganda the Germans were exposed to since Hitler came to power in 1933, is staggering and unbelievable for those who had not witnessed it. Shirer in his book ‘The Third Reich’ described of what he experienced. So did other correspondents. You had to live there and be exposed to it to really understand what the Nazis did and how it effected the German people – so prone to this form of pomp and ceremony. The Roman Circus in modern version.

I often thought about what made the Germans so receptive to Nazi propaganda. I mean we talk about a people who were along with the English, the Scandinavians, Italians, the Swiss, French, Spanish and Austrians among the most cultured and liberated people in Europe. In culture only Italy had as many poets, literary men, composers as the German nation did. In science and demography Germany was in the

forefront. And also in tolerance of minorities, both religious and ethnic. At last not any worse than the other so called enlightened nations. So what happened that the German reverted back to barbarism? (Barbaric, according to Webster's, meaning uncivilized, cruel, savage, inhuman.) As an old man now, thinking back and trying to understand of what happened to the Germans I find a number of dark sides to their so called being one of the most civilized people in the world.

First of all their strict code of obedience. To submit to authority totally. The fanatical Law and Order people.

In Germany to obey was a national trait. Unquestioningly and blindly. It is not something born with, a genetic defect. Rather it was passed on from father to son, from authority to the public. To command or to obey - no in-between. Just as total in one as in the other. Father was obeyed, as was mother. And so was the teacher. German schools had few disciplinary problems. Sounds wonderful unless we talk about total and blind obedience. A German in uniform became a pawn, a robot in modern terms. He belonged with body and soul following every command regardless how stupid or inhuman the order was. This is why the war criminals from the lowly SS man to the commanders of concentrations and death camps, and to the hierarchy such as Kaltenbrunner and Eichmann and even Goering tried to excuse their inhumanity by stating that they only followed orders or policies of Hitler. It wasn't just that simple. Not just following orders. We have seen in the infamous Wannsee Conference how eagerly the underlings made plans for the final Solution decreed by Hitler. And it was the technicians of industry who initiated the use of gas for the extermination of large groups of people as

being more efficient than shootings. The unflinching obedience had corrupted their minds. They had gone beyond obeying, they were proposing radicalism, extremism. Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz, under whose guidance over a million people were murdered (most were mothers with their children and the elderly) had this to say about obedience:

I had been brought up by my parents to be respectful and obedient toward all grown-up people. It was constantly impressed upon me that I must obey promptly the wishes and commands of my parents, teachers, and priests, etc. Whatever they said was always right. From my earliest youth I was brought up with a strong awareness of duty.

And further he stated at his trial: *From our entire training, the thought of refusing an order just did not enter one's head, regardless of what kind of order it was.*

Laws are important as they regulate the lives between people. Without laws we would have chaos. But when a nation makes laws that are criminal in nature and we follow these laws blindly we become criminals - so the judges of the world in the Nuremberg trials.

Another character trait of Germans is efficiency. A German ditch digger will construct the most perfect ditch. A German composer the best music. A poet the most lyrical rhymes. Germany produced the best scientist. Its industry the most efficient. Nothing wrong with efficiency unless it is used for evil purpose. Ten SS men with rifles shooting ten children and their parents every thirty seconds. Transports usually composed of a thousand persons dispatched in less than an hour. That is efficiency. Three thousand killed by gas in fifteen minutes. Greater efficiency.

The need to excel. Not the very normal desire to do well as a student might do in school or a worker or scientist. But to be better than anyone else in the world, and then to have the audacity to believe it too. This was the main reason the German scientists could not produce the atomic bomb. Individually they were excellent scientists.

However, building the A-bomb was only possible as a team effort. With each German scientist acting like a prima donna and each one thinking of himself to be superior to the others - the others all *Dummkoepfe*, 'dumbheads' – they failed. And failed by a large margin. Germany had the know-how to make the bomb back in 1940. America didn't until 1942. When Werner Heisenberg stated after the war that the German physicists were not seriously working on the atomic bomb he was not telling the truth.

When the war was over in Europe the German teams working on the bomb were still in their infancy of getting a pile to produce a controlled chain reaction (for making plutonium) and their efforts to purify uranium were still at the laboratory stage.

Another character trait of Germans was a tendency for fatalism. This made for a brave soldier who would stay and fight in his foxhole to the end in a hopeless situation if he was told to do so. While the American and any other soldiers (except the Japanese) had the sense and initiative not to die and try to get out of a hopeless situation. Therefore the Germans endured the bombing with fatalism and could have never been bombed into submission as some bomber generals, like British Gen. Harris believed.

But the most fatal ingredient in the cup of poison that made the Germans worship and idolize Hitler and the Nazi movement was their unhealthy obsession with romanticism. It is when this romanticism becomes excessive, dominating, compulsive, that it diminishes the other civilized traits one has acquired. Like becoming intoxicated by

over indulging in a bottle of heavy wine. This is what I mean by Germany's indulgence in romanticism. Furthered by the German writers and poets, mystical saga and legends of hero worship. Already instilled in young children by the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm. These were not the innocent tales of fun and frolic. But of wicked people like the witch in Hansel and Gretel who wanted to eat the children; and at the end the children pushed the witch into the oven and burned her alive. Already the beginning is gruesome when the children were sent into the forbidding forest to get lost and not return home. What kind of feeling does that give young, impressionable children – to be abandoned by the parents. I don't remember all the stories I read. It seemed all tales pertained to good and evil, murder and mayhem. I was awed and in shivers. Not really healthy stories for young children. But these were the German fairy tales.

I remember as a youngster one of my favorite poems was Goethe's *Der Erlkoenig*. The king of the alder forest. It begins: *Wer reitet so spaet durch Nacht und Wind*

Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind...

Rhyme is difficult to translate unless one is a poet. The best I can do is:

Who is riding late through wind and night

It is the father with his child...

And the poem tells of how the Erlkonig is violating the child while the father holds it dear to him...the child's complaints as it tries to tell the father that the king is tempting the child to come to him...then is suffering as it is violated in a mystical spiritual way...the father helplessly riding madly through the king's forest...and the poem ends with:

...und in seinen Armen das Kind war tod.

...only to find that in his arms the child was dead.

I still feel the emotion of fear when I read that poem; yet I do read it. We human beings enjoy being thrilled, whether from fear or elation. The Romanticists appealed to human emotions, not reason. I am a romantic but I know of its dangers and enjoy it, but thoughtfully and not in over indulgence. Hitler used the tradition and emotion of the Romantic Movement to capture the soul of the German people and advance his power.

Pictures are worth a thousand words the saying goes. You combine pictures with music and you have a most persuasive stimulus. I am referring to opera and specifically to Richard Wagner, Hitler's greatest Romantic ally. His music and operas were pure *Rauschgift* for the German soul.

Rauschgift means 'intoxicating poison.' I believe that if we in America would call illegal drugs 'intoxicating poison' we might scare a lot of young people away from even trying it the first time.

Wagner's operas are exactly that. 'Lead me not into temptation' the New Testament says.' Wagner did lead the German soul into the abyss of mysticism and eroticism. His operas denying Christianity in the worship of Gods and Goddesses. The extremism of hero worship. The loves in his operas are not of the amorous affection and devotion we see in Puccini or other composers and poets but of an intemperate zealous nature. Sick! The layout and scenery as Wagner demanded in his shows are wildly extravagant. The German soul already susceptible to illusions and imageries immersed itself in his Holy Grail.

Add to that his music. What a genius Wagner was to make such music. Immortal *Rauschgift*. Most Americans only know of his music in the Wedding march – 'Here comes the Bride...' Few know it came from his Lohengrin opera. Oh yes, many are

familiar with the movie the ‘Apocalypse Now.’ Remember when the helicopters come charging into Vietnam en masse and the music blaring from their loudspeaker thrilling the audience – a magnificent spectacle. The warriors on the ships bringing death and destruction. The music is from the Ride of the Valkyrie. Wagner would have loved it. How tempting it is to immerse oneself in his music. Tannhauser; the inspiring sounds of the Ring. Scenery, music, chorals and solos conspiring to transport one into the nether world of unholy fantasies. Teutonic Romanticism!

I saw most of Wagner’s operas. This was of course after the war when I was in the U.S. Army and stationed in Germany. I really didn’t like Wagner’s operas but I went to try to figure out what tuned the German mind to his music. Usually promptly went to sleep during the long, drawn out monotonous and morbid singing of some hero until the shrill screaming of a goddess or heroine, or the resounding of trumpets and drums woke me up.

Hitler was fascinated by Richard Wagner, his life (Wagner was a virulent anti-Semite) and his music – or rather his operas.

Sometimes he would attend a private performance. Watching it solo. Immersing his sick mind in that lurid *Rauschgift* of hero worship. Hitler the hero. The more rousing excerpts of his operas were preludes to Hitler’s speeches at party rallies. His fanfares and drum beats stirring up the Hitler Youth and SS to hysteria. And preceding a *Sondermeldung*, a special bulletin of the Wehrmacht announcing another exploit of the U-boats or a victory in Russia.

When I listen to Wagner I think of Hitler, of evil.

All these characteristics of the German people I mentioned here are really worthwhile and even noble and helped Germany to become the great nation it was before Hitler came to power. It was their lack of moderation and tendency for extremism that made them such willing followers of Hitler and Nazism. To use Goebbels' favorite idioms - total, radical, fanatical.

People often ask me if I ever saw Hitler. In fact I saw him many times. A block away from where I lived in the Theresienstrasse lived the architect Troost, Hitler's builder before Speer. I don't know when Troost died but Hitler still came to visit his widow. He would drive up in his motorcade - the Fuehrer is here. People would line the streets to see him drive by and shout their Heil Hitler. If the weather was good he would drive by in his open Mercedes, sitting in the back and always wearing his brown uniform. All I had to do was to look out of the window or be downstairs to see him at eye level. My mother had a closer encounter with Hitler. She stood once at the street corner by our house when his motorcade came by. His car had to stop as a streetcar was crossing. He had just come so people were not yet in the street. There she was staring at him – and he at her. Hitler probably surprised that there was a woman not raising her arm and shouting Heil Hitler.

PROPAGANDA! Was what made Hitler and his Nazi party so successful that even in 1932, when free elections were held, the Nazis had become the single most powerful party in Germany.

Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda. Also known as the 'Poison Dwarf.' Hitler's propaganda genius. He was born with a grotesque club foot which

caused him a lot of grief. Trying to enlist in the Big War, they laughed at him. Later, in a speech he intimated that it was due to a war wound, “those of us shot up in the war.” Probably to compensate for his deformity he concentrated on studies. Attended no fewer than eight universities where he majored in philosophy, history, literature and art. Really a career student before he finally got his Ph. D. He wrote an autobiographical novel, ‘Michael’, which was not published until he became famous. Wrote two plays nobody wanted to produce. Wrote articles for the Berliner Tageblatt which were never printed.

Goebbels was one of the many angry young men who did not succeed in the postwar era. Then in 1922 he heard Hitler speak at the Krone circus in Munich. In his diary he recorded “I was reborn.”

Hitler had a canny intuition of a man’s capabilities and spotted in the educated Goebbels gifts of eloquence and most important – loyalty to the Nazi movement. After Goebbels made a speech to the party Hitler thanked the little man and embraced him. Goebbels wrote gratefully in his diary: “Adolf Hitler, I love you.”

Goebbels proved to be a great orator and gifted propagandist. Truth did not matter.

Goebbels firmly believed in the old idiom, ‘you tell a lie often enough and people believe it.’ Hitler made Goebbels Minister of Propaganda in 1933. In March of 1933 Goebbels proved his skills by arranging a torchlight parade in Berlin famous for its conclusion when the marching students burned books of such ‘degenerate’ authors like Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Jack London, H.G. Wells. At the book burning Goebbels proclaimed, “the soul of the German people can again express itself. These flames not only illuminate the final end of an old era; they also light up the new.”

Which in due time became the pyres of bodies consumed by the fires and the burning of German cities.

In September of 1933 the Reich Chamber of Culture was formed with Goebbels at its head. Under his guidance the professions, press, radio, music, literature, theater and motion pictures were organized into sub-chambers. All had to join the various organization or be deprived of their livelihood. The dictatorial nature of the chambers, lack of free expression, incarceration of those opposed or not following the Nazi creed led many to leave Germany. Great artists like Marlene Dietrich, Peter Lore, Thomas Mann, and many others left to seek the freedom denied them in Nazi Germany. The dark curtain of the Swastika engulfed Germany and would for twelve long years before the Thousand Year Reich came crumbling down.

The propaganda I was exposed to as a little boy in Munich was awesome to me. Frightening really in its intensity. I loved parades, all boys do. The most fun parade was the one on *Fasching*, carnival. The others were usually soldiers marching from one barracks to another. Bigger parades had a band in front. I don't remember all the dates when big things happened. One of course was Hitler's birthday on the 20th of April. Another big fest was the 1st of May. It has always been a holiday in Bavaria, of pagan origin, with people in their native costumes dancing around the May-pole. The Nazis appropriated this day and made it National Labor Day. *Heldengedenktage* 'memory of heroes' the Nazis substituted for memorial day. The 9th of November was another Nazi fest. It commemorated the march of Hitler and his followers as they attempted a coup in Munich. And January 30th, *Tag der Machtuebernahme* when the Nazis took power.

I only know about these Nazi holidays in Munich and not what other cities did. These festivities were usually organized by the *Gauleiters*, district chiefs, and the party. *Gauleiter* for Munich-Upper Bavaria was Adolf Wagner. Most *Gauleiters* were old members of the party dating back to Hitler's early days and received their posts as party district chiefs as a sort of 'thank you for your loyalty' from Hitler. They were a mixed bag of anything from bankers to street brawlers. The *Gauleiters* carved out their little fiefdoms and ruled them like barons. Only loyal to Hitler they took their orders directly from him or their party chief Hess, and when he traveled to England from his successor Martin Bormann. Hitler tolerated them and their dictatorial administration and admonished them only to keep up the spirit and will of the people, which they did more or less successfully. For food and consumer goods they and their cohorts raided the occupied countries and sent trainloads to their *Gaue*. Hitler dubbed his *Gauleiters* the *Gaugrafen* or 'Gau Barons.' Their opposites in the government called them 'little Hitlers.' Robber barons would have been just as appropriate. They had their little quirks. Julius Streicher sometimes walking to work in Nuremberg in his swimming trunks. Wilhelm Kube, *Gauleiter* of the Ostmark (Austria) had the church bells ring to announce his arrival. When they became a constant source of embarrassment to the party Hitler finally suspended Streicher but let him keep his title and pornographic newspaper *Der Stuermer*. Wilhelm Kube and Erich Koch he banished to the East were they became infamous as the most brutal administrators in the former Soviet Union. Adolf Wagner was not the worst of them. Though he infuriated the Catholics in Munich by decreeing the removal of the crucifix from classrooms and substituting pictures of the Fuehrer. And of course he was very anti-Semitic.

Their style of propaganda! For Hitler's birthday in 1939, every house owner in Munich had to buy and install two curved candle holders for each window facing the street. They stuck out about a foot and a half from each window. At the end was a metal cup into which a large candle in clear cellophane could be placed. Then at a certain time when it got dark all candles had to be lit.

It looked magnificent all right. Looking down our Theresienstrasse towards the Ludwigstrasse both sides of the street were brightly illuminated by the thousands of candles. And so was every other street in Munich.

In the afternoon was the big parade starting from the Siegestor down the mile long Ludwigstrasse to the the Koenigsplatz where the ceremonies celebrating Adolf's birthday were held. I watched from the Ludwigstrasse, nearest my home. The street was decorated with each house covered with silk, each city block in a different color.

Garlands of greenery and ornaments of gold and silver across the wide avenue from window to window. Flags and Swastikas galore. It was like a stage setting out of Wagner's operas. Loudspeakers blaring martial music, Nazi songs, fanfares and kettledrums. The parade was at least three hours long. Every contingent of the army, from horse drawn guns to heavy motorized vehicles and tanks. Army bands, army auxiliary units. The air force and parachutists. The navy with floats of ships and submarines. Then came the black SS. The SA and their many branches. The Hitler Youth and the little guys, the Volksjugend, preceded by their drum and bugle bands. The League of German Girls, women's Red Cross and nurses in their white dresses with blue stripes. Numerous floats with the 'Joy Through Strength' theme. And in between came the Nazi big wigs in open cars with the people screaming their Sieg Heil and

behaving in a frenzy. Tirelessly raising their arms in Nazi salute whenever a flag came by or a general in front of his troops or a Nazi Bonze. Of course there were *Gauleiter* Wagner and *Reichsleiter* Fiehler, the Munich mayor, and one of the worst Nazis and anti-Semites. Not all. I saw some people standing back and just watching silently as I did. The vast majority of Munichcians seemed to love the parade, raised their arms and shouted their Nazi greetings.

Yes it was impressive and awesome – and horrible, to me. To me, a Jewish boy, these people in uncontrolled madness looked frightening. In due time, when the walls came crumbling down and the city burned there would be no more jubilation and frenzied Heil Hitlers, and very few flags flying on Hitler's birthday.

I don't know what went on at the Koenigsplatz. Probably speeches, dedications and swearing-in-ceremonies, favorites of the Nazis. Perhaps new SS recruits were sworn in, swearing loyalty not to the Fatherland as in pre-Hitler times but to the Fuehrer.

I swear to thee Adolf Hitler,

As Fuehrer and Chancellor of the German Reich,

Loyalty and Bravery.

I vow to thee and to the superiors whom thou shall appoint

Obedience unto death,

So help me God.

Hess was still the Deputy Fuehrer and he was a fanatical and intense speaker. Goebbels of course was in Berlin and so was Goering. Himmler probably in his hometown of Landshut in Lower Bavaria doing his thing with his SS bullies, or perhaps in the *Ordensburg*, his SS castle, practicing some mystical rites.

In the evening the parade went in reverse. When darkness set in all the candles were lit and the streets were ablaze. The participants in the parade, except the Wehrmacht contingents, carried torches. I didn't go and see that.

Eleven days later the whole process was repeated for May Day. This time the candles one had to buy and display were in red cellophane. The frenzy repeated.

Like with the Soviets, red was one of the favorite colors of Nazi memorabilia. I remember when I was little, maybe till 1936, the postal wagons were painted yellow. Then they all turned red.

Propagandize is to disseminate principles of ideas by organized effort – according to Webster's. In this the Nazis were very good. The best! I saw what they did to the public. Nazi propaganda was a mixed bag of Germanic folklore, heroic legends, a good dose of romantic mysticism, Wagnerian music to get the adrenaline flowing - and marching, uniforms, flag waving the Germans so loved. And foremost the teaching of racial superiority: *Deutschland – Deutschland ueber alles*, Germany – Germany above all. Better than anyone else – by birthright.

Radio was the main source of propaganda. Most Germans had radios, the *Volksempfänger*, a simple radio produced en masse and sold cheaply. With their parades and ceremonies they reached only those who wished to participate in their propaganda stunts. With the radio, and all programs controlled by the government and Goebbels' propaganda ministry, they could reach and influence all or most Germans.

Hitler's speeches were broadcast and preceded by an hour long 'Nazi-spiel' of Wagnerian humbug, fanfares and drum rolling, frenzied commentaries to excite the audiences and prepare them for their Fuehrer, the Almighty One.

When the war began in 1939 and well into 1943, when there were victories on land, sea and air, the announcements were made in *Sondermeldung*, 'special bulletin.' Again for an hour before the bulletin was read there was this heart pounding music, soldiers songs, trumpets blaring and kettledrums beating. After the middle of 1943 there were no more special bulletins. No more victories to announce.

After the war started, on Sundays evenings, came the *Wunschkonzert*, an hour long program of favorite music and songs as requested by those who wrote in. Rarely Nazi stuff. And interspersed with messages from soldiers for their loved ones back home or visa versa. Goebbels was a clever manipulator of the human mind. He more than anyone else understood German mentality and how to give the carrot along with the stick. It was the same with the UFA film industry. While there were obvious propaganda movies meant to turn the people's wrath against another country, such as movies before the invasion of Poland showing Poles abusing *Volksdeutsche*, ethnic Germans, and movies extolling the Hitler Youth and Wehrmacht, and of course anti-Semitic films, there were in the main good movies just for entertainment. Maybe with a twist on how beautiful our fatherland is and 'we must preserve it and our way of life.'

While the German people were really propagandist by the Nazis I am certain they didn't swallow it all with bait and hook but were selective. Rather they believed what they wished to see and happen. Then the fortunes of war turned against Germany in 1943, when the cities were reduced to rubble and burned out shells, the Nazis planted rumors of *Wunderwaffen*, wonder weapons to come and bring victory the Wehrmacht could no longer achieve. The hydrogen bomb was the most fantastic wonder weapon.

Another dream weapon rumored was the magnetic ray, an electronic beam shot up to immobilize the motors of planes. A powerful light to blind the flyers. I don't remember them all. None of these wonder weapons ever materialized because they were never even worked on. The secret weapons Germany tried to produce were never mentioned, such as the V-1 and V-2, the proximity fuses, submarines propelled by hydrogen peroxide and of course the atomic bomb.

In similar fashion rumors had it that the Jews were shipped East to work camps. To most Germans – good riddance. Let them work there and rebuild what had been destroyed by 'their' starting this war – so Goebbels said.

Did the Germans really believe that this is where their Jewish neighbors disappeared to? To work camps somewhere in the East? Did the Germans know what was really happening to the Jews? The answer cannot be clearly defined. It depended upon the source of information available to the public. The German government hid from the people what they did. The crime too dreadful to even appeal to the anti-Semitism of many Germans and plead for understanding. Many citizens saw the Jews, young and old, packed off with their baggage in buses and trucks. Couldn't miss them with their yellow stars. After the war a boy from Wittlich, a town near the Moselle river, stated that when he saw the town's fifty Jews taken away in two trucks he thought they were going to be resettled in Poland. He later remembered that he thought it was cruel to uproot people like that. "But I never suspected what was really going to happen."

If a family had a member as a soldier in the East they knew. It was almost impossible for a soldier to serve on the Eastern Front and not be exposed to mass shootings of men, women and children – referred to as Jewish bandits and commissars. And if a soldier

did not witness such shootings himself he heard about it from those who saw it. When soldiers came home on furloughs they usually told their wives, relatives and close friends of what they had seen and knew. For that reason many Germans knew about mass shootings but can rightfully claim they did not know about the extermination camps.

There was constant propaganda about atrocities committed by the Soviets. The Russian soldier was depicted as subhumans. Cowards who couldn't shoot straight and run modern machinery of war, drive tanks and fly planes. And later when these subhumans had successes they were described as 'hordes of ferocious beasts.' Newsreels showed the Russian prisoners dirty, disheveled and those of Asian decent or with brutal faces the favorite of the combat photographers. The Asian menace again.

Russian partisans were always described as bandits. Often as 'Jewish bandits who ambush your husbands and sons,' to disguise mass shooting of women and children as anti-bandit actions.

So, to this question often asked "did the Germans know?" I can only give an equivocal answer. About atrocities committed by the SS and its auxiliary native troops in Poland, the Baltic countries and the Soviet Union many knew. While I won't attempt to put figures on 'who knew' if we only think in terms that at least twelve million German soldiers and civilians served at one time or another in the East we have a sizable part of the German nation who knew, when we include their families and friends back home.

Who knew about the Final Solution and the death camps? That information was restricted to those who had to know because of their needed participation in the process

of extermination. The Nazi party officials knew. So did the higher up bureaucrats of the German government such as Regierungsrat Schwingenstein. They coordinated the plans for 'resettlement' of the Jews. The Gestapo, SD, Sipo and other police agencies of Germany knew. They were involved in keeping track of every Jew and seeing to their departure on trains. A large segment of the German transportation system was involved in routing the many trains to the death camps. And the SS as mass executioners.

How many were involved in the Final solution? A minority of the German nation. But at least tens of thousands were party to it.

In Munich everybody knew of Dachau. It was the first concentration camp built in Germany, Himmler's work. It was common knowledge in Munich and Bavaria that Dachau was mainly for political prisoners. A 'political one' was anyone opposed to the Nazis. Denounced for making an anti-Nazi remark, beaten by the Gestapo to confess and incarcerated in Dachau. Listening to a foreign broadcast meant Dachau. It was common knowledge that parents had been reported by their Hitler Youth children. There is the sad case of twenty-one year old Franz Schroeder from Wittlich. His own father had denounced him for listening to Radio Luxemburg. He was arrested taken to the Gestapo. Sent to a camp and shortly after his mother received an urn with his ashes and a note that her son had died of pneumonia. He had been in perfect health when taken away. The mother never again spoke to her husband.

Between 1933, the inception of Dachau and other camps, and 1939, 225,000 Germans were imprisoned for political offenses. Pastor Martin Niemoeller, a U-boat commander of the First World War, was probably the best known prisoner.

What did the Germans think about the Jews, often their neighbors, disappearing? It wouldn't be fair to say that they didn't care. Though many who were anti-Semitic thought 'good riddance' whatever. Many were afraid to ask, besides it was forbidden for Aryans to associate or even talk to Jews.

I had some people in our house asked what happened to the Lewins, the owners of our apartment house. They were taken away on the twelfth of November 1941 and many saw the bus drive up, their luggage loaded and off they went – never to be seen again. The truth is that my mother and I didn't know. Nor did the few Jews left after the war in Munich learn of their fate until after the war. We only knew that they had been taken for resettlement to the East – destination Riga in Latvia. Neither the Jews of Munich nor the German gentiles – except those involved or in the know – would and could have ever thought that this transport of a thousand people, mostly families with their children were taken to Kovno in Lithuania and shot the same day they arrived.

Hitler never put the orders for the destruction of the Jews into writing. He really believed that when the war ended victorious for Germany he would emerge as the War Lord who guided the Wehrmacht to victory and he wanted to stand unblemished before the world. However, Hitler was the only one who could give the order for the extermination of an entire people. Since his most intimate confidants in this ghastly business were Goering, Himmler, Heydrich and his successor Kaltenbrunner, Eichmann, and they were all dead at war's end or shortly after – Heydrich was assassinated in 1942, Hitler killed himself, so did Himmler. Only Goering and Kaltenbrunner and Eichmann decided to stay alive. Goering proclaiming that he was the Commander of the Luftwaffe, and yes, *Reichsjaeegermeister* 'Chief Huntingmaster', and maybe

Reichsmarschall, Head of the German Government. A more honorary post as it was the party that ruled. Goering was fighting for his life at the Nuremberg war trials. He was not about to reveal his role in the extermination of the Jews. Yet it was Goering as head of the government to whom Hitler expressed his *Wunsch*, 'wish' that the final solution should be implemented. This was just before Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

Again no written records exist but others testified to the effect that Goering gave the order for the killings to begin. Himmler also communicated Hitler's wish to Heydrich.

Der Fuehrer wuenscht: like an order from Hitler which no one dared to disobey. Or...?

There were some responsible individuals who did not follow Hitler's orders. And these were orders and not expressed as wishes. In June of 1942, Field Marshal Erwin

Rommel of the Africa Corps received the following communiqué:

Chefsache [top secret] 9 June 1942. Per officer only.

1. *To the Panzer Army in Africa.*

Inform: 2. OKH/Gen.Qu. etc...

According to current intelligence reports, numerous German political refugees are to be found with the Free French Units in Africa.

The Fuehrer has ordered that they be proceeded against with utmost severity. They should therefore be ruthlessly destroyed in battle. Captives should be summarily shot on orders from the nearest German officer, unless they are to be spared temporarily for interrogation. Further written communication of this order is forbidden. The commanders should be instructed verbally.

OKW (High Command of the Wehrmacht)

General Siegfried Westphal, Rommel's deputy commander said the following in his recollections. "Bir el Hacheim was particularly courageously defended by the Free French first brigade, and alongside it the thirteenth half-brigade of the Foreign Legion under General Koenig. This stronghold was a key post. According to the OKW, Koenig also had a Jewish battalion under his command. We received a radio signal from Hitler ordering that all captured Israelis be slaughtered in battle. We destroyed this order as we did not want to have anything to do with such methods."

Another case of resistance to the Nazi's final solution can be demonstrated in this account of a high Nazi official. As soon as German troops stormed into Russia Heydrich's *Einsatzkommandos* (killer squads) were right behind them liquidating Jewish families. These mass shootings were openly committed and referred to as 'combating bandits' the pseudonym for fighting partisans. However, there were no partisans active in the Baltic states. In the fall of 1941 German Jews, mainly from the big cities of Berlin, Frankfurt and Vienna were resettled in the ghetto in Riga, capital of Latvia. 12,000 German Jews were shot in the Ponary forest outside Riga between November 30 and December 8, 1941. This information was, for whatever reason, widely disseminated in the Nazi hierarchy. Possibly to show that the final solution had begun. The assistant advisor on racial affairs, *Oberregierungsrat* Dr. Werner Feldscher received a firsthand report of the massacre. Feldscher passed this information on to his immediate superior, Dr. Bernard Losener, who made an urgent appointment with his chief, Secretary of State Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart.

This following account of a Nazi civil servant comes from Document NG-19949-A, Losener affidavit, 24 February 1948, vol. 64a, U.S. National Archives.

“I told him that my colleague, Dr. Feldscher, had received an eye witness account of the way in which deported German Jews had recently been massacred in Riga. I told Stuckart that this outrage had affected me as it would any feeling human being; and that in the present case I was also affected as an adviser in the Ministry of Interior, since Jews of German citizenship were involved. My conscience and my position at the Ministry were now irreconcilable.”

Stuckart’s reply to this was, word for word: ‘Herr Losener, don’t you realize that all of this is being done on orders from the highest level?’ I said, ‘There is a judge inside me who tells me what I have to do.’ Stuckart answered that if my conscience did not allow me to continue, he would relieve me at once from my position.”

Losener was finally transferred and remained a low-rank senior civil servant until the end of the war. We can see that it was possible for a German of high rank to voice his abhorrence about the shootings, follow his own conscience and take the consequences which in this case was only a demotion.

We must also not forget the reaction of simple Germans to Hitler’s conduct of the war and the final solution of the Jews. Rumors of what was really happening to the evacuated Jews trickled out into the public. A whisper from an indiscreet party leader or from a soldier on leave: Germans began to hear stories that the Jews were not being resettled but systematically murdered. Many Germans found these stories difficult to believe. A typical reaction was told later by the daughter of her father’s astonished reaction when she told him of murdered Jews, as related to her by a Nazi official. “You must be joking,” said the father. “Germans would not do such things.”

Ruth Friedrich, a Berliner, wrote in her diary: 'Rumors have it that they are forced to dig their own graves. Their clothing are taken from them. They are sent naked to their death. The horror is so incredible that the imagination refuses to accept its reality.'

To explain the stunning defeat at Stalingrad *Gauleiter* Wagner gave a speech in 1943 to the students of the Munich university. He blamed the lack of will of the German soldiers for the defeat and then riled against the students in particular, accusing them to put their heads in the books to avoid being drafted, and as far as the girls, they should make children and not study. With a suggestive snigger he added, ..."and if any girl lacks sufficient charms to find a mate, I will assign to each one of them one of my adjutants; I can promise her a thoroughly enjoyable experience." Whereupon thousands of students protested and marched through downtown Munich singing and shouting anti-Nazi slogans.

And this in the city of Hitler's movement, *Die Hauptstadt der Bewegung*, Hitler's official residence. The Nazi Party's headquarters.

This was a spontaneous and short lived protest. More substantial was the student movement at the Munich university called 'the White Rose.' Led by the Scholl brother and sister team they printed leaflets and distributed them during the summer, fall and winter of 1942. In one leaflet they called attention to the fate of the Jews. In one night they painted at seventy different locations on main streets of Munich on walls DOWN WITH HITLER, and HITLER IS A MASS MURDERER. Amazingly none of the other students or teachers who saw their brazen efforts reported them. It was a custodian at the university and party member who saw them drop leaflets and turned them in to the Gestapo. That was on 18 February 1943. On the 22nd of February, they were tried by the

infamous Roland Freisler. That afternoon, after a short visit with their parents, Hans and Sophie Scholl and their compatriot Christoph Probst were beheaded on the guillotine at the Stadelheim prison. The guillotine of medieval fame brought back in use by the Nazis with their arrival in 1933.

The Scholl's message in essence was, as they confided in their friends, 'to let the truth be known. To tell the youth of Germany that it was being misused by the Nazis. To give hope to the persecuted.'

Let us not forget the courageous Scholls, Christoph Probst and others.

So, again to the question 'what did the Germans know?' I firmly believe that at least half of the Germans did not know or would not believe of the final solution, the extermination of the Jewish people. It was because of the other 50 percent who were guilty or condoned in silence that I did not wish to live in Germany anymore.

This brings up the parallel question – what did we Jews in Munich know about the killings? The sad truth is we knew little, even less than the gentiles in Munich. They had soldiers to tell them, we didn't.

I try to remember what I knew and heard during the war about the evacuations to the East. I was twelve years old when this first transport left in November of 1941. Not only the Lewin family in our house, and my girlfriend Ilse were amongst them, but all my classmates. Boys and girls I had gone to class with for the past six years. My dearest friends. They said they would write. I remember my mother saying that we would send them food packages. Only silence. I hoped that some day when this war ends and I am still alive I would see them again. It is human nature to hope, even children hope. In my heart I knew I would never see them again. After this first large transport of a thousand

persons smaller ones began to leave. I don't remember, or never really knew, their destinations, but my mid 1942, it was usually to Theresienstadt camp. Auschwitz was only known to us as a large resettlement camp in Poland, or as it was called then Generalgouvernement. While I was on the outside fringes of the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*, as the Jewish administration was called, I am certain that if they had known the true purpose of the evacuations they would have let all Jews know. If only to give those who had a chance to hide to get away. No one knew in Munich of the real purpose of Auschwitz or that mass shootings of our brethren had taken place.

I don't know who drew up the list for the first thousand Jews from Munich. It could very well have been the Jewish Gemeinde administration. However, knowing the Nazi machine and how it operated I am certain that the instructions for who should be in this large transport came directly from the *Reichs Chancellery*. In September of 1941, the Jews in Germany were required to wear the yellow star. It was about the size of the palm of a hand, had the star of David imprinted in black on a yellow background with the name *Jude*, Jew. Worn over the heart it was prominently displayed. Seeing children, many of them just as blond and blue eyed and pretty as gentile children, wearing this mark of outcasts, evoked much sympathy amongst the public in Munich. As I found out myself the first day I wore the star. It was paramount to get the children away.

Therefore, in this first transport almost all families with children were included. The Jewish leadership sending the best of the community – its children – to death. I am certain that Schwingenstein and company told the Jewish leaders that this camp in Riga was new, well suited for families and the elderly. Elderly were asked to volunteer for this resettlement to Riga. Instead they all wound up in a pit in Fort IX, Kovno.

After this transport left our school was reduced from about 130 pupils to about a dozen, and one teacher, Dr. Kessler. He was taken away in the spring of 1943 with his elderly mother to Auschwitz. He was part of the Jewish administration and I remember talking to him before he left, I brought him a cake my mother had baked for him, he had no inkling what stood before him or what Auschwitz meant.

All we Jews in Munich knew was that our brethren were deported to the East. Germany was to become *Judenfrei*, free of Jews. We also knew that sooner or later all Jews were to be resettled. There was nothing we could do about it. By then Germany was at war with America and I knew that sooner or later the British, Americans and Russians would defeat Nazi Germany. The question that was more of a personal nature: would my mother and I survive? Even as a kid then I felt forlorn, how I could possibly make it with the German government becoming ever more brutal with the Jews. But a kid lives day by day, the next hour is more important than the next day.

Hope of survival is strong. The Germans were devious in hiding the true nature of the resettlements. They knew very well that what they committed was an enormous crime against humanity. None must know. The world must never find out.

The Jewish community sometimes heard from those deported to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. Cards sent with prearranged messages. All is well. Auschwitz a large labor camp. And when my teacher Dr. Kessler left with his mother in March of 1943 he knew not that upon his arrival he would enter a gate with the slogan written upon it *Arbeit macht frei*, 'work is freedom', a band playing waltzes, then undressing in a warehouse, led naked into the *Brausebad*, bathhouse – it said so on the door. Then to suffocate of poison gas with a thousand other men, women and children.

As was told after the war, some of those who escaped Auschwitz made their way to the Warsaw ghetto and told the leadership there of what they knew and had seen. They in turn were able to get the truth to the Vatican and London.

We in Munich had no one to tell us. We believed evacuation meant work camps. Where children were permitted to be children and treated as such. Knowledge might not have changed the outcome. But if the Jews in Munich had known they would have spread the news among the gentiles and while it cannot be foreseen what the consequences had been it could have caused a lot of trouble for the Nazis. At least the morale of the German soldiers would have suffered and many would have fought less zealously for the Fatherland that was engaging in wholesale murder.

And yet, I as a boy I knew. I knew the Nazis wanted to kill us all. I knew since I heard Hitler's speech promising destruction of the Jews if they started another world war. I believed implicitly in his threats. The world war had begun when Hitler attacked Russia. It was not the Jews that started the war but there was the war anyhow. And what would follow is the killing of us Jews. Of me and my mother. This I believed! I also knew vaguely from other sources that Jews were being killed in the East. I think it was in the spring of 1942, when I was still wearing the star that an elderly man approached me and talked to me. We became friendly with him and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Matschilles. There were true anti-Nazis and so was their soldier son who was home dying of tuberculosis. Herr Matschilles told me that the SS shot the Jews in the East and I should never let myself be sent to a camp. His wife's brother lived in a small house in the country and they would take and hide me when the time came.

We had to take a boarder into our small apartment when most Jews were kicked out of their houses and apartments. During the summer of 1942, Herr Loewenthal sat in the Pinakothek park (by then so few Jews were left in Munich that they had taken down all the signs from park benches that Jews were not permitted to sit there). A German soldier sat next to him and told Herr Loewenthal about camps in Poland where they gassed Jews day and night. I don't know what my mother did with that information but I told no one. At that time there was hardly any coherent Jewish administration or *Gemeinde* left. All my friends except for Salo had already been taken away. For me there was no one to tell to. Killings by gas was new to me. I only knew that you could die inhaling the gas that came out of the burners. I had heard of many committing suicide that way.

We Jews in Munich did not know of the final solution. I personally believed that the Nazis would kill us regardless of the outcome of the war. I only did not know when and how.

Now to return to my own life in 1939. The year of the Nazi propaganda in full swing or at least I was old enough to see, hear and understand.

I kept diaries and cut out newspaper headlines just in case I made it and could remember. I lost it all in the bombing attack on 7 January 1945. So my recollection of the good times of the last year of peace in Germany is concentrated on the important events that occurred – like:

I bought myself an air rifle. That was a piece of a boy's treasure. Target shooting.

I had fun with neighborhood boys who were not in the H.J. We played our cowboy and Indian games. With our air rifles we shot with potato pellets at each other. Most air

rifles then made had a tube one must take out and load with a pellet or metal dart at the end. We would stick the end into a raw potato. Then shoot at each other. It just stung when we got hit. We had fun.

Willi got a pet. For poor kids any pet is something special. His was a green frog which he kept in a glass jar with a punctured top. Inside some sand, pebbles and a ladder the frog could climb up and look at the world, or us. What is maybe more interesting than the frog is that we, that is Willi and I, needed to catch flies for its meals. And there was no better place than the stable near us on the Massmannberg. The stable held the many horses which were needed during the day to pull the garbage dumpsters. This was a large wagon with two huge wheels with which the two attendants collected the refuse. Every house had the same big, elongated metal containers into which the residents deposited their garbage which consisted mostly of the ashes from their coal stoves. The men would come into the court yard where these cans usually stood, then lifted them up with two long wooden poles by the handles and carried them out. Come to think of, except for the ashes there was little garbage to dispose. Everything edible was eaten. Most food items when bought came in open containers, first weighed and poured into a triangular paper bag. The bags then reused. Newspapers disappeared into the toilets. For such items as milk you brought your own bottle or can, the same when you bought your daily beer, you came to a side window of the inn, rang a bell, handed in your glass and the inn keeper would fill it from his barrel. So, Willi and I went to the stable and asked to catch flies. Oh, we were most welcome. Could walk around the horses where the flies would congregate and catch as many flies as we wanted. Another source for flies were the stables of the cavalry in the

Lazarettstrasse. We went there just to be with the soldiers and maybe get some hard tack bread and not so much as a meal for the frog. There were also the stables of the Loewenbrau brewery. Beer was delivered in wagons pulled by these big horses, like in the Budweiser commercials. The technique we used in catching flies? We needed life flies not squashed ones. The best place was the rump. Just touch the horse so it knows you are there, then swish and you got a fly, maybe even more. Willi's frog got fat in no time.

The Jewish administration, had given us a *Vormund*, a guardian to help mom raising us I guess, a man in the house. Leo Flaschen was single, maybe in his fifties, and a nice guy. He lived alone with his elderly mother. I got along fine with him, so did mom. The reason he couldn't marry my mother was that even though she was Jewish she was of Aryan blood. Since 1935, people with Aryan blood could not marry people with Semitic blood. Sounds silly or inhuman? But these were the Nuremberg laws. He usually came in the evening after work and I would go down to the streetcar stop and wait for him. Scared kid as I was I always carried a staunch stick. Munich streetcars had a unique way of identifying what number they were. Besides the obvious number designation in front of the tram, which might be snowed over in winter, they also carried two lights of various colors and combinations. For number 17 which was his tram, the lights were blue and red. It was often cold and snowy in winter but for whatever reason, every evening I was down there waiting for him. Then I could also read the bulletins displayed at the bank. And in the showcase of the bank they had news photos from around the world.

Leo was fond of mom's cooking and he came often on Sundays for our noon and main meal. My mother was a superb cooker and baker. My favorite dish was course roast with lots of gravy and potato dumplings, which I got on Sundays at Frau Spitzelberger's kitchen. My job to grind the raw and peeled potatoes and later awarded five of them. I loved, as all kids do, noodles in every form and shape. Mom's specialty to make a flour-gravy spiced with lots of fresh dill. Spaghetti she made with her own tomato sauce flavored with many herbs. No meatballs though as ground meat was expensive. She made the best soups buying soup bones with a little meat left on. Into the soup she cut a celery root. When cooked she would slice the root and with oil and vinegar make a salad which I never cared for. How customs are different. When we came to America we saw the green stalks of the celery eaten while the root was discarded. In Germany it was the other way around and you couldn't even buy the greens. Besides soup noodles she made a thin form of pancakes which she then sliced into a sort of noodles as a delicious substitute. Or a dish of liver dumplings eaten with the soup, a traditional Munich fare. The meat of the bones she cut off, by then rather tasteless, and fried the meat with potatoes and onions which was another Bavarian specialty called *Tiroler Groestl*. Poor people in Munich had to do with the cheaper cuts of meat, and they learned to make delicious dishes with the innards. Baked tripe I liked. Kidneys I wasn't so fond off, even when cooked they tasted like...well, kidneys. Beef heart mom cooked in the soup and we ate it with a dish of creamy horseradish. My favorite of these 'cheaper cuts' was cooked beef lung. Mom would cook the lung, then cut it into strips and cook it again in a brown sauce, serve it with bread dumplings.

My mother also made some special dishes she learned to make for my father who came from Berlin. Prussian dishes I was not that fond of. And her Sauerkraut or wine-vinegar Kraut was the pits.

She was also a great baker. Her Christmas cookies were the best as long as she could buy butter. There are again some Bavarian baked recipes were mouth watering good. Her *Pfeffernuesse* cookies fantastic as were her *Apfelstrudel* and *Zwetschgendatschi*, a sort of plum cake. I was a connoisseur of her cheap foods deliciously made.

In March we got new identification cards. All Germans had them of course. And everybody was required to carry his or her ID card at all times. We had them too.

The new ones looked the same size, gray with ones picture inside. There was a big difference with our new cards. Right in front was a “J” printed the length of the card. J, identifying one at once as a Jew. And every male Jew who did not have a Jewish first name had to add Israel. Every female Sara. When I signed my card it was Hugo Israel Holzmann. My mother became a Sara.

Here is an interesting tidbit for American readers. We in the United States treasure such old biblical names like David, Daniel, Samuel and Sara, Rebecca, Judith. In Germany, even pre-Hitler, you would hardly ever find a gentile with an old biblical name. More than last names these first names of David, etc, showed that you must be Jewish.

On March 27, I turned ten. Wow – no longer a little kid. I don’t remember what I got from mom. Probably a piece of clothing and always a good cake, raisin cake made with butter. Mom was this great baker, and I seemed to be always hungry. I was a skinny thing and the doctor at school sent me to a dairy place for my daily glass of milk.

Alo, my good friend Alo Hirsch was also sent there. He was little to begin with. At least I was tall and slender he was little with nothing but skin and bones. I think I lacked fat in my diet. The food at the Hort was never cooked with fat or oil. Yet, except for my bout with pneumonia when I was five and my usual winter flu I was hardly ever sick. And the first time I ever saw a dentist was in 1947, when I came to America, and then I needed a mouthful of fillings.

After we ingested that stuff that went for lunch at the Hort we did our homework which was always extensive and took us a couple hours every day.

By three in the afternoon we all had finished our assignments and could play downstairs in the court yard. On the side of our building was a rectangular area with a hard dirt surface which made it nice to scrape outlines and make a playing field. What we played, and it was by far our daily favorite game, was *Voelkerball*, translated it would mean 'people ball', which makes as little sense as the German name for it. Because we played it daily and I still think it is a great game to play for children ages 6 and above let me briefly explain the game.

The rectangle was divided into two parts, a sort of tennis court configuration, but a lot smaller. One team, let's call it the A team occupied one field, the B team the other side. Each team sent a catcher behind the end line of the other's team. Somehow we decided which team would get the ball first. Maybe the A team's catcher. The ball something like a volley ball.

Oh yes, how did we chose the two teams? Two of the older boys would do the picking, first one then the other, always selecting the more agile and better playing boys first. Then what was left over, mainly the girls. Sorry, but that is how boys chose sides.

The game begins. The catcher lobbs the ball over the B team to his own team. If one of the kids in A team catches the ball without dropping it first it become a 'hot ball'.

With a hot ball the kid can hit one of the B kids with it and the kid is out and has to join the catcher. And so on until none is left. It is also possible the kid in B team catches the ball and it becomes his hot ball. Or that a kid is missed and the ball hits the ground and then may be safely stopped by a kid from the B team. With fewer kids left on a team it becomes harder to hit one and the ball may be exchanged many times, the kids chased from one side to the other until one is hit. Of course ones a kid is hit the ball usually remains in this kid's field. That is how the ball gets usually captured. The last kid left really get chased from side to side until it too is finally hit and out. A good game. We played it every day unless it poured.

I remember one wonderful class outing in late spring. Teacher Kissinger stayed behind with the children who couldn't go and Frl. Neumeier went with us. We would get her as teacher comes fall. We took the train from Munich to Stanberg, a big lake, an hour ride from Munich. We got into a large boat, the type with oars to row. Two men rowed us across to the left bank of the lake to a beautiful chateau that belonged once to King Ludwig II, the one who built all these great castles, Chiemsee, Linderhof and the very picturesque Neuschwanstein. We picnicked there, walked around and looked at the cross in the water where the king drowned himself. Poor King Ludwig. With all his beautiful castles he didn't know to live and to be happy. Come to think of it King Ludwig had as his close friend Richard Wagner. Maybe that drove him to commit suicide. Mom told me that my father used to swim across the lake, some 10 miles. I wished I had known my father. Children should have both parents when they grow up.

Normally, school activities were restricted to learning and not field trips. So, this was a wonderful day and I looked forward of having Miss Neumeier as our teacher.

Another trip I took that spring was to the zoo Hellabrun. My guardian's business partner took me along with his boy. Hellabrun zoo was world famous for its natural habitat for the animals. The most fun was to watch the chimpanzees. It was cages of course but in the inside were trees they could climb around, swings and all sorts of big toys. And the chimps sure knew how to entertain us kids.

And a visit to the Deutsche Museum in Munich was always a treat. If the reader ever should visit Munich this museum is a must! Even then in the late thirties it had displays not found in any other natural history and science museum. A complete coal mine built into the underground with life size figures. The powder room where they stored explosives smelled like sulfur. A stable for the burrows that pulled the wagons on tracks with stuffed animals inside. And many slides the coal miners used to get down into lower levels with big signs forbidding their use. Fat chance that we read these signs.

From the coal mine one entered a complete salt mine. The walls looked like crystal salt and when I licked it was salt.

On the upper floor were the fascinating maritime displays. I always stared in wonder at the replica of the cruise liner Bremen's first class dining room. One could only view it through glass partitions as the tables were laid out with complete services. Never thought I would ever get to sit in a cruise ship's dining room. We, my wife Isabella and grandson Daniel cruise every year now. It isn't that a dream came true as I never even dreamed about such possibilities. Just a different world I live in now.

In the maritime section they also had the first German submarine ever built and used in the Big War. The U-1, sliced lengthwise in half for better viewing.

In the industrial part of the museum they showed how yarn and cloth was made from ancient to modern times. The modern looms actually worked.

The machinery section was of great interest as it revolutionized industry. The development of steam engines for work, for transportation. Then diesel and combustion engines to electric motors. I was always fascinated by the section on electricity, lightning. They made a small display of a village and above it a long rod through which they could send a bolt of lightning. This was in a large hall and for the show they closed all windows, I guess for the effect of seeing the lightning strike. It first hit a house which began to smoke. Then they showed the church tower protected by a lightning rod and when it was hit the bolt was grounded. And it sounded like the crack of thunder in the hall, frightening fun. One floor was on health care with ancient methods of healing to modern drugs like sulfa. One large hall showed how the airplanes and dirigibles evolved. And at least the last time I visited the museum in 1939, it still showed the contributions Lillienthal made to aeronautical progress and models of the gliders he flew in. Lillienthal was a German Jew. How did that display get by the Nazis?

The Deutsche Museum was not just a museum for science. It was also for history and culture. A section on music boxes of which many could be played. Clocks from sundials to the most modern. And to the delight of us children many of the displays could be worked.

To the credit of the curators there was nothing on Nazism or the military.

A full day at the museum was never enough to see it all.

In spring was also the Auer Dult. A large fair, though nothing like the Oktoberfest, but fun to visit. Circus Krone always a special treat to see. The circus was based in Munich and had a permanent roundel building. The building was also used for boxing and wrestling matches and the Nazis had their affairs there. One circus accommodating another circus.

That year of 1939, we – many of my classmates and I – discovered how wonderful it was to visit the Gaertner Theater. In this beautiful theater they only played operettas. The most wonderful music often comes from operettas – I guess we call them musicals in the States.

For two dimes we bought tickets for standing room on top. And yes, we had to disregard the big sign at the ticket office *Juden sind hier unerwünscht*, Jews are not wanted here. You couldn't tell Jewish kids from gentile kids so the sign didn't matter to us. But we could read and knew what it meant and for a moment it made us feel sad to be singled out as outcasts. These signs now everywhere, at the movies, theaters, museums, swimming pools, sport stadiums.

I had become a great sports fan. Every Sunday I went out to the '1860 Stadium' to see one of our three Munich soccer teams play. Usually a double header. Three or four dimes would do it. Streetcar, ticket and the program.

It was now a year that my sister had gone to America. She wrote that she had a great life with her new family. Living in America, all beyond my wildest imagination. I sure wished I could go to America.

In summer I went to Vilshofen again, I was very fond of the place. Great for a city boy, so many things to do with my friends. My aunt Centa, with whom I stayed, pretty

much left me alone. Besides I usually ate at my grandparents. I don't remember seeing many Brownshirts in town or for that matter Hitler Youth boys. Little towns in Lower Bavaria were heavily Catholic and while that didn't make them friendly towards Jews it also, in most cases, prevented them from being gung-ho Nazis. The Nazi party not too friendly towards any religion. You could only become a good Nazi if you put God and religion behind you and accepted Hitler and the party as your savior.

Before school started in September I had one more wonderful trip. My friends Willi and Hansi planed to go on an overnight bicycle trip to somewhere and they wanted to take me along. Mom let me. Hansi had to cancel out at the last minute with bicycle problem so Willi and I went alone. We took some food and a blanket and packed it all on the rack, and we were off. I had told Willi how beautiful Stanberger Lake was and so we bicycled the twenty miles to get there. We visited King Ludwig's place. From there to the famous Bismarck Monument, we climbed up the tower and had a great view of the Alps before us. It is strange how some things are still so clear in my memory, so it is with this monument. I can see what it looked like and remember the people we met there. Maybe it was the exhilaration of us boys to be free as birds, do as we wished, and the wonderful view of the mountains.

We drove through the countryside and came upon a pond. Yes, it was on a private estate with a fence around but no one near by. The pond full of fish and conveniently a net nearby. We fished. Stashed the fish under our shirts and we were gone. In a little forest we built a fire and on spits roasted our fish. Tasted better than the sandwiches we had brought along, or so we thought. The night we spent in a barn full of hay. Dusty, and scratching in my neck all night.

Willi, Hansi and I were not all the nice boys I seem to make us appear to, we did mischief and pranks. The worst one I remember was when Willi and I went out to Oberwiesenfeld and went to the home gardens people had there. Little fenced in plots to grow salad, radishes, vegetables and many flowers. It was the day before Mother Day and we wanted flowers for our mothers. We climbed over the fence of one garden where we saw lots of tulips in different colors. Afraid to be caught in our act we tore a bunch out, bulbs still on them which we then took off and threw away. That was all wrong and really mean. When we came home my mother chewed me out real good and threw the flowers away. I had to talk her out of returning them. Instead I walked to the market at Elisabethplatz and bought her a Geranium plant. Willi's tulips also wound up in the trashcan, no appreciation shown.

We always swiped an apple or some other fruit in season when walking by a fruit store and they had them outside. We didn't consider that stealing as we only fed our hungry mouths. Freddie next door had a much worse habit. He would shoplift in the Tempo department store and then give the loot away, that was stealing. A favorite was to go by a house that had buttons to push to ring upstairs. Not to open the door to the house as there were no automatic openers. Just to ring and announce 'come down, somebody is waiting to visit.' To make sure somebody came down we would stick a toothpick in with pushing the button, then run away.

When the lilacs bloomed we went to the Pinakothek where they had many bushes full with purple and white lilac. We just didn't steal them but waited until the *Aufseher*, the park guard, was coming and saw us. He had a bad leg and walked with a cane which he

started to swing at us from far away. Then we broke off the lilacs, waited until he was close - the closer the more fun - and ran. The smoking of cigarettes I already mentioned, puffing them and coughing our fool heads off. Never made me like cigarettes. Hansi began to smoke though, Willi later in life. I liked a pipe. I still enjoy a pipe and good tobacco.

When my sister left in 1938 I was nine years old. Maybe I thought I was now the man in the house and became more daring, or rather careless, and seemed to get one injury after another. The worst injury I got that winter. Mom was getting up a good fire in the stove and I wanted to grab the tea kettle when I lost my balance and fell forward over the stove. I pushed myself away with three fingers of my left hand touching the red glowing iron plate.

Any burn hurts, even if it is just the tip of fingers. To stick the fingers into the water bucket would have been the best, but in olden times you didn't do that. Cold water on burns causes blisters they believed. Mom was wise enough to stick my fingers into a bag of cool flour. It helped, though the water would have been better. I got the blisters anyhow.

A real dumb hurt I got when I helped Frau Spitzelberger sewing. She was needling a piece of long cloth while pumping the pedal. I was feeding the material into the needle and got my thumb under it too. The needle went right through my nail and into the bone and broke off. Herr Spitzelberger had to pull it out with a pair of pliers.

The next summer I got into real trouble. Freddie Alster, the neighbor boy and I went swimming in Thalkirchen in the Isar river. I couldn't swim yet but the water was shallow though fast flowing. I was just laying in the water alongside a split wooden

beam holding on so as not to get swept away. The wood was too slippery to hold on but there was a pebble wedged in the boards and I held on to that. The problem was not just to get swept away in the river but a hundred feet further on there was a waterfall, if I went down into that I had it. I didn't call Freddie for help. I got myself into this stupid situation and I better get myself out of it too. Then the stone dislodged - that was it. And at that moment a wave came and swept me over the log. My guardian angel again?

I didn't go near the river after that. Later that summer I went with Freddie and his family to the Florians Muehle, a public swimming pool. They had one pool which was really strangely built. It went from shallow into deep at a steep angle and when I went in I started to slide to the deep end. Every time I moved and tried to get back out I just slid deeper. I called Freddie to grab my hand and he did and we both were sliding. I am not the type to call for help - I get into trouble I have to get myself out of it too. But I knew he would call for help and so I held on to his hand and dragged him along. And he yelled and someone came and pulled us out. I had it with the Florians pool and just visited the Ungerer or Dante Stadium pools. There I learned how to swim. Just jump into the deep end and start dog paddling and soon I could swim.

Most injuries kids get are because of carelessness. And my hurts were not any different. The last one I remember as a kid was during one of those excursions with my class. We went to the Perlacher Forst, some forest to the east of Munich, and went to a playground where they had one of these long slides. You climb up to a platform, hang on a handle and slide down the wire, at the end you hit the dirt as you stand up. But I raised my legs to go just a little further and crashed into a wooden barricade. Got a long splint

into the base of my little finger. It stuck way in and when I tried to pull it out it broke off. I still have that piece of wood in my finger and it is now part of me.

I never cried when I got hurt, I managed the pain. I might cry when mom got angry at me, like once she caught me hanging on to the beer wagon. Got real mad at me and slapped me. The hurt was inside that I couldn't reason with her that there was no danger in hanging on to the back of a moving wagon.

First of September. WAR! Germany attacked Poland. Everybody expected it to happen. There had been plenty of propaganda the past few months preparing the public for war.

How the Poles mistreated the ethnic Germans. Even a movie I had seen – those bad Poles, if you believed any of it. All Germany wanted was Danzig and a corridor to the city, but the Poles wouldn't give it to Germany so Hitler took all of Poland, or rather, split it with the Soviet Union. Suddenly those terrible Bolsheviks were Germany's friend. Strange that before the war, and when it came, people were less excited than a year before with the Czechoslovakia problem. Three days after the war started France and England declared war on Germany. I don't know if Hitler had planned on that but there it was. War in Europe. They called the three weeks campaign a Blitzkrieg. In the newsreel they showed the poor Poles riding on their horses into the war. Cavalry against tanks. The official reason for attacking Poland was that the night before Polish soldiers had attacked a German radio station near Gleiwitz. They took international reporters there to show them bullet holes where the fighting took place and dead bodies in Polish uniforms with ID cards showing them to be Polish soldiers. As we learned after the war

the Polish soldier were concentration camp inmates, taken to the station, made to dress in those uniform and then shot. Worthy of Joseph Goebbels, though it was most likely Heydrich's doing.

The Germans should have been a little suspicious of these reports because a short time after the war began they already gave out ration cards. In Munich ready for 800,000 souls.

As soon as the war began blackout started. Curtains were not good enough to black out light and we had to buy black paper, glued it to a large cardboard sheet and stick it to the window when it got dark. We did it to our kitchen window, in the bedroom we just didn't turn on the light. Even before the war started we had air raid drills. They put a siren on the neighboring house which was the corner of Augusten and Theresienstrasse. It sounded awful when they practiced with it since our windows were so close to it. I could hear the thing as soon as it started with that deep growling sound that rose up to a high pitch, a virtual crescendo of howling. The undulating sound for one minute meant *Fliegeralarm*, 'air raid alarm'. Three 15 second long blasts meant air raid warning. And the all clear was a one minute long howl.

We had an air raid shelter built into our basement. Part of the end of the basement converted to a large room with reinforced ceiling and a steel door. A crawl space was broken through to the basement in the next house. Theoretically if the house above you was demolished by a bomb one should be able to escape into the neighbor's house. It didn't work out in most cases as a 1000 lb bomb would crush the basement also.

Narrow benches put into the shelter for comfort. No comfort station as that business was taken care of by the people at home when they heard the sirens go off. Air raid

practices had been done before the war even started. They put on a real good show in the Schwind and Schellingstrasse with one realistic practice; they even had smoke coming out of the house. Fire engines, ambulances, wounded carried out and attended to by nurses. Brownshirts directing the practice. Strangely, when the air raids began seriously in 1942, that house was one of the first to be hit, and then there was nobody there to help the people. There isn't much you can do when a house is all rubble. Dig out the people if they are still alive.

School started. I loved going to school. I could feel at home there, and safe. We had a new teacher, Miss Neumeier. I liked her, she was friendly and a good teacher and she enjoyed teaching. The kids from the orphanage and I were now part of the class. What a difference teachers can make. I could finally develop my skills and when time came for our grades I had mostly A's. Yes, school was great to go to. To learn, be with my friends, I was always liked by the other kids. Now with my grades on top of the class I became also respected. How different each child is, each one a universe of its own. Since we came from all over the city we could rarely visit one another. But then we saw each other every day during the week.

In the fall we got a few new kids. Mostly from the countryside were the father had been a farmer. Jewish farmers were no longer permitted to work their farms but had to move to the big cities. Their farms appropriated and sold for little and then they couldn't even get the money. Outright robbery.

Many classmates had emigrated to other countries. After the father had been arrested during the Crystal Night and spent several months in Dachau they needed no further

convincing to get out of Nazi Germany, just about everyone wanted to leave. Most felt that things would never get better under the Nazi regime, only worse.

But where to? And only those with plenty of money could ever think of emigrating, poor Jews were stuck in Germany. The only country that would accept Jews with open arms was Palestine and that was closed by the British because of Arab opposition to the Jews returning to their ancestral land.

With the war came ever new decrees affecting Jewish lives. My mom and I were not affected by most of the new laws put into effect to harass the Jews and take their properties. Their houses and apartments confiscated, their business taken away. My uncle Richard and aunt Johanna from Wiebaden also lost their house. They managed to get to Cuba, but both died before the war ended. The big department store Tietz by the Bahnhof had already been Aryanized. It was now called Hertie. The other Jewish department store Uhlfelder just closed its doors after it was demolished during the Crystal Night.

On the 14th of September we had our first *Fliegeralarm*, Air raid alarm. It came after midnight and lasted only a short while. This wasn't practice, it was the real thing. I was exhilarated, I didn't even go into the cellar, stood in the street waiting for them, but they didn't come.

15 September a new decree which affected us too. Jews could no longer leave their apartments after eight o'clock in the evening. From classmates I heard that the Gestapo came around to do house searches. Looking for weapons which no Jews had, and stealing from the people whatever they liked. I finally had to get rid of my air rifle, gave it to Hansi upstairs for safekeeping.

The displaced families, thrown out of their houses and apartments, had to move into a few Jew-houses or the *Judenlager*, Jew-camp in Milbertshofen and families into the convent at Berg-am-Laim. Part of that large institution was leased to the Jewish community by the Catholic Diocese.

Sometimes in the fall the Gemeinde requested us to accept a couple of Jewish kids for a while. These were three children from the country whose mother had died and the father left for America hoping to bring them out. Dora, Trudi and Bernie Schmidt. Dora and Trudi came to us and slept on the sofa in the kitchen until they could go to the Jewish orphanage. Both Trudi and Bernie, younger than I was, went with the orphanage to Auschwitz and were gassed. Dora survived. The only one from Munich to return from Auschwitz. (Recently, in 2007, I found another kid who survived Auschwitz, Sigi Golomb, a former classmate).

When the Germans overran Poland they soon made life miserable for the Jews there too. A propaganda crew of Goebbels went into the villages and took movies of the poorest Jews there, often beggars and the hovels they lived in. Made a documentary called *Der Ewige Jude*, the eternal Jew, and showed it all over the city. I think few Germans went to see it. At least I saw very few people go into the cinemas where they showed it. Another virulent antisemitic film Goebbel's movie industry produced was *Jud Suess*, the Jew Suess. I went to see it. Good movie if you wanted to learn to hate Jews. Both movies made to fan the hate of Germans against the Jews. I guess if one was anti-Semitic it only increased these peoples hatred of Jews. If not, these intelligent and decent people could not be swayed by obvious propaganda exhibitions.

On November 8th, there was an assassination attempt on Hitler in the Buergerbrauekeller, a bomb exploded but he had left. My thoughts then? Why did God always protect Hitler?

In December, like a bad Christmas present, our ration cards had all special allocations snipped off and most food items were reduced, mainly meats and dairy products. No whole milk just the bluish looking thin milk. But there was still adequate food.

Fish, when available could be bought and potatoes and vegetables were not rationed.

Here is an interesting entry in Goebbels' diary:

19 November 1939, Sunday.

I protest to the Fuehrer about the fact that Jews are treated on equal terms with Germans in the matter of food rations. Immediately abolished.'

(That little poison dwarf has been the instigator of many restrictions imposed upon the Jews. Always beginning in Berlin and then nationwide.)

I don't think we ever got a clothing card. But mom knitted and darned and there were always nice people to give me the cast-off from their boys.

The second half of 1939 had many unpleasant incidents. Yet we were happy at school, we had each other as friends. Willi and Hansi were my close buddies. It was so much easier for us kids. It must have been hell for parents. The hopelessness of it all.

CHAPTER VI**1940****A Last Happy Summer**

January began with constant news about triumphs of U-boats and planes against British shipping. Every morning when I went to school and waited for the number 2 streetcar I read the bulletins displayed on the wall of the bank. I could not imagine the future. Here was a war between Germany and France, England and the allied countries of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Yet nothing seemed to be happening.

There was also a war going on between tiny Finland and the mighty Soviet Union. I don't know who was friend or enemy. Whoever is a friend of Germany would be my enemy. Both seemed to be friends of Germany.

There are daily reports of German planes shooting the British out of the sky over the channel and over England, British air bases bombed.

Then to school. For four hours I was in the company of my kind of kids. Nice and decent children meaning no harm to anyone. And for four hours the darkness of Nazism did not engulf us.

Since the war started five months ago it seemed that if not every day at least every week there were new reports of Nazi chicaneries.

As of the first of January 1940, all Jews had to buy their food stuff in certain designated stores in Munich. Our store was in the Augustenstrasse about four blocks from us. Since our food stamps had *Jude* or Jew stamped on them we could do nothing else. The other

stores did not sell on Jewish stamped ration cards. From the beginning of the war the ration cards provided plenty of food for anyone. We never used all the stamps as we didn't have the money anyhow. Now with half the coupons cut off things were meager. Meat and dairy products reduced, butter and whole milk not for Jews. Nor white bread coupons for which one could buy rolls or pastries.

The same with the special allocation stamps for which one could buy, when shipments of such items as fruits, canned goods, sweets, produce from Italy came in and the newspaper reported that for such and such a coupon this or that was available - our coupons had been snipped off.

We still had the clothing store at the Gemeinde where more well-to-do Jews would take their old clothing and shoes, especially from their growing up children. From that store I got my clothing when available.

The two large department stores, the Tietz and Uhlfelder used to give food tickets to the poorer Jews to get food stuff for free. All that was past history.

Spring came and we could play outdoors again. We still had two Jewish sport clubs in Munich, the Itus and Macabees. The trade school was operating as was the Hachshara farm. The boys from the trade school built a soccer field out in a section of the cemetery in Freimann. Now we could go out there and play and nobody would bother us. There was a wall around the cemetery, and just by the soccer field they had built a new Kaserne complex for the SS, the Funk Kaserne. Nice neighbors. The SS would look over the wall and watch us Jew kids play. They must have gotten an eye full when one of our older boys, Max, drilled the ball into the goal from the middle field, a distance of 60 meters. Max was around 19 then, and fearless. He would always chase any boys,

young and old, away if they bothered us. We made several soccer teams. Our school had one, so did the orphanage and sometimes these two teams combined to play the trade school. We didn't have uniforms or boots, we wore whatever we had. The way the spectators who came out on a sports rally could tell the two teams apart was the little guys against the big guys. The trade school even used their teachers. I remember fat Herr Penzias, a friend of our family, huffing and puffing on the field and we kids running circles around him. Our school had some pretty good players, my friend Salo the best. That our school lost every game against the trade school didn't matter to us. We had a good time, it was fun to participate, and we could be just boys.

My papers to go to America had been completed and I should have left in February with the same arrangement my sister had gone to America, to be adopted by an American family. But because of the unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic all passenger shipping from Portugal had stopped.

There seemed to be no war going on except in the Atlantic. U-boats and planes sinking all British ships they found. And the war between Finland and the USSR was dragging along. The papers seemed to sympathize with the heroic struggle of the Finnish troops and Marshal Mannerheim. The Finns were obviously the favorites of the Germans. And then I read that the English were trying to help Finland with war material. However, the Germans were also friendly with the Soviets. It just didn't seem right, Hitler and Stalin in togetherness. Before their rapport the papers had always riled against the Bolsheviks. Now they are the good guys and the bad guys are the British Jewish Plutocrats.

