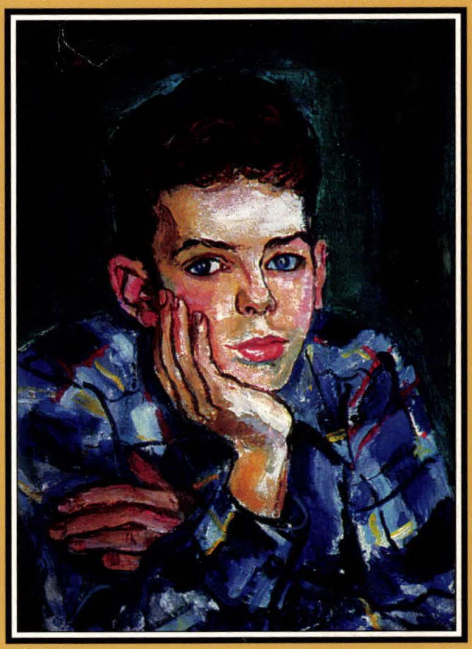
Not for Johnny Only



Recollections for My American Son

META CORDY

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by

Meta Cordy

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Not for Johnny Only

Dedication

To the memory of Lotte Palfi Andor

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Not for Johnny Only

Introduction

I had planned to write these stories for my son and meant the collection to be *For Johnny Only*. Since I got much encouragement from various sources to publish the stories, I should call them now *Not for Johnny Only*.

Everything I wrote down was a personal experience or happened, sometime, somewhere and remained in my memory. Memory does not last forever, and what has not been written down will be lost. My respect for professional writing is too great to confuse recording events from my life with creative writing. Yet I always felt the urge to write down what had happened, either in letters or in diaries. I also wrote poems for birthdays and family events and made translations of songs for friends. My colleagues at New York University, where I counseled foreign students, often heard me tell stories from my past. They encouraged me to put them on paper and gave me a beautiful electronic typewriter as a farewell gift at my retirement. When I realized that people enjoyed my experiences, I decided to sit down and "remember."

The description of my hometown and childhood is very detailed. The older one gets, the more vivid do early memories become. It may be that some of the reactions I had later in life to the big cities (Berlin, Paris, New York, Los Angeles-Hollywood) came out of the contrast with a protected small-town childhood. The accounts of life in Berlin and Paris revolve around my early career ambitions and the darkening political clouds that threatened Europe in the mid-1930s.

I came to this country in 1935 with the help of an uncle who lived in Plainfield, New Jersey. A cousin and I moved together to New York, where she was studying at Columbia University, and I continued my music studies. I met my future husband, Henry Korn (later Cordy), who had also left Germany and was a professional singer. He had a friend in Hollywood who had succeeded as a musician and was willing to

help us. Therefore we moved to California right after our marriage in 1938.

In Hollywood our son, Johnny, was born, which immediately made him an American citizen, while his parents, refugees from Germany, were trying desperately to become Americans. It was the wrong time, because we were considered "enemy aliens." I am sure sometimes Johnny was ashamed to have German parents. I remember when he brought a friend home from school and we asked him where his parents came from he cheerfully said, "from Denmark." Then he asked Johnny where his parents came from, and when he heard, "from Germany," the little boy's expression became sheer terror. Since we were still far from becoming citizens, we had to be especially careful and never spoke German in public.

My husband and I struggled for four years to build up our musical careers on the West Coast. In the beginning we sang in the choruses of many films, musicals and operas, but we specialized in duet programs and gave joint recitals on many occasions. Henry got small roles in different motion pictures, and things were looking up for us. He had just been engaged to sing the tenor solo in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, when suddenly the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Attorney General Francis Biddle announced a curfew on the West Coast for Japanese and Germans. Nobody was permitted to leave the house after eight P.M. or to travel more than a certain distance from home. Needless to say, Henry had to give up his performance. All the major motion picture studios where he worked were outside the curfew zone, and since concerts and most rehearsals took place in the evening, he lost his main income from one day to the next.

We realized we were finished and had to leave the West Coast. Another emigration. Being German Jews, we had had to leave Germany; now we were blamed and punished for being German. A classic Catch-22. Johnny was about two years old, and my mother was living with us at the time. We talked to many officials to gain exemption from the curfew. Even the

mayor of Los Angeles, whose son was also a singer and a good friend of ours, tried to help us. No exceptions were being made. War is war. We had to go back to New York, where we had family and friends.

In 1942 in New York my husband and I had to start the struggle for existence and career all over again. Henry got into the City Opera, but this did not pay enough for the three of us. However, he got other engagements, sang with many different opera companies, gave recitals and later spent the summers in Europe, singing at many radio stations.

Meanwhile, I decided to contribute more substantially to our income, took a course in "speed writing" and worked as a secretary at various educational institutions. It became necessary for Henry also to have a stable position, because Johnny was getting older, expenses mounted, and we had to think of his college education. Henry got a position as a cantor at a Reform temple, which meant more security for us.

The most important event during this period was meeting the Sterbas, two psychoanalysts from Vienna, in 1943. They were remarkable people; and from then on we spent every summer together for forty-one years. It gave our life a new direction, which is described in the chapter on "Sugar Bush."

The longest position I held—over eighteen years—was at the American Language Institute of New York University. I worked exclusively with foreign students, and soon became their counselor. This gave me a chance to develop an extensive program to help them understand American life by attending many of New York's cultural activities. Through various contacts with people from all over the world and American families who opened their homes to foreign students, I met a great number of interesting personalities, whom I describe in later chapters. Many theatrical organizations invited the students to performances, which gave them particular insight into American culture.

Henry died of a heart attack in 1965. At that time I gave up my professional singing completely and concentrated entirely on my work with the students. I travelled more during summer vacations, sometimes visiting the homes of my former

students. The accounts of my travels are not descriptions of localities, but rather of human encounters which I experienced in various parts of the world.

During my whole life I have had the good fortune of befriending and being befriended by many talented, unusual and wonderful people. Some of the most interesting encounters are reported in the last chapter. Human relationship and friendship constitute the red thread that runs through my entire life. That's what made me write *Not for Johnny Only.*

CHAPTER I

Germany

Childhood

My hometown was called München-Gladbach when I lived there. At the railway station it said "M-Gladbach." Several years before the Hitler period it was combined with the neighboring town, Rheydt, in order to become a *Grosstadt* (metropolis) and was called Gladbach-Rheydt. At the collapse of the Third Reich, the name was changed again and became, appropriately, Mönchengladbach, because of the large and beautiful *Mönchs-Abtei* (Benedictine abbey).

In the year 974 the Archbishop Gero von Köln (Cologne) founded an abbey in the "Gladbach Hills," devoted it to the martyr Vitus and invited the monks from the surrounding countryside to join him. Wherever these Benedictines had their abbeys, they developed leading centers for culture, education and peace, which made them highly respected throughout the land. The historical ups and downs of the abbeys through the Middle Ages are still represented in the works of art which were preserved.

During the thirteenth century the Gladbach monks started to rebuild their abbeys. There was little left of the foundation, since much of it had deteriorated over the past centuries. They enlisted the master architect Gerardus, who had been assigned to build the Gothic cathedral in Köln. He reconstructed the damaged Gladbach abbey so skillfully that it became one of Germany's most important architectural achievements of the century.

During World War II, in 1943 and 1944, the almost

1000-year-old abbey was ruined by bombs. The people, although hungry and bombed out, started within a year to rebuild their abbey. It took about ten years, and with the help of religious and art organizations and with the best restorers available, they obtained a perfect replica of the old Benedictine abbey. It is still at the same place, surrounded by well-kept grounds above a grove of magnificent old trees at a lovely pond, the Gero Weiher. Visitors from all over constantly come to see the cathedral.

The nineteenth-century part of the town is less interesting, but does have pretty residential sections and parks, like most German towns. My family lived in one of these districts and enjoyed a comfortable bourgeois life. All the arts were represented during our active cultural seasons. We had an orchestra, a theater, and an opera that also presented operettas right in our town. The performances took place in the spacious Kaiser Friedrich Halle. Maybe they were not always first class—for that we had to go to nearby Cologne or Düsseldorf—but the choice was extraordinary. Occasionally we had a very talented singer or actor, and that always made the season. We also had a small but charming art museum, and several movie theaters. Well-known speakers were invited to lecture every winter. Two concert series were almost fully subscribed, and every Saturday night we could hear either the Cäcilia concert with a famous soloist or the Symphony concert.

Sometimes a musician who was to give a recital, or a lecturer, came to stay at our house since the hotels were not yet very good. The visit of Count Hermann von Keyserling, whom my mother had agreed to invite when he came to lecture, is unforgettable.

I was about sixteen years old when the great philosopher was expected. He had founded "The School of Wisdom" in Darmstadt. After he had spent a long time in the Far East, his "Travel Diary of a Philosopher" was published in Germany, which made him famous and in great demand for lectures. He tried to combine Eastern and Western thinking in his writings and was considered a pioneer among the intellectuals. My

mother became increasingly uneasy about his visit after she received several letters from strange ladies explaining how to treat the Count. One lady suggested having a party after the lecture, because the Count liked discussions and being asked questions. Another lady called my mother's attention to the fact that the Count needed alcohol not only with the meals but also between. Of course he would never get intoxicated, but could consume an enormous amount of wine. My mother had been a widow for a number of years and was not used to giving big parties. However, she had many friends and relatives whom she could ask to help entertain the Count. Since I had certainly never shown any interest in philosophy, probably hardly knew what it was all about, my mother was convinced that I would not understand the lecture and wanted me to stay home. Yet, after meeting the lecturer I became curious. Mother greeted him at the front door with a bottle of champagne in one hand and a glass in the other. This impressed the Count very much. One of our friends later said she had served him a cheap fruit champagne which she happened to have in the cellar. She did not know much about wine.

Our guest was very tall and his back slightly bent forward. His expression was serious and any polite smile would immediately disappear again. At tea time, while he continued to enjoy his champagne, I asked my mother why I could not listen to the lecture in the evening. The Count came to my assistance and declared that I would understand what he had to say—there was no doubt in his mind. My mother politely weakened and I was permitted to go. It later turned out they were both right. I could not understand everything, but since he had built his lecture on music, which was my main interest, I did understand a lot and really enjoyed the evening. I also enjoyed an occasional smile which the Count sent my way. Afterwards we had twelve people for dinner at our house and quite a discussion took place. The only tense moment developed when the wife of a lawyer asked loudly across the table, "Count Keyserling, do you believe in God?" There was a long silence and then he answered, "Do I have to

answer this question right now?" "No," I said quickly because I did not want our guest to get annoyed.

The Count's departure had been set for noon the next day. At breakfast he declared he always had to be at the station two hours before his train would leave. My mother, whose desire was to do everything right for her guest, called the chauffeur immediately to drive him to the station as soon as possible. She was probably relieved that the end of this visit was near. Right after the Count had left we discovered a pair of large galoshes which were still standing at the front door. Since my mother was afraid he might come back and miss his two-hour deadline, I grabbed the galoshes, one in each hand—no coat, no scarf, sleeveless, although it was in late fall and quite cold—and ran through several streets to the station to catch up with Count Keyserling. A school friend saw me through her window and thought I had lost my mind. When I got to the platform from which the train was to leave, I saw the tall figure pacing back and forth, and people, waiting for a train long before his, watching him curiously. I interrupted his "ritual" and standing in front of him said, "Count Keyserling, you forgot your galoshes." He stared at them for a moment and then declared, "They are not mine—I never wear galoshes." I was mortally embarrassed, feeling everybody's eyes on me. The Count gave me a last friendly smile and then resumed his pacing. Wondering whose galoshes I had rushed to the station, I walked home trying hard to avoid puzzled stares. When I got there, I heard that a guest from the night before had already called to inquire if we had found his galoshes.