Plutocracy meaning the 'rule or government by the rich.' The way the Nazis lied and twisted everything around it was good propaganda that the Jews were the ones who

ruled as they were the rich in England, and simultaneously then accuse them as being the ones who ruled the classless and property-less society of the Bolsheviks.

In early March the Finns and Soviets concluded an armistice. Russia must have gotten what they wanted from Finland.

In March I turned eleven. After Easter recess I started sixth grade with my class. We had now Frl. Neumeier and Dr. Kessler as teachers. We had an abundance of teachers as they had all been thrown out of their positions in the gentile world. We had Dr. Kessler in math and natural sciences, a nice man with a gray full beard, strict but fair. I was now the only one in my class who got an A in math. I had come a long way from my D performances. For the other academic subjects we still had Miss Neumeier. I had only one disappointment with her. We had to write an essay with the title 'TOO LATE.' I loved to write and made the best of this essay even if it was in Bavarian German. I knew I would get red marks all over each page. But it was the content of the story I wanted her to be proud of me. We got to read our essays in class. Those before me wrote about being too late for the train or movie or what. Then it was my turn. I had written a fantasy story of two explorers flying over the Amazon (I read not only Karl Mays but also other adventure stories and accounts of explorations, though this was all made up) – and too late they realized that they were running out of gas and had to set the plane down on the river near a village. The Indians there had never seen white men before and thought they must be some sort of Gods coming out of the sky. Their adventures in the village and returning to civilization I never got to read because Miss Neumeier told me to sit down, and to never copy from a book. What hurt was not so much that she didn't believe I had written the story but the embarrassment in

front of the class. When I told mom about it she said that I should be proud that the teacher told me I wrote my story from a book. But I still felt bad of being told in front of my classmates that I had cheated.

Beginning of April. German troops invade and occupy Denmark, making war on Norway. So much for Nazi propaganda about the British violating Norway's territorial waters by freeing their prisoners from the Altmark. The Altmark was a German freighter that had followed the Graf Spee battle cruiser and taken on all the British sailors of ships sunk by the Graf Spee. Then, when the Graf Spee was scuttled at Montevideo, the Altmark had disappeared and came to Norway to refuel. By Geneva convention the German ship was supposed to have let the British sailors be interned by the Norwegians. They didn't. The captain of the Altmark said he had no prisoners on board. A British destroyer then came alongside and freed the British. German propaganda making a big fuss about the British violating Norwegian neutrality. Now Germany violated the neutrality of both countries, occupying Denmark and invading Norway.

10 May 1940. Winston Churchill is the new leader of Britain. The Nazi papers make fun of him. Showing him as a bulldog with a top hat and a cigar in its mouth. I thought that he will be a tenacious bulldog.

19 May 1940. Germany begins its attack on the 'phony war front.' They attack not only the French with whom they are at war but also the neutral Dutch and Belgians. Every day I read the bulletins and every day it looked worse, German victories. Holland overrun. Belgium collapsing soon after. What happened to the mighty French army? I was deeply disappointed when they were defeated in another Blitzkrieg and the British

kicked out of France. This was the low point for me. How could anyone stop the Germans? Were they really invincible? How would this war end?

It was the high point for Germany. Celebrations, parades, flags flying, church bells ringing. Wagnerian music blaring from the radios along with soldier and Nazi songs.

As I said before, even my German friends were happy and celebrating. Yes, Hansi and Willi too, though they didn't brag to me. Willi told me that things will get better for the Jews once Germany had won the war. Most people thought that with France defeated the English will sue for peace. Only Herr Spitzelberger, our friend from upstairs remained true. Germany will never be able to invade England he told me. "Things will turn around some day." Some day – when will that be?

We kids in school were saddened by Germany's victories. While kids can easier adjust than adults they are nevertheless also affected and do understand what is going on.

Wednesday 5 June 1940. It was after midnight when the siren over us went off. Nothing new, we had air raid alarm the night before. We even had heard some far away shootings, English air planes must have been near the city. It was at least exhilarating to know that the English were neither dead yet nor capitulating but fighting back.

Everybody was already down in the shelter. Herr Spitzelberger, our air raid warden, was by the entrance door to the house and I was with him. I was supposed to help him fight any fires. So even if the block-warden came around, as he had done before, Spitzelberger was permitted to be upstairs and I as his helper with him.

This was our fifth air raid alert since the beginning of the war. Then shooting of the flak (while World War II veterans will know what flak means younger readers might not. It

is the German abbreviation for *Fliegerabwehrkanone*, once again one of these specific German compound nouns. It means anti-aircraft cannon. GIs made it part of their war-time vocabulary). Then for the first time we heard the heavy flak shooting from nearby. Three blocks away are the Tuerken Kaserne, and from their huge courtyard the firing came from, loud explosions that made the windows rattle. I followed Spitzelberger to the shelter which was crowded with the people of both our houses. And then came the gruuump of different explosions. More felt than heard down there. These are bombs some said. The English were really bombing Munich! I admit, I felt both fear and elation, true joy! Then it was over. The shooting died down too. And we had an explosion in our shelter. Herr Schoenauer, in his brown SA uniform, probably his nerves shot, shouted at Frau Lewin that Jews shouldn't be together in the shelter with Germans..."*Raus, raus mit euch Juden*, out with you Jews!" The Lewin family got up and left, and my mom grabbed my hand and we left too.

Until the end of 1941, when Schoenauer left for the East, the Lewin family and my mother and I did not go back into the shelter. We stayed in the wash room. But then the English didn't bother Munich until with vengeance in 1942.

When I went to school the next morning, and the streetcar passed by the Barerstrasse, I saw the street blocked off and the damaged house. Part of the front of the building was torn off by the bomb. That really was close to us. I had something to tell in class. All the kids had their experiences that night, most were frightened. Some felt like I did that it showed the English were not defeated and were fighting back, we all knew that Germany bombed English cities.

Summer recess and Miss Neumeier had made plans with us that every Sunday she would take us on an outing. This was great as the latest harassment that came out forbade Jews to go to any public park, theater, swimming pools, sport events, etc. Before it had always been Jews are not wanted there. Now it was Jews are forbidden, with the usual admonition that violations will be severely punished. Not that I paid any attention to these restrictions. I just became more careful. Going to the movies I would never stand in line but wait until the people were in and then buy my ticket. I had done this before, but now I would scrutinize the people going in from the other side of the street, and if I saw someone who knew me and was not on my imaginary list of 'friendlies' I would not go in. At the soccer stadium on Sundays, I would be in the standing bleachers where the men and boys stood close together. If anyone ever looked at me more than fleetingly I was gone. I avoided men with stern faces – Gestapo? German soldiers in uniform I was not afraid of. Brownshirts I wouldn't stand near one. I knew I was an enemy of the state. Even before I had always looked at people around me and avoided men who gave me a lecherous look. I was a handsome boy and while I had no idea what these men wanted I sensed danger and quickly got away. I had become a street-wise kid and now it became a matter of survival. And never – never to feel safe and relax my attentiveness. I regarded every German as my enemy unless he proved to be a friend or sympathetic to me.

In July Hitler made a speech in the *Reichstag* (German parliament) urging the English to make peace on his terms. Lord Halifax answers Hitler. 'No peace until Germany leaves all conquered countries.' The German news sheets blame it on the Jewish

Plutocrats, the Churchillian clique. We Jews are blamed for the British to be rich capitalists and to want to continue the war.

In July we had our first outing with Miss Neumeier and my class. It was to be in Gruenwald, a forest to the south of Munich. Oh gush, I was so excited. I wanted to sleep on the sofa in the kitchen so I needed not to undress. Mom convinced me to take at least my boots off. My mind kept working on tomorrow. Where would we go, what would we do? Maybe I should leave earlier not to miss my connection. I couldn't sleep. Then came the sheep counting. How do you count a herd of sheep? I had them run by me singly...endlessly. I had them jump over a fence to count them better. Some fell over the fence. Sheep counting didn't work. Nor did anything else until mom came and told me to undress and go to bed.

Early in the morning breakfast. Mom had my picnic packed in a rucksack. A bottle of sweet coffee. Streetcars empty so early on Sunday morning. Any car that came by would take me to make my connection with number 25 to Gruenwald. A beautiful day. Shortly after eight I was in Gruenwald, all alone. Every twenty minutes a number 25 would come and bring my classmates. By nine all were there. Miss Neumeier relied on me to keep the kids together. She led the troop, I brought up the rear.

These Sunday outings count to my most delightful times as a kid in Munich. One thing the persecution of us Jews in Munich did to us, it drew us together, as close friends, I would even say as families. We were like brothers and sisters though we never expressed such thoughts.

I really remember only two outings in detail. One was to Grosshesselohe, the streetcar stop right at the side of the forest. I loved the forest. In Germany or Bavaria, the woods

are all like parks. Rarely any underbrush, fallen branches or trees. We went deep into the forest where we had our picnic and played games. Miss Neumeier had us do races and had prizes for the winners. She didn't know I was the best runner. The last race was between Bertel and myself. Bertel was good in athletics, the best racer – except for me. Since I won all the prizes of chocolates I shared them with the kids. Especially with Alo who was our slowpoke. During the afternoon a storm came up. No rain or lightning, just clouds rushing by overhead and a tremendous wind blowing. Strangely the storm did not blow so much on the ground as in the trees. We stood on one side of a clearing and watched trees bowled over on the other side. Some tall trees lifted out roots and all or splintered off at the base. It was reported in the papers as a freak storm that whipped through parts of southern Bavaria and did a lot of damage to forests.

The other wonderful outing I remember was to Milbertshofen to visit the Hachshara the farm. Older boys and girls were working to become Chaluzim, pioneers in Palestine. We all knew that going to Palestine meant hard work, becoming farmers, draining swamps, clearing lands and hillsides of rocks so they could be plowed, trees planted and always under the threat of marauding Arabs. How we wished we could go there. Gerald Fleming writes in his book of the Final Solution that when the Mufti of Jerusalem came to visit Hitler in the Berghof in 1942, Hitler mentioned that the Jews of Europe were being *beseitigt*, 'eliminated' and that he supported fully the Arabs in their struggle with the Jews. And once the British were defeated he will help the Arabs to achieve their aspirations – meaning to kill all the Jews there. He then said, "I know that all the work done in Palestine is by the Arabs, the Jews don't work."

The truth was of course that the Arabs had neglected Palestine for centuries and it was the waves of immigrants from Russia, Poland and Germany who toiled the land and made Palestine into the biblical land of milk and honey.

In an aside to Goebbels, as Goebbels recorded in his diary, Hitler thought of the Arabs as primitive and unintelligent and unable to learn how to use modern weapons.

That the Hachshara was still functioning, when everything else had been taken from the Jews by 1940, was due to German policy then to try to get the Jews out of Germany and even the trickle of emigration to Palestine was welcomed.

The older boys and girls working and living at the Hachshara showed us around and let us do some work in the vegetable gardens, try milking the cows – I had done that on a farm so I knew and could milk. Some kids couldn't squeeze a drop out. Inge

Ruthenburg not even wanting to touch the cow, afraid she might hurt the cow. Then we sat around for a question and answer session, about Palestine, some had been visiting there. All hoped to go there this year. The produce they grew was given to the two Jewish camps and the hospital.

At lunch we were introduced to community sharing like in a Kibbutz. We put all our wrapped sandwiches in a pile and then they were given out. Nobody had any fat delicatessen sandwiches. Things were already scarce. I had Metwurst on my bread, a sort of meatspread. I hoped whoever got it liked Metwurst. My sandwich was margarine and onion on bread.

After lunch we sat together with the pioneers, one played the accordion, and we sang songs we all knew. And tried to learn how to dance the Hora. We formed a circle, linked hands and did the steps. I was easy, we had such a great time.

I think these two months of Sunday outings were the happiest times of my childhood.

One more outing I had in the summer of 1940. It was in high summer that the Spitzelbergers invited us to come along picking raspberries. We left about three in the morning as streetcars don't operate so late - or early. We had to walk from our place to the *Ostbahnhof*, the Easter Railroad Station, a long walk of two hours. The train left around 5:30, the only train leaving for that place on Sunday. We got to the Kreuzstrasse station early. We were not alone as there were groups of people debarking the train and walking out to the many raspberry fields, everyone carrying a bucket as we did.

Berry picking early in the morning is a bummer. Foggy and cold, wet in the bushes from dew. Raspberries grow on large bushes that have numerous thorns. Most of the berries were already picked on the outside and one had to squeeze into them to get the ripe ones. There were plenty all right but I wore shorts and hated those thorns scratching my legs and hands, and the cold wetness on the leaves from the night dew. We used large metal cups to gather them and then dump them into our bucket. Once the sun came out and dispersed the fog it became nice - and then hot. What became the worst bother were the flies. They have a fly in Bavaria, maybe in all of Germany and even Europe, that is called a *Bremse*. (I have never seen this beast over here in the States. It looks like a horsefly with long gray wings but isn't the same species.) Those beasts were not after the sweet berries but after our blood. They would sting me unmercifully on any exposed areas including the face. Felt like a bee sting and then itched terribly and raised a large bump like a bedbug bit you. But the picking was prosperous and by noon we had our bucket full and could take the afternoon train back to Munich.

Spitzelberger told us what to do next. Spread out the berries on the kitchen table and cover them with a large wet sheet, leave them over night. By morning most of the little worms had crawled out and were hanging to the sheet. The ones left in the berries got cooked with them and made into a raspberry jam. Can't be fussy when you are hungry. (I had a similar experience many years later when stationed in Vietnam. I lived in a large hotel for sergeants in Saigon and we had to feed ourselves. Though we had a restaurant on the top floor of the Palace Hotel, many of us would buy French bread at the Chinese bakery next door when we came home from our jobs, and eat the fresh baked crusty bread with whatever we had. The flour came from the US and was full of maggots and they were in the bread too. At first I was fussy and picked them out but soon I did as the others, ate the bread - just don't look. We got our carbohydrates with the proteins.)

Back to school in September.

The war to conquer the British went on with daily bombing raids. First trying to knock out their airfields and factories. Daily reports of masses of English planes shot down.

18th of August was *Adlertag*, 'day of the eagle.' Big victory in the air over England.

Their planes shot down like raindrops from the sky, all their airfields destroyed.

The special bulletin by the radio preceded with the new soldier song *Denn wir fahren gegen Engeland*, 'we are marching against England'.

(The war history reports for the 'Day of the Eagle' 71 German planes shot down versus 21 for the British). August 20th, Churchill makes his famous speech: '*Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.*' The last day of the big air

offensive of the Luftwaffe was on the 15th of September when, in a last all out effort, 60 German bombers were shot down and many more damaged for a loss of 26 British fighters. The expected invasion never came. Instead daily reports of bombing of London and other cities in southern England.

Then the bulletin headlined: Terror bombing of Berlin. The tit for tat had begun. London and other English cities were now bombed day and night and then only at night. We were still safe in Munich except for an occasional alarm.

October: (A little interesting tidbit I found out after the war that happened on the 10th of October 1940. Some Nazi official had the idea to hold a plebiscite in Luxemburg to show Hitler how popular he had become in Europe. Each conquered country had their collaborators. In France Marshal Petain and even more so Pierre Laval. In Norway the infamous Quisling. Holland and Belgium has their traitors I don't think there were many collaborators in Denmark. The people in Luxemburg speaking German and soon to be annexed as a new Gau - it seemed a safe bet to show the Fuehrer how the people there loved him. The result of the plebiscite: 97 percent of the people were opposed to the German occupation and being annexed by Germany.)

In the fall of 1940, we received our first clothing cards. A slip of paper authorizing us Jews to buy a dime worth of thread quarterly.

This was also the times when Jews were forced out of their houses and apartments. These displaced families were housed in a few Jew-houses around the city, in Berg-am-Laim convent and the big Jew-camp in Milbertshofen that at one time housed over 1,300 Jews. I learned that from the kids in my class who were dispossessed. As

depressing as it all was on everybody, at least for the four hours we were happy together. For all of us, school was a refuge where we felt good and safe and not alone.

Our time for eviction came too. I wasn't home when that woman came who told my mom to get out. It was also depressing to me when I didn't know if tomorrow I would still have a home. My mother didn't write about the many other times when someone came to us and wanted to inspect our apartment for their use. It felt so strange – humiliating? To have people inspect our place to see if they liked it, with us having no rights whatsoever. Except for that woman mom wrote about none of the others ever wanted our tiny apartment. Cold flat, no water, no sink, not even a toilet. But each time someone came I feared we might be thrown out. Fear? I best describe it as that sinking feeling in the stomach; all in knots. It made me so sad that people could be so cruel.

Why were the Nazis in Munich such bad people? Hate us Jews? What have we ever done to them to deserve that? Why does God permit this? Come on you British! Bomb that Nazi Munich! Yet in retrospect it was so much easier for us children. It must have been hell for our parents and all adults. Every moment expecting the Gestapo at the door. Losing one's property, all the years of hard work – stolen, robbed. And how to protect one's family from deprivation and suffering. The helplessness of it all.

Most of the new restrictions didn't affect us directly. Though it seemed every week we got a letter telling us to turn in this and that. When it was time to turn in my bicycle I gave it to Willi who stored it for me in his cellar. And every letter threatening severe punishment.. Meaning Gestapo prison and Dachau.

I remember my classmate Erich Kupfer from the orphanage. A little guy. Always fun to be with and full of mischief. And that got him into real trouble.. He was caught

defacing a picture of Hitler pasted on a wall. Taken to Gestapo headquarters he was repeatedly beaten and then put in prison. He was then like me, eleven years old. The horror of it, when in class we were told that Erich was in prison. Erich was freed later to be included into the transport to Kovno, and the pit.

I had visited Erich Kupfer earlier that year when he lived with his uncle in the Jew-house in the Reichenbachstrasse. There I met his uncle who soon left for the United States and Erich went to the orphanage.

The world is small, or at times seems so. In 1949, while I was in the army and stationed at the 28th General Hospital in Osaka/Japan I was told of an ex-German by the name of Cooper, a master sergeant and psychologist in our hospital. I wasn't particularly interested in meeting him. But when I did it turned out to be Erich's uncle from Munich. He had joined the US Army Air Force, became a bombardier in a B-24 and bombed Munich many times. I told him I was going to sue him for the many times he broke our windows and busted our doors. He was of course devastated when I told him of Erich's fate, though then I only knew he had been deported with a thousand other Jewish families and the orphanage to Riga and disappeared.

In October a new chicanery. Jews were forbidden to go to a lending library. The one we always went to in the Schleissheimerstrasse we could no longer use. The owner knew we were Jewish and told us he was no longer permitted to let us borrow books. If I didn't mention it before, we didn't have public libraries. The many lending libraries charged a fee for loaning a book for a week, 20 Pfennigs, about a dime. Maybe he was

afraid as on the house next to his Hitler once lived and there was a plaque posted commemorating this event, with many Nazis and Brownshirts always gawking at it.

My mom went to a library in the Augustenstrasse where they didn't know us and with her old ID card, which she had kept, registered both of us. Now at last we could get books again. Our only joy and entertainment in the evenings.

We had a few air raid alarms since that minor raid in June. London and other English cities were systematically bombed. Berlin had been raided and we all knew that sooner or later we would get it. My feelings were still the same. I would be scared when they came but I wanted Nazi Munich bombed. The Nazis had made life so miserable for us the past couples of years, longer than that for all Jews, but I was not affected then or old enough to understand. Every place I went 'For Jews Forbidden.' Even the nearby park of the Pinakothek had these signs and that was where I usually took Lumpi, the neighbor's dog, for his walk. Not that I did not violate these Nazi laws every day but I was no longer enjoying all these forbidden places like a child does – free and without any care. Now I was in enemy territory and had to be constantly on the alert to watch if someone who knew me might see me and report me to the Gestapo. So I hated the Nazis and wanted to see them hurt as they made us Jews suffer. In retrospect my feelings may be uncivilized to wish harm upon the city of Munich which I loved. It was my home, I grew up here. But my revulsion for the Nazis was greater than my own safety and well being than that of the city of Munich. Yes, I admit, there came a time when I wished I could have told the British and Americans 'it is enough!' That was after we had seven major air raids in July of 1944, three of them by a thousand planes each time in three consecutive days. But the tempest begun by Hitler could no longer be stopped. I had to

endure just like the other citizens of Munich, the good and the bad. And in truth, the worst of the bombing, and I was in the middle of it, was easier to endure for me than the constant fear of the Nazis and Gestapo. When I said my little prayer at night, I asked God to protect me from the Nazis, never from the bombing.

Fall of 1940 was for all freedom seeking people, and for those oppressed by the Nazis, the low point. France defeated, the English had left the continent and were holed up in their island fortress. Everybody awaited the invasion of England. Daily reports of large flights of bombers over England. Bombers over London and other cities at night. Even as a boy I understood that night raids meant the British still had fighters and prevented the Luftwaffe from attacking during the day, and that after the bulletins repeatedly reported that the British had been smashed and lay helpless. Of course the British too dared not come over Germany during the day with bombers. There was no doubt by winter that Germany had no intention of invading England, and wanted to bring them to their knees by destroying their cities and people.

The German victories against British shipping continued with Stukas and four engined bombers sinking them from the air and U-boats from the sea.

The Italians attacked Albania and Greece. Only in North Africa were the British successful. The Italians had invaded Egypt and the British drove them back into Lybia.

We heard a strange rumor in the fall of 1940. All Jews were to be shipped to Madagascar. I vaguely had heard of the place somewhere to the east of Africa. Out came my school atlas. It was really a large island in the Indian Ocean. Lots of arid and

scrub land. Good for us Jews. I hoped the natives were friendly and not Nazis. The rumor didn't last long and was soon forgotten.

(Pierre Laval, Vice-President of the French Council of Ministers and second to Petain himself, to curtsy favor with Herr Rosenberg, suggested to send all French Jews to Madagascar, and proposed to dump all other Jews in Germany and German occupied lands on the island too. The Nazis really considered it seriously for a brief period. From a practical point of view it was impossible. The shipping was there, lots of barges once the invasion was off. But how to get them through the Suez Canal. But by then Hitler had already formulated his way of solving HIS Jewish problem. Shoot them.)

In November the news is of hard fighting by the Italians in Greece. Of course hard fighting means they are not doing so well. Then that the Italian army is reorganizing back in Albania. In North Africa the British are attacking and the Italians are doing victorious retreats.

All in all 1940 was a good year for me. Those wonderful class trips we took together in summer were unforgettable. My best classmate Alo Hirsch left with his family for America in the fall. One of the last families to leave.

My thoughts then of the future. What will be in store for us in 1941? Will the Soviet Union join Germany in conquering the rest of Europe? Stab England in the back by marching through Persia? Like Hitler Stalin was unpredictable, both out to conquer the world. Will Germany take Sweden? I thought Hitler might do that. Squeezed in between conquered Norway and German friendly Finland. Make Spain its Axis partner or Protectorate? Portugal for the taking. Germany wants Gibraltar badly. Switzerland?

Someone told me that Hitler would not attack Switzerland. First of all it is Nazi friendly and secondly it is Germany's World Bank

CHAPTER VII

1941

A FATEFUL YEAR

My mother was still summoned to the *Fuehrerbau*, the Reichs Chancellery. The man she had to see was a Regierungsrat Schwingenstein. She told me little about it, except that it had no longer to do with being evicted from our apartment but rather with her still being Jewish and belonging to the Jewish community. At least she was no longer picked up by the Gestapo. These visits, with often months in between, would drag on for a long time yet and when Schwingenstein had enough of her she had to go to the Gestapo and later the local *Ortsgruppe*, 'Party District Office.'

The year began with new and painful restrictions, at least for us. Not only were we confined to our apartments after eight o'clock but we were no longer permitted to leave the city and take a train. Mom had to go to the country to get food, barter with whatever we had to trade and farmers could use. She gave all her better clothing and things from me which I had outgrown. She knitted wool sweaters; scarves and gloves were always in great demand. She also got nice things from our good neighbor Frau Maurer and other people in the house. Lucky that mom had her old gentile ID card so if she was checked on the train she had no problem. At least those train controls were only checking on identifications and not what travelers carried as baggage. Since bartering for food with farmers, or as it was called *hamstern*, was strictly forbidden she had to be careful not to be seen by local authorities. Each village had a party hanzo called an

Ortsbauernfuehrer, 'local village party leader' who made it their business to check on strangers walking through the village with bags of whatever. Mom had found a new farmer in Gelting, to the East of Munich. Herr Baumgartner was an anti-Nazi and gave mom plenty of those rarities as eggs, butter, flour and a slab of smoked meat. He had two daughters who could use nice clothing. He told mom that I could come out during the summer vacation and work with him on the farm and he would pay me with food stuff.

The war was going badly for England. Being bombed every night and having their ships sunk, but the threatened invasion had never come. The British were to be bombed into submission, everybody expected them to sue for peace. The Nazis were really mad at the British for not giving up. For once German propaganda was right when they blamed it all on Churchill and his clique. But England was still giving the Italians hell in North Africa and captured Tobruk at the begin of 1941. In January a special bulletin announced the sinking of the British aircraft carrier *Illustrious*. Weeks later she was bombed again in Malta. So much for German propaganda, Goebbels' goof as he admits in his writings.

In February Hitler sent Gen. Rommel to Africa with German divisions to capture back what the Italians lost. The goal, as the papers announced, was the capture of Alexandria and the Suez Canal. I even had the naïve thought that if the German's capture the Middle East and Palestine maybe they ship us Jews there.

In March, an article I read said that Roosevelt promised the English aid until victory. He stated '*The end of compromise with tyranny.*' The Nazi papers made fun of it and said, 'Roosevelt is really a Jew and changed his name from Rosenfeld.'

During March the bulletins report the heaviest air attacks against London and Plymouth. The paper proudly spoke of English civilian casualties. In London alone during the month of March 4,259 people were killed, this number includes 598 children under the age of 16. These figures taken from London newspapers, so it must be true. They blame Churchill for these casualties and not the Luftwaffe.

In April Germany destroyed Belgrade by air and then invaded Yugoslavia; another Blitzkrieg. Then once Yugoslavia has been conquered Germany invaded Greece from the backdoor and the British left. In North Africa Rommel made good progress since England had sent her troops to Greece.

4 May 1941: Hitler addresses the Reichstag, *'In this Jewish-capitalistic age, the National Socialist State stands out as a solid monument to commonsense. It will survive for one thousand years.'* (Hitler's one thousand year Reich has exactly four years and 4 days left.)

10 May 1941: 'Crazy Hess' flew to England. At least the bulletins described him as mentally deranged.

Here Goebbels diary:

'Tuesday, 13 May 1941. Yesterday: The devastation in London, according to all reports on the spot, horrific. But no signs of weakening. Appalling news comes in the evening: Hess, against the Fuehrer's orders, has taken off in a plane and has been missing since Saturday. We must presume him dead. His adjutants, who were the only ones aware of his intentions, have been arrested on the Fuehrer's orders. The Fuehrer's statement gives delusions as the reason for his action, some madness to do with illusionary

peace-feelers. I received a telephone call from the Berghof. The Fuehrer is quite shattered. What a sight for the world's eyes: The Fuehrer's deputy a mentally disturbed man. Dreadful and unthinkable.'

'Wednesday, 14 May 1941. Yesterday: Another crazy day. The wild alarms and rumors start at first thing in the morning. Total chaos. Everything from high treason to peace-offers. Meanwhile, clarity at last: Hess has landed by parachute in Scotland. Let his plane crash and sprained his ankle in the fall. Then he was found by a farmer and later arrested by the Home Guard. A tragi-comedy. One doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. The public's morale is rock-bottom.'

And later.... 'To Obersalzberg. The Fuehrer is waiting for me. I read the letters that Hess left behind for the Fuehrer: totally confused, schoolboy amateurism. It is all so stupid. A fool like this was the Fuehrer's deputy. He is supposed to have had visions, had horoscopes drawn up, and so on. Rubbish. And this is one of Germany's ruler. The whole thing can be traced to his mystic obsession with healthy living and all that nonsense about eating grass. Totally lunatic. I would like to give a good beating to that wife of his, his adjutants and his doctors.'

It goes on like this day after day. Goebbels, as Minister of Propaganda, is responsible for press releases to the German public, the countries allied with Germany and the world. And he doesn't like this Hess debacle one bit. The reason I include these parts of Goebbels' diary in my book is to lead the reader into the following statement which more than anything else shows how Goebbels and the Nazi propaganda operated with lies and deceptions!

Again from Goebbels' diary:

'Friday, 16 May 1941. It seems that London has not hit upon the idea of simply issuing statements in Hess's name without his knowledge. This is the big, most alarming danger so far as we are concerned. The thought of it makes me shiver. We are dealing with dumb amateurs over there. What we would do if the situation were reversed!'

11 May 1941: British terror raid on Hamburg and Bremen. German air raids on London and other English cities are described as successful missions of the Luftwaffe. British retaliatory raids are always terror raids. In Munich we haven't even had an air raid alarm since last year.

We have Dr. Kessler now as full time teacher. Miss Neumeier went to Palestine. Some of the kids come now from the family camp in Berg-am-Laim. A few are living in the camp in Milbertshofen. It just isn't fair. But the kids are bearing up and at least for the four hours in school they are happy. And we get our weekly notifications of turning in this and that. Typewriters is the latest item they are robbing us of. Not that we have one. In fact all these notifications of turn-ins and restrictions we read and then throw away. The Gemeinde doesn't bother us, they know we are poor. While they have to put pressure on other Jewish families to comply to keep the Gestapo off their necks. The Gestapo has a well documented list of all Jews living in Munich and their wealth – or lack of. I guess that was the reason they never came to us for house searches.

By now, most Jews were living in the few Jew-houses or in the two camps.

Mom still has her occasional summons to the *Reichskanzlei* but I was usually in school when she went and she rarely told me of her summons.

Food was still adequate because other people helped us out. Otherwise almost every month when we got our rations cards we had nasty surprises. Every stamp was marked

with JEW. At least we could buy with them at our designated store. The people in that grocery store were noncommittal, neither friendly nor unfriendly. I never knew how they got the Jewish peoples business. Maybe they were Nazis and liked that extra business of people being forced to buy from them or they just volunteered to serve the Jews. But they usually had adequate supplies for stamps. The surprises came with the stamping of 'void' on all meat products, butter, eggs, white bread which were also the stamps for rolls and any form of bakery. Potatoes mom bought from a friendly man who brought them in hundred pound sacks, the same as coals. He didn't even ask for stamps. So there were good people trying to help.

Mom could get some fouled fruit from a relative's store by the Bahnhof, an aunt of hers, but only if her aunt's husband wasn't around, again a split family of Hitler believers. But mainly it was the occasional food stamps from people in our house that helped us, with these stamps mom could then buy anywhere. We kind of became vegetarians, not by choice of course. And eating vegetarian is fine as long as you can get the other food staples, such as noodles and other cereals, which again we were restricted to buy. Thin milk (I guess we call in fatless milk now) we could get in limited quantities. Some fish were still available without stamps such as carp, when in stock.

And of course beer was sold without stamps, though forbidden to sell to Jews. Which meant nothing to Herr Seep of our inn. Beer in Munich was considered 'liquid bread,' and it is nourishing – and good.

I loved noodles in any shape or form. One of my favorite dishes was noodles and over it a gravy made from a cube of Knorr sauce. Sometimes when mom got eggs and flour from a farmer she would make her own. Make a dough, roll it out on the table and cut it

into thin strips then let it dry. Whatever was available in vegetables mom bought. Mom made real delicious hamburgers from breadcrumbs and cooked spinach. I think what hurt most for cooking was the lack of eggs, flour and cooking fat or oil.

Mom was the herbal lady. Even other people in the house when they saw herbs somewhere for sale they brought some home to my mother. She would dry them and used them mainly to flavor sauces over potatoes. My favorite – dill sauce, just water flour and dill. I read somewhere where hungry people roasted cooked potatoes in coffee grounds, I persuaded mom to try it; didn't work. Maybe because we used grounds from malt coffee. Didn't roast, tasted awful and we were picking grounds out from our teeth for hours after. Black bread which we got adequate also looked strange, all sorts of other stuff beside rye they must bake with.

Often on Sundays Frau Spitzelberger invited me up for dumplings. I would grind the raw potatoes, then get five big ones with lots of gravy and a little piece of roast, two bites just to see what meat tastes like. Her husband never minded if she fed me. Later on during the war things became even more short on supply and Herr Spitzelberger would catch pigeons. Rig a string to the window, open it and put crumbs on the window sill and inside and when the bird was in the room close the window and they had a little roast.

No, while food was important to me and I seemed to be always hungry except when I ate those five dumplings, it was not such a big problem – yet.

The problem was that the war was going Germany's way. By summer Germany was master over most of Europe, the 'master race' lording it over the lesser people. Only England was still alive.

School vacation came. There was a time, years ago, when I welcomed the long summer absence from school. Now I missed my classmates.

Hansi, my friend from upstairs, was drafted and off to somewhere, Willi would follow next year.

I had been invited to work the summer on the farm of Herr Baumgartner. One day I drove out the twenty miles or so to his place with my now illegal bicycle. He lived to the east of the city, past Riem, the Luftwaffe base, and through a number of small villages to Gelting. Then on a dirt road out to his farm.

In Bavaria the farms were usually small, I don't know how many acres he had. And as was custom he had a plot of land here and there, in effect all over. His farmhouse was not that big, and again as most small landholders have them. The ground level had the kitchen and living room combination. A storage room where he stored the milk and made the butter, and a sort of work shed. Then the cowshed, which was part of the house. Upstairs were three bedrooms. The toilet was the outhouse. For washing I used a bucket of water in the cowshed. He had six cows and two oxen which he used to pull the wagon and plow. And pigs, the chickens, ducks which most farmers keep.

Farmer's produce was tightly controlled; each cow, calf, pig, chicken and duck was registered. And each day he had to have so and so many cans of milk ready for pickup and also eggs. The same with the land. In summer all his land was checked so see what he planted and then he had to deliver a certain amount of what he grew to the mill. To slaughter a pig he needed a permit and then his meat stamps were withdrawn for a certain time. But farmers did well food wise and always had a little extra to barter away.

Herr Xaver Baumgartner, or as I called him Xaver, was in his mid fifties, short and stocky, with a little mustache. He was a unique man, simple yes, but with a lot of wisdom, I call it native intelligence. People like that, if they had the education, would be the foremost scientist or doctors or inventors. Farmers were still exempted from the draft. He was a widower, his wife having died in a strange accident. As she sat on the hay wagon and he rounded a tight corner the wagon tipped over and she fell into the creek and drowned. He showed me one time where it happened, the creek a foot deep. He said she couldn't swim? The farmer's daughters: Lise, I guess 15, kept the house for him, did the cooking and little chores as milking, feeding the chickens and pigs and churning the butter vat. The older daughter was somewhere in the mountains. For help he had a French prisoner of war who came daily. There was lots of work and I loved it on the farm and farm work, and Lise was a good cook. My daily chores became fetching wood in the forest, bringing it home to saw and chop it. Farmers didn't get coals.

Quickly I learned how to harness the oxen to a wagon and how to guide them to wherever I wanted to go. Daily cleaning out the cowshed and bringing new straw in. Lise did the milking and that I soon did too. But the first thing every morning was to go to a meadow he owned and he would cut fresh grass with his long sickle (the only job he always did himself), I raked it and put it on the wagon. After feeding the stock we went in for breakfast. Lise loved roast potatoes, she could eat a plate full morn, noon and evening with a pot of coffee. So we had lots of potatoes roasted in butter and garnished with greens and onions. Xaver and I had also smoked meat and sometimes eggs. To make hay he used his sickle, he didn't have one of those machines that clipped

the grass. Then we let the grass lay there until it became hay, turned it often, load it on the wagon and bring it home and store it in the barn next to the house, winter feed for the cows. Emil, the French war prisoner came around 9, worked in the fields and stayed for lunch and supper. He knew what to do and worked on his own.

Xaver taught me how to plow. It was slow going with an ox pulling it, all morning plowing I could finish a field. I was proud of my straight furrows but the ends were I had to make my turns were messy. When Xaver saw that I did well plowing he left me alone and went into the woods and picked nuts from the trees, or he might just sack out.

He was a great dreamer and philosopher and would talk endlessly about any subject.

Sometimes I worked with Frenchy Emil. Picking potatoes from the field was a backbreaking job, always bending over and pulling the stalks out and putting the potatoes in a sack. Emil was homesick, he had been captured over a year ago and longed for his family, his kids. His German was not that good but I understood what he wanted from me. He had learned from the farmer that I was a Jewish boy and that we had it tough under the Nazis. He was from southern France which was not under control of the Germans. He was desperate to get home and wanted me to flee with him. My German, and being a boy would help him he thought. Once in Vichy France with his family he would take good care of me. What turned me off to his plan and going with him was that he wanted to go by way of the Bodensee, across the lake by boat into Switzerland, then let the Swiss repatriate him into Vichy France. I had heard about the Swiss how they turned refugees back to the German border and into the hands of the Gestapo, so I was not interested. Actually they turned refugees over to the German border guards who in turn called the Gestapo. Same thing..

Xaver was an ardent anti-Nazi. He had to be careful as he was known never to fly the Swatiska during holidays or participate like most farmers did in the meetings at the village of Gelting with the local party members. However, he strongly believed that the Nazis would win the war and he told me why. He had a sort of journal of the prophecies of Nostradamus, the famous seer, of whom I had heard people speak of. He showed me a prophecy that foretold of a big war in the twentieth century during which an island nation would be destroyed by sulfur and fire. He firmly believed that England was meant and the Germany would develop superbombs to do it with. This in retrospect is a fantastic prophecy as it was not England but the island nation of Japan that was atomic bombed.

(Recently when I read Goebbels' diaries from the years of 1939-41, I came across these interesting revelations.)

'5 December 1939

Oberst von Hacken has produced a new translation of Nostradamus. Marvelously useful for our propaganda abroad. I shall take steps immediately.'

And further:

'9 January 1940

I set up an expert committee to deal with Nostradamus and astrology. It will supply the necessary material for my propaganda.'

We must assume that Herr Baumgartner fell victim to Goebbels' forgeries of Nostradamus.

About Nostradamus it is written: a mysterious – and largely incomprehensible – sixteenth-century book of prophecies.

Goebbels' diaries are also full of other interesting notes. Many people and historians have always wondered what were Hitler's final aims in this war? Besides the acquisition of Lebensraum and the subjugation of other nations and its people. And the destruction of those he considered undesirables. I have seen somewhere the phrase *Grossdeutsches Weltreich*, 'Greater German World Empire' with a notation that at present the coinage must not be used. In Goebbels diaries is an interesting reference:

6 February 1940

'The old Holy Roman Empire was the greatest political creation of the post-Roman era. It took its European character from the Roman Empire, and we shall assume that mantle now. Because of our organizational brilliance and racial selectivity, world domination will automatically fall to us.'

I had a great time on the farm with Xaver. Hard work and learning about farming and animal care, and plenty to eat. When I left after four weeks he gave me as much food as I could pack on my bicycle; a sack of flour, butter, eggs and slabs of smoked meat and fat. Mom was very happy with that and me. I only spent a couple days at home before she sent me to visit my grandparents in Vilshofen who wanted me to visit them.

The problem was that we Jews were forbidden to leave the city and ride the trains. Or rather, since we paid little attention to all that crap, how to avoid or face a possible train control by the Gestapo. Mom thought that with my heavy Munich dialect and her old ID card which did not have the J mark I should pass. Act as if I didn't know that my mother packed me her ID card by mistake.

I went to Vilshofen and was not checked. I loved the little town and to be with my friends there. My grandparents, having that fruit and vegetable store, had no problems getting extra food through the farmers they bought the produce from. Every evening grandma gave me a stamp for 50 gm of meat and I bought my *Leberkaes*, the meat loaf. The butcher gave me twice as much as long as I paid for it. Every morning those hard, crispy rolls, and Sundays the traditional roast and dumplings. There was no war here in Vilshofen and it would never come except for food shortages hitting the town because of all the refugees crowding in. Most evacuees from the bombed out cities of northern Germany and not Munich. While there, I heard of and then read the newspaper of Germany attacking the Soviet Union. I think it was on a Sunday, June 22. Terrible news to me as this was surely the World War Hitler had promised would lead to the annihilation of the Jews. I saw people read the paper or displayed bulletin and nobody said anything. No happy faces, no gung-ho war fever as it was with Poland and no jubilation as when France was defeated. A few flags flying as a show of Nazi support and that was it. People had been promised that the war would be over by this Christmas, and now?

Besides the brief news of successful attacks by the Wehrmacht all along the front it also explained the reason for attacking the Soviet Union. This time it wasn't border incidents or mistreatment of ethnic Germans but to prevent the Soviets from attacking Germany and engulfing Europe and the world with its Jewish-Bolshevik tyranny.

This cast a shadow over my good times in Vilshofen. A lingering knot in my stomach whenever I read the paper. Not that Germany was smashing the red army but what that war meant to us Jews.

Then it was time to leave. My last visit to Vilshofen during the war? And the last time I saw my grandparents. In 1942, my grandfather passed away and my grandmother soon followed him with a broken heart. They had been nice and good people.

When I took the train back to Munich there was just one man in the compartment. He was friendly and talkative. Told me his name which I forgot, I just call him 'the man.' After the next main station, Plattling, the door opened and two men came in, in civies.

'*Zugkontrolle*, train control, your papers please.' The man showed his – then me. With that sinking feeling in my gut I got down my suitcase and handed him the ID card.

Knowing very well it was mom's. He looked at it...then looked at me, "whose is this?"

I looked at it...then faking surprise (I didn't do such a good job the man told me later)

but in my best Munich dialect I said '*Scheisse*. My mom packed me the wrong card.'

He asked me my name, what Hitler Youth troop I belonged to and a few more questions.

Then gave me the card back and they left.

The man smiled at me (the dialog I have to improvise as I don't remember the exact words but here is the gist of it.), "Are you Jewish?"

I didn't need to fake surprise as I was surprised by his question, "Why do you think that?"

He smiled again, "Oh, the ploy you used is an old one. Also I saw your face when you lifted down your case. The way you pressed your eyes together for a moment. You were afraid. You did well speaking your Bavarian dialect. That convinced the Gestapo that you were legitimate. Just a mix up in passes. So are you Jewish?"

I laughed or rather chuckled, "What makes you think so?"

He then, “Ah Hugo. I like that. Being careful. You must never trust anyone, not me either.”

I sat back down and he gave me some suggestion of how to improve my hiding, whatever I was hiding...”Your Jewishness,” he smiled. “Never to panic or show obvious fright, a sure way to be arrested. Not to be cocky but show being concerned, being apprehensive is fine. You still don’t trust me? That is fine.. Let me change the subject. Do you like girls?”

Without going into those details he told me that I was a handsome boy and he and his wife liked boys. If I was Jewish, he had it from highest government sources that they will start killing all Jews. He has a friend in Switzerland who also liked boys and he could get me there. I would be well taken care of.

He even gave me his address to visit him. Of course I never visited him. But here again I had an opportunity too escape into Switzerland. More safer than with Frenchy.

But a double ‘no-no.’ The uncertainty of Switzerland as a place of refuge and to a man who liked boys. I didn’t even tell mom. How could I! Though I told her about being checked on the train. She only said something to the effect, “You see I was right.”

My mother told me of another visit to the *Reichskanzlei* and that our eviction was definitely off.

Our small apartment had a boarder. Herr Julius Loewenthal was assigned by the Gemeinde to live with us. He had some privileges as he had been a German Officer in the Big War but now they had him evicted from his apartment. Well, we had an old sofa in the kitchen. He was a miserable little old man and I never could get along with him.

Worse, he had once a cigar and liquor store and brought some of that stuff with him. And that with the Gestapo doing house searches. He didn't need the money. I think he still dealt in these goods to please some of his old customers, like the SS professor who dealt in feces, professor Traugott Baumgaertel. What a strange first name. It means 'trust in God.' He came sometimes and was a wonderful person. Strictly anti-Nazi. He always told us the latest news from London direct. Our nice black SS Nazi professor.

Then, terrible news we received from the Gemeinde. This time it affected us directly or rather me and in a most awful way. As of the 19th of September all Jews had to wear the star of David. Severe measures threatened with non-compliance, hiding or covering up the star. Mom went to the Gemeinde to pick mine up.

They looked weird, on a yellow background the six pointed star in black. And in the middle of the star the word *Jude*, Jew made to look like Hebrew letters. It had to be sewn on the chest over the heart and worn on any outside garment. This was devastating! To be marked like an outcast, like Cain I thought. With trepidation I awaited the day when I had to wear it.

(In hindsight I think that to make the Jews wear this symbol of Jewishness or rather symbol of Nazi persecution backfired. Most Germans I believe, did not want to see the Jews singled out like this, gave them a bad feeling or bad conscious. Especially seeing little children, like their own, marked with that ugly looking star. I also believe that this was the reason that in the first transport of a thousand Jews from Munich they made certain that most, if not all, children star-wearers were included.)

School started again and I was in seventh grade, we had Dr. Kessler again. I liked him, he was a good teacher and I got along fine with him. Without any books, and now

also without writing material, it was all learning by what he told us. From classics he would read to us and we would have discussion. But most of all I was happy to be with my classmates – my brothers and sisters.

We were twenty children left. Down from the fifty-five kids we were when our class pictures was taken in 1938. All others had emigrated to foreign lands.

Of these 20 kids, 16 were deported in November. In the year 2000 I received a list of these children of my class who had been resettled, from the Munich archives. They were listed as ‘deceased’, date of death 25 November 1941.

I like to remember my classmates. Of some I have forgotten their names as they left a long time ago. There are a few newcomers who are not in our class picture.

This class photograph was taken when we were in the forth grade, in the courtyard of our school, the year 1938, I guess we were all ten years old then.

Those who were shot in Fort IX, Kovno on the 25th of November 1941, I mark after their names with an asterik.

Back row, from left: Our teacher Ferdinand Kissinger. He, and his brother Julius (uncles of Henry Kissinger) with wife Jenny, sons Albert and Manfred went to Kovno.

Jacki Alster, Mrs. Alster and her two sons Jacki and Freddie lived in the house next to ours. She tried to emigrate to Australia in time but since her hosiery store was taken from her, and the money in a blocked account, she didn’t have the funds to leave. Jacki was a nice kid but mama’s boy. Though in my class and neighbors we were not close friends. His younger brother Freddie was a good friend of mine. Freddie was in a class below ours so he is not in this picture. The family – Kovno.

The boy next to Jacki left a long time before and I don’t remember his name.

Menni Rosenbusch, fun kid. Always full of pep and go. He was one of the best in class in art. We were not close but I liked him, everybody did. He and his large family – Kovno.

Manfred Rosenbaum. He and Menni were close friends, they also lived next to each other. Kovno.

The little guy next to him, the fifth boy, was my best friend Alo Hirsch. His father was the butcher who once gave me that big stick of salami, something a boy remembers if nothing else. Though he lived so far away from me that we rarely could visit each other we were inseparable in school. Alo and his family managed to leave late in 1940 for America. One of the last families to get out.

Many of the boys wear suspenders and *Lederhosen*, shorts made of leather, the traditional dress for boys.

Next to Alo is Walter Kaufmann – emigrated.

Then another little guy, Erich Kupfer. The orphan boy whom I visited when he lived with his uncle, his uncle the bombardier who gave us hell in Munich in 1944-45.

Erich was a wild kid. He lived at the orphanage and was caught defacing a picture of Hitler. Taken to Gestapo headquarters and beaten and then put in their jail until they shipped him with the other children to Kovno.

Next to Erich is Harald Zernik. He became my best friend after Alo left. A nice gentle boy and fun to be with. He came to visit me early November as if to say good by. I got hold of a small bottle of cherry liquor and in the attic we finished it. He was lucky to throw it all up. I was drunk for three days in school, had a bad headache. Harald and his family to Kovno.

The last two boys are the Lemle twins – they did not appear in school after 1941, and though they did not emigrate, I don't know what happened to them. They survived.

The second row are all girls. From left to right:

Esther Berger, a sweet little girl. Always friendly and full of fun. Esther and her younger sister Hanna to Kovno with their parents. Not all the children living in the orphanage or *Kinderheim* as it was called were orphans. Many had parents but having been forcefully removed from their homes and often living in a one-room place the children were housed in the orphanage.

The girl next to Esther is Eva Sundheimer, emigrated.

The third girl is Ricki Jeidl. I have to smile when I look at her. Never a serious moment with her. The teacher would get angry with her talking in class and she smiled: that was that. I repeatedly talk about how much fun my classmates were but Ricki was always cheerful and full of pranks. When I got my writing papers back red-marked all over I would look at her and she gave me that smiling laugh 'it all passes by, cheer up Hugo', and I felt good again. Emigrated to England with the *Kindertransport*.

Next to Ricki is Gerda Leiter, Miss Correctness – emigrated.

(In the year 2004, I read the book "Flames of Memory" and in it a brief story of a Gertrude Newman from Pittsburgh who wrote about her experiences during the *Kristallnacht* in Munich when the Gestapo came to arrest her father. He was forewarned and in hiding. The Gestapo then threatened her and her mother with Dachau if he didn't turn himself in. He did of course and spent 3 months in Dachau. The family was able to get out of Germany and went to America. In back of the book was a picture of Mrs. Newman as an 70 year old lady. Yet there was a feint resemblance to a Gerda Leiter

from our class. The computer gave me the phone for a G.S. Newman in Pittsburgh. I called: "Are you Mrs. Gertrude Newman?"

"Yes. Who is calling?"

"My name is Hugo Holzmann. Are you from Munich?"

"Yes, but I don't know anyone by that name."

"That is all right. It has been sixty-five years. Did we call you Gerda Leiter in class?" So it was Gerda Leiter. And we both were very happy to have found each other after such a long time and are in constant correspondence. Gerda, or Gertrude as she calls herself now, or Gert to her friends, is the only classmate I have found.)

Next to her Margot Sussheimer, followed by Eva Ballin. Both emigrated.

Eva Gunz, such a nice and friendly kid, Kovno.

The next two girls in dark blouses are the Ruthenburg twins. My favorite girls. Different in looks and temperament. The first is Margot, a pretty girl and outgoing. Maybe a little flirt with the boys, trying at least. She would flash her eyes at a favorite boy and then be embarrassed, as if she had done something bad. Her sister Inge was a scarred kitten.

I always thought of her as a little bird with broken wings. I think I was as a boy really gentle and kind hearted even with my stern outer appearance and wild ways. And Inge was my little birdie I had to help and protect. I was good in all subjects except spelling and gladly helped Inge like in math, geography and art where she was not very good.

And when I helped her she would stand or sit next to me trembling, her little hands shaking, whispering. I have never met anyone with such painful shyness.

If ever a child can die of fright and the heart fail of terror it must have happened to Inge when she was led to the pit in the fort and saw it full of shot people, some of whom

were still alive and shrieking in their agonies. Poor Inge, the little bird with broken wings. Poor Margot and all the other children who went to Kovno.

Next to the twins is Eva Hisch, very outgoing and exuberant – Kovno.

The girl next to Eva is Susie Scherz. A fine girl. She had to step down a class and her older sister Frieda in turn came to us. Both rather slow learners but good girls. To Kovno.

The girls to the right of Susie – Margot Trieste, Marion Thalheimer – both emigrated, to America. Margot and I liked each other. Just innocent, but real liking nine year olds can feel for one another. Margot was still with us during the 1940 summer picnics we had with our class. The rest of the girls to the right of Margot and Marion all emigrated except one. Bertel Sandbank, my good and dear friend Bertel. The girl rejoicing in life who would never give up until she took her last breaths in the gas chamber of Chelmno, in April 1942. Bertel is the third girl from the right, standing right behind me.

The next row from the left, squatting behind the kids sitting in front.

Guenter Hess. Once our class became smaller as other kids left and the persecution of us kids ever more severe we drew together like a family. Guenter and I became dear friends. He lived with many others from our class in the convent. To Kovno.

The lovely girl next to him is Steffi Weil. She left a very long time ago. But who can forget her pretty face and name.

Then Inge Weissmann. She too emigrated.

Paul Nussbaum. Who sat next to me in class and invited me for Saturday dinners. His family left in 1939 for Baltimore.

Next to Paul- I don't remember his name, Paul Neuburger and Ernst are the next two boys and all left.

Manfred Pollack, one of the orphans. A great guy, our best soccer player. He and Erich Kupfer were always together making mischief and having fun. Deported and shot.

Next to Manfred with the hair in his face is Sigi Golomb. Sigi is an abbreviation of Sigfried. Jewish boys didn't want to be called either Adolf or Sigfried. He disappeared suddenly in 1938. (Recently we found each other through an ad I placed in a Jewish journal. He went to his sister in Hungary in 1938 and was deported to Auschwitz.

Survived in many camps and came to America. Prof. Emeritus of Boston University.)

Walter Marx is the boy half squatting next to Sigi. Also to England.

And behind Walter in the dark sweater that is Hugo – me.

The girl, squatting all by herself to my left was a nice and friendly girl. I don't remember her name but she emigrated.

The boys sitting in front, Eugene Goldmann left for the US.

The next two boys I forgot their names but they emigrated.

Simon Ehrentreu from a famous family of rabbis left for England.

Peter Thalheimer, with his sister Marion to US.

That boy, sitting up straight and blond is Alfred Greif. My best competitor in athletics.

Running like the wind, only Bertel and I faster. He went to Kovno.

I hadn't see Alfred after the summer of 1941. I had thought for certain that he had left.

And then I found his name on the list of the children who were taken to Kovno.

The last boy emigrated.

Something else bad happened to our school when we began in September. The trade school for our older boys and girls was closed down. All were forced to work for several German companies. Dora and many others for Agfa, I believe they worked on filling batteries. My friend Ilse Lewin from our house was sent to Lohof camp for girls, away from the city to pick and make things from flax. There was only rail connection to the camp so that Ilse couldn't come home or her parents visit her. The girls could leave the camp on weekends but without being able to use the train they couldn't go any place. She came home one weekend only and that was the time Gestapo Mugler came to check on us wearing the star.

[I call this man Gestapo Mugler as my mother referred to him as such. However, in a book published by the Munich Archives in 2004, this man is listed as a high ranking SA leader and not from the Gestapo. So are his colleagues Hans Wegner and Ludwig Schrott. According to this book , when it came time to rob the Munich Jews of their houses, businesses and possessions the Nazi party became intimately involved through the notorious anti-Semite *Gauleiter* Adolf Wagner. It became German law in April of 1938, that Jews would be forced to give up their possession through forced sales and the money deposited in closed bank accounts, after the November 1938 pogrom of the so called Crystall Night the Jews of Munich were no longer forced to sell – they were robbed of their possessions. To this end the NSDAP or Nazi Party, under the helm of *Gauleiter* Wagner, set up their own apparatus to steal and rob under the pseudonym *Arisierungsstelle* or arianization office with a number of highranking SA leaders in charge. Wegner, Mugler and Schrott set themselves up as pseudo-Gestapo officials to make house searches, evict Jews from their houses and apartments, participate in their

deportations and in general brutalize the Jewish citizens of Munich. Therefore most Jews thought of them as Gestapo as my mother did.]

The war situation had turned very bad. Now the Russians were getting a good taste of Hitlerism. In July the bulletin reported 'German bombers over Moscow.' When I speak of the bulletin, all the war reports emanated from the OKW, *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, or High Command of the German Armed forces. Before Hitler attacked the Soviet Union the Russians had shown no sympathy for the British being bombed day and night. Not that the Russians deserved to be bombed now, but what irony. The English were more magnanimous and promised the Soviets every help they could give them, which made for fun-times in Goebbels commentaries.

5 August: *Kesselschlacht* in Smolenks. Here is a new vocabulary of the OKW. Meaning 'encirclement battle.' 700,000 Russians killed or captured. Thousands of tanks destroyed. These OKW reports come as a special bulletin and are red bordered. On the radio these special reports are announced by a hour of fanfares, drumrolls, Nazi and Wagnerian music.

22 August: Soviet loses as reported in the bulletin of the *Voelkischer Beobachter*. In two months the Soviets lost 3 and a half million dead, one and a quarter million prisoners; 14,000 tanks and 15,000 guns destroyed. And over 11,000 planes shot down. I don't know what is true. The German also told of huge loses of the British in airplanes and yet they couldn't go on bombing England during the day because of British resistance. But just to look on the map where the battles are taking place it must be true that the Russian are taking a terrible beating.

19 September: The OKW reports the capture of Kiev and the taking of 600,000 prisoners.

And this is the day I had to wear the Nazi-star!

Friday the 19th of September 1941, the dreaded day. The day we had to wear the yellow star to be marked like outcast, like criminals.

Victor Klemperer writes in his book 'I Will Bear Witness' that he was so terrified on that day and the weekend that he did not leave his apartment. I was terrified too,

I never forget this day. It was a chilly fall morning when a quarter after seven I went down into the street, the yellow star on my overcoat. I don't remember why I took the streetcar going into town where I would have to change instead of the number 2.

Maybe I didn't want the people who always waited for the same car see me, or perhaps the one into town was the first car to come along and I didn't want to stand around and have people gawk at me. We were permitted only to ride the front platform and that is where I got on. The place was crowded with people. I was in terror – was everybody staring at me? I looked straight ahead at someone's back. The conductor came to collect the fare. I couldn't find my money. My dime was there but with cold and trembling fingers I couldn't feel anything. I told the conductor that I can't find my money and I would get off at the next stop. And then a man paid for me. I looked at him gratefully and he closed his eyes and nodded softly. And that little encouragement meant so much to me. Then when I got off to change cars I stood there at the stop, my star shining bright on my chest – look, look at me. I am a Jew. LOOK! And I saw that people would look. A brief glance and then look away. Some shaking their heads. Nobody really stared at me, gave me a bad word or a sneer. I felt that people were surprised seeing my

star and didn't like it. And at school we horsed around showing each other our same stars and we could laugh and be happy with each other. We could live with our mark of Cain – though we were innocents. Many of my classmates didn't come that Friday. I was glad the Ruthenburg twins didn't come. Poor Inge would have fainted in that scared world she lived in.

My mother was not required to wear the star. Not until a few weeks later when during one of her visits to Schwiengenstein he told her 'you want to be a Jew. So put the star on.' And mom put one of my stars on her coat and proudly walked around the neighborhood or wherever she had to go. That was my mama! In all the times I wore my star – their star – I only encountered one unfavorable comment. A bunch of us got on the streetcar, the front platform, and one boy horsed around. So I said 'quiet down, don't behave like an idiot.' The conductor who just appeared had heard me and said 'you are all a bunch of idiots.'

1941 was a terrible year. The war was all going bad for us.

3 October: Hitler speaks, "*Russia had been broken and will never rise again.*"

Goebbels, "*The struggle in the East is settled.*"

18 October: "The OKW reports German troops in front of Moscow."

19 October: Latest Goebbels report: "3.2 million Russian prisoners, 19,000 tanks, 28,000 guns and 14,600 aircraft destroyed." Yet the Russians are still fighting.

25 October: A few weeks ago it was 'General Mud' holding up the troops now it is 'General Winter.' So the bulletin says.

At the end of October came that ugly incident my mom wrote in her story. The star inspection by Gestapo Mugler. I don't remember the details like mom did. I remember

that a woman came to our apartment pounding on our door and telling us 'all Jews down in the street for star inspection.' There were mom, our boarder Herr Loewenthal, myself, and the three from the Lewin family. Herr and Frau Lewin and Ilse. She had come for the weekend. I would never meet Ilse again!

That Gestapo Mugler I had never seen before and I really don't recall what he looked like but I remember him as being a mean and arrogant bastard. He poked around my star to see if it was sawn on and threatened all of us with concentration camp if we didn't wear the star properly or tried to hide it. There were people around our little group. A few laughing but most just staring. We must have been some strange group. My mother, some of whom the onlookers might have known; I, a boy of twelve.

Ilse then fifteen, and the prettiest girl to look at. Herr Lewin looking so distinguished. Frau Lewin a beautiful woman. Only Herr Loewenthal in any way looked Jewish. And that was because in his younger years he had boxed and got his nose bashed in, it looked very much crooked. At last that is what they always claimed that Jews have crooked noses.

I always hid my star in my own neighborhood. Lifting my arm up I could do it easily or carrying something. I didn't want people get used to seeing me wearing it so if I went to the movies or other forbidden places, like walking Lumpi in the Pinakothek park without the star, I would be safe. Once I came near our school I displayed it openly. Or of course going to the temple, hiding it on the streetcar and then getting off a stop before and showing it openly. It didn't bother me anymore, or at least I got used to it. No, I never got used to it. But since the reaction of the people was non-committal or friendly, it didn't bother me terrible.

Professor Baumgaertl came about once a month to get his supply of cigarettes. Germans had a ration cards for smoke products but he apparently smoked continuously. He said he needed to smoke when he did his research . Maybe it was because of the type of product he worked with – though now I know that slides with feces don't smell. It was just a habit. But he always was cheerful and brought us the latest news from London. Encouraged us to keep going. But he was honest, and while he believed that ultimately the Nazis would be defeated by the whole world going against them, he thought that the war would last for many years. Maybe as long as ten more years.

Ten more years. No Jew would be left alive. It all looked so hopeless. While Germany would not be able to defeat the Allies the Wehrmacht looked so strong that I could not imagine how anyone could defeat them. Maybe America. But except for helping England with material America was staying out of the war. Maybe when one side couldn't win against the other it would become a stalemate. And then maybe the Nazis would let us Jews leave - I thought and hoped. If mom and I couldn't go to America because of their stupid quotas we would gladly go to Palestine, join a kibbutz.

Every day when I went to school I read the two bulletins. The news was on both sheets always the same, report from the OKW. Then each bulletin interpreted the news in their own fashion. The Munich paper had more news from the front, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi party newspaper more political news, propaganda. And always coming down on us Jews. The Jewish Plutocrats sitting on Churchill's back, the bulldog, and whipping him on. And the Jewish Bolsheviks flogging the Russian bear.

I hardly ever had a chance to read the two glass cases by the school, the *Stuermer* and *Schwarze Korps*. As a boy, with a star on, I got chased away by one of our own people or a German walking by. Most comments were “you shouldn’t read that.”

But I read in the *Schwarze Korps* anyhow something new and frightening: 'heroic SS men fighting Jewish terrorists and bandits in Russia.' Why Jewish terrorists and bandits? (The Jewish bandits of course were Jewish families in Russia the SS heroes had rounded up and were murdering in the pits they had to dig.)

In class we never discussed the war or our problems. Though I could see the sadness when a kid told us how they had to leave their apartment and move into the Jewish camp. In most cases they had to leave everything behind, just take what they could carry. I thought what I would do with my stuff if they ever make us leave. Leave nothing of value behind, give it away or dump it into the trashcans. A boy collects all sorts of treasures when growing up. I already gave away my air rifle, telescope which Willi had given me, I gave it back to him. My big book ‘Jane’s Weapons’ had to go. Bad stuff for a Jewish boy to have at home.

Salo came by and told me that he was in a forced labor situation and had to make ammunition boxes. He had to leave the orphanage and was living in the Jew-camp in Milberthofen. I visited him there once, a big camp in the Knorrstrasse. Built by the Jews who lived there now, over a thousand people. He slept in the barracks with many others. At least he had his own wall locker. We went to the canteen to sit together and talk. They had a man behind the counter but the only thing for sale was mustard. We got a glass of water. The camp was open and the guards at the gate were Jewish men. Salo could come and go as he pleased. Salo like me, always hungry. But while I had adequate

food at home and on Sunday's a fillup with dumplings Salo had nobody. Oh, he had some friends but they were all in the same situation. He was like I, a *Mischling*, his father Jewish and mother Christian. His father had died a long time ago and his mother didn't take care of him. Raised in the orphanage as a Jew he was considered a Jew and had to wear the star. His mother as an Aryan got the regular food rations, just as my mother would have gotten if she had renounced her Jewish religion. As for her status as an Aryan Jewess? They just didn't have any official laws regarding her status. Depending on who made his own laws for her, like Schwingenstein who told her to wear the yellow star and ordered that she receives only Jewish food rations, to some Gestapo official who six months later ruled that she must not wear the star. Ordered to perform forced labor she got her own job as a cleaning woman, a phony arrangement, and the Gestapo left her alone after that. She just fell through the crack of Nazi bureaucracy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CRUELEST HOAX

There had been rumors floating around that Jews were being resettled in the East somewhere. No one knew who would have to leave, when and where to. I think we heard of these rumors first in October. Kids told me in school what their parents told them. This is how I usually found out about bad things happening. Then, it became official, by letter from the *Gemeinde*, the Jewish center.

It is interesting for me now to speculate where from these rumors originated. We always heard about new restrictions weeks before they happened. We learned at the beginning of September of the yellow star business before we received the letter announcing it.

The chain of command for laws and restrictions imposed on the Jews came from the highest offices of the government where these laws originated. The *Reichskanzlei* under Lammers. Then passed through the Gestapo to the Jewish administration, the *Gemeinde*, and we were informed by letter. I believe that somewhere in the *Reichskanzlei* someone passed the information on to a Jewish contact either in Berlin or here in Munich.

When in 1999, I requested information from the Jewish Federation in Munich about this first evacuation transport from Munich, which supposedly went to Riga and was never heard from again, I received from the president of the Federation a letter sent to her by the Munich Archives in regards to this matter. [See document 1 in German and document 1b, its translation, in 'Notes'.]

In the first paragraph the letter said: 'in October 1941, the RSHA, National Main Security Office, decided upon the evacuation of the Jews from Germany. On October 24th, 1941, the Chef of the Statepolice in Berlin informed the various Gestapo commands of the immediate deportations. The Gestapo then ordered the various branches of the Jewish Federation to prepare the list of those to be deported.'

We can see how it all led to the Holocaust:

January 1939, Hitler threatens the annihilation of Jews if the Jews should start another world war.

June 1941, by attacking the Soviet Union the world war begins.

June 1941, Hitler expresses his 'wish' that all Jews under German control be eliminated to Goering as head of the government, and Himmler as the executor of his wish.

Himmler passes on the order to Heydrich whose *Einsatzgruppen* follow the German army into the Baltic and Russia, and begin the mass murder.

July 1941, Heydrich forbids any further emigration of Jews.

October 1941, orders go out from Himmler to the Chef of the Gestapo in Berlin for the evacuation of the Jews from Germany and Austria.

By October the *Einsatzgruppen* of Heydrich had already gained experience in mass shootings and disposing of the victims remains. They were ready to take on the German Jews. Why Heydrich chose the Baltic for their elimination is most likely due to the willingness of local antisemites and German friendly natives in Lithuania and Latvia to assist in the mass murder.

The first transports of German Jews came mainly from Berlin, Frankfurt and Vienna and were temporarily taken to the Ghetto in Riga. The clearing out of the Ghetto began

in early December when 12,000 Jewish men, women and children were shot in the Ponary Forest on December 10th through 12th.

On Monday, November 10th, when I arrived in school there were hardly any children and none of the teachers except Dr. Kessler. Not one of my classmates had come. Dr. Kessler told me that most Jews in Munich had received evacuation orders over the weekend and were to be deported on Tuesday, tomorrow. He didn't know what would happen to the rest of the Jews. The school was closed for now, and for me to go home and await any further notification from the *Gemeinde*. A thousand people were involved. Almost all the children, all teachers except himself. He was not married and lived with his elderly mother.

I can't be certain who selected this group of a thousand people. Almost all families with children. In transports from other cities such as Berlin the Jewish Federation was told how many persons to select for a particular transport, included were always Jews arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo for such infractions as not wearing or covering up the star, or being out after eight in the evening, caught in a forbidden place like in a park or cinema and other times the Gestapo arrested Jews arbitrarily. As to our first transport from Munich, I am certain that some Nazi authority told the *Gemeinde* to evacuate all families with children. The reason is obvious. The Jewish children in Munich wearing that ugly yellow star evoked much sympathy amongst the public. The SD and Gestapo had a large corps of *Spitzeln*, informers and denouncers, who kept tabs on the populace about moral, war weariness, defeatist attitudes. The SD/Gestapo must have been told by their 'informers' about the people's feelings in Munich in regards to

the Jews and especially the little children being marked. The children had to be gotten rid of! The *Gemeinde* followed the orders from the Gestapo and selected the families.