The well-to-do citizens of Mönchengladbach contributed to the development of the city's cultural life. A number of businessmen, including two of my relatives, befriended the art collector Walter Kaesbach in Düsseldorf, who had been born in our city but then moved to Düsseldorf. He later donated his fabulous collection of paintings to Mönchengladbach. That was the beginning of the Kaesbach Museum, which grew considerably in the course of time. During the National Socialist

period there was no more interest in art and the museum was temporarily closed. Now the city has added a contemporary museum that features large avant-garde exhibits and is well-known around the country.

Although Mönchengladbach was slowly expanding during my childhood, it kept its small-town character. Most people knew each other and discussed what was going on. When I was still in school, the first department store was opened and shortly afterwards a five-and-ten-cent store. I remember our maid coming home from her first visit to the latter and excitedly telling us, "Mr. Woolworth took care of me himself." For my brother and me it was always a treat to visit our father's textile factory and run around the offices to be admired by the employees for "having grown again." We were permitted to watch the weavers at their looms and play hide and seek behind the large rolls of cotton to be sent away. The caretaker had a small house at the gate. His little daughter Agnes was blind, which always shocked me terribly when I saw her. However, she seemed happy and loved the gifts we brought her.

There was, typically for German society, a club which excluded Jews. It was called Erholung, which means recreation. Their big clubhouse was right in the center of town. The mostly conservative middle-class people belonging to this club, whose anti-Semitism was not taken very seriously by anybody, were actually quite harmless. The father of my best friend was a member of the club. His name was Cohen but he was not considered Jewish, since he was third- or fourth-generation baptized. His wife was the daughter of a Protestant minister. Since my family did not belong to a synagogue, they never paid attention to these facts and I spent lots of time at Professor Cohen's house and he always let his daughter stay with us.

Heinrich Lersch was a poet who had been born in Mönchengladbach and also spent most of his life there. My brother and I met him when we were still children. A cousin of our father had brought him to the house, and we immedi-

ately felt that he was a more important person than other visitors.

We had been told that he was working deep under the earth with hammer and iron and that he was a boilermaker. His father, as well as his grandfather, had also been boilermakers. We were especially impressed by the fact that Heinrich Lersch wrote poems about his work under the earth, mainly about the men who worked with him. This made us think that he was probably a sorcerer.

Heinrich Lersch must have had a hard life when he was young, because his father wanted him to remain a boilermaker. However, Lersch had different ideas about his life, which were already expressed in his poems.

At the beginning of World War I, Lersch decided to join the army in order to fight and protect his beloved Germany. Shortly thereafter he was wounded in France and sent home to recover. His physical condition did not allow him to return to the front. About this time he met with German poet Richard Dehmel, whom he worshipped and whose work had greatly influenced him. He also developed more contact with other poets and writers and devoted most of the time to his writing. Eventually his work was published in newspapers and magazines and later in books as well. Heinrich Lersch is now well known as a fine poet in Germany.

My grandmother lived with an unmarried son in an old house at the other end of town. Uncle Karl had been an officer in the German army during World War I, looked very handsome in his uniform and was extremely popular with the ladies. However, he preferred going every weekend to a little seamstress in Düsseldorf, who evidently meant more to him than family and friends. Uncle Karl had a funny habit that my brother and I loved. While getting up after finishing a meal, he banged a flat hand on the table and shouted, "*Mahlzeit!*" which means "finished." My grandmother owned the first radio on which one could hear foreign stations. That's how we learned that there was another world outside our home country. The word "international" had not existed until our

mother's sister had married, moved to Turkey, and my parents went once to visit her. From then on there was more interest in the house in foreign news; we got a big radio too, newspapers and magazines were bought, and we were told much more about the world.

There were a few peculiar characters in town, and the naughty children ran after them and teased them. Sometimes we were even afraid of them. "Klumpe Mattes" was a very tall, horrible-looking man who always wore wooden shoes (Dutch Klompen) which made a loud sound when he walked. "Doll Else" (*doll* means crazy) was led by a nurse through the streets and mumbled constantly—sometimes bad words—which we enjoyed particularly. Yet "Doll Friedrich" we all loved; he had the mentality of a child and played and laughed with us, helped to put our roller skates on and in winter went skating with us. He was as old as our parents and lived at a home for retarded people.

Going shopping was always fun, especially when we were sent to the butcher, who gave us big slices of sausage or ham to eat. The woman who sold candy loved children and let us try everything before we bought it. When I went to purchase my first hat as a teenager and tried one after the other without liking them, the salesgirl said, "I do not know what you want—I think you have the perfect 'hat face.'" The son of the owner of the department store, a young no-good, who assisted his father from time to time, declared at the age of twenty-seven, "I am going to let my father work a few more years and then I shall retire."

My Cat Peter

When I was still in school I had a black cat called Peter, whom I loved very much. He was not supposed to sleep in my room, but I always put him out officially, and after a while let him secretly in again and hid him under my blanket. He purred very loudly the moment I touched him. At meals he always sat under the dinner table. Feeding him there was strictly forbidden. Sometimes I would take a piece of meat or fish and hold my hand at the side of my chair until he discov-

ered it. Peter never asked for anything; he just waited until it was given to him. We had a large garden right next to the city park. This was ideal territory for Peter to roam. He often disappeared for a while and socialized with the neighboring cats. I usually called him before going to bed. When he did not come I worried terribly. He was probably responsible for the many little black kittens on our street.

Once Peter stayed away for several days. When he reappeared he was in very bad shape. His shiny black fur was dirty and crumpled, his tail was hanging way down and one eye was so swollen that one could not see it any more. I was convinced that he would not recover. Could a one-eyed cat defend himself? He would not eat anything and only drank a little milk from time to time when I held it in front of him. He was permitted to lie on a blanket in the entrance hall so that everybody passing him could say a few comforting words to him. He was a picture of misery. What had become of my beautiful green-eyed Peter? I was desperate. The vet said, "Leave him alone until the swelling disappears and then we will see if there is anything left of the eye." It lasted about a week and I could see every day that the swelling was slowly subsiding.

One morning, before going to school, I bent over Peter to say "Good-bye" and saw to my surprise that the eye had returned and he was looking at me with both eyes. I could not believe it. He must have somehow turned it completely to the inside to protect it from whatever had caused the ugly wound. After this miracle it only took a few more days for Peter to heal entirely and look and feel his own self again.

From then on I tried every evening to get him inside much earlier. I think he understood and very rarely stayed out long. Maybe even cats can learn from bad experience.

When I was five years old my parents bought me a half-size violin and I started to take lessons. My brother had already played the piano for a while, and the dream of our parents was, of course, that we would someday play together. On my eighth birthday I fell in love with a young, new teacher who

had been a child prodigy and played in concerts already. He played duos with me, and my brother and I surprised our parents on Christmas Eve with the slow movement of a classical sonata.

One summer my parents organized a house concert and engaged the Rosé String Quartet from Vienna. About sixty people were invited and I was permitted to listen. Since all windows and doors were wide open, the music had to compete with the twittering of birds from the garden, which I enjoyed particularly. During the second number of the program, a Haydn Quartet, Professor Rosé broke a string and damaged his bridge. He addressed the audience and asked if there were a violin in the house. I immediately jumped up and shouted, "Yes, we have a violin. You can have mine." It was very disappointing that it was too small and my offer had to be turned down. My teacher ran home to bring his own violin.

During the unexpected intermission the audience walked through the garden. After Professor Rosé had tried out the borrowed instrument for a while the concert proceeded.

When my brother and I were still very young we enjoyed, as many children do, making faces; actually, grimaces not only for each other but also for others, to shock them. This did not please our *Kinderfräulein* (governess) at all. She punished us severely when it happened, but her being so serious about it made it ever so much more tempting.

One day she told us if the big clock in our entrance hall would strike twelve while we were making grimaces, our faces would remain the way they looked at that moment and never change again. We did not quite understand what that meant but felt uneasy about it. Later in the day, a man from the watchmaker shop in town came to clean and wind the big clock in the foyer. He had recently had a stroke and his face was completely distorted; his mouth was open and hanging down. Our Fräulein came to the playroom and said, "Now I can show you what will happen when the clock strikes twelve." Then she led us downstairs to watch the poor man who was standing on a high stepladder working on the clock.

We were not permitted to say anything, since we might disturb him. When we saw his face which was pitiful and ugly, we were horrified. It was obvious that this man had made faces while working on a clock which must have struck twelve—now he had to look like that forever. Karl and I never made grimaces again.

The Burglar

In our small town we had very few incidents of theft or robbery. Whenever something happened it was talked about for weeks. A police force did exist; they wore beautiful uniforms that always looked new. They paraded the streets, were well known to the inhabitants and frequently chatted with them. I often wondered what else they did during the times when nothing happened. One night my mother and I were sitting on the terrace, listening comfortably to the *Promenaden Konzert,* which could be heard in the distance. Every summer a group of musicians from the city symphony orchestra played concerts, mostly on Sundays, in the city park. We could hear them very well without having to go there. My parents actually never went to these concerts, but my brother and I often slipped out the garden door and joined the many visitors in the park. The conductor was the concertmaster of the city orchestra and also my violin teacher. Although he faced his musicians in the shell, he always managed to greet us, turning around smiling and bowing while conducting. His name was Kleinsang, which means "little song." The program usually consisted of semi-classical, operatic and popular music.

On this evening my mother and I went to bed fairly late. Since my father's death several years ago, I had slept with my mother in her room and we always talked a while before going to sleep. It was almost midnight when we heard some strange noises downstairs, and our shepherd dog started barking fiercely. My mother jumped up, looked out the window and saw a light shining in the dark that she remembered having turned off. We decided "There must be an intruder," and mother picked up the phone and whispered to the operator to get the police. She had to repeat our address three times since

she had evidently woken up the operator. Mother got very nervous because the dog had stopped barking but the noises continued. One could even hear footsteps coming up the stairs. I was not sure if I had locked the bedroom door, but having an acute attack of bravery, went to check and opened it a little to listen. Suddenly the lights in the hallway went on and who was standing there, staring at me in bewilderment—my brother. We had forgotten him, had locked all doors and he could not get into the house. He had been out of town and we had expected him to return at a later date. After he had tried and rattled everywhere, because he did not want to ring the bell, he finally broke a pane of glass in the kitchen window, opened it and climbed in. Naturally, the dog had stopped barking when he found out who was making all the noise.

While we were relaxing and laughing, the doorbell rang and four husky policemen appeared to investigate the situation. My brother invited them in, explained what had happened and served them beer and cigars. We listened to a description of all the robberies and muggings that had taken place in town during the last ten years and then praised the men for their courage.

First Misdeed

My brother and I were taught that "there are also bad people in this world." When I now look at my grandchildren watching violent movies on television, I feel like telling them, "There are also good people in this world." However, children can be good and bad.

I remember with horror what I once did to my poor mother who had tried to bring up her children in a rather Prussian way: discipline, honesty and obedience. Being a widow, she had to carry a heavy burden alone. What prompted me to persuade my best friend, Else, to do this terrible thing has remained a puzzle to me. We were both eleven years old and played together almost every afternoon. We had plenty of toys, especially dolls. After a while we got bored and started to invent games like being parents, doctors or

teachers. On that fatal day I suggested that we should go to different stores and take things, just to see if we could get away with it. It was sort of a new sport. We first did it when the shopkeeper was not looking and took pencils, pens and other small objects. Then we went to a drug store and took toothpastes, skin cream and larger objects. It was great fun. Suddenly I became very daring and decided I could do it while facing the shopkeeper.

It did not take long before one of the salespersons saw what we were doing and called the owner. He took our names and addresses and said he would tell the police about it; but we could go home after returning the loot. By then the fun was over. We realized that what we had done would have grave consequences. Else started to cry and became terribly frightened of what her parents would say or do. She thought we would be put in jail. I was more optimistic and convinced that the store owner would be lenient with us since we had returned what had been taken. We went home. Nothing happened on the first day, which was a Sunday. On Monday after school I was practicing for my violin lesson when I heard the doorbell ring. Shortly afterwards, my mother came into my room and said, "There is a policeman who thinks you stole something. I just want to be sure you had nothing to do with it and it was somebody else. Do you know anything about it?" I was very tempted to say "no," but maybe by then I was also confused and afraid of jail. I admitted my guilt. I will never forget my mother's expression when she realized that her daughter had done something that could humiliate her in our small town. Word would go around and nobody would respect us anymore. I felt a cold sweat breaking out. Mother left the room and returned to the waiting policeman. I tried to distract myself by playing music again. I heard the front door slam, but my mother did not come back to me. She telephoned Else's father, a professor at the *Oberrealschule* (the high school for boys), who came over immediately. They then went to the store together and talked with the owner, whom they both knew. They persuaded him not to make an issue out of the incident. He agreed to forget the whole thing and left

the punishment to the parents.

Else's father was convinced that it was my bad influence which had made his daughter steal, and decided she could not see me any more except in school. My mother did not speak to me for weeks and made me feel utterly miserable. The only comfort I had was talking with Else in school and figuring out when and where we could meet secretly. There was an old cemetery near our homes where nobody could think to find us. We sneaked out when the families were busy, hid behind tombstones when we heard steps, trembled when the church bell sounded and rushed home ridden with guilt.

After a long time with more punishment for me, no desserts, no playmates, no movies, I slowly slipped back into normal relations with my mother. She finally accepted my promises to never, never steal again. Even Else was occasionally permitted to see me. Our friendship continued and grew over the years and has lasted until today.

The most dreadful incident during my childhood occurred when the mother of two little girlfriends who lived nearby and always walked to school with me, committed suicide. She was a tall, handsome woman and everybody knew her well since she was an avid equestrienne and regularly rode through town in a cavalcade. Her husband was an exhibitionist, and the night before her death he must have stood on the balcony of their house to attract attention. I think she saved him from jail with her death and the incident was hushed up.

KARL HEINZ

He was eleven years old and I was nine. He came to our street to play with the many boys who lived there, including my brother Karl. I noticed that he often looked at me when I watched their games, or while I played with the girls. Afterwards he sometimes came over and then we took a little walk. I felt comfortable with him and I liked that he singled me out and didn't pay attention to the other girls. After a while it was accepted by everybody around us that "we were going together." The girls teased me for a while but then gave up.

The grownups smiled when they saw us—we didn't care.

One day during recess at school Karl Heinz came over from his nearby school. We talked and waited until everybody had gone inside. Then he pointed to the heart-shaped gold medallion my grandmother had recently given to me and which I wore around the neck. "Take it off," he said and I obeyed. Then he took a tiny little picture of himself out of his pocket. He looked different on this picture—his eyes were big and questioning and his round and chubby face was not as cheerful as usual. But then, it may have been a pose for the photographer. He put the picture inside the medallion, closed it carefully and said, "When we are grown up we will get married." I stared at him a long time and then said, "Yes." The ceremony had been short and serious. He left and I returned to class but did not listen to anything till the end of the day.

A week later I heard that Karl Heinz was in the hospital with appendicitis. I did not see him for a while. One day I was invited to a party and when I left the house, a long funeral procession came through our street. Church bells were ringing loudly, a horse covered with a black blanket pulled the coffin and many people walked behind. This happened frequently since we lived near a cemetery. Suddenly I recognized my father in the procession, and when he saw me he looked terribly embarrassed but managed a weak smile. I immediately knew that Karl Heinz was lying in that coffin. For the first time in my life I became utterly sad, but also angry and a little frightened. I did go to the party but did not say a word to anybody. I suddenly felt separated from my friends and had to deal with something all by myself. Later at home I asked my parents why they had not told me. They had not had the courage right away but wanted to tell me after the funeral. I never spoke to them about it again.

I don't remember how long it took me to get over this experience. But I do know I never could hear church bells again without thinking of Karl Heinz. Even now, after more than sixty years, I still think of him the moment I hear the sound.

Although there had been these sad incidents, our German childhood was ideal. We lived outside the town on a residential street with only ten large houses, which all had lovely gardens with special play facilities. In each house lived children of either my brother's or my age, and there was not a day that we did not play in one of their homes, or had them come over to spend the afternoon with us.

Karl and his Friends

My brother Karl was two years older than I and better endowed intellectually. At the age of seven he was already interested in science and read serious books. I tried to make up for the difference between us by acting the clown, and by developing a great interest in human beings. My mother told me that I always asked people if they were married and how many children they had, even the doctors who came to the house. I gave them chocolates and gifts for their children. When our house was built I played around the lot and later knew the life stories of all the workers. At games Karl was always the leader. I admired him greatly but, of course, sometimes resented it a little. In our playroom we had a raised platform that was ideal as a stage to create shows or make up a household. Anybody who came to visit had to ring the bell and climb two steps. One day we played watchmaker after we had collected all the old, non-working watches and clocks from relatives and friends. There was an old-fashioned alarm clock that fascinated Karl, but he could not get it to work. Then I tried to "repair" it and by chance I got it to tick again. That was the only time Karl let me be the leader and he had to work for me. What a triumph!

Karl was very popular among his friends and they too accepted his leadership. With some of his favorites he formed a club that they called "Pudding Club." Every Wednesday they met at one of the members' homes and ate an enormous amount of pudding. Afterwards they rode around town on their bicycles, rang their bells and made a lot of noise. When people heard them they said, "*Ach Gott,* it must be Wednesday again."

When Karl was sixteen years old he formed a very intense friendship with a fourteen-year-old boy from school. Walter was also very musical and they played four-hands together, read plays with loud voices and went to theaters and concerts. Although I was seldom included in their activities, they sometimes needed a third person at card games and permitted my participation. To be taken seriously by them strengthened my ego considerably.

Some of Karl's friends had started to pay attention to me during our dancing lessons with an old teacher, Mr. Büttchenbach. He had taught practically every teenager in town how to dance. Karl observed his friends with a keen interest and developed a new possessiveness about his sister which puzzled me. The boys told me he had bragged, "When my sister wears her pink nightgown, she looks fantastic, but you will never see that, of course!"

When Karl's best friend Walter developed a passionate crush on me, a strange situation developed. He asked to go for walks together and tried to accompany me wherever I had to go. Karl became extremely jealous and confronted poor Walter by asking him to decide if he wanted to continue being his best friend and give up seeing me, or go on seeing me and give him up. That was a hard decision for Walter. Since Karl meant very much to him and he could not do without him anymore, he finally gave me up. He came to the house to say farewell and brought me a book of poems by Ricarda Huch. One was circled: it described a sad parting. At this place in the book was a letter written by Walter in which he asked me to forgive him for leaving me and proposed to meet some day in America. I was so overwhelmed that I could not say anything. I believe I was too young to understand the depth of the poem, but I was moved by Walter's seriousness and quite shocked to lose him. We were both in a state of despair and did not know how to handle the next step. During the night after this "tragedy," Walter's father died of a heart attack, which made the situation worse. I did not dare to see or call him, and yet I feared we might meet by chance, which could have easily happened in our small town. In fact, a few days

later I did see him from far away and he saw me too. We both stopped for a moment and then turned away at the same time. Only after several weeks did we meet again, and since Karl was busy with new friends and his jealousy had somewhat subsided, Walter and I slowly slipped back into our old relationship.

Adventures at the Shallows

When I was twelve years old I spent an unusual vacation with my friend Else at the sea. Her aunt was the head nurse of a small hospital on an island called Nordstrand. It was part of the Halligen, a group of tiny islands west of Schleswig-Holstein. For Else and me it was the first time we travelled without our parents or anybody else. We were accommodated in a little room in the attic of the hospital with two narrow beds and one large bowl with a pitcher of water to take turns washing. Else's aunt, who was responsible for our well-being, trusted us completely and was convinced that nothing could happen to us on this little island. We only had to be present at breakfast and dinner. In the mornings we were told at what time the tide would come in, then took sandwiches and a Thermos bottle, walked half an hour to the beach and stayed all day.

There were other places to visit on the island, but we always ended up at the beach. The sand was clean and easy to handle. We built castles and creatures, buried each other up to the neck, collected seashells, read our teenage books and never got bored. Three weeks without supervision was perfect for us. We got the darkest tan and sometimes wrote postcards home. We often picked the beautiful Heidekraut (Calluna) that we passed on our way to the beach and brought it back to the patients. There was a large field of these purple plants, which grew on the sandy ground of the island. They are a favorite of the bees, whom we did not like.

Our first adventure was the arrival of two teenage boys at the beach, who were visiting the island for a weekend. Since there were no other people around, they swam with us and even sat and played ball with us, shared our lunch and treated

us as if we were teenagers too, which made us feel totally grown up. Needless to say, we fell madly in love with them. Although they never came back again, we talked of our great "amours" for the rest of our vacation.

After a few days of having the beach to ourselves again, we had another adventure. An old teacher came with his class of six-year-olds to give a lesson on and in nature. He read to them from a book while they sat around him on the sand. Once he came over to where we were sitting and inquired whether we knew when the tide would come in. We did and he thanked us and asked where we came from. We told him and quite a conversation developed. He then invited us to join his group and tell them about our town and school, our curriculum and activities. The kids fired questions at us, being only too glad about the interruption of their lesson. We felt like teachers talking to these smaller children and took advantage of the offer to "lecture" for a long time. Meanwhile the tide had arrived and the teacher called it a day. We all went into the water together and played games afterwards. The children thanked us for everything and we thanked the teacher.

However the most exciting thing in Nordstrand happened one evening. My friend had asked her aunt for permission to let us swim one night during the full moon. She had no objections but wanted us to be in bed by midnight. We secretly decided to swim without bathing suits if nobody would be around. We left right after dinner to be at the beach as long as possible. When we arrived at the beach we saw a large section of the water completely illuminated. We could not believe our eyes. We went close to feel the water. It felt the same as usual. About thirty feet into it, it was glittering as if a hidden electricity system was brightening it from below. We first hesitated to jump into this phenomenon, but dipped our feet and only gradually immersed ourselves. Then we decided that it must have something to do with the full moon. It was very exciting to swim in this clear, shimmering water, not knowing what had happened to it.

When we came out we looked around for a container to

take some water home to surprise everybody. After a long search we found a glass jar which we cleaned and filled with sea water to the brim. It continued glittering just like in the shallows. We hated to leave the beach and stayed a long time after swimming, wondering what had caused this miracle. People would never believe us if we would not show our proof.

As soon as we got to the hospital, we joined the nurses, doctors and those patients who were not bedridden. They all had assembled in the largest room for a Saturday night gathering. We walked right in with our jar and reported what we had seen. Everybody got very excited, but they knew what it was—a phosphorescence. It happens very rarely—maybe every twelve or fifteen years. The tiniest, light-producing organisms, which one could only see under a microscope, come to the surface and brighten up the water like fireflies.

The patients envied us for having seen this wonder, and the doctors and nurses decided to walk to the beach to see it too. Unfortunately, we had to go to bed, but not without putting the jar between us on the floor. To our sorrow the glitter was gone in the morning. The evening had been the highlight of our vacation and we will never forget it.

My cousin Katja became my closest friend in the family. Our fathers were brothers and owned a large factory. We had many family gatherings and Katja and I spent our childhood together, playing in the sandbox, later going to the same school, taking dancing lessons according to the Dalcroze method and even performing in public in Schumann's *Children's Scenes.*

Katja was a child prodigy and already performed as a pianist at an early age. She was such a natural talent—my father used to say, "When this child plays a C Major scale it is something very special." When she was ten years old, her parents decided she should discontinue school to have more time to practice. They engaged a teacher for private instructions. She was also sent to a piano teacher in nearby Köln, which meant weekly travels for her. At age sixteen she continued her

music studies in Berlin, and I followed her later to study singing. Her influence on me as a musician was very strong, and most of what I have learned outside my own music studies was through her. It was very important for me to work with her and I cherished her judgement and her inspiration. Katja had one hang-up—she never wrote letters, which did not prevent me from having a life-long one-sided "correspondence" with her whenever we were separated. This happened only a few times during our lifetime.