The evacuation orders came to each family on either Friday, Saturday or Sunday by personal delivery and had to be signed for.

I knew nothing of it until I found out Monday in school. The Lewin family in our house had received their orders also on the weekend. They must have been in shock. Though we all had expected it was the suddenness and little time given to prepare. Not only that but in the orders it stated that from the moment of receiving the order no one was to leave the premises under any circumstances. How to buy the food told to take along. The many things on the list which were permitted to take along. Sunday, the special food stores where Jews could buy their meager rations were closed. I am certain that many went out on Monday to buy what was available. What could they do anyhow? Take someone to Dachau?

I include here the letter the families received and the list of things to take. It is this list which is so detailed and includes everything from dust cloth, nail file, haircutters to extra set of eye glasses, writing material and shoe laces which is all so deceiving, and I call 'the Cruel Hoax.' These items never meant to be used!

These documents, the letter and accompanying list, were sent to the family Seligman and for whatever reason kept separate from all the other documents which were destroyed. Seligman's documents are now in the Munich Archives. A copy of the original, which is in German, can be found under 'notes' as Document 2.

JEWISH GEMEINDE MUNICH
BRANCH OF THE UNITED JEWISH
FEDERATION OF GERMANY

Munich, 7 November 1941
Lindwurmstrasse 125

Mister/Misses
Miss

Richard I. Seligmann
MUNICH, Amalienstrasse 3
Boardinghouse Dryer

Pertaining to Evacuation:

In accordance with the orders of the Secret State Police, State Police Head Office, Munich, do we have to notify you that you and the below listed family members are detailed to the evacuation transport.

Simultaneously are you committed to be ready with the below listed family members named for the transport,

On T u e s d a y, the 11 November 1941
from your present lodging, and you may not, without permission of the authorities, leave your premises, not even temporarily.

Any attempt to resist the resettlement, or to hinder it, is fruitless and can lead to severe consequences for those concerned. In case there are older family members who wish to be included in the transport it is to be made known to us for informing the authorities.

To supplement this order we wish to inform you of the following details:

Every member of the transport may carry luggage up to 100 pounds, packed in either 2 suitcases or one backpack and 1 suitcase (it must be considered that the members of the transport have to carry their belongings themselves.)

In any case, the following items are to be taken along:

Warm outer clothing and underclothing, underwear, shoes, wash basin, small bucket for washing things, blankets, travelling food.. Utensils (only plate, cup and spoon; no knife and fork), feather bedding only for children.

A list of necessary items is enclosed.

Every transport member must take along 50 Marks in cash. Any money, negotiable certificates such as deposit slips, other bank accounts and similar papers are to be taken along and placed in an envelope with the name and list of included papers written upon it.

Also an inventory of properties in accordance with up-to-date, as of November 10, 41, contents is to be listed, signed, and with your name written upon the envelope which must be kept unsealed and brought along.

Personal documents of any type, such as identification cards, passports, food stamps are also to be taken along.

Other particulars, if necessary, will be provided to you by us or the authorities.

The achievements of our members in labor assignments has proven that through the spirit of united efforts all difficulties can be overcome. We are therefore certain that the ordered evacuation will be conducted in the same spirit.

Karl Israel Stahl

Dr. Joseph Israel Schaler

Julius Israel Hechinger

Fritz Israel Sanger

[These men who signed are the leaders of the Jewish *Gemeinde* or Federation of Munich.]

List of items to take, which have been selected in accordance with weight restrictions and in consideration that these items have to be carried by individuals.

Items which are needed during the trip or during the first days after arrival, are to be carried in the backpack or the 2nd suitcase.

[This is part of the terrible hoax! 'Items which may be needed during the first days after arrival.' There were no days after arrival! The families were all machine-gunned when they arrived.]

1. General items:

Bed linen (if available sleeping bag)	Extra pair of spectacles
Towels	Writing paper, envelopes, pencils
Dish towels	Pen, Prayer book, etc.
Wash towels	Wallet, billfold, money pouch
Wiping cloth	Playing cards

1 Pillowcase

Blankets (as many as available)

Toiletry items:

Comb and brush

Cloth brush

1 bar of soap

Toothbrush and toothpaste

Wash cloth

1 wash detergent

Shampoo

Disposable handkerchiefs

Nail file

Toilet paper

Important Papers:

Birth certificate, marriage papers

Emigration papers

I.D. card – passport

References, school exams

Writing material

Passport photos

Food stamps

Handkerchiefs

Shawl

Wash pouch

Shoe laces

Shopping net

Ear muffs

Medications: none except Baldrian

Vaseline

Frostbite cream

Body powder

Band aid

Darning kit: (no scissors)

Thread

Buttons

Safety pins

Rubber band

Cook utensils:

Cup

Water bottle or thermos

Eating utensils

Bread box

Solid heat cooker

Shoe cleaning kit

Flash light and extra battery

Candles, matches, lighter

Insect powder

String, strap

2. Women:

Clothing (winter and summer)

Work clothing

Apron

Pullover or wool sweater

Costume

Rain coat

Winter coat

Shoes or boots

Overshoes

House shoes

Undershirt

Underpants

Nightshirt or pajamas

Underwear

Stockings, socks

Gloves

Garter belt, garters

Halter

Pad, cotton

Hat, head cloth

Pocket tools

Haircut machine

Alarm clock

Men:

Suits

Work trousers

Work jacket or jacket

Pullover or wool sweater

Training suit

Winter coat

Rain coat or wind breaker

Shoes or boots

House shoes

Stockings or socks

Shirts

Collars, ties

Undershirts

Under shorts

Night shirt or pajamas

Winter gloves

Shaving brush and soap

Suspenders

Sock holders

Spat

Cap, hat

Shirt buttons, etc.

[Looking at this lengthy list of essentials the adult evacuees might have been disturbed that no knives, scissors and even forks were permitted. On the other hand long term items like darning things, nail file, extra shoe laces, playing cards and hygienic items for women gave assurance of a long stay – and life.]

(I believe that the forbidden items of knives and scissors were requested by the *Reichsbahn*, the German railroad, to prevent people from committing suicide and messing up their train. It is as simple as that if you understand German mentality in the 1940s.)

Who drew up this lengthy list? I doubt that the people of the *Gemeinde* had time to make this list. Most likely it came from Berlin where they had already experience with evacuating Jews.

Did the Nazi authorities in Munich know the destination of that transport and their fate?

I have no direct evidence. After the war nobody asked questions and no one volunteered any information. We Jews who were left only knew that this transport was supposed to

have gone to Riga and all these people had all disappeared. Not one came back. No one asked of the Munich Gestapo or Schwingenstein and his cohorts. All the responsible people from the *Gemeinde* had been killed. In 1959 the leader of Einsatzgruppe A, which conducted all the mass murders in the Baltic, was arrested and committed suicide in prison before he came to trial. His name was *Standartenfuehrer* Karl Jaeger.

It is the indirect evidence that convinces me that the Munich authorities knew of the destination and the fate of that transport.

When all the evacuees were in the camp in Milbertshofen a company of the SS and Munich Police hermetically sealed the camp. There was no need to do that, all the evacuees had let themselves be picked up, if they wanted to escape they could have done so, unless they were all marked for death and none shall escape.

The days of questioning in the camp prior to the evacuation. Rigorous questioning and searching of their possession, and humiliating strip searches by the Gestapo of all, including the children. Conducted in the typical brutal Gestapo fashion the Jews of Munich had never been exposed to before. All their identifications and personal papers taken away. Anything valuable confiscated [read stolen].

Crowding the evacuees eight and ten into a compartment meant for six. Their baggage had already been placed in their compartments the day before filling the racks, seats, narrow space between the benches. Brutally driven into the small compartments by the SS and police to find room sitting or standing as they could.

Traveling only at night. None should see them as they passed through German towns and villages. And easier guarded during the day on a siding somewhere.

The thousand persons were picked up on the 11th through the 13th of November. They should have left on the 17th, but Karl Jaeger and his shooters were busy somewhere else and could not accommodate them until the 25th. Then he had all of his *Einsatzkomando* 3a. ready to take care of three transports. His German killer commando from the Sipo and the 2nd battalion of *Litauische Schutzmannschaft*, the Lithuanian special police. One thousand persons each from Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich to be massacred. Oh yes, t h e y knew. They all had known since the summer of 1941.

Ilse must have come on Monday from her camp. When I came home from school and told mom we didn't know if the Lewins were on the list of evacuees. We would have loved to help them in any way but did not want to intrude. If they were on the list they must feel bad and be busy packing and we did not want to disturb them.

Tuesday morning I heard a bus drive up and stop in front of our house. I looked down from the window. There was a civilian driver, a man from the community who helped the Lewins carry their luggage. The bigger pieces stored on the roof of the bus. A stern looking man with a list watched, Gestapo most likely. People walked by, some stood around watching. They didn't know what was going on until the Lewins came out with their yellow stars and got quickly into the bus. And the bus left and they were gone.

This is how the Jews disappeared, few people aware of it.

I felt very down – would I ever see my dear friend Ilse again. She had rushed out of the house and into the bus. She never saw me wave 'good-bye.'

Dr. Kessler had told me they were to be deported to Riga in Latvia. I hoped it would be a good camp. But I knew better.

On this Tuesday, 11th of November 1941, and also the next few days, all the Jews scheduled for the transport were picked up by buses and trucks and taken to the Jew camp in Milbertshofen. This is all I knew then.

When I began to write my autobiography, which I did for two main reasons, one to honor my courageous mother, and the other reason to remember my friends and schoolmates, I wanted to be able to write the truth of what happened to this transport of a thousand people. In 1999, as I mentioned it before, I wrote to the president of the *Gemeinde* in Munich, requesting information of this particular transport that was destined for Riga and never heard from. After the war all we learned in Munich was that this transport never made it to Riga. Nobody ever heard of or mentioned Kovno. It was only that year (1999) that I received the documents from the Munich Archives that told a different story. Trying to piece the details together I learned that the interned families stayed at the camp in Milbertshofen until the early morning of November, 20th.

Further...

As soon as they arrived in Milbertshofen they were assigned to barracks in a special section of the camp and separate from those others living there. They could not mingle with the regular inmates.

When all had arrived, each barrack had to take their belongings to a building where the Gestapo searched their baggage. While that was going on their quarters were searched for anything left behind or hidden.

There were a number of rooms with Gestapo agents who did the examining, the procedure always the same. For many it was their first taste of Gestapo brutality.

Nobody was addressed as Mr. or Mrs. but by the usual vocabulary of Nazi thugs.

‘Jew-pig, Jew-swine, Jew-dog and their favorite expression *Schweinehund* or pig-dog.

Even little girls were called Jew-women, a child not permitted to be a child.

All envelopes with their documents, ID cards, inventories, bank accounts, any money

and the letters and lists they had received were taken from them. (This is how the

Seligmann letter and list survived. They did not bring it in the envelope.) All Jewelry

and valuables taken from them. To this end all, including the children, were

strip-searched. All pictures, and we can imagine that the people only took their most

cherished photographs on the trip, were taken from them and dumped into a garbage

can. Anything not on the list was taken from their baggage as was anything on the list

looking new and nice. A simple and old coat might be left but a fur coat or fur piece

was confiscated.

Amongst the documents I received from the Munich Archives is the testimony of a

surviving member of the camp who was detailed as a baggage handler. Here is the

English translation. The original in German is in the ‘notes’ as document 3.

**Testimony of the witness Hartmann in proceedings against Munich Gestapo officials.
State Prosecution Office Munich, AZ 3 Kis 2/54.**

“After their arrival in the camp and assignment to barracks their baggage was examined by the Gestapo for weapons, jewelry and such things. Also a strip search was conducted.

At these searches there were ugly scenes as many of the items from the luggage of the deportees were confiscated by the Gestapo without reason other than they were more valuable.

One could imagine were these things disappeared to.

During the deportation to Riga extraordinary measures were taken to prevent any escapes.

Two days before the transport left the guards at the gate which normally consisted of inmates and workers who lived there were reinforced by the SS. Until the transport left day and night patrols guarded both inside and outside the camp, composed of police, SS men, and also of Jewish orderlies who were threatened with dire consequences if one of the deportees escapes through their fault.

On November 20th, at four o'clock in the morning, after coffee was given at two, the deportees, whose baggage was brought to the train and put into compartments the day before by a work detail, were ordered into groups, in pouring rain, and made ready for the trip. Guarded with the strongest military escort, a whole SS company. Despite blackout regulation the camp was illuminated by numerous search lights. The command was given for the march. Under escort by the SS the march was made to the 20 minutes distant loading platform of the Milbertshofen rail yard. Once there, with lots of yelling by the guards, the deportees were pushed into their assigned compartments. The train consisted of regular cars, third class of old construction, and 9-10 persons were forced into the compartments so that at the most half of them could find seats while the others had to stand as all the baggage did not have room in the luggage racks.”

These old trains Herr Hartmann speaks of had ten small compartments per wagon, two wooden benches for six people to sit on with little space in between. There were net racks above to place a few small suitcases in. But 9-10 people and children with all their baggage, some in big bundles of bedding and blankets – or imagine 20 suitcases. The baggage alone would fill the compartment.

Along the length of the ten compartments ran a long corridor leading to the exist and toilet on each end. No one was permitted in the corridor unless permission given to go to the toilet.

The train of ten wagons plus the car of the escort of SS, and twelve policemen from Munich, left during the morning.

Since there were no survivors of the transport, nor were any of the SS men held to account for their lack of sympathy for the deportees or their brutality towards them, we don't know what happened during the trip.

The distance between Munich and Lithuania is a day and night trip. The transport was under way for three to five days. Knowing how the Germans handled these transports it was most likely that during the day they stayed on a siding away from towns for easier guarding the evacuees and secrecy, and traveled at night. Besides hiding somewhere during the day the train only stopped to take on coal and water for the engine and perhaps provisions for the escort. Never was food or water provided for the evacuees. One can do without food for five days but without water is a real torment. How do you take care of a thirsting child! We don't know the particulars of this transport only of others who left in similar circumstances – and it must have been hell. Stuffed like

sardines into the compartment with all their baggage – the cruel hoax, their baggage never to be used by them.

A card thrown from the train and forwarded by a consciousness German to a friend of the Lewins told of Herr Lewin dying on the train.

Late in the afternoon of the 25th of November, the train arrived at its destination. It was not Riga but a rail siding outside Kovno (Kaunas), the capital of Lithuania.

See footnote.*

There, the escort was relieved by the men from *Einsatzkommando 3, Einsatzgruppe A*, and their Latvian and Lithuanian auxiliaries. These SS men were well trained in terrorizing and shooting children and their parents.

*There is testimony from survivors of the Kovno ghetto who told that on the 25th of November 1941, they saw men, women and children come from the train and walk along the street leading by the ghetto fence, up the hill to the fort. When they asked the people where they came from they said “from Munich.”

There is also testimony from two Munich policemen who were with the escort, that the train arrived on the 23rd. The escort was at once taken by the SS to the city and returned to Munich. None of them saw what happened to the people on the train. It is therefore possible that the evacuees arrived on the 23rd but were kept on the train until the 25th. Marched to fort IX and machine-gunned on arrival.

It is also possible that the ghetto people erred when they saw the citizens of Munich marched by to the fort. The Munich citizens then incarcerated in the damp prison cells at the fort and kept there for two days without food and water. The children and their parents taken in batches of 80 to the ditch and machine gunned. The horror unimaginable.

Surrounded by these brutes who, saw in the evacuees literally ‘walking corpses’, the column marched by the nearby Ghetto of Kovno, whose fearful inhabitants already witnessed the march-by of the evacuees from Berlin and Frankfurt earlier.

They were the last once to see and give witness of the existence of the Jews from Munich.

As night fell, the watchers in the ghetto could see the lights of Fort IX shine forth, punctuated by repeated burst of machinegun fire. The knew was happening.

It only lasted one hour.

ABANDON ALL HOPE

YE WHO ENTER HERE

DANTES INFERNO

There are no witnesses to their last hour. But we know the procedure the Germans used in these mass shootings. During the day the families were told – or rather screamed at – to take off their clothing. Sometimes even their underwear. The auxiliaries moving amongst them and clubbing at the slightest hesitation or protest or any show of hysteria. A brutally swung club or rifle butt in the face subdues anyone quickly.

Like sheep to the slaughter? People ask ‘why didn’t they resist, fight back?’ Many young Israelis ask that that. The utter stupidity or rather naïve ignorance of these questioners.

The terror was unimaginable because of the brutality of the SS men. There was no choice. No contest. No chance to protest and protect ones family. The civilized people

from Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich were amongst aliens from hell. Men-beasts in German uniforms. As the civilized and loving fathers and mothers they were, all they could do with their last will and strength was to help undress their children, comfort them, hug and kiss them as last time. All in shock by the terror of it all. Hearing the screams and shrieks, and the machineguns – and knowing, understanding full well that was going to happen.

“Schnell, schnell...raus mit euch Hunde!” ‘Quick, quick out with you dogs’, they were driven in a single file through a cordon of hellish beasts, the SS. *“Los, schneller, lauf”* ‘get going, run’, and clubs hit faces and heads, rifle butts rammed into their sides. Driven to the front of the line to the huge open pit. *“die naechsten zehn Judenschweine”* ‘the next ten Jew-pigs’ screamed, might have been the last words they heard on earth.

Then lined up at the pit, facing it, already full with the bodies of those murdered before them, some still screaming in agony. Their eyes seeing for the last time, the ultimate hell on earth. Behind them ten SS men with Mauser rifles pointing at the necks of men and women, pointing down at the fragile heads of children *“Feuer!”* ...’fire’...*weiter, los, schnell.*” 20, 30 seconds between salvos. It took less than an hour to shoot a thousand children, their parents and elders.

At night, in darkness, though lit up by lights, the killers used machineguns. The victims facing the pit, killers behind. A burst into their backs and they were flung into the pit. Most dead, many not. *“Die krepieren schon.”* They will die.’

This is how the 994 people from Munich were murdered in the early evening of 25 November 1941. My friends, my classmates. My brothers and sisters.

SS-Standartenfuehrer, colonel Karl Jaeger wrote a report on December of 1941 detailing his work from July to the 1st of December 1941. The document is of course in German and I wish to include a few excerpts.

Einsatzkommando 3
Secret National Matters

5 Documents
4th copy

Overall view of the executions conducted by Einsatzkommando 3. In the region of
Its responsibility to 1 December 1941.

[Following is a 6 page list of day by day actions in the various villages and towns detailing how many men, women and children were shot.

On page 5, under 'others in November':]

November 25, 41 Kovno Fort IX 1159 Jews 1600 Jewess 175 Jew children 2934
(Resettlers from Berlin, Munich & Frankfurt a.M.)

[From the beginning of the actions of Einsatzkommando 3, from 3 July to 1 December 1941 Jaeger reports the shooting of 133,346 men, women and children. His command 3, consisted of a hundred SS men with about four hundred Latvian and Lithuanian auxiliaries. His written report, which was signed by him, but not available for the prosecution's case when Jaeger was finally brought to trial in 1959, illuminates the thinking of this colonel of the SS and men like him.]

I can report today that the goal of solving the Jewish problem in Lithuania has been achieved through the actions of EK 3. In Lithuania are no longer any Jews except those who are work-Jews and their families.

These work-Jews including their families I tried to eliminate [*umlegen* is the word he used for eliminate. Umlegen is a slang used by gangsters when they kill someone], however this resulted in a battle with the governing civilian authorities and the Wehrmacht, and the prohibition: these Jews and their families may not be shot.

The actions in Kovno, where sufficient trained auxiliaries were available, can be described as *Paradieschiessen*, 'exercise shootings' in contrast with local ones which often presented insurmountable difficulties.

All leaders and men of my commando participated actively in the *Grossaktionen* 'big actions' in Kovno.

[Giving in to their basest instincts of bloodlust Higher SS and Police Leaders often participated in these killings, trying out their skills in neck-shootings with their Luger pistols.]

I consider the Jew-actions of EK 3. in the main as successfully completed. The work-Jews and Jewess are urgently needed and I can imagine that after winter they are still needed. I am of the opinion that all male Jews be at once castrated to prevent any more propagation. If a Jewess becomes pregnant she is at once to be liquidated.

[signed] Jaeger
SS-Standartenfuehrer

The murdering of the 994 people from Munich, amongst them the 169 children listed, and two thousand people from Berlin and Frankfurt warranted only a line in Jaeger's report. Was Jaeger only following orders? He admits that he tried to eliminate all Jews but was stopped by the Wehrmacht and had a fight on his hands with them because of his zeal.

Did Jaeger murder himself? He says all men and leaders participated.

Gerald Fleming writes in his book that it was the practice of Higher SS and Police Leaders to participate in these executions though there was no need for them to do so.

Even now, so many years later, I think almost daily of my classmates who were like family to me. Of Inge Ruthenburg, this shy lovely girl; eleven year old Inge who lived in this scarred world of her making. How did she face these last minutes of indescribable horror, when her mother said good-bye to Inge. What can a mother say to her child in these last moments of their precious lives?

"The bullets won't hurt, my love."

"Mama, I am so scarred." The last frightened words of child about to be shot.

"We are going to God in heaven, my darling."

A trembling embrace...last kissing of the beloved face wet with tears...of sweet lips twisted in agony...eyes showing the horror felt...

“Daddy help me, I don’t want to die!” A child’s cry of despair.

The soul-wrenching helplessness of a father who cannot protect his family.

All my classmates and their families were gone. I felt deep in my heart that I would never see them again. This was the bleakest time in my life. The Nazis on top of Europe. Big successes in Russia. England bombed into ruins by day and night attacks and hardly able to reply in kind. Except for that minor raid last year where they dropped only a few bombs they had not returned – my friends.

The apartment of the Lewins had been sealed. I don’t know who had access to it or how the furniture and other property was divided up. Every so often I saw the seals changed. Somebody must have come and looked around. Then a van came and took most of the things away. The next time a truck came, and last a cart that hauled the remainder away. Legalized robbery. Then a family moved into their apartment. Whoever they were, and I have no memory of them, they left me alone and never reported me for not wearing the star. They moved out in 1943 when the air raids began.

And then another terrible tragedy happened to us. We heard of suicides happening among our Jewish people. Usually elderly who were kicked out of their apartments and were despondent. Then the constant restrictions imposed upon Jews and the shortage of food. Also during house searches by the Gestapo old people were often mistreated. I don’t know what sadistic kick the Gestapo men got out of slapping old people around. I

guess when people, especially the most vulnerable ones, are humiliated and mistreated and see no way out they seek the freedom of ending their own lives.

But it had never been done by younger people and not families with children. Youth is by nature more resilient and never gives up hope. What parent can kill its own children?

So it came as a real shock when I heard that Bertel Sandbank, her brother Martin, their mother Louise and a family friend had taken poison to end their lives.

I had already mentioned that Bertel's father Moritz never came back from Dachau. The free spirit he was and probably defying the humiliating treatment he was murdered in Dachau. The murder of her husband in Dachau KZ, having received the deportation notice over the weekend, the family chose to end their lives on 12 November, the day they were supposed to be transported to Milbertshofen. The mother and family friend died, the children survived.

Bertel was the most wonderful girl in my class. She so lively, her enthusiasm lifted all our spirit. Our best in gymnastics and only I could outrun her in races. She attended ballet classes and was loved by all who knew her. We were the best of friends and respected each other and our different capabilities. And while she was from a well-to-do family she was not the stuck-up kind of girl.

Her brother Martin was younger and a grade below us. Her mother I don't remember though I might have met her.

Bertel was in the Jewish Hospital in the Hermann-Schmidtstrasse. I wanted to visit her. Before I went into her room I promised myself to be brave and not even think about her tragedy. Then when I went into her room and saw Bertel laying there emaciated, so pale in the face when she always had such a fine tan, I cried....I just couldn't help it. Poor

Bertel had to console me. She was so happy to see me and despite her condition so full of a desire to live, and wanted to know everything that was happening in our school, our class, and me. We talked about nothing that pertained to the Nazis or her tragedy. And soon it wasn't that difficult to talk to Bertel and tell her everything. The dark eyes shining from her haggard face she was bubbling with life. Kids are so resilient, as long as you don't kill them.

After Bertel and Martin left the hospital a couple weeks later they went to the Kinderheim, as orphans. When the school opened again in December, and we were then forbidden to use the streetcar, it was too far for the children from the Kinderheim to walk to school, I never saw Bertel again.

While I will mention Martin again in this book, the kids stayed in Munich as we still had a temple and it had been his father's wish for him to be Bar Mitzvah, the fate of the children had been sealed. After Martin's confirmation in February of 1942, they went to Nuremberg to relatives and in April 42, were deported to Izbica, which was a transshipping point at that time to Chelmno, and murdered there.

On the 8th of November Hitler made a speech in the *Buergerbrauekeller* in Munich. The 8th and 9th of November, Hitler always in Munich making speeches to his old cronies. He said that the Russians have lost ten million men, and '*however long the war may last, the last battalion on the field will be a German one. We are deciding the fate of Europe for the next thousand years.*' Nothing about the war won by Christmas. I hear people talk and they are disappointed with all that talk that Russia has been vanquished

already, the war over by the end of the year - and instead listen to Hitler promising that the last battalion on the field will be German.

The news at the end of November: no need to capture Moscow. The city to be flattened by bombs and artillery.

On the 5th of December the bulletins report: *Abwehrschlachten vor Moskau*, a new vocabulary from the OKW. Defensive battles.

7 December 1941. A red bordered bulletin. Usually a special report of a great victory.

This time it was 'Japan attacks America. American fleet sunk in Pearl Harbor.'

And three days later Germany declared war on the United States. This was great news for us who were the enemies of Nazi Germany. With America on the side of the Allies Germany would lose the war for certain. But when? Would my mother and I witness the end? Germany's defeat?

We were notified by the Gemeinde by letter that the school would reopen on the first of December. This was the good news. The bad news was that on that day we Jews were no longer permitted to use public transportation. No buses or streetcars. That hurt as our school was far away from us. To get to school at eight o'clock I would have to leave at six, a long walk and in darkness.

It started to snow the night before my first schoolday and it would snow for many days to come, a most severe winter in Munich, Germany and really all over Europe, especially in Russia. Mom said I didn't have to go to school but I wanted to. She made sure I was dressed warm, scarf and gloves, and out I went into the dark morning.

Hardly any traffic so early. The flakes coming down heavily or driven into my face by the wind, it was bitterly cold.

I cut through the silence of the forbidden Pinakothek park, just a little short cut. Not even birds calling this wintry morning. As a snow lover this was my kind of weather. By dawn I was halfway to school. The wind picked up driving the snow against me. Nature working against the Nazis, covering up my star, I wasn't about to brush it off. Traffic now as I crossed the broad Ludwigstrasse. People walking huddled in their coats with scarfs and hats. I never wore a hat or cap but tomorrow I would wear my ear muffs. It was brrrr - cold and my ears frozen. If I keep my ears, neck and hands warm I am OK. Feet kept warm by stomping in the snow. With daylight coming, traffic and people, the magic of the snowy morning had passed and I hurried to school, all eight classes now together. Only three kids showed up. None from the orphanage except for Martin Sandbank. There were a few more kids left but if they lived in Milberthofen camp it was impossible for them to walk to school and almost as far from the convent in Berg-am-Leim. Bertel's younger brother Martin who lived now in the Kinderheim with his sister would walk to school but no one else from the Kinderheim.

We both would walk into town and get Bar Mitzwah lessons from Cantor Lachmann after school. Poor Martin and Bertel, now without parents.

The sun came out when I walked home, a cold winter sun. Again through the empty park, the snow on the trees glistening like crystals as it melted in the sun and re-froze when the icy winds whipped through. My star displayed now but nobody around and the birds and squirrels didn't care if I wore a yellow star.

This unusual cold and snowy weather would hold on for the winter. While it might have been a burden to some, and definitely was for the German army fighting in Russia, to me it was a delight in the dark mornings to trudge through the snow and cold to our

school, all alone in the world. Sit in the warm room for four hours and listen to all sorts of stories told by our story-teller Dr. Kessler.

I don't remember much about what we learned. No books and all eight grades together. I remember him reading us the story of *Krambambuli*, about a dog torn between his old master, a forest ranger and his new master, a poacher. When they met in the forest, who would the dog obey. He had us in tears. But whatever we did or did not learn we were together.

Herr Eitelhuber, the caretaker was still there, though, he was forbidden to take care of us. Since he lived in the same building where we had our class he heated the whole house. I guess he could have turned the heat off to our room but he didn't. He was a good man, always good to us kids.

Mom gave me a thermos along with hot potato soup when I went into town for my Bar Mitzwah lesson. Mom made the best potato soup and with a couple slices of black bread I had a gourmet lunch. We still had the community center and administration, the *Gemeinde* functioning. Also our temple in the Lindwurmstrasse had Shabbat services. Cantor Lachmann and Rabbi Finkelscherer were the only ones left from the religious staff. Rabbi Finkelscherer lived in Berg-am-Leim, too far away to come to the temple. Martin Sandbank was really a year younger than I was, much too early for him to have his Bar Mitzwah. The confirmation is usually conducted when a Jewish boy turns 13. It was or had been his father's wish to be confirmed and our people expected the temple to be closed down at any time. There were no other boys coming for Bar Mitzwah lessons, nobody left in our age group. Mom and I rarely attended services now, it was just too far to walk. We were all still terrified by this transport leaving so suddenly and rumors

coming out from Milbertshofen that the deportees were mistreated by the Gestapo. My friend Salo came by and told us of what he knew. The SS guard from Dachau coming and guarding the deportees day and night as if they were prisoners. Their stuff stolen. So, not to give the Gestapo any excuse we faithfully wore the star and did not use the streetcars. Our small hospital was in operation but without doctors, just a few nurses and aids. It wasn't healthy to get sick now. We were not permitted to be treated by an Aryan doctor.

There were still a thousand Jews left in Munich but hardly any children. Maybe some of the older ones who worked for Agfa or forced labor somewhere else. Dora Schmidt was still here so was Salo. They lived in either of the two camps. Few Jews were still in their own apartments unless they were dingy places like ours and nobody wanted.

Mom and I didn't have much of a Hanukkah or Christmas. No candles for one and we never had a tree, not even a Hanukkah bush. But Willi invited me over for Christmas, tree, sparklers and all. And I got my plate with cookies and an apple, no more oranges. Willi played his accordion and we sang the old Christmas songs. Most of those we also know in America. 'O Christmas Tree....and Holy Night.' Frau Rau said that on the radio instead of Christmas music they were playing soldier and Nazi songs. Goebbels' doings I am sure. With Christmas vacation I had plenty of time to take Lumpi for a walk. The dog also loved the snow and cold, he was a long haired dachshund and had plenty of fur to keep him warm. I still took him into the Pinakothek for his walks, lots of trees. I just covered up my star with my arm. Frau Maurer knowing very well of our

shortened rations would no longer give me the twenty Pfennigs but instead an apple, a sandwich or food stamps.

Things began to look better during the winter. The Russian bear might have been down many times but was still kicking and very much alive. The bulletins, or the OKW report, spoke of strategic withdrawals before Moscow.

By the end of 1941 the world was really at war. The Japanese captured island after island and seemed unstoppable and were in the Philippines, Malaya, Burma. Fighting in China. Looking at my school atlas, that little Japan trying to conquer all of China? But then it looked the same Germany trying to conquer all of the Soviet Union. The World War had just begun and there was no end in sight. Germany, Italy, Finland, Rumania, Hungary the Axis. Brave England, helped by Canada, Australia, South Africa and Russia the Allies. Japan against mighty America and China. It would take time, many years to beat both Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan. I had no doubt that someday it would happen. When and how I had no idea.

The propaganda was as vicious as ever. Now it was the Jewish capitalists in America who were guilty that Japan attacked them. The bulletins full of Japanese victories. Sinking more ship after they all had been sunk already at Pearl harbor. That war was far away. America would take care of the Japanese, but we needed them over here. At least the Americans should help the British in North Africa and give England the planes to bomb the hell out of the Nazis.

New Year came and went. I never liked New Year. It was not for kids, only for big people to have fun.

CHAPTER IX**1942****A Ray of Hope**

At the begin of 1942 there was something in the papers about an Anglo-American conspiracy called the Atlantic Charter. The Nazis made fun of it with caricatures of Roosevelt and Churchill. The reports did not write about the noble words of the document... *'to ensure life, liberty, independence and religious freedom and to preserve the rights of man and justice.'* Nor did it mention that the documents was signed by others besides the United States, Great Britain and the USSR. The signatories were Australia, China, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Holland, Honduras, India, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Poland, Santo Domingo, South Africa and Yugoslavia. Many were governments in exile. A world in arms against the tyranny of Nazi Germany.

January was even colder and snowier than December. Munich has pretty much the same clime as Denver, Colorado. (Where I lived for 21 years after retiring from the US army). It gets cold but little snow. That winter we had plenty of it. This was the enjoyable part of my day, to trudge through the cold darkness alone. Then the warmth of our classroom. I have no memory of what Dr. Kessler taught us, if anything. More of the kids didn't come anymore. It was just too far to walk and besides

they didn't learn anything. My seventh school year was just a waste. Yet I went faithfully every day as long as the school was still open. More out of loyalty to my teacher, I liked Dr. Kessler. Then after I ate my soup and bread to cantor Lachmann. I could read Hebrew fluently so it was more a matter of learning the chanting. Each word, when I read from the Torah had to be chanted in a certain way. And in the scroll there were no vowels. Most Hebrew words have the vowel written under the letters in a sort of dots and dashes. Every day when I came home cold and tired I read the bulletins, to see what was new in this drag-out war. The Japanese were giving it to the Americans. In Russia a kind of stalemate because of the bad winter. In North Africa a kind of see-saw battle with Rommel trying to get to Alexandria. England bombed nightly. I felt with Germany having such a mighty army the war might last another ten years.

It was in January that our Jewish Public School was closed. It didn't matter much, we were only a dozen children left to attend the class and most didn't come anymore.

At once I was called to the Jewish administration and told I would have to work out at the Jewish camp in Berg-am-Laim.. Order by the Gestapo. All boys twelve and older were put into forced labor. Here my memory fails me. Did I get a special permit to use the streetcar? It was very far to walk from my house to Berg-am-Laim. I never did. I think I remember that I caught the streetcar a few stops away. So I must have hidden my star and used the trolley illegally. Also I could no longer attend my Bar Mitzwah classes. The chanting I could do but I missed out on the religious part of my coming confirmation.

My job at the Jewish camp in Berg-am-Laim was to work in the kitchen. The building turned over to the Jewish community for housing was of stone with fairly nice rooms.

Just not enough space if you put a family in one room. I guess the Sisters lived here before. I don't know where the nuns were now. The kitchen was modern with big vats to cook in. Mostly older girls worked in the kitchen besides the cooks. My job was scrubbing the floor and cleaning pots and pans. We had only Jewish supervisors and they were scared, we were forbidden to eat anything in the kitchen and as long as I worked there I never got anything to eat or a plate of soup. Of course there was hardly enough food for the inhabitants and this was in lieu of their ration cards. A kid gets mighty hungry smelling that food which was usually soup, potatoes and vegetables, endless cabbage. Sometimes cereals like noodles. I stole bread. And I even began to like margarine on bread. It wasn't the taste so much but to know that it was artificial stuff, looked like butter but didn't come from a cow.

I liked to work there as it was warm, clean – my job to keep it so – and there were the girls to talk to and they were nice to me. The supervisors didn't bother us, even when we goofed off. Just not be caught eating anything.

In January nothing much changed, still deep winter. Bulletin announces heavy fighting in Russia. In the V.B. (the Nazi paper) an order of Field Marshal von Reichenau to his troops to be *'merciless in dealing with Russians and that food supplies for local civilians and war prisoners are unnecessary humanitarianism.'* This order by a Wehrmacht general caused the death of several million Russians.

Also in January I read of the hero's death of Gen. Von Reichenau, (He died of a stroke). On January 30th, Hitler gave his annual speech in commemoration of taking power nine years ago. He calls Roosevelt a mad fool and declares *'the Jews are the ones who will be finally destroyed. This war will be fought in the true biblical manner – an eye for*

eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ Hitler quoting the bible. He was just mad that the Russians are shooting back instead of lying down and dying.

February came and nothing changed in the weather or war or my job at the camp. After I came home I still walked the dog. One evening, when it got dark, a man approached me and began to curse the Nazis. This was Herr Matschilles, a firm anti-Nazi and so was his wife and their son who was laying home with TB. We became friendly with them, they lived just around the corner in the Schwindstrasse. They told me that Frau Matschilles had a brother in the country and would take me in if the Nazis wanted to put me in a camp. Their son, who would soon die from TB, had been on the eastern front and told how he had seen the SS shoot Jewish people, children and all.

‘Never let them put you in a camp’ Matschilles told me, ‘there they kill all Jews.’ This confirmed what I had suspected. But that the SS would shoot whole families was unbelievable and terrifying. This was one of the countless cases where a soldier serving in the East had seen and came home to tell. The Matchilles had another son on the eastern front. He would be caught in the caldron of Stalingrad and never return home.

On the 21st of February Martin Sandbank had his Bar Mitzvah. He was not yet 13 years old but these were special circumstances. The Jewish religion, at least in the traditional way, is flexible to permit this. He did fine, Cantor Lachmann conducting the services. Martin told me that he would join his relatives in Nuremberg with his sister Bertel. He wouldn’t even be here for my confirmation which was to be the following Saturday. I wished him the best and had him remember me to Bertel, my dear friend and the only one left from my class. She had never come back to school.

Saturday, the 28th of February 1942, was my Bar Mitzvah. My thirteenth birthday was still a month away. Again, tradition was changed to accommodate me. As I was to find out later this Saturday was the last time services were permitted in our synagogue. First our school, then our temple was closed, like a nightmare without an ending.

Mom and I walked to the synagogue in the Lindwurmstrasse. This synagogue has nothing of the splendor of our big temple, rather a large hall converted into a prayer assembly.

The synagogue is in the back of a large apartment house, behind it is the *Gemeinde*, the Jewish administration. When we walked into the courtyard we saw the Gestapo checking everyone's identification and proper wearing of the yellow star. Yes, wearing their Hollywood style leather coats or jackets. At least to me, a man in leather looks more threatening. They looked at my picture in the ID card, then at me, then with a pencil checked my star to see if it was sewn on. One Gestapo man had a list he checked me and everyone against it. A bad welcome to the temple on the day of my Bar Mitzvah. When we came into the synagogue Dr. Kessler came to us and told us that Cantor Lachmann had been arrested by the Gestapo a short while ago, and he would conduct the services. Shock after shock. The being checked by the Gestapo is always a frightening experience, and then my religious teacher arrested.

I put on my tallith, the white prayer shawl, and sat with my mother. When the Torah was taken out of the sanctuary I was called to the front and sat with the men to be honored this day. The honor is to stand with the rabbi when he reads from the Torah, it is really a teaching of the laws of Judaism, the rabbi is the teacher. Then it was my turn and Dr. Kessler called me up. I went to the desk where the Torah was opened up, a large

parchment scroll on two handles. The scroll turned to the portion to be read that morning, my chanting of the words. When I looked out at the congregation, at my mother, to my horror the Gestapo men were standing in the back. I had never before seen any observe our services. I know what real fright is, that knot in the stomach, the pounding of the heart, hands trembling, I had it all right then. The beasts staring at me from the back of the hall. I began chanting my pre-prayers all right, I knew them by heart. Then when I began to read from the scroll – fright? Panic? I began to tremble, my voice began to quiver, the pointer which I held shook. But I kept on. Once I lost my place in the Torah but Dr. Kessler pointed at the place. I kept on chanting. I felt like fainting. I don't know how I managed but I concluded my reading and my final prayer. Dr. Kessler shook my hand, said something which I didn't hear, and I returned to my seat amongst the men, who each in turn congratulated me. They understood. I remember that I felt so embarrassed that I had broken down but I had finished. One whispered 'they are gone.' And when I looked back the Gestapo men had disappeared.

I had my Bar Mitzvah. After the service was over others congratulated me and gave me envelopes with presents. We could use the money. When we walked home I was happy. I had done it despite being so frightened. But it scarred my soul.

This was the last time our temple had services. The Gestapo closed it up. I was the last boy to be Bar Mitzvahed in Munich. The date: 28 February 1942.

In March Hitler spoke again and declared that Russia will be defeated this summer. An exceptionally severe winter in Europe prevented victory last year. Yes I remembered that cold and snowy winter trudging to school.

In March I was still working in the kitchen in Berg-am-Laim. Then on the 27th of March I turned thirteen. Mom baked me a cake, her fabulous raisin cake.

It must have been around that time that one Saturday afternoon there was a loud knocking on the door. We didn't have a bell. At the door two Gestapo men, house search! Our boarder Herr Loewenthal was out for a walk, so just mom and I were home. They looked through things in the kitchen, then into our bedroom. One was searching through the big, elaborate desk Loewenthal had brought as his only piece of furniture from his place when he moved in with us. The other opened the big closet. And there on the bottom shelf in plain view Loewenthal's stash of goods he traded with, or gave my mother to use for bartering. A half dozen cloth material for making suits, as many bottles of liquor, and a stack of cigarette boxes, mostly Mokri cigarettes and a few boxes of the best sort of Nil cigarettes. My stomach knotted up. We all get arrested now. Even German's were put in jail for that kind of loot. Then the Gestapo man closed the closet door and that was it. The other agent asked me if there is a secret compartment in the bureau. There was and I showed it to him but at least that one was empty which I knew. And they left!

I could never understand that. I mean, they came to look exactly for such stuff. One found it all in plain sight and just closed the door and said nothing. The least I thought he would confiscate the stuff. Didn't he need a new suit? Or liquor, cigarettes? It was to me unbelievable. Or did my guardian angel blind the man for a moment? Like it protected us during the Crystal Night? And many other times in my young life? Mom was in shock and disbelief too. She had Herr Loewenthal get rid of it all. The friendly professor came and took all the cigarettes. The other stuff I hid in the cellar,

it was good stuff to barter for food with farmers.

Mom had found out that it was possible to write overseas, to America, through the International Red Cross. She got a card from the local Red Cross office. It was a two-part card, one could write on one side and the reply was written on the other part of the card. Mom wrote my sister Herta that we were well and that I had my Bar Mitzvah. The reply from Herta would arrive two and a half years later!

The beginning of April another transport left with 700 Jews. This time for Piaski. Cantor Lachmann was in that transport. I could never find out what he was arrested for, taken to the Gestapo cellars and then shipped along with his family in April. This is another transport that disappeared and I could never find out what happened to these people. Piaski a transshipping point for Chelmno, Sobibor and Treblinka. No one ever came back. By then there were so few Jews left in Munich that the camp in Milbertshofen was closed and the remaining Jews housed in the convent in Berg-am-Laim.

Salo, as I said, worked for a company making ammunition boxes for the Wehrmacht. When the camp closed down, his boss, Herr Puchner, found him a room near his work place and not too far from where I lived. From then on Salo and I spend a lot of time together.

He rarely wore his star and I chucked mine later on in April when I began to work for Herr Buchner (not to confuse with Salo's boss whose name was Puchner.)

In April, 1942, I received a summons from Gestapo headquarters, always a bad omen, it could be anything. Maybe someone reported me for not wearing my star, had seen me in the movies or the soccer stadium, all major crimes. All it said was to report to a certain

room at a given date and time, and of course the obligatory threat of severe consequences for failing to report. Gestapo headquarters was in the old Wittelsbach Palais, an imposing building that once belonged to a duke and was located right off the Briennerstrasse where all these Nazi buildings were. I went there going around all these buildings in which mom had her times with Schwingenstein. She had not been summoned there anymore but now had to visit the local *Ortsgruppe*, local party office. It was still the old business of them wanting her to disassociate herself from the Jewish community. They couldn't care less about her religion, religious people they were not. I went to Gestapo headquarters scared, in *Angst*. I hoped it would be a 'local' so I could talk to him in Munich dialect. The trouble with being summoned to the Gestapo was that one never knew if there was a return home. Yet, mom and I treated it as just an office visit. I dressed normally for a boy my age. It was a warm spring day and I wore shorts and a shirt on which mom had sewn my extra star. I was punctual as I entered the lobby, showed the man at the information desk my letter and was directed to the second floor. Nobody seemed to pay attention to me, a boy with a star. There was a secretary who called that a Hugo Holzmann was here. I entered a large office, since I didn't wear a cap I didn't need to take it off. A man sat behind the desk, the light coming in behind him from a large window so that I never really saw his face clearly.

I said respectfully but in Bavarian *Gruess Gott*, really meaning greet God, or greetings from God, which is the normal greeting one gives in Bavaria. While I do not remember the dialogue and will not try to repeat it as guess work I remember the substance of what was said. He had a folder in front of him. Everybody on their list deserved a folder. He asked me name, age, schooling. If I was in *Zwangsarbeit* 'forced labor' now.

I answered in a sort of civilized Munich dialect, not too heavy but authentic. I was too street-wise to put it on heavy as if showing off, one never knows what goes on in these people's mind. But when he asked me what I wanted to become someday I knew better than to say what he probably expected from me: a doctor, lawyer or banker. Besides I never wanted to become one of those professions anyhow. I told him I wanted to become a sailor and see the world, "like Karl May did." He then involved me into a conversation, or he kind of tested me, if I knew the books and the various important characters, names like Winnetou, the Apache chief, Hadschi Halef Omar his companion in Arabia. And then lectured me that Karl May had never been to any of these many countries he wrote about. I knew all that but I let him lecture me. He then told me that all of that, my wishing to become a sailor, would have to wait until the end of the war. In the meantime he had a new job for me, with the firm Oskar Buchner, a garden nursery. Gave me the address and I was to begin the next morning at seven o'clock. That was it. All the fear for nothing! A new forced labor job and not too far from where I lived, a good 30 minutes to walk. Just past the rinks where I used to go ice skating.

I was there before seven, Schleissheimerstrasse 190. The sign said 'Landscape and Nursery, Oskar Buchner.' A big garden as I saw from the street, the gate open so I walked in. Part of the nursery was in front, then to the left a large wooden building. To the right small beds covered with glass windows. Past the building the main garden with many flower beds. At the end of the building was the office, at least there was a sign that said so. And around, at the end of the building a large open shed and that is where I met Herr George Meier, the gardener. And elderly man with a gray mustache and goatee. I introduced myself and so did he. He was the only one working in the garden

and badly needed help, he was glad that I would work there. He saw my yellow star but didn't say anything. He showed me around, first the large shed where I had found him. Here all the gardening tools were kept, seeds and fertilizer, and here we kept our things and had our breaks and lunch. There was a small table and a couple wooden chairs. The office was still closed, Herr Buchner would come at eight. Next to it the work room for Frau Geiger, who did the flower arrangements and made the wreaths. In the front part of the building lived the Glasser family. Now just the old man and his daughter, Frl. Hilde. Outside our shed was a trailer and the car of Buchner. All along the building trees of various sizes in wooden containers. Meier explained that the company decorated most of the churches in Munich and other facilities and I would be helping Herr Buchner lug those trees in and out. There were many, many flower beds. Now, middle of April, the bulb flowers were sprouting: crocuses, daffodils, narcissus, tulips, phlox. The annuals were still seedlings under glass. Some flowers were raised in pots for sale and they were under glass. There were many rose beds, and Meier pointed out a long strawberry patch, private for the Buchners and "don't ever pick one." At the end of the garden the compost heap. It was just a quick walk-through to show me what was there and what my job would be - to do everything. Mainly spading the many flowers beds, planting seedling in spring, weeding, watering and helping Frau Geiger. All around the garden were bushes from which we cut the leaves every day for Frau Geiger. Wreath making and selling was the big business, and fresh cut flowers or bouquets, also the selling of flowers and plants in pots and budding soil.

Here I like to introduce Herr George Meier as he typifies so many Germans during the Nazi regime. Once we became friendly, as he was a nice man and considerate as my

supervisor, he told me proudly of him being a cavalierist, a lancer, in the Big War and liked to reminisce about his exploits. He was not a Nazi, didn't belong to any party, but rather a German nationalist. He knew of only the good things Hitler had done for Germany. Got Germany out of the depression, everybody had work, earned enough to make ends meet, and therefore supportive of Hitler (though he never called him the Fuehrer which every good Nazi would do) and the exploits of the German army. They had finally beaten France. The war in Russia was bad as there was no end in sight. He told me right from the beginning that the Nazi party was all wrong in what they say about the Jews and making Jews wear the star, and Hitler was just following the party's philosophy. Meier was unbelievably naïve! What the newspaper wrote and what was said on the radio he believed and would do so until the end of the war. He had no idea about all the restrictions put on the Jews, that we received curtailed rations, no meat and dairy products, and that so many had been deported to who knows where.

He was certain that Hitler knew nothing of what was going on in Germany. How the Gestapo treated Germans and sent them to Dachau. He knew about the Gestapo and Dachau, he must have found that out from his wife who was quite aware of what was going on and only shook her head in amusement and frustration at Meier's naivete. I met Frau Meier when she invited me over for a meal and sometimes gave me food stamps.

At eight o'clock Herr Oskar Buchner came. Let me describe for the reader Buchner as he was a rare character and the typical Nazi. He was in his fifties, tall and strongly built and yet slender. His face was unforgettable and even now 55 years later I can still

picture him clearly. Blond but not much hair left, blue eyes, a prominent beak type of a nose.

I think it was the flushed redness of his face that made him a standout. I don't know if it was due to drink or liver problem. He died of liver failure in the late forties I was told. Buchner had been a party member and a Brownshirt (SA) before Hitler came to power. This made him one of the old guard and gave him certain privileges which included Jews for forced labor, though I was the only Jew who ever worked in his garden. The others worked out of the city nursery and he contracted them out to work in parks, shovel snow and later when the time came, to remove rubble. Right from the beginning he called me *Bua*, the Bavarian equivalent for boy, never Hugo. I remember little of the first time I met Buchner except two things he made clear. One was that I needed to work hard for him or back to the Gestapo for me. The other was a big surprise. He told me that he had to decorate in certain places and would take me along and I could not wear my Jew-star (namely the Nazi Party Headquarters). If anyone says anything about my not wearing the star to get in touch with him and he would get it squared away with the Gestapo. None was gladder than me to take that mark of Nazism off and from that day on until the end of the war I only wore it one time, when I had to go to the police station to retrieve my wallet which I had lost.

In fact I borrowed a knife from Meier and cut the threads off – and I was star-less! I started off by turning the turf on a bed, raked it over. I knew I would like outdoor work. And when I looked down on my chest – behold, no yellow star. A boy's happiness!

At nine o'clock Frau Geiger came, an old woman in her late sixties. I would call her a typical woman from Munich, not in looks of course. She was short and stocky and had a beer belly. She liked her work, and she was the best in making wreaths and pretty bouquets, and she liked her beer. As old as she was she didn't need to work anymore, but work was her life and so was her liquid nourishment. In Munich beer is considered 'liquid bread.' Buchner would always have a case of bottles in her workplace and even took cases to her apartment in the Tal - perquisites. Frau Geiger also was the cashier when people bought items, that is when Frau Buchner wasn't in the office.

Frau Buchner. I guess in her mid forties. Pretty? I didn't think so. I thought of her as rather plain but she was elegant and always the lady. How she could put up with Oskar I never knew. She was working in the office, doing the accounting, cashier and weekly she paid us our salaries. She was always friendly and correct with me. Part of my job would be to run errands for both of them. And Buchner got me a bicycle and bought a gig to hang on so I could deliver wreaths to the cemeteries, flowers to customers, and pick up boxes of artificial flowers from a place in town. And once he got to know me and felt he could trust me (or back to the Gestapo) he had me deliver envelopes to certain ladies of his acquaintance. For Frau Buchner I ran errands in town getting her medicines from a homeopathic apothecary and occasionally, from some way out butcher shop, getting cold cuts she liked.

This then is the environment I worked in and the people I worked for.

I worked from seven to six. I was supposed to work till six but since Meier left at four and Frau Geiger at five, unless there was some unfinished work to be done, I could also

quit at five. Sometimes Frau Geiger worked late finishing a wreath or garland and I had to stay and help her. And some times with late errands I had to make I might not get back till seven or even later.

Saturday was work day. If it rained then Buchner would let me take a Saturday off as the flowers and plants didn't need watering. Watering a main part of our work as there were no sprinklers.

My pay, and yes I got a salary, ten Marks a week, about 4.70 dollars, paid every Friday afternoon by Frau Buchner. After six months working there I became a full fledged worker and had deductions taken out. Social welfare, war tax and *Krankenkasse*, 'health service' which was a joke as I was not permitted to visit an Aryian doctor and there were no Jewish doctors left in Munich. In fact by summer when more transports left, this time to Theresienstadt, they closed down our little hospital.

Garden work can be hard, and it was at times. Meier and I taking care of a hundred odd flower beds, spading, planting seedlings, weeding, only the watering was easy. Most flower beds we had were annuals, and when they had been cut, the bed had to be spaded over and replanted. Spading a bed can be arduous when it rained, the mud sticking to the spade and my boots. Meier and I always worked outside, rain or shine, cold or hot. We also had a couple compost heaps to take care of. All the vegetation not used went on the heap, mixed with dirt and when rotted had to be shoveled through a large sieve for potting soil. I also had to help Frau Geiger making her wreaths, she made each one from scratch. First she took heavy wires and formed them into a circle. Then with thin wire from a spool wrapped evergreen around it until she had a thick wreath. She made a dozen each morning as they would keep for a few days if not used. I

had to cut fresh leaves from the bushes around the garden. She had eight inch long wires of varying thickness and took a bunch of leaves and wrap a wire around their stems, and then fasten them to the base wreath. To that she then added the flowers in like manner only using thinner wires. She was good and skillful in her work, a real artist in using various flowers for combination of bright colors. And artistically she drank beer all day. She had an order for each wreath to be made and depending on how much the customers wanted to spend she used the flowers. For some even roses. Then came the personalized silk bow. When there were no fresh flowers, either in winter or when someone ask for a certain flower, like white lilies which were not available, then she used artificial flowers. Both the plastic flowers and bows came from a store in the Schwanthalerstrasse near the main railroad station.

The evergreen branches with which Frau Geiger made the basic wreaths came from the forests around Munich. Buchner and I went once a month on an all day trip into the forest. Buchner had a permit for cutting evergreens, he had permits for everything with his connections. Even in the summer of 1942, it was hard to get gasoline, most people with private cars could not get anymore gas. Frau Maurer, our neighbor, had to store her car as she could not get gas. The same with artificial flowers, few garden stores could get any. Buchner did.

In the forest he would clip off branches, he was supposed to take them from the fully grown trees only, however, even their lower branches were usually out of reach. If he couldn't cut enough he cut them from the small trees and even bushes. My job was to collect the branches and put them into the trailer. Pile them up high and then fastened a

canvass over and tied it down. Then back home and I put them into a large wooden container, sprayed them every few days as they kept longer.

But I liked my work, usually outdoors rain or shine. This was the growing season when I started to work there and I really enjoyed watching the stems grow out from bulbs and seedlings, grow bigger each day and turn into beautiful flowers.

The hardest work was lugging the planted trees around. The smaller trees and bushes were in wooden pots weighing around 30 to 50 pounds; heavier when they had just been watered. I had to lift them up and carry them to the trailer. The bigger trees weighed close to a hundred pound and had two handles. Meier and I loaded those and Buchner helped me to carry them into the churches. Some by the main entrance to the church, most in the back by the altar. We decorated most of the churches in Munich, the main ones anyhow, both Catholic and Protestant. Soon I would know myself which trees to load for a particular church.

We also decorated a few times the *Bahnhof*, the main station when a big-wig like Duce came to Munich. And also a few times for funerals of important departed. One of the high Nazi officials who died was General Udet, the beloved Munich flying idol who, even as a General of the Luftwaffe, did stunt flying out at Oberwiesenfeld. He didn't die, he committed suicide working for Hitler. But that was before I worked there.

Across from our garden was an inn. I began to eat there daily as mom just didn't have enough bread stamps to give me a sandwich every day. The proprietor was a Herr Stoecher; he and his wife were not only very nice to me when they found out that I was Jewish – Meier must have told them - but also sometimes would slip me a food stamp, a meat and fat stamp, so I could buy a dish besides their daily offered *Stammgericht*. A

Stammgericht one cannot translate, or can but it doesn't make sense. Main dish would be the literal translation. It is a dish made daily which does not require a food stamp because nothing goes into it that needs a food stamp. Usually a mix of potatoes and cabbage or some other available vegetable. The funny thing was that the Stoechers didn't trust their waitress so they only slipped me the stamps when she wasn't around. They just couldn't bring me the better dish to the table as when one ordered that was the time to hand over the food stamps for all to see.

Later on during the war Herr Stoecher would whisper the latest news from Radio London, often a more delicious morsel than his food. What I meant by saying that it was funny that they didn't trust their waitress is that she didn't trust them. She would often bring me a couple slices of bread and act as if I had already given her the bread stamps. Mutual distrust a way of life in Nazi Germany, no one trusted another, and not even within the same family. Beer and lemonade was always available to buy, beer would soon become very watery.

Just about the time I started to work for Buchner and was told by him to remove my star, my mother, having sewn on our last star to my shirt for my Gestapo visit went to the *Gemeinde* to buy an extra set of those ugly yellow stars. Since she was wearing one they asked her why she, as an Aryan, was wearing it. She told them that Regierungsrat Schwingenstein had told her to wear the star. The official from the *Gemeinde* (he Jewish of course) called someone in the Gestapo for clarification of her status who relayed a message for my mother that she was not to wear the Jew-star.

Here we have the classical dual system in work. The *Reichskanzlei* ordering her to wear the star as my mother was a Jewess and the Gestapo following established Nazi laws

who regarded her as an Aryan regardless of her religious affiliation. Mom falling in the crack between the two, no laws applied to her status as an Aryan Jewess. I guess she could even have protested getting Jewish ration cards. But the idea was to lay still, not make waves, be unnoticed, forgotten. Just like that mom and I wear free of wearing this humiliating symbol of Nazism!

Mom had been working all winter at the NSV, a woman's Nazi organization concerned with welfare, knitting shawls, sweaters, gloves for the German army in Russia. Volunteer work as she was never paid. With the winter over the knitting circle was disbanded. To prepare for next winter? No need as the Fuehrer had promised the war would be won by then. Since my mother needed to show that she was working for the war effort she got into a phony work arrangement with Frau Maurer. Cleaning the shop of Frau Maurer's plumbing business. A scrub woman in a dirty plumbing plant would keep the authorities off her back.

Just because I was somewhat privileged, with Buchner having told me not to wear the star, at least while working for him, which I then broadened to mean not to wear it at any time, I never lost my guard. Going to the movies I followed the same routine of standing away until most of the people were inside and the show had started and then buying my ticket. Movies were really the only enjoyment people had left. There were still operas, operettas and theaters, cabarets and the circus. Except for the circus the other entertainment were not for me. Mom went rarely to the movies. She was busy running all over the place trying to get vegetables and food items for which she didn't need food stamps.

Goebbels was smart in giving the people movies free of propaganda. The antisemitic films 'Forever Jew and Jew Suess', they had to drag the public in. Or had the SA, SS and Hitler Youth march in to fill the cinemas. There were still a few propaganda movies shown like 'Ohm Krueger', with Emil Jannings, an anti-British film. *Der Rebell*, and *Standesheute Bruckner*, *Der Rebell* was with the peoples favorite actor Luis Trenker fighting for Freedom against Napoleon, and the Bruckner film was a story of a soldier fighting in the Alps against the Italians in the Big War. Not very nice to make a sort of propaganda movie directed against the Italians. They showed a few movies with the motive of spies in our midst to make people aware of spies, I guess. People liked best movies were they could forget their own problems, strictly entertainment such as "Ilse Werner Dances" and 'Muenchausen', the first color production. There were always long lines of people wanting to see these movies. And foremost comedies were favored. And here was a group of actors who made everyone forget the war for a couple of hours. Heinz Ruemann, Theo Lingen, Paul Hoerbiger and Hans Moser. *Lumpazi Vagabundus* and *Feuerzangenbohle* amongst the best UFA produced. These actors never gave themselves to propaganda movies or anti-this or that productions.

Heinz Ruemann I saw in the 50s in an American movie. *Ship of Fools* with Lee Marvin. Ruemann was the little German Marvin liked to talk and brag to. Paul Hoerbiger played in the 1948 film *The Third Man*, he was the Janitor.

Sundays was my day off. And I usually went to the 1860 Soccer Stadium. Munich had three teams in the national soccer tournament, often a double header. Here too as every place I went I practiced caution. Chose were to stand, amongst a crowd of men and kids.

Somebody looked at me and I was gone. After the games I often went to another sports event in the evening, usually ice hockey in winter. We only had one indoor ice rink in Munich which we called the *Schachterl* stadium, literally the 'little box'. Time passes so slowly for a kid and I wanted time to go by fast. Every day closer to the end of the war, the end of the Nazi regime, and Sundays the time just flew by.

This was also the time I became close friends with Salo – my crib-mate. Two years older than I was and also in forced labor, hammering all day long making ammunition boxes. He had an unheated room near where we lived. At least we could talk freely to each other and he knew always what was going on in the Jewish community or what was left of it. Salo was even more starved than I was, he didn't have cooking facilities and had to go to restaurants. With Jewish food stamps he could only buy the *Stammgericht* for which he didn't need stamps. His stamps for food which needed cooking he shared with the Neuburger family and ate there. Or had a pot full of potatoes cooked to eat at home cold with bread during the week. If he didn't join me for a soccer game on Sunday it was to scrounge around in restaurants for a meal, the *Stammgericht* of potatoes and vegetables. The restaurants during the war served good and tasty meals but you needed stamps. Usually one needed stamps for 50 gm of meat, 10 gram of fat and maybe 100 gram of cereal to get a decent meal. If he was starving he would go to his mother for a piece of bread or whatever she had to spare. Germans got food rations which supplied around 1800 calories per day and we Jews got rations for around 600-700 calories, not enough for anyone and not for growing boys like Salo and me. Salo soon made it a habit of coming around on Sundays, at noon, to eat with us. I didn't mind but mom felt 'used' as she now had to share our meager rations for two with Salo.

She moaned and groaned about it but never made Salo feel unwelcome. Once we had dinner early on Sunday and when Salo came we had already eaten. The she felt bad about it and warmed up the leftover for him. My mother was a good woman.

From Salo I learned that regular transports were now leaving for Theresienstadt, usually fifty at a time. This was supposed to be a better camp for both the older and the children. This was true, but what we didn't know was after a short stay at the camp people were shipped out to Auschwitz and the gas chambers.

So when our boarder Herr Loewenthal was sent to Theresienstadt we didn't feel too bad. I never liked the man, he was mean, and had once a real physical fight with him.

It was summer and everything in bloom in our garden. Meier and I busy, and I having to run ever more errands for the Buchners. His gas allocation was finally reduced and he made heavy use of me, my bicycle and my gig. Usually taking one or more wreaths to different cemeteries and none close to us. Getting bows made at the store in town and picking up boxes of plastic flowers.

It was on Saturday, 29 of August, just after midnight, that the sirens howled. We had a number of air raid alarms during the year but never any bombs dropped. Everybody went into the cellar, I stood with Spitzelberger before our house. Then the racket started. Anti aircraft guns shooting but we didn't hear any planes or bomb explosions.

And then we saw not too far from us the sky lit up in a couples places by fires.

Apparently one plane had flown over the city and dropped a string of incendiary bombs.

Five houses were burned in the Briennerstrasse which is only two blocks from us.

Wrong place. A little further on they would have hit the big Nazi buildings and Hitler's Braune Haus.

The war news: German troops before Rostov and Stalingrad. But the Russian still fighting and it didn't look like Hitler's latest prophesy of winning the war in summer would come true. Heavy fighting in North Africa in front of El Alamein, Rommel knocking on the door of Alexandria. U-boats not sinking as many ships along the coast of America as they had in spring. I knew it would take time for America to gear up for war, awakened they were already, woken up by the Japanese in the nightmare of Pearl Harbor.

We were building a small prefab house in front of the big building, it was to be the office and workroom for Frau Geiger. First the foundation was laid and connections made, then the walls came up, the roof was built and then a big truck came with hundreds of shingles for the roof, each one weighing about ten pounds. That we had to unload ourselves. I, on the truck, lifting three at a time and handing them down to Buchner who gave them to Meier to stack by the house. Each batch to lift and hand down wasn't that much but by the time I did it fifty times my back was sore, but there was nothing I could do except grit my teeth and keep on working. This was the hardest work I had ever to do for Buchner. Poor Meier had to lay over for three days because his back was sore.

When the house was ready, windows put in and furnishing placed, Frau Geiger moved in. Now she had lots of light and windows to see what was going on outside, which I didn't like. I knew she was telling everything Buchner what Meier and I did, or didn't do. At least in front and the side of the garden, the back was still ours. The Buchners moved into their large office. Meier and I could now use the old office for our breaks,

drink coffee, and smoke our pipes. Meier always had a pipe in his mouth and his tobacco ration never lasted. He grew his own tobacco and when the leaves were ripe he hung them up to dry and then cured them, rubbed them and had pipe tobacco. He gave me one of his pipes and we enjoyed smoking together. Buchner didn't mind as he smoked cigarettes all the time. As far as me being only 13 and smoking a pipe – back in our office he couldn't care less.

Half of every day I spent now running errands. I hated to pull that gig behind my bike, I really had to tread hard. If I had to deliver one wreath I put it on my shoulder and drove with one hand. The same if there were only a couple of boxes of plastic flowers to get, and bows, I fastened it all to my bicycle rack, more and I had to use the gig.

It was in August, shortly after we finished the house when Buchner told me I could take a Saturday off. Mom wrote to our farmer friend Baumgartner in Gelting and asked him if I could come by. He knew what we wanted and wrote back 'any time.'

The reason mom couldn't go was that she would have to go by train, and the station was not in Gelting but another village further away. That wouldn't have mattered so much as she didn't mind walking a couple hours but to get to the farm she would have to walk through the village and the *Ortsbauernfuhrer*, or village party leader, was known to look out for *Hamsterers*, people who came to farms to barter for food. If people carried heavy he would arrest them, and if just small amounts take their things away. The authorities discouraged hamstern and would take your things away if it was just a bag full, more you got arrested and sentenced to Dachau. Your name and sentence in the paper to discourage others. For a Jew it meant Stadelheim and the guillotine. Germans also used the guillotine for such offences as committing a crime during black-out, even

pocket theft or shop lifting. Listening to foreign broadcast and spreading the news around. Defeatist attitude, or anti-Nazi/Hitler comments. People lived in fear. Even Nazis themselves unless they were big-wigs. Germany under Hitler was a true terror-state, for its own people and even more so for foreign workers and worst for Jews and Poles.

When you went to a farmer and brought things - jewelry, watches always welcome. Good clothing, shoes and boots if he had use for them. The farmer always told you if he wanted something and how much and what he would give in trade. That was it, like it or not. Mom still had some liquor, always welcome with farmers, and some cloth material for suits.

Friday after work I pedaled out to Daglefing where the racetrack was, past Riem the Luftwaffe air field, Dornach, Kirchheim and more villages to Gelting, then I turned north on a dirt road about two miles and there was Baumgartner's small farm. Baumgartner was happy to see me and liked what I brought. Show me the farmer who doesn't like Schnapps and liquor. I liked the farmer, a simple man with lots of wisdom. He still believed in Nostradamus, he didn't think that the German army would ever get Stalingrad or Moscow, or Alexandria, but in the end Hitler would come up with this weapon of total destruction, vanquish England and force America to make peace on his terms. I didn't believe in what he said or that prophesier told. When the war ended I remembered Baumgartner and his Nostradamus. I believed then that Nostradamus just got the island nations mixed up, it was Japan and not England. The weapon of total destruction of course the atomic bomb. It wasn't until the year 2000, when I read

Goebbel's diaries, that I found out that it was all a hoax, a forgery committed by Goebbels and company.

I had two great days on the farm, helping the girls clean the cowshed, milking, and went with Baumgartner into the woods to collect nuts. When I left Sunday morning he gave me plenty of good stuff. A bag of flour, two dozen eggs, a heavy ball of butter, a slab of smoked meat and a round loaf of farmer's bread. He told me to leave Sunday morning when the good people of the village were in church; to bicycle through the village in the direction of the train, then at the end of the village take the dirt track and circle back to the main road.