Adolescence—Berlin

When I discovered that I had a voice, I decided to study singing in Berlin. My mother first took me to a singing teacher in Mönchengladbach who, after a thorough test, declared, "This is definitely professional material." I started lessons immediately and made amazing progress, vocalizing endlessly and seeing myself already as Tosca or Madame Butterfly. My mother got a little scared and had me tested again by a voice specialist, who treated the singers at the Cologne Opera. He examined my larynx and told us my vocal chords were so long that I would probably end up a coloratura.

I could easily hit a high C already and with more exercise for fluency my voice developed, and I started to study the coloratura repertoire. After a while I got restless and wanted to change teachers. At this time my American uncle came to visit and invited my mother and me to come with him to America and spend the summer sightseeing and traveling. This sounded very tempting; my mother promised that she would take me to Berlin to find a good teacher as soon as we had returned. Two exciting months in the United States went by only too fast, and shortly after we were back in Germany my mother lived up to her promise. We went to Berlin and found a nice family, who gave me room and board. The Köpplers took good care of me in the beginning and helped me to adjust to a different life. No more supervision, away from routine and family obligations; it was quite a change for me. I had to wash my own stockings now, place my laundry in a large box and ship it home. Within a week it all came back,

neatly cleaned and ironed. Today I would be ashamed of such a procedure, but at that time it was the way it was done. I also had never handled money myself, and started to write down every penny I spent to get an idea of what budgeting was about.

My first singing teacher was a strange fellow. He let me sing the most demanding arias right from the beginning and gave me no exercises, expecting my voice to develop by itself. Maybe this worked with the great Wagnerian singers, but I did not make any progress, and after a few weeks I had to look for another teacher, who had been highly recommended to me. All he did was hold his hands on my head and ask, "Does it vibrate?" Well, I guess it didn't and shortly afterwards I was looking again for somebody else. One of my new friends mentioned a professor to whom all the State Opera singers went. That sounded better! He accepted me and I found out that in order to bring the voice forward, he made every pupil pull on his own nose. I could not take that long either. These teachers were called *stimmbildner* (voice builders). Only when I met Lotte Leonard, who was a well-known concert singer, did I learn what it means to study singing. She coached her students, always starting with vocalizing and easy songs, and only slowly developed the voices for operatic and Lieder singing.

Through these many changes I met a lot of students and my social life began. I made friends easily and was frequently invited. In exchange for the missed meals at the Köpplers, I could invite friends to their table too. They had permitted me to have a Siamese cat in my room, which was a great attraction for my colleagues. One day Mr. Köppler went to the stock exchange as usual, but returned after an hour because he had forgotten an important document. When he opened his big safe, out jumped my "Siam." I doubt that he would have survived until the evening, were it not for the forgotten papers.

Mrs. Köppler, I am sure, had been asked to keep an eye on me. I wanted to test that. Some of my girlfriends had told me that their landladies had objected to male visitors after

nine P.M. I asked a colleague to come and stay longer, which he did, but nobody interfered. At dinner I told Mrs. Köppler about my friends' curfew and that I was the only one whose landlady was generous and did not make any rules, but left it to me when to dismiss visitors. Mrs. Köppler then declared, "You know, Miss Aschaffenburg, I am convinced a young lady who lives at my house would not do a thing like that and besides it can also be done during the day."

There was one other girl who also lived with the Köpplers. She was studying to become an actress. Her name was Minuschka and we became good friends. I often had to listen to her recitations and new roles she was learning, and she had to listen to my songs and arias. Minuschka's first chance came when she got a small part in the film *Mädchen in Uniform*. She was very excited and reported daily on her rehearsals at the UFA film studios. The only thing she did not like was that the director was harassing her and she did not know how to handle the situation. I suggested to just avoid ever being alone with him. One day she came to my room and said, that although it had worked for a while and nothing had happened, he now insisted on coming to her place in order to help her with her part. Could I be around during that time? I did not feel like becoming a chaperone and said, "You have to learn to say NO." Fortified, she went to the telephone to cancel the appointment, but the director insisted she should invite me while he would bring a famous actor as a surprise. We would just have a cup of tea together. That sounded quite different, of course, and I consented to have them all in my room, since Minuschka's was too small. I prepared strawberries with whipped cream and cold drinks in anticipation of my "blind date." At nine P.M. there was a knock at my door and when I opened, Conrad Veidt was standing in front of me, still covered with make-up from a rehearsal for the film *Der Kongress tanzt*. At the time, Veidt was one of the most popular stage and screen actors in Germany, and his reputation was quickly spreading to other countries. He was the idol of many women, tall and good-looking.

I decided to act as if I were not particularly impressed

that he was visiting me and pretended it was the most natural thing, which obviously amused him immensely. He made himself at home, looked at my pictures on the wall, and out the window. When Minuschka came in with the director, she acted quite differently from the way I had. She smiled all over, stared at him in admiration and asked him many questions about his work in the film, which he answered in detail and with enthusiasm. Then he questioned us about our respective studies, and from then on only called us Eleonora Duse and Maria Jeritza. He told us that a long time ago he had had a passionate love affair with a woman who lived in our house, which, looking back now, made him feel nostalgic.

The director was delighted that his idea to arrange this evening was working out; Minuschka already saw herself in a leading part next to Conrad Veidt, and I was hoping he would come again. We all had a very good time and the two gentlemen stayed till one A.M. Mr. Veidt embraced us when he left and promised to call us soon for another get-together. This, unfortunately, never happened. I suppose we were much too young for him, since he had treated us like children. We were disappointed, but nevertheless, it had been a wonderful evening, which will always be remembered.

It was a great honor to be invited to a gathering at Olga Schnitzler's, who was the wife of the Viennese writer Arthur Schnitzler. Many interesting people met at Olga's salon, mainly artists, and usually somebody performed. Katja and I had been introduced to Olga at a concert, and when she heard that we were music students and friends of the pianist who had played that night, she invited us all to her house. It was the beginning of a very special friendship, which lasted until the National Socialists took over and we all had to leave Germany. Olga had been a singer and although she did not perform anymore, kept her interest in music alive. She often gave us good advice about what to study, which concerts to hear and how to prepare for a professional career.

Before we left Berlin, Katja and I spent a Sunday afternoon with Olga at the zoo. It was one of those lovely first

summer days when everybody gets out again to sit in the parks and open cafés. We walked around the animal cages and were particularly interested in a tremendous lion, who stood in the middle of his cage and stared into the distance ignoring us completely. I felt uncomfortable and wanted to go on, but Olga was so fascinated by the lion, we could not get her away. She stood spellbound in front of him and tried to get his attention. After a while this silent colossus began to turn ever so slowly until his back faced Olga. He then lifted his long tail, aimed carefully between the iron bars and gave Olga the biggest shower over her white dress, hat and shoes. Mischievous Katja said, "He was right."

One evening, I was invited to a party where I did not know anybody except the hosts. A young man introduced himself to me and "took over." He accompanied me to the room where the buffet was, placed me at a corner table and brought me a plate with a "little bit of everything." He pointed out various people passing us who were well-known personalities. After dinner he showed me around the house, led me through the garden and obviously prevented my meeting other people. He was not exactly my type, but at least he was entertaining. We talked about the hosts, the musicians who were playing, the people who were sitting around us and the highlights of the cultural scene during the current season. We then danced most of the evening, which I enjoyed.

At first I felt content, although I had hoped to meet more than one person. But in the course of the evening a slight uneasiness developed in this isolated situation. I finally told my escort that I would be very busy the following day and had to go home early. He immediately jumped up to get my coat, led me to the hosts to say good-bye and suggested that he walk me home, which was not very far. Since it had become rather cold during the evening, he put his arm around me and started to become more intimate than I wanted. The problem now was how to get rid of him. When he asked for my telephone number to arrange for the next meeting, I thought he had been too polite and considerate to now be told that I did

not want to see him again. I always have problems when it comes to telling people something unpleasant. He noticed my hesitation and tried to put both arms around me, which I fought bravely. He then insisted that I give him my phone number. I finally said, "Steinplatz 1416," hoping that nobody would have this invented number (in Berlin it was always the name of the district followed by four digits). When we arrived at my house, we said good-bye rather formally since the doorman was watching us. My companion left and I felt quite relieved.

A week later an envelope arrived with a charming little book called *Rendez-vous am Zoo*. The story was about a man who was madly in love with a girl who did not want to see him. All his efforts were in vain, but one day, he went for a walk in the zoo and whom did he see there—the girl of his dreams. They walked together for a while and she discovered that she felt at ease with him and liked him. From then on they saw each other frequently and in the end they got married. The book was signed "Steinplatz 1416."

The cultural scene in Berlin was overwhelming. Three first-class opera houses (competing with each other), several orchestras and the best theaters in the country—one only had to choose. It was still new that international dance companies came to Berlin, and we had the opportunity to see Russian, French, and English ballets for the first time.

Eric Simon was one of the most important concert and opera managers in Berlin while I studied there. Katja and I had met him through friends and he kindly offered to come to my teacher's studio to hear me sing, since he was interested in the development of young singers. I remember how nervous I was when he came. He certainly did not engage me, but gave me generous encouragement and offered to hear me again after a while. He had heard Katja already and invited us home to meet his family and we all became good friends. Many times we received free tickets for concerts and opera performances and met quite a few well-known singers.

One of the most famous divas in Europe, whom Mr.

Simon wanted to sign up for the Metropolitan Opera, was Zinka Milanov, a soprano from Czechoslovakia. He had heard her at the Salzburg Festival and thought her voice was unique. But she weighed at least two hundred and twenty pounds. He was not sure if the Met would accept her. She had walked around Salzburg in a white dress covered with a black print saying "Amour" all over. Anyway—he took a chance and introduced her to Edward Johnson, the General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera. After hearing Miss Milanov, he immediately gave her a contract, with the stipulation that she had to lose forty pounds before it would go into effect. The next day she went on a diet and in a relatively short time lost the requested pounds and became a tremendous success at the Met.

At the end of my period of study in Berlin, I had a most unusual experience. Some friends had invited me to join them at a charming café at the outskirts of the city. When I arrived, they were already sitting around a large table and I was seated so that I could look over the table through a glass window onto the street. While talking with them I looked out from time to time but without paying particular attention. It was mid-afternoon and not many people were in the street or at the café.

I was listening to a friendly argument between two people and at the same time watched an object falling down from a balcony on the other side of the street. It looked like a blanket or a sack. I was not close enough to identify it. Just before it hit the street, I noticed a woman pushing a perambulator with a baby sitting in it. When she saw the "object" she screamed and pulled her baby carriage back as fast as she could. Then people were rushing toward the scene. I jumped up from my chair and realized the "object" had been a human being. Minutes later one could hear sirens, see an ambulance rushing in and the police cordoning off the street. Everybody at the café started to run around getting terribly excited, and many left to find out what had happened. I felt nauseated and could not move. One of my friends, who had

not seen the actual fall, sat with me for a while and then suggested that we pay and go home. It would be bad enough to read about it in the papers later.

We held on to each other, took a back exit through the kitchen and went home, hoping to soon recover from the shock.

I had to lie down immediately and tried in vain to forget the incident. Later, a friend came to pick me up to go to the theater. I told him I was not sure I could make it and explained what had happened. He pulled a newspaper from his attaché case and showed me the headlines: "Five-star General Jumps to Death from Balcony." Then came a long description of how they had rushed him to the hospital and had tried to save him, but within an hour he had died. Evidently the general had never gotten over the loss of the First World War, and had already made several attempts to kill himself in spite of treatments over the years. Although I did not know this man, I felt great sympathy for him.

But life has to go on. My friend finally persuaded me to get up and accompany him to the show. In the end this helped me overcome my depressed state.