The following account I wish to write not for its erotica content but to show how much or how little the Nazis racial teachings meant to the average German woman. I believe that Germans, who were anti-Semitic before Hitler came around, perpetuated their bigotry and also became die-hard Nazis, followers and believers in Hitler. There was also the strong Catholic minority in Bavaria who for religious reasons were anti-Semitic; they may or may not have become Nazis, Hitler gave the Catholics a hard time too. Those Germans who had no ingrained hatred of the Jews did not change their attitude – generally speaking. As far as the racial pronouncements of the Nazis, the superior Nordic Race versus the inferior Slavic Race and the sub-human Jews, to the bigots these were sweet bells ringing. 'One is superior just by birth!' The others took Hitler's, Rosenberg's, Himmler's and other Nazi racial philosopher's teachings at what it was – garbage.

Now, to the farmer's daughters. Lise I had known from the year before, she was just a girl, now 16. This time her older sister Therese was also home, she was maybe 26, twice as old as I was, not married but a woman.

There were three bedrooms upstairs. One for Baumgartner, now a widower, one for the girls with two beds next to each other, and the guest room with two single beds and separate. I was to sleep in the guest room. Only so did Therese, the woman. Therese came to me and laid with me. My first experience.

The next night I had to sleep in the other room, and there was Lise next to me in bed. And having lain with a woman and Lise a virgin I didn't know what to do.

I only write of this episode because it was unforgettable, and also because all the racist teachings meant nothing to the farmers daughters. I was fully aware of the crime I committed, 'defilement of race.' The chopping block for me, ten years in Dachau for the girls. Only I didn't look at it as a crime I committed but criminal laws regulating all aspects of our lives. Anyhow, I got safely home with all my good food stuff.

Mom cut a piece of black bread off and smeared it thick with butter for me, what a delicacy. We never ate eggs during the war, mom baked a cake or made a dough and cut it into noodles. Butter also only for cooking and baking. Mom melted the butter for butter-fat which didn't get rancid. Hardly any Germans at that time had refrigerators or even ice boxes, we certainly didn't. How I hungered for the smoked meat, the body deprived of fat. We ate it in the evening, sliced thin with bread or potatoes. A slab like that lasted us for months.

I imagined there were a number of reasons Buchner didn't want me to wear the Jew-star in his garden. One was to avoid being looked upon as employing slave labor.

At thirteen I looked too young for working there. It would have looked worse had I worn the star.

The same going into all these churches lugging those trees. But the main reason was that he took me along to decorate at those Nazi functions. Like the party chancellery, Nazi party headquarters. In Munich were the headquarters of the Nazi party and the SS, at one time also of the Gestapo. Now the Gestapo and government main offices were in Berlin. All this conglomeration of Nazi presence located in one area around the Koenigsplatz, the king's plaza, the playground for Nazi parades and rallies.

And behind the plaza, the two imposing buildings of the Reichs Chancellery and to the left the Party Chancellery. When they built these two large Nazi edifices back in 1937, they first constructed an underground bunker for protection against bombs. They already expected that someday Munich would be bombed. They also built a third bunker but never constructed a building over it. When the air raids began seriously in 1943, they permitted public use of that bunker.

And then one time in summer we loaded our trailer with trees, had many cans of flowers, all cut a certain length by Meier and me. Buchner told me I was going with him to Party Headquarters. He was in his brown SA uniform, smiled when he said "Now you understand why I don't want you to wear your Jew-star." I had never even dared to walk by the building in the Arcistrasse, a building in quasi Romanesque-Nazi style. Many broad steps leading up to the elaborate main entrance. There, we placed the two large trees. Smaller trees I carried up leading to a long hall. Inside an immense long table covered with white damask table cloths. The service already laid out, each plate and cup in white with the party emblem, the Swastika. Buchner and I put the flowers in

arrangements into the many small vases. Some garlands and bows along the walls. He disappeared for a while, probably to visit some of his old cronies. This was party headquarters, home and center of the SA, the notorious Brownshirts. Everyone who walked around in his brown uniform. Not a healthy place to be for a Jewish boy. To me this was the devil's den.

Of all the Jewish men who worked for Buchner (about a dozen) I was the only one who worked in his nursery and didn't wear the star. The others were working out of the city nursery at various city parks, normally forbidden for them to visit. I guess the Gestapo didn't mind for them to be seen if only to show the populace in Munich that there were still Jews around. Buchner 'owned' them and paid them their meager salaries while he in turn was paid by the city. Just another lucrative income for Buchner who needed lots of money for his extra curricular activities. Sometimes, with me in tow, he visited the group at their various job projects. He was friendly enough with them, addressed them by their last names. Talked to them individually and then went into conference with the foreman who was not Jewish. The men complained to me about the foreman being a slave driver, but that was a natural gripe. I got to know a few of the men, Max Hirsch was an elderly man, very friendly to me and invited me over to his place and his Aryan wife fed me good sandwiches. Perhaps once a month he invited me over, he lived by the Isartor and I could get there easily with the streetcar. The nicest man was Herr Gutmann, a jolly round bellied elderly man always uplifting ones spirit. I went to visit him also but never for sandwiches. Max's wife was a good provider, Frau Gutmann just a nice old lady. Then there was Herr Jacobson. He was a linguist and

knew twelve languages, now shoveling dirt. I never became friendly with him or any of the others. I guess they didn't trust me, thought of me as Buchner's 'boy' and privileged for not wearing my star. They didn't realize that I was just as much afraid of Buchner as they were.

In hindsight, and having seen the movie 'Schindler's List', I think of Buchner as a little Schindler. Party and SA member since early, probably in his younger years marching and screaming his Sieg Heil; I am certain participating in smashing windows and destroying property during the Crystal Night. Yet foremost a businessman and realizing the benefits of employing Jews for little salary. Smart enough to foresee the defeat of Germany when America entered the war. We were to him an insurance ticket to testify when the time came that he saved us from concentration camp and treated us fairly. Which was true. Only while Schindler might have had a humanitarian motive Buchner did not.

20 September, after midnight. *Fliegeralarm*, air raid alarm. Just because the flak was firing all around the city it didn't scare us. But then came the whoomps of exploding bombs. Spitzelberger and I went into the shelter, it was scary. They no longer used the heavy flak in the *Tuerkenkaserne* which made such a racket and caused some of the windows to break in the vicinity. In fact they no longer had any flak within the city, just around it. So in the shelter we heard no longer the canons, only bombs exploding. We really didn't hear those far away either but rather felt them, and the lights were flickering. The whoomps were intense, vibrating the cellar floor and walls. Yet they didn't seem close as they was no sound of explosions.

We spent two hours in the shelter. During quiet periods Spitzelberger and I went up into the attic to check on firebombs. From upstairs we could see a number of fires around the city, then shortly after two the all clear sounded.

(This was so far the heaviest attack with about thirty planes. 149 people were killed and 6,000 homeless. The big whoomps came from extra heavy bombs.) Spitzelberger who was our air raid warden, advised everyone that in the future, even in winter, the windows should be left open to prevent them being shattered by far away explosions. The British were repaying in kind, for me it was the British making war on the Nazis of Munich.

30 September: Hitler makes a speech: *'I said that if Jewry started this war in order to overcome the Aryan people, then it would not be the Aryans but the Jews who would be exterminated. The Jews laughed at my prophesies...I doubt if they are laughing now.'* I never laughed at his pronouncements. This I believed, this I always feared he would do. My thoughts then – he already had my friends murdered.

But it was all so hopeless. German forces had taken Rostov and were headlong rushing down to the Baku oilfields. Stalingrad all but vanquished. Rommel again before the gates of Alexandria. Paper writing about the coming offensive of the Wehrmacht moving through the Middle East and linking up with the Africa Corps. It looked like America was still defeated island by island by the Japanese and unable to come to the aid of England.

(October 1, 1942. Germany had reached the end of its military impetus to conquer Stalingrad, the Caucasus with its rich oilfields. Rommel was checked. No one knew it or realized it that from here on it would be all defeats for the Germans except for

temporary local successes. Or that the war would last another long – or short – 31 months.)

It was now October and I had been with Buchner for six months. I worked hard for him and he seemed to appreciate it. It was then that I became a full employee with the benefit of having to pay all deductions which left me even less to spend. However, he also got me the *Schwerarbeiterkarten*, extra ration cards for heavy laborers. These did not have Jew stamped all over and while mom kept the two pound meat rations I could use the fat and cereal stamps and bread stamps to eat at Stoechers inn. Also we had extra bread and even white bread stamps, for rolls and pastry items. Mom would eat a piece of pastry in the morning and I would eat hers and my bread.

Also Buchner got me a permit to buy boots, mine were falling apart. I bought a pair of high-ankle work boots, much too large so I could use them for many years. But clothing was a real problem. In cold November I was still wearing shorts. Once decorating in the Frauenkirche, the big Catholic cathedral with the two towers, the deacon gave me a pair of long trousers. As I said I was a street-wise kid and had a fine feeling for people – I had to survive. My feeling was at once that the deacon liked boys.

Warding off every ‘overly’ friendly words and gestures right away, but not brusque, he left me alone and we just became friends.

Sometimes during the fall of 1942, I had an unusual experience which terrified me and was like a nightmare. I never told mom about it as she also would never reveal what happened at her meetings at the Ortsgruppe. Not even when she once came home with a swollen face.

Buchner had us cut the flowers again short for the vases, we loaded the trees. Buchner in his uniform, I knew it was back to the Party chancellery. It was late in the season so we only had the wild carnations, anemones, marigolds, chrysanthemums and fall asters, and yes roses what was left. Then off to the Arcisstrasse. We even drove by my house in the Theresienstrasse, he knew where I lived. Back to the devil's den. We carried the two big trees to the entrance, I lugged up the smaller ones into the corridor and to the door of the hall where the party would be. Buchner had already brought up the cans with the flowers, I knew how to arrange them so he left me alone, he went off visiting. I was busy arranging the flowers in the vases when I heard strange footsteps on the marble floor. I turned to see who...my heart sank. It was a little man in an immaculate brown uniform, jacket, long trousers. The man walked with a pronounced limp, I was in panic, I didn't want to take another look. What he said to me I can't remember. Maybe he asked if everything was all right. I don't remember what I answered, I knew I spoke my best Munich dialect, my only defense. If further words were spoken – my mind is a blank - he soon left. It was him, Joseph Goebbels! I only took one look at him and he looked like the man in the movies, I smelled danger. All I wanted to be was a stupid Munich bumpkin who couldn't even speak decent German. Buchner said nothing when he came back nor did I say anything. He helped me finish and then out of the place of the Brownshirts!

It was fall and Buchner and I went out into the forest to cut evergreens to cover the perennials and beds were we had planted with bulbs for spring. We didn't have heated greenhouses and any flowers and plants we needed in winter came from the hothouses of the city nursery. The same, we had to take the trees to them for winter keeping and

pick them up there for decorating churches during Advent and Christmas. And yes, the party chancellery had a Christmas party too. The last time I decorated there was in 1943, Goebbels had proclaimed the total war and at least the party had to obey him. Meier harvested his tobacco leaves and we hung them up to dry.

November: the Americans are here! Americans, British forces landed in North Africa. First reports were that the French had driven them off, but then a few days later reports of the OKW said that the Allies had succeeded in landing in Algeria and Morocco, and then that German forces engaged them in Tunisia. And more good news. Rommel abandoned Tobruk. The situation really changed in a short time. Far from capturing Alexandria Rommel was retreating. Of course it was all announced as strategic withdrawals to shorten lines of communication. Heavy fighting still reported in Stalingrad which had been announced as practically captured a long time ago.

In the garden we prepared everything for winter. Drained the hoses, put straw around the faucets. Advent was coming and Buchner, Meier and I went into the forest to gather evergreens. Frau Geiger was in the business of making little wreath and garlands, decorated with cones, and silver and gold things and red bows which people loved to display for the advent season. Even these decorations were hard to get but Buchner had connections and brought them.

The compost business was still going on. All the cut offs rotting and getting mixed with dirt for some fine potting soil.

And a new project came up. The neighbors also had a large garden but not a nursery, mostly grass, a large vegetable patch, their house in front facing the street. They wanted to build a dugout and put it right between their and our garden. Buchner didn't want to

give up any of his property, especially were along his garden he had those hedges that provided the green leaves Frau Geiger used for making her wreath. They were also turning brown now, but for next year. Buchner told them they could use me to build it when he didn't need me. So the neighbor, his son and I started to dig. A large hole, really an excavation which took us several weeks to do. Then came railroad ties for the sides and ends. Over it more thick wooden ties which were fastened together with metal braces, about eight feet of dirt shoveled over it. A door, steps leading down, two benches inside and we had a real dugout. Not good for a direct hit but safe otherwise – we thought. The neighbor said we all could use it and we did when the time came in 1944, and we had daylight air raids by the Americans.

All over the city I could see signs on houses painted in white *Luftschutzkeller*, air raid shelter, with big arrows pointing down. I guessed for rescuers to dig if their house fell in.

After that last air raid in September, not to far from us, at the Elisabethplatz, I had seen some houses flattened by bombs. These were no longer the little bombs the English had used back in 1940, taking a half a wall down, causing damage. Now whole houses were destroyed. Still, I wanted 'them' to come and bomb Nazi Munich. I remembered how the people of Munich had decorated, hung their Swastika flags out, screamed their Sieg Heil and greeted each other with Heil Hitler. They were still doing it, flags flying at every Nazi holiday, though no more big public festivals and parades.

Official buildings and school had signs public shelters. Some places in the city had huge ponds of water built for fire fighting. There was one even in the middle of the Marienplatz, in front of the *Rathaus*, 'city hall.' Air raid bunkers had been built.

Strangely they were all built above ground. Some, like round towers, others squares with a real roof on. All was ready for Armageddon. Little did the people, and I, realize how destructive heavy air raids could be. We had a number of alarms at night, usually around midnight when sleep was best. I would hear that siren above us the moment it began to howl, that deep sound that in a few seconds became a shrieking monster and went back to stop almost only to start again and again, for a long minute. I would get dressed leisurely, put my boots on, and go down to join Spitzelberger as his assistant to do whatever we needed to do. Mom would go down into our shelter. With Schoenauer gone somewhere to the East we had no longer any problems, Frau Schoenauer was not the Nazi he was. She even ask my mom if I didn't want to come to her place in the rear house to play with her son. But I had no longer time. The shelter now full since that last air raid in September when we all experienced the bombs exploding, though far away. So far nobody had been evacuated from our two houses. Women and children could leave the city and live out in some farm village in Upper Bavaria. I stuck with Herr Spitzelberger and he showed me our fire fighting equipment which he kept in the attic. A few buckets of sand to dump on the stick-like incendiary bombs, they had magnesium inside and would burn in water. Buckets with water which we hoped wouldn't freeze in winter, and a handpump. It all would come handy in time. The flyers they put out, and at the meetings Spitzelberger had to attend, they actually proposed that the warden and his assistants should stay in the attic during an air raid to be ready to smother these sticks when they crashed through the roof. Spitzelberger was a brave man but not a fool. He proposed that when the bombs fall we go into the shelter and check when things

quiet down, and that we would do when the time came. But for now, the British were still just teasing the city with a few bombs here and there.

In the fall Willi had been drafted, he was not even 18 yet. His basic training was in a Kaserne in the Schwere Reiterstrasse by the Oberwiesenfeld, where we always played and spied on the soldiers doing their thing with their ladies. Now, he would be a soldier. At first no one could visit him. Then in December his mother told me that he could be visited, told me where to go. One Sunday afternoon I went to his Kaserne, at the gate a guardhouse with a sentry who checked Wilhelm Rau's name from a list, if he could receive visitors. Who I was, 'a buddy of Willi' I had to sign my name and address in a register (not my own of course), then I was told where to find him, a large room with many soldiers. Willi was delighted to see me, greeted me as an old friend with "Where is your star, Hugo?" I had to hush him, to him a joke, to me my life. He told me he would soon be leaving for Russia. When I left he gave me a loaf of hard black bread called a Kommisbrot and a package of Limburger cheese, the smelly delicious cheese. Willi went soon to Russia. Didn't last a year before he was wounded and sent to Bad Reichenhall where I visited him with his mother.

I had to run into town more often to get plastic flowers from the store. I liked to go there, the girl who did the bows was very nice to me and showed me how she made them. Arranging the letters and then put the silken band into a press, came down with the upper upper part, it was like ironing, and the bow was ready. Besides it was warm in the place.

It got dark earlier now and once coming back I was stopped by a policemen for riding my bike without a light on. He wanted to take me to the station house but I managed to

talk him out of it, not begging just talking nice to him - then Buchner got me a light for my bicycle. I was on the road now almost every day rain or shine or snow. Sometimes I would not get home until eight or nine o'clock. Good thing that the streetcars number 27 and 7, ran right by the garden and my house, as Buchner wouldn't let me take the bike home. But I got my bicycle back when Willi went into the army.

The Americans had landed in North Africa and were already fighting Italians and Germans in Tunisia. There was the great news, admitted by the OKW, that the Russians had encircled the sixth army in Stalingrad. At first the OKW reported that now the Wehrmacht could fight the Russians out in the open and would annihilate them. Then it became a relief operation, Gen. Hoth fourth Panzer army would break the encirclement. Regardless, it looked like the Russians were not dead yet and fighting back. From other places on the Eastern Front the OKW reported *Abwehrschlachten*, 'defensive battles.'

I saw a new contraption in the streets of Munich, first on trucks and then on taxis. The *Gasauto*, 'gas mobile.' The lid of the trunk was removed and a tall cylindrical canister placed into the truck with a furnace at the bottom. With coals also in critical supply the furnace was fired with wood. From a pipe sticking up the smoke would come out. When the wood changed to gas the taxi moved along smartly belching smoke. Looked like a little locomotive on wheels.

With no more leaves available from the hedges the wreaths were now made of evergreen, bunched twigs of pine, spruce or whatever evergreens we picked up, were fastened to the basic wreath. We had to go out into the forest more often now and in winter Meier would come along.

After Advent came Christmas. We didn't sell Christmas trees but Buchner cut some for special customers, and to give to churches and decorating party headquarters – for the last time. Stores no longer had much to sell for Christmas and while many shop windows were still decorated it was a dismal time in Munich 1942. Nothing much to buy unless for food stamps. Clothing stores still displayed their wares but we Jews didn't get any clothing cards, just the quarterly dime worth of thread. Many shop windows still displayed a Hitler portrait and victory slogans. Munich was still Nazi-Munich in the winter of 1942.

There was a small air raid just before Christmas. We stayed in the street and watched the searchlights play in the sky. Criss-crossing but never finding the few planes that came in from the West and unloaded far in the west of the city. Flak was heavy but since we never even heard the planes we just stayed and watched the fireworks display. Amazingly there was more shooting of anti aircraft batteries in the early stages of raids, 1942, and 1943. Later with the raids becoming major most of the guns must have been withdrawn and sent to Russia.

Christmas 1942. Frau Rau had no more Willi and I had lost a good friend. Frau Rau had married her boarder and was now Frau Griessmeier. He, a nice guy working somewhere in the war industry. There were still a lot of men around who were considered essential for the war industry, specialists in their fields. But more and more laborers came in from all over Europe to fill their places so they too could be drafted and sent to the ever more demanding Eastern Front. Frau Stiegler also had a boarder. Herr Wendel. He was boarded in Hansi's former room, or rather a cubbyhole of a room, just big enough to put in a bed and small dresser. He was strictly anti-Nazi. He had

moved in while Hansi was still in Russia, alive, and once in my presence joked with Frau Stiegler telling her if she waited long enough she could visit Hansi with the streetcar. That was when German forces were pushed back all along the front. Frau Stiegler didn't catch on though.

New Year was quiet. No church bells ringing, no sparklers in the streets, no party goers seen in the streets, all that gone with everything else nice. I got a few days off and so did Salo. He came to us if only to warm himself up and join us for lunch.

At least we had enough potatoes and coals. Every week to the library for books, this was and is the greatest entertainment – books. I was still reading the Rolf Topping paper backs. Not far from us 'Old Mary' had a little bookstore trading in paperbacks. If I traded in a new Rolf Topping I got 10 Pfennigs and could select an old one. I would go there when I had a stack of paper backs, let her value them and select with that money what I wanted or buy some used ones – cheap. There was also a Western series I liked to read, Tom Mix, and a detective series John Kling. I think both were translations from English but still available. Once a week to the bath house, always a pleasure to look forward to, soak in a hot tub for twenty minutes. They had taken the sign down 'Forbidden for Jews.' The ugly signs had been taken down in parks, movie houses, in fact all over the city they were gone. I don't know if this was authorized by the party or the people just grew tired of looking at these signs. Besides the average person in Munich didn't encounter any more Jews, people wearing the star, there were not many Jews left in Munich. Some were still working at the Agfa plant, Dora Schmit was still there and living in Berg-am-Laim. The Buchner Jews were around. Our old friend Max Penzias worked together with Salo making those wooden cases, he was privileged and

didn't need to wear the star as his son Rudi had been raised Christian. But most of the Jews left, even the so called *Sterntraeger*, or 'wearer of the star' were of what was considered a privileged class of Jews. Married to an Aryan and the Jewish raised children of those mixed marriages. We, in these categories did not know or realize that we were privileged, so far our only benefit was that we were not deported. Yet, we all expected to have this happen sooner or later. Everybody dreaded the knock on the door and the Gestapo taking you with them. My teacher Dr. Kessler was still here, working somewhere in forced labor. The *Gemeinde* office still functioned with one or two people. At least we didn't get these letters anymore in which the *Gemeinde* always passed on Gestapo orders to us. There was very little else they could do to us except to tell us to stop breathing or deport us. But just because they pretty much left us alone I still did not forget that they took all my friends and classmates away – to where? Riga? Some of my classmates had promised me they would get a message to me somehow. Only silence, I knew they were all dead. And for that I hated the Nazis and their followers with a deep passion and wanted fire and brimstones upon them!

CHAPTER X

1943

The English are Coming!

1943, what will it bring? Not the end of the war. We anti-Nazis realized that German military might was still too powerful for the Allies to overcome. The Nazis needed Germany to win this war as they were too deeply involved in Hitler's Third Reich. And then there were the naïve Germans like my Meier who believed what he read and heard on the radio. What they heard was not good for Germany: The Wehrmacht withdrawing from the Caucasus. The sixth army in Stalingrad, still encircled, and the relieve operation a failure. January 26, the OKW report: 'every Stalingrad defender considers his life had ended, but the will to resist remains unbroken.'

January 30, Goering speaks from Berlin: *'a thousand years hence every German will speak with awe of Stalingrad and remember that it was there that Germany put the seal on her victory.'* Yes in hindsight, I read these proclamations. But what utter nonsense to tell that to the German people in their greatest defeat ever. An army of over 300,000 men with all their equipment lost. And his was the 'seal of her victory.' Nazis and the Meiers swallowed that verbal garbage as they would do so to the very end!

I think it was the morning of February the 3rd, when both bulletins were black boarded like a death announcement. And that is what it was. The sixth army has ceased to exist. Fighting to the last bullet and the last man. 90,000 German soldiers capitulated along with their newly promoted Field-Marshal von Paulus. A week before the senseless

fighting ended Hitler had promoted von Paulus to field-marshal in the expectation that he would not let himself be captured but commit suicide after all his soldiers were killed. Hitler was very angry and vowed never to promote someone again in such a situation. Did it again three months later when he made Gen. Messe, the commander of all troops in North Africa, field-marshal. The same day Messe surrendered with 250,000 German and Italian troops. So much for the historians who wrote that the unconditional surrender demands by the Allies caused German troops to fight harder and braver.

The mood of the people changed after Stalingrad. Even Nazis saw that the German military might was on the wane while the Allies were getting stronger. Only diehard Nazis and the Meiers still believed in victory. When I heard people speak in Munich, and I was one to listen but not talk myself, the populace was elated with the easy conquests in 1939 and 1940. Mighty France, against which Germany fought for four years in 1914-18, was conquered in three weeks. England need not be invaded as they would have to give up unless they wanted all their cities destroyed. There was much jubilation, parades and flag waving in Munich in those first war years. Then came the war against Russia. 'A preventive war' the headlines screamed. They were preparing to attack Germany. Fanatical Nazis and the naïve believed that. I know, in Munich at least, people didn't want the war with Russia. Not preventive and not for *Lebensraum*, 'living space.' People in Munich were quite happy with what they had and what the German army had achieved. Half of Europe German or controlled by Germany.

The Munich burgher's comfortable life they wanted back. Good beer and all the other culinary delights people were fond of. Fasching, the Oktoberfest and some shady night spots in Schwabing. Not the black-outs and their sleep disrupted by alarms. And not to

march Napoleon like into the lands of Russia. Munich and Bavaria were provincial, good Catholics and Bohemians all the way. The spirit of the soul and the belly and the flesh have always been compatible in Munich. Then the war against the Soviet Union, most people did not want, began. Victory over the Russia was promised by Christmas. Then the shameful episode in September when children were marked with the yellow star. Then suddenly the stars disappeared. Or was it that the children had disappeared? The burghers of Munich really didn't care, as long as they didn't have to look at the children marked like criminals. Nor did the good citizens of Munich care much when the OKW reports proudly announced another heavy bombing raid over London, or Coventry, Manchester, Plymouth. But the people did not like the war against Russia.

By the beginning of 1943 I heard a lot of grumbling, mostly by women of course. They liked to tell each other of a husband or son killed in Russia or missing or that it happened to someone they knew. And then came the grumbling about the war: 'everlasting...the Fuehrer had promised...now the Americans are coming', and so forth. And all that before the bombings really began in earnest. What I heard made me believe that the people in Munich would just as readily give everything back to the French, the Czechs and Poles – who cares about far away Danzig – if things would return to normal times. But it was too late. The burghers of Munich and the Bavarians in their pretty villages had danced with joy and glee with the devil and now they were committed to his deadly revelry if they liked it or not. In stores, in the streetcars, walking along I listened to their gripping. Not yet anti-Fuehrer or anti-Nazi. Just tired of the war and a deeper than ever animosity towards the Prussians and Saxons and all the other

non-Bavarians who caused all these problems. In all this heretic complaining I never heard people blame the Jews as Hitler and Goebbels were never tired of telling them.

This winter was by far not as severe as last. Still, it was difficult to run all the errands over slick streets. The problem in Munich for bicyclists was that the streetcar tracks were deep grooves which were fine to cross but to negotiate sideways was difficult. If the wheel got caught in the groove you fell off your bike. So you made a short sharp turn to cross it then continued alongside. The sharp turn on a slick street made you fall too, I took a dive many times in winter. The good thing was that there were few cars to run over you. Food was getting scarcer all the time. Still plenty of potatoes but little fresh produce one could buy. Some came up from Italy but were only sold on special allocation stamps which we didn't get. Dried vegetables mom bought wherever she found some, such staples as lentils and peas. Sauerkraut was usually available for mom to make her vinegar spiced wine-kraut. Beans in cans she could buy at times, the same with beets. And if she was lucky, and at the Hertie department store at just the right time, she could get frozen Jopa vegetables and a few times even frozen berries. Every couple of month she would go to farmers and try to barter for food. My old clothing which became too small for me or things she got from other people. At least farmers who had young kids, might tell mom he needs such items. Rarely did she come back without anything. Even a loaf of black bread was welcome and needed badly. Sometimes a farmer would sell her a few eggs, a little piece of butter, a small bag of flour as they knew how difficult it was for city people. They had no idea how difficult it was for Jews. Of all the items which were most precious to get was fat, butter or lard.

I don't remember that cooking oil was ever available from farmers and we got just minimal amounts of it. So most of the times our evening meals were potatoes spiced with one of her herbs, dill my favorite.

Buchner never talked to me about the war or my personal life. He neither showed any animosity or sympathy. He knew I worked hard for him and trusted me for his personal errands to deliver envelopes. One lady I visited even had a boy - by him? I don't know but she got the most envelopes. In 1942, I had seen him occasionally in his brown uniform picking up his car, going to party meetings. This became seldom in 1943 and never after. Buchner was not a fanatical Nazi or SA man. I pegged him as one of those who had fun strutting around in his uniform and jack boots, shouting his Sieg Heil with fervor at party meetings – he was someone. They all were in uniform. Men in uniform are always more dangerous as they seem to have to play the part. Gestapo agents in leather coats or jackets were the most cruel. The worst of course the ones in army uniform with the SS insignia. I had met them all except the SS men and I would meet those two days before the end of the war!

Frau Geiger, our wreath maker, professed her anti-Nazi sentiments to me. But I never trusted the woman, a feeling I had. People have this need to be someone and going to the Gestapo and denouncing someone made them an important person.

My gardener Meier I already described him. The personification of the naïve German who believed what he read and they told him. He had no love for Hitler or the Nazis but he felt they did good for Germany, taking the country out of recession and providing work and a decent income for all. Proud of the Wehrmacht that had conquered the hated French. Germany, his generations, had fought France for four long years and could

never defeat them. Now with a world war ‘forced’ upon Germany – every German had to do his duty. As a soldier, an industry worker or a gardener. This was gospel to him, much to the consternation of Frau Meier. But he was a good man and so was his wife. They invited me over for dinner some times and slipped a few food stamps. Meier didn’t change until the war was over. Then he felt distressed and very much ashamed of what Germany had done to the Jews and other people.

I must mention the Glasser family as they lived in the wooden house in our nursery and were really part of us, if only by their daily presence. Old Glasser was tottering around on his walking stick, his young wife having died shortly before I began to work for Buchner. He was a quiet old man and never bothered anyone. His sympathies I never knew. About the war and politics he never expressed any thoughts to me. He appreciated it that I helped him clean out his cesspool. The house he lived in had no piping and he had an outhouse inside. His daughter Hilde, I guess in her 30s, was a beautiful woman. In 1943 and till the end of the war, at least until I left, she became the girlfriend and then fiancée of Herr Lindemann. Lindemann worked in the war industry and was also the center forward for the Bayern Munich soccer team. I saw him play on Sundays and he was good. Then when I got to know him I found him to be very realistic about the war situation and sympathetic to me. Of course I would tell him how I admired his soccer skills and we had a great time talking about last Sunday’s game. He gave me many free tickets and a large photograph of him which he signed. And once we became friendly, Frl. Glasser became nice to me. Before she had always ignored me but that was because I worked close together with Frau Geiger and the two hated each other and were not on speaking terms. Frau Geiger had always told me what a tramp the

woman was. That she painted her nipples red. As if that would bother me and make me hate her. It was the SA browns and SS blacks I hated and not red nipples.

So yes, by the beginning of 1943, there was a lot of disaffection in Munich. Except for Nazi diehards and naïve people like Meier, and there were many of them. The majority of the people no longer believed in victory. The war might not be lost, there was the possibility of peace through negotiations – if Hitler was gone.

At the begin of March a transport left for Auschwitz with over a hundred people. My teacher Dr. Kessler and his old mother were amongst them. So was Dora Schmidt.

Dora would be the only survivor of Jews sent to Auschwitz from Munich.

Auschwitz was then known to us as large labor camps somewhere in Poland. People had even received postcards from Auschwitz. ‘Work for everybody, good living conditions, schools for children’ – all lies. But that we didn’t know until the war was over.

It was Tuesday night, March 9th, shortly before midnight when the siren began to do its awful howling. Same time as the night before. We got dressed leisurely and mom went down into the shelter while I joined Spitzelberger. Soon lots of flak action over the city and we could hear motors, not loud and not of many planes. Searchlights all over the sky but finding nothing, they are only useful on a clear night; it was partially cloudy, lots of clouds lit up. And then we saw a different light in the sky, several in fact.

Looking like a lit up Christmas tree and seemingly floating up there. We went across the street to see them better as they were to the north of us but not very far, even our street was illuminated. Spitzelberger thought they were markers and either they used them to light up the city to take pictures or for the following planes to bomb. “We better get down Hugo, I think I can hear planes.” And we could hear the droning of many motors

coming closer. (Spitzelberger was quite right in thinking of these flares in the sky as markers. And they were dubbed Christmas trees by the public. Large magnesium flares floating slowly down on parachutes.) When we went into the shelter the place was full. People sitting on the benches unconcerned. They had been here the night before for a half an hour. They looked up fearfully when Spitzelberger closed the steel door and fastened the levers. He explained that we had seen flares in the sky to the north of us and heard many planes.

And then all hell broke loose. The rumbling of explosion, each distinctly felt yet so many that they seemed continuous.

Walls vibrating and the ground shaking, white dust like smoke filled the shelter...and the detonations of numerous explosions coming closer. The lights flickering adding to the horror of it all. The explosions now close enough to hear their individual cracks, benches now shaking with the jarring of the ground. And then, like a fast thunderstorm that spend its fury over us the explosions receded and then it was all quiet. Everyone very much scared, I too. This was our baptism of fire. Is this then what I wanted? To be scared, frightened to death? Yes! It needed to happen. Just a few days before another large transport had been sent east. Nazi Munich needed to be punished for following Hitler, even worshipping the devil. I remembered their hysterics during the parades. How unconcerned they were when the Wehrmacht marched into one country after another making it possible for the SS and Gestapo to terrorize the people. Rob them of their goods and ship it all to Germany. Take their men and women into Germany as slave laborers. The people so proud in 1940 when France was crushed, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway occupied though they had been neutrals.

Nobody showed any concern for the cities of England bombed day and night. Maybe if I had been a gentile I would have thought like them, Nazi or not. But my hatred went deeper and had a different cause than retribution for violating other nations and bombing the hell out of the British. It was the kidnapping of my friends and most likely killing them. This, I not only believed but I knew. I did not know when it happened and how, but I knew they were no more. And I knew they were not killed in an accident but murdered, by the Nazis. So come my friends and fight the Nazis with your bombs!

Spitzelberger and I were the first to go out into the street, other people were out there. Some said that all the bombing was done near the Josephsplatz, four blocks from us. There were fires burning in that direction. Three hours after the sirens had woken us up the all clear sounded. I went home to get a couple more hours sleep.

Since this was our first air raid of any significance I shall briefly detail what happened to Munich. Around one hundred English planes came from the north-west, passing by Stuttgart and Augsburg. There were preceded by three machines, the so called 'pathfinders' who navigated the raiders to their target, and then lit up the area they decided to bomb with those Christmas tree-like flares. The following bombers then unloaded into the outlined area. This was the first time we had seen these Christmas trees over Munich and whenever we saw them in the future overhead we knew we would get it. Just to give the reader an idea of how active the flak was over the city, the two types of heavy anti aircraft guns they used, both 88 mm, and 10.5 cm canons, fired over 10,000 shells that night. Shrapnel fragments lying all over the place.

This attack, which by later perspective must be considered a light raid, dropped 76 *Luftminen*, air-mines, a large bomb, 9 feet high, which would explode on impact even

when hitting the roof and crushing everything beneath. Most devastating when it hit in the street where the explosion would dig just a small crater one or two feet deep but the blast going in every direction. What we called an air-mine the British and Americans referred to as a blockbuster. The ones used in this raid were of the 3,500 lb. type. 99 bombs of the regular type were dropped, 1,000 pounders. Around a 1,000 incendiary bombs, both of the liquid and solid phosphorus type. And 70,000 stick-incendiary bombs filled with magnesium. Those stick-bombs were about a foot and a half long, 3 inches in diameter and octagonal in shape. They went through the roof and burned brilliantly for about 5-10 minutes. Long enough to start a fire in the attic. Easily smothered with a bucket of sand if you were there at the right time.

The damage to Munich? The type I was looking for – Hitler's Braune Haus damaged by fire bombs! The official Nazi publication, the Voelkischer Beobachter located in the Schellingstrasse, totally demolished. And the price Munichians paid for their allegiance to Hitler?

(A footnote: Statistics reported after the war by the Munich Archives and listed in the book '*Fliegeralarm*, by Richard Bauer.' Heinrich Hugendubel Verlag, Munchen 1987.) 212 fatalities, twice as many wounded, 9,000 people made homeless. And this just a small air raid. In July of 1944 we were attacked in three successive days by a thousand planes each time and the homeless numbered 200,000.)

The next morning there were no streetcars running, I walked to work. Down Theresienstrasse a block and there was Schwindstrasse. Our block undamaged but the second block had houses laying out in the street. One of them was the house where they had the big air raid drill a few years ago with fire engines, ambulances and SA people

directing the show. Now nobody, except ruined houses, damaged houses next to them, and broken windows all the way to our street. I walked further on to Goerresstrasse. Same thing, houses in ruins, others damaged. At one demolished house they were digging, people buried underneath. Yes I felt sorry for all who were killed, buried under houses. I knew they were not all Nazis. It was a gift of their Fuehrer. Hitler who had at one time said in one of his hysterical speeches “*Wir werden ihre Stadte ausradieren.*” ‘We will erase their cities.’ Meaning English cities, and he had done it to many cities. Now the British were doing the erasing.

All this destruction uncomfortably close to us. No wonder we were all literally ‘shook up’ in our cellar. Yet I wished I could trade my friends for ‘stopping the bombing’, but that was just a fantasy. I knew this was only the beginning and things would get a lot worse. That I would sit frightened in my basement, numb with fear. But it had to be! It was my part of ‘my’ fighting the Nazis - wishing hell on my city.

Since I have given the readers a taste of what it was like to sit in a cellar and get bombed let me also introduce the preamble to an air raid. The *Fliegeralarm*, the air raid alarm. This to me was the more exciting part of an air raid, my friends were coming. Then I would sit in the cellar with the other people – scared, but I just endured silently. Others were praying out loud, some screaming, or sat there trembling and with shaking limbs, men too.

Munich was far from England where the bombers came from. The alert system was of Germany efficiency and could be because of the distances involved.

When the bomber formations came in from England they were observed all along their routes, though it was mostly guesswork as to their destination. The people in north-western Germany must have been alerted just about every night as that is where the planes would fly over first, or they came over eastern France and then western Germany. We in Munich usually did not become involved when cities in the north and west of Germany were bombed.

There were two types of air raid warnings: The *Luftwarnung*, or air alert, and the *Fliegeralarm*, the air raid alarm. The air alert was a long 15 seconds blast, repeated three times. This was not a forewarning but it meant that just a few planes were on the way and could possibly attack Munich. Sometimes, if the 'Pathfinders' flew far ahead of the bomber formations, we might get the alert and then followed by the alarm. But usually the 'few planes' were fast Mosquito bombers doing a nuisance raid.

I have experienced them coming in, probably flying low to escape radar detection, then unloading their bombs over the city while we were still in bed, and that is scary when you get woken up by bombs exploding and not the siren's call.

During air alert, businesses and factories remained open. Streetcars stopped running, movies let out, beer was still served. But otherwise one could seek shelter or carry on. Or for that matter stay in bed if one had the nerve to do it. Mom and I would always get dressed, she would go down into the shelter and I would stick with Spitzelberger.

Air raid alarm was a different matter. Munich was never surprised because of the excellent warning system – until it broke down. That was in those July 1944 attacks when the city was without electricity and most of the sirens were kaput by then.

Munich became concerned when formations were flying past the north-western cities of Frankfurt and Mannheim, Darmstadt and still proceeding in an south-easterly direction towards Nuremberg, Stuttgart and Munich. Then the first warning was given over the Munich radio. The station would give the call sign of a cuckoo bird, repeated many times interspersed with the regular program. Then people would already tell each other *der Kuckuck ruft*, 'the cuckoo is calling.' That alone called for sinking hearts and for many an urgent trip to the bathroom. The call of the cuckoo also meant to switch to a different channel, the so called Laibach station. This station identified itself by a continuous huck-huck-huck call, the famous or infamous *Holzhacker* or 'wood chopper'. Every so often the station would come alive and broadcast the latest news, *Hier ist die Befehlsstelle des Gauleiters...* 'here is the command post of the *Gauleiter*. Enemy bomber formation reported 120 miles north-west of our city' ...huck-huck, and so on.

120 miles or around 180 km was the distance when the first warning was issued, they were past the big cities.

At the next announcement they were a 100 miles distant. These reports came to a central command center from observers, flak batteries, night fighters, listening devices and radar stations.

'This is the command post, etc. Enemy bomber formations 80 miles north-west of our city flying in a south-easterly direction...huck-huck.' If one paid attention, the single formation was now reported in plural, that spelt real trouble. The bombers were now past Stuttgart and the direction pointed at only one big city – Munich.

'This is the command post, etc. Air raid alarm has been given for our city' ...huck-huck.

The full alarm was always given when the bombers were 80 miles or 120 km from the city, and the sirens began all over Munich, one minute of ear-shrieking howling. At least it was for us. I had a love-hate relationship with that siren on our neighbor's roof.

When I heard it I knew my friends were coming but I hated it to be right on top of us.

Then there was an eerie silence of shocked reality; they were coming. Quick dressing had become an art. Doors began to slam in the house as some people rushed off to public shelters. Running footsteps in the street. People calling to each other in the blackout.

At 80 miles distant, if the reports were accurate, it took the bombers from 15 to 25 minutes to get here, depending on their problems. If they got scattered by flak and night fighters they might consolidate their formations first and be here in 20 to 25 minutes, if they flew straight in they would be here in 15 minutes.

'This is the command post. Enemy formations 60 miles north-west of our city.'

Outside darkness, running feet. The sky so peaceful with the many stars shining down on a blacked-out city.

'This is the command center. Enemy formations 40 miles from our city.'

These were coming in fast, eight minutes had passed since the siren calls. If I wanted to go to the bunker in the Arcisstrasse it was high time for me to leave, three minutes on my bicycle, eight minutes to run there. But then my mother would have left shortly after the alarm to walk the fifteen minutes to the public shelter in the Loewenbrau brewery.

If we stayed, then it was time for mom to go down in the shelter and for me to join our warden.

‘This is the command post. Enemy formations 20 miles north-west of our city. Other formations reported 30 miles west.’

They had split up and were coming in from two directions, as was their habit, coming in at different times. Spitzelberger and I could hear the canons in the distance. Search lights crossing in the clear night.

‘This is the command post. Enemy formations 10 miles to the north of our city. Other formations to the north-west and west.’

There were coming in on a broad front. The droning of many air planes could be heard through the din of the flak, the flashes of guns firing up into the sky like lighting. The noise of motors and guns firing becoming overwhelming. Then above brilliant lights flaring up, the Christmas trees dropped by the Pathfinders over northern Munich. My mind filled with joy – my friends had come to fight the Nazis. My stomach in knots with fear, my heart pounding and as my mom described me: my face white.

And then it began. The cascading of bombs sounding like an express train, the explosions far and near, heard and felt. The light bulbs flickering.

‘This is the command center. Enemy activity over our city – huck-huck-huck...’

It was sometime in spring of 1943 that I met Horst, an old friend of Willi, and former Hitler Youth member. He was now in the war industry and waited to be called into the army. He belonged to the 1860 Munich sports club and its branch of Greco-Roman wrestling. He asked me if I was interested in joining. I had to laugh, me? A Jewish boy? He said that a Herr Bogner was the coach and he wouldn’t care, he said he would ask him about me. A short time later Horst came to visit me and told me that Bogner would

love to have me, only he and Horst would have to know that I am Jewish. My mother said it was all right with her. TUS 1860 Munich was at that time the largest sports organization in Munich and also had the best soccer team. In fact that year they became German champions. Who would ever forget their forward trio of Janda, Krueckeberg, Willimovski slicing through every defense and scoring.

So I joined TUS 1860 Munich. Herr Bogner had been a life-long wrestler, not big and tall but all muscles and talent, now at age sixty he was a coach. Greco-Roman wrestling is nothing like free style wrestling. It isn't just brute strength but technique to get your opponent on his back. Just get his shoulders down for a moment and you won the match, no count of three. He was delighted to have me and since I was making little money he freed me of my membership dues. I used my name and address to sign up as he explained to me no one ever cared to check the register. Nor was it important for a boy to belong to the HJ, there were a number of them who didn't belong. So, as a Jewish boy I became part of the organization. I liked the pre-wrestling training, it was good for me. I had strong legs from paddling all day on my bicycle but not strong arms. It was rigorous training, weight lifting, running, jumping, tumbling, learning to fall. The first hour and a half that is what we did, then wrestling. The boys were in every age group, wrestling for boys under sixteen goes by weight class and not age.

I never talked to Bogner about politics or my life. He knew who I was and probably thought he did me a favor to let me participate. I am certain he was not a Nazi!

Now I even got a membership card and could use it to get free into the stadium for the soccer games. It also gave me a non-Jewish identification document.

I don't know how long I would have remained a member of the wrestling club but it all came to a sudden end. About three months after I joined there was a wrestling meeting with other sports organizations. I would have rather not participated but Herr Bogner wanted me to as I was the only one in this weight class' and he wanted to show 1860 as having a complete team. He didn't care if I won or lost.

One Sunday in June we all met at a gymnasium in Milbertshofen. Not in my part of town so I felt safe. Who would go and watch youth Greco-Roman wrestling anyhow except parents and friends of the boys. The bleachers in the gym were filled with people. Not good at all.

I participated in two matches and lost in standing and drew in kneeling. I wasn't that good yet; Herr Bogner said I did fine against the more experienced boys. We got dressed, most boys in their HJ uniforms.

Then came the awards ceremony. In marched, preceded by a large Swastika flag, a bunch of men in their brown SA uniforms, they were to make the awards. Bogner came at once with a sheepish grin on his face and ushered me and the boys without uniforms to the back. (Later he told me that he thought the awards were to be made by the coaches. But since the meeting was held under the auspices of the SA their leaders wanted to make the awards.) The awards were given out, now I was glad I didn't win. Speeches made, flags flying, the Horst Wessel song *Die Fahne hoch...* was sung, then the *Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles*, all screamed their Sieg Heil. And that was it. Herr Bogner and I decided that I had better resign my membership in the TUS 1860 Munich sports club. He still grinning about it. I don't believe he realized the danger I was in – and he too. For me a good lesson to stay out of trouble and not seek it.

In March we prepared our garden for the summer and the growing of flowers. The beds for the annuals had been spaded and raked and were planted with seedlings. The perennials were freed of their evergreen branches and so were the beds planted with bulbs. Most flowers already having shoots protruding from the black soil. The first flowers were the *Maerzenbecher*, a pretty yellow flower we could use for wreaths. Lilac bushes were blooming. We could only use them fresh from the bushes because they wilted fast. I still had to get plastic flowers from town. Now when driving around the city I could see bomb damage. Still isolated but all over the city. The Frauenkirche, the two-domed cathedral and symbol of Munich, was damaged and houses around it destroyed. There was more damage in our immediate neighborhood. The Pinakothek where I used to walk Lumpi the dog had burned, both buildings. One of the art galleries facing the Koenigsplatz, the Glyptothek, had burned. Probably the same bomber that had unloaded there had hit the Braune Haus, Hitler's place. And I heard that the large, round structure where cooking gas was stored had exploded. We had always been afraid that if that happened half the city would be demolished. But it did relatively little damage to the buildings around it when it blew up full of gas.

I had become friends with a French prisoner of war, Roland was his name and he was in his fifties. Captured in 1940 and shipped to Germany, first as a prisoner of war and now as a foreign laborer, he volunteered for work to get out of camp. There was no way for him to get back to France so he preferred to be sort of free. I don't know where he worked but he lived near our garden. In the back of some industrial shop he had built himself a shack where he and another former prisoner lived, primitive but it was his own.

They raised vegetables, potatoes, tomatoes and rabbits. At lunch Roland ate sometimes in the same inn where I had lunch. As a foreign laborer he was paid and received ration cards. The Germans had a system of issuing food stamps in different categories. On top were the hierarchy of Nazis. They could get special allocations of food stuff nobody else did. Regular Nazis like Buchner received what the other Germans did. Below the Germans came the foreign laborers who were not in camps, like my French friend Roland. On the bottom of the list came the Poles and Jews. With the added restriction for Jews to have to buy their food in a few stores scattered around the city. He had a family back in France and was homesick, three years away from his family. Roland could write and receive letters. Escape was impossible as when he left the camp to become a quasi free laborer he had to sign a statement that he would make no attempt to escape. The consequence would be that his family would be sent to a concentration camp. Typical Nazi way of doing things.

When I saw how primitive he lived I trusted him and told him that I was Jewish. He knew nothing of how we were persecuted and deported. Or that the French Jews were

also sent to death camps. He had a simple radio with which he could receive the Munich stations.

For those anxiously awaiting the Allies to come and liberate Europe from the Nazi yoke even German news, or the reports of the OKW, gave good indication of what was going on. Especially when the reports spoke of defensive battles and victorious withdrawals, one could read between the lines and chalk up another defeat for the Wehrmacht.

Roland had always good news from a different source. These freed prisoners talked to each other and some had connections to Germans who listened to BBC London. This news spread like wild fire, and also got to me by way of Roland. One Sunday, Roland and his comrade invited me over for dinner. Rabbit cooked the French way.

One time I also met a Russian prisoner. He came a few times to eat at the inn. He wore that brown uniform of Russian soldier and that funny cap. Once he sat with me on the table and he spoke pretty good German. I asked him where he was from in Russia, just to be polite. Then I just ate and ignored him. I didn't trust the man, I had never heard of Russian war prisoners to be at liberty. I didn't doubt that he was Russian but I wasn't sure that he didn't work for the SD. I had good eyes for people and he looked like someone you don't trust.

It was now May and the flowers were blooming. Busy weeding, watering, cutting greenery for Frau Geiger. Decorating churches with trees and fresh flowers and running errands for the Buchners.

It was around the eight of May when I read the bulletins and things were going well for the British and American armies in Tunisia. The end of that campaign was becoming another Stalingrad for the Wehrmacht, and Hitler stubbornly sending more soldiers and

equipment instead of withdrawing and saving his men. When I talked to Meier about it – poor naïve Meier, who believed everything he read or heard on the radio, he was certain that the new reinforcements gave Rommel the means to drive out the Allies from North Africa and then back to Alexandria. Rommel was not even in North Africa anymore but had been recalled by Hitler to work on the Atlantic Wall. I don't know who proposed it but we bet ten Marks – I betting that it would be all over in less than a week. On the thirteenth of May, the commanding general of the Africa corps was promoted to field marshal by Hitler and on the same day he surrendered with all his forces to the allies. 250,000 German and Italians went into captivity. Giving out field marshal batons at the last moment to generals in hopeless situations doesn't change anything. Hitler didn't learn from Stalingrad and never would. Meier insisted I take his ten Marks. He would never learn either. We settled down to a peace pipe in our office. "At least" he said, "they didn't capture Rommel."

The news bulletin, actually published on the fourteenth, was again black boarded like a death announcement. 'The heroic soldiers fought to the last bullet.' Roland told me about the capture by the allies of a quarter of a million men with all their equipment.

It was now summer and our house was emptying. That air raid in March had unnerved a lot of people, or in plain English, scared the hell out of a lot of people. Almost everyone with children would evacuate the city and the authorities (the party was in charge of the evacuation) shipped them to towns, villages and farms in Upper Bavaria. Everything around Munich already full with evacuees from the north. People without children, and if not employed, or elderly, could find their own place of refuge but were permitted to evacuate. In Germany you just didn't move from one place to another. To

leave the city you needed a permit, then report to your local police department that you leave their district, give them the new address, and report to the local police office wherever you went. This was already the procedure before the war began. A very normal procedure in a totalitarian state.

Our inn, the Ludwigshof remained open, and Herr Sepp would be there throughout the war. Though at night he would be at home, wherever he lived.

Herr Bieringer, the man who has his paper and magazine business in our thoroughfare moved next door into a store. The residents on our first floor moved all away. The same the two parties on the second floor. The people who had moved into the Lewin's apartment didn't even stay a year. On our third floor, our good neighbor lady, Frau Maurer moved out and lived permanently at her cottage in Hechendorf on the lake. She came to Munich often to see that the plumbing shop was functioning and did her accounting at her cottage. My mother was still 'employed' at her business. Of course my lucrative sideline of walking her dog Lumpi was now gone. But I earned my own money now. Seven Marks a week (about 3.50 dollars.) One wonderful thing Frau Maurer did, she gave us the keys to her apartment for mom to dust and occasionally open the windows to air the place, and open them when there was an air raid. But most important, she showed me how to get BBC London on her fine short wave radio.

Cautioning me to keep the volume low so no one would hear me listening to the forbidden broadcast. I listened infrequently because the danger was too great of being overheard. And when at nine in the evening I listened I had the volume so low that I needed to put my ear to the loudspeaker.

It was the call sign of the BBC London that was a dead give away. Repeated

drum sound, like BOOM-BOOM-BOOM, and again and again until the announcer said in German “here is BBC London calling. Our broadcast in German.” And then gave the news and an hour long program. That was really an eye opener to hear the news from London versus the reports of the OKW.

Frau Rau, now married and her name Grissmeier, was still here. I guess because of her husband who worked in the war industry. He was finally drafted in 1944, but Frau Grissmeier stayed to the end. The end meaning the destruction of our house in January of 1945. Above us on the fourth floor, all parties remained. Spitzelbergers, Reiters and Stieglers. In the rear building, one of the first parties to move out were the Schoenauers, the Nazis. Actually in all fairness to Frau Schoenauer, it was her husband who was the real Nazi and virulent anti-Semite. She moved out with her kids shortly after that March raid.

Across from her, the apartment of Frau Hecht. After she left for a better place and married Herr Brandner, her place remained vacant. Herr Brandner was with the Africa Corps and as he told me he drove one of those eight-wheeled armored cars. I guess he spent the rest of the war in America in a POW camp, he was one of the lucky ones.

Below them, on the ground floor or as we called it the parterre, the Schoenhofers remained and so did the old lady on the other side, Frau Obermeier.

Our house was more than half empty. I had no idea who owned the house now after they took the owners, the Lewin family away. I knew one thing, nothing got fixed anymore, nobody knew who to contact. Before long fixing things were out of the question anyhow in all houses in Munich. You did it yourself if your windows and doors were

blown away or freeze. Luckily we had Herr Spitzelberger who had golden hands and could repair just about anything.

I had two strange things happen to me during the summer of 1943. Buchner told me one day that the local police station called and said that I could pick up my wallet from them which I had lost. Someone found it and turned it in to the police. Since I had my Jewish ID card in the wallet I had to wear the yellow star to go there, the only time I wore the Nazi-star since I had begun to work for Buchner. I had no problem at the police station. These were the ‘green’ (they wore green uniforms) or regular police. Nothing missing from my wallet, not even a few marks I had in it. I had lost my wallet once before with my Jewish ID card in it – I guess boys lose things. A few days after I lost it a German soldier in uniform came to our door and said he found my wallet at the rail road station – a forbidden place for me to be. It was strange. Here was a country bent on exterminating the Jews and its citizens are honest enough to return the lost wallet of a Jewish boy. Try to explain that paradox.

Though everybody was required to carry identification with him at all times, and that included youngsters, I decided not to carry my ID card anymore. If I didn’t wear the star then I shouldn’t carry anything identifying me as a Jew. If searched, I might get away just pretending to be a stupid kid from Munich who forgot his ID card.

And shortly after it happened. I was in town running an errand for Frau Buchner, I had a bag full of homeopathic bottles she wanted refilled. There was a large apothecary in the Bayerstrasse where I usually went. I parked my bicycle and was just about to enter the store when two men in civilian cloth approached me, one holding a badge in my face, “*Geheime Staatspolizei*, ‘Gestapo’ your identification!” Let me explain that

Gestapo was really a nickname for these people. They never called themselves Gestapo, it was *Geheime Staatspolizei* or secret state police. And these two were not in their usual leather regalia but just long civilian coats. Also I realized at once from his dialect that he was not from Munich or Bavaria. I explained to them in good Munich dialect that I worked for a large nursery and we worked for the party. That I left my ID card home because on the bicycle I have a tendency to lose it. I asked them to call my chef. As for what I was doing here? I explained that I was getting medicines for my chef's wife, I showed them the bottles. The speaker asked me if I was in the Hitler Youth. I told him '*Faehnlein 13*' or troop 13 from the Winzererstrasse. He asked me my Chef's name. Then the mouthpiece said in his Saxon dialect "*Auf jeden Fall trage immer deinen HJ Ausweis mit dir Junge*, 'always carry your HJ card with you, boy.' And they walked on looking for their next victim.

I don't know why they stopped me, I looked my age, 14, not Jewish. Who knows. I had done good. Nervous yes, but calm and talking with a steady voice in dialect. Respectful but not showing any fear. Again it was probably my dialect that fooled them. I got the medicines and bicycled back. Buchner was in his office, I told him what had happened. The man actually laughed., he got a kick out of my having fooled the Gestapo.

When I asked him if he could make a sort of work ID card he put a beauty together. A little green card that folded together. Outside in big print *ARBEITER AUSWEISS*, 'WORK CARD' Inside my picture with his company stamp over it. Then my personalities, all correct but minus my adopted name of ISRAEL. My title was Garden Worker. His company's name and address, telephone. His name printed and signed and

the added PG, which stands for *Partei Genosse*, Party Member. Looked very authentic and impressive. How well it might have held up I don't know. It wasn't a forgery but also not an authorized identification card. I carried it faithfully with me at all times instead of my Jewish ID card and never had to use it.

In July the battle of Kursk began in Russia, the battle to end all battles as it was described. After the Kursk salient had been taken the gates to Moscow were open. Again the war over by the end of the year. The pincer movement began on the 4th of July, Operation Citadel as we now know. Every day the bulletins reported progress towards Kursk from both the north and south. Hundreds of Soviet tanks destroyed, guns captured as were thousands of Russian soldiers; a multitude of planes shot down. The newsreel showed the new behemoth, the Ferdinand Panzer in action, impregnable to any Russian tank or anti tank gun. The new Panther tank better than the Russian T-34, and of course the Tigers. After a week had passed and Kursk had not been captured it was called a *Materialschlacht*, 'a battle of material', of attrition. Thousands of Russian tanks destroyed, ten thousands of Russians killed and captured; their armies decimated. And then the battle became a *Abwehrschlacht*, a defensive battle, followed by strategic withdrawals.

And while this battle was in progress the Allies landed in Sicily. First the OKW announced that the British and Americans had been thrown back into the sea with heavy losses. Then that they had landed and were encircled and destroyed. And when they took Sicily, Goebbels announced 'they had not breached *Festung Europa*, 'Fortress Europe' as Sicily was just an island. Shortly after 'Fortress Europe' was breached, they landed in Italy. I didn't even need to listen to the BBC London. The truth was in what was

happening. At the end of July Italy gave up the war and surrendered only to be occupied by German forces. But despite all these reversals, Germany was still a mighty military power. They were on the defensive in Russia and now in Italy. The air armadas of England and America were almost daily over Germany, doing Hitler's work of erasing cities. The U-boat war had little to report. Germany was reaping what it had seeded. The Blitzkrieg times were over, no more small nations to conquer. The fight was now with the Soviet Union that seemed to become stronger every day – defensive battles in the east. Defensive battles in Italy against the Allies. On land, sea and air *Abwehrschlachten*.

And Germany working in a frenzy on the Atlantic Wall to stave off the invasion that was bound to come. The bulletins reported of partisan actions in every country Germany had occupied. In the East and Balkans they were called bandits, in the West they were terrorists. It seemed that the whole world was turning against Germany.

The mood of the people had changed with the landings on the European mainland. The lost battle for Kursk which had promised a speedy defeat of the Soviets and end of the war. I heard it more freely expressed that Germany can never win this war. Make peace the only alternative. But many people knew how Germany had dealt with the Poles, Russians and Jews, heard of reprisals taken against civilians in Italy, France and practically everywhere where the Wehrmacht occupied and the Gestapo functioned. There cannot be any peace, not the type people hoped for. Only unconditional surrender, and that was not possible with Hitler in power and his SS and Gestapo ruling the land. People were grumbling. Food and other goods in ever shorter supply. People afraid of worse air raids to come. Through their *Spitzeln*, 'informers', usually faithful party

members of either gender and age, the SD and Gestapo were informed of the people's disaffection with the war, and this information passed on to the upper echelon of the party. That is when Goebbels as chief of propaganda stepped in and disseminated rumors of the *Wunderwaffen*, 'wonder weapons' to come and give Germany the victory. The first of these weapons I heard about was the *Wasserstoffbombe*, 'the hydrogen bomb.' In hindsight this is amazing. Yes, Germany as America, and to a lesser extend Japan, were working on the atomic bomb, a well guarded secret by all. The hydrogen bomb at that time could have been only a fantasy-dream of Edward Teller. It was described as such a powerful bomb that it would destroy England, and then America would have to sue for peace. Another one of these wonder weapons was a magnetic beam shot up to disable the motors of planes flying overhead. A light ray of such brilliance that it would blind the pilots. I don't remember them all. However, these rumors did wonders for the war-sick populace; of Munich at least, and they had new hope and carried on to final victory, whatever it took. Goebbels and his propaganda machine concocted these and similar rumors to the very end of the war. Diehard Nazis and the naive, the Meiers believed.

Listening to BBC London sometimes I knew that Germany suffered grievous loses and lay almost helpless before the every increasing air attacks. Its U-boats checkmated. But the end so far away, Germany still so powerful. Would I see the end? It came with the certainty of spring following winter and the day the night. But I also knew it would be a long winter and an endless night before the sun of freedom came. A boy lives for the next day and not a year hence. I worked at my job and I liked it. We were preparing for fall, my second one here at Buchners.

Since March we had few alarms, most of those just warnings, and no air raids. Then just after midnight on Tuesday September 7th, we had alarm, and they came. For us in the cellar it was not as bad as the air raid in March. At least no bombs in our immediate neighborhood. When we came out there was a big fire at the Technikum a block away. Also many fires in the nearby Luisenstrasse, fires really all over the city. That night the British bombers alone dropped 180,000 stick-bomb incendiaries; 17,000 people had become homeless.

It was sometimes in September that Frau Grissmeier told me that Willi had been wounded in Russia and was in the SS Lazarett in Bad Reichenhall. She invited me to come with her and visit him. On Sunday we left by train. The *Bahnhof*, 'main railroad station' still in one piece. A trip into the mountains, great, I had never been in the Bavarian Alps. Bad Reichenhall is a major stop before Berchtesgaden, Hitler's Obersalzberg and Berghof.

The town lies at the foot of mighty *Predigtstuhl* peak which can be reached by cable car. I really enjoyed the train ride, seeing places I had never been before. A little apprehensive of visiting a SS Lazarett.

At the gate of the military hospital were SS guards. Frau Grissmeier identified herself as the mother of a wounded soldier there and I as his friend, and they passed us without checking me. Willi most happy to see his mother and his old Jewish buddy. At least this time he didn't surprise me with his 'where is your star Hugo'. He knew better.

When Willi had recovered they sent him back to Russia. In 1944 he was captured by the Russians, became a POW, and was finally released in 1950.

Saturday night, the 2nd of October we had another air raid. Again it was mainly a raid with incendiary bombs, with 190,000 stick-bomblets dropped, we did not get any heavy explosive bombs in our immediate area. We even had some stick-bombs on a house near our own and there was a fire in the attic. Now here is a typical German way of doing things. A fire engine drove up and just stood there letting the roof burn. When the people asked them, begged them to put out the fire they said that they were waiting for their chief to give them the order, and their fire chief was not present. When he finally showed up the house was burning from top to bottom and became a shell. The first house in our city block to be destroyed. Fires again all over the city and even the *Fuehrerbau*, the to us infamous Reichskanzlei was burning. However there the fire department came quickly and extinguished the blaze. A few other buildings around the Koenigsplatz were damaged, some by bombs. I think that the Koenigsplatz is one of the targets the British pick as there is always bombing. It should be as around it, along with some art museums, it is all Nazi. A year ago they had closed the Koenigsplatz to all traffic and built a camouflage scenery on the square. I doubt if the British were fooled by it. 22,000 persons became homeless, 233 were killed and 90 wounded, according to the after-war statistics from the Munich archives.

Munich now had relative peace for a while. We had plenty of warnings and alarms and even a few bombs dropped one time but nothing severe until March 1944, when the Americans came during the day.

30 October: the bulletin writes about the Moscow Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States and their unconditional surrender demands to Germany. I remember how Goebbels and his propaganda ministry

treated these demands by the Allies. It was laughed and mocked at with derision and scorn.

After the war some American generals and many historians called the unconditional surrender demand a mistake. That it prolonged the war unnecessarily by instilling a fatalism in the German soldiers and caused them to fight to the last bullet so to speak. This is a false assumption. There was nothing but ridicule for the Allies surrender demands. Besides, the Germans expected nothing less if they should lose the war. In no manner or form did it contribute to any prolongation of the war, or add to the fatalism of German soldiers, or make him fight harder or braver. He knew very well that to survive a lost war, and if he had the opportunity, all he had to do was throw his weapon away and raise his hands. Even in Russia he had a good chance of being taken prisoner and survive. Unless he was of the SS.

Throughout 1942 and 1943 they shipped our Jewish people out to their unknown fate. Statistics after the war showed that between November 1941 and February 1945, 2,991 Jews were deported from Munich of whom 160 returned from Theresienstadt and only two from the other camps. Dora Schmidt and Sigi Golomb the sole survivors.

In 1943, Munich was grumbling and tired of the war that could no longer be won but still a Nazi city. Flags were flying on 30th of January, the day of 'taking power,' and on April 20th, Hitler's birthday. It would do so for one more year. A year later there were not that many windows left in the city to fly flags from. The days of parades and mass meetings were over. I hated their parades during which they drove themselves into a frenzy. I hated their brown and black uniforms and foremost that Swastika, a symbol of evil to me. I hated the Nazis for what they had done to us for many years. These laws

and restrictions only affected me personally when I saw these ugly signs of Jews not wanted or Jews forbidden. I knew how families had been thrown out of their homes, their things confiscated. I saw the sadness of my classmates when they traveled from Milbertshofen or Berg-am-Laim, the two Jew-camps, their new homes in barracks. I had heard of many people committing suicide, driven to kill themselves by the relentless persecutions, like Bertel's mother, and left her and Martin orphans. The Nazis did it. And then all my friends and their families taken away. Why? Because there were born Jewish. It was all so unfair. Yet, the funny thing was I really did not know many Nazis. Schoenauer in the back building, he was mean and cruel to the Lewin family not us. Still, I had hated him for being like that, he was a true Nazi. Gestapo Mugler, that arrogant man who had so much fun humiliating us in front of neighbors and passers by. Schwingenstein, my mother's tormentor I had never met, nor the Nazis of the *Ortsgruppe* who gave her a bad time. Buchner? A real example of a Nazi. Yet I didn't hate him, he was OK with me and the other Jews working for him. He didn't help us in any way and paid us only a pittance, but it was a lot better working for him than being shipped out to who knows where to – and murdered.

I had known people, and yes children, being nasty and mean to my mother and me. Calling us bad names, spitting. But I didn't know these people and kids individually. I had seen the SS march by their eyes as cold as stone. To me they looked fearful and merciless – brutes. But I didn't know any of them or had met them.

No face, no name to hate. When I say I hated the Nazis with a passion it was really a system, a government, a dark shadow, a danger that oppressed our existence. And the always expected knock on the door.

I remember a jingle we used to sing in my class to the melody of a popular New Years song:

Es geht alles vorueber, es geht alles vorbei.

Im Maerz faellt der Hitler im April die Partei.

Everthing goes away, everything passes by. .

In March it is Hitler in April the Partei.

I knew it would happen someday that there was no more Hitler and party, then I didn't need to hate anymore. The Germans, my neighbors, in fact most of the people I met and knew were not bad, even if some 'were sort of Nazis' like Frau Stiegler. But that type of world, free of Nazism, was for now just a dream. So I hated and wished for punishment of that monstrous ogre Nazi.

The American Army Air Force had joined the British, and on their list of important targets was the city of Munich! Munich did not have the big factories to make tanks and planes but it had a significant war industry of which the BMW, Bavarian Motor Works, was perhaps the most important. Munich was also a large communication center between Germany and its forces in Italy and the Balkans.

By the end of 1943, I had been almost two years working for Buchner in forced labor. While I liked to work in the garden and mostly outdoor it wasn't all that easy. But I don't seem to be complaining much or not at all about the hardship working for Buchner. Certainly working for him and then going home to mom, the warmth and coziness of our home, hungry and mom always having something to eat for me, was so

much better than having been shipped off to a concentration camp and the unknown fate awaiting one there.

I got along fine with Meier and Frau Geiger, and the customers who came in to buy things. Frau Buchner was, if not friendly, a least formal and correct with me.

Buchner also was not a terror. Oh, I resented at first when he called for me "Bua", boy, yelling for me in front of everyone and the customers. A no-name kid. Nor was he ever friendly with me, for him I was just a 'thing' called boy, and only once did he slap me.