I felt far removed from the political scene. It never occurred to me that the Weimar Republic was coming to an end, and that the National Socialist Party was growing steadily around the country. Whatever I heard or read about it was sharp criticism and grave doubts that it could become a menace. I was involved with my singing and had years of study ahead.

Nineteen thirty-three was the fatal year, when the National Socialists took over in Germany. During this year I often went back to Mönchengladbach, to make sure my mother would not worry about the political situation. She felt that nothing could happen to us personally. Still she started to discourage her local friends from visiting her—at least not in the daytime—because she did not want them to get into trouble. Several newspapers in Germany specialized in anti-Jewish propaganda, and people who had long been against the Nazi party were put in prison. Whoever was against Hitler was

stamped a Communist. We deplored what was happening, but did not consider it a danger for us. We should not have been so optimistic! When several of our close friends discussed emigration, I felt for the first time that the political situation concerned me too. But many people were convinced it could not last long, and I kept postponing any decision. However, two events shocked me out of this lethargy.

Otto Siebert

Through friends Katja and I had met a young musician who had come to Berlin to study conducting. We liked him right away because he was a real musician—totally devoted to his studies. He was intelligent and interested in everything. All he needed to develop his talent was to find the right teacher, the right inspiration, and to meet lots of musicians. He went to concerts and operas with us and always to a café afterwards to discuss the music we had heard. He took advantage of the abundant opportunities in Berlin, but spent the mornings reading music scores to learn all the symphonies. He worshipped the composer Anton Bruckner, knew all his music and had already decided to conduct a Bruckner symphony at his debut in Berlin some day.

We introduced Otto to all our musician friends and also to Olga Schnitzler, who would invite him to her house concerts where many young musicians performed their programs before a Berlin debut. Otto's family did not know much about music, and the small town where he was born offered very limited possibilities. I have always admired artists who were not born in a cultured atmosphere and had to discover music and art all by themselves. Otto had found an organist in church who let him play the organ before his feet could reach the pedals. This musician was amazed that a child was able to understand music without instruction. He decided to give him lessons. In no time Otto learned how to read music, play the piano and could easily identify the music of different composers. The teacher helped him to get into a music school and encouraged him to become a professional musician.

Katja and I enjoyed talking with Otto, and we often

shared meals or invited him to our places. During the beginning of the Hitler time, we neglected him for a while, since we started to have problems and associated mainly with people in the same situation. How long could one stay in Berlin—how long would it all last? One evening we invited Otto for supper again at Katja's place. Of course, the conversation turned to politics and the Hitler catastrophe. We discovered to our dismay that Otto was very much impressed by the political events taking place in Germany and obviously never found out that not only we but many of his other friends were Jewish and vitally affected by the situation. We first did not say anything because we wanted to find out what had made Otto react so strangely. When I asked him, "What about the Jewish artists who have to leave the country now?" He cheerfully answered, "That will give all of us a better chance." I said, "But what about people like Olga Schnitzler, whom we like so much—she would never stay in Berlin under the present circumstances?" Otto was shocked to hear that Olga was Jewish and had not realized whom he would lose, and that he might have associated with more Jewish people since his arrival in Berlin. He seemed embarrassed now, but said, "In a great revolution sacrifices must be made." Katja asked him, "How could you have been for the new Nazi laws without thinking what they would mean for the Jewish people?" We then told him that we were Jewish too.

At this point Otto was so overwhelmed that he would not say anything further. He fell into a complete silence, blushed all over and did not dare to look at us. We all felt most uncomfortable. I even felt sorry for him, since he had acted like a child without thinking or knowing anything. Maybe he could still wake up and be "saved." Katja and I went into the kitchen and did the dishes, leaving Otto to take the first step. But he remained sitting there bent over, looking at the rug, unable to make a decision. Finally I suggested that he should go home now and think about what had happened. We told him that if he kept his attitude, we would not want to see him anymore. However, if he could admit how ignorant and thoughtless he had been, he should call me the next day to

discuss "the change."

The next morning he called very early to tell me that he had not slept all night and was still terribly upset about the evening. He did not understand how this could have happened. He loved his friends and could definitely not do without them. What he had said was all nonsense. Would it be possible for us to forget it and forgive him? He assured me that he was not anti-Semitic, but he had heard so much about the big changes in Germany and had thought it was all great. Now he felt quite differently about everything. Maybe he should leave the country too. I said right away that was not necessary, as long as he did not go along with the Nazis. In 1933, it was still possible to say that. Now I have to laugh at my own naiveté. Anyway, we met for lunch and talked a long time. Otto was really very repentant, and I felt that we had to give him a chance. We still kept seeing him for a while until we left the country. Then we lost track of him completely. What happened to him later I do not know. After the war, somebody gave him my address in New York and he wrote me a long letter. He had conducted opera in several small towns, and now felt ready for the big cities. Could I help him to come to the United States and if possible, find him a conducting position? In my answer I explained that, unfortunately, I would be unable to be of any help. After the war a great animosity toward Germans had developed here. Also, at that time, even American conductors had difficulties finding a position, as there were not yet enough orchestras and opera companies in this country.

I never heard from Otto again.

Another shocking incident occurred in Berlin on April 1, 1933, the infamous Boycott Day. Katja and I had heard rumors of something going on on the Kurfürstendamm, Berlin's Fifth Avenue, and we immediately went there. The Nazis had stationed two uniformed SS men (Secret Service) in front of every Jewish store, carrying large signs: DER DEUTSCHE KAUFT NICHT BEIM JUDEN (The German does not buy from the Jew). This scared many people away, but I got so mad that I entered

a store in protest. One of the "officials" called, "What are you doing in there?" "I am Jewish—I can buy here." "*Ach so,*" he said. That same evening they destroyed many of the stores.

Shortly after this disgusting incident I went home for the Easter break. During this time I heard from a cousin in Cologne that the husband of her best friend in Munich, a musician by the common name of Willi Schmidt, had been picked up by the Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei) and three days later they had sent her a small box with his ashes. It was a case of mistaken identity. They had been looking for a Communist by the same name. Mrs. Schmidt used all her influence and got an interview with Hermann Göring, Hitler's Minister of Defense. He "apologized" to her and arranged for free tickets on the steamship *Bremen* to the United States a few days later. She left with her two children and her mother, and all her belongings were shipped to New York. She has never set foot on German soil again.

How can one live in a country where things like this happen? I realized that there would be no professional future for me, since people were constantly incited against us. I had to leave Germany as soon as possible. My singing teacher, who was Jewish too, had already accepted a position at the Conservatoire International in Paris. She persuaded me to leave with her. Katja had left a few months earlier and was waiting for me in Paris. That made my decision easier.

CHAPTER II

France, Early Exile

A Strange Beginning

Paris 1933. I made it. For months I had slipped one hundred Reichsmark-bills into different German mailboxes to friends abroad, sometimes even larger bills from Holland, where we were still permitted to visit. It was my first attempt at doing something unlawful. If caught: jail, or worse, concentration camp.

My decision had been made. I needed the money for a new beginning. Here I was, eating my first croissant at a cheap hotel on Boulevard St.-Germain. Escaped. Lucky. I should be grateful. Far from it. It is not easy to tear up your roots, not knowing where to put them in again. A week later I developed insomnia, then a skin rash, then internal cramps. A friendly refugee doctor, who could not pinpoint my disease, sent me to Madame Tedesco, a specialist, who told me diathermic treatments would take care of my troubles.

I was roasting comfortably with warming metal plates on my abdomen, when we started talking, and she became extremely interested in my being a refugee. She had recently said good-bye to a young girl who had taken care of her small children for a year and then returned to her home country. Madame Tedesco did not think it was such a good idea to go back to Germany, but the girl wanted to get married and did not care about the political situation. Lucky she, I thought.

While I was slowly getting warmer and warmer inside, Madame Tedesco went to her desk to find the letter she had just received from the girl. She handed it to me to show where

in Germany her young friend was now living. I turned the letter over and saw my own address. My mother had recently written that a charming young couple had just rented my room. This girl was now sleeping in my bed.

The time I spent in France is rather vague in my memory. I was not happy, missed my friends at home and became unsure of my studies. I was still working with my German singing teacher, whom I felt I had outgrown. The only advantage was that my mother could pay for my lessons to Madame Leonard's account in Berlin. It was too dangerous to get money out of the country, and whatever we secretly managed to get out was for my daily expenses.

Living in Paris was certainly different from the way it had been in Berlin. Most students lived in small hotels and the typical German *Pension* (boarding house) was hard to find. However, my intensive room hunting produced something comparable. A middle-aged lady had advertised French lessons in the local newspaper. When I went to see her, she also mentioned that she had a room for rent; it was in the back of the dining room. There was one other girl living with her and a daughter about my age. I was glad to have a chance to learn the language and moved in with Madame Salomon. Rue du Gros was near the river Seine and not considered to be the best neighborhood.

My room was very small but had a *lavabo*, which is a washstand with a basin from which the water can be poured into a container under it. Of course I did not understand how this worked and poured the water all over my shoes, which I had placed under the basin next to the container. My window across from the bed did not close properly, and the wind from the river blew in most of the time. I always felt as if I were lying in an open car. Three times a week I had my lesson during the mid-day dinner, for which I had to pay extra. The conversations with Madame Salomon were most unusual. She tried to teach me how to have a good time with men in Paris, and even offered to introduce me to some. I pretended that I was engaged and that there was no need. She also thought my

clothes were much too conservative and wanted to lend me some of hers if I ever had a date. I preferred not to accept this offer. Her daughter seemed to change boyfriends constantly, while Madame Salomon herself had only two. The whole situation was far from ideal for a music student without a piano. Vocalizing was only permitted when nobody was at home.

As soon as I felt a little more comfortable with my French, I found myself a hotel room on the top floor next to an attic. The owner permitted me to rent a piano and practice there. That was a great improvement. Both Katja and my teacher lived nearby. Katja had a room with a piano at the home of the aunt of the well-known movie actress, Danielle Darrieux. Once Katja woke up in the middle of the night because there was lots of noise and commotion. She did not dare to investigate, but found out in the morning that the daughter of her landlady had committed suicide.

The French people were not very hospitable at that time. They were friendly and polite, but did not ask me to join them and never invited me to their homes. Every Sunday morning I went to the Louvre, but still have not seen everything. Katja coached me regularly and accompanied me whenever necessary. We spent most of our free time together. She found a singing teacher whose lessons she accompanied, but got paid very little for it. She was always given her money in a black-bordered envelope which looked like an announcement of somebody's death. Katja went through some agonies of her own, wondering if we could ever live in Germany again, and if we would ever get permission to work in France, for which one had to bribe certain officials. We could not afford that. And where would we go if we could not stay in Paris? Katja's father died suddenly and she had to go back to Germany for a while.

Since neither Katja nor I nor any of our friends had cooking facilities, we went to a restaurant at least once a day. There were many little places with reasonable prices around the Champs Elysée. Breakfast at the hotel consisted of fruit and a croissant; coffee was boiled in a little electrical pot. At noon we usually met a cousin and his wife and ate together in

our neighborhood. At night we met at my room or at Katja's, made ourselves a cup of hot bouillon or tea, and ate delicious French bread and cheese. Even for that we sometimes invited friends who also did not have much money. Once a month we met to mend stockings or sew on buttons. Occasionally we went out. One could sit for hours at a café over one cup of coffee or a soft drink without feeling embarrassed. There is no better place to do that than on the Boulevard St. Germain. After some time, I began to study with the concert singer Claire Croiza, who introduced me to French songs, which I had never dared to sing. She permitted me to bring Katja as my accompanist, which we both enjoyed very much. Madame Croiza was extremely dramatic and sang and acted out every song for us first, and then patiently listened to my "slightly" different version. Madame Croiza was the only woman I met in France who had a son but was not married. She had lived for a long time with the composer Arthur Honegger, and was very proud to have a son by him.