At noon I could go over to Stoecher's inn and eat and fill my stomach with whatever they had. But what soured my life was the ever constant threat of the Gestapo. Though I had few run-ins with them, and the ones I had were rather routine (if anything could ever be considered routine with them), it was the daily omnipresence of living under their hellish guardianship which even to me as a boy was spoiling a good day at Buchners.

Add to that the constant victories of the Germany army trying to conquer the world, at least through 1943, and even a boy could become depressed.

The most difficult work for me was lugging these heavy trees around. Meier had taught me to lift with my legs and not back, I had strong legs from cycling and kicking the ball around. But what made my work harder was that I did not have the proper clothing for outdoor work. Meier had a raincoat when we worked in this type of weather. My jacket or sweater would soon get soaked when it rained or snowed. Snow wasn't that bad but sleeting was. And there were many days when work in the garden was made miserable by the weather. Just as food was inadequate so was clothing for us. Mom would knit sweaters, scarves and woolen gloves to keep me warm but she could do nothing for

trousers. Until late in the year I would wear shorts until I got a pair of long ones from the church deacon.

I could write about many miserable days I had to endure, but I remember especially one evening when there was a rush job to take a wreath out to the *Nordfriedhof*, the North Cemetery. The wreath wasn't finished until seven. I don't know why it had to taken to the cemetery in the evening, I was sure that the client could wait until in the morning, or Buchner could have taken it in his car. It was in November, dark already and sleeting, the wet snow blown by a storm. I was in shorts, no gloves and carrying the wreath on my shoulder driving with one hand against the storm. After an hour I was only halfway to the cemetery, tired, soaked and freezing. This was the only time I called mom and complained. I had to call Frau Maurer to get her on the phone. Of course what could my mother do? She left it up to me to turn back and then face the anger of Buchner the next day. Just the shelter of a phone booth for a few minutes and hearing mom's voice gave me new courage, it wasn't right for me to upset her like that.

So I kept going, walking and pushing my bike another hour in the freezing storm. At least they had a night watch at the cemetery to whom I could deliver the wreath.

Then home was easy, driven by the wind behind me.

Just one day out of many that made life difficult working for Buchner. But somehow, I seemed to get never sick besides catching a cold like everybody else did.

CHAPTER XI**1944****Fire and Brimstone!**

So as not to repeat myself I shall bypass the preparations in the garden for winter and the work we did during that season. Meier less busy and having more time to enjoy his pipe, while I would run errands. During the months, when we had hardly any work in the garden, Meier would come along when we decorated with trees which helped me a lot dragging in those heavy buckets, and work with Buchner and me in the forest cutting greenery.

The winter of 1943-44 was milder than the previous ones, just normal snowfall and cold. At that time all city services were still functioning. Water, electricity and natural gas and garbage pickup. Most of the garbage pickup was really picking up the ashes from the coal fires everybody burned to cook with and heat. The streetcars were all running so were the trains.

Food had become the big problem. Not that one couldn't buy food with stamps. And the quality of prepared food was still good and so were the meals one could buy in restaurants – with stamps. Bread however was not as good as it used to be. Bread in Germany was what we call rye bread, a dark crust and inside firm. We didn't have the white bread which is our main staple in the United States and can be toasted, I had never even seen a toaster until I came to America. But our black bread was now diluted with other grains and even potatoes. I didn't mind eating potato bread as long as there was plenty of it which there never was. I remember one morning for breakfast there was

only a quarter slice of bread left in our breadbox and no stamps to buy more for a few days. Mom felt bad about it but that was it. The fine bakeries were also gone. The crisp white rolls were now brown, and baked goods without sugar. Munich had been famous for its wurst and sausages, cold cuts. They still were available though it was rumored that many butcher shops were using horse meat to make their delicacies.

My mother spent most of her time, when not knitting, scrounging around for food.

When she had knitted the type of things farmers liked like sweaters, gloves, she would go hamstern. The problem was that most farmers near Munich had evacuees and had to feed them, so little was left for them to trade in. At least many of the farmers were sympathetic to people who came from Munich looking for food so that they always had advice on who to visit to barter with. Mainly farmers with many children. Each child counted as a person and left the farmer with extra food or he got more often a permit to butcher. Mom would now branch out ever further away from Munich and walk to villages far away from the train, often walking for hours to get to some isolated places where others didn't care to venture. To fill my stomach I would visit Herr Strauss for a sandwich, bring Frau Brandner Christmas decorations I swiped from Frau Geiger's stash or fresh flowers we got from the city's nursery, and she always gave me a few food stamps. I came to visit Meier, though I saw him every day, and his wife understood what my visit was all about. She had a good source for potatoes and always gave me a bag full.

But my main source of extra food was the *Stammgericht* at the inn every day. Potatoes with 'mixed in' whatever was available. It wasn't really bad to eat, Frau Stoecher, who did the cooking, would often mix into that preparation whatever was left over from

other dishes she had cooked and not sold and could not be stored. The *Stammgericht* was then often a sort of stew. In all honesty, her dish, whatever she conjured up, was a lot better and more nourishing than the stuff I had to eat at the Hort in school.

Things with food were always worst in spring when even potatoes were hard to come by, were old, sprouted stuff coming out or just rotting away and no fresh produce available yet.

Just about that time Salo came up with his brilliant idea. Somebody had shown him and he taught me. As I told before, our Jewish ration cards were minimal and had no dairy and meat products, no eggs and few cereal products. The special allocation cards we never received. At the beginning when they curtailed our food rations they just snipped them off. Then later they printed 'void' on each stamp, with "JEW" on those we could buy with. Salo showed me that by using a needle you could gently dig into the paper and lift out a spot of ink. The problem was that the word 'void' would have been wonderful to dig out but the German word was '*ungültig*', eight letters and two dots over the u.

So I began to work on a stamp. Each needle tip lifting off a tiny amount of ink. I took me almost two hours and my fingers were trembling and my eyes tired. Then I rubbed my thumb over the stamp to smoothen it out and make it look old, like kept in the wallet. I had a genuine food stamp for 50 gram of meat. My mother could never do it with her trembling hands, but I could now use my artistic talents productively. A stamp a day gave us 50 gm of meat, or 100 gm of fat, or one egg; an egg wasn't worth the effort but 250 gm of cereal products like pasta was.

It was frustrating work as I succeeded doing only one usable stamp in three tries. You couldn't dig out any paper, just a spot of ink on the needle tip. And there was a limited supply of those stamps.

Saturday, March 18th, 1944, 1:30 PM. I was just in the cinema on the Elisabethplatz watching a funny Hans Moser movie when there was an air raid alarm. We had a number of day time alarms but nothing ever happened. Movie was let out and they made us go into the public shelter of a nearby school. Made us go? Oh yes, they had block wardens with their Swastika armbands with warden printed on it and they were in charge, and had to be obeyed like the police. So I saw little of the raid which was not in Schwabing or my area where I lived. What was different was that when I came up two hours later there was a lot of black smoke billowing up towards the center of the city. At night you only saw the fires or their reflections in the dark sky. Daytime it would be columns of smoke, some parts of the city engulfed in smoke. These were the Americans who had come for the first time and they had come up from the south, from Italy, we in the north of Munich were spared. These raids on Munich are nothing in comparison with the heavy attacks cities like Hamburg, Bremen and Berlin endured. Even going by the OKW reports that German propaganda admitted: 20 January, heaviest terror attack yet on Berlin. 29 January, Frankfurt raided heavily at night. 4 March, 600 American bombers over Berlin in their first day time raid on Germany's capital. 15 March, heavy night raid on Stuttgart, we sat in the cellar for an hour. 18 March, 1,000 plane bomber attack on Frankfurt. 31 March, Nuremberg attacked. Now the OKW reports on cities attacked, each raid is reported as a terror raid.

What Germany did to the English cities back in 1940-41, was war. Now when the English hit back they are terror raids. All attacks on cities are in essence terror raids, there is no doubt about that. Goering began it all with Hitler's approval. "*We will erase their cities,*" Hitler screamed in his speech. Goebbels, the mouthpiece for Germany, was so certain that England would be brought to her knees with obliterating their cities.. Were the English, and now with American help, right and justified to destroy the German cities in retaliation? Richard Bauer in his excellent record of air raids on Munich writes in his preface that first of all the guilt must be born by the Nazis as they started the war and the terror raids, beginning with Warsaw and Rotterdam. But he also states very eloquently that one thing the English learned from Nazi Germany , 'to repay terror with terror.' I don't want to be the judge on that, if terror attacks should beget unrestricted warfare on cities. My war on the Nazis justified the terror attacks as it was the only means by which I could fight the hated Nazis.

Now when I pedaled through the city I could see houses missing, in ruins, burned out shells, the war had come to Munich. But in our garden niche of the city, the flowers were in full bloom. Wreath making business had picked up as even the last air raid in March had claimed 173 victims. Though not as many bombs had been dropped as in previous raids, the Americans used a bomb that penetrated through the house and exploded deep within, caving in the cellars. At this time everything was still functioning in the city. Fire engines came to burning houses, ambulances to pick up the wounded, frantic efforts made to dig out the buried, hearses came for the dead. And even when electricity, gas and water was shut off it was repaired quickly. Though after the raid a year ago when the gas works exploded we didn't have cooking gas for three weeks.

Burials of victims were still conducted by the relatives in the cemeteries they chose.

Frau Geiger was busy. While we still decorated the churches there were no more parties at the Party Chancellery.

Goebbels had declared *den totalen Krieg*, 'the total war.' People, and I mean the Germans themselves, were supposed to work ten hours a day, seven days a week. He decreed the closure of all theaters, cinemas, of all forms of entertainment. Every hour of day and night and every ounce of energy must be devoted to the war effort.

Goebbels to me was perhaps the most fanatical of all Nazis and so dangerous as he controlled the press and radio. As minister of propaganda he used every subterfuge and lie to promote National Socialism, the Nazi creed. His favorite words became '*fanatical, total and radical.*' He was most likely responsible for the many slogans appearing in print, placards - often placed on ruins, and banners across streets. '*Unsere Mauern brechen aber unsere Herzen nicht. Unsere Wunderwaffen werden den Feind vernichten Der Endsieg gehoert uns.*'

Meaning, 'our walls crumble but not our hearts. Our wonder weapons will destroy the enemy. The final victory is ours.' And many others I can't remember. These slogans had little effect on the morale of the public unless your name was Herr Meier, or you were a diehard Nazi. More believed were the rumors his people planted about the wonder weapons. They were too fantastic to be believed, yet I wondered, could the Nazis really lie like that? There must be some truth in all that.

As we all found out after the war there was a tiny bit of truth. The new submarines that could travel as fast under water as on top, a good weapon for 1946. The jet plane, which would have made a great fighter but Hitler in his madness of revenge wanted it to

be a bomber to bomb England. The Mouse, a one hundred ton tank, but besides a test Mouse it was never produced. There were no bridges built to carry that vermin. The V-1 and V-2. New antiaircraft ammunition with proximity fuses. But that was it. Nothing to change the outcome of the war. And the atomic bomb still in its infancy. But you have to give the devil his due. The rumors more than anything else made soldiers infected with the Nazi bug and the SS fight to the very end. And not as historians claim the unconditional surrender demands.

As far as Goebbels's 'total war' proclamation. It worked in Berlin as he was the *Gauleiter* of Berlin and as such had unlimited powers. The other *Gauleiters*, or party chiefs, did as they wished. They were responsible to Hitler for the moral of their people and knew very well that to take all and every type of leisure and entertainment away from the people who worked all week, and were bombed relentlessly, would have a negative impact and lower the morale. So at least in Munich the theaters and cinemas were open, so was the circus and everything else really.

20 April 1944. There were no parades for Hitler's birthday, but flags were flying and the radio was filled with Nazi speeches, Wagnerian adrenaline and soldier songs. The Fuehrer taking congratulations and conducting the war. Since the first of May, German Labor Day was close, many banners and flags were kept flying.

25 April, one o'clock in the morning. The sirens howl. At this time we were still seeking shelter in our basement. Since more than half of the people in our two buildings had left the city we were now always the same faces, most of us tied to the city one way or another. The Stieglers could have left but they were still here. I stayed in the street with Spitzelberger until the flak became too intense and shrapnel sizzling all over the

place. Also we could hear the planes loud and clear and red markers appeared towards the inner city. This was, as reported, the heaviest air raid so far. We had many fires in our area but not explosive bombs close to us, so it was not as scary. Our shelter did not heave and shake, but we could feel the bombs in the distance, and it seemed endless. It was a raid of four hundred bombers. But what made this raid so effective was that a fake attack was first directed against Karlsruhe, drawing off the night fighters, while these bombers came in from the south of France, from the south-west. The bombers had, except for the flak which shot down thirteen British bomber around the city, a free run on Munich. Concentrating over the inner city and the main railroad station they came in waves of 50 to 75 machines in an hour long bombardment. Besides a number of 4,000 lb blockbuster they also dropped 550,000 incendiary stick-bombs.

When we came out the night sky over the city was red with fires all over the place. In our neighborhood a number of houses burned down as did the new Pinakothek. But we, in our area, were spared the heavy destruction caused by explosive bombs. Though enough of those fell to keep people in their shelters while the incendiary bombs burned down the houses over their heads. 70,000 people became homeless. Few flags were still flying for Labor Day. Hitler's house burned down! I don't believe he ever returned to Munich except passing through by train. And with the railroad station destroyed, he couldn't miss that, unless they rerouted his trains so he didn't have to see his handy work.

There was constant talk and writing about the invasion. All kinds of bragging, let them come and our navy will sink their ships, the *Luftwaffe* will decimate them on the beaches and the German army push them back into the sea. Newsreels showed many of

the tremendous fortifications built, the impregnable Atlantic Wall. Rommel inspecting and quoting that the Allies will be defeated on the beaches. Where did I think the Allies will land? Everybody had his ideas. I thought the Allies will land in Spain and then march into France on a broad front. The Pyrenees don't stretch all across the border. Another possibility I thought was to land around Marseille and come up the open Rhone valley.

But then they would know how to do it. They had the air power to just flatten everything along the Atlantic Wall. Meier, my war adversary, thought they would land at Calais. Or rather, as he put it, try to land.

15 May: The OKW reports that German troops have occupied Hungary and Rumania, both part of the Axis. Nobody understood why that happened. Hungarian Regent Horthy had always been a good friend of Hitler. Along with the *Wehrmacht* came the SS and Eichmann. Eichmann would later state at his trial in Jerusalem that he only followed orders. Nobody gave him the order to send at once 62 cattle cars full of Jewish children to Auschwitz. The Wehrmacht desperate for supply in Russia had to divert transportation stock so Eichmann could round up 400,000 Jews from Hungary and ship them to the death camp.

4 June: The allies are in Rome.

6 June 1944: It was sometimes during the morning that Frl. Glasser came to me and smilingly and joyfully told me "they landed in France." To me it was a thrill. Then anxious moments. Did they succeed in landing in France? Breach the Atlantic Wall? I told Meier the news that the Americans had landed in France. No one knew where.

Meier of course believing that they were just attempting to land. Fortress Europe was inviolate. We all listened to the noon news on Frl. Glasser's radio – minus Frau Geiger who wouldn't set foot in her apartment, that is if Frl. Glasser would have let her come in.

The OKW spoke of attempts to land in the Normandy. The 7th army was radically cleaning out small infestations of landed troops inflicting severe casualties, taking many prisoners. The *Luftwaffe* sinking many ships and strafing the beaches. (the *Luftwaffe* managed to send a total of three planes over the beaches that day and didn't sink any ships.) The navy attacking the landing ships and warships, (the navy didn't do much better). Paratroopers who had landed on the Cotentin Peninsula had been wiped out. It didn't look good for the Allies. But then one cannot believe the OKW.

Great excitement at the inn. Herr Stoecher, the innkeeper had a big grin on his face when he asked me if I heard the news. But no discussions. Nobody can express any feelings or show any signs of happiness. Roland, my French friend was there. He didn't know anymore than I did or anyone else. We left together and he asked me if he could come in the evening and listen with me to the BBC. I told him to be at my place a few minutes before nine. Nothing new during the afternoon, the same news bulletin repeated. British and American forces tried to land on several beaches in the Normandy and were repulsed by the combined efforts of the German navy, air force and army. Heavy losses inflicted on the Allies, many ships sunk, their planes shot down. Buchner knew of course but didn't say a thing to me and Meier. With me he knew I was on the 'enemies' side. With Meier he knew there was no rational discussion possible. My mother knew already when I came home. Everybody heard the same thing.

Roland came shortly before nine o'clock. Mom had never met Roland before only knew of him. We went directly into Frau Maurer's place, crouched on the table next to the radio. Whenever I listened, and it was rare that I did because I was always afraid that Herr Maurer might come unexpectedly home, even his wife didn't know where he was or when he would come home, I always returned the dial to the Munich station and the AM band. Now it was short wave to the right frequency for England.

It was nine and there was the booom-booom-booom. We, with our ears glued to the radio.

'Here is the BBC German language program, London calling.' What a thrilling moment. Roland and I smiled at each other knowingly.'

'Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force. Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France.'

Then some details are given. Six thousand ships involved (a little exaggeration as the total were 5,300 ships.) Over a hundred thousand men landed with tanks and necessary equipment. A cordon of guns from battleships to destroyers guard the landing beaches with an umbrella of fire. Allied aircraft by the thousands prevent German reinforcements from reaching the landing areas. The *Luftwaffe* prevented from intruding to the beaches. The German navy impotent to interfere with the landings.

That was it! Even Roland and I understood that this was the invasion. (Hitler did not. Maybe he wasn't listening to BBC London. He still believed, and would do so for several critical days, that the real invasion would come across the channel.) Roland was ecstatic, embraced and kissed me right on my mouth – those emotional Frenchmen. I

was in silent joy – and not because he kissed me of course! Now I could face the bulletins tomorrow and know they are mostly a pack of lies, like with the reports from Russia. Just read where the battles take place and one knows how the Germans were being defeated.

It was a somber bulletin the next morning. British forces had landed near Caen but were prevented from reaching the city. Other forces landed near Bayeux and were confined to the beaches. American landings further west and on the Cotentin were bottled up on the beach and could remain there only by a curtain of fire from warships. The OKW further stated that the situation was well in hand and that except for a few lodgings on the beaches the Atlantic Wall had not been penetrated. American and British forces were prevented from forming up and are dealt with by reserves brought to the landing areas.

And so it went. Promises that the Allied troops would be made short shrift and driven back into the sea proved wrong. The OKW said that only the ring of fire from warships and overwhelming air power kept the isolated pockets from being annihilated.

Whenever the news looked bad for the Allies I took to the radio and was cheered up by the news from the other side. New reinforcements landed. More tanks and guns added to the army on land. Hard fighting with German Panzer divisions brought in from other parts of France. Artificial harbors being built. The Allies were there to stay!

While twirling around on the short wave band I heard on one channel the Lilli Marlene song, *Vor der Kaserne for dem grossen Tor...* I listened to it. Then came the announcer on, 'Soldatensender Calais', the soldier's station from Calais. We bring the latest news from the front.'

What news it was! I couldn't believe it. It spoke of our enemies the British and Americans, like OKW reports. It told of terrible bombings of the German troops with many casualties.

It named the divisions that were decimated by the bombings. It told of successes by the American troops encircling Cherbourg. Of the criminal negligence of the commander General Schlieben who let his troops be slaughtered by American battleship fire and bombing by planes instead of surrendering while he sits comfortable in his deep bunker. Now fifty years later I still don't know anything about that station that told the truth but made it appear as if it was a German soldier's radio. It either was really a German clandestine station operating from somewhere or more likely a ploy used by the British and operating from England. Catching German listener with the Lilli Marlene song and other German favorites or even German soldier songs. Clever blokes, as the English would say. I listened to it along with BBC London occasionally.

To return to Munich. Our second day time attack came on the 9th of June. Surprise that the Allies with their second front established had enough planes to continue bombing Germany – and Munich. The attack was mostly directed at outskirts of the city.

The only interesting item to mention about this raid was that I had delivered a wreath early in the morning to the Westfriedhof, or west-cemetery and decided to take a shortcut along the Oberwiesenfeld. A small canal and street separate the field from the Munich airport. And as I started my drive along the canal I saw numerous barrels, which were just lit by soldiers, making smoke. They tried to fog in the Borstei, the Munich gas works on one end, and as I drove towards our garden, they made plenty of smoke to cover the BMW factory complex at the other end of the huge field. Plenty of

that white smoke got in my eyes and throat, made my eyes burn and water and my throat scratchy. But the wonderful part about that trip was that I came by the big air raid bunker at the end of the field at the Lerchenauerstrasse. I had seen it before, a round tower four stories high with probably thick concrete walls and ceiling. I had never been in it but I guessed that the people were inside on the four floors and not underground. I stopped at the entrance where people just went in as the sirens had given the alarm. A man in SA uniform and the armband of a warden asked me to go in. I had thought that the bunker was for the people in the BMW factory which was right up the street. I asked him if I could go in and he said that it was a public shelter. I told him I had to go back to my work place where we had a dugout. But it was good to know that I could come here, it looked like a safe place.

Just then the heavy antiaircraft batteries along the field began to fire at distant planes. A canon firing makes a lot of noise, each shot going off in a loud explosion, and I could see the shock wave in front of the barrel. I rushed back to the garden, Meier was still working so I joined him, the others were in our dugout. While there was a lot of firing around the city most of the attack was apparently at the fringes of the city, hitting the rail lines. Since the wind came from the north even here in the garden we got fogged in.

Four days later, and almost at the same time a quarter after nine in the morning, air raid alarm. Again the fog of white smoke began to drift over us. Meier and I worked until the flak became heavy and we could hear motors. It was a bright, sunny day and windy which soon dispersed the fog. Meier and I joined Frau Geiger, old Glasser and the neighbors in our dugout. It seemed a safe place down here under the earth with eight feet of dirt over us. It was a bad day for us. The Americans were specifically after the

BMW motor works with their many bombers. Wave after wave of bombers unloaded over northern Munich. They hit the BMW plant and everything else around it too. Underground, even more so than in a cellar, we could feel the detonations far and close. The noise of the explosions indescribable. They came in waves. When we thought the silence would be the end new motors could be heard of approaching planes. The flak starting all over again. Then suddenly all hell broke loose. When fifty bombers release their seven or more high explosive bombs simultaneously, which is called carpet bombing, the numerous detonations happened quickly. All 350-400 bombs hitting in quick succession of less than half a minute. 30 seconds of pure hell. First it is the cascading of bombs coming down sounding like an express train going over us. Hearing and feeling the explosions coming closer, over us and receding almost together. Close hits we do not only hear and feel through the shaking walls and heaving floor but in the dugout the tremendous pressure hit us. At the height of the rain of bombs over us our dugout was lifted up and slammed down again. While the railroad ties held together dirt flew in all directions. The women probably screamed but their cries unheard in the cracks of the explosions. The door had been torn off the hinges and was in pieces. Yet nobody was hurt in our dugout, except for us being very dirty and temporary deaf. When it was finally over and we came out we could see what had caused that tremendous convulsion of our dugout. A bomb, probably a thousand pounder, had exploded outside in the neighbor's vegetable patch. The crater not more than thirty feet from us. Looking at the size and depth of the crater made me believe that our dugout wouldn't have a chance.

Still, it was unlikely to get a direct hit. Many windows in both the big house and the new office building smashed. Smoke billowing up in both directions. To the north Milbertshofen and the BMW complex shrouded in smoke. Surging masses of smoke rose from the city. Occasionally the bulging domes of dark smoke flared incandescent with the fire of burning houses.

It was two hours after the alarm before the all clear sounded, close to lunch. So I told Meier I wanted to go home and check on my house. I took the bicycle and rode down Schleissheimerstrasse. Many houses laying in the street as rubble, some still burning. No fire department this time. Some of the side streets looked even worse. Goerrestrasse towards Josephsplatz all destruction and smoke. The overhead wires from the streetcars down. There wouldn't be any trolleys running for a while. Then I turned into Theresienstrasse and all was well in my block. Mom was fine but she said it had been terrible. I didn't tell her about the crater. So, everything was fine at home and I went back to the garden and had enough time for lunch. Then I had to deliver another wreath to Westfriedhof cemetery.

This time I took the Schwere Reiterstrasse along the Kaserne. Passing by Oberwiesenfeld I saw a lot of craters in the field and one which obviously had hit a dugout. I put my wreath behind a tree and went there. I knew I couldn't help anybody but perhaps if someone was hurt there or buried in dirt I could get help. The bomb had gone into the dugout and exploded inside and tore the soldiers to shreds. The sight of pieces of bodies hanging on the walls was terrible. I knew one thing then, I wouldn't go into my dugout anymore. This raid which hit the north of Munich very hard caused over 300 casualties and made 15,000 people homeless. About 450 bombers were involved.

Now we had a lot of work clearing off the stones and dirt flung out by the bomb and thrown all over our flower beds. And removing all the glass from the broken windows, Buchner had them soon replaced. He having privileged status as a 'war important' business. Frau Geiger busy making her farewells to the departed, some of them victims of the last air raid.

Summer was both a good and bad time for getting food. Vegetable produce was coming in from the farmers and sometimes freely available. Potatoes were a real problem. The new ones, and new potatoes are so delicious, only to be had on special allocation cards which we didn't have. Old potatoes getting pretty bad, many sprouting roots and rotten.

But summer was great. In Munich it might get pretty warm, and I could work without my shirt on. In Germany we didn't have what we call and wear as t-shirts. We had a sort of undershirt which I hadn't had for a long time.

The strawberry patch, the private domain of the Buchner's showed many ripe berries. Ah, get a hungry kid into a forbidden strawberry patch. There I squatted, my eyes peeled towards the front of the garden and the house, looking for Buchner's car to come in or Frau Buchner appearing, or Frau Geiger. I knew she would tell on me. My eyes peeled and my fingers picking and my hungry mouth tasting those delicious berries. I didn't worry about Meier, he would just wag his finger at me – 'no, NO Hugo!' One real big strawberry, in my mouth, I bit down – yeeeach, what was that? I had picked a fat snail. Kept spitting for the next minutes.

I still have an aversion to snails and have never ordered those slimy, creeping gastropod mollusk they serve under the cover name of Escargot.

I learned from Frau Geiger how to make very pretty miniature bouquets. Flowers with short stems and arranged like an umbrella. Then tied with a pretty ribbon and taken to Frau Brandner for a sandwich or some stamps. Also roses she loved, half opened, not yet in full bloom. Those I would carry out stuffed inside my shirt. Ever carry roses under your shirt? The thorns get mighty uncomfortable. A bouquet too large to hide under my shirt I would stash at the rear fence under a bush and then get it from the outside. We had staggered wooden fences so I could reach through and hopefully find the right bush.

Scrounging food still remains ones main occupation besides working, and in the evening scratching off another 'ungueltig' from a food stamp, that helped of course. But that was not an unlimited supply either. Just what the Germans received on meat and dairy product rations and then not every stamp a successful operation. One in three looked legitimate enough to use.

Sport events were still in full swing in the summer of 1944 despite Goebbels proclaiming the total war and forbidding all entertainment and public sport events. There was no soccer in summer but there were other events I went to. Bicycle races in an outdoor arena. Men's and woman's field hockey I liked to watch. Field handball outdoors at the Dante Stadium where they also had bicycle races. I don't remember ever going swimming during the war though I am certain that the pools were open. And of course to the movies. All, just to pass time instead of sitting at home, that we did in the evening. Frau Spitzelberger was still coming down nightly but the poor woman was sick with diabetes and looking wretched. She had been ones an obese woman, fat I would say. Now her body was just hanging there under her too large dresses. And she neither

had the strength or mood to do much cooking. So the Sunday feasts of roast and dumplings were over. The Matschilles were still around, both in their late sixties using their time like most other people, shopping for food here and there. In our house pretty much the same people. Many if not most of the apartments now empty. While I don't know any statistics, I believe that of Munich's population of 800,000 people in pre-war times the population was reduced by now to half that many or even less.

The war news was going 'our' way.

On June 13th, Germany launched its vaunted wonder weapon, the V-1 flying bomb against London. The retribution on German cities would now be avenged. What I heard people say was that the avenging did little good, gave little comfort when you are yourself on the receiving end of merciless bombing. Listening to the BBC it was not such a great wonder weapon at all, most of the flying bombs never reached London. The British government had no need to evacuate the people of London.

30 June: Cherbourg fell to the enemy. OKW reports the soldiers fought to the last bullet. Radio London tells a different story. Already on the 26th of June, Gen. Schlieben together with Admiral Hennecke and 1,000 men surrendered, in accordance with Rommel's dictum, 'the Fuehrer orders the men to fight to the last bullet,' Schlieben had given his outlying forts a free hand to fight on or surrender. Some fanatical officers made their men fight but by the end of June it was all over. The first big French city was in American hands.

6 July: Russian forces enter Poland.

11 July: Tuesday just before lunch time an air raid alarm. I had seen the smoke pots come on twenty minutes before. That didn't mean necessarily that the planes were

coming, but this time they came. And since it was lunch time I told Meier I would run to the big round bunker by Oberwiesenfel, I had it with the dugout. A clear sunny day. I walked leisurely, I had at least fifteen minutes. When I got to the Lerchenauerstrasse the flak started to shoot from Oberwiesenfeld. I started to run, a girl with me. Then we heard the planes, the fog prevented me from seeing them but they seemed overhead and shrapnel was whizzing down like rain. You don't want to get hit on the head by one of those things, usually finger long jagged metal fragments, still hot. We made it to the bunker.

The door was still open and the brown uniformed warden waved us in then closed the steel door. The girl could go into the middle where on each of the four floors was a sort of large chamber with benches. Women and children into the rooms and the men along the steps leading up in a circular staircase.

This round bunker had thick walls and ceiling so unless it got hit by a blockbuster it seemed very safe. Or at least that is what I was told.

Shortly after we came in the tell-tale flickering of the lights and since I was leaning against the rounded wall I could feel the vibrations of explosion. But nothing like in our basement or the dugout. No sound of the rushing of bombs, no noise of explosions.

For two hours we sat in there while all hell broke loose outside.

When I came out at 2:30, gray and black smoke all over the city. Fires nearby in the BMW plant. Smoke in every direction except Oberwiesenfeld but certainly beyond it and towards my area. This, as reported in the Munich Archives, was our first 1000 bomber raid. Dropped on the city were over 3000 heavy bombs and as many lighter

ones. Also 4800 liquid incendiary bombs, 18,000 phosphor incendiaries and 320,000 stick-bombs.

Back at the garden Buchner came and let us go home. Even told us that if we had damage not to come to work the next day. He drove Meier home as no trolleys were moving.

I walked home. A disaster area along the Schleissheimerstrasse. The side streets looking devastated and many houses burning. Our Theresienstrasse not much better but our house stood. Mom was all right. She had gone with Frau Matschilles to the public shelter in the Loewenbrau brewery, her new home. After an air raid there is an eerie silence. Or maybe it just appeared to me so. No flak, not bombs exploding, no streetcars or any traffic. Burning houses don't make much noise except when they fall together. The closest bomb hit to our house was across the street in the Augustenstrasse where the corner house with the Tempo department store had been demolished. Mom had left our windows open so they were in one piece. Not so other windows. Those of the people who had left Munich and kept their windows shut, no more windows, not even the frames left. I don't know who was all in our cellar during the air raid. Spitzelberger at work, his wife had managed to go down there. Some of the other women, all the men at work, the innkeeper probably the only man to comfort the women. A bomb had hit in the street a little ways away from us. That had done the damage to our windows. Scar marks on the walls of our house but that was it. No electricity, gas or water.

Trying to remember it all I can't. The reason is that the next day, Wednesday the 12th of July, the 1000 bombers came back and again went for the northern part of Munich, that is US! I had stayed home and helped Spitzelberger to put plywood boards over the

busted windows of Frau Maurer's place and in some of the other apartments of people who had asked him to take care of their places and had given him the keys. In the morning a police car came around with a loudspeaker and announced that since the siren's didn't work the air raid alarm, if there was one, it would be made known by the flak firing.

Before noon Frau Grissmeier came by and told us that the *Ortsgruppe* had a place in the nearby Gabelsbergerstrasse where they gave out hot food. My mother thought if she went she wouldn't get anything as they knew her. But they didn't know me, so I went with a pot and there was an army mess wagon giving out thick noodle soup. Of course there were a few of the Brownshirts around to get credit for the feeding. I told the soldier who ladled the soup out that my mother couldn't come as she was hurt. So he gave me a second generous helping. There also was a water wagon, the type they used in summer to water down the streets and it gave out clean water. I rushed home with my pot full of noodles with soup – and chicken, it had to be late in the war that I got chicken to eat. We ate it with delight and it was good. Then I went with a couple buckets to get water. Without gas and electricity one can do but water one needs. Shortly after noon we heard the booming of the flak. Since no one had a battery powered radio we didn't know what was going on. They wouldn't come again a day later? Then when we heard the motors of planes we knew it was again a raid and went down into our basement shelter – and it was hell. A lot of bombing done in our immediate neighborhood. Theresienstrasse from the Augustenstrasse on towards the Pinakothek in shambles. I walked along a ways to get out of the smoke of burning

houses to the Einhuberstrasse and a woman told me that there were some people buried in the cellar.

There were steps leading down into the cellar between the rubble, I went down to see if I could help. What a terrible sight. The cellar caved in and just by the stairs two heads sticking out from the rubble. Two men, white as chalk in their faces but buried in rubble up to their necks. One stared with his eyes open, alive. A fire smoldering nearby. I had nothing to dig with so I rushed up and found some soldiers and told them about these men. I knew one thing, both a dugout and a cellar were not safe and I would avoid either one if I had a chance.

The next day Thursday, I went to work, using my own bicycle. No streetcars running in our part of the city with most of the overhead wiring down, some of the tracks torn apart by craters in the streets. In fact, there would be no more streetcars running in our neighborhood until the war was over. Instead they built a narrow track railroad that ran from the area where I worked passed my house. I could go to work on a train. I didn't use it often as it only ran infrequently or not at all. The track was laid to help get rid of the rubble and like in other parts of the city it was mostly cleared by British prisoner of war.

Shortly after nine the flak fired. Here in the garden we could hear it better with the guns at Oberwiesenfeld fairly close to us. I told Meier I was going for the bunker. He, as an old soldier, preferred the dugout, but then he hadn't seen what I had. At the bunker I had a strange experience which I would like to relate. And this morning no smoke pots working. Either they ran out of oil to make the smoke with or they realized that by

fogging in the BMW complex and the fog drifting over the northern part of the city they invited the bombers to carpet bomb all areas.

I leaned my bicycle against a tree by the bunker and locked it up. And then the warden told me to lay the bicycle down as it would make less of a target when a bomb fell nearby. I thought that was silly, why would a bomb hit near my bicycle. But I did as he told me just to comply and make him happy. I went into the round tower and stood on the stairwell leaning against the wall, I had been here two days ago and was familiar with the place, men on top or alongside the staircase. At a later visit I would find out what was on top. Just under the thick concrete ceiling over the top floor was a room with large hand pumps one had to turn, like big wheels, to bring in fresh air.

I must have been on the second floor staircase leaning against the wall, the lights flickering and I felt the vibrations of explosions. They were busy again, the third day in a row. Then, I seemed to hear the detonations, a string of heavy bombs falling outside somewhere. It all happened so fast, a few seconds, and the wall knocked against me and flung me forward almost into the room with the women. That explosion I heard, and also stuff smashing against the wall. It felt like being hit by a car, though I have never been hit by one. For a short while everything quiet, then the vibrations and flickering lights of another wave bombing. I spent two hours in the bunker.

When I came out, seven large craters in a row. One on each side of the bunker. One crater close to the tree where I had laid my bicycle behind. The tree a stump, my bike buried in dirt. When I dug it out I found that only a few spokes on the wheels had been torn out.

Our house still stood, little else. Mom had gone to the brewery shelter, she was safe.

This was the third 1,000 bomber air raid in as many days. I don't believe that any other city in Germany endured that. I had thought that there were three cities in Germany who would get it someday. Berlin, the capital of Nazi Germany. Nuremberg, Julius Streicher's hate capital, the City of the Party Rallies. And Munich, the *Hauptstadt der Bewegung*, the capital of Hitler's Movement.

The Allies could take Munich off their list of worthwhile targets. Munich was no more. I guess that 90 percent of northern Munich; Milbertshofen, Schwabing, Maxvorstadt, Neuhausen and the center of the city were flattened in these and other raids in July. There were two more raids on Munich during July with 800 planes each. Whenever they bomb northern Munich now there is only a one in ten chance that they hit something that is still standing. I hoped that my 'friends' would move somewhere else now. Hit the areas where most of the Nazis live, in the south of Munich and Bogenhausen. Bogenhausen was a real Nazi nest, perhaps the most elegant neighborhood of Munich with many pretty villas. I had heard that the Gestapo, after being burned out in the city, had made their new headquarters in the Moehlstrasse in Bogenhausen.

The statistics for July 1944. 2,000 fatalities. 200,000 homeless; this out of a population of perhaps 400,000 who were still living in Munich in summer of 1944. For those still living in Munich, often in miserable conditions and for long periods without water, electricity, gas and transportation, they can raise their hands to their God Adolf and thank him for what he has brought unto Munich.

For the rest of my story I shall not detail any more air raids until I get to the last three heavy ones, in November, December and the one in January 1945 which did us in. For those three raids I kept notes and do not need to recall them from memory.

I will mention a few strange incidents of rather unusual nature from the other raids.

Besides, without a diary, which I lost in the last air raid, I cannot remember the raids in detail. Like these three in July were I had lost all track of what happened when and where. After July our part of the city was in ruins. In our large city block with maybe forty houses facing the streets and many more in the back, there were no more than 8 left standing. None in the Augustenstrasse. A couple in the Hesstrasse, three in the Schwindstrasse and in our Theresienstrasse there were three houses relatively livable, ours and the houses to either side of us. There is one big difference in the bombing methods of the British at night and the Americans during the day. The British use mostly incendiary devices, like these magnesium bomblets they drop by the hundred of thousands. And in between those, air-mines or block-busters, to keep everyone in the shelters while the city burns.

The Americans mean business. Most of their bombs are 500 and 1000 lb. explosive bombs. Utter and immediate destruction.

In the meantime on the war front. 20 July, attempt on Hitler's life failed.

24 July: The Wehrmacht is ordered to replace the military salute with the Nazi 'Heil Hitler' greeting and arm raised.

26 July: Goebbels makes a radio announcement: *'never again will the Almighty reveal Himself to us as He has just done in saving the Fuehrer.'* Goebbels the atheist who makes fun of any religion is invoking the Almighty.

5 August: American forces break out of Avranches and flood across France. The Russians are in Estonia and Latvia. The ring is closing. It is now worth fighting for survival.

It isn't all war and destruction I can report from those air raids. It was in early September and all of us went out into the forest to get evergreens, Buchner, Meier and I. There was an air warning as we could hear the sirens far away, probably just a few fast bombers. Then I heard a plane overhead and a whistling sound that grew louder. Buchner turned to Meier and asked him "can you hear it?" Meier, who is a little hard of hearing cupped his ear, then he smiled, "yes, that is an *Amsel*, a black bird. They whistle *wunderbar*." Then the bomb hit.

For once Buchner and I shared a good laugh together.

Bad news from Frau Grissmeier, Willi is missing in Russia. She confided to me because she knew how close we were, I was truly sorry. Missing in action usually meant death. Especially with the German army constantly in retreat and leaving their wounded behind. I tried to give her hope that missing could also mean being captured, that he was just a soldier and not SS. It was only after the war and through the Red Cross that she found out that Willi was indeed in captivity. And he would return home some day.

And I did something for the war effort. I visited Meier one Sunday to get potatoes. There were a group of British prisoner of war working a few houses away clearing rubble. I thought I would practice my school English a little and said to one, pointing at the ruin 'Hitler war'. He looked at me in surprise, I don't know because of my English or that I rightfully blamed Hitler, but we talked. Between his meager German and my just as poor English we got along fine. He talked to his friends and they all contributed

and I wound up with a can of English cigarettes and several chocolate bars. Something for my mother's upcoming birthday. He (I just don't remember his name) and his friends were tickled to find a German boy cussing out Hitler. I knew a few cusswords, they are easier to learn and remember than regular English. The German guard came over and told me it was forbidden to speak to the prisoners, but when I told him I was just practicing my school English he let me. Told me to go around the corner where nobody saw me. I became friends with my English. He asked me if I couldn't get some bread and sausage.

So I worked overtime on my '*unguelzig*' stamps. Bought a stick of salami and a loaf of bread and got more cigarettes and chocolate in return.

When my mom's birthday came on the 30th, I had a half dozen chocolate bars – which we shared of course. The cigarettes, I had two cans of fifty each, mom would use for bartering.

Our next major air raid came on the fourth of October. It was mainly directed downtown and around the rail road station. It was during the day and I knew that my mother was now always going to the public shelter in the Loewenbrau brewery. Herr Matschilles had shown me the public bunker near us in the Arcisstrasse.

This was my new home during an air raid at night. Mom would leave as soon as someone told her the cuckoo bird was calling, or when the siren came on. I would stick with Spitzelberger and listening to the reports of the Laibach station. If it said that enemy formations were approaching and as close as forty miles I would get on my bike and rush over to the bunker. During the day I would be at my favorite bunker, the round 'temple of sanctuary tower' by Oberwiesenfeld.

Strangely, my mother never went to the bunker in the Arcisstrasse and I never went to her shelter in the brewery. The Loewenbrau brewery, restaurant and associated buildings were burned down by then but the shelter was intact.

One day in October when I came home from work mom had a real surprise. The mailman had come, mom told me, and she had been afraid it was something from the Gestapo. We didn't have mailboxes and the mailman delivered to the door, we hadn't had any mail all through the year. It was from my sister Herta. The Red Cross card we had sent in spring of 1942, the two part affair where she wrote on the other side, had come back. Herta had received it in 1942, and answered right away. And then the card had been underway for two years before it came back to us. I saved the card along with other interesting souvenirs, diaries I kept on and off, interesting headlines from newspapers, all burned in the air raid in January. I don't remember a word of what my sister wrote in reply or if she wrote in German or English. At least Herta knew that in spring of 1942 we were well and alive.

On Sunday, the 29th of October, just as we wanted to sit down to eat, Salo was with us, the sirens went off. Mom left for her shelter, I stayed with Salo and Spitzelberger as only light formations were reported. When the flak was shooting overhead and we could hear the planes we went into our cellar. It was a relatively light raid as only 150 bombers flew over the city and unloaded. It is where they hit that matters, and when our shelter shook and it felt and sounded like we got hit, we knew it had to be very close. And it was, a string of bombs fell along Augustenstrasse and one hit the bank across from us. The house where I always took the streetcar from going to school and where the two news bulletins were posted daily. People said that the residents of that house were

buried under the burning ruin as they went into the bank vault. They came with a power shovel to dig them out. A couple days later they found them, all dead in the vault.

In reading through the book of Richard Bauer, 'Air Raid Alarm' who detailed each air raid warning, alarm and all air raids over Munich with information and pictures he received from the Munich Archives, I find that the American bombing of Munich was directed as much against the war industry, military, transportation network in and around Munich as against the city itself. It wasn't just terror raiding on their part. At night the British just went for the city. Either way, they were fighting my enemies.

A interesting experience I had during the raid on Wednesday November 22nd. I was working, and just when I sat down for lunch at Stoecher's inn the alarm sounded. His radio came on and reported the formations of bombers coming from the north. I finished my lunch, then I raced off running to the bunker at Oberwiesenfeld, flak already firing. Just where the Lerchenauerstrasse splits off towards the bunker I saw in a side street a group of people just standing there and looking up. I thought, as nonchalant as they acted, they must have a safe place to shelter in. Besides I heard the bombers fairly close by then. So I ran over to them and looked up in the sky as they did. And there they came from the north. Like silver birds in the sky, maybe fifty or more planes, no more than 6 or 7000 feet high. Each four motored plane clearly outlined against the blue sky. I had seen planes before, darting in and out of clouds or at night caught in searchlights, but this was awesome.

The smoke pots no longer in operation, and for whatever reason the flak stopped firing at our side of Oberwiesenfeld. I can guess why, at this stage of the war, most of the 88 mm cannons were taken away to Russia to be used against tanks. The few flak, as I had

seen myself, were manned with HJ boys and girls. With a big flight of bombers coming right at them they were probably heading for the dugouts.

When I joined the group of men I had also spotted their 'hiding' place. A manhole cover had been removed and when I looked down all I saw was deep darkness. The motors droning loud and the bomber close. *Runter, los!* 'down, lets go' somebody yelled and we scrambled down on the rungs fastened to one side. Down and down it went in the darkness towards a shimmering light. At least thirty feet I would guess, ten meters. Then I was in a large sewer tunnel. A walk on our side, water flowing in the middle. People had both lanterns and flashlights. Here were quite a number of people in the tunnel. Most to the right so I went to the left to the end of the line of people. I thought this was about the safest place anyone could find. If a big bomb hit on top it would never penetrate thirty feet of dirt. Even when the rumbling of bombing came and we could feel it more than hear it I felt secure. I had seen few women and no children. But then it was some climb coming down. Suddenly – a bluish flash of light to the right, a deafening explosion and then a blast of hot air that bowled over some people and threw a few into the sewer. Then all quite. People talked and no one could hear. That was an experience I didn't want to repeat, I returned to my tower bunker. But once on my way to it, and seeing again a group of men standing by the man-hole, I asked them what had happened on that Wednesday noon. Apparently this sewer line was a major artery that ran from Nymphenburg to the plant near the Isar river. It flowed under the Oberwsiesenfeld, and in one area of the huge field, there was a low point and there a bomb had penetrated to the sewer and exploded. The noise and pressure of the detonation could only go in either direction. We got one half of it. This was a freak

bomb hit, would never happen again, or? I felt safer in the upstairs of the bunker than the downstairs of the sewer.

In the meantime. 15 August: Allied forces land in the south of France.

23 August: Paris liberated.

31 August: Russians in Bucharest.

September 1944: Many people wonder why the war did not end in 1944. The Allied armies were poised to invade Germany from Holland to the Swiss border. Coming up north from Italy. The German army leaving Greece and the Balkans. The Russians 'liberating' the Baltic nations, their ever more powerful forces in Poland poised to invade Germany from the east. Former Axis partners of Germany switching sides as Italy had done in 1943. Bulgaria declares war on Germany in September followed later by Hungary.

The strength of the German armed forces on the 1st of September 1944, were still formidable: 10,163,303 men under arms!

This was of course a powerful force and if Hitler had withdrawn his *Wehrmacht* into *Festung* Germany he could have prolonged the war. However, Hitler had a *Groessenwahn*, a magalomaniac, and scattered his forces from the south of Greece to the north of Norway, trying desperately to hold on to every foot of conquered territory.

8 September: 'The first V2s fall on London, doing as much damage as a British blockbuster. For every V2 hitting London fifty blockbusters fall on German cities.

Hitler doesn't care if German cities suffer terribly, he wants vengeance.

21 October: American troops take the first German city, *Festung* 'fortress' Aachen.

The city was reduced to rubble and few German soldiers were found alive as the city was pulverized by bombs and artillery. It became the practice for Hitler to designate a city as a Festung, a fortress to be defended to the last man. Fanatical Wehrmacht officers did just that with Aachen. They died along with their men and the city.

2 October: Goebbels makes a speech: *'hell would yawn before us if we laid down our arms and surrendered to the mercy of our enemies. Germany is firmly determined to hold out to a successful finish.'*

16 December: Hitler's last military blunder. The Wehrmacht attacked in the Ardennes throwing away its last formidable reserves of men and equipment in a futile attempt to stave off the defeat of Germany.

By that date I had no longer a radio to listen to BBC London. Frau Maurer's radio in pieces after the air raid on 27 November.

The mood of the people in Munich by the end of 1944 was sour. And the slogans put up in ruins or in banners across streets made people either laugh or cry, or just stare in unbelief and silence. The latest one I saw proclaimed *Glaube an den Fuehrer und Endsieg*, 'believe in the Fuehrer and final victory.' You had to be a Georg Meier or a Nazi war criminal to believe in that. One was too naive to know any better and the other only saw a rope as his future.

I remember one night, we had been to the bunker but no air raid took place. On the way back with a lot of people waking in the middle of the Theresienstrasse, the only place free of rubble, Matschilles started to curse the Nazis, the things he would do to them once the war was over. He shouted it loud enough that everybody heard him. Nobody said anything and no one turned him in. That in contrast to an incident I observed in

1942. A German soldier in uniform came out drunk from an inn and cursed the Nazis, he spoke in an Austrian dialect. A car drove up with Gestapo agents who hustled him into the car. Knowing the Nazis, his wife or relatives would receive an urn in short order, with a letter of condolence that their beloved soldier had died of pneumonia. Now at the end of 1944 there were few informers and denouncers left. Their own necks in danger.

It was late fall and we had again prepared for winter. Very little had changed in our way of doing things and yet there were dramatic changes. Frau Geiger still made her wreath and garlands for the Advent and Christmas. But few of the wreath were meant for victims from the bombing, they were all put in mass graves at the North or East Cemeteries. There were no plastic flowers or bows as the business in town was no more.

Little cards with messages were now attached and for decorations what was left of artificial flowers, the discards from earlier times. All the windows in the big house and the office had been replaced as were the hot boxes for seedlings. No more close bomb hits since the one landed in the neighbor's vegetable patch. All trees were in the city nursery and we would not need them anymore, or rarely, as there was no longer any church left undamaged that still needed decorating their altars. I still ran errands for both Buchners.

But on cold and snowy days Meier and I would spend hours in the warmth of our cubicle and smoke our pipes - from Meier's private blend. He could come again by streetcar as the lines he used were back in operation, but not my route.

Meier was a good man, he would never hurt a fly. Nor was he stupid, he was just naïve and honest and could not believe that his own government would lie. They were wrong a few times as he well admitted, but there were these wonder weapons to come and force the English to make peace.

I had made a new friend. The innkeeper's son Josef came home from the eastern front, discharged by the army as he was wounded and had lost his arm. We would often sit together at lunch, I eating my *Stammgericht* and he having a beer and talk. He was bitter against the Nazis, he blamed them for the war and he having become an invalid. There were no more soccer games or other sports were people could watch, not since the Americans came during the day. Movies were still shown in the cinemas that were left. None in our neighborhood, our *Marmor Palast* just around the corner in the Augustenstrasse was gone with the Augustenstrasse itself. We really lived in a dead zone.

Ruins and shells of houses and isolated here and there a few damaged houses, like our three. Salo came sometimes in the evening to warm up and Sundays to join us for lunch. He had no more news from our Jewish community, there just wasn't any community left. Herr Penzias also came by sometimes, he worked with Salo in the same place and lived only a street away in the Luisenstrasse. His house also standing alone and damaged. There was no more news from or about Jews, no deportations in 1944, few of us left. We all knew that we were living on borrowed time.

The Nazis in their last convulsions would certainly get us few Jews left in Munich. Even though we had realized by then that the hundred or so Jews left in Munich were the 'privileged' ones. Mixed marriages and their off-springs, the Mischlinge. The

Jewish partner of a mixed marriage was considered fully Jewish of course and so were the Jewish raised children. We all had to wear the yellow star and received our minimal ration cards. Herr Penzias didn't have to wear a star as his son was Christian.

Mischlinge baptized Christian were treated different. Once they had been drafted into the *Wehrmacht*, then Hitler kicked them out and now there were in labor camps.

Salo and I never wore the star anymore. What worried me was that the Gestapo didn't bother us anymore, I just didn't trust them.

Just because their headquarters had burned down didn't mean that they didn't carry on their deadly games from somewhere else. What frightened me more than any air raid was the knowledge that the Gestapo could come by at my workplace or in the evening at our apartment and just pick me up. There was no more *Gemeinde* to send letters, they could come for me any time. So, I welcomed the air raids if only to keep the Nazis and Gestapo busy looking for new quarters, some of the bombs must hit the right targets. As it was, my expectations were proven right when in February of 1945, they deported all Jewish raised Mischlinge. By then I was gone, in hiding and no longer available to the Gestapo.

My mother had found a new source for hamstern. This word should really be familiar to English speaking people and not just Germans, 'hamster' in both languages is the little rodent that gathers in or hoards grain for the winter. Mom learned of a family with many children in St. Ottilien. She could take a bus there and then walk three hours to their isolated farm. They needed things for their children of which one was retarded and the family in fear that they would come and take the child away. Mom told me that the

farm woman showed her the big hatchet by the door she would use to fight them off if they came for her child.

Mom still had things from me when I was little and she got other children's clothing from neighbors. Or she unraveled something and used the wool to knit. Also the two cans of English cigarettes she bartered for. When mom came home from her excursions she was really finished, tired out, especially in winter tramping through deep snow. But we ate again, something else besides potatoes and pickled cabbage, sauerkraut – which my mother still hadn't learned to cook right. Amazingly the store where we had to buy our food still stood. It was in the Augustenstrasse by the Dachauerstrasse and there were few of the houses still standing, the store in one of them, and so was the library nearby. Poor Frau Spitzelberger, she was hardly able to get out of bed and could not longer come down in the evening and sit with us. Mom visited her often. But worst of all, she could not even get up during an air raid and experienced a number of them laying in her bed which must have been pure hell. It was about this time that Herr Spitzelberger finally managed to get her to a hospital outside of Munich where she died shortly afterwards. Many good people in this world, Jews and Gentiles alike, had to go through this Nazi caused 'hell-on-earth' for no other reason than the meanness of a group of rotten people and their like-spirited followers.

When I decided to write this book I went through a box of saved mementos and keepsakes from the Second World War. I found notes I had written after the last three large air raids, the last one in January of 1945. That one I wrote up while in hiding. How I saved these notes? Most likely I had them in my so called emergency valise.

A small suitcase mom and I had set aside for each of us with a few underwear, socks, sweater, gloves and such stuff to grab and run if the time came. Meaning to run from the Gestapo, not the planes. Mom had in hers also a few jewelry pieces, a gold pocket watch.

Kind of emergency funds. A few other valuables we had with Frau Maurer. And that included a genuine yellow Jew-Star. I thought I save it as a souvenir – if ever the time came for me to look at souvenirs and keepsakes, also a few pictures from our family. So here then are the notes from the heavy air raids in November and December of 1944. Since they have different elements and had for me new surprises I include them in this chapter of Fire and Brimstone.

Monday, November 27. Half past four in the morning.

Alarm! The siren jarred us out of sleep. Quick dressing was an art. So late at night or early in the morning? Never had an air raid at that time. I ran upstairs to the Reiters who had their radio going. It reported a formation of fast bombers coming towards our city. These must be the Mosquitoes, the fast British bombers that could appear over the city at any time even without warning. I told mom and she thought they would be here soon and we might as well just go into our shelter. A few fast bombers weren't much to worry about. The radio then reported a formation of bombers 40 miles away. Now they were bombers, but too late for mom to make it to the Loewenbrau shelter. This was unusual, we didn't have a heavy night raid on Munich since last April. It had been the

American's turn to give us hell. Mom went downstairs into our shelter, I stood with Spitzelberger and Herr Sepp, the innkeeper in the street, Sepp was here already. In a few minutes time we heard the flak booming. Then a few planes over us and there came the Christmas trees lighting up – us! And some red flares too.

We went into our shelter, surprisingly everybody who still lived in the house was there, or almost everyone. Frau Stiegler, I didn't see her girls, Frau Reiter and her son Josef. Frau Grissmeier, now alone as her husband had been drafted. Spitzelberger, his son still at nightshift, the innkeeper, mom and I. And from the back building the Schoenhofers and their niece Resi, old Frau Obermeier, and that was it. Spitzelberger had closed the steel door, which was an ominous gesture. Then pounding on the door and there were the two Stiegler girls Marie and Liesel. The door could be opened from both sides but only our shelter had a light, none in the cellar hall. The two always late, their mother can't get them out of bed until the shooting starts. They said they could hear the planes. The door was closed and fastened again. The light started to flicker and we could feel the first bombs hit, not too far away. Then a continuous vibration of the floor and shaking of the walls. Even though that our shelter was almost soundproof we could hear the rushing sounds of a carpet of bombs coming down and then the continues, rapid, earth shaking explosions. Those further away sounded like thunder booming, those close cracked like lightning nearby. One string of bombs must have landed very close to us. Boom...BOOOOM....BOOOOM...CRASH...CRASH...BOOOM...boom...it all happened so quickly. Everything shook like crazy and then it was past and our shelter still in once piece. The two closest hits made the walls convulse and the floor jar our feet, the detonations so close and loud. Was our house still standing above us? Then an

eerie silence. Now I could even hear the whistling sound of a few single bombs at times and sometimes no explosion, a dud or time delayed device.

Frau Reiter praying, Frau Stiegler screaming during the worst of it, her girls crying, Herr Reiter's knees shaking uncontrolled, Frau Schoenhofer hiding in the arms of her husband. Everyone acts differently when scared to death. Mom says I looked outwardly calm but white in the face. Inside of me my stomach in knots and my heart pounding. My calmness must be that I am scared stiff.

Amazingly, even with our shelter closed in by walls and a heavy steel door we can feel the pressure of nearby hits. Maybe it comes through the large hole at the end of the shelter leading into the next house. When things began to settle down and we thought it was over there was a sudden jolt, our whole shelter seemed to lift up, shake, a terrible pressure wave pushed everyone against walls. I saw the steel door bulge; then nothing but a cloud of dust. I thought for certain that this time we got hit. Yet there was no near sound of an explosion, just this momentary terrible upheaval of our whole shelter.

Later we found out that a blockbuster had landed in the Hesstrasse, about a block and a half away from our house and had demolished a whole city block.

It was the worst attack I had ever experienced in our house. I hate those basement shelters as you get buried if not killed. I had seen what happens when you get buried alive. Then finally it was over, when it got light outside the all clear sounded, from far away as we were again without electricity.

Fires, smoke. The string of bombs had landed right in line with our street. Our three houses still stood though the cornerhouse which had one part in the Theresienstrasse and another around in the Augustenstrasse had heavy damage from a bomb that landed

in the street. The house to the other side from us was burning in the attic. And lo and behold, a fire engine came with a water tanker and put it out, a rarity and never to be seen again. If fire engines came it was always now to put our fires in official buildings, party edifices. Besides, any city fire department is overwhelmed when whole streets are on fire. And strangely, this neighbor house that was saved miraculously by the fire department would be the only house in our city block standing pretty much undamaged by the end of the war. In our apartment, even though the windows had been open, all glass was gone, our door demolished. Windows that had been closed in other apartments were gone, glass, frames all disappeared.

I didn't go to work that day but worked with Spitzelberger to repair our door and he gave me corrugated cardboard sheets to put over our three windows. I worked with him on the roof moving unbroken shingles from one side to our side. Frau Stiegler said she was leaving the same day with her girls so there was no one living any more on that side of the house. When it rained now, on the left side of our house the water would go right through the missing roof, through the attic and drip-drop right down the floors.

Salo had come in the afternoon to help us, so did Herr Reiter and the innkeeper. And by evening we had our side of the roof covered again.

One more bad experience I had at noon. I just sat down with a plate of soup, lots of light coming in from the empty window frames and missing door, when there was a terrific explosion nearby. The whole house shook violently and parts of the plaster from the ceiling fell down over me, on the table and busted my soup plate. Dirt and debris hit our backside of the house. A delayed fuse bomb had blown up in the back yard of our

adjacent house. Luckily we hadn't started on the roof yet, probably we had been blown off it. In the evening another late exploding bombs but further away.

So much from my notes which I wrote down within a day or two after the raid.

I think there was no need for delayed fuse bombs, they were directed at the people. Unless it was again done in retribution for similar delayed action bombs dropped first by the Germans over English cities. Terror begets terror. This November raid was performed by about 500 British bombers. 180 fatalities and 20,000 homeless. The police and party officials knew who had left and would put the bombed-out people into apartments that were empty.

We had all become handyman. It gets cold in Munich late November so I jury rigged curtains made of blankets to keep the cold out, cardboard alone didn't do it. The door couldn't be locked anymore but we were glad just to have a door. For light, a candle. Frau Stiegler left us her supply of coals and potatoes, so we really heated up the old iron stove until the plates glowed on top. Spitzelberger had also put cardboard on Frau Maurer's windows and with boards closed her entrance door. I couldn't go into her apartment and listened to BBC London as her radio was in pieces.

A few days after the raid electricity came back on. That was a big help with windows permanently barricaded, and we could read again. And what a joy when Spitzelberger gave me a squarefoot of a plastic sheet, I worked it into the cardboard window and we had day light, or a little bit anyhow. One made do even if it was primitive.

My mother joined Frau Matschilles now every evening to stay over night in the Loewenbrau shelter. They took their blankets and pillows along and slept on the

benches with many other women and men too. I didn't think at that time that any children were left in Munich. But they were as I found out when we went to the Circus in December.

During the day I was back at work. Buchner had become very accommodating with my being absent for a few days after air raids, he saw the damage caused in our neighborhood. In fact he couldn't even drive passed our house any more with craters and rubble blocking our street and immediate neighborhood. Over in the Hesstrasse where the blockbuster landed everything was flattened. Most city blocks from a distance looked damaged, some houses in the streets, others standing up as a shell. But in the Hesstrasse, for a large circle around, there was no stone on top of another. It looked like these many houses had never been there.

Now we had not even few churches left to decorate for Advent and Christmas. The business for wreath was also diminished, people just didn't care anymore. Not that many people died in Munich, many of the older folks had moved out. Younger people don't die so much of normal illnesses and those that were killed in air raids were put into a mass graves and we supplied a number of wreaths, and even got bows printed somewhere else.

Also Buchner had artificial flowers shipped in from Rosenheim and Augsburg.

For the mass graves Frau Geiger made large wreaths

One always from the mayor of Munich, words of condolence. The one dedicated by the *Gauleiter*, now we had a Paul Gieseler as party chief of Munich. His wreath had the old garbage of 'They Died for the Fuehrer and Vaterland.'

With less work to do Meier and I enjoyed our warm office and puffed our pipes with his “Meier Brand” tobacco. I was then fifteen years old enjoying a pipe and still enjoy a good pipe and tobacco 60 years later. Of course never in the house unless I want to start the Second world War all over again, my wife Isabella is from Russia.

This section of Munich where our nursery was had not been damaged so heavily, which is amazing being in close proximity to the BMW works. This was great of course as Stoecher’s inn and restaurant was still standing. I counted on eating there every day for my main meal, poor fare as it was now.

The bombing raid in November which hit many parts of the city, and heaviest again in the north, was a real waste of effort in that in the north most bombs hit ruins.

When Meier and I sat in our cozy office and puffed our pipes we talked a lot about the bombing and the war. Meier understood very well why Munich was bombed to bits. The Luftwaffe had done it to England in the early fourties and now it was our turn. But he still believed in the radio and Goebbel’s propaganda about the wonder-weapons to come and win the war for Germany.

In our house, when we talked to the few neighbors left, nobody had any such illusions.

In fact I believe that most people left in Munich by the late 1944 wanted the war to end and the Allies to come before the Russians came. On the western front the allies were standing still in winter while the Russians were continuing their offensive and were in Hungary. In Italy the Allies made slow progress but moving steadily north. I wondered who would get to Munich first: the Allies coming from Italy, or the west, or the Russians from the east? There were all welcome as far as I was concerned, just come and liberate us from the Nazi nighmare.

From notes:

17 December, Sunday:

Sunday afternoon Salo and I met Sepp Stoecher, the son of our innkeeper, and we went to Circus Krone, they had the Christmas program like every year. The usual Sunday air raid warnings, and at noon an alarm, was over by the time we got to the circus. The program was fun to watch though I remember nothing of it. Their usual acrobatics and foremost the clowns to let the people laugh. And yes, there were children. Wherever they lived or came from there were still children in the city. By five o'clock the afternoon program was over and we went back home, part ways together. I know we walked, no streetcars in our part of town. Besides, even in normal times there was no good connection from our place to the circus. Then we parted company with Sepp who walked home, I guess to his father's inn. Salo and I went to the Schrammel inn, close to where I live, one of the few houses still standing in the Schwindstrasse. We ate there, I guess with our forged food stamps.

I liked to eat calves brain, baked, and for a 50 gm meat stamp I got a good size portion. If a reader should ever wonder what baked brains tastes like? It looks and tastes like scrambled eggs with a meaty flavor. I haven't eaten it since but then it was delicious. 'Hunger being the best cook' my mother always said. I am certain it tastes better than raw snails.

Paula, the waitress brought us a chess game and we played for a while, the inn being a lot warmer than our place. By then it was 7:30, and we went to my place. Mom was just getting ready to leave with Frau Reiter, both their nerves shot and couldn't stand

another raid in our shelter. Frau Reiter said the Laibacher station was ticking again.

They had just left when the siren on the neighbors house went off. Shortly after we heard the flak in the distance so Salo and I ran over to the Arcisstrasse bunker.

A word about this particular shelter, the bunker as we called it. It was build many years ago to be a shelter for another Nazi building they had planed to build over it but the war interrupted it. It was the length of a city block and built deep underground with lots of concrete over it. Above ground was a narrow extension about four feet high and 10 feet wide which ran the length of the bunker. On each end, and in the middle, a higher concrete structure that had steel doors and steps that led down into the bunker. Once downstairs in the bunker there was a long corridor from which rooms branched off on either side with benches. A high wooden fence ran the length of the bunker with a large gate at one end.

When we got there the gate was still closed and people before it trying to get in and in panic with the flak shooting in the distance. A real panic. We just stood across the street by the Technikum and watched them scream and trying to break down the gate, mostly women but some men amongst them. Then the gate flew open and all rushed in.

Before we even walked across to the bunker the all clear sounded. Salo went home to his own place. I back to my house. I read for a while and then went to bed, the downs warmer than our room. I must have just fallen asleep when the siren did its noisy howling again, 9:30. I went upstairs to Herr Reiter and listened to the radio. Fast enemy bomber formations reported 60 miles west and 40 miles south-west of our city. The command center never reported our city by name though by now the British must have known the frequency of the Laibach station and it gave them a good fix on how far they

were still away from ‘our city’, Munich. I got on my bicycle and raced over to the bunker. I knew that fast bombers could be here – fast. Herr Reiter, the Spitzelbergers – father and son – and the innkeeper stayed behind. I locked my bicycle against the side of the Technikum, its proper name is *Technische Hochschule*, or technical university, and walked over to the bunker, towards the middle, most people would be at the first entrance. The flak began to fire and it was time to go down. I couldn’t get the steel door open so I raced back to the first entrance with shrapnel and steel splinters whirling down. Here the door was still open. I stayed in the corridor, I never went inside the rooms full with people wailing and praying. Besides, always cautious and staying away from crowds. Lights began to flicker and the walls and floor vibrate. Unless there is a carpet of bombs coming down I could feel the individual explosions if close, and they were. Close ones make the concrete floor jar my feet and the walls hit against my back. From the air ducts that extend up the pressure comes through in waves, made my ears pop. Once the whole bunker seemed to be lifted up and dropped back. That was when a blockbuster hit near, the lights went out even though the bunker has its own generator, it must have been damaged by the rough handling. But this was nothing like in the house shelter. I never felt my guts knot up and probably wasn’t white in my face. I felt that even if something hit right on top we would be safe.

When it was quite outside I went up. Outside *Feuerrot*, ‘red with fire’. Nearby houses burn yellow and orange but further away it looks all red. I stood by the wall of the bunker looking towards the Nazi buildings, some of those on fire which made me feel good, then on the other side a brilliant light exploded, just as quick I ducked and the

rush of debris and dirt came over the bunker. It was one of those delayed fuse bombs which could go off within minutes or hours and even days later.

I went along Gabelsbergerstrasse to the Schleissheimerstrasse to see if my mother was all right at the shelter. At the Stiegelmeierplatz where the Loewenbrau is I walked through some white stuff on the sidewalk, nearby a canister which was open and had spilled that stuff. I don't know what made me look back, maybe I saw fire behind me – there was! Every step I had taken over that white powdery spill burned. I looked down and my boots were on fire. I saw a pile of real dirt and jumped into it and rubbed my shoes into the dirt.

That stuff must have been phosphorus, ignited by the friction of walking over it.

Learned something new, don't walk into strange things. People by the shelter said that all had left and no one got hurt.

I tried to walk back home by way of the Schleissheimerstrasse but was blocked by a firestorm raging. Down the Augustenstrasse, same thing. Back to the Luisenstrasse but couldn't get by fallen houses in the street. I had to walk all the way back to the Arcisstrasse and then make my way along the Pinakothek park, then along the Theresienstrasse to my house. Already from far I could see that the corner house, the one next to ours, was burning from top to bottom. I met Spitzelberger who told me that a large incendiary bomb had fallen into the Tagg shoe store of the corner house and started a big fire which burned upwards. A fire in the roof or attic you can work on but a canister that explodes in the ground floor is impossible to extinguish. He worried that our roof might catch fire too, so we went up into our attic. He was right. Being a house builder he knew that the beams for the roof connect in the fire wall from one house to

the next. Where our beams connected to theirs it was like a blowtorch coming through. I pumped water and he sprayed at the connections. From one beam to the next and back again. Salo came by to see if we were all right and he helped us getting buckets of water or pumping. We really were able to prevent our beams from burning away. And then the neighboring house fell together, burned out. Our whole house shook, or at least the attic did, as if there was an earthquake. And then we were safe.

This raid by only about 300 bombers did a lot of damage because the British dropped 75 blockbusters. Plus the other more common 1000 pounders and lesser bombs and incendiaries. 562 fatalities and 49,000 homeless. And Circus Krone, we had visited that Sunday afternoon, had been destroyed.

Our house, now standing in tandem with the house on our right, was damaged but habitable. All I had to do was to fix the card boards that had been blown in. Buchner gave me time off. For a couple days I worked with Spitzelberger to keep our side of the building from having our water pipes freeze up. Many of the apartments under us were empty and had no windows, the same as the toilets between the floors. Windows let the cold in, in fact the pipes were already frozen on the ground and first floors.

Spitzelberger had a device, a sort of round basket of iron, that he affixed to the water pipe, filled it with coals and let it burn. Then move the basket up a few feet and so on. Two days and nights and our water came through. In between he nailed the windows closed to prevent the icy December air from blowing in at the pipes.

On Tuesday we were finished and Spitzelberger said he didn't need me any more.

Buchner gave me time off over the holidays. Mom and I walked to Moosach and took the train to Vilshofen and stayed over the holidays at her sister Centa's place, or rather

downstairs where my grandparents had lived. My mother needed the respite, her nerves were just about shot. We came back the same route. No more trains from our Hauptbahnhof, our main railway station was utterly kaput as were the tracks. We were not checked, the Gestapo busy somewhere else. I had my workman's pass and besides we would say that my things had burned in the air raid. There were more people leaving than coming back to Munich. All the cities along the route, Freising, Landshut, Landau and Plattling so peaceful, the same with Vilshofen. The only way you knew a war was on in these towns was that the shop windows were mostly empty and few men walking around. And yes, a lot of northerners and easterners, many already refugees from the east. The Russians were coming fast.

The Ardennes offensive was just about over by the New Year. Except for Meier no one I knew had believed that it would lead to anything.

New Years - bleak. Not that there were any parties anywhere, at least not in public places.

Amazingly our Ludwigshof inn was still open serving beer and for food stamps - cold cuts.

Herr Sepp knew if he closed up they would draft him. He still had a place to work and there were few inns or restaurants left in our northern part of the city. Just desolation.

The Schramml inn where Salo and I had played chess was gone in the same raid.

The Mahlkasten didn't exist anymore nor the bathhouse. And on the corner of Theresien and Schleissheimerstrasse, the famous Scharfe Eck was gone. Comedians had played there on weekends. *Komiker* we called them and they were a special breed of comedians only people from Munich could understand and appreciate. To get a little

humor into this otherwise drab account of war and bombing let me recount one occasion when I went with Willi and his mother to the Scharfe Eck and we saw a show of the Komikers. It also might give the reader a sense of what Munich humor was about. The Scharfe Eck inn was like any other restaurant but it had a small stage. The show was called '*Rosele*.' The stage setting was done up like a Bavarian living room, then a wall, kind of separating the room from the outside. First we saw the farmer and his daughter Rosi in the room. The farmer telling Rosi, a young and rather heavy built woman, that he had a call about his advertisement of selling his sow and someone would come to look at it and maybe buy it.

Next scene we see Rosi outside with her boy friend Xaver, he all dressed up and carrying a bouquet of flowers. He came calling to ask for the hand of his beloved Rosele. She tells him how to act with her father and to be firm in his intentions to marry her. Her father had never met Xaver.

Next scene: Xaver comes into the room and meets the farmer, his prospective father-in-law. The farmer thinking the man had come to look at and buy his sow. It is the dialogue that becomes so hilarious and their demeanor. The farmer advertising his sow and Xaver so astounded of how the farmer speaks of his daughter.

I have forgotten the wonderful dialogue but remember the beginning:

Farmer: "Did you bring the flowers for her?"

Xaver: "Yes."

Farmer laughing, "Do you want her to eat them or stick them on her rump?"

Xaver: "I wouldn't do that to my Rosele."

Farmer: “We don’t call her Rosele. We call her just pig. That is what she is. Just a big, fat pig.”

I guess you have to be from Munich to appreciate the confusion of one man talking about his beloved fiancée and the other about the well nourished pig he wants to sell.

When we came back after Christmas we continued our lives as before. Rather primitive and with cold air blowing in through cracks in our walls. But it was livable. Water was running in our downstairs bathroom. Electricity was still off but the gas was back on. Now it became a matter of scrounging candles from the people who had electricity. Meier, Stoecher, Frl. Glasser all helped.

Every evening mom and the other women trudged through the snow and cold to the Loewenbrau shelter. She left me with a good fire burning in the stove. My own problem was that with our neighbors house gone the siren was also gone. In fact there were none in our part of the city left. I just hoped that I would hear the flak and then race off to the bunker.

CHAPTER XII

1945

Going Into Hiding.

From my notes:

Sunday, January 7th, 1945.

Saturday evening Salo came to me. We had decided he would sleep over and Sunday morning we would take the train out to Seefeld-Hechendorf to visit Frau Maurer and go ice skating on the lake.

In the evening we did some reading by candle light, since the last big air raid three weeks ago we had no longer any electricity. My mother went in the evening to the Loewenbrau shelter as she had done for many weeks now, her second home. Without electricity the sirens didn't function or only so far away that we couldn't hear them. Salo slept in the big bed and I on the couch in the kitchen, there was still a little warmth from the fire.

I woke up at six and lighted the gas burner to take the chill out. January it gets pretty cold in Munich and our make-do windows of cardboard didn't keep the cold out, also our apartment had cracks in the walls that let the cold air in. It didn't get warm in our kitchen anymore even if we built a fire that the plates glowed red hot. Then I went back in my warm sofa-bed. Mom came home at half past six and they badgered me to get up. We had breakfast, potatoes, hot tea. Tea was now used over and over again until there was no longer any color and flavor. We took along rolls and some cold cuts from stamps we had picked the 'void' off. Mom had been to St. Ottilien a few days ago and we had food again besides potatoes. We walked the Augustenstrasse to the Stanberger station, a cold morning and snowing softly. The snow covered ruins on each side of the

street looked just desolate, what had been burned out shells were now just rubble from being bombed over and over gain. The British at night were always bombing the north where they came in from, I guessed just to get rid of their loads and head back to England. The Americans during the day bombed more selectively and all over. We were lucky as a local train just left for Pasing. There we had to wait for a while to catch a train to Seefeld; Seefeld is the station, Hechendorf the little community on the Woerthsee. We followed the footpath through the forest to Frau Maurer's cottage. She was happy to see us but had visitors and they just sat down for lunch. During those days nobody has enough to invite unexpected guests and not to make her feel obligated we went right down to the lake, we had plenty of food with us. The lake was frozen over all right but also covered with heavy snow, so we had to get a couple snow shovels and cleared an area, a kind of circle to run around on. We had a great time skating, racing, resting and smoking our pipes. It was good just to be boys again and forget about the war, the bombings and the Gestapo. When it got dark around five, we went up to the cottage and ate our things in the cozy and warm kitchen. Told Frau Maurer all about the Theresienstrasse, what her place looked like – no more radio. Windows and doors barricaded. She hadn't been to her apartment, or Munich for that matter for many months. Her plumbing business also destroyed, she was quite happy to await the end of the war here in her little cottage.

I ate just two of my five rolls, mom liked them too and I would share them. I really wanted to stay longer as her place was so nice and warm but our train was leaving at a quarter past six so we trudged on back, along the road this time as it had become dark.

We arrived in Munich at 7:30 and were just walking in the Dachauerstrasse when the sirens went off – air raid warning. Nobody hurries with just a warning. We asked someone what was going on, what did the radio report but nobody knew anything. Then a woman said the radio just reported a bomber formation coming. When we reached the Augustenstrasse the alarm sounded, now people began to walk faster and some running. A little early for an air raid. I felt no longer the exhilaration of earlier raids, it just scared me like everyone else. Besides, these were the British coming at night and I knew what they were aiming for – our part of the city. We turned right at the Gabelsbergerstrasse heading for the bunker, and we had hardly gotten there when the flak started to shoot in the distance. Salo and I stood outside the entrance looking up at the flickering sky, search lights criss-crossing, it was a clear and cold night. We heard the motors of one formation fly over but they didn't drop their bombs. Then a second formation came from the north and Christmas trees blossomed out above us, red flares, it was meant for us again. And what I had noticed before when formations of bombers came over the city, the search lights went off and the firing of the flak stopped. Either they ran out of ammunition or they got scared. I had seen the HJ boys man the guns at the Oberwiesenfeld and head for the dugouts when the planes came over. It was time for Salo and me to go down. The bunker was crowded, people no longer wanted to endure in their basements shelters.

Then it started, always the lights began to flicker and we could feel the vibrations on the wall and the jarring of the floor, sometimes violently, and the pressure waves coming through the ducts. That went on for a half an hour and it was quiet, a relatively short raid. Outside all red around us, some houses along the Barerstrasse burning, more on

the way home. Our house still standing and the neighbor house too. I could see fire through the large thoroughfare, our back building was burning, or what was left of it as it also had taken a bomb. I found Spitzelberger and he told me he was alone in our shelter and it had been terrible. Salo and I went up to the third floor to our apartment, the little light we had came from the burning building. Every apartment entrance door was in pieces or just gone, ours too. I found a candle, in its light we saw a mess. All the cardboard from the windows gone as were the window frames. The stucco on the walls and ceiling torn off.

Furniture all over the place in pieces. And there stood in one piece our kitchen table, and upon it like a miracle, a roasted chicken mom had brought from the farmer, and as a surprise had prepared for me, for us, when we came home. The first time ever that we had a whole chicken. I was not about to eat it without mom, and I would never get to eat it at all! In our bedroom the same mess, the big closet in pieces, clothing all over the place. Lots of work to clean up. But tomorrow the windows would have to be fixed first and a blanket hung for a door.

We went up to the fourth floor. In Frau Reiter's one-room place clothing that had flung on her stove was smoldering, I threw them into a bucket with water.

We walked to the Schleissheimerstrasse, I wanted to find my mother. Again air raid alarm, back to the bunker. A radio we heard announced enemy formations over Stanbergersee, that was close, just 20 miles away. We raced to the bunker, overhead the lights and flares...we just made it down when there was a terrific crash, everything shook, even down here. A bomb must have hit the bunker along its length. A woman

died of a heart attack, some fainted. Then the knocking on top, we were saturated with the incendiary stick-bombs.

This time a real firestorm raged when we came upstairs. All over before us the still burning stick-bombs, worse than a couple hours ago.

We walked to the Augustenstrasse, many houses burning that had stood before. Houses or their rubble in the street. The house we had listened to the radio before - burning from top to bottom. We separated, Salo wanted to see if he still had his place. (This was the last time I saw my dear friend until after the war when he came back from the concentration camp). I walked along the Augustenstrasse to the block of my house. Had to climb over ruins in the street, plenty of light from burning houses. Turned the corner of the Theresienstrasse, my house was still there. Though it looked odd; for one thing, no roof. I saw a small fire burning in the attic. I rushed up the outside staircase that leads to the first floor. I stood amidst a lot of rubble on the first floor, and there were no more stairs, the whole stairwell had fallen down. Just a large empty shaft. I went back outside and met Spitzelberger, he told me what had happened. A bomb had hit the ruin of the neighbor house and cut off part of our house. Cleanly sheared off the end rooms. That is why our house looked so strange, it was narrower. Another bomb hit in front of our house. Either one also caused the stairwell to collapse.

I went to the Loewenbrau shelter looking for my mother but couldn't find her, I knew she was looking for me. I ran back home again, past burning houses, showers of burning debris cascading down. The heat unbearable, I couldn't breath rushing by. Then past, the cold of the winter night which felt good. At the Schwindstrasse I met Herr Matschilles.

His first words were that my mother and his wife had been killed or buried, I had been to the wrong shelter. I don't think I believed him, fate couldn't be that cruel, at the last moment killed by bombs. I went back again and was told by someone that nothing happened in either shelter, no one got hurt. I had no idea where my mother could be, probably looking for me and sheltering somewhere from the cold night. Back to the house. Spitzelberger said that he and Reiter would go up on the roof of the still standing house next to ours and make their way into our attic to put out that small blaze.

Frau Schoenhofer came by, she had been in the bunker and I helped her to get some suitcases she had in our shelter out and carried them to the bunker, then I stayed there.

I met the Penzias family, living even closer to the bunker they always sheltered there.

I tried to sleep, the concrete floor too hard and cold. Herr Reiter and his mother came by and stayed the night in the bunker. He said that they had put the fire out in the attic.

What good would that be though, a house with no roof and stairwell.

In the early morning they served hot malt coffee in the bunker. Penzias found me and told me that our house had burned down. After a night of two bombings it didn't register or bother me, the house was uninhabitable anyhow. With first light I went back to the Loewenbrau shelter for another look. Most houses had now burned down to a shell, but all streets in our neighborhood clogged with rubble. When I got to the shelter Frau Matschilles and my mother were just coming out. The shelter like underground caverns with hundreds of people living and sleeping there I must have missed them. I told mom about our house or what Penzias had told me. We walked home by way of Sandstrasse. So much destroyed that there were no landmarks left, just a field of ruins and smoking rubble.

And our house the same, caved in together and just smoking rubble, it wasn't even a standing shell. The entrance to the cellar, which was under the outside staircase, was whole so I went down and got out suitcases and trunks with extra bedding and dishes and stuff we had put there - just in case - and we stored them in the neighbor's shed in their garden. It was quite warm in our cellar from the burning house or what was left of it, a smoldering and smoking pile of rubble. A couple hours later the cellar caved in. Spitzelberger and Matschilles promised my mother to keep an eye on our things. Not that we saw any of it ever again.

During the morning my mother tried to get help from the local aid organization. There were people there from the *Ortsgruppe* and they told her 'no help for the Jews.' (As she writes in her story). At noon there was another alarm and we went to our shelters.

My mother was finished with her nerves, besides no place to live, no food – nothing for us. In the afternoon, together with Frau Matschilles, we walked to the nearest station for trains going north and east, to Feldmoching, and in the evening the train left.

We were going into hiding.

(I wrote in my notes that this double air raid must have been done by another 1000 bomber attack. The reader might wonder what my feeling were being so roughly treated by my friends – the English. My house and all my belongings destroyed. That was just part of the deal - you bomb the hell out of the Nazis and if I get it too – so be it. No hard feelings, and that was how I felt about it. I believe that is how the majority of the people in Munich felt. Not that they wanted to be bombed at all, but they didn't put the blame on the English and Americans. They knew it was in retaliation for the incessant

bombing of London and other English cities. They knew quite well whose fault it really was, and even if they were Nazis they knew who was to blame.

According to the statistics of the Munich Archives, this double air raid was not as heavy as I had thought. The first attack was by 350 bombers and the second by 150. They dropped 80 blockbusters, 1000 explosive bombs and 400,000 stick-bombs. However, they went again mainly for the north and center of the city which didn't need it. 505 fatalities and 70,000 homeless. Now we could have been counted amongst them but Jews didn't count.

(I thought I had started my new diary from the time I got to the Brandls. But when I looked through my 'treasures' in 1999, I found only the notes I made about this air raid in January and the beginning of my diary as of the 9th of April, 1945. I have to rely on my memory for the times from leaving Munich on the 8th of January to April 9th)

I don't know how my mother got the information that no trains were leaving from the main railroad station – bombed to smithereens – but were departing from Feldmoching, about 7 miles north of Munich. With us Frau Matschilles who wanted to take me to her brother. We left sometimes in the afternoon and it was a milk train, stopping at every station, and full with people fleeing Munich. In the evening we arrived at Pilsting II, the rail station for the village by the same name a few miles away, and one stop before the town of Landau a/Isar. Isar, the river that comes from the Alps, flows through the city of Munich, past Landau and joins the Danube at the town of Deggendorf. At Pilsting I

said good by to my mother who traveled on to the town of Vilshofen to join her sister Centa.

With my most essentials in a small suitcase Frau Matschilles and I walked to the road junction of Goblen. Here the main highway from Munich to Deggendorf passes by with a branch off to the town of Landau. Right at the junction, in a hollow, stand two little houses, the Brandls and Helldoblers. That was Goblen. All around fields, the highways lined with trees as it was custom in Germany. Except for the autobahn most other highways in Germany were just two lanes. Why these two isolated houses deserved a name that was even on maps I don't know. Maybe because of the road junction, but this was Goblen. We got there late in the evening and the Brandl family welcomed me and said I could stay until the war was over. They knew of course that I was Jewish and how dangerous it was for them to keep me.

(It couldn't have been done back in 1942, when Herr Matschilles first told me of his wife's brother who offered to hide me as the family themselves were watched by the Gestapo and SS. I found out about their own problem sometimes later.)

Hiding is difficult. The longer one hides out the more possibility to be found out and denounced. Or the host gets jittery and wishes to risk it no longer. There is also the real problem of food, those hiding out are without food stamps. You have to depend upon the host for every piece of bread, every meal. You can never say you are hungry. At the least it is a very humiliating experience. Clothing is a lesser problem, cast offs. Illness – forget about getting sick and being able to see a doctor as it happened to me when I got blood poisoning.

I needed to hide only for four months and had two close calls of being found out – one, two days before the end of the war and that was a very close call indeed.

Let me also tell about this nice family that helped me.

Simple people, good people and yes good Germans. Herr Brandl worked for the road and river service, now he was retired, in his late sixties. They had thirteen children, eight when the war was over. Some killed, some missing in the war. I got to meet five of their children. Only one, Hedwig the youngest, then I guess thirteen, lived with them. She must have been an accident as Frau Brandl was fifty when she had her. Rosel, the next youngest, nineteen, lived there too but on and off.

They had three small bedrooms upstairs in the one story house and another sort of guestroom downstairs next to the kitchen/living room. So there was plenty of room even when one or more of their older children showed up. And I had my own room which I shared when one of the sons came to visit.

The other and older daughter I met was Fannie. She was married and lived with her husband and one son in Karlsruhe. Her young boy when little had a very high fever which damaged his brain and now six, was retarded and had to be fed and diapered.

When she came with him and stayed for a few weeks I saw how dearly she loved and cared for her boy. She was always afraid THEY would take him away to a nursing home and kill him, as was custom in Nazi Germany.

One son, Willy Brandl, came sometimes to stay here, he had been wounded in Russia and was an invalid.

The other son, older and in his late thirties, was Luitpold, and he was a strange one. I met him when he came home visiting clandestinely. He also helped find a place for my mother to hide when her sister Centa in Vilshofen wanted her out. Centa was living with her two little children in a small apartment, a widow by then as her husband had been killed in Russia. My mother had no ration cards but Centa and her two children did and she should have been able to take care of her sister, especially in a small town in the middle of farmland. Instead she starved my mother. When my mother wrote to me that she had to leave Luitpold happened to be visiting and he went to Vilshofen and took my mother to a farm not far from where I was, just a few miles east across the river.

Here is what I was told about Luitpold and what he revealed to me. He trusted me as he too was a fugitive!

Luitpold was a wild one in his younger years and had joined the SS even before Hitler came to power, at that time recruited by Himmler. When Himmler opened up the concentrations camps in 1933, the first was at Dachau, Luitpold became one of the early ones to be incarcerated there. I don't know why, no one ever told me. But it must have been something other than criminal as he stayed in Dachau until 1942. Then, the SS desperate for more men, let all incarcerated SS out of the camp if they joined the penal battalion, doing the dirty work; burying details, mine sweeping, suicide missions, etc. He volunteered and was sent to a training camp and promptly ran away.

That is why in 1942, and more seldom later, the police, Gestapo and SS were frequent visitors to the Brandls looking for Luitpold. Since the Brandls had many other sons

serving in the army they left them alone. They had to promise that if Luitpold ever shows up they report him at once to the Gestapo.

Luitpold was a character, very smart and imaginative, and yes good looking. I think one of his jobs in the concentration camp was to forge documents for German agents in foreign lands. He became an expert forger and used his knowledge to make himself new names, from birth certificate to *Soldbuch*, ‘army book’, every soldier must have. In fact a number of them. He made documents, army orders that gave him furloughs, travelling permits, papers that showed him as being wounded and on sick leave. With these he traveled around Niederbayern and met women because of his good looks and charisma.

He would stay for a while, got engaged at times and then left for the front – meaning another village or town. All his girlfriends, and lovers considered themselves lucky that their man came home so often on furloughs and sick leaves. When I met Luitpold the first time he was in full army uniform, all sorts of decorations, the *Verwundeten Abzeichen*, ‘purple heart’, and had in his *Soldbuch* the documents to show where, how and why he earned his decorations.

This then is the Brandl family. I called the senior Brandls like everyone else: Brandl-vada, and Brandl-muada, in effect Brandl-father and Brandl-mother.

They had electricity but no gas or running water. There was a hand pump in the yard behind the house, further back the outhouse. A cowshed as they had a cow and a calf, chickens and a couple turkeys. For having a cow and chickens they received no dairy product stamps or eggs. Old Brandl helped out on farms during the growing season for

which he received flour and such other important staples as bacon and lard. Food was not a problem and I ate the same as they did.

They had a radio but not short wave. We listened daily to the reports of the OKW, *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, High command of the Armed Forces. While always claiming to inflict severe losses on the enemy in the East, West and South and praising the bravery of the German soldiers one could gather the advance of the Allies by where the battles took place. And then of course the continuous promise of the wonder weapons to come for the *Endsieg*, 'the final victory.'

The great battle of the Ardennes was over and the promised victory which would make the Allies lick their wounds and withdraw from the mainland was now claimed as a battle of material, and to stall the Allied advance until new troops could be trained and together with the new weapons bring the final victory. Something only the 'Meiers' and desperate Nazis would still believe. The new troops raised in multitude were the *Volksturm*, the 'peoples army'. The sixteen year olds called up and the old men together with those who had been spared so far, skilled workers in the war industry.

To complete the description of the house there was a tool shed built to the side. The tools were there, the bicycles and storage for wood. There was a little attic above and when I researched that space I found a nice hiding place behind some long boards I could squeeze in – if I ever needed it.

Between the house and the cowshed was the vegetable patch and flower garden, it would be my department when spring came.

Oh yes the German turkeys. They had two and considered them as emergency food. These turkeys are nothing like ours in the US, they were wild beasts and fenced in.

Once one of them got out, I had just visited the outhouse, and that wild bird flew at me and tried to jump in my face. I had to return and hide from that 'Nazi' turkey until someone came out of the house and with a pitchfork chased the bird back into its enclosure.

Close to our place was another small house in the hallow and there lived our neighbors, the Helldoblers. If not both, at least Mrs. Helldobler was a gypsy which made her also an undesirable person in the Nazi way of thinking. Herr Helldobler worked for the railroad.

I believe that he was physically handicapped as he was never drafted though only in his fifties. They had a bunch of kids old enough to go to school and daily they walked the three miles to the village of Pilsting. I had thought that Brandl-mother was sticking to my cover story of being a nephew of hers bombed out in Munich. However, once one of the kids asked me "are you really Jewish?" Hedwig must have told them. Who else did she tell? And the kids? I am sure that both the Brandls and Helldoblers admonished their kids never to tell anybody. But with the kids knowing there was that ever present danger of telling 'secrets' to other kids.

Since there was no gas Brandl-mother had to cook on a wood stove and also heat the kitchen, they didn't have coals and only fired with wood. Gathering wood and sawing and chopping wood became my main occupation.

The land between us and the Isar river, which was about a quarter of a mile away, was bush land with just a few trees, we called it the Griss. There I went just about every day gathering wood. The bushes, dried up in winter, gave a good supply of wood and broke off easy. Brandl-father also got a supply of wood from a farmer and it laid outside the

shed and there I sawed and chopped wood every day. One time we, or he did, blew an old tree stump apart with gunpowder for wood. And once Fannie, when she was here, and I went on our bicycles at night to the station and stole two railroad ties. Those gave a lot of wood.

Since we lived so far away from the village and station I saw few people ever walk by. Motorized traffic was military traffic. A civilian car was dangerous, only a Nazi could still get gas, and I hid at once. Besides the two houses were in a hallow and only the upper floors could be seen from the street. So it was a good hiding place.

I wasn't hiding in the sense that I always stayed in the house. I made wood, worked in the garden, cleaned out the cowshed, washed and brushed my teeth in the morning at the pump and walked over to the outhouse. But except for going across the highway into the Griss I never went to the village, the station or into the town of Landau. Hewdig went to school in the village on her bicycle and Brandl-mother would go there every few days to buy food. Potatoes were plentiful, food could be gotten on stamps. The Brandls had little money but then there was nothing to buy, he got a small pension. I had given them all the money I had. What they needed money most for was to give to Luitpold. With all his forging business he had never learned how to make counterfeit money.

I soon settled into my daily routine of gathering and making wood, clean out the cowshed and put new straw in it. Brandl-mother did the milking.

17 January: Warsaw is liberated. The OKW says Warsaw is reduced to rubble and has no longer any significance. The Russians are in East Prussia according to battle reports. I wondered, who will get here first?

There is plenty to do for me which is good, passes time faster. Brandl-Mother is a good cook. For breakfast the common malt-coffee with plenty of milk, sugar and bread with marmalade. For lunch, which is the big meal, usually a meat dish and potatoes or noodles. At evening we eat something cold or sit around a kettle of milk soup with black bread , sometimes even butter on bread. The bucket of milk the cow gives each day is let stand and the cream spooned off and when there is enough of it butter is made in a churn. Hedwig and my jobs to turn the handle. Really easier than the up and down churn Baumgartner had. Sometimes we had pancakes for supper, not the flapjacks we eat but the thin ones baked out in butter and rolled with sugar or marmalade inside. No complaints about the food even if it was only milk soup with black bread sometimes. Eggs we never had, they were used for baking cakes and bread. When Willy came his mother would give him fried eggs for breakfast, but he was the only one who got them. If the others had eaten eggs I would have too. It was that simple, they shared with me like I was one of the family. Good people.

I heard from mom occasionally by letter. She wrote to Frau Brandl who then gave me the letter. Things were getting bad for her, her sister Centa hiding the food from her, saying she needs it for the kids. Mom having to beg for food from other people. She didn't get ration cards because she wasn't registered in Vilshofen. To do that, which with her old Aryan ID card would have been simple enough, but she needed an exit permit from the Munich police and a paper from the Ortsgruppe showing that she was permitted to leave the city. Neither one available to her.

I asked Luitpold if with all his connection he could find a place for my mother. He told me of a farm not far away from here but he would have to give them something valuable to take my mother in. I knew that we still had some jewelry with Frau Maurer in Hechendorf, heirlooms from mom's olden times and the rings of my father, plus some gold coins. I realized my mother's desperate situation and there was only one thing to do.

I had to make that long and dangerous trip to Frau Maurer which also would take me through Munich. A couple days before I left the Matschilles came for a visit. Herr Matschilles had brought his bicycle on the train and told me I could use it to make my trip. They would return the same day I left and should be back in Munich before I came. I could sleep in their place.

Here, from the notes I made after my return my trip to Munich on March 13th, 1945:
It was a beautiful day. The storm we had the day before had blown away. I left in the morning and I made good progress. Munich is about 120 km or 80 miles away. Half way is the town of Landshut which I wanted to reach around noon. Landshut is where Himmler came from and if any town in Lower Bavaria was Nazified it would be it, I wanted to get through it fast. Then getting closer to the town I saw in villages yellow-red flags displayed. I guessed this was their air raid warning or alarm. And soon low flying fighter-bombers came swooshing by over the highway. I just kept under the trees along the road. They didn't bother the civilian and farmers in the fields. Just outside Landshut I stopped by a farm along the road, there was a roadblock ahead staffed by Brownshirts. I had my work pass which at least identified me as being 15

years old, and not yet drafted. But I didn't want to risk it so I waited and ate a sandwich.

Then I realized that the SA men were not checking anyone but rather stopping the traffic from going into the town. Landshut had not yet been bombed which was surprising it being Himmler's town and a transportation hub.

And then the American bombers came over, flying in large formations, wave after wave.

They were flying very high that the planes just looked like shiny pin heads and trailing white condensation stripes. They came from the south, from Italy and were heading north probably heading for Regensburg which had a large Messerschmitt factory.

Just when they had passed a formation of seven B-17s came back from the north, not high up, maybe 6,000 feet. I could see the white stars American planes had on their wings and fuselage. The farmer who watched with me said he saw one bombers drop a string of bombs. I didn't see them but I heard that whistling sound individual bombs make, then saw in town columns of dirt and smoke shoot up into the air. Then we heard the explosions. The farmer thought they hit the Bahnhof, the rail station. They were gone and soon the all clear sounded from the town and the roadblock had left. Driving through Landshut, through the market square where the big church stands, I saw Swastika flags and banners as was appropriate for this Nazi town. Since the rail station is a block off I saw the devastation that one plane caused. All bombs hit the station and tracks. This was a great display of pin-point bombing, so the bombers can hit what they want to bomb. Ideal conditions too, clear day, no wind, no flak or fighters to bother them.

It was now half past two and I still had about 40 miles to go. Through Moosburg, Langenbach, then a brewery truck came by and I raced after it and hung on a corner letting it drag me along. A German soldier on his bike did the same but soon dropped off, too fast for him I guessed. A few times I thought I was going to crash but I was too tired to let go, and in no time we were in Freising. It was now around five in the afternoon and just right. Munich about 20 miles away and I would get there after nightfall. When dusk fell over the city I reached Freimann. No need for anyone to spot me. I was now a fugitive in my own city.

Mom had given me the address of someone downtown to visit and get cigars for Matschilles, he had been a great help. I got a little package of ten cigars. And since I was in the Maximilianstrasse I visited Eitelhuber, the former housekeeper of our school. His wife was home and she gave me to eat and drink, real tea. I was still one of her boys, she had known me since I was six years old attending school and the *Hort*. Her husband would be home tomorrow and to be sure and visit him. Another couple of 'good Germans.' I drove along the Residenzstrasse past the Feldherrnhalle, no more SS guards standing there, in fact just a ruin of a Feldherrnhalle. Ludwigstrasse to the Theresienstrasse and down that street towards my former home. The rubble had been cleared off the streets at least though sidewalks were still full of it. Since I passed Luisienstrasse I visited Herr Penzias, his house still stood though damaged. His family was there and Penzias was really angry that I had dared to come to Munich. I believe he was rather scared that I visited him. He was right of course but I had to come. My visit to Munich was just a passing through. (In my notes I marked his name with just a P that if found I would not compromise him). He told me that all half-Jews who were raised

Jewish had been sent to a concentration camp in February, Salo amongst them. Two other older kids I had known, Kurt Kahn and Clairle Schwalb had hidden out with the caretaker of the Jewish cemetery but somebody saw them and denounced them and the Gestapo came and took them away. Penzias said that if he had more time he would have found a place for Salo to hide. (That was just an excuse that he didn't do anything for Salo who was a good friend of his and the two had worked in the same place for three years. The last wave of deportees had been notified by the Gestapo by mail a week before that they would be sent *zum Arbeitseinsatz nach dem Osten*, 'sent to the east for forced labor.' And therefore had a week to disappear. But that is how Penzias was. A good guy but never risking his own skin which was understandable.) That news was a shock to me, poor Salo. He was a survivor but without help he was lost in this situation. And not even his own mother would help him. I left soon and I knew I made them happy.

I had always felt that at the last minute the Nazis would come after us and now they had done it. More reason to be careful and not risk anything like stupidly hanging on that truck for nearly twenty miles.

I drove by my house, just a spooky ruin in the night. I had spent my childhood here and had been happy. One cannot be too melancholic about the past. I learned a long time ago that time doesn't stand still for anyone and one cannot turn back the pages of life except in a brief dream.

The Matschilles had told me that Herr Spitzelberger now lived across from them in the Schwindstrasse, just around the corner from where I had lived. He lived in a broken down house in a one room flat he had fixed up. It was eleven at night but he was still up

and glad to see me. Matchilles had told him where I had disappeared to. He had come down in the couple months I hadn't seen him, looking haggard, not well. There never was a better man than Herr Josef Spitzelberger.

I went across the street where the Matschilles lived, in the back, ground floor, the top of the building gone. Nobody home which didn't surprise me since I knew they would have trouble getting through the Landshut station. The door to their apartment was unlocked, in fact there was no lock on the door. To take the chill out of the air I built a fire in their oven, ate a little and laid down on the sofa.

Around six in the morning they came home. They had a twelve hour layover in Landshut which I knew about. Herr Matschilles was mad about getting just 10 cigars, he had expected a full box. I knew nothing about that whole business but the upshot was that he took his bicycle from me and that caused a fight with his wife. She was such a nice woman and he could be a real ruffian at times. I left them and went over to Spitzelberger who loaned me his bicycle. Driving out of Munich, at least in my neighborhood, I avoided the main streets. It took me a good three hours to Hechendorf. Frau Maurer was home and happy to see me. She is such a wonderful and gracious lady. She new nothing of our disappearance but had known that our house was destroyed. I told her that even before our house burned down everything in the apartments had been reduced to splinters. She had a lot of things in the cellar but that had caved in. A shrug of her shoulders, "there is nothing that can be done about it. The important thing is to survive until the war is over." And like so many who lost everything, it became a shrug and the wish for the war to end and survive. Though I did not mention anything in my notes I am certain that Frau Maurer gave me something to eat. She gave me the little

bag with jewels mom needed and I was off again. I was able to take the train from Seefeld, stored the bike in the baggage car, as far as Neu-Aubing a suburb of Munich and then biked to Spitzelberger to return it. His son Alfons was there, now a fugitive too. He was to be drafted into the *Volksturm*, the old men's grenadiers, and decided to disappear. Desertion, it would cost him his head if they found him, he had his own little place somewhere. Things were in such disarray by that time that even Herr Spitzelberger was not registered in his new place, and no one seemed to care. They had another heavy air raid in February and besides bombing the inner city they again unloaded in the north, shuffling around ruins. The main streets were cleared but side streets were still clogged with rubble in the streets. The little train now ran by our house. They dubbed it the *Rassende Gauleiter*, 'the racing Gauleiter.'

During the night we had air raid alarm. The Matschilles went to the bunker. I decided to stay with Spitzelberger I didn't want anyone to see me, but there was no air raid.

I slept on the sofa in Matschilles place.

In the morning I checked on our goods in the neighbor's shed. It had all been stolen except for a little box of wet and moldering linen. It didn't matter anymore though my mother was sorry about the loss as she had hoped that after the war she had still some things. The bed linen, a nice service, pots and pans.

During the day we had three air raid warnings but nothing happened.

Matschilles had promised me to fix my own bike which was still around, he had never done it. The tubes and tires were in bad shape, especially the front tire was split and needed patching. He said he didn't have anything to fix it with. I think he was still mad at me because he didn't get the box of cigars. So I had to wait until the evening when

Spitzelberger came home and he helped me and put a couple patches of an old tire around mine. I tried it out in the evening and it went hump-hump with the affixed tire patches over mine, but it worked. I drove to Herr Eitelhuber and he was happy to see me and that I had escaped the Gestapo. Of all the people I visited only the Penzias were displeased, and that was understandable. The Eitelhubers gave me to eat and a hunk of smoked meat and bread to take along.

I slept at Matschilles place again and early the next morning while still dark I left Munich to return to the Brandls. Until I got to Freising I had to stop three times and redo the large patch as it kept slipping out and rubbing against the frame. And shortly after Freising the patch came lose again, the tube ballooned out and busted. A five inch slit in the tube and the repair patches I had were just for small holes. I pushed the bike to Langenbach and got a ride with a farm wagon until close to Landshut. In Landshut I went to several places but no one had a new tube or a patch large enough to fix mine. I walked, pushing my bike. Walked all day until in the evening I came to Loiching, I needed to get transportation to get to Pilsting. It wasn't that I was that tired but my heels were getting raw, I had developed blisters and they rubbed open. I was in luck, the evening train came soon, I could take my bicycle along and there was no control. Then the long walk from the station to the Brandls.

[Here my notes end and I have to rely on what I remember about the times after and until the begin of my diary in April.]

I had to soak my right foot in a tub with hot water to get the sock off. My heel all raw and as was to be expected I got an infection in my right foot. An ugly wound with puss

oozing out and all I could do was to soak in hot water. I guess during those times the only medicine for infections were sulfa drugs and those were not available to me. As my mother had instructed me I gave the gold watch to Brandl and a pretty ring to his wife, also a couple gold coins, I had no idea of their value. Gold coins were not in circulation and hadn't been for at least fifty years, but they were pure gold. Luitpold came by and I gave him the valuables to take to the farmer who hid my mother. My foot kept getting worse though I hardly felt any pain. Then one day a red streak came up my leg and Brandl-mother said I had blood poisoning. She sent Brandl somewhere to get alcohol. Then she made a bandage around my heel and up my leg and soaked it in alcohol, kept soaking it. The next morning the red streak was gone, her alcohol bath had helped. And soon my foot got better and healed. That was close.

Back to my chores. It was spring now and I could work in the garden, spading and planting seedlings for salad, carrots, onions and other vegetables, and flowers. Some were perennials and others had bulbs. By the end of March shoots were already coming out.

But my main chore was still going out into the Griss and getting wood, now with the bushes having leaves, breaking off twigs and letting them dry for a week before gathering them.

The news every night. The Russians were coming fast and so were the Americans from the west, up the boot in Italy it seemed hopeless. Besides they would never get through the Alps. But so slow, for us who desperately waited for the coming of the Allies – much too slow.

Evening we sat together as a wonderful family and sang songs, played cards or read.

When their son Willy was here for a visit things were always lively. He played the harmonica and we sang along old tunes. He was good in making up and singing Stanzls, Bavarian parodies making fun of anything. Willy, Brandl-father and I would play cards until late at night.

I turned 16, on the 27th of March. I don't think I even told anyone. My mother would remember me this day. And like a birthday present I had a life-show in the afternoon. At the station, about a mile from us, they had put a bunch of old rusted locomotives on a siding. In the afternoon I heard planes and shooting. I looked from the upstairs window and saw a flight of P-38s, the twin fuselage fighters, shoot up these discarded locomotives. One after another they would circle around, go deep to treetop level and fire at the locs – looked like fire spitting from them. Then jump over the locomotives and go around for another pass. Later Brandl and I biked to the station. Every locomotive was sieved, so thick did the firing come that all the many telephone wires along the track were hanging loose, shot off. Good show Americans, you couldn't know that you were shooting at old hulks..

The Americans, British, Canadians and in the south the French are all deep into Germany. The Rhine river has been crossed in many places and allied troops are entering Frankfurt and Mannheim. The OKW always reports fierce fighting and the German troops inflicting great casualties, slowing down the Allies advances. And then it reports of cities abandoned, like on the 29th Frankfurt and Mannheim. The latest 'victory is ours' twist is that the Allies and Russians are into each other's hair and momentarily they will fight each other. Germany with masses of new troops and new weapons regain

the initiative and defeat the enemy. We sit around and smile at each other. No one here believes that garbage, you had to be a Meier to believe that.

I never knew how their son Willy felt about it all. He was certainly not a Nazi, just a soldier. But he had a bunch of medals that showed that what he did was beyond the call of duty. Showed that he was beyond being a brave soldier, rather fanatical. He never spoke for or against the Nazis, listened to the news without comments. Didn't mix into anything verbally that had to do with the situation or make any comments when everybody else spoke of the impending defeat of Germany.

I had heard that the Wehrmacht had promised its soldiers that for certain decorations, like receiving the Knights Cross, and destroying a certain number of tanks, they would get a piece of the land in the east. Become sort of titled landowners with Slavs working for them as - slaves. All that down the drain now, just a dream. He got along fine with his brother Luitpold and joked with him about his latest name, injury and what unit he was suppose to belong to. He also knew about my situation and was only like a friend to me.

[I come now to the parts of my diary I could find after 55 years. It is a day by day account and often repetitious – making wood. But it is also the last month of the war and things were happening.]

Tuesday, April 10:

A sunny beautiful day. If only things would move faster with the war. All day till evening I made wood. For lunch we had calf knuckles with gravy and potatoes. The calf had disappeared while I was gone. (It was illegal anyhow, that is not registered.) Now

we had lots of delicious calf meals, stewed, cooked and the best a roasted leg.

Brandl-mother had been busy cooking and preserving the meat in glass jars.

During the afternoon fighter-bombers were cruising by. The news (we were getting the *Bayerische Rundfunk*, a Bavarian station) reports that Munich was bombed yesterday.

Wednesday, April 11:

The weather is still nice but not for long, the wind has changed. When I got up I heard the sirens wail in Landau. After my morning washing, brushing teeth and doing exercises I saw three Lightnings (P-38s) fly low and shoot up a train passing by (the tracks are between us and the river and so is the railroad bridge where the track crosses the river to the other side). Soon the locomotive was belching steam all over.

During the morning I sawed and chopped wood. Before noon Luitpold came by and brought me news from my mother. She is doing fine at the farm and wants me to visit her for some good and plenty food.

For lunch we had *Dampfnudeln*, a Bavarian dish made of yeast dough in the shape of a dumpling and cooked in water with a dish of cooked berries. Shortly after noon, in the far distance, we heard the rumbling of bombings. The radio said Munich was being attacked. Around four o'clock Mustang fighters came by and shot up the afternoon train. They must have the train schedule.

The news, progress from the north but nothing changing in the south. If that keeps up the war is going to last for a long time.

(Oh yes we were impatient. People like Luitpold and I, people in camps, in forced labor or just anti-Nazis were desperate for the Allies to come. Everything they did was too

slow for us. I don't think that any of us realized how strong the German army still was and how much effort it took to whittle them down).

So far my hiding here was going fine, liberation could not be that far off. Frankfurt fallen into American hands. These were magic words, unbelievable still a year ago. Would my luck still hold? Or the hand of God over me? My Guardian Angel protecting me like letting me get well a few weeks back? I just didn't trust the Nazis. They would come after me to the last minute if they knew where to find me. I was troubled that the Helldobler kids knew. Kids wanting to share secrets in school, I knew about that.

Thursday, April 12:

The weather is bad today, rain and windy. Making wood in the shed. No news of any progress. My stomach is bothering me, diarrhea.

(Then a day later I added this news) This afternoon President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died.

Friday, April 13:

Last night the Matschilles came. I don't feel very well today. President Roosevelt is dead.

I finished the book *der liebe Augustin*, 'the jovial Augustin', a fun story to read. Now I read a book about the ancient Romans. Mostly books from Hedwig she uses in school.

Saturday, April 14:

I feel better today. Forenoon the Matschilles went back to Munich by train. They were lucky, no fighters shooting them up. But then, in all fairness, the fighters just went after the locomotives and not the trains. Luitpold came by and told me to visit my mother on Monday. Chopping wood. A little more action on the radio. German units delaying the

British advance towards Bremen. Bamberg abandoned to the enemy. I don't remember where Bamberg is. American units advancing towards Chemnitz. That is in eastern Germany. Why do they go east instead of coming south towards us?

Sunday, April 15:

Brandl and I went into the Griss for more wood. There is even some driftwood along the river we pulled out and let it dry.

Monday, April 16:

At nine in the morning, a nice sunny day, I bicycled off on my own bike. Brandl-father had found an old tube and tire for me. Into Landau, my first visit to the town. No flags, no Brownshirts, all is well. Across the big stone bridge over the Isar river. When I looked down, 'that water had come from my old city, Munich'. Up the long hill leading into the upper part of Landau. Then the highway would take me to Miesbach, my mom's place.

Just outside town – pchhhh, a flat and I had no repair kit. I had gotten so far, the next five miles I would walk. Just then 3 girls came by on their bikes and one shouted Heil Hitler to me. I said something not very nice to her, about kissing a certain body part. They laughed and stopped , and one offered me her repair kit.

Luitpold had explained to me that just before I came into the village of Miesbach there would be a hill to the left with the farm house standing in the middle and a dirt road leading to it. I got there before noon and lunch was soon ready. A feast for me. The farmer Alois and his wife Fanny were nice people. They have one big dog on a chain, Nero, we got along fine. In the afternoon I worked in their garden, weeding.

(I am amazed in reading these lines that I said nothing about meeting my mother. Here we hadn't seen each other for three months. We were both well taken care of. My safe trip to Munich, the end near. Yet I fail to even mention meeting her! I can only subscribe it to my inborn reluctance to show any emotion, express love openly - this from my father's side. Add to that a similar strain of keeping ones feeling and emotions hidden coming from the Reiters, my mother's families, it was just not necessary for me to express my happiness in seeing my mother again. The love was in my heart and not my pencil.)

That night and the following days we could hear the rumbling of bombings far away. At night the sky was red towards Regensburg, Straubing and Plattling. The farm is halfway up a hill and one can see far to the west and north.

Tuesday, April 17:

I got up early. In the morning we had egg soup for breakfast, they eat well here. I thought how miserable people lived in Munich. Little to eat, few stores left to buy from, and the constant air raids. But that is the way life is, here good, there bad. By evening I had finished the garden, weeding, planting and so forth. The evening news reports battle for Nuremberg, that close already!

Wednesday, April 18:

Morning I worked with the farmer and his hands in the field planting potatoes. For those who don't know, potatoes are planted by a seedling potato stuck in the ground. A bush grows above it and many potatoes as roots under the earth. For lunch we had *Hasenoehrl*, a Bavarian dish made of strips of dough fried in fat, together with apple sauce.

All day long cars, trucks and cannons drove by seemingly going in both directions. At five in the afternoon I started my trip back to the Brandls. Alois the farmer paid me for my work with a 50 lb bag of grain. I tied it to the rack of my bicycle. Good-by to all, good-by to mom. I knew the next time we would see each other would be after the war – if!

When I came close to Landau I saw a lot of soldiers around. Down the long hill towards the bridge. The road curved at the bottom of the hill to the left and then there was the bridge. When I turned the corner I saw them. Military police checking all traffic. One can recognize the *Feld Gendamerie*, ‘military police’ by their shiny shields they wear around their chest. I dreaded them having been told by Willi and others that they were merciless towards the soldiers and probably not any different to civilians. How to get passed that control? It was too late for me to turn around, that is always suspicious. I just kept going straight for the control, slowed down as if to stop and began swaying as if my big sack was making me fall off the bike, and the policeman waved me on! On the bridge I saw a number of bombs ready to be placed for blowing up the bridge.

When I came home to the Brandls joyous news. Sensational news! Regensburg given up without a fight. Tanks near Straubing. 2500 parachutists landed near Plattling and others at Landshut. I believed my people, the Brandls and Helldoblers are all crazy. They expect the Americans to be here tomorrow. The radio sobered us all up. Only reported heavy fighting around Nuremberg, nothing about Regensburg.

Brandl showed me a newspaper a few days old. It showed in heavy print:

BERLIN BLEIBT DEUTSCH

BERLIN REMAINS GERMAN

WIEN WIRD DEUTSCH

VIENNA WILL BE GERMAN

EUROPA WIRD NIE RUSSISCH

EUROPE WILL NEVER BE RUSSIAN

So spoke Hitler in April of 1945.

Thursday, April 19:

This morning Brandl-mother went to Landau on her bicycle. When she came back she told that yesterday everything was sold without food stamps and clothing coupons in Landau .(That was true. Everything else had been rumors.)

Today everybody is sober again. I really believe we won't see the Allies until May. It probably isn't that the Germans fight to the last in desperation. I think it is more that the American soldiers are cautious and do not want to be killed at the war's end. I am just glad that things are going well with my mother and she has a good place to stay. She deserved it after the terrible times in Munich and with her sister in Vilshofen. She had been on the brink to go back to Munich, bombing and all, just to get away from her sister.

Friends you can chose but not relatives.

Today I received a letter from a girl unknown to me. She wrote she would be happy to meet me in Landau on Sunday. Until this war is over I am not interested in meeting anyone. Hedwig's doing probably. I just hope she didn't tell the girl that I am Jewish.

The evening news the same as yesterday, fighting in Nuremberg.

Friday, April 20:

The weather is beautiful again. The windows rattled and far away rumbling could be heard. When I looked out smoke could be seen in the direction of Plattling. Later in the

morning wave after wave of bombers flew overhead. In the afternoon a formation of Marauders came by low a few times, looking for trains or military traffic on the highway. They are Vickers Wellingtons or Bristol Blenheims. (Most likely they were American B-25s).

I get so mad when I hear reports about concentration camp atrocities. I hate anything that is Nazi or Swastika. During the afternoon two men came by and asked for water. They came from the prison in Rosenheim (near Munich). One was imprisoned for four years because they confiscated his property and he took it back. The other was in two years because he butchered a pig illegally. They told us about conditions in camps. (Meaning Dachau. They knew nothing about the death-camps.) They came by foot from Rosenheim and wanted to continue to Prague. Walk as there were no more trains running. They told us a thousand people held demonstrations in Munich and marched through the city demanding an end to the war. The same in Berlin. (I don't know about Berlin. There was a revolt in Munich a few days later. In Berlin with fanatical German troops fighting the Russians it would have been impossible for anyone to demonstrate.)

Evening news: Nuremberg abandoned to the enemy. Neumarkt occupied by the Americans. Spearheads 50 km from Regensburg.

Saturday, April 21:

Today little happened. In the morning planes bombed Straubing A soldier said that yesterday a fuel dump was hit in Deggendorf. That could have been the smoke we saw.

During the afternoon the weather turned bad, thunderstorms. People are now walking along the highway, no trains running. Little military traffic. Some of the people came in to get out from under the downpour. When they talked at all about the war it was that it all would soon be over, the Americans were coming. Except for two *RAD* men, 'Labor Service Officer'. The two were talking about the Fuehrer's speech and how the new wonder weapons would soon be available and drive the Americans out faster than they came in. And if that wouldn't do, then go together with the Amis against the Russkies. Totally stupid I thought. Hitler was still doing his magic tricks to some people. Everybody just let them talk. They were still in power.

Sunday, April 22:

Outside real April weather – storm and rain. After lunch the two *RAD* leaders came back. I had seen Rosel and Hedwig make eyes to them the day before, now they were back. I went upstairs not to have to listen to their stupid talk. Or ask about me, why I wasn't in the labor service, I was old enough for that. They stayed until the evening. When they left three Germany army officers came in to warm up and one stayed over night in the barn.

Monday, April 23:

Storm and rain the whole day. During the morning the two *RAD* leaders came back with two soldiers, I went back upstairs. At noon they all left and I heard Brandl-mother chew

out the girls, then they cried, I was disgusted with them. Then the window vibrated. I looked out the window and saw a dive bomber come down and release two bombs at the rail station. Then a couple other bombers did the same, destroying the station and track. It didn't matter anymore, there were no more trains running. In the afternoon more small bombers came and worked over the *Luftwaffe* air field at Canacker, north of Pilsting, about five miles from us.

The news that evening: battle for Berlin. Americans 40 km from Regensburg.

Tuesday, April 24:

Early in the morning the fighter-bombers came back looking for targets. The wind has stopped. Around six in the evening there was a loud rumbling from south of us.

Bombing the town of Dingolfing, now the smaller towns were getting it too. Probably full of German troops digging in on the other side of the Isar which is a pretty wide river.

The weather had cleared by then. Shortly after we heard bombing north which meant the town of Plattling. And then another bomber formation came, this time bigger planes, and carpeted Canacker air field. I saw the many bombs explode like black mushrooms popping up and a short time later came the booming of the explosions.

OKW report: Ulm has fallen to the Americans. Spearheads before Augsburg. 20 km from Regensburg. Slowly but surely.

This evening the United Nation World Conference met in San Francisco or were suppose to meet, the radio said something to this effect. Perhaps the world leaders can manage it to make peace and keep the world from having any more wars, for a few decades anyhow. We shall see.

(No such success. The Soviet Union occupied and devoured Eastern Europe. The Arabs tried to annihilate the new born state of Israel. The Indians and Pakistanis were at each other's throats. And five years later, in June of 1950, the Korean war began. War begets wars.)

Wednesday, April 25:

It is a beautiful day. At noon bombers, wave after wave flew by. In the afternoon again. At noon two soldiers posted themselves at the road junction and checked all traffic going by. All who were walking, all traffic was stopped and checked by them. I saw their metal shields, the dreaded military police. Towards evening they were relieved by two other police, control was there all night. In the evening the door opened and one of them came in.

He wanted to read a letter by our light. And then I saw by his badges and the skull on his hat that they were from the *Totenkopf Verband*, 'the Death-Head' SS unit that was guarding Dachau. I kept on reading, my stomach in knots worse than during an air raid.

I just hoped he wouldn't check us out – me! He read his letter and left.

News: artillery fire into Regensburg. We could hear it all night, made the windows rattle.

Thursday, April 26:

The weather is cloudy again. I stayed in my room all day, and just came down to eat.

The SS control outside is getting on everybody's nerves. As a little kid I loved to play hide and seek, now it has become serious business. If they (Americans) would only

come soon. They have to cross the Danube from the north and come down south. I believe they will first get to Munich before to us. I gladly wait another fortnight or however long it takes as long as the SS does not get me first or a misdirected bomb hit us.

It was the same in Munich for so many years. The Gestapo always threatening. Always afraid that they come and arrest me and the air raids from the other side. I surely didn't want to disappear into a camp never too be heard from again or be counted as one of the unknown victims of a bombing attack. Not at the last minute.

Sitting alone here in the darkness of my room I remember when we sang this beautiful song:

Juedische Jugend sei stark und fest

Nach vorne richte Deinen Blick...

Jewish youth be strong and brave

Ahead you must turn your gaze...

There was nothing else I could do but to look forward to the next hour, the next day and hope I make it. So close. Oh God, protect me from them just a little longer.

During the day low flying fighter planes all over the place.

Friday, April 27:

All day I spent in my room upstairs as at any moment one of the SS could come in.

Often low flying planes made the two SS-police seek shelter by our house, though they never came in. With evening came a thunderstorm and it poured. Sometimes it looked as if fire was streaking from the heavens momentarily lighting up the darkness. The two would take shelter in their car. When the storm was passed and outside darkness, I came down to eat. Just then a soldier came in...and on his heels the two SS. While one

checked the soldier the other wanted to know who we were. Brandl-mother introduced her family ignoring me. "And who are you!" He pointed at me eating. Brandl-mother quickly said "He is my nephew from Munich. He was bombed out and lost everything." Her face red, embarrassed, showing lies. Oh God, my stomach all cramped up, my heart pounding madly. My face probably as white as the soldiers. At that moment the other SS man said, "*schau mal her, dem seine Papiere stimmen nicht*", "look here, something wrong with his papers." They both checked the soldier's papers. The man in fright, white in the face. Then the one who asked about me and obviously in charge of the patrol said to the soldier "*Sie kommen mit uns.*" "You come with us." And they took the soldier away. As soon as they had left I went into the tool shed and hid behind the lumber, piled loose pieces all around me. They didn't come back. I heard a car leave. That was close. The closest I had ever come in being found out. After years of living under the Gestapo, enduring the ever violent increasing air raids – at the last moment this scare. After midnight I came out from my hiding place and looked at the road junction. No car, no men. They were gone.

(Later, even today when I think about this incident I get palpitations. It was at the last moment that this unfortunate soldier, who had something wrong with his papers, saved my life. Frau Brandl wouldn't have been able to cope with any further questioning. Her face flushed and grimacing and lies written all over it. I was at the age where I should have been in the *Volksturm*, the boys and old men's grenadiers.

This *SS Totenkopf* 'Deathhead unit', driven by Americans from the Dachau concentration camp, instead of fighting the Americans or disbanding, decided to continue in their terror.

They formed roadblocks in many places, like our road junction, looking mainly for deserters from the German army. At this point in the war many army and air force units were disintegrating, just dissolving, told by their officers to make their way home, survive until the end came. For many the end came with a rope tied around their necks or with a *Genickschuss*. These SS patrols collected them, brought them before a kangaroo court of SS officers, condemned to death for desertion and summarily hung or shot.

Many a German wife or mother will never know that her man, declared missing in action, was really murdered by the SS.

After the Americans came, not far from our house, such a soldier was found – with a rope around his neck. He was, as the girls told us, laying on the highway and had been run over by trucks, his insides all spilled out. I didn't go and see. I wasn't, and never became, a sensation seeker. I didn't need this questionable thrill of looking at a mutilated body as our girls did.

Saturday, April 28

“THE WAR IS OVER!” With these words for which I had longed for so many years Brandl-father woke me up. Can it be really true? No SS men by the road. Nothing to be seen outside. Funny, my toothpowder is finished. When I got the can in February I thought, by the time I use that up the war should be finished too. When I went downstairs the Radio just announced “*Freiheitssender Muenchen*”, “Freedom station Munich. News for all Bavarians. Who continues to fight is a war criminal...” More we didn't dare listen to as a soldier was in the room.

At two in the afternoon he was gone and we listened again. This time it was the regular broadcast of the Bavarian Radio, news as usual. Then the announcement that traitors had occupied the radio station and made treacherous broadcasts. All had been arrested and will be dealt with.

So the fighting goes on. But other fabulous news from the OKW. Stettin, Bremen, Regensburg, Ingolstadt fell to the enemy. Berlin encircled. Americans 50 km from Munich after having bypassed Augsburg. Kempten and Friedrichshafen fell to French units. And all this admitted in the German news!

CHAPTER XIII

The End of the War

“Amerikanische Panzer!”

Sunday, April 29:

I got up late. Went to the pump behind the house to wash and just brushed my teeth, without powder now, when I heard machinegun fire. Strange, I didn't hear any planes. The firing came closer, I heard the swishing sound of bullets overhead. Then the booming of a gun. Puzzled by it all I went into the house when Brandl-mother screamed "*Amerikanische Panzer!*" 'American tanks!' I looked out the window and saw the most beautiful sight in my life! A tank standing before the house on the highway with a big white star on the side! I raced upstairs to get a white sheet to show our peaceful intentions. The firing had been right over our house. I didn't understand why? (What had happened was that the American tank column came across the field on a dirt road that joined our highway about a hundred yards up the road. A German truck came along and stopped at the dirt road, probably staring in surprise at the American tanks. Instead of being sensible, getting out and raising his hands and saying 'hello' he panicked and took off down the highway racing past our house. The lead tank just turned his turret and fired after the truck with his machinegun and canon. I guess for a brief moment the fire came over our house which is down in a draw. Both the antenna on the house and the electric wire leading to the main line were shot off. Some of the cannon shots went wild and hit some houses by the station. They got the truck further down the highway.)

When I came down in the courtyard with my white flag, three civilians and a German soldier stood there, looking for shelter from the firing.

Then two American soldiers came from the street where their tank stood with pistols in their hands. MY FIRST AMERICANS! I could have just thrown my arms around them.

Oh God, it was true. I can still cry thinking about this extraordinary happy moment!

They asked the soldier if he was SS. He wasn't. They left him alone, he didn't have any weapons on him. They went back to their tank. Then preceded by a funny looking open car (a jeep) the tank column went along the highway towards Landau. Just then loud explosions from Landau and a mushroom of dirt shooting up. They had blown the bridge.

And with an even louder boom the railroad bridge across from us blew up, really rattled the windows and shook our house. Soon that tank column came back, spread out along the road junction and highway and fired at Maming, a village past the station and before Landau. (They had built a roadblock before the village. I had seen it when I drove by a week before. I never thought they would close it and block the road.) Soon the village was burning and white flags appeared. Some more of these open cars came and they talked with each other and they all went down the road towards Landau. I finally fixed the sheet to a pole and climbed on the roof and fastened the flag to what was left of the antenna. I heard some bullets swish by, they were shooting at me from across the river! Our side is flat but the other side of the river is hilly and forested. I didn't think they could shoot that far but I got off the roof very fast.

It wasn't until all the excitement was over a little when we realized what had happened. And in our joy we embraced in happiness. These good people had saved me, and their other fugitive son, Luitpold would also be saved.

Just American military traffic going by all afternoon. I stayed glued to the window, taking it all in. Mom should be safe on the other side. She wasn't close to the river at least three miles inland. A few more days and she would be liberated too.

The Brandl's had me sleep in the kitchen at night on the sofa, just in case American soldiers came in, I, with my school English was to be the reception committee. At two in the morning seven soldiers did come in and slept on the floor in the kitchen. I gave one the sofa and slept on a chair. They got up early in the morning, I lit some candles as we had no electricity. I got water from the pump and build a fire for them to cook things. They were very decent to me, I being the enemy?

They cooked breakfast from little bags of powders and cans. Even eggs, already cooked, came in cans. Crackers, a white bread filled with raisins. Coffee and cocoa and milk from powder. All things we hadn't seen for years or never.

When they left it was still dark outside. I laid down again and reminiscent.

It was all over, just like that. I just think...and tears. The terrible Nazis. What they had done to my people. My classmates, my friends whom I had all considered family, I knew they were not alive. Yet I hoped. The city of Munich – my city destroyed. Yes I wanted Munich bombed, to hit the Nazis. And yes I felt sorry for the people burned in the vault of the bank across the street from us. The soldiers I had seen torn apart in the dugout of Oberwiesenfeld. The two men I had seen in the cellar, buried up to their heads in rubble. All Hitler's and the Nazis' victims.

When it became light outside I got up and washed. Brandl-mother came down and we went through all the cans scrapping out morsels and shook out the bags for a little coffee and cocoa. It was Monday morning.

THE SHOOT-OUT

Monday, April 30:

In the morning the shooting began. There were three batteries of artillery emplaced behind the highway but there weren't firing. It was cannons closer to the town I heard firing across the river. Big trucks with trailers moved by, loaded with pontoons, some had boats. They must be getting ready to cross the river and build a bridge. During the morning the people from the rail station came in, they were scared by all the shooting. Sometimes American soldiers came in and asked for eggs. The first one who came Hedwig gave him all the nine eggs we had. So we had a lot of in and out traffic.

I watched the Americans, nobody seemed to walk, no troops marching by. Lots of tanks, trucks with trailers and those open cars. There were in the Griss to the river and blown railroad bridge.

And then at noon the big shooting started, it came from across the river. Fountains of black dirt in the Griss. Then I could hear shells swishing above us and exploding in the field behind us. A soldier came into the house and told us to take the white flag down, they were aiming at us. So I scampered up on the roof and tore the sheet off. Some explosion to either side of us now and dirt sprayed up. Some hits close so our house got sprayed with dirt. I remembered the explosion of bombs and that even far away hits break the windows so we opened them all.

And then all hell broke loose on our side. The tanks along the highway were firing at the wooded area on the other side of the river. And the three batteries in the fields behind the highway opened up at some distant target. In the afternoon the cannonade began again.

The distant target was of course my mother's place. And while I knew nothing of what had happened I found out a few days later when I went over to my mother and saw the hill side where the farm stood, all cratered, and my mother told me what had happened. She told it all in her story. But here I can add my side of the happening and put the two experiences together in a brief account of the 'shoot-out.'

The day the Americans came to us, Liberation Day for me, Sunday 29 April at 9:30 in the morning; my mother did not know what had happened on the other side of the river. There were plenty of low flying planes around but they had been there daily for a week. She heard some far away shooting and then the big detonations when the two bridges blew up. Her farm house is in a straight line from Goblen to the east and about 3 or 4 miles from the river. By road it is at least 15 miles as one has to go through Landau to get across the bridge.

Monday morning a battery of German artillery came and set up their cannons on the hill.

They made their headquarters in the kitchen where the farmer's wife and my mother were cooking. They put their maps on the kitchen table and had a phone connection to observers on the river. My mother then overheard them talking about American tanks observed at the road junction of Goblen. Mom knew very well where Goblen was. When she heard the officer give the command to fire at Goblen she begged him not to shoot there as there is where her boy lived. His answer, if we remember it from her story, was that so many had died in this war that a few more don't matter. They began to fire at Goblen, the little house with the white flag on. That was when I climbed on the roof and tore the sheet off.

The Americans didn't like at all being shot at. They had reconnaissance planes in the air all day and they must have spotted very quickly where the firing came from, and our three batteries went into action shooting at mom's German battery. A few shots for zeroing in was enough for the brave battery commander to have his soldiers pack up and get out fast leaving the farm house and its occupants to bear the punishment.

However, then the firing soon stopped when our batteries were told that the Germans had pulled out. The firing of our tanks against the forested hill probably was meant to drive out any observers and German soldiers shooting from across the river.

In the afternoon the firing resumed at the farmhouse when the plane spotted the SS digging in and the farm people and my poor mother got a second dose – and miraculously the farm house was never hit!

In the evening we saw fires in Landau. We were still in a kind of exhilarating shock that it was all over, for them, for me. The older Brandls understood very well the risk they had taken in hiding me. And congratulated me again and again that I had 'made it.'

During the night all was fairly quiet.

Tuesday, May 1:

For a war zone it was pretty quite all day with little shooting of artillery. Lots of military traffic going by in the direction of Landau. The Americans were on the other side of the river as I could see them move through the wooded hills. I wonder how my mother is doing. She should be liberated by now! In the next few days I want to go to her.

Wednesday, May 2:

It snowed during the night and it is all white outside. Last evening we got electricity back. I don't know who connected us to the grid. This morning we could listen to the

news and some news it is! And this was still the Bavarian broadcast station, wherever it was located. Hitler dead. Died yesterday of a stroke. (Which was a lie by the station but then they must have received the report from Berlin telling the last falsehoods. As we know Hitler killed himself on April 30th.) Admiral Doenitz named as his successor. No word of Himmler or Goebbels. The satanic conspiracy is dissolving. All guilty must be brought to justice, foremost the SS and Gestapo.

Further news: Landshut and Munich fell to the enemy. The Inn river crossed, and outside Linz. Garmisch taken by the Americans. 15 km from Innsbruck. These are the German news we were listening too giving such a detailed report of what was happening. And no slogans anymore of the wonder weapons, ‘the final victory is ours’, or that the Americans are about to march against Russia. It is all over. Finally the biggest and most cruel war machine is collapsing around the monsters who created and controlled it.

Thursday, May 3:

This morning I drove with my bicycle to visit my mother. I was elated – happy! These were all moments I had never fantasized or dreamed about. Like something precious you don’t want it to dissolve into a mirage, and maybe a little bit of boyish superstition. You want something badly and dream about it, and it will never happen.

The bridge in Landau blown into the river. The Americans had built a pontoon bridge alongside but they would not let civilians use it. Made sense. I talked to the bridge guard in halting English that I wasn’t a German but Jewish. I was right of course in that in 1941 the Nazi government had taken the German citizenship away from all Jews.

The guard called a soldier over from a truck, they talked and the soldier took me to his truck, they put my bicycle up and over we went. Thanks Yankees.

At noon I got to the farm. My mother was just as happy to see me as I was. In our reserved Holzmänn/Reiter tradition we didn't fall into each other's arms, embrace and kiss and maybe cry – but just shook hands, “Hi Mom!” It is in the heart that counts. She said she had worried about me – the shooting. Later she showed me around the hill side full with craters. The farmhouse spared, just windows blown in and shrapnel scars. It was only then that we realized we had been shooting at each other.

But I told her nothing about my close call with the SS which was a lot more terrifying then get bombarded by artillery.

We had a feast that evening. Farmers sure eat well and they have all the treasures stashed. Besides each day they have fresh milk and eggs.

Friday, May 4:

I would love to stay here for a while if only because of the good food. But mom wanted me to get back to Munich as quickly as possible and look for us for a place to stay. We also desperately needed clothing, bedding, everything. So in the afternoon I said good bye to mom and the nice farm folks and drove back. They gave me a round loaf of farmers bread, some cheese and smoked meat to take along.

This time a guard didn't let me cross the bridge, I needed the town commander's permission. There was also a ferry built further up the river and here the soldiers took me across. I quickly learned with Americans that a NO doesn't necessarily mean no to everyone. They are very individualistic.