I also enrolled in a course, just to audit, with Yvette Guilbert, a fabulous cabaret singer, who was the greatest interpreter of anything singable without having a voice. When she heard that I was a refugee, she passionately embraced me and invited me to come to all her courses without having to pay. Her husband had been German too.

Katja's teacher, the famous Swiss pianist Edwin Fischer, came to play in Paris, and took us to special restaurants and even introduced us to a nightclub. A Viennese friend of ours, related to Rudolf Kolisch, whose string quartet was a favorite of the Parisians, invited us to all their rehearsals and concerts. We spent a lot of time with them. A German critic took me to many concerts he had to review, which sometimes meant two or three a day. In return I helped him with the little English I knew to translate his reviews so he could send them to a magazine in America.

The first concert I heard in Paris was a song recital. I went with my teacher and we were surprised that the singer came on stage wearing a large hat and long gloves way above her elbows. My teacher turned to me and said, "I'm surprised

she's not wearing skates too."

Eric Simon, the manager whom we had already known in Berlin, had also emigrated to France and became very successful placing some of his singers with the Paris Opéra, as well as the Metropolitan Opera. He often invited us to hear them when they came to sing in Paris. One day he called me to ask if I could go to listen to an American black singer at Salle Gaveau in the evening and report to him about her. A New York colleague had told him that she was an outstanding talent and that he might be interested in signing her up for Europe. Unfortunately, he could not attend, since one of his singers had his debut at the Opéra that evening.

I gladly went to the concert. Very few people attended, which made me sad for the singer. When the handsome young contralto started her first song, I was spellbound. She had the most beautiful voice I had ever heard, and her German was absolutely perfect. Her interpretation of the classical Lieder repertoire was breathtaking. I decided immediately to call Mr. Simon the same evening to tell him about this sensational contralto. The small audience gave her the biggest applause possible. We looked at each other as if we had been experiencing a miracle together. She smiled sweetly and added several encores. Her name was Marian Anderson.

Mr. Simon not only signed her up, but also organized another concert for her in Paris, since the reviews had been marvelous. This time the hall was almost filled and her fame in Europe started.

Several years later, she was to sing her debut recital in New York's Town Hall. On the boat trip back from Europe, something terrible happened to her: during a hurricane she slipped, fell down a staircase and broke her leg. Mr. Simon wanted to postpone the concert, but she insisted she could sing and wanted very much to go through with it. I was already living in New York at that time and went to the concert with Mr. Simon. When the curtain opened, Ms. Anderson was already standing at the piano. The audience seemed a little puzzled because this was not the way it was usually done. Yet, when she started to sing it did not matter any more. Nev-

ertheless, I suggested to Mr. Simon to go backstage during the intermission and ask Ms. Anderson to say a few words of explanation to the audience. When the curtain rose and the singer was again at the piano, she addressed us in a charming way, "You may be wondering why I stand here. I have broken my leg recently and wanted to spare you the ugly sight of my limping across the stage." Needless to say, the audience applauded her for her courage.

My mother came from Germany to visit me and was appalled at how little French I had learned. She insisted that I start studying at the Alliance Française. I had mostly associated with refugees, who did not speak much better than I. After my classes at the Alliance, I always ended up at a café with students from various countries—which did not improve my French either. Only when Katja and I met Alice Stern, a distant relative and a delightful lady who invited us to her house, did we finally make it to a French home. Alice, who had polio as a child and had been in a wheelchair ever since, sang and painted and gave many parties. Her parents had built her a house in which she could move around easily and reach everything she needed. I sang duets with her at parties, and Katja accompanied us and played solos. After many such lovely evenings, Alice asked me to sit for a portrait in exchange for teaching me French. This improved my language considerably and made me feel better. But the threatening situation in Germany was always on our minds and the French were making immigration more and more difficult. Many refugees went to South America, Japan or Australia to be safe. Fortunately, my uncle in the United States invited me to come to America. It took me a long time to make that decision. I finally wrote to him that I first wanted to come as a visitor and find out if I would like to live there. He agreed.

Before I left Europe I still tried to make the best of my time in Paris. I visited many museums and galleries and discovered some of the most unusual corners of the city. I saw a few shows, even though I could not understand everything. I said good-bye to the new friends I had made, even to the nice

mailman, who was the only native who had talked with me and corrected my mistakes in exchange for having "café au lait" with him.

During my last week I had an exciting experience. The teacher for whom Katja played had to select a group of singers from among her pupils for a concert at the Belgian consulate. They had to perform Brahms' *Liebeslieder Walzer* under the conductor Hugues Cuenod. (He later became a singer and is now an occasional guest at the Metropolitan Opera.) Madame Faure needed one more soprano and Katja suggested that I audition for her. All went well except for my German name, which was declared impossible for the program. Madame Faure changed Aschaffenburg to Mlle. de Fenbourg. I also had to wear a hat and gloves which Alice Stern lent me. The concert was on a Sunday afternoon and I enjoyed it immensely, especially my solo, although I could hardly see the conductor from underneath the brim of my borrowed hat.

After this adventure I went back home to get ready for the United States. The hope to return permanently to Germany kept fading, since Hitler became too powerful and left us with no hope. To remain in Paris without money would have never been possible because of the French immigration laws and the working restrictions. I have returned to Paris several times during my life and always felt as sad and depressed upon my arrival as I did in the beginning when I was a refugee and did not know what the future would bring.

CHAPTER III

New York

Another Culture

The arrival in America was different from my arrival in Paris, since now there was even less hope of returning to Germany. My relatives, who picked me up at the boat, made me feel welcome and accepted. Within a short time I met all their friends and was invited to various homes. One of my cousins, who was a businessman in New York, took me to the Commodore Hotel for an American lunch. I secretly wiped the cottage cheese off the pineapple since this combination was inconceivable for me. One ate cottage cheese with bread; but fruit was a dessert. When I stepped on his foot by mistake and profusely apologized, he said, "Do it again, I like it." This informal way of reacting seemed very American to me. He and his wife also took me to Coney Island and insisted that I try everything the amusement park had to offer. Another time, my uncle's associate, who had a large estate in Plainfield, New Jersey, invited us for dinner. Afterwards his wife played the piano, I thought. But it turned out that she was fooling me. It was a player-piano and she only pretended to be playing. For a classical music purist this was hard to take.

On one of the first Sundays I was asked to sing at my aunt's Unitarian Church and the minister became one of my most loyal fans. Three years later he performed my marriage ceremony. Another friend of my relatives was very interested in music and arranged for me to sing during a program at a World Peace Rally in Plainfield. This was considered to be my

official American debut. She also introduced me to the pianist Lydia Hoffmann-Behrend, who performed in many women's clubs. After we made music together at her house, she asked me several times to appear with her, which made me feel as though I had now started my career in New York.

Through my aunt's connections with the NAACP I met several charming young black women for the first time in my life. They invited me to an evening on Times Square and showed me the famous theater section and 42nd Street with all its movie houses. I was quite overwhelmed. When we discussed the race problem the women laughed about my innocence and said that I would never understand it, since I had not grown up with it. They explained to me that many people did not like them because their skin was black. "But black skin is much prettier!" was my reaction. In Europe one rarely saw black people at that time. Later I had my first theater impression in Harlem, where I saw a wonderful performance of *Hamlet* with an all-black cast.

Klaus Liepman, a young violinist, had been one of the first German refugees to come to America. I had known him in Berlin and called him shortly after my arrival. He introduced me to my first cafeteria, where I ordered tea (at that time some cafeterias still had waitresses). What one of them brought me was a cup with water and on the saucer lay a little soft bag with tea leaves in it. I looked puzzled, which amused Klaus. He then asked me, "Do you think you will be happy in a country where they bring you hot water with a little piece of flannel dangling from a string and call it tea?" I had to admit that it was rather strange but it did not dampen my growing enthusiasm for America.

After staying with my family in Plainfield for several weeks, my cousin Dorothea and I decided to take an apartment near Columbia University, where she was studying Early Child Development at New College. I continued my music studies with a private teacher. She brought lots of college mates to our place and introduced me to all her new friends. We were both

totally inexperienced housekeepers. I took over the shopping and the cleaning of our apartment, while she attempted to cook. Fortunately, I have a healthy stomach and survived her experiments. We once had a little fire, but only the kitchen towels got burned. They were hanging right over the stove. One learns. Whenever we returned from an extended weekend, we found a row of milk bottles in front of our door since we had forgotten to cancel the order.

Our uncle in Plainfield, who had given both of us the affidavits to come to this country, had to teach us how to make out checks, handle apartment leases and other legal matters. Once he took Dorothea on a trip to Alaska where, walking alone one day, she met a bear—head on. When the terrified uncle later asked her, "What did you do?" she replied, "I opened my camera and took his picture." Evidently she survived.

Our two-room apartment was on West 119th Street. We had a strong family resemblance and often wore the same dresses, which confused people. I had to calm her before exams and she had to encourage me before auditions. One day she came home from a party and proudly declared she had finally met a charming American guy. Up to now the men we had met had mostly been European refugees. Her friend, she stated, was a gentile. He called her a few days later and she invited him to visit us so I could meet him. Over tea he told me that he was working on his doctoral dissertation and had a pre-doctoral fellowship from the Social Science Research Council in New York. I asked him if his father was also a scientist and he answered, "Oh no, my father is a rabbi." That took care of Gabriel's being a gentile.

The next time Dorothea met him was under the clock of the Biltmore Hotel. He brought her a rose with a stem down to the floor which embarrassed her terribly. He said, "I wanted to see you blush, then you look so pretty." When Dorothea cooked her first meal for him, she was nervous all week before and talked about nothing else. Gabriel ate her dinner with admiration and appetite. When she served the dessert, she went to the ice box to take out a little pitcher

with a brownish sauce. She poured it over his vanilla pudding with the words, "This looks like coffee, but it is prune juice." Alas, it was neither. She had gotten it mixed up with leftover gravy. Well—he married her anyway and they are still together after sixty years.

When Dorothea and I met a young German couple, Eugene and Leni van Grona, we drew on their experiences since they had already lived in America for several years. They were both dancers and had become well-known in their field. Eugene, while still a teenager, had come here with his mother, and was immediately engaged to dance at the opening of the Roxy Theater. Leni had come later to visit a sister, saw Eugene at the Roxy and was so impressed by his performance that she went backstage to tell him that she was a dancer and asked him to give her lessons. He invited her to his studio to see her dance. She performed for him although she had never had a dance lesson in her life. He immediately realized that, but was so touched by her eagerness and obvious talent that he offered to give her private lessons. Leni stayed in America and fell madly in love with Eugene. Eventually, this proved contagious and after several months they got married and danced together for many years.

One of their great projects was the founding of the first American Negro Ballet in 1935. They trained talented young black dancers. After two years they performed at a theater in Harlem for the first time with a program of music by Bach and Stravinsky. All the stage sets were handmade by the Gronas and their friends, and Leni and two of her dancers sewed the costumes. Musicians and dancers had to be paid and there was not much money for each individual. Fortunately, curiosity filled the hall at opening night and it became a tremendous success.

We all thought the American Negro Ballet was now an established company, but it did not work that way. The few sponsors Eugene had did not dare invest more money in a black company at that time. Although the company gave several more performances, the well-trained dancers became im-

patient and accepted other engagements which were more lucrative. When Eugene saw that he was losing his best performers, he had to give up this wonderful project. He later danced for a while with Leni at Rockefeller Center's Rainbow Room. After some time he left to go to Stuttgart, Germany, where a television film about his entire career was being made. The Gronas now live in Berlin.

ELEONORA

One of my German friends, the actress Eleonora von Mendelssohn, had arrived in New York a couple of years before I came and was trying to get into a Broadway show. She did not want people to know that her father was a famous banker in Germany and that she was a descendant of Felix von Mendelssohn, the great composer. However, she was extremely proud of the fact that she was distantly related to the legendary Italian actress Eleonora Duse, for whom she was named. She kept aloof of the social circle she had been born into and only associated with artists, musicians and bohemians. I called her at the first opportunity and made an appointment to visit her. She lived at the Gladstone Hotel with her brother Francesco. A week later they invited me to a cocktail party. Eleonora promised to introduce me to many interesting people. When I arrived at the Gladstone, it turned out that Francesco was out of town and Eleonora was lying in bed with a broken leg. I sat down next to her, presuming the party had been canceled. However, Eleonora told me that it would take place in Francesco's room next to hers and people could go back and forth to see her.