The news that night: On Thursday the German and Fascist Italian forces capitulated in Italy and Austria. Today the German also laid down their arms in Denmark and Holland.

The German radio reporting this all as a matter of fact in the same emotionless voice as the victories were announced four years ago. But this time it sounded a lot better. No more propaganda.

Saturday, May 5:

Since yesterday we have stormy weather. In the morning I bicycled to Pilsting village, they have an American commander there. All travel is restricted on highways so I need a permit to go to Munich. I was told I needed to go to Landau for that.

Luitpold came today. (I see in my diary where for the first time I spelled out his name. Previously I indicated his name only with a question mark.)

News: Linz, Salzburg, Berchtesgaden *gefallen*, 'lost'. The radio still reporting it as from the German side. But what sensational announcements, Munich in Americans hands, Berchtesgaden lost. Both Hitler's homes. Historical news!

It all began to come apart two weeks ago, April 20th, Hitler's birthday, when the radio announced Nuremberg fell to the Americans. Nuremberg is in the middle of Germany though far to the north from us. These two weeks so much happened, all crammed together. It seemed the Nuremberg battle happened only yesterday. Each day had been a desperate wish for the Americans to come faster. Then suddenly there were here. An American tank standing outside our house. LIBERATION. I still haven't had time to think about it all. The Nazis now just a bad dream. No Nazis anymore! No Swastikas

seen any place. No banners with 'Final Victory is Ours'. And no more Gestapo and SS to terrorize anyone.

The nightmare is finished. So far I haven't found the time or mood to just sit down quietly and contemplate it all, savor it. The quickness of it all just overwhelmed me.

Sunday, May 6:

It is now a week that the Americans came. Six desperate years I waited for them. When the war started with Germany's attack on Poland, and the British and French came in, I knew that without American help England could never defeat Germany. And now it is all so normal. No war, no Nazis. Too normal really.

If the stormy weather stops I leave on Tuesday for Munich. Tomorrow I want to go to Landau and get a permit to travel. For lunch we had potato dumplings. The first time since I came. Brandl-mother had opened some more jars of calf and made a stew.

Willy had come home too. He seemed as happy as we were that the war was just about over.

Monday, May 7:

CAPITULATION OF GERMANY. UNCONDITIONAL! The very end of the Nazis. It is all over! The capitulation of the Wehrmacht was signed at 02:41 by Jodl (Gen. Jodl of the German High Command.)

During the morning I saw many planes land at Canacker air field. In the afternoon I bicycled to Landau. In the office of the military governor a German did the interpreting. I told him that I was Jewish, had hidden in the neighborhood and wanted to return to Munich. I understood enough English that I knew he said nothing about my being

Jewish and had been in hiding. The American officer said I should come back in a week.

Well I tried, but I can go without a permit.

The radio reported that all German forces had capitulated. Tomorrow on Tuesday, Winston Churchill and King George will speak.

In the evening Willy played his harmonica and we sang. Then Brandl-father, Willy, Luitpold and I played cards until two in the morning. The Brandls had a full and happy house.

Tuesday, 8 May:

In the morning I left my Brandl family; I would be back. It was a nice day again and with the warm sun shining down and my small suitcase strapped to the rack and a bag with my food hanging on the handlebar I was in a very happy mood. Twenty miles south I reached Dingolfing and hit an American roadblock. They told me to take the ferry across and visit the military office. The bridge here blown too and the pontoon bridge just for the military. I told the very nice officer my story in my school English and he told me to stay in town for a week until travel regulations came out. He had an interpreter but I didn't want to make the same mistake again. But he sent the German along to take me to the mayor's office and make sure I get a good place to stay. The mayor was very accommodating and sent me to a very nice farm family at the edge of town. There I had my own room, three fine meals a day, and they had a little library. It was such a beautiful day. In the afternoon I walked down to the river, sat along its bank. The water dark and roily, spring run off from the mountains. I regarded the little

ripples as greetings from Munich. And here I was resting and I could do my contemplating. The warm sun, the quiet Isar flowing by, all around in summer bloom. Peace – and I was at peace. The knowledge that I was a free person. No longer the stomach twisting fear of being discovered, no more fear at all. It felt good to be alive and free. And my mother safe. My sister in America, in Philadelphia. She would be wondering if mom and I were still alive. My friends who had disappeared, a forlorn hope.

I would have to wait until I get back to Munich. My old friend Willi missing in Russia. I think I dozed off laying there in the grass, how beautiful life is.

Wednesday, May 9:

Just quiet summer solitude. I went for walks, sat by the river reading. Walked through the old farm town of Dingolfing, I didn't see any destruction here. Whatever we had seen bombed towards this town must have been an airfield or military installation. In the office they told me the officer was away and besides a civilian administrator would come on Friday. I also met some other people from Munich who wanted to go home.

Thursday, May 10:

I really felt good here and wished I could stay longer. The Huber family I lived with were nice and fed me well. I had the run of the house. When we sat together in the evening they listened to the radio and avoided conversation. No talk about the war, the Americans here. They did not want to know my story. I was glad, yet, can you just pretend it had never happened? I felt they had been former Nazis and the mayor, probably himself a former party member, sent me to them so they could do something good for a change. Just my feeling. It didn't matter.

After lunch of salad, chops, roast potatoes and berries for desert I drove to Rimbach, a village about 10 miles away. The Matchilles had relatives there and said they would await the end of the war with them. Brandl-mother had told me and given me the name of the relatives. However, they happened to have gone to Goben. I left my address with them.

When I returned there was a big commotion on the river. The ferry laden with a wagon and horses had torn loose, hit the pontoon bridge and sank. Now they let the civilian use the bridge too.

Later I went into an inn and had a glass of beer. How and where from I had any money I don't remember. But it felt good to sit down a free man, or boy, and order a glass of beer.

Today was a holiday. I don't know what holiday it could be, not official, perhaps a religious one, Whitsun? For me every day is now a holiday.

Friday, May 11:

Just a day of rest. Three good meals. Walking around and sitting in the sunshine down by the river, doing nothing, not even contemplating. Being gloriously lazy and relaxed.

Saturday, May 12:

The civilian administrator didn't come. Now he is suppose to be here Monday. Frau Huber, my hostess wanted me wait. I could stay with them as long as I wanted to.

During the morning Herr Matschilles came by, they had gotten my note. I promised him to come later, they wanted to go back to Munich the next day, so did I.

I left the nice family in the afternoon and they gave me a bag of picnic to take along.

It was only ten miles of sunshine to Riembach, past fields and cattle grazing, .

Sunday, May 13:

I had slept in the hay in the barn. Early in the morning we started out. The Matschilles had all their baggage on a cart and had to push it, a long way to get to Munich. Frau Matschilles wanted me to go ahead and not have to walk with them and I was anxious to get to Munich. With my lay over in Dingolfing my mother might have found transportation and be already in Munich. So I said good by to the very nice women and her usually grouchy husband and went on my way to Munich. Before Landshut a check point, just about the same place where the Brownshirts had stopped the traffic back in March when I came through. Remembering that minor incident made me shudder with revulsion. Now I welcomed a check point by American soldiers. They were not interested in me. Many people on the road and they were more concerned to get German soldiers to POW camps to register and then release them as long as they were not SS. The SS they kept. Good! I passed through Landshut, and it gave me the shivers remembering the last time I came through here in March, with flags still flying on some buildings and banners with slogans of 'believe in the Fuehrer and final victory' and stuff like that. Landshut, rightly or wrongly, had always been for me the image of a real Nazi town. Maybe because it was Himmler's hometown.

I hit another checkpoint coming out of the town. This time there was a delay, I talked to some of the soldiers. One was from Philadelphia and offered to send word to my sister. I knew her address of 1941 when we had last received a letter from her through the Red Cross. Then on again. Along a stretch through a wooded area three men blocked my way. *Ostarbeiter*, 'forced laborers from the east,' and they wanted my bicycle. I finally convinced them that I was a forced laborer myself just like them and a fugitive from the

Nazis. Now I could have used my Jewish ID card or the star. A couple of miles along came a big American camp, a tent city really. I thought maybe I can scrounge some food or bread. I had my picnic stuff but if my mother was already in Munich she might be hungry. The guard at the entrance pointed to a tent which had its sides rolled up and a couple soldiers sitting on small tables and typing. A soldier with a lot of stripes on his sleeves was reading a paper and smoking a cigar. (A good guess is that he was the first sergeant.) He sent me to the baker's tent and there I got a fresh loaf of white bread. How good it smelled and too good to eat. I stashed it in my bag.

Three times before I got to Munich I had to repair a hole in my front tube. Brandl-father had given me a repair kit to take along and a hand pump. At five in the afternoon I got to Freimann, the outskirts of Munich. A 10 minute drive along the Ungererstrasse and I was at the Jewish Cemetery. My first visit to anyone in freedom would be with my father. Herr Schoerghofer, the same caretaker as in olden times, let me in.

I walked past the temple on my left, to my right the memorial to the Jewish soldiers of the First World War who fought and died for Germany. The hedge of lilacs now in full bloom, what we called double lilac, big candles of purple and white, I could smell them. Through the hedge into the cemetery, I remembered the path very well. I used to come here just about every Sunday before the war, the long walk from home with my mother. Then the thirst-quenching glass of lemonade at the stand outside which was really the highlight of my visit to the cemetery. I saw a lot of bomb craters around. Whoever did the bombing and was after the SS Kaserne complex outside sure missed them and instead disturbed the silent ones here. Four rows up and turn right. And there was my father's graveside. A square headstone laying flat, I cleaned off the dirt and debris.

MARTIN HOLZMANN, 1884-1934. Behind the stone the red rosebush now grown wild. I talked to my father, I don't remember what I said. Tears rolling down my face, lately tears seemed to come so easy, I didn't need to hold it all in anymore, I could be happy or sad, as I wished. I put a stone on his cleaned headstone, a Jewish tradition, leaving a little 'hello.'

When I went back by the admin building Herr Schoerghofer came out and greeted me more warmly. He remembered me from five, six years ago when I came with my mother. He was genuinely happy that I had made it. He told me the story of Clairle Schwalb and Kurt Kahn whom he had hidden here. Somebody had seen them and denounced them and the Gestapo came and picked them up. They escaped from the Gestapo and are alive and well.

Since it was on the way I drove by my old working place, the Buchner garden. Being Sunday I knew nobody would be around, but the gate was open and I met Herr Lindemann, chatted with him for a while. Then went across the street to the inn and met them all. Herr Stoecher, his wife and their son Josef. That was a hearty welcome. They didn't know what had happened to me after that big air raid in January. Buchner had told them that my house had been destroyed and when he checked if we picked up our ration cards we had not shown up. I was declared missing, dead or what. We had dinner together that evening and they let me sleep in one of their rooms. Good people and not 'Johnny come lately' anti-Nazis. Good to see their one-arm son Josef again.

Monday, May 14:

In the morning I pushed it – my cycle had a blow-out again and I out of glue and patch – to Herr Spitzelberger. He now lived at the Joseph Platz. Broken down house but he

fixed up the basement and made it livable. He was surprised and happy to see me again. One good man! His son Alfons also made it. I walked down the Augustenstrasse to my old house. The whole area just an enormous field of rubble and burned out shells. The north of Munich must be about 95 percent destroyed. Many of the flattened blocks bombed and bombed again repeatedly. One thing they had accomplished in the four months I had been gone, they cleared the rubble of the streets but not off the sidewalks. I walked past my house. Maybe I felt a little nostalgia, I had spent my childhood here, and a happy child I had been until? When had it become bad for me, the Nazi oppression really affected me?

It was the star wearing! Then two months later the deportations began. It was all finished now. The good times, the bad times. Like everybody else, when things are good I had a happy time as a boy, I had wished that time would stand still. The bad times, and most of the past nightmares were bad times, every day, every hour seemed endless.

I walked to the Luisenstrasse and visited the Penzias.

Max wasn't home but his wife and young son Rudi were. Frau Penzias told me that my mother was in town and had been looking for me. She had her address,

Berger-Kreuzstrasse 39, in Ramersdorf. Way out at the east side of town. Back to Spitzelberger who loaned me his bicycle and promised to fix mine. Packed my valise and bag of food. I drove through downtown, desolate, fields of rubble and empty shells but the streets passable. All traffic military vehicles - beautiful, the Americans in Munich! Past the Marienplatz, the Thal where Frau Geiger lived, I had no desire to see her again. Herr Strauss lived there at the Isartor but I was now in a rush to get home. Home? My mother must have found a place for her and me. Across the Isar river bridge,

I saw all bridges standing. Whoever was the German military commander in Munich had more sense than the ones in Landau and Dingolfing. To the right the Deutsche Museum, it looked heavily damaged. Out the endless Rosenheimerstrasse, here the destruction was more isolated.

Ramersdorf, a large square and the end stop of the streetcar line 4, on one corner the ancient church. From there I had to ask my way. And then I stood before the house. A nice modern villa, two story. I saw the name Holzmann next to Lippe for the second floor. I rung the bell, and my mother came out... "hi mom."

E N D

Yes, end of I, Hugo – a Jewish boy in Nazi-Munich, but also a new beginning. Of life in Freedom, and going to the Land of the Free – to America.

C h a p t e r XIV

To America

The post war year of 1945, was a very difficult time. Little if anything to eat, though we ate our bread in freedom. We had literally nothing except what we wore and a few changes of underwear, and that was it. We left at the beginning of 1947, for the dream land of America. Those who stayed endured hardship until 1948, when miraculously the German economy perked up with help of the Marshall Plan and they instituted a money reform. With the new Mark everything became available over night though nobody had much money, everybody started out the same way. Until that time the old Reichsmark was in circulation, almost worthless and still used with Pfennigs and all. The same ration cards were used, though later versions left off the Swastika. We Jews received the same cards as anyone else. No one was now privileged or underprivileged, which was fine. The problem was to find food for food stamps.

Munich, in the days of its short revolt and before the Americans came in and established order, had been plundered, looted. I wasn't there when it happened I only heard about it. Both the freed forced laborers from all over Europe who were in camps around the city and the people from Munich, joined and looted the warehouses where the food was stored. Until the Americans brought more food in and the regular food deliveries from farmers were again normalized Munich was without food. When we were legitimized as residents of Munich and received our ration cards, it became a daily visiting groceries, bakeries, milk stores (which sold all dairy products) and butcher stores to find something for our stamps.

While I kept a diary when in hiding, and continued to do so after I returned to Munich, it would not be interesting for the reader to repeatedly follow me to the various stores and places where I was scrounging around for food. So let me just pick out the

more interesting happenings, at least for the year following our return to Munich. In August of 1946 we entered the emigration process which meant being in one or another camp for months at a time and didn't have to worry about our daily bread.

The house where we lived in at the Berger-Kreuzstrasse was built of stone as was customary in Germany, brick and masonry not wood and wallboards. The owner lived downstairs, the upstairs had been built to accommodate a renter. This apartment belonged to a Hans Lippel, a cousin of my mother.

Many of the children of my maternal grandparents left Vilshofen and settled in Munich as my mother did. So did relatives from my grandmother's side, her maiden name was Lippel. We had little contact with the Lippel's side of the family. Though one sister of my grandmother went to Munich and married a man who has this fine fruit store at the main railroad station. We could always come by when her husband (a Nazi) was not in and she give us bags of over-ripe fruit. I always admired the many exotic fruit she had such as pineapples, bananas, mangos. Grapes and strawberries in winter from Italy or even North Africa. Of course these were fruit to look at and not be desired.

One brother of my mother, my uncle August Reiter, had a milk and dairy store in Sendling a southern part of the city. We had no contact with them except, I remember, once, one of their two sons died and they invited us to the funeral and wake afterwards in a restaurant across from the *Waldfriedhof* - Forest Cemetery.

There were other brothers and sisters of my mother in Munich - and left us alone. It was forbidden anyhow to fraternize with Jews regardless if they were friends, neighbors or relatives. But with one of my mother's sisters we were friendly with. My aunt Maria

Blum. She had married a house painter, Fritz Blum, they also had one daughter, Anne Marie and she was the same age as my sister Herta.

Uncle Fritz and aunt Maria were my favorite relatives we had in Munich. They lived far away in the Werneckstrasse in a small apartment house and had a nice open courtyard I could play in. Twice, I remember, I was there when the Zeppelin flew over. Once the Graf Zeppelin alone and once together with the Hindenburg. I always associated their place with Zeppelins. Uncle Fritz was a good man. Sometimes it happens that you have relatives of the type you wished them to be, usually you cannot select relatives. Uncle Fritz was always full of fun and jokes. He would come to us and paint our apartment for free. At that time, in the 30s, you didn't buy paint as we do now, already mixed. He had to take the paint in powder and mix it in a bucket of water and I had to stir it for what seemed to be hours.

They drafted him into the army though he was already sick. I guess it was sometime in 1942, and soon after he died of stomach cancer. By that time they were living in the Barerstrasse, not far from us, and near where the first bomb hit that fell on Munich. After the war my cousin married a baker, Karl Kainz was his name, and he was another one of these relatives you couldn't find a better one. He had his bakery also in the Werneckstrasse but just a small place back in a courtyard. He only baked fine pastry for cafes and hotels, and when I was stationed in Germany and visited his place he would always fill a bag for me with the best he had on hand. In the late 80s, Anne Marie and Karl came to visit us in Denver where we lived then and we showed them the Western United States by car. I must tell about one funny thing that took place while in Las Vegas. We were just in the old Dunes Casino and Karl needed some change. Thinking

of having some fun with him I told him to throw his silver dollar into one of the slot machines and the change would come out. He hit three cherries and out came, clinkerty-clink, change of 26 silver dollars. I guess back home in Stockdorf where they lived he must have told his friends about those wonderful change machines in Las Vegas.

I am still in touch with my cousin. Her family the only one who cared and dared to associate with us during the Nazi times.

Another Lippel family member was this Hans Lippel, I had mentioned before.

He, without a family, invited my mother to use his apartment and stay until she can find her own place. The apartment had a nice kitchen/living room, two bedrooms and a bath. It was again subdivided to a woman and her daughter, and we shared the kitchen and bathroom. We got along fine with them.

But what luxury. Hot running water in the kitchen and the bath had a tub and also hot water. I had never lived in an apartment with all these wonderful facilities. And the place furnished, Hans Lippel's things, but we were free to use everything including his stash of linen, towels, etc. Clothing was a problem, right after food. Good that it was summer and we had a wash house in the basement.

So it was great, mom had found a place for us. How she arranged it with her cousin, even found him, I never knew. He was not friendly to us during the war years, couldn't care less about us, and then this sudden generosity. Mom told me one time that he had been a Nazi, party member and all, and now felt sorry. Whatever, we had a home and we had survived and were together. No food - we had been through that before. No clothing, we were dressed and so we washed it. Mom felt bad that all our things had

been stolen, we didn't own a single dish, cup or spoon. I knew we would manage somehow. Our goal was now to get out of Germany and to America.

While a few of the surviving Jews from Munich would remain in Germany, mostly elderly people who had come back from Theresienstadt concentration camp and could not leave, to me it was a moral necessity to leave Germany. I remembered the many signs posted all over *JUDEN SIND HIER UNERWUNSCHT* and *JUDEN IST DER EINTRITT VERBOTEN* – meaning, 'Jews are not wanted here and entry forbidden for Jews.' Just because the war was over didn't mean that the former Nazis were not still around, and I did not wish to mix with them.

Munich, when we returned, was functioning, it had been two weeks since the American troops came. There was a military government alongside the same civil servants who ran the city under the Nazis. They themselves former Nazis, but that couldn't be helped, they were the experts in running a city. Those SS who could be found were in POW camps and the Gestapo people in prison – at least I hoped so. The army (and now when I write about the army I mean only the American army) had taken charge of all POW camps and repatriated the French, British and American prisoners quickly. The prisoner from the East were shipped back by truck unless they wished to stay in the West. The many foreign workers who had left their camps and looted the city, along with the populace, were ordered back to their camps if they wanted to be fed and sent home.

Besides the army which brought in emergency food, the UNRRA, a United Nation organization came in and helped with food and clothing and mainly took care of the people from the Dachau concentration camps. The Jewish organization we called

JOINT, came in to help what was left of Jews. However, the JOINT concentrated their efforts for the Jews who had been in camps, both Dachau and the many forced labor camps around Munich and Bavaria. These became the 'displaced persons'. There were not many Jews left in Munich, a dozen maybe. Later on 168 returned from the Theresienstadt camp, mostly elderly persons. I don't know of any small Jewish children in Munich after the war.

I had come home and we had a place to live in. I had brought food and mom had some potatoes and cabbage and a little fat and she was ready to cook. I told her how I had been delayed in Dingolfing and she told me of a truck going to Munich from Miesbach with flour who took her and others along. Mom had been here for a week and worrying about where I was. So, for the first evening we had what I had brought and roasted potatoes. The maggots had gotten into the loaf of bread I had brought for her from the farm but we picked them out carefully.

It was just good that the war was over, we were alive and together.

Let me return to my diary:

Wednesday, May 16:

I had returned Spitzelberger's bicycle and worked on my own, he gave me patches and glue. I had become an expert in fixing tubes and tires. For slits in the tire I used discarded pieces of rubber or leather to wrap around.

I drove to the Stoechers, the innkeeper, and he gave me 30 lb of potatoes and a can of coffee (the malt coffee of course, nobody had beans.) Standing in line somewhere I got a half a pound of butter.

Thursday, May 17:

I visited the Penzias. Now Max was happy to see me. He told me of the new Jewish administration office that had opened up in the Kaulbachstrasse. I visited there and met the administrator, Dr. Neuburger. No relation to Herta Neuburger a dear friend of mine who was also in hiding, helped by our cemetery caretaker Schoerghofer, who sent her to his sister in the country. It was so much easier for girls to hide. Her older sister Regina went to Theresienstadt KZ with Salo and returned with him. Her brother Theo hid out. There was nothing Dr. Neuburger could do for me. His main job would be to rehabilitate any returning Munich Jews, find them a place to stay. Providing documentation that they had been former residents of Munich, as without such documents one couldn't get registered and receive ration cards. He had a nice young Jewish man from Dachau working for him as an office aid. Heinz, with his hair still shorn off was a speed typist and did all the clerical work. He was from Vienna, had been an orphan, and was in no hurry to return to Vienna as the Russians were there. He wanted to go to Palestine, so he had to wait until that was possible. The good news: they had heard from Theresienstadt. Most of those who had been deported in February, which should have included me, were alive and ready to come home and that included Salo. Neuburger was arranging with the city to get some buses and bring our people

home. Another good news was that he was in touch with the JOINT people and they promised some food deliveries for us, non-perishables like cans.

Friday, May 18:

Visited Strauss and helped him bring his stored goods back from Steinhausen on a push cart. It was waking all day and I was very tired. He gave me a pound of coffee and a tin of meat. At least the streetcar is running from Ramersdorf to his place as my bicycle was finally ready for the junk heap, tires all busted open.

For the first time today a Munich newspaper came out, the Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

There is still a war going on in the Far East.

Saturday, May 19:

What a beautiful day, real 'peace weather.' During the war one couldn't even enjoy a nice, sunny day, there was no mood to enjoy anything really. I still find it hard to believe that it is all over. No Gestapo to harass people, no SS to kill them, in fact this city of Munich, once so full of Nazis, doesn't have a single Nazi left. And no bombs. Even though the moment of the bombs raining down was terrible it never bothered me as much as the constant threat of the Gestapo. The air raids were frightening but then it was over again. The Nazi terror was omnipresent! Mom got a couple tins of preserves in one store, in another she stood for an hour in line only to be told that she wasn't a registered customer. In the evening mom found the bicycle of Hans Lippel in the cellar, great! I worked on it, cleaned the dirt and rust of years off, oiled it and I had myself a bicycle again with good tubes and tires.

Monday, May 21:

I drove out to Gelting and visited our old farmer friend Baumgartner. That was a big and real surprise for him that I made it, and he was genuinely happy. He admitted that Nostradamus had been all wrong. He would never believe in any prophesies again. (We both had no idea then that what he had read were the forgeries of Goebbel's and company). He had evacuees in his house and he had to feed them. He couldn't give me much but even a loaf of farmer bread, some flour, fat and a half dozen eggs helped. The sorry fact is that we had more to eat during the war than now. Then we had not enough stamps, now we have the stamps but nothing to buy with, but we were eating our bread in freedom! On the way home I got drenched in a thunderstorm but not my food stuff, I had wrapped my poncho around it. In the evening after a cold supper I began to learn English, or tried to anyhow.

Tuesday, May 22:

In the afternoon I visited Eitelhuber. He gave me a jacket as I had none. He told me that Walter Dittmann had come back from Theresienstadt. I met him at the Kahns. It was true, all were coming back from that concentration camp. He had left on a truck, Salo should be here in a day or two. We also talked about the various transports that had left Munich. The first one in November 1941, with a thousand Jewish citizens of Munich was truly missing. They were scheduled to go to the Ghetto in Riga but what the Kahns had found out so far was that they had never arrived in Riga.

(This is amazing that even today most, if not all, Jewish authorities concerned with the Holocaust, list this transport as being sent to Riga. Even the Simon Wiesenthal center in Los Angeles shows them so. Yet they also have the Karl Jaeger's report which clearly

lists the killings on 25 November, 1941 in Kaunas/Kovno, 2934 evacuees from Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt. The records of the Munich Archives, readily available to anyone, documents these 994 citizens of Munich as having been shipped to Kovno and shot the day they arrived, that recorded since 1959 when criminal proceedings against Karl Jaeger began.

I don't know if it is a lack of research or people really don't care. I am certain my classmates and friends and all the families shot that evening care that we remember them and what happened to them, and not having disappeared on the way to Riga. Nothing was ever heard from any of the transports that left for Piaski and Auschwitz . By now the world knew of Auschwitz as an extermination center. Piaski as a trans-shipping point for Sobibor, Treblingka and Belsec.)

Wednesday, May 23:

Salo is home! I met him in the Kaulbachstrasse, our little Jewish admin. office. My old buddy with whom I made it through the war years had come back. We spent most of the morning and afternoon there and they had money for him, registration to get ration cards and found a room for him, and a bag full of tins and a bread. While we were with Dr. Neuburger other people came in seeking help for this or that. There was little he could do for them unless they were former residents of Munich. And then he was limited to giving them money, registration, and finding them a place to live, and if he had food on hand from JOINT, then giving them a starter with tins and bread. He could not issue any travel permits as some wanted. I saw a couple who said that they wanted to return to Dresden but there was no transportation available. They said they would walk.

(Victor Klemperer, in his book "I will Bear Witness, 1942-1945" notes for the same day, Wednesday, May 23, that he visited the Kaulbachstrasse 65, Jewish aid office.

Yes. it is very likely that I was there when Victor and Eva Klemperer came in and in my diary expressed little sympathy for the man who renounced his Jewish religion and now claimed to be a Jew, while my mother, an Aryan by birth never gave up her Jewish identity. In retrospect and having read both volumes of Klemperer's book, and found his writing fascinating, I feel different. A highly respected professor of Romance languages and history. A man who wanted to be a good German. Innocent and naïve of the evil machination of the Third Reich. But foremost I enjoyed seeing in him a good man freely admitting his human frailties.)

It was sometime in June that the office of the JOINT, now located in the former Gestapo office in the Mohlstrasse, invited me over and offered me the apartment of a former Gestapo official. Sounded too good to be true, and that is how it was. When I went there the man's wife and little children were still living there. An eviction notice you don't give kids. I was glad that we are not like them. It isn't the kids fault who and what their parents were. Mom felt the same way I did, so we stayed in our little overcrowded apartment.

June, 15:

The food situation was still bad. We had the food stamps but couldn't find places that sold the food. And if there was, also sure to be long lines. I was skinny as a pole. I had boils and one at a very inconvenient place, went to a doctor and he sliced it open without using any local anesthesia, and it really hurt good. The doctor said these boils

were due to a lack of vitamins. Mom thought it best if I went for 4 weeks to the farm where she had lived. It would soon be harvest and they could use help and had plenty to eat.

I sat out early the next morning on my bicycle and made good time, got to the Brandl's in the late afternoon, they were happy to see me. Then to Landau, at the pontoon bridge they now let the civilians across. Then on to Miesbach and the farm. I asked the farmer Alois if I could help with the harvest and stay for four weeks. But he had the house full with family besides he had a couple Hungarian women quartered, also the first harvest was still six weeks away. But I could stay for a few days and eat well.

The two Hungarians were Veronika and Ilusia, they were the wives of Hungarian officers and since the Hungarians had fought with the German army they were now considered traitors in their country and not very eager to get back. They had no idea where their husbands were or if they were still alive. They were now refugees too and did the cooking and kitchen work. I went out into the field to turn the cut grass for hay, helped clean the cow shed. In the evening I played rummy with the women and at night I visited them, at their invitation. Ilusia was the pretty and young one but Veronika was all paprika. My second affair but by now I was already 16. Sunday everybody went out into the woods to pick berries. Then we had pancakes with raspberries and whip cream, that was living it up.

Veronika tried to teach me Hungarian (the language) but that is a jaw breaker Even just to say 'how are you' which comes out as something like *hodgwadg*, is almost unpronounceable. Since the two women worked in the kitchen and cooked they made me little delicious side dishes for me. They treated me like a son – some son.

Tuesday I left the happy farm and went back to the Brandls, stayed over night and bicycled the next morning to Vilshofen, the town where I had so much fun as a youngster. I wanted to see it one more time as a free person before we left for America. There had been no bombing or fighting so nothing had changed. I stayed with aunt Rosa and her kids Irene and Harald, her husband too had died in the East. Their own place in a new apartment house had been taken over by the army and they had a small apartment in the Stadtturm, the old tower with a large gate that at one time guarded the town. They had a nice view down into the town square. While their food was rationed like everybody else's they had no problem buying any with stamps. I visited other brothers and sisters of my mother. Went to the cemetery and visited my grandparents. Mom would be pleased.

But I did not go to her sister Centa. Not after the way she treated my mother when she desperately needed her help. It was nice to be back in Vilshofen.

I left on Thursday and drove to Miesbach to try to get some food to take home. My farmer had non to spare but from neighbors I could buy farmer's bread, fat, butter, flour and eggs. Money was still good here. Loaded up I left my farmers, Veronika and Ilusia kissed me good by. I hope they make it home to their families. Such nice ladies.

Driving back to Munich I had a blow out just before Landshut. A three inch slit in my tube and no patch large enough to fix it. I pushed into town and found a place that fixed my bike. Then I was lucky to find a truck that delivered flour to Munich and he took me along and even dropped me off in Ramersdorf. Much to tell mom, not everything

though. I had been gone less than two weeks but mom thought I had filled out. Mom felt sorry that I ignored her sister Centa. She had already forgiven her, but I didn't.

The days in June and July went fast and my daily entrees tell of running here and there, necessary forms to fill out to get an apartment, apply for furniture, scrounge for food - that is standing in line. Visiting friends, and having fun with Salo. He came often to visit and stayed over night. We were a group of young kids, all survivors, and we kind of stuck together. There were not many left and none of the younger kids. Salo, Carola Gruenzeug who had come back from camp with Salo, her hair still short (they had it shorn off in camp), the Neuburger girls Regina and Hertha, Hertha the only kid younger than me. Alfred Ball, Erich Stern and a few others I had not known before. Heinz, the office help from the Kaulbachstrasse and his young group of Viennese, all liberated from Dachau and waiting to get back to Vienna or Palestine. Heinz worked now out of the JOINT Committee in the Goethestrasse. More clearly defined the JOINT Committee was set up by American and British Jews to help the remnants of the Jewish people and assist them in uniting with lost family members who had survived, and assist in emigrating them to any families they had in foreign countries. Things were moving slow. There was no mail service yet to America. Even if my message to my sister was forwarded she wouldn't know how to contact us.

I have an interesting entrée for the 12th of July. We all went out to Gruenwald to go swimming in the Isar and I saw that the big bridge across the river had been destroyed.

The only bridge in and around Munich that had been blown. And it figured, with most of the Nazis having lived in the south of Munich they desperately tried to ward off the Americans for another day or two.

Sunday, July 15:

Most of the Jewish people then in Munich met at the Kaulbachstrasse to begin a new *Gemeinde*, community center. Dr. Spanier was elected to be president. It will be again in the Reichenbachstrasse. They already used part of the building as a residence and nursing home for the old people who had come back from Theresienstadt.

July is a nice month in Munich. Our group spend many afternoons at the Ungererbad, the swimming pool. Things were getting back to normal even if at a snail's pace. Most streetcar lines were running, none yet where I had lived though the little narrow railroad they had built was active running rubble out of the city from my neighborhood. They had no longer the British POWs to rely on doing that work, most of the workers were former east block laborers who didn't want to go back but needed a job.

The supply of food was still sporadic. I have an entrée for the 21st, that early in the morning I stood in line at a bakery because they had rolls for the first time.

A thing I remember, but didn't write down, was that one time I stood at the Bahnhof and two GIs peeled an orange and dropped the peels. When they left I picked up some peels and squeezed them to inhale the aroma. I hadn't seen oranges for six years.

Sunday, July 29:

We all went to the zoo in Hellabrun. That too is in operation again. I wondered were they get the food for the animals? Horse meat; but where from horses?

Monday, July 30:

Tried to visit my old gardener Meier. The house he had lived in was also a ruin. Frau Brandner had moved. Visited and stayed over night at my aunt Blum's place in the Barerstrasse. Frau Blum, my mom's sister, and her daughter Annemie, my cousin had always been supportive of us during the war. None of mom's other relatives had cared.

Wednesday, August 1:

Finally got to visit Frau Brandner, my good lady who had helped me out with sandwiches and food stamps when things were rough. Her husband Hans had come home, formerly with the Africa Corps and then POW, we had coffee and cake. They too were delighted that I had made it. Her son Bodo had died of diphtheria during the later part of the war. Everybody had suffered, the good and the ugly.

From there I went to the movie house Regina, my first movie in many years. The newsreel was American and very interesting, not that I understood much. It showed the building of the Super Fortress, the B-29; fighting against the Japanese on Okinawa. And the execution of six SS soldiers who had fired on Americans after the war was over. The movie was rather a documentary, the life of conductor Toscanini.

Friday, August 3:

Salo and I bicycled out to Hechendorf to visit Frau Maurer. The last time I had seen her was under different circumstances, back in March as a fugitive. This gracious lady had

been our most loyal supporter before and during the war, she took a lot of risk in helping us. She was all smiles that my mother and I had survived and were back in Munich.

Her son Hansi had come back and was home. He lived in Munich and had taken over his father's plumbing business. He knew little about the Bismarck's final battle as his ship, the Prinz Eugen had turned back. His own ship spent most of the war in port, defending against British bombers until the Prinz Eugen was smashed by bombs. He was then transferred to *Schnellboote*, 'fast torpedo boats'. Salo and I went swimming in the lake where seven months ago we had been ice skating.

I wished I could find for Frau Maurer a pound of real coffee. That was always her greatest pleasure, a cup of coffee made of beans and not that Ersatz stuff, malt.

Tuesday, August 7:

I saw a long line of people getting a newspaper, I got one too. The headline: ATOM BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA. It didn't say much else, President Truman announced the dropping of this bomb and warned the Japanese with complete destruction if they don't stop the war.

Wednesday, August 8:

More detailed news in the paper about the atomic bomb. It was supposed to have the exploding force of 20,000 tons of dynamite, or an attack by 2,000 Super Fortresses each dropping 10 tons of bombs. I knew nothing of atoms except what I had read in science fiction books by Hans Dominik. In his stories atoms could be split to make lots of energy and heat, but that was just fiction. Or was it? Now the Japanese have to quit the war and surrender.

Wednesday, August 15:

Japan has capitulated. THE WAR IS OVER!

Saturday, August 18

I took the streetcar out to Pasing, from there I thumbed a ride out to Fuerstenfeldbruck, a small town near Munich. I had gotten hold of Meier's address and wanted to visit him.

The car let me off right in front of his house, and there he was sawing wood. What a surprise and he was very happy to see me. He too had not known what happened to me after the air raid in January. Buchner had told him that I was either dead under the house or had disappeared. He now admitted how wrong he had been all along believing the newspaper and radio. Meier was a fine man, naïve yes, but a with a good heart. Later his wife came from shopping and she was also delighted to see me. She had never believed all the Nazis told but had given up a long time ago to argue about it with Meier, he was as stubborn as he was naïve. We had tea and cake and were just happy to be with each other again, I had lots to tell. The Meiers had been bombed out during the last big air raid in February, and had left Munich and Buchner for this town. They were happy here and didn't care to go back to the city. Buchner had to manage alone with his son who was just a boy but old enough to wield a spade, fourteen I think.

I was really glad I had found them, probably seen them a last time, and I took a couple pictures to remember them by.

Sunday, August 19:

Salo and I took the streetcar to Pasing, a suburb of Munich, and went to the movie there. Most cinemas in the city are destroyed. We saw our first American movie, 'Young Edison', great film.

Friday, August 24:

I wrote a letter to my sister Herta in Philadelphia and gave it to Eitelhuber who knew an American soldier who promised to send it. I savor in my mind the moment Herta gets the letter, knows we are alive and with an address she can reach us.

Friday, September 7:

Since in my diary I made daily notes of what mom cooked I can see that the food situation has improved. With food stamps one can now buy food in most stores. There are still long lines for fresh produce and fruits. Salo, forever hungry, is always a welcome guest. Today was Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. For the first time services were held in Munich since February 28th, 1942, when I had my Bar Mizwah and our temple was closed. Dr. Spanier conducted the services. In the evening we ate cold, three different types of cold cuts with plenty of bread, then coffee and cake. We were living it up.

Of interest to the reader might be how the American soldiers and Germans got along. The Germans were not only former enemies but by then the full story of the atrocities committed in the concentration camps was known. Americans were forbidden to fraternize with the Germans. This of course made sense, it would also make sense for the soldiers to fraternize with the Frauleins. The reality was different.

Sendlingertorplatz was the hub of the black market flourishing in Munich. There any day, soldiers and Germans could be found fraternizing quite openly and trading goods.

The soldiers usually offering cigarettes, which were used as better currency than money, also things from the PX and traded them in for cameras, watches and other valuables. I guess soldiers are the same everywhere, and don't mind fraternizing with former enemies as long as business is involved or sex. As far as the bad reputations Germans had, none professed ever to have been a Nazi, and knew nothing of what the SS and Gestapo had done.

I had loaned Salo my bicycle and he had it stolen. So now I have to hoof it or use public transportation.

Mom had gotten a letter from Alois, her farmer, and he had food for us. She had heard of buses leaving from Freimann to Deggendorf and passing through Landau.

Friday, September 14:

No bus. A car took me along to Landshut. Then I had to wait three hours and got a ride that left me off at the Brandls. I was always welcome there, my second home and family.

There was nothing I could ever bring them. But I knew, if I ever make it to America I would send them packages - which I did. Fanny had left and was living with her husband and son in Landau. Willy was in Munich. Rosel and Hedwig were home and so was another son, Hans with his wife. Always a full house at the Brandls. For supper we had buttermilk soup and black bread, we all spooned the soup out of a big kettle.

The next morning I went with Rosel to visit Fanny in Landau, Brandl-father loaned me his bike. The poor boy the same, still in diapers, just a year older. But how his parents loved and took care of him. The thought of putting him in a home never entered his mother's mind.

From there I drove on to Miesbach to the farmers. I stayed over night – sorry, the Hungarians had left. Alois gave me a sack of good food to take along. Then back to the Brandls.

Sunday, September 16:

For lunch we feasted, we had three roast chickens and the trimmings. In the evening a black soldier came by and asked to stay, so they let him sleep in the kitchen.

The next morning the soldier had to return to Munich and he took me along in his army truck, his name was Kerry Edwards. He was a helluva nice guy to take me along as that was strictly forbidden. I had to wear his field jacket and helmet liner, and I was a sort of American soldier, nobody bothered us. We stopped outside Freising and had lunch.

We made a little fireplace with stones, then he poured some gas in and lit it, in his steel helmet he heated water for coffee. Coffee, milk and sugar came in little packets. In a flat mess gear he fried eight eggs along with a hunk of meat he called Spam. He opened another can of beans, and after we had cheese, jam and crackers, I really filled up.

Kerry drove me all the way home. I had noticed that most trucks were driven by black soldiers, I guessed they must run the transportation corps.

Tuesday, September 18:

Today I was sick. Not used to all that rich food and the very thought of Spam made me even sicker. (And I never liked Spam again. Besides I hadn't known it was all pork.)

Friday, September 21:

Mom and I went to the services in the evening. Dr. Neuland, the new head of our Gemeinde, asked us to take a man in for a few days. His name was Ruman and he used

to be a district judge before the Nazis booted him out. Ruman had been hiding out on a farm somewhere the past two years and he was a total wreck, not physical but mental. He had hid out in a barn and food scraps were thrown to him like he was a dog, and like a dog he was. Completely subservient, really like a puppy-dog. I could do nothing but pity him. This is what the Nazis did to people.

On Monday Dr. Ruman left us for a sanatorium in the mountains. Hiding was no easy business, I had a taste of it, always worrying about being found out. Ann Frank was in hiding for over two years and then denounced. I hope whoever told on her and her family sits in jail and rots. Denouncing innocent people is condemning them to death.

Saturday, September 29:

Buchner had sent me a note to please come by. A strange relationship now, he was no longer my master. He was all friendliness and smiles. Called me Hugo instead of 'Bua.' Though I didn't appreciate it when he asked me to come to work for him, I asked him if he was joking. But he wasn't, he meant it, promised me good pay. No thank you.

He gave me a letter which was sent to him by the Gestapo as they couldn't locate me. It was an invite by the Gestapo to be deported in February of 1945. Noncompliance would have the most severe consequences. (I wished I had saved this letter but I lost it somewhere). What he really wanted me for was to sign a letter that he had treated us Jews well during the war. He had all the other's signatures already and I signed it too. Not because he got them to sign but because it was true. Even Jacobson who really hated Buchner's guts had signed it to my surprise. I asked him for a bouquet of flowers for my mother and he told me to cut what I wanted. I made her a nice mushroom shaped bouquet like I used to make them for Frau Brandner. From Stoecher, the innkeeper, I got

a bag of potatoes, one liter milk, two apples and three eggs. Through Salo I managed to get a pair of nylons, mom never had any before. When mom went to the movies with a neighbor woman in the evening I fixed everything up in the kitchen for her birthday tomorrow.

Sunday, September 30:

Mom's birthday, she is fifty years old today. She looks young and except for the shaking of her hands she is in good health. But fifty is getting old and I dreaded the thought of her getting older and what comes after. What a birthday gift, a bottle of milk, two apples and three eggs, but she also received my special bouquet of flowers with the last rose blossoms in it – I robbed Buchner of those, and a pair of nylons. I wrote her a poem, easier to say in words what I felt. For lunch we had American beef out of a can with noodles and she had baked a cake. In the afternoon Salo and I went to the 1860 soccer stadium and saw two Munich teams play. Since this was the first game played after the war I shall record it here: Bayern and Wacker 1:1. Hans Lippel whose apartment we are using came by to congratulate mom. He seems a nice guy but mom told me that he was a Nazi. What kind I don't know. It seems strange to ask 'what kind of Nazi' but Nazis ran the whole range from 'run-alongs' like those who wanted to be somebody and joined the party and wore their Nazi pins during the 'good times' until 1942, to the type of Schwingenstein and Gestapo Mugler. Lippel was neither in the SA or SS, nor had he been in the army. Some sort of government official.

Saturday, October 21:

We received a letter from Herta. Really just a short note. She had included it in a letter to a soldier who was from Philadelphia and stationed in Munich. He brought the letter

himself, came in a jeep and gave me a clothing bag with some things he could spare. A nice uniform shirt, a pair of combat boots that fit, and some new T-shirts and shorts, socks, things I certainly could use. Her letter was in English – big help. Out came my dictionary as we puzzled over the word ‘engaged’. She wrote she was engaged to Larry. This dictionary gave a list of uses for the word ‘to engage’ but not the conventional meaning. Probably a Third Reich dictionary and to engage means the enemy. I could read better when she wrote that she was happy to hear from us that we were alive and well.

Monday, October 23:

We had received a letter from the Brandl’s that they had a goose for us. So on Sunday I hitch-hiked to Goben and returned home on Monday. The train was so full that when it stopped in Pilsting I could only find a place between the cars, holding on with one hand and the goose in the other. In Landshut we had to change trains and I crawled through the window of the toilet and made it my home.

We had a feast and Salo was invited, roast goose with dumplings. In the afternoon we went to the Gabriel cinema in the Dachauerstrasse and saw ‘Gold Rush’ with Charley Chaplin. I never even heard of the guy before and he was funny, I laughed so hard that my stomach hurt. I went to see it again a few days later and could then enjoy it more soberly.

Thursday, November 15:

We got our new apartment a two bedroom place in the Oberlaenderstrasse 18. New? It was bomb damaged and needed the interior walls fixed and windows put in. I will have to ask Spitzelberger to help me repair the place.

Here my diary ends. I know I kept writing until we left but it got lost. I shall write then of only the more pertinent things that happened until we left for America in 1946. I had received a Retina camera from somebody and took many pictures and looking at these old pictures from 1946, I remember many of the good things that happened and are worthwhile telling.

Yes Spitzelberger helped me repair our walls and make new frames and windows. He was a very good mason and carpenter but it was a lot of work. Several times I had to push the handcart with two big wheels from his shop in Schwabing to our new place in Sendling, loaded with bricks, cement, sand and stuff. It took me four hours each way!

By Christmas our place was finished and looked good. Furniture we could buy on special allocation for bombed out victims, which we were now considered and the same with simple kitchen utensils, cups, plates, etc. We really had our own place again and spacious, running cold water in the kitchen and an inside toilet. No bath though. Back to heating water and washing in a large vat.

There were a number of wonderful happenings in 1946 which I like to share.

The Jewish *Gemeinde* somehow managed to rent a hotel in Kruen and sent any of us, who wanted a little vacation there, for a small fee. Kruen was a mountain village a few

miles from Garmisch and right at the foot of the Alps. I spent four glorious weeks there in April and had good company. The Gutmann's were there, Walter Ditmann whom I knew and some other young people, but again no little kids. The food while not plentiful was delicious and the waitress Kristine very nice to us. The snow had melted off the lower hills and I climbed alone, or with some of the other youngsters, every peak nearby. I also had a bad experience. Every night the hotel would shut up tight at midnight and one time I was late and nobody let me in. It was cold and I finally found a barn with hay and curled up with a friendly dog. Otherwise, it was four glorious weeks in my beloved mountains.

The other wonderful happening was that Frau Brandner's husband Hans had an aunt who was the caretaker of a mountain chalet right by the Koenigssee, a most beautiful and prestigious place to live, normally only for the rich and famous. Frau Brandner and her 15 year old daughter Betty had been quartered in there recently and now she was the caretaker. The chalet belonged to the famous, or rather infamous, Minister of Labor in Nazi Germany, Saukel. Saukel was at present in prison in Nuremberg, classified as a major war criminal for using millions as slave-labor, and in due time would be hanged. Frau Brandner had the whole downstairs to herself and Betty, and each room was rustic and furnished in Bavarian style. I could visit there any time and bring friends. Of course Salo came with me, that was in early summer. When I came alone, Betty would climb the nearby peaks with me, the Brett and Hohe Goell peaks and others nearby. We spend the night in the hay in the Stahlhaus inn, right at the border between Germany and Austria. No border patrol or customs up here. We had come down from the mountain and were mighty hungry, Betty had some black bread with butter and I had a

large can of American sweet peas. We had received a package from my sister and the only thing I can remember that was in it, were these peas.

The inn didn't sell any food, just beer and a place in the hay upstairs. They were nice enough to heat my can of peas. Being starved nothing ever tasted as good as these sweet peas I shared with Betty and they are still one of my favorite foods.

The next day Betty showed me a wall full with Edelweiss. I guess in any language they are called Edelweiss, meaning 'the noble white', the pedals that come from the center flower are of white velvet. They grew in that almost vertical wall on little outcroppings of dirt, and always just a little bigger white stars higher up, inviting.

What took us one hour of climbing up and carefully breaking the flowers off so the root isn't pulled out took us over four hours to get back down. Betty showed me how to preserve them and today, 55 years later, they look just a beautiful - stars made of white velvet.

Here I must add a little adventure I had and could have ended tragically. Once again I was in the mountains surrounding the beautiful Koenigssee. With me this time a friend, Walter Ditmann. Climbing the Goell was not that difficult. Rather more dangerous was going up the Brett peak which was steep and a long way up to the ridge. In fact there was a sign at the bottom of the peak 'Only experienced climbers on ropes should attempt the climb.' Then along the narrow crest to reach the higher Goell peak. This was really an easier ascent, however, we had to cross a slanted snow field, and then it happened. Walking along the still frozen snow in my soldier's combat boots, which had leather soles and not iron, I slipped and slid down on my fanny. I dug in my heels which didn't help, tried to brace with my bare hands which only skinned them...a few more

yards and the slope became steeper, and then dropped off into a chasm many thousand feet down. Goodbye Hugo. By the way, when you read all these stories of people facing death, the flashing by of ones lives just before...it doesn't happen. While it is relative of what you think then, it must be either a numbness of being scared to death or as I did, frantically trying to stop my slide. And suddenly my slide stopped. Hello guardian angel.

During my writings I have repeatedly referred to my *Schutzengel*, my guardian angel. Am I serious? In analyzing the number of times I faced death as a boy I can rationalize all but two of such instances. Being deadly sick as a four year old with pneumonia and whooping cough and being placed into the room for dying children it was just a matter of youthful resilience that made me get well again. The treatment of mustard plaster and cough syrup certainly didn't help much, but my body repaired itself, right?

The next close encounter was swimming in the Isar river and almost getting swept over the falls. Here it was a sudden wave that came and swept me over the wooden beam.

The close encounter with bombs? I just happened to be at the right place. The visit by the two SS men at the end of the war? Just a coincidence that the one proffered the soldier's insufficient documentation just at the right moment.

Bombarding each other with artillery? Our house crated all around? Just lucky.

The sliding down the snowfield? A few more feet and down the abyss? The sun must have softened the crusty snow.

However, there were two incidents I cannot rationalize.

The pounding on the door behind our beds by the SA thugs, and my mother and I heard nothing!

Nor do I have a rational explanation for the Gestapo agent who looked into our closet and saw all that freely displayed contraband. This is what they came for to find. Not weapons but just such goods. And yet the agent was like blinded. There just isn't such a thing as a friendly or compassionate Gestapo agent!

Do I then believe in guardian angels? Do I believe in a God who sent his angel to us to guard us from harm and evil? I believed it then. I do not know now.

In spring of 1946, finally things began moving in uniting families. President Truman signed a special refugee bill passed by Congress to let displaced persons into the United States, besides the regular quota of immigrants. We put in the papers to emigrate and Herta furnished the affidavit of support. We were on the list for going to America in 1946. We saw the American consul and had no problem. The HIAS organization loaned the money for the trip to my sister, I think around 400 dollars. Most of the other kids I knew were trying to leave Germany. Probably for similar reasons, it just wasn't comfortable anymore to live with the German people after we all had learned of the atrocities – mass murder on a gigantic scale. Salo told me that Dora Schmidt had survived Auschwitz and went directly to Palestine. Herta Neuburger went to Australia. Salo put in papers for the U.S., with all his friends leaving he wanted to get out too. I don't think he would ever miss his mother or she him. Salo like I, was really very attached to Munich, we both had grown up in the city. But our love for the city and its people had been dirtied and besmirched by the Nazis. Separation for the sake of our own peace of mind was absolutely necessary.

In August we gave up our apartment, and as all emigrants, were quartered in the SS Funk Kaserne in Freimann, the one right next to our cemetery. Who would have thought back in 1939 and 1940 when we played on our soccer field, with the SS men looking over our wall and watching us Jew-kids play, that someday I would live in their barracks!

Then in September it was time to depart for Bremen. By bus we went with our luggage to the station in Freimann and there our special train was waiting. I think by September of 1946 they could have done better than to transport us in freight cars. The large wagons were empty and we were assigned by family, ten persons to a wagon. Each received a large army comforter to sit and sleep on. My mother looked so melancholic when we left, I don't remember if she cried. But she felt sad to leave Munich for the unknown. Another country, no language, what would the future hold for her? We young people had no such qualms. We left a city, a country where we were not wanted. To me personally – yes I was sad in a way to leave Munich. The city and its life style is special, if you have the fortune to be born in Munich, you belong there. But a city is nothing without people and the people I knew and loved were all gone.

Yes, there were many good German people I had known and left behind. Herr Spitzelberger, Frau Matschilles. The Stoechers and yes, Georg Meier. My Brandl family.

Thoughts of Jews one hundred to a cattle car, not even as big as this freight wagon – going to their death. But this was different, in fact we joked and had a great time. With us were Margot and Peter and their mother. Their Jewish father was in America and had emigrated before the war but couldn't get the family out in time. With their

mother Aryan and the two kids brought up Christian they had little problem from the Nazis, yet they too were happy to leave. The others, who were in our wagon, I didn't know. I was made wagon-master and had to wear an armband. All it really meant was to be responsible to fetch the C-rations and hot coffee when we stopped, which we did frequently. The wagons had no toilets and we males had no problem with the center door wide open. The two days and nights were a fun-picnic for us as we were going to America. And on our wagon we had drawn with chalk a big sign NACH AMERIKA, 'to America.' We could be seen by all, we were going into the land of freedom.

I had a little misfortune one night which could have ended tragically if my little guardian angel hadn't been around to protect me again. We were sleeping in a row with the big door open and I was right in the middle. Then something woke me up, the rattling and shaking of the wagon had made me slide towards the door and my legs up to my knees were already hanging out. I shut the door after that.

In Bremen we were taken to the Schwarzer Weg Kaserne complex, a former army base.

Males were quartered separate from females but we all ate at the same mess hall. It was in September when we arrived and we should have been here only a few days. But then the dock worker strike erupted in the United States which lasted for three months, and we were stuck in this camp. I made new friends, David, a nice boy, a year or two older. He had been in Buchenwald and was once hung up by his hands tied in his back. For hours they let him hang like that until his shoulders dislocated - the SS bastards. I met Max Liebster, also a Buchenwald survivor. How he survived is really a miracle being Jewish and a Jehova Witness, and a very gentle person, usually the first ones to give up

hope and just die. (He worked at the Brooklyn Center for many years, then married and he and his wife Simone live in France continuing their work. I visited Max one time in Brooklyn and met Mr. Knorr, the president of the Society. All very good people.)

A couple I befriended were Klaus and Paula Stern, from Berlin I believe. They had met at the Hachshara, the pioneer farm, and had married. They both survived Auschwitz, met again after being liberated by the Russians and were now starting a new life in the US. All these people were leaving as they had no longer family that survived the Holocaust, and Germany had become an alien place to live.

(The Sterns live in Seattle. I visited them once in the early 50s when I was on my way to Eniwetok where the hydrogen bombs were tested. Then I lost contact with the Sterns. In 1995, when my wife and I went to Vancouver to take a cruise to Alaska, we stopped in Seattle and I looked in the phone book for their phone number. I had forgotten their first names but I knew if I see his name listed I would remember it. Klaus Stern, that was it. I called and Paula answered. "This is Hugo." Its been almost forty-five years and she knew me at once. Her voice sounded the same as fifty years ago when we spent so much time together in Bremen and so did Klaus when he came to the phone. What is so amazing is that the face changes of course, the hair grays, wrinkles, the eyes still with youthful shine yet old, the whole aging bit, but the voice remains as young as ever. On the way back from Alaska we spent a week with them. I parked the car in front of their little house and rang the bell, I could only visualize them as they looked in their late twenties. Now they were both in their seventies, that hits hard. Life is so fragile and a lifetimes seems so long, yet only a moment in history. Fine people the Sterns.)

I don't know what we did these three long months. We could go freely into Bremen, the streetcar stopped right by our camp. Downtown Bremen looked like Munich, almost totally destroyed, nothing to see and nothing to buy. We couldn't even go to a restaurant as they fed us at the camp and we received no food stamps. But we were happy, we were on our way. Once mom and I got tickets for the opera in Bremen, damaged but repaired, it was their first production. Madam Butterfly was my first opera and I loved it, since then, I am very fond of anything Puccini. All sweet musical pralines. I don't know what I did besides reading, we all exchanged any paper backs we had. Every evening we played Skat, a German card game perhaps similar to bridge.

I also returned to Munich for a week but remember little of my visit.

We spent Christmas in Bremen and New Year and then came the third of January and the strike was over and our ship ready to leave.

Our ship, the USS Erny Pyle, was a former Liberty freighter converted to carry people. Converted? They just hung hammocks into the holds, four on top of another, forty men to a hold. The women and children were in cabins, four to eight in one with double decked beds. Recently going through my memorabilia I came across our passage ticket and saw that my ticket cost 142 dollars and that of my mother 250 dollars. She had luxury accommodations, eight to a cabin. Buses took us to the port of Bremerhaven. A real gangplank to board the ship. The boat looked big from the pier and was from the inside, spacious. As all Liberty ships she was a one stacker of 7,000 tons. I was told that at full throttle she could make 15-16 knots. The trip should take us seven days to New York. As we formed lines to board the ship we got our assignments. Mine was in

hold H, the second bunk up. I had to get on my knees first in order to crawl in, I guess the man below me had to lay down first and then roll in.

Who cares, we were on our way to America. Once aboard we had to visit the Purser's Office to get our names checked in. Each of us received ten United States dollars we could spend for shaving, hair cuts, buying candy, pop or whatever. My first American money! My own ten dollars, I had a fortune!

MIND OVER MATTER

When I was a kid, before the war and after my sister had left for America, mom and I would look at my school atlas and view America. Names like California and Hollywood were magic, so was New York city, Washington the capital, Philadelphia where my sister lived. There were other places which were so fascinating to me. Wyoming, Colorado (where I would live for twenty-one years after I retired from the army). New Mexico, Arizona, both the land of the Apaches, Sioux and Comanches, the tribes I knew well from the Karl May books. Texas looked bigger than all of Germany. We also looked at the wide Atlantic Ocean and I read books about the wild storms in the Atlantic. We imagined what it would be like to cross the ocean like Herta had done. It had to be in a storm, hear the winds shriek and ride the big waves, being tossed around. Mom and I both wanted to cross the Atlantic experiencing a big, beautiful storm.

We left in the evening with the tide. No band on the quay to play the German farewell song '*Muss I denn, muss I denn zum Staedtele hinaus*' do I have to leave this little town; just a few people waving good bye. Then we glided out of the harbor and were soon in

the wide ocean, the sea still, just a light wind blowing. No, not still, there are always waves in the Atlantic even if there is no storm, just a gentle swaying of the boat.

We ate supper in the large mess hall. I picked a metal tray and stood in line passing by the servers who heaped the food on my tray. Barbecued chicken! Wow! Mashed potatoes, and something orange-brown they called sweet potatoes, peas, biscuits, cake and apple for dessert. These sweet potatoes tasted very good, I thought like those roasted chestnuts we bought as kids in Munich from street vendors. Another food I had never eaten before and liked was corn on the cob. In Germany they grew corn for animal feed only. Even in the worst famines, during and after the war, they never sold corn for human consumption.

Then we sat on long tables screwed to the floor and there were pitchers with milk and coffee on the table and this was real bean coffee, my very first taste of it. The food on the ship was good. Real American dishes and good portions of it, and we could sneak back for seconds, just take a new tray and look innocent, though there was a sign NO SECONDS PLEASE. The first time, with few exceptions, that I could get up from the table and be full. We explored the ship, and it was big inside though pretty much the same on each deck. On top was a sort of play room with plastic chairs and round tables where we could sit, read, play Skat or just look out the large windows. Also on each deck was a sort of reading room with good lighting. In the middle of the ship, next to the Purser's Office was the exchange. Here they sold all sorts of things, candies, cigarettes, Coca-Cola and other soft drinks. The barber and hairdresser shop was also there and a laundry place. I couldn't help myself and the first evening I splurged. I had my first Coca Cola that I had heard so much about it and always saw the GIs drinking. A candy

bar, both five cents each, and I badly needed razor blades, they cost ten cents for a pack of Gillette blades. My first coke tasted a little like cough medicine to me (I got used to it). The candy bar, a Butterfinger, was delicious. And for my ten dollars I got all sorts of bills and coins in return which I had to ask someone what each meant and how much it was worth.

On deck, when the sun had set, I felt the cool breeze and watched the dark waves with little crowns of white spray. I became acquainted with an old sailor who checked all the clocks and carried one which he called his chronometer. Every day or so he would have to change all the clocks back by one hour.

The next morning, and I liked the breakfast of mush (oatmeal) scrambled eggs, sausages and toast, we went through the English Channel. Here the British fighters fought it out with the Luftwaffe. We could see the English coast, other ships passing through the choppy sea; a busy place this Channel.

A ship paper had come out in the morning which we all avidly read. It showed the ships position, the speed, the distance covered from Bremen and how many miles to New York. We were suppose to make between 350 to 400 miles in a 24 hour period. The weather: they forecast wind and rain, no storm. And of special interest to me, the daily menu.

We were still in the channel when I spotted my sailor friend. Between his broken German and my meager English we got along fine. I asked him if we had a chance to encounter a storm. He said there was a good storm coming and we should encounter it as soon as we got out of the English Channel, that afternoon for certain. I told the good news to mom and we both looked forward to a fine display of the Atlantic in fury.

It had been cloudy in the channel, now out of it we saw gray and white clouds fly by in a hurry and the sky to the west, dark and threatening. The wind had picked up and the ship began to lurch and roll, rise and then decent into large valleys. It was getting cold and mom and I got our overcoats. It kept getting worse during the afternoon and on deck we had to brace ourselves against the storm blowing from the west, a storm it was now. We found a sheltered place and watched the sea, this was what we wanted to see and we loved the display of nature gone wild. For supper the mess hall wasn't even half full. They had put wet sheets on the tables to prevent the large cans with milk and coffee from sliding off. When I put my tray down my apple would roll from one side to the other. We had baked chicken, rice and corn, and I had no trouble getting seconds.

When I checked in my hold it was awful. Sick people laying in their bunks, bad smells. In the evening mom and sat in a corner of the reading room going along with the crazy motions of the ship. When the old sailor came by I asked him how long the storm would last. He said that they were stacked one after another to the west and north. We would never make it to New York by the 10th.

Sleeping in the hammock was quite an experience. Laying down I could feel all the motions of the ship. There was the upward lift for a few seconds, then nothing for a moment. Then the ship seemed to fall away under me and when it stopped I got pushed into my hammock. This was only half of the fun as the ship also rolled from side to side. Good that the hammocks were concave so one didn't roll out. I had no problem sleeping.

In the morning, shaving became an art as I had to hold on constantly. Not many people showed up for breakfast. Now they had placed apples and oranges in large bowls on the

tables. Instead of the mush I tried one of the dry cereals. I had never seen that before and it came in little boxes, add milk and sugar, it tasted very good. Then the usual delicious breakfast fare of scrambled eggs, sausages, home fried potatoes and toast. Breakfast would be always the same and mom and I enjoyed it thoroughly. There were a couple mornings my mother wouldn't come for breakfast and once or twice I didn't eat anything but cereal. We got our coats and went up into the deck room with the large windows to look out from. The sky ominous, it stormed and rained, the rain just whipping by. We looked in awe at the tempest, that is what we wanted to see. There were not any waves whipped along but rather mountainous seas and deep valleys and they were not close together. The ship would laboriously drive up one of these huge mounds and when it reached the top sit there for a moment while the big screw came out of the water and vibrated the whole ship and then plunge down into the greenish-black depth and shudder as it hit bottom. Around us watery mountains higher than the ship and then repeating the same process again and again. Except for the day when we left Bremen, the next morning through the English channel, and the day before we arrived in New York, we had constant storms. The voyage which should have taken seven days took us fourteen days of which twelve were in storms. At times all the passengers were sick and at one time or another half of the crew, as told by the old sailor. Not my mother and I. Yes we wanted to experience the storm but we got more than we had bargained for. But was it really mind over matter that we experienced no sea sickness?

I remember a few memorable events. Everybody learned how to walk anew and one had to hold on to something. You could hardly walk up the stairs when the ship went up as it

felt as if one was weighed down, nor when the ship fell as it was like walking on air. There were just a few seconds at the end of the rise or drop that one could negotiate steps.

On the third evening I had a bad experience and all my own fault. I went down the stairs, let go too early, was propelled forward and crashed into a steel girder with one side of my face. What a stunning smash-on. They took me to the infirmary where a nurse cleaned my face. A good bit of skin gone but nothing broken. To make matters worse she used tincture of iodine over the abrasions. Now I was a marked person and no more seconds in the mess hall. I didn't need to have worried, few people showed up for any of the meals. Between one storm and the next some people recovered, some never did. They say to be real sea sick puts you in such misery that all you want to do is die. Mom and I wouldn't know.

We younger set had fun sitting on the plastic, metal framed chairs in the card room on deck sliding around, smashing into the walls.

How bad can it get? One morning when I went into the mess hall a storm had hit us from the north, the ship rolling heavily from side to side. I sat down with my tray to eat, that morning none of the food looked inviting. Not more than five people on the only table they had prepared with wet sheets, three of those cooks drinking coffee. The ship seemed to roll more than ever before. One more time to the north and then driven by storm and tossing sea the other way and everything slid off the table, the pitchers with coffee and milk, the bowls with fruit. I had to hold on not to slide off the bench and my tray followed the rest of the stuff. That was when the captains turned the ship south. It was a scary moment and I had no idea if such a big boat could roll all the way over.

When I went out on deck, the side of the ship that had faced the arctic brunt of the storm, was caked in ice.

It was really a series of several storms that surged over the North Atlantic and was written up in the New York papers as one of the worst storms ever seen in these regions. Our progress into the face of these hurricane like winds was at times so slow that it seemed we were driven backwards. In one twenty-four hour period we made only 46 miles.

But everything has an end. On January 17 the storm had stopped, we were in thick fog with the fog horn constantly blaring its deep-throated tune. Then we came out of the fog and there laid New York harbor in a brilliant wintry sunshine. We sailed by the Statue of Liberty. What better way to be welcomed to America than by this Gracious Lady. Many of the refugees cried openly as they waved to Her.

We slid into pier 41. Everybody already lined up to depart. Mom and I stayed back, a few hours more didn't matter. It was a slow process going through customs, what could these people possibly bring of any value? We were amongst the last to leave the USS Erny Pyle, good ship she had been to us. Customs. The only thing the inspector looked at was my box of Edelweiss, he had never seen any real ones before. Then with our two suitcases we walked to the EXIT. And there was my sister Herta, all happy smiles. I recognized her at once; when she left at age 14 she was a pudgy little girl, now she was a young, slender and pretty woman. And then she was in mom's arms, both crying. And I met Herta's husband Larry. A real great guy, the most wonderful man I ever had the fortune to meet in my life. WE WERE IN AMERICA, THE LAND OF THE FREE.

E N D

I like to add a few amusing anecdotes of how we fared in our new life in America. I was then 17, and knew a little English, I had no problem learning the language. Not so my mother. Larry knew no German and mom just a few words of English. Herta of course would converse with her in German. Larry and mom somehow managed though at times it was confusing. Once they were in town and mom apparently was thirsty and asked Larry for something to drink. Larry thought she didn't feel well and suggested a Bromoselzer. From then on mom, when in town always bought herself a Bromoselzer, never had a headache or upset stomach. (Bromoselzer as Alkaselzer are medicinal drinks and good for these maladies).

Another confusion came when mom cooked innards for our dog: heart, lung and such stuff. Larry asked her what she was cooking, he was fond of her soups. Whatever she told him, he thought the soup was for him and when she was out of the kitchen got himself a plate full and ate the dog's food.

Then in summer a hurricane came up the East Coast. They were all named after a woman's name and this one, though I don't remember, might have been Hazel. Larry must have told mom that a hurricane by the name of Hazel was coming the next day. Mom only understood that Hazel was coming the next day for a visit.

Then when it started to blow and rain in sheets, mom became worried. Talking to Larry about where Hazel was didn't help. Finally she asked Herta where Hazel was, afraid

that the poor lady was getting all wet. Herta surprised, told mom that Hazel was here already. A few more confusing questions and answers, “well, where is she?” Herta saying, “she is outside, can’t you see her storm and rain?” Then it must have dawned on Herta and we all had a good laugh.

America was good to us as it is to all who seek refuge and want to start a new life in Freedom.