Since I did not know anybody I wanted to go home again, but Eleonora insisted that I stay and mix with her new friends. She introduced me to Helen Hayes, Charles MacArthur, Lillian Hellman and many others—names which did not mean anything to a music student from a small town in Germany. Eleonora finally convinced me that it would be good for my English to stay and practice.

When I looked into the room next door it was filled with people laughing and drinking. They all seemed to know each

other. I am not a shy person, but it took a lot of courage for me to mingle with that crowd. I crossed the room a few times, pretending I was looking for someone, when I saw a lady sitting alone at one of the few available tables and decided to join her. As soon as I got near her she kindly offered me a seat at her table. I thought maybe she did not know anybody either. We immediately started a lively conversation. She became very interested in my being a refugee, wanted to know all about how I got to America, with whom I was studying and what I was singing. I began to enjoy myself and liked this charming lady who told me that she was only in New York temporarily, lived in California and had a dog and a cat. I had not asked her name which evidently did not matter. People passing our table called her "honey" or "sweetheart." When everybody had finally left, I went back to Eleonora and told her how much I had enjoyed myself, although I had only spoken with one nice lady whose name I did not know. "Oh," she said, "that was Lilian Gish." Even I knew who she was and felt embarrassed about not having recognized her. Eleonora assured me, "That was the best you could have done for her."

When Eleonora had recovered from her leg injury, she started to make the rounds of the theatrical agencies, went to shows and readings, and finally managed to get a leading part in a Broadway show. She was given the role of Klytemnestra in Sherwood Anderson's *Daughters of Atrius*. She asked me to help her with her new role. Many mornings at eight A.M. I went to the Gladstone and watched her eat her breakfast, which consisted of a large beefsteak tartar. Raw meat was supposed to give her the necessary strength. Then I had to take the script, read half a page before her entrance and continue to give the cues. Her technique was to memorize the words with the intonation, emphases and crescendos first, so that she could later concentrate on the acting of her role. During that period of study she totally immersed herself in Klytemnestra and thought of nothing else. The result was a stunning performance and good reviews. For my patient assistance Eleonora gave me an orchestra center seat for the open-

ing performance, which I thoroughly enjoyed. A few of her new friends in the theater world whom I had met at her party invited Eleonora afterwards to a lovely restaurant and included me. I sat between Charles McArthur and Ben Hecht, the Broadway producers who were at the height of their careers at that time. Across the table was Helen Hayes, the actress and McArthur's wife, who was particularly nice to me since she sensed my uneasiness at not being able to understand everything. I was wearing antique jewelry, which she greatly admired. She also gave me some advice about starting a career in New York.

Unfortunately, *Daughters of Atrius* did not have a long run, but for Eleonora it was probably the highlight of her career, although she later played with Elisabeth Bergner in *The Two Mrs. Chaneys*. However, the first time on Broadway can never be topped. I went to see Eleonora many more times, admiring her professionalism, especially when the old Russian actress, Madame Uspenskaya, who played the nurse, did not give her the right cue or no cue at all.

During my first months in New York I always spent the weekends with my relatives in New Jersey. They enjoyed hearing about my experiences in the big city, and I could relax sitting in their garden and most of all be with my brother, who lived with them.

My uncle had been on a business trip in Brazil and brought me back the most beautiful handbag I had ever seen. It was made of crocodile leather and adorned with a small crocodile head. I used it all the time and people constantly asked me where I got it.

One Friday afternoon, after a singing lesson, I took the subway to the ferry which went across the Hudson River to New Jersey; there I took the train to Plainfield, where my uncle was to pick me up at the station. I had stuck my music in a flat case under my arm while I held the precious bag in one hand. When I got to the subway platform the train had just left, and since it was before the rush hour, I knew it would take quite a while before the next one would come. I

sat down on a bench, took out a book and started to read. There were very few people around. I was so involved in my story that when the train arrived I jumped up, grabbed my music case and went into the car in front of me. As soon as the doors closed I realized that I had left my bag on the bench. I got terribly upset and several people noticed my strange behavior. They asked what had happened and I explained that I had to get back immediately to the same stop, but they all assured me that the bag would not be there anymore, even if an honest person had found it and turned it in. Somebody suggested that I call the Lost & Found tomorrow. But "tomorrow" was a Saturday! I was desperate.

When I arrived in Plainfield I told my uncle what had happened and, of course, he was shocked. It had probably been a very expensive bag. He did not have much hope that I would see my bag again, but said that the best thing would probably be to go to the Lost & Found myself. They would investigate more carefully if the bag had been returned. He looked up the address and gave me the directions. It was a sad weekend for me since I could not forget my problem.

On Monday morning, I went back to New York and took the subway to the Lost & Found office on 138th Street and Broadway. At the appropriate office I asked if they had found my bag and the attendant said, "I don't think so, but I will look around; usually it takes a few days before things are returned." After a while he came back, empty-handed. Then he brought pencil and paper to write down exactly what had been in the bag. I remembered it only too well. The few dollars were the least, but I had several farewell gifts from friends in Germany in that bag. A silver fountain pen, an antique powder box and other mementos. The attendant asked me to wait a few minutes. He then returned—with my bag. Everything was still in it—nothing was missing. I was so stunned—I did not know what to say. The man laughed and encouraged me, "Take it home. It's yours." When I "recovered" I asked him who had found the bag, since I wanted to thank the person. I was told that it was a man who cleans in the subways. They did not know his name but could give me

his badge number. I should use it when writing to the Lost & Found office. It sounded funny, but I took the number and left. At the next telephone booth I called my uncle, who was delighted about the news and said, "I will give you five dollars for that man." We were not sure whether the right person would receive the letter, but I sent the money with a thank you note to the subway office. Two weeks later I received a letter in return. It was written in a very scrawly way and hard to read. It said: "Dear Ms. Cordy. Thank you very much for the money you sent me. You must be a nice lady doing a thing like that. In my nineteen years of working in the subway I have returned many items, but nobody has ever sent me a letter like you. I saw in your papers that you are a singer and I wish you good luck for your singing. Truly yours." The signature was illegible.

One day I took the Lexington Avenue subway. It was so crowded that I regretted not having taken the bus. Fortunately, a passenger got off and I sat down next to a woman near the door. More people came in and I was convinced that I would never be able to get out again. A tremendous black fellow was cheerfully leaning against the door.

When the train stopped in the middle of the track and the noise became bearable, I tried to catch the black man's attention by pulling his sleeve and asked him, "Could you please help me to get out at the next stop?" He gave me the sweetest smile and said, "Sure, honey, don't worry about it. We'll work it out together." Everybody around us laughed and when my stop came, people stepped aside and my friend held the door for me. "Thank you so much." "Not at all—have a good day." I did.

First Audition

In 1935, shortly after I had settled in New York City as a singer, I did not know much about American musicals yet and studied the magazine *Show Business*. I found a call for an audition and decided to give it a first try. The number of singers gathered in a Broadway theater auditorium made me rather

nervous. When I was finally called to go on stage and sing, I chose a song with which I felt very comfortable. It was by the German Lieder composer Hugo Wolf and I sang it in German. Since everybody else had sung in English, I probably stuck out like a sore thumb. The judges were so startled that they let me finish the song, which had not happened to anybody else. They then asked for something else and I sang two little French Bergerettes (ancient folk songs) which may have come a little closer to the accepted style but were still, to say the least, different. One of the judges said, "Thank you very much, Miss Cordy," which also was different. To the other singers he had said, "Don't call us—we'll call you."

I went home and waited for a call which did not come. About three weeks after the audition my doorbell rang one morning and the mailman asked me to sign for a little registered package. I opened the envelope and on top was a letter from a company I had never heard of. It said: "Dear Miss Cordy, thank you very much for your audition last month. As you must have noticed, there were quite a number of applicants for the few openings available. The fact that we were unable to offer you a part in our forthcoming show is no reflection on your performance. Please accept the enclosed token of our appreciation for your interest. Thank you again, Sincerely yours...."

Naturally, I was very disappointed but rather curious about the little package. What was in it? A selection of Ex-Lax, the most popular American laxative, sent by the company which was sponsoring the show. It took me a while to understand that this was meant seriously, and was even considered a friendly gesture. Since it had come instead of a singing engagement, it was a terrible disappointment for me.

At the end of the music season, late one March, operas and concerts were still drawing large audiences. One could hardly walk on 57th Street without seeing a familiar face or even getting a glimpse of a star. Katja and I went to many concerts, met musicians and other artists and had a great time.

The Budapest String Quartet had played in Town Hall

one night, and since the second violinist was married to one of our cousins, we knew them all well and went backstage to express our enthusiasm. They immediately invited us for a midnight dinner, and we proceeded in different taxis to a place near Carnegie Hall. It is always fun to watch musicians eat after a performance since they are usually very hungry. Performing seems to increase their appetite. Or is it just the satisfaction that the concert is over? The four string players, who were of Russian descent, were telling us about their recent trip around the world. They were at the height of their fame as a quartet and had practically no competition. The only group they would acknowledge was the Viennese Kolisch Quartet, whom they knew well. They admired them because they performed from memory, which is usually not done by ensemble players. Mr. Kolisch insisted that the quality of their playing gained considerably from being totally free to look at each other.

When the conversation turned and jokes were told, we all laughed a lot. I looked at my watch and realized that it had become 12:01 A.M.—April 1st. I nudged Katja under the table and winked at her before asking, "What did you people think of Kolisch's statement in the last Sunday's *New York Times*?" Eight Russian eyes stared at me. "What statement?" I said, "The one about the fact that they are going to give up playing from memory and will from now on use music again?" The cellist said, "That is incredible! I thought they would never admit that it had been a mistake. What I can't understand is that I read the *Times* thoroughly and never saw it." Katja then supported me, declaring, "Oh yes, I read it too and thought it was very brave of Kolisch to go public with this decision." They were all puzzled and each one gave a long description of what they had always thought of playing from memory. They wondered why they had not heard anything about it and predicted a tremendous controversy. At this point Katja and I burst out laughing and told them that today was April Fools' Day.

Fortunately, most musicians have a good sense of humor. The Budapests laughed heartily along with us and there was

no bad feeling at all.

A few weeks later the Kolisch Quartet was in town and I happened to meet Mr. Kolisch on 57th Street. Although I had not seen him for a long time, but had known him when I studied in Paris, I thought it might be better he would hear the story from me than from anyone else. I bravely told him what I had done and—he had a good laugh too.

The story of Katja's first major engagement after she arrived as a pianist in this country is worth recording. A colleague had recommended her to a German dancer as an accompanist. They later went on tour together through the United States and gave many performances during which Katja also played as a soloist.

Before they left to go on tour they had to give a show at the Rainbow Room. When they rehearsed on the big stage, Katja was placed right in front so that she could see the dancer. The piano had been mounted on a tremendous platform. In the evening, during the performance, Katja was suddenly engulfed in glittering lights which practically blinded her. Fortunately, she knew her music enough so she could play with her eyes closed. But more trouble was still to come. The turntable on which she was sitting began to move in a circle, which made her quite dizzy. She had a hard time concentrating in order not to faint.

The highlight of the evening was when she stopped playing and the turntable came to a halt. She got off the piano in a daze and headed toward the exit. Then she left by the wrong side of the stage, climbed up a staircase to reach the dressing room, opened a door and found herself...nose to nose with a horse which was to appear as the next number. It must have all been a harrowing experience and Katja swore never to play at the Rainbow Room again.