My mother died in 1982. Her heritage to me can be told in simple words. This is what I learned from my mother: 'To judge no man or woman or child by a grouping but each one by his own character and merit. To each is given only one life. Life is a precious gift of God. It is only important that we live an honest life and raise our children in our image. We will be only remembered for having led a righteous life and not trampled upon the rights of others.'

E P I L O G U E

T h e C r i m e

How could such a crime have ever happened. Executing children with their parents and grandparents. The 25th of November 1941, in Fort IX of Kovno, Lithuania, was as far as I know the first massacre of German Jews by the *Einsatzkommandos*.

Heydrich, head of the SD (security service) had been busy shooting Jews since July of that year. On 22 June 1941, the German army attacked the Soviet Union.

Within a few weeks they had conquered the partitioned Poland, the Baltic nations and were driving into Russia proper. Four weeks after the attack the *Einsatzgruppen*, just a larger command – usually consisting of about 500 SS men attached to the SD, security service of Heydrich, and designated group A, B, C, D, were already busy rounding up Jews from cities, towns and villages and taken them to quickly dug ditches and

following the same procedures - shoot them. What terrifying procedure that was!

What to tell your child about to be shot! How to say good bye! The horror of it unimaginable!

The children and their mothers and fathers had to take off their outer clothing, mothers undressing their little ones. Then in a long line enter the ditch area. In groups of 10, walk down a dirt ramp and lay upon the bodies of those already massacred and were shot with pistols or rifles – in the neck. Those SS men shooting them were called *Genickschusspezialisten*. They were not such great specialists as half of those shot were not hit properly in the neck to sever their spines, but lived terribly wounded. Many of the wounded screaming in their agony...children shrieking, bodies jerking uncontrolled...all adding to the terror.

Just try to imagine, if you can, this inferno of human bestiality. The mother and father descending into this pit of hell with their beloved child...having to lay the terror stricken child upon moving and screaming bodies TO BE SHOT. What do you tell your child? ‘You are going to heaven? That the bullet won’t hurt? Good-by my precious child.’

The scene is beyond human comprehension for the normal person. Yet it was conducted by those who called themselves the superior Nordic Aryan Race.

There was never an easier way to die for the innocents. Only worse. Sometimes they had no dirt ramp leading into the pit. The families had to jump down upon the bodies already shot. Another sadistic variation of the SS men was to force the families to take off their undergarments too. Adding humiliation to the terror. In one of the plates of Gerald Fleming’s book “Hitler and the Final Solution” there is such a horrifying scene.

A group of nude women lined up on ramp; a maybe six year old girl looking back at her tormentors. This and many other pictures were taken along with monthly reports of the number of Jews shot, and given to the Fuehrer for Hitler's sadistic entertainment. The horror was complete. Produced by German efficiency. Total.

The Jews were rounded up by the SS men and their native collaborators. Usually local anti-Semites or the worst criminals from the local prisons. They worked with rifle butts and clubs to evict the Jews from their homes and lead them to a central place. From there in a long column to the pits. All the while the people knew what stood before them.

People often wonder why the Jews led themselves be lead to the slaughter like sheep. It was because of the unimaginable brutality of the SS and their native collaborators. The slightest protest or resistance meant a rifle but in the face or stomach or groin. Or a club, a whip or stabbed with a bayonet.

It was pure barbarism versus civilization. All the civilized men and women could do was to try to comfort each other and their children. And perhaps at the moment before descending into the pits...a good-by, a last embrace, a last kiss.

By 25 November when my people from Munich were shot in Fort IX, 300,000 thousand Jewish children and their parents had already been killed. Jews from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Russia. Their murderers, the SS-men, had the procedures well rehearsed.

How could such a crime have happened. This was before the extermination camps were in operation.

Who must we blame! Who bears the guilt! A thousand years from now people will ask WHO COMMITTED THESE CRIMES. Amazingly it was not even a German who ordered the genocide. It was this house painter from Austria, Adolf Hitler. Yes, I believe that if Hitler had not been born the Holocaust would not have happened. Goering, Himmler and Heydrich were his main tools. I believe that none of the three, if he had been the leader of Germany, would have ordered the genocide. Goering and Himmler were not active participants in the murders. Not the sadistic killers who were able to shoot children. Himmler visited a camp one time to watch a demonstration of killings. One hundred Jewish men and women were selected for his viewing of executions. When they were shot by an SS commando he almost fainted. Then he berated the commando for their poor aiming as many were still alive and had to be shot by officers with pistols. Goering, as far as I know never killed anyone except when he shot down planes in the First World War. Heydrich? Yes, he could and would have killed his mother for the sake of power, he was a cold blooded beast. Even his own people feared him. I am certain he practiced Genickschuss on Jews. However, it is one thing to shoot children, which Goering and Himmler did not do, and another to order it, which they did. Hitler expressed his “wish” that the Jews be eliminated. Goering, Himmler and Heydrich gave the orders. The orders went out to the bureaucrats like State Secretary of Interior Wilhelm Stuckart whose ministry had taken from all German Jews their citizenship in November 1941. They were no longer German citizen with rights but stateless persons. Gestapo Chief Heinrich Mueller to round up the German Jews. Lt. Col. of SS Adolf

Eichmann for transportation. And Reinhard Heydrich gave the orders to kill to his *Einsatzgruppen* commanders.

It is hard to believe that it all happened because Hitler willed it. But that is exactly how it happened.

The famous (famous?) British historian David Irving writes in his book “Hitler’s War” his thesis that Hitler did not order the killings and was not aware of the exterminations of the Jews until at least 1943. How can any historian write such garbage. Were did Irving do his research? Or maybe he didn’t and just wrote what he wanted to believe. That is not being a historian but rather an advocate. His writings clearly show that he admired Hitler and the Third Reich but hated Churchill and the English government, and he an Englishman.

Hitler was cunning. As I wrote before he did not want his name associated with HIS genocide. And he did not want the world to know about it.

No one can decipher Hitler’s mind and thinking. It suffices to know that he was a virulent anti-Semite. His upbringing does not suggest where and when he became anti-Semitic. As a boy he picked up his father’s utterings. The teachings in the Catholic church which condemned the Jews as the Christ-killers.

As a 15 year old, he told a friend when they passed a synagogue, that it should not be permitted to exist. I don’t believe that his upbringing was any different than of any other boy in Linz. What made him into this special Jew hater that when he came to power resulted in genocide?

It is my believe that some people are born with a mental defect. This defect prevents them from incorporating civilized traits and characteristics which develop normally in

humans and do so in the most primitive tribes. Such civilized human emotions as compassion, sympathy, pity do not exist in such people. Perhaps we all have met such people. Ruthless, merciless, without any feelings or consideration for others and perhaps even brutal and sadistic. Most career criminals fall into this category. So do repeat rapists. A wife constantly abused by her husband knows such a man. Bigots, racists are part of the clan. There are many ‘little Hitlers’ around. Most often they manage to hide their prejudice and intolerance pretty well or at least control it. Add to such a ‘civilized defective’ person fanaticism and power and you have Ceasar, Ivan the Terrible, Attila the Hun, the Inquisitors, Stalin and Hitler, Pol Pot, Milocewic. I don’t think such a lack of civilized traits is inherited. It is a defect, a mutation of the mind.

Hitler, Goering, Himmler, Heydrich and his replacement Kaltenbrunner, and most higher officials in the Nazi party and government, as the Gestapo, the SD, the Black SS and all those belonging to the *Einsatzgruppen* had this mental defect and never in their lives acquired civilized traits.

Hitler was the Master and Leader of Germany. He had the fanaticism, the will for power, great oratory talents, leadership qualities, a good memory for details and a certain charisma that seemed to hypnotize not only individuals he dealt with but the masses. The others did not have such characteristics. So it was only Hitler who could attain the power to become Germany’s leader and could “will” the destruction of entire peoples – and be obeyed unflinchingly.

Yet, in all fairness to the SS beasts who did the killings, they were not devoid of some sort of human feelings. Those they shot down...the many children and their mothers

and fathers, they could not face them. They did not want to look in their eyes. It wasn't just that when showing their backs the neck was more prominently exposed for the neck-shot – you can just as easily shoot into the throat and hit the spinal column. And when they shot the people into the back to hit the heart they could have done it more successfully if they had aimed at the chest. But they could not or did not want to look into the children's eyes. That much civilized feeling I grant the killers. None other!

To come back to Irving's faulty theses. He believes that Hitler did not order the extermination of the Jews because there was no written order in existence. Hitler never wrote such an order. He wanted to stand with clean hands before the German people and his German World Empire. We don't know what transpired between Hitler, his faithful underling *Der treue Heinrich*, meaning Heinrich Himmler; his like-spirited *Reichsmarschal* Hermann Goering; and his chief executioner, the head of the RSHA – 'Main Security Office and the Security Service', Reinhard Heydrich.

We can be certain that they spoke freely with each other and did not use such flowery and deceiving terms as evacuation, resettlement but said what they had in mind. Killing all Jews. Yes, from the oldest down to the newborn babies.

Conferences between Hitler and Himmler were almost always held in private.

The crime of extermination was so inhuman and uncivilized and barbaric in its methods that even Himmler and Goering would have never given the order. It had to come from the Fuehrer himself. Heydrich is another story, he was a cold blooded monster. But all his power was delegated from Himmler. He efficiently executed Hitler's order which might have been given directly to him from Hitler or most likely was given by word of

mouth through Himmler. Goering, when he issued the order in July of 1941, was only making it quasi official. He, as *Reichsmarschall*, head of the government, made the order legal. To try to fathom the screwed up thinking of these men – I cannot fathom Hitler’s mind except that he was one of those bigots and fanatics, always a lethal combination, who gained the power to execute his psychotic fantasies. Himmler was known to abhor hunting. Calling it dastardly to kill those defenseless and innocent animals. And in the same breath would talk about the Jewish Race as varmint that had to be destroyed. Goering was the hunter. He was also a pleasure seeker. Having as much fun hunting animals as chasing after women. Playing with his elaborate model railroad and getting his kicks with morphine. He was also a braggart and loved to dress and appear in his own designed fantasy uniforms. Goering was also devoid of human feelings and any sort of compassion for others. He was a jovial and mindless brute.

While no document exists showing an order given by Hitler or anyone else for the extermination we have plenty of evidence where the order emanated. Gerald Fleming shows quite clearly the process that led to genocide. The same information was available to David Irving. If he had done his home work he would not have come out with such a cock and bull story that Hitler did not order the Genocide and knew nothing about it until 1943.

For me, as a nine year old Jewish boy in Munich, Nazi Germany, the unmistakable order for the genocide began on 30 January 1939. I mentioned it before but here is Hitler’s speech to the Reichstag:

“Today I want to be a prophet once again: If the Jewish financial establishment in and

outside Europe should succeed once again in plunging the peoples of the world into war; then the result will not be a Bolshevization of the world, and thus a victory for Judaism, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.”

When I heard that speech as part of the weekly news program in the movie house, I was terrified. I understood and knew and believed that if a World War would come, and only Hitler could start it and not the Jews, that the Nazis would kill my mother and me; and my friends and classmates and their families. When Hitler attacked Poland and France, England declared war on Germany it was not yet the world war. Then Hitler attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, and the world war had begun and I knew that the Nazis would kill us all! From that moment on every German was my enemy unless he proved to be my friend.

The blame for the genocide must include many. Yes Hitler willed it. The three aforementioned mass murderers took Hitler's "wish" and gave the orders. The hierarchy of the party and government, (remember that Nazi Germany had a dual functioning regime, the governments agencies and the ones of the Nazi party) all the ministers and higher officials such as Regierungsrat Schwingenstein worked on the Final solution. Mueller's Gestapo, Heydrichs Sipo (*Sicherheitspolizei*) a sort of political police, SD and SS formed into the killer troops did the dirty work. They all were as guilty as Hitler and his evil threesome, and let us not forget the hate monger Joseph Goebbels. And they all, if still alive after the war and brought to justice, blamed Hitler. Every one of them from Goering on down to Eichmann, and the head of the execution troops said "*I was only following orders.*"

The Fuehrer's orders. They really believed that by stating that they only followed

orders the world, the courts, would understand their barbaric behavior. Eichmann when brought to trial in Israel even claimed that he was no anti-Semite. Himmler, when he was just a farmer in Landshut/Bavaria was not known to be anti-Semitic until he joined Hitler's SS. Streicher from Nuremberg became so virulently anti-Semitic to cover up his own sexual aberrations. Men without morals and conscience. Power hungry and doing anything to advance themselves in Hitler's eyes. And they called themselves the elite of the Nordic Germanic Aryan Race.

There is an interesting document in existence at the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. The German repository for such reports of war crimes. It originated from Himmler's field headquarters in Russia. Here is my translation of the report:

(- No. 544 -)

The Reichsleiter-a

Field command post
20 December 1942

Regards: Report to the Fuhrer about gang actions.

R e p o r t No. 51
Foreign country-South, Ukraine, Bialystock.
Result of gang elimination from Sep. 1st to Dec. 1st, 1942.

1.) Bandits:

a) Ascertained dead after combat (x)					
August:	September:	October:	November:	Total:	
227	381	427	302	1337	
b) Prisoners at once executed:					
125	282	87	243	737	
c) Prisoners executed after prolonged questioning:					
2100	1400	1596	2731	7828	

2.) Helpers of bandits and suspected helpers of bandits.

a) Arrested:				
1343	3078	8337	3795	16553
b) Executed:				
1198	3020	6333	3706	14527

c) Jews executed:

31246	165282	95735	70948	363211
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This report was submitted by Himmler to Hitler and placed into Hitler's hands.

According to a note by Hitler's adjutant Pfeiffer, the report was submitted to Hitler on 31 December 1942. As was the custom, Himmler, after Hitler had seen such reports, would append a note to the effect "The Fuehrer has taken note: Destroy."

At the end of the year 1942, when a more comprehensive report was issued by the SS Inspector for Statistics Richard Korherr, he was told to eliminate the word *Sonderbehandlung* i.e. "Special Treatment" the pseudonym for killing. Rudolf Brandt, Himmler's personal secretary writes to Korherr: 'The RFSS (*Reichsfuehrer of the SS*) has requested that "special treatment of the Jews" be mentioned nowhere in the document. Page 9, point 4, should read as follows: "Transport of Jews from the eastern provinces to the Russian East: passed through camps in the General Gouvernement, through the camps in the Warthegau. No other wording may be used. I am returning the copy of the report, with the *Reichsfuehrer's* initials, and with the request that page 9 be altered accordingly and then resubmitted.'

The era of hiding their genocide had arrived. The extermination camps were all located in the General Gouvernement and in the Warthegau.

On 11 July 1943, Hitler's secretary Martin Bormann (by then the most powerful man after Hitler) issued instructions whereby, 'in agreement with the Fuehrer, The Final Solution was not to be mentioned in any documents related to the Jewish question.'

It is of course a paradox that on one hand even reports to Hitler can no longer bear the inscriptions: Jews executed. Then - Jews given special treatment. Now it was 'passed through the General Gouvernement and Warthegau' while on the other hand Himmler

spoke of the annihilation of Jews to selected but not intimately informed audiences.

Hitler too would admit to the exterminations as he did in his talk with the Romanian Chief of State Antonescu and the Hungarian Regent Admiral Horthy.

All the evidence and examination of witnesses after the war points to Hitler as having given the order for the mass killing of Jews. And it doesn't matter if he expressed as a "will or wish" of the Fuehrer. All orders handed down by Himmler and Heydrich to the various SS agencies for executing the order was always referred to as "from highest authority." There was only one authority over the two and that was Hitler.

We can really trace Hitler's evil path to destruction from his early mutterings about the synagogue in Linz that shouldn't be there (he was then 15) to a more explicit statement he made to the journalist Hell when asked what he wanted to do with the Jews once he came to power, Hitler said – as reported in Hell's article for a newspaper and titled *Aufzeichnungen* 1922, meaning "reportage".

'His eyes no longer saw me but instead bore past me and off into empty space; his explanations grew increasingly voluble until he fell into a kind of paroxysm that ended with his shouting, as if to a whole public gathering: "Once I really am in power, my first and foremost task will be the annihilation of the Jews. As soon as I have the power to do so, I will have gallows built in rows – at the Marienplatz in Munich, for example – as many as traffic allows. Then the Jews will be hanged indiscriminately, and they will remain hanging until they stink. They will hang there as long as the principles of hygiene permit. As soon as they have been untied, the next batch will be strung up, and so on down the line until the last Jew in Munich has been exterminated. Other cities will

follow suit, precisely in this fashion, until all Germany has been completely cleansed of Jews.'

So much for Hitler in 1922.

As far as Hitler's responsibility in matters of the Jewish question, that he and he alone is responsible for decision making, can be documented in an interesting speech Hitler gave to his *Kreisleiters*, (district leader of the party). The speech Hitler gave in a secret address was on 29 April 1937 and he spoke in reference to an article in a local paper in which the editor asked 'how to distinguish Jewish firms.'

'From whom is he demanding this? Who can give the necessary orders? Only I can give them. The editor, in the name of his readers, is asking me to act. First, I should tell you that long before this editor had any inkling about the Jewish problem, I had made myself an expert in the subject. Secondly, this problem has been under consideration for two or three years, and will, of course, be settled one way or another in due course. My point is then this: the final aim of our policy is crystal clear to all of us. All that concerns me is never to take a step that could damage us in any way. You must understand that I always go as far as I dare and never further. It is vital to have a sixth sense that tells you, broadly, what you can do and what you cannot do. Even in a struggle with an adversary it is not my way to issue a direct challenge to a trial of strength. I do not say "come on and fight because I want to fight." Instead I shout at him – and I shout louder and louder: "I mean to annihilate you." And then I use my intelligence to help me to maneuver him into a tight corner, so that he cannot strike back, and then I deliver the fatal blow.'

Helmut Krausnick, in his book “SS State”, adds to Hitler’s speech that “nothing perhaps betrays Hitler’s innermost feeling about his Jewish policy and its dreadful consequences as clearly as did this text.”

Gerald Fleming, adds, “other quotes of Hitler concerning the Jews have the same sadistic tone, but, in some way, this text is indeed of major significance: Hitler insists on the fact that he alone can decide about measures against the Jews, even relatively minor ones like marking of Jewish firms. He stresses the fact that he – and nobody else – calculates every step in this “fight”; he speaks of maneuvering in such a way that the enemy be paralyzed; and he asserts that ‘*The final aim of our policy is crystal clear to all of us.*’ And then concludes with ‘*...and then I deliver the final blow.*’

January 1939, his famous or rather infamous speech to the *Reichstag*. The one I heard and understood.

Many people thought of Hitler’s speeches as propaganda. I didn’t. In regards to the Jews he foretold what he had in mind - as he did, or tried to do, when the British bombed Berlin and Munich in 1940 in answer to his terrorist attacks against London. ‘*Wir werden ihre Staedte ausradieren.*’ We will erase their cities. He tried to.

Destroyed a good part of London, most of Coventry and other cities. And tried it again with his Weapons of Vengeance. That prophecy of course backfired as instead most of the German cities were erased.

Five months after his 1939 speech to the *Reichstag* he prophesied to the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky: “the Jews shall be annihilated in our land.”

My mother’s interviews with *Regierungsrat* Schwingenstein in 1940, when he advised

her to abandon her son as his fate is already sealed. Schwingenstein belonged to the *Reichskanzlei*, the highest German government office. Here we have a hint that already in 1940 the word was passed amongst the top government officials of what was in store for the Jews in Germany. Interesting also that Schwingenstein wanted my mother to sign a petition directly to the Fuehrer. It seems ridiculous that for a woman to renounce her membership in the Jewish religion would interest the leader of a country.

But again, here we have prove that Hitler was intimately concerned with everything pertaining to the Jews. Only he could give orders.

We have Hitler's statement of 21 October 1941, made in the Fuehrer's Headquarters and preserved in a memorandum signed by Martin Borman, his secretary: "*When we finally stamp out this plague. We shall have accomplished for mankind a deed whose significance our men out there on the battlefield cannot even imagine yet.*" And four days later in the presence of Himmler and Heydrich: "*It is good that we are preceded by an aura of terror for our plans to exterminate Jewry.*"

The Jews in Munich, one thousand persons, mostly families, were rounded up on the 12th of November 1941, and kept in an aura of terror. On the 16th, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels reminded his readers of the Fuehrer's prophecy made on 30 January 1939. In the 16th of November issue of *Das Reich* he wrote: "We are witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy at this very moment." Nine days later, on the 25th of November, In Kovno's Fort IX, these 1000 children and their parents were executed with machine guns.

On 26 January 1944, Himmler gave a speech to several hundred high ranking

Wehrmacht officers: “When the Fuehrer gave me the order to carry out the total solution of the Jewish question, I at first hesitated, uncertain whether I could demand of my worthy SS-men the execution of such a horrid assignment. But this was ultimately a matter of a Fuehrer-order, and therefore I could have no misgivings. In the meantime, the assignment has been carried out, and there is no longer a Jewish question.”

This was six months before Adolf Eichmann finally got Regent Horthy to release the Jews of Hungary to him. Then the gas chambers of Auschwitz were operating again at full capacity – 10,000 children and adults gassed daily.

The reason I needed to find the person who gave the order to kill my friends and classmates is that these kids were family to me. And if you have someone murdered in your family you want to find the one who killed and also the one who ordered the murders. I don't know who did the killing, except that *Standartenfuehrer* Karl Jaeger was the commander of the killer commando, as documented in his report, and signed by him.

There is conclusive evidence that the one who gave the order was Adolf Hitler.

As to the ‘worthy SS-men’. There are no words in any dictionary to describe them.

Such men belonged under the bottom of the dung-heap of inhumanity, as did the Third Reich and its leader.

It is almost incomprehensible to the average person that anyone should be persecuted, terrorized and killed because of ones birthright as it was done to the Jewish children and their parents. Just born Jewish is not being guilty of anything.

If you are born a German you are not guilty of anything. There is no such condition as

Allgemeinschuld - collective guilt, at least not in civilized society. If you are born a German you can be proud of your heritage, the great nation Germany was and is again. Most of those who were adults during Hitler's times are gone forever. All those will meet their Maker, if you believe in that and as a Christian you should. It will be only between them and Him and only they will know if they must be ashamed standing before God. They might have fooled themselves in believing that they were good Germans, good Nazis, but they cannot fool God.

If you are a young German, and after learning of what Nazi Germany did to the world, you speak of the good deeds Hitler did then you are just as evil. As are the neo-Nazis. There are still those who say Hitler had the Autobahns built and gave the many unemployed jobs. Ask the compulsory laborers who built the Autobahns. Minimum wages and part of the salary deducted for everything the government could think of, poor food, sheds to live in and for long periods away from the families. The unemployed finding jobs in an industry geared for war, working 10-12 hours a day for six days during the week. Wonderful vacations through the "*Kraft durch Freude*" the 'Strength through Joy'? Everybody had to pay for it and only good Nazis could ever hope to cruise to Italy and Spain.

Daughters, and even wives, becoming SS-whores in the *Lebensborn* institutions to breed 'super-babies.'

And when the Thousand Year Reich crumbled after twelve years of terror and horror, your cities destroyed, millions killed, many more millions murdered, this was the legacy of the crooked cross, the Swastika - of Nazism. A legacy of shame.

What makes today's Germany so different from Nazi Germany is that after the war there was this silence between father and son. In every other nation of the world a son could ask his father "dad, what did you do during the war?" In post-war Germany there was only silence. Many of the fathers never returned.

And because of this silence a new generation of young Germans grew up essentially free of poisonous nationalism, bigotry and extremism of this and that.

A generation free of the guilt of their fathers and walking hand in hand with its neighbor nations. A Germany rejoining the civilized countries of the world.

One more thought why we can't apply collective guilt to the German Nation for the Holocaust. We would have to apply the same stigma to all the lands occupied by the German Army because of their many collaborators. From France to the Low Countries, the Baltic Nations, Poland and the Ukraine, the Balkan Countries – the many who flocked to the Swastika. The Lithuanians, Latvians, Poles, Ukrainians, Rumanians - vicious killers. The lack of sympathy in the Allied countries to the plight of the Jews and a total absence of interfering in the Holocaust. In hindsight we may ask 'what could the Allies have done?' It is true, very little in fact. But the little they could have done they did not do. Some thought of bombing the rail lines leading to the camps. This would have been futile as with German efficiency and camp inmates they would have been repaired within 24 hours.

I remember, it was after the first American daylight raid over Munich in 1944, when I picked up leaflets dropped by the planes. It wrote about the new B-29 bomber being built and showed a drawing of a B-29 superimposed on a B-17; how much bigger the new bomber was and able to carry a bigger bomb load. As if that propaganda stunt

impressed anyone. As if it made a difference if the bomb dropped from a B-29 was any more lethal killing people. Then, as a boy I thought TOTALLY STUPID. Why don't they drop leaflets writing about the killing of the Jews.

Again in hindsight, I believe that the dropping of leaflets on a continuous basis with details of the mass murder, which were fully known at that time by the Allies, was the only effective way to counter the genocide. To tell the German populace what their government was trying so desperately to hide. What would have been the consequences of these revelations? I don't know. Possibly Himmler would have shut down the extermination centers. Possibly Horthy would have refused to hand over 400,000 Hungarian Jews to Eichmann. Certainly the moral of the German soldier would have suffered and so many more would have fought less fanatically for the lost war – knowing the government was engaged in mass murder on a scale unprecedented in human history.

And in hindsight I ask myself “what, if Hitler had not been born?” No! The Holocaust would not have happened. Hitler was truly the anti-Christ. And his closest collaborators who were just a guilty? They would have been nobodies.

Goering would have had a less elaborate model railroad in his attic than he had at Carin-Hall. Still getting his kicks with morphine and other man's wives.

Goebbels still writing furiously and getting nothing published. Using his oratory talents for whatever, probably as a *Hausierer*, a travelling slesman..

Himmler raising his chickens and practicing voodoo or something like it.

The abject Streicher would have sooner or later come in conflict with the law because of his sexual aberrations.

Heydrich? That man's mentality escapes my understanding. A total miscreant.

After the war all the killers claimed they were only following orders. As if following orders would excuse their murder of Jewish children, women and men. Daniel Goldhagen in his historical book "Hitler's Willing Executioners" writes about the death march of Jewish women from the concentration camp Gross-Rosen in Poland to Loslau near the Czech border in 1945. The purpose of the march was to keep the prisoners away from the allied armies and liberation. The women in their light garments, often without proper shoes or even without shoes had to drudge along in the wintry cold of ice and snow. Their guards were mostly SS-women who treated the prisoners harshly and cruelly, driving them on with rods and clubs, or beating them for no reason at all - the brutalized guards they were. When a prisoner fell, could no longer walk, the guards pointed them out to accompanying male policemen who shot these women.

Before they reached Loslau a courier came with orders from Himmler 'that Jews may no longer be mistreated and killed.' Did these order-obeying automatons follow orders? NO! They continued lording it over these unfortunate women, beating and injuring them and when unable to walk anymore - shooting them. Which makes a farce to the "we only obeyed orders" refrain of the killers.

And one more thought. Are Germans different than any other nationality or people?

I already mentioned their propensity for extremism which made them flock to the Swastika and what it stood for. Otherwise – NO!

And while this is a sad statement about humanity it is the terrible truth. Among

humankind that are very few humanitarians. Basic human nature is a very selfish and cruel nature. The brutish animal with intelligence. The decedents of the Neanderthals. Add to that the guile of religious fanaticism and we have the circuses of ancient Rome, the human sacrifices of the Incas, the Inquisition, the 30-year war, and our today Islamic terrorism.

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NOTES, DOCUMENTS, PICTURES

DOCUMENT 1:

Letter from the Munich Archives to the President of the Jewish Federation in Munich in answer to her request for information about the disappearance of a thousand Jewish citizens from Munich in November 1941. Information I had requested of her.

DOCUMENT 1b:

English translation of this letter.

DOCUMENT 2:

Copy of the original letter send to the Seligmann family in Munich ordering their deportation. The English translation of this letter is part of the text.
The copy provided to the author by the Munich Archives.

DOCUMENT 3:

Copy of the witness Hartmann. The English translation is part of the text.
From the Munich Archives.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

ADDENDUM:

10/06 99 14:02 +49 89 23330831 Stadarchiv +49 89 23330831 001/006



Landeshauptstadt
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Direktorium

DOCUMENT 1:

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Stadarchiv, Winzererstraße 68, 80797 München

Frau
Charlotte Knobloch
Israelitische Kultusgemeinde München
Reichenbachstraße 27

80469 München

Stadarchiv

Winzererstraße 68
80797 München
Telefon (089) 233 - 3 08 15
Telefax (089) 233 - 3 08 30

Zimmer: 103
Sachbearbeitung:
Herr Dr. Heusler

Ihr Schreiben vom
22.4.99

Ihr Zeichen

Datum
05.05.1999

Aktenzeichen (bei Antwort bitte angeben): 162/ /99/Heu



Transport jüdischer Familien im November 1941

Sehr geehrte Frau Knobloch,

im Oktober 1941 wurde im Reichssicherheitshauptamt Berlin die „Evakuierung der Juden aus dem Altreich“ beschlossen. Am 24.10.1941 erging daraufhin die Anordnung des Chefs der Ordnungspolizei, Berlin, an die zuständigen Stapoleitstellen. Diese beauftragten die Zweigstellen der Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland mit der Erstellung von Transportlisten.

Am 07.11.1941 erging an ca. 1000 Münchner (namentlich nachweisbar und überprüft sind derzeit 994 Personen) die „Evakuierungsaufforderung“ der Zweigstelle München der RV (s. Anlage).

Eine Namensliste liegt im Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Sign. Fa 208). In der Zeit von 11. bis 18. November wurden die betroffenen Personen in der Knorrstr. 148 („Jüdische Siedlung Milbertshofen“) interniert. Ursprünglich sollte dieser Transport am 17. November München mit Bestimmungsziel Riga verlassen. Da das dortige Ghetto noch „überfüllt“ war - die Ermordung der zu dem Zeitpunkt über 20 000 Bewohner des Ghettos konnte wohl nicht, wie zeitlich geplant, vollzogen werden - wurde der Transport aus München für drei Tage verschoben. In den Nachtstunden des 20. Novembers verließen die Internierten auf offenen Lastwagen das Lager Milbertshofen. Vom Bahnhof Milbertshofen aus wurden sie im Personenzug deportiert.

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002/006

Seite 2

Der Transport war ca. 4 Tage unterwegs. In den Abendstunden kam er in Kowno an. Dort wurden die Münchner am Ghetto vorbei zum Fort IX geführt, die Entfernung betrug ca. 6 km. Die Stadt Kowno war umgeben von einem Gürtel von Forts, die in zaristischer Zeit erbaut wurden um die Region zu schützen. In der Folgezeit wurde der größte Teil dieser Forts als Gefängnisse für Schwerverbrecher genutzt. Während der Besetzung durch die Deutschen dienten sie sowohl als Gefängnisse wie auch als Exekutionsstätten.

Aus dem sogenannten „Jäger-Report“ (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Sign. Fb 76), das ist die Gesamtaufstellung der im Bereich des Einsatzkommandos 3 bis zum 01.12.1941 durchgeführten Exekutionen, findet sich am 25.11.1941 folgender Eintrag:

„1159 Juden, 1600 Jüdinnen, 175 Judenkiner = 2934 (Umsiedler aus Berlin, München u. Frankfurt a. M.)“. Das heißt, der gesamte Transport aus München wurde durch das Einsatzkommando 3 der Einsatzgruppe A ermordet. Überlebende sind nicht bekannt.

Der damalige Kommandeur des EK 3, Karl Jäger (*1888) wurde im April 1959 verhaftet und beging am 22.06.1959 in Untersuchungshaft Suizid.

Als Todestag der Münchner Deportierten kann also der 25. November 1941, bzw. der 5/6. Kislev 5702 angenommen werden.

Einen Hinweis auf die Ermordung der Münchner finden Sie auch im Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte, Band XX, 1991 im Artikel von Dina Porat: The Legend of the Struggle of Jew from the Third Reich in the Ninth Fort near Kovno, 1941-1941 (S. 363 ff.).

Ich hoffe Ihnen mit diesen Angaben gedient zu haben und verbleibe

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

i.A.

3. 

Brigitte Schmidt

DOCUMENT 1b:

**STATE CAPITAL
MUNICH
DIREKTORIUM**

City Archives

Mrs.
Charlotte Knobloch
Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Munich
Reichenbachstrasse 27

Winzererstrasse 68
80797 Munich

80469 Munich

Your letter from
April, 22nd, 1999

Date
May 5th, 1999

Transport of Jewish Families in November 1941

Dear Mrs. Frau Knobloch,

In October 1941, the RSHA, Main Security Office, decided upon the evacuation of the Jews from Germany proper. On October 24, 1941, the head of the State Police, Berlin, sent to all Gestapo offices the orders for evacuation. The Gestapo ordered all branches of the Jewish Federation in Germany to prepare for the transports.

On November 7th, 1941, the Federation send out the notices for evacuation to around 1000 Jewish citizens of Munich (checked and officially proven at this time, to 994 persons).

A list of all persons is available from the Institut fuer Zeitgeschichte (office of historical documents), (sign. FA 208).

During the dates of November 11th to 18th these evacuees were interned in the Knorrstrasse 148 (Jewish Camp Milbertshofen). As first planed this transport was scheduled to leave Munich on 17 November, with destination Riga. Because the ghetto in Riga was overcrowded – the murder of the 20,000 residents of the ghetto could not as planed be completed in time – the transport in Munich was held up for three days. During the night of November 20th, the internees were transported in open trucks from the camp Milberthofen. From the station in Milberthofen they were deported in rail cars.

The transport was travelling around 4 days. In the evening hours it arrived in Kovno. There, the Munich citizen were led past the ghetto to Fort IX. The distance was approximately 6 kms. The City of Kovno was surrounded by a ring of forts which were built during the Tsar's time to protect the region. Afterwards the forts were used as secure prisons for violent criminals. During the occupation by the Germans they also served as prisons and execution places.

The so called "Jaeger Report (Institute for Historical Documents. Sign. Fb 76) lists the complete executions conducted in the region of responsibility of Einsatzkommando 3 to 1 December 1941. For November 25, 1941, the following entrée is made:

"1159 Jews, 1600 Jewesses, 175 Jew-children = 2934 (resettlers from Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt a/M." This means the complete transport from Munich was murdered by Einsatzkommando 3, of Einsatzgruppe A. Survivors are not known. The former commander of EK 3, Karl Jaeger, (b. 1888) was arrested in April 1959, and committed suicide on 22 June 1959 while in detention. The day of death for the Munich deportees is then 25 November 1941, or 5/6 Kislev 5702.

Further documentation for the murder of the Munich citizens can be found in the Yearbook for German History, volume XX, Tel Aviv, and in the article by Dina Porat: "The Legend of the Struggle of Jews from the Third Reich in the Ninth Fort near Kovno, 1941. (page 363 ff.)

I hope that I have been helpful in providing you with this information, and remain with friendly regards

Brigitte Schmidt

[I am grateful for whoever wrote this abstract from the official archives in Munich, he or she did not mince any words and use the usual pseudonyms - evacuation, resettlement, transport, elimination, trip through the Warthegau but called the shootings what it was - murder.]

DOCUMENT 2:

JISRAELITISCHE KOLONISIERUNGSGEMEINSCHAFT MÜNCHEN e.V.
ZWEIGSTELLE DER REICHSVERBANDUNG
DER JUDEN IN DEUTSCHLAND

München, den 7. November 1941.
Lindwurmstrasse 125/Rkg.

Herrn/Frau
Fräulein

Richard I. Seligmann

München

Amalienstrasse 3
Promenaden Dreyer

Ihre sämtlichen
dreiteiligen Matratzen sind
mitzunehmen!

Betr.: Evakuierung.

Zufolge Anordnung der Geheimen Staatspolizei -Staatspolizeileitstelle- München haben wir Sie davon zu verständigen, dass Sie und Ihre unten namentlich bezeichneten Familienmitglieder zu einem Evakuierungs-Transport eingeteilt worden sind.

Gleichzeitig werden Sie hierdurch verpflichtet, sich mit den übrigen unter genannten zum Transport eingeteilten Personen

ab Dienstag den 11. November 1941

in Ihrer jetzigen Unterkunft bereitzuhalten und diese ohne besondere Erlaubnis der Behörde nicht, auch nicht vorübergehend, verlassen werden.

Jeder Versuch, sich der Umsiedlung zu widersetzen, oder zu entziehen, ist zwecklos und kann für die Betroffenen zu schweren Folgen führen. Falls sich ältere Familienmitglieder Ihnen zum Transport freiwillig anschließen wollen, ist uns hiervon zur Weiterleitung an die Behörde Kenntnis zu geben.

In Ergänzung obiger Anordnungen teilen wir Ihnen noch folgendes mit:

Jeder Transportteilnehmer darf bis zu 50 kg Gepäck mitnehmen, verpackt in entweder 2 Koffer oder 1 Rucksack und 1 Koffer (es muss damit gerechnet werden, dass die Transportteilnehmer ihr Gepäck zeitweise selbst tragen).

Auf jeden Fall sind mitzunehmen:

Warme Ober- und Unterkleidung, Leibwäsche, Schuhe, kleines Waschgefäß, kleiner Simer zum Wäschewaschen, Decken, Reis- und Proviant, Essgeschirr (nur Teller, Tasse und Löffel, keine Messer und Gabeln), Federbetten nur für Kinder.

Ein Verzeichnis der nötigsten Bedarfsgegenstände liegt bei.

Jeder Transportteilnehmer hat RM 50.- in barem Geld mitzunehmen. Überschüssende Beträge, Wertpapiere bzw. Depotscheine, sonstige Bankausweise u.dgl. sind in einem Umschlag mitzunehmen, der mit Namen und Inhaltsverzeichnis zu versehen ist. Ausserdem ist das beiliegende Vermögensverzeichnis nach dem Stand vom 10.11.41 in allen Teilen genau auszufüllen, zu unterschreiben und in einem besonderen, mit Namen versehenen, nicht verschlossenen Umschlag mitzubringen.

10/06 '99 14:03

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Persönliche Dokumente aller Art, Ausweisplakate, einschl. Kenn-
karte und Pass, Lebensmittelkarten, sind ebenfalls mitzunehmen.

Einzelheiten werden Ihnen gegebenenfalls entweder durch uns
oder durch die Behörde mitgeteilt.

Die Leistungen unserer Mitglieder im Arbeitseinsatz haben bewie-
sen, dass durch Gemeinschaftsgeist alle schwierigen Aufgaben gelöst
werden können. Wir sind deshalb zu der Hoffnung berechtigt, dass auch
anlässlich der Evakuierung die Betroffenen die angeordneten Massnahmen
in gleichem Geiste tragen werden.

Karl Israel Stahl

Dr. Joseph Israel Schäler

Julius Israel Hochinger

Eritz Israel Sängner

Anlegen.

Verzeichnis der Gegenstände, die nach Massgabe des zulässigen Gewichts und unter Berücksichtigung der Notwendigkeit, das Gepäck event. selbst zu tragen, zur Auswahl in Frage kommen.

Gegenstände, die während der Reise und in der ersten Zeit nach der Ankunft benötigt werden, sind im Rucksack oder in dem 2. Koffer zu verpacken.

1. Allgemeines:

Bettwäsche (evt. Schlafsack)
Handtücher
Gesichtstücher
Scheuertücher
Waschtücher
Staubtücher
1 Kopfkissen
Decken (soviel vorhanden)

Toilettensachen:

Kamm und Bürste
Kleiderbürste
1 Stück Seife
Zahnbürste und Zahnpaste
Waschlappen
1 Waschlappen
Kopfwaschpulver
Tempo-Taschentücher
Nagelfeile
Toilettenpapier

Medikamente: keine ausser

Baldrian
Vaseline
Frostsalbe, Hirschtalg
Körperlotion
Schnellverband

Nähzeug: (keine Schere)

Stopf- und Nähgarn,
Knöpfe,
Sicherheitsnadeln
Gummiband
Koch- und Essgeschirr
Becher
Feldflasche oder Thermos
Reisebesteck
Brotbüchse
Brotbeutel
Spirituskocher mit Hartspiritus
Schmutzzeug
Taschenlampe mit Ersatzbatterie
Kerzen, Streichhölzer, Feuerzeug

Insektenpulver
Schnur, Lederriemen
Taschenwerkzeug
Haarschneidemaschine
Uhr (Wecker)

Reservebrille
Schreibpapier, Umschläge, Bleistifte
Füller, Gebetbuch etc.
Brieftasche, Geldbörse, Brustbeutel
Kartenspiele

Wichtige Papiere
Geburtsurkunde, Trauschein,
Auswandererpapiere
Kennkarte - Pass
Zeugnisse
Adressenmaterial
Festphotos
Lebensmittelmärkte

Taschentücher
Halstuch oder Shawl
Wäschebeutel
Schuhbänder
Einkaufsnetz
Ohrenschützer

2. Frauen:

Kleider (Winter- und Sommer-)
Berufskleider
Kittel oder Schürzen
Pullover oder Strickjacke
Kostüm
Regenmantel
Wintermantel
Schuhe oder Stiefel
Überschuhe
Hausschuhe
Taschentücher oder Handtücher
Schlupfer
Nachthemden oder Schlafanzüge
Unterkleider
Strümpfe, Wollsocken
Handschuhe
Hüftalter, Strumpfbander
Büstenhalter
Binden, Watte
Hut, Kapuze, Kopftuch

Männer:

Anzüge
Arbeitskleidung
Arbeitsmittel oder Joppen
Berufsschürzen
Pullover oder Strickjacken

DOCUMENT 3:

Aussage des Zeugen Hartmann im Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Münchner Gestapo-Beamten (Staatsanwaltschaft München, AZ 3 KIs 2/54)

"Nach ihrer Ankunft im Lager und Einweisung in die Baracken wurde das Gepäck zusammengestellt und von Beamten der Gestapo auf Waffen, Schmuck und dergleichen untersucht. Ebenso wurde eine körperliche Untersuchung an ihnen vorgenommen. Bei diesen Untersuchungen spielten sich manchmal häßliche Szenen ab, da willkürlich aus dem vorhandenen Gepäck den Abwandernden Gegenstände abgenommen wurden, die offenbar wegen ihres höheren Wertes von den durchsuchenden Gestapobeamten grundlos zurückbehalten wurden. Man konnte sich denken wohin diese Gegenstände dann wanderten.

Beim Abtransport nach Riga wurden besonders scharfe Maßnahmen getroffen, um Fluchtversuche zu verhindern. 2 Tage vor dem Abtransport wurde die sonst ständig von Lagerinsassen oder Lagerarbeitern versehene Wache am Eingang des Lagers von der SS besetzt. Bis zum Abtransport wurden Tag und Nacht Streifendienste innerhalb und außerhalb der Lagerumzäunung eingesetzt, teilweise durch Schutzleute, SS-Männer, teilweise auch von sogenannten Ordnern, die aus der Zahl der nicht abzutransportierenden im Lagerarbeitsdienst beschäftigten Juden genommen wurden und denen strengste staatspolizeiliche Maßnahmen angedroht wurden, falls durch ihre Schuld es einem Abwanderer gelänge zu flüchten.

Am 20. Nov. morgens 4 Uhr, nachdem um 2 Uhr nochmals Kaffee gefaßt wurde, traten die Abwanderer, deren Gepäck durch einen besonderen Arbeitsdienst bereits tags zuvor in die Wagenabteile verbracht wurde, bei strömendem Regen in Gruppen zum Abmarsch an unter Bedeckung stärksten militärischen Aufgebots, einer ganzen SS-Kompanie. Nach Ausführung des laut abgegebenen Kommandos 'Laden' erfolgte der Abmarsch aus dem Lagergelände, das allen Verdunkelungsvorschriften zuwider durch zahlreiche Scheinwerfer taghell erleuchtet war. Unter dem Geleit der SS wurde zum Ladebahnhof Milbertshofen, 20 Minuten vom Lager entfernt, marschiert und dort wurden sofort unter ziemlichem Geschrei der Bewachungsmannschaften die Abwanderer in die einzelnen Wagen eingewiesen. Es waren Personenwagen ältester Konstruktion 3. Klasse, wobei 9-10 Mann in jedem Abteil nebst ihrem Gepäck untergebracht werden mußten, so daß höchstens die Hälfte der Fahrgäste auf den Sitzbänken Platz nehmen konnte, während die übrigen gedrängt stehen mußten, da das Gepäck nicht in den Gepäcknetzen allein untergebracht werden konnte."

My mother Anna Holzmänn as a young woman.



RABBINAT of the Israeli Community MUNICH

Munich, 1 July 1924

CERTIFICATE

Miss

ANNA REITER
Born on 30 September 1895,
in Vilshofen

was today confirmed in the Jewish Faith

RABBINAT
MUNICH

Sig. of Rabbi
Dr. Baerwald



My father Martin Holzmann, my mother Anna and my sister Herta. Around 1925.



This certificate from the central police department in Munich, date 8 August 1938, .
 testifies that Anna Holzmann is a widow and can therefore remarry.
 It gives her name, date of birth and her being registered as a Jew (Israeli).
 It also states that her husband Martin Leopold Holzmann died on the first of April 1934.
 Further it states that two children were born in this marriage.
 (Herta) Jeanette, born 6 April 1924, Hugo Wolfgang Johannes, born 27 March 1929.

Polizeipräsidium München München, den 8. August 1938.

Familienstandszeugnis.

Zur Wiederverheiratung wird auf Grund des Melderegisters bestätigt, daß ~~Herr~~/Frau
Anna H o l z m a n n,
 geborenen Reiter, isrealitisch,
 geboren am 30. September 1895 in Vilshofen,
 hier gemeldet, verwitwet ist und aus der einzigsten Ehe mit de.^m am
1. April 1934 in München verstorbenen
Martin Leopold Holzmann, zwei Abkömmling^e besitzt.
 Jeanette, geboren am 6. April 1924 in München,
 Geb. Nebenverz. Hugo Wolfgang Johannes, geboren am 27. März 1929 in München

Gebühr 3,-
 Geb. Nebenverz. 2,-
 Form. 464 Fach - S.

J.A.
Asberg
 Ech

The author, Hugo Holzmann, 6 years old with his sister Herta, 11 years old.



My mother in 1938.



Hugo Holzmann as nine year old in Berlin with his grandmother Jeannet Holzmann.



Kennort:	München
Kennnummer:	CA 04 234
Gültig bis:	28. Februar 1944
Name:	Polmann geb. Krüger
Vorname:	Anna
Geburtsort:	30. September 1895
Geburtsort:	München
Beruf:	Polmann
Unverändliche Kennzeichen:	Polmann
Veränderliche Kennzeichen:	Polmann
Bemerkungen:	Keine

A 104 (S. 35) ⑤

1776

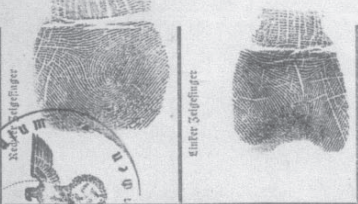


Anna-Lara Polmann
(Unterstützt von Xantenmühlweg)

München, den 28. Februar 1944

POLIZEI-PASIDUM
(Unterstützt von Xantenmühlweg)

(Unterstützt von Xantenmühlweg)



Stempel: St. 100

Unterstützt von Xantenmühlweg

Kennort: <i>München</i>		Unter Zeigefinger	
Kennnummer: <i>A 13909</i>		Unter Zeigefinger	
Gültig bis: <i>19. März 1945</i>			
Name: <i>Schubert</i>		 Hugo Ernst Holmann (Unterschrift des Kennortinhabers) <i>H. Ernst</i> 19. März 1945 Polizeipräsidium (Unterschrift des ausfertigenden Beamten)	
Vorname: <i>Hugo Ernst</i>			
Geburtsort: <i>München</i>			
Geburtsdatum: <i>28. März 1909</i>			
Beruf: <i>Polier</i>			
Vormerkungen: <i>keine</i>			

A 104 (C. 10) ©

10 November 1938. The Ohel-Jacob synagogue in the Herzog-Rudolfstrasse burnt down by the Nazi thugs during the night along with our Jewish Public School which was in the back. To the right of the policeman are the display cases of the *Sturmer and Schwarze Korps*, the SS publication.

The small building to the left was our Hort and became part of our school in 1939 when we were again permitted to have a school.



THE NAZI STAR. The only one the author saved.



The Jewish ration card for potatoes for the months of November 1944 through July 1945.

By the time we fled Munich in January 1945, we had already used the allocations through April.

EA: Münch.-Stadt a	EA: Münch.-Stadt b	EA: Münch.-Stadt c
Speisefkartoffeln	Speisefkartoffeln	Speisefkartoffeln

Bezugsausweis für Speisefkartoffeln

Gültig vom 13. November 1944 bis 22. Juli 1945

 **69-77** 

III

II

I

RAUM FÜR STAMPEN DER KARTENHEFTE (BEI AUSGABE VON EINFÜHRUNGSZEICHENEN) ODER DES VERTEILERS (BEI VERTEILUNG AN DIE EINFÜHRUNG)

77
16.7. bis 22.7.45
Speisefkartoffeln
IV

77
9.7. bis 12.7.45
Speisefkartoffeln
III

77
2.7. bis 15.7.45
Speisefkartoffeln
II

77
25.6. bis 8.7.45
Speisefkartoffeln
I

76
18.6. bis 24.6.45
Speisefkartoffeln
IV

76
11.6. bis 24.6.45
Speisefkartoffeln
III

76
4.6. bis 17.6.45
Speisefkartoffeln
II

76
28.5. bis 10.6.45
Speisefkartoffeln
I

75
21.5. bis 27.5.45
Speisefkartoffeln
IV

75
14.5. bis 27.5.45
Speisefkartoffeln
III

75
7.5. bis 20.5.45
Speisefkartoffeln
II

75
30.4. bis 13.5.45
Speisefkartoffeln
I

EA: München-Stadt

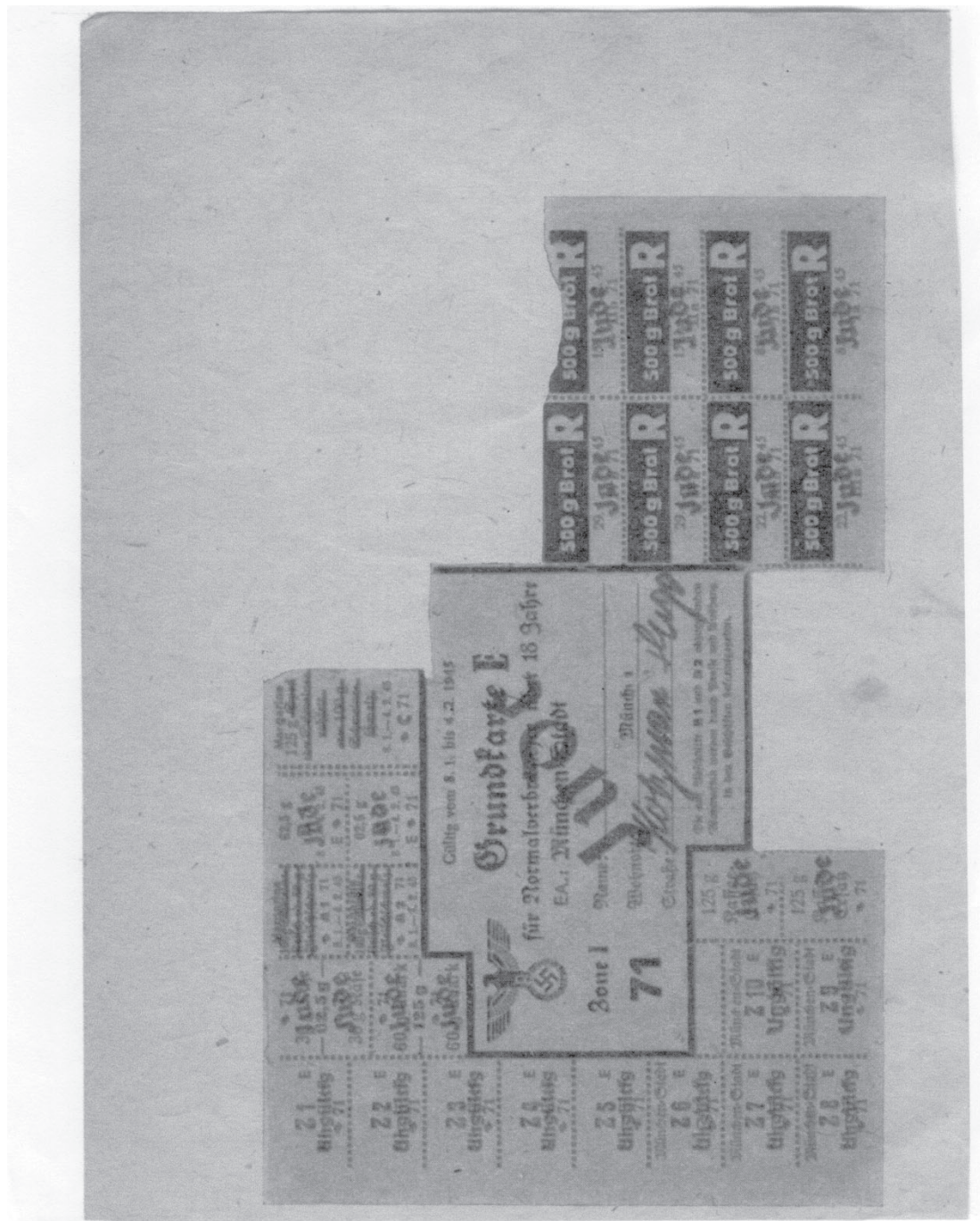
Name: Hilma Holzermann

Wohnort: München

Straße: _____

Ohne Namens eingetragen ungültig!
Nicht übertragbar!
Sorgfältig aufbewahren!

EA: Münch.-Stadt a	EA: Münch.-Stadt b	EA: Münch.-Stadt c
Speisefkartoffeln	Speisefkartoffeln	Speisefkartoffeln



The clothing card for Jews which we received and authorized us to buy a dime worth of thread quarterly.

Wirtschaftsamt
der Hauptstadt der Bewegung München

Nr.

Bezugsausweis für Nähmittel für Juden.

Der/Die ... Holzmann Hugo München,

... Theresienstr. 128 Str.Pl.Nr.

erhält bei de

München, Dienerstr.23

... W. F. F. e r, K.G. München, Bayerstr.71

gegen Abtrennung der nachstehenden Abschnitte

vierteljährlich Nähmittel im Betrage von 0.20 RM ohne Punktabgabe.

Ernährungsamt

Dienstleistungsamt

Abteilung B

Judenversorgung

.....
Unterschrift

IV	I	II
Gültig ab 1.10.44	Gültig ab 1.1.45	Gültig ab 1.4.45
Nähmittel für	Nähmittel für	Nähmittel für
0.20 RM	0.20 RM	0.20 RM
für Juden.	für Juden.	für Juden.
WA.München	WA.München	WA.München

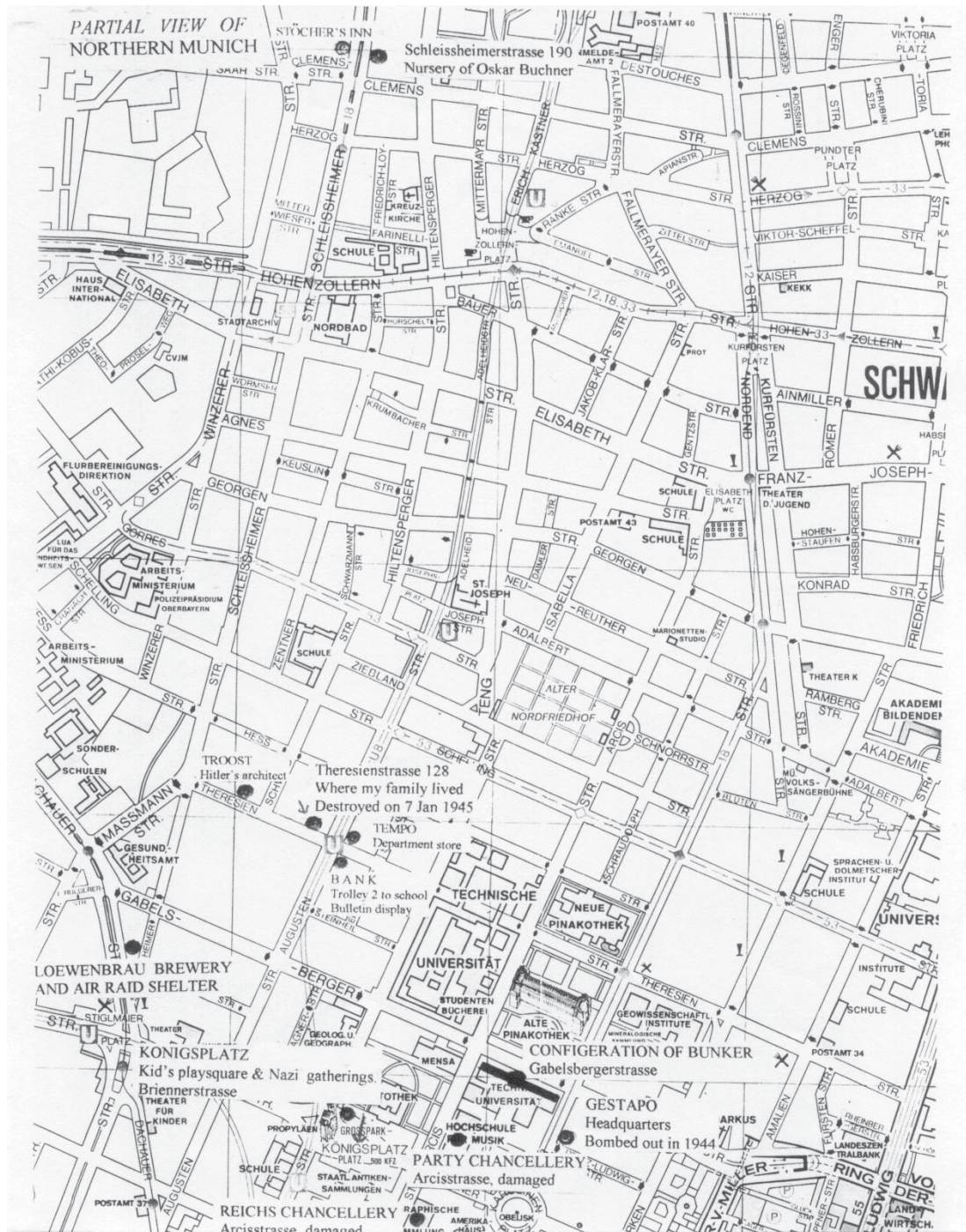
Hugo Holzmann 12 years old. Taken on 28 February 1942, the day of his Bar Mitzvah.



The *Parteikanzlei* (Nazi-Party Headquarters in the Arcistrasse, where I had to decorate with trees and flowers. Further along is the *Reichskanzlei* (Nazi Government) where my mother was summoned to repeatedly.

In the foreground, the low white wall is part of the *Bunker* or air raid shelter. The higher edifice between the trees is the main entrance to the shelter.







Our house, Theresienstrasse 128, or what is left of it. In the foreground the narrow gauge rail line used to carry the rubble to the Oberwiesenfeld.



Nr. 21048

Lebensmittel- und Unterstützungs-Bezugsnachweis
für ehemalige KZ.-Insassen D.R.

Herr-Frau Holzmann Anna 30.9.95
wohnhaft: Oberländerstr. 16
war vormals Insasse Nr. Sternträger
des KZ.-Lagers 11.9. 1946.
München, den

Städt. Wohlfahrtshauptamt München
Abteilung Fürsorgebüro für ehemalige Kz.-Insassen
Goethestraße 64, Zimmer 20

Leser Abschnitte ungültig!

Ab 19A Vp. von Vert.-St. laufend versorgt.

Städt. Wohlfahrtshauptamt München
Stempel und Unterschrift.

KZ. 100. Vp.	KZ. 99. Vp.	KZ. 98. Vp.
KZ. 95. Vp.	KZ. 96. Vp.	KZ. 97. Vp.
KZ. 94. Vp.		

Israeli Community Service
Munich
Herzog-Max-Strasse 7

Munich, August 8, 1946

CERTIFICATE

I acknowledge that Mrs. Holzmann, Anna, is a member of the Jewish Community. Mrs. Holzmann, who before her marriage, converted to Judaism, has never left her faith, not even during the years of persecution. Her son was Jewish raised and is also a member of the Jewish community.

Signed, Dr. Ohrenstein

Stamped with the Seal of the
Rabbinat, Munich.

Israelitische Kultusgemeinde
München
HERZOG-MAX-STRASSE 7

FERNSPRECH-NR.: 31448

BANK-KONTO: SEILER & CO., MÜNCHEN, LOWENGRUBE 18/20

MÜNCHEN, DEN 14.8. 1946

B e s c h e i n i g u n g .

Ich bescheinige hiermit, dass Frau
H o l z m a n n Anna Mitglied der Israelitischen
Kultusgemeinde ist.

Frau Holzmann, die vor Ihrer Eheschlie-
ßung zum Judentum übergetreten ist, ist nie aus
der jüd. Gemeinde ausgetreten, auch während der
schweren Verfolgungszeit nicht. Ihr Sohn ist jü-
disch erzogen und gehört auch der Jüd. Gemeinde
an.



Dr. Ohrenstein

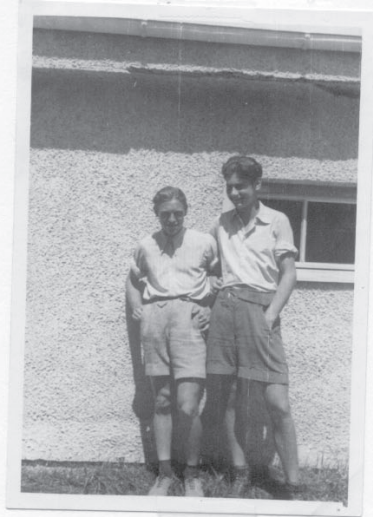
The author's membership card in the newly formed Jewish Community Center, 1945.

 Signature of bearer Eigenhändige Unterschrift des Inhabers <i>Hugo Holzmann</i> Name and Christian name (Vor- und Zuname) At withdrawal this certificate will be given back to the Kultusgemeinde Dieser Ausweis ist beim Ausscheiden aus der Kultusgemeinde zurückzugeben	Membership Cert. No. 63 Mitglieds-Karte Nr. 63 Bearer of this Mr., Mrs., Miss Inhaber dieser Karte Herr, Frau, Frä. <i>H o l z m a n n, Hugo</i> date of birth Place of birth geb. 27, 3. 29 zu München is member of Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde in Munich ist Mitglied der Israelitischen Kultus- gemeinde in München Munich, München, den 24. Sept. 1945 (Community of Israelitic Worship and Instruction) Israelitische Kultusgemeinde München, Herzog Maxstr. 7 <i>S. Spanier</i>
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Willia Rau. Friend and protector of Hugo and Ilse, the Jewish kids in the
Thereseinstrasse. As a boy and then in his sixties



Salo Neuwirth with the author in 1945.



Haus Waldeck by the Königsee, Sauckel's former retreat . In front Frau Brandner the housekeeper.



The author in 1946, as caretaker of freight car #29, leaving Munich for Bremen.



The author's sister Herta and her husband Larry Thomas in Philadelphia, 1947.



My mother in her late 60s, in Philadelphia.



The author as sergeant in the US Army in Vietnam, 1966.



The author and his wife Isabella, in the year 2000.



The author and his grandson Daniel.



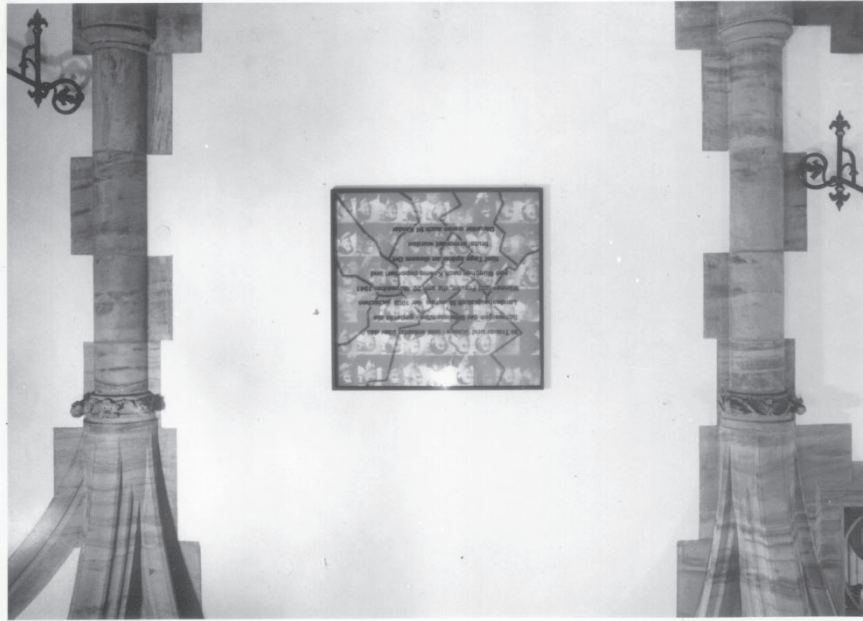
A D D E N D U M

Concurrent with writing my autobiography, the purpose of which I enumerated in the preface – to honor my mother Anna Holzmann, and that my ‘brothers and sisters’ from the sixth grade of the Jewish Public School in Munich may not be forgotten – the City of Munich commemorated the 60th anniversary of the murder of 994 of its citizens in Fort IX of Kovno.

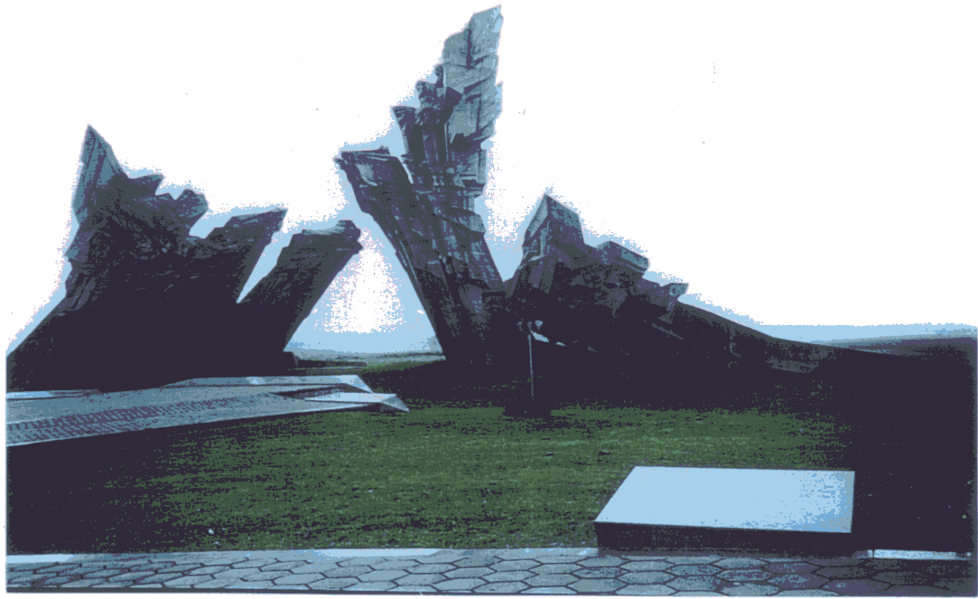
At the location at Fort IX, the City of Munich placed a mosaic memorial designed by artist Beate Passov to honor the victims of Nazi persecution. Also a plaque, designed by the artist, was at the same time placed in the Munich City Hall, the Rathaus. It reads:

IN SADNESS AND SHAME – HORRIFIED BY THE
SILENCE OF THOSE WHO KNEW – THE CITY OF
MUNICH REMEMBERS ITS 1000 CITIZENS WHO
WERE DEPORTED ON 20 NOVEMBER 1941 AND
FIVE DAYS LATER BRUTALLY MURDERED.

Concurrent, the Munich Archives published a book...verzogen, unbekannt wohin...
“...moved, unknown to where...” A well researched documentary to this dark episode of the city of Munich.



The PLAQUE IN THE MUNICH CITY HALL



THE MONUMENT TO THE MANY VICTIMS OF FORT IX,
KOVNO, LITHUANIA
...A CRY TO HEAVEN...