Emanuel Feuermann

Our cousin Emanuel Feuermann was one of the greatest cellists of his time and already recognized at an early age in his native Europe. His first appearance in the United States, how-

ever, was a disappointment for him since he once had to face a half-empty hall. It was not his playing but rather the fact that American concert audiences were not yet used to listening to the cello as a solo instrument. It was considered to be solely part of the orchestra. His manager was convinced that it was a matter of time and wanted him to continue performing in America. Feuermann was living in Switzerland and used to full houses wherever he played, especially in Germany, where he had also been the youngest professor at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Berlin.

In 1934 Feuermann played in London under Bruno Walter. The concert was a tremendous success and the reviews were brilliant. News spread to the United States and from then on his reputation was made and he never had to face an empty hall again.

When he returned to this country he was asked by the Kraft Cheese Company to appear on their nationwide radio show in Los Angeles. He had never done anything like that before but finally consented. At that time I was already married and we lived in Hollywood. Henry and I stayed with Feuermann through rehearsal and broadcast. Afterwards he told us that he would have to leave for a concert on the East Coast. The Kraft people had sent him a collection of their products to the hotel, but he could not possibly take anything along besides cello and luggage. He "generously" offered us to pick everything up. On our way out of the NBC building we practically bumped into Clark Gable and Carole Lombard holding hands, both looking stunning.

The next morning I went to the Ambassador Hotel to take a look at the delicacies Feuermann had left. The bellhops brought several packages to the front desk and had a good laugh at all the different kinds of pastas, dozens of cans with sauces, cheeses, olives, pickles and a beautiful large tray. The boys had to help me carry everything to the car. Instead of a tip I gave each of them a jar of pickles. We lived off all this food for a long time, felt sorry for Feuermann, who missed out on it, and blessed the generous Kraft people.

When we moved to New York we often saw Feuermann

and went to his concerts. He was living in the United States by then but frequently returned to Europe. Once I went to the movies with him and since he had just come back from a tour and was very tired from—at that time endless—train rides he fell asleep during *Gone With the Wind.* When I woke him up, he said: "Are we there already?" One day he shocked me while I was sitting at the open window of a bus. He drove by in his convertible and shouted: "Is the light over there green or red?" I did not know he was colorblind. Many years later, after his tragic early death, his daughter married a computer scientist, who was black. An old-fashioned relative asked, "I wonder what Feuermann would have said about that." Cousin Katja snapped, "What could he have said, he was colorblind."

My Aunt's Troubles

My mother's brother, Ernest Lilienthal, came to the United States as a very young man and decided to stay. He later helped many relatives to immigrate during the Hitler period. His wife was American and always supported him in this endeavor. Her name was also Meta. She had been married to a much older man. When she met my uncle shortly after his arrival in America, she fell in love with him and divorced her husband to marry my uncle, who was much younger than she. They settled in Plainfield, and my uncle bought the Art Color Printing Company in nearby Dunellen. My aunt was an early supporter of women's rights and a charter member of the NAACP. She also wrote a column on peace for the *Plainfield Courier*, and during World War II she worked for the Red Cross. We all loved and admired her very much, because she opened her house to nieces and nephews for weekends, holidays and special occasions. Since the children of her former marriage lived far away, she treated us like her children.

The only thing I could not understand about my wonderful aunt was her prudishness and moral strictness. Even white lies were usually rejected. When my husband-to-be came from California for our wedding at her house, she arranged for him to sleep in a room above the garage where the chauffeur had

formerly lived. The night before our wedding I had terrible feelings of guilt as I secretly tiptoed through the garden.

Before moving to New York I lived at my relative's home for quite a while and remember one incredible incident. One morning, during breakfast, my aunt asked her husband for some money since she was planning on going shopping in New York. He gave her a fifty-dollar bill and she left shortly afterwards. When she got on the train a very nice-looking lady sat down across from her and they started talking. There were no other people in their compartment. Shortly before arriving in the city my aunt asked the lady to kindly watch her bag while she went to the ladies' room. As soon as she came back the lady asked her the same favor and left her purse on her seat. My aunt looked into her own bag and the fifty-dollar bill was gone. She remembered exactly where she always put her money. Of course, she was shocked but could not help suspecting the lady since there was nobody else in the compartment. She quickly reached over and looked into the lady's bag and there on top—was the fifty-dollar bill. She grabbed it back just in time before the lady returned. Both acted as if nothing had happened. When they arrived in New York they wished each other a good time and separated.

My aunt did her shopping but felt bad about the incident all day. She even called her husband's office to leave a message that he should pick her up at an earlier train. She arrived in Plainfield, where my uncle was waiting for her. After she had settled with her packages in the car, he said, "May I ask how you managed to pay for your shopping, since the money was still lying on your dresser." Then he showed her the fifty-dollar bill. My poor aunt almost fainted. My uncle could hardly calm her; she was so upset that she would not listen to him. Only later at home they decided on all the steps one could take to locate the lady whose money had been taken. They informed the police department and put an ad in the Plainfield paper, but they never heard from the lady. It has always remained a dark day in my aunt's life, and all we could do for her was never to mention the incident again.



GILBERTE

My brother had befriended a young actress who was half French and half Swiss. When I met her she was rehearsing for a show at the Alvin Theater. I think it was called *Squaring the Circle.* I had heard so much about "playing on Broadway" that I told somebody that unfortunately Gilberte was not playing on Broadway but only on one of the side streets.

When she invited me for the first time to come to dinner at her house and meet her mother, we had another strange misunderstanding. Her sister, Marcelle, had recently married and moved to Texas. In the course of my conversation with Mrs. Frey, she asked me, "You know that Marcelle is in Corpus Christi?" I presumed this meant that she was pregnant and said, "Already?"

That was the end of our conversation since the two ladies laughed through the rest of the evening.

When I settled down in a furnished room on 54th Street in Manhattan, all I still needed was a piano. My landlady had no objections, neither had I to her parrot, whose cage was hanging in the hallway in front of the bathroom. Every time I went in there, he shouted, "Again?"

Since I was afraid a Steinway would be too expensive, I walked into the Fifth Avenue store of the Knabe Company and asked if I could rent a piano. Four young men were hanging around, obviously bored with nothing to do. They got up and one of them started to persuade me to buy a piano. I explained that I could not afford that and must even settle for an upright. They kept asking why I needed the instrument, how long would I study in New York and many other questions. They finally understood that I was not a buying customer and took me to the top floor of the building, where all the uprights they used to rent out were now stored. It had become so difficult to collect the monthly rent that it was no longer worthwhile for the company to continue renting and they had decided to give them all away. First I could not believe this, but it turned out that they were right. I picked out a perfectly good, soft-toned piano, had to pay only for the

transportation and ended up with this grand new possession. I thought, anything is possible in America.

When I told my uncle about this adventure later, he said, "Why don't you walk into a Chrysler store next week and see what happens?"

My mother had always supported my professional ambitions and kept being interested in the development of my voice. She had studied singing herself for many years. From Paris I had gone back to Germany many times to show my progress, but from New York I could not do that anymore.

For her fiftieth birthday I decided to send her a record of some songs I had recently studied. She was thrilled when it arrived and played it for everybody. Of course she wrote me about the reaction of family and friends. What I liked best was the remark of our cleaning woman, who had known me since childhood. She was a very simple person and knew nothing about recording. My mother called her into the music room and said, "Would you like to hear Fräulein Meta sing?" She listened to my voice in awe and then asked, "But how does Fräulein Meta know in America that she should sing now?"

During the years I spent in New York, I met Katja's best friend, the French pianist Evelyne Crochet. Like Katja, she had studied with Edwin Fischer in Europe, and later also emigrated to the United States to continue her studies with Rudolf Serkin in Philadelphia. Her career skyrocketed at an early stage. She played with the major orchestras and became well-known through her marvelous recordings. After having lived in New York for several years, she settled with a friend in Puerto Rico for a while. José del Castillo, a neurobiologist, was the director of the laboratory at the University of Puerto Rico. In the winter they invited Katja and me to visit them. They had a beautiful apartment in Old San Juan, and we could use their neighbor's place while they were away. It was overlooking the harbor of San Juan and one had a marvelous view from the balcony.

Evelyne and José had two spider monkeys. They lived in a large cage on the grounds of the laboratory, but occasionally spent time at the house. Evelyne pampered them and José adored them. I had never been exposed to monkeys without bars between us and felt uncomfortable in their presence. Yet Katja made friends with Pancho, the male, who sat on her lap and put his arms around her. Sometimes he accompanied us on a walk around the island. My fear of him was later justified when a noisy truck drove into the laboratory grounds where Evelyne and José were standing. Pancho got so frightened that he bit both of them badly, and they had to go to the hospital for stitches.

José's research was in marine biology, which included the study of sharks. They were collected from the ocean and kept in a pool on the grounds of the laboratory next to the monkey's cage. One day we were visiting the monkeys and wanted to see the sharks. They were all gathered under a large corner plank to protect themselves from the fierce sun. Evelyne walked gingerly on the edge to reach the corner and tap on the plank in order to make them come out and swim. Her shoulder hit a pipe on the wall and off she flew into the pool with the sharks. I quickly bent over to help her, but she had already managed to climb out. Katja was standing at the other end, one hand on her heart, and looked so horrified that we had to laugh. At this point, Evelyne realized that her sunglasses were at the bottom of the pool, and she jumped in to retrieve them. Katja screamed and looked aghast. We saw the sharks swimming over from their side to where Evelyne was searching the water. She made it just in time, triumphantly swinging her glasses.

We had just sat down to recover when José came around the corner with a guest from the Einstein Institute in Philadelphia. He introduced Evelyne—in her drenched jeans—to the gentleman and asked, "What happened to you?" When he heard what had happened, he said, "Unbelievable! Do it again!"

ERZHERZOG FRANZ JOSEF

My brother Karl had a friend, Albert Surina, who taught mathematics at the high school in Plainfield, New Jersey. He had told us about an acquaintance of his who was a Hungarian Baron and had a gorgeous estate on Long Island. Albert had been invited several times by this Baron and thought he was an extraordinary host who knew very interesting people and whose taste for entertaining was exquisite.

One day Albert asked me if I were available to sing a short program at the Baron's home at a dinner to honor the Archduke of Austria and his German wife. Of course, I would be paid a handsome fee which would include my accompanist. The Baron wanted only German Lieder—and nothing else. Needless to say I was delighted—especially after talking to the Baron. We discussed the selection of the songs and the details of the evening. He told me that his dinner table only seated twelve people and that he wanted to include me but my accompanist had to come afterwards. I did not like the idea, but it turned out that Katja did not mind coming later. I was to be picked up by a young banker whom the Baron had also invited.

My experience with royalty was nil. I only felt comfortable in my black taffeta dress, which had been specially made for my first New York recital. Nevertheless, when the invited guests started to arrive I became slightly tense and after being casually introduced, I sat down. A good-looking young man joined me and we started talking about the beautiful interior of the living room, the pictures on the wall and the gorgeous flower arrangements. I was hoping we would be placed together at dinner. Since I had not paid much attention to the names during the introduction, I asked him what his name was. He looked at me with astonishment and rather cooly said, "Erzherzog Franz Josef" (Archduke Franz Josef). I had missed the most important moment! Fortunately, the young man who had brought me to the party saved me from my embarrassment by offering to show me the rest of the house.

After a while a butler announced, "Dinner is served." The hostess let us into the dining room. Here I got another

glimpse of royal behavior. As soon as the Archduchess arrived in the room she immediately sat down at the head of the table before the hostess could say anything. The rest of us were advised to look at the place cards, and only then we all sat down too.

The food was obviously catered and very good. I regretted not being able to indulge since I cannot eat much before singing. To my right sat the editor of the local newspaper, who cheerfully told me that I would be able to read all about this evening in his paper on Sunday. To my left, the helpful chauffeur was still amused by the fact that I had missed the arrival of the guest of honor. Since different kinds of wine were served, the conversation around the table became livelier and livelier. At the end of the meal we returned to the living room where coffee and liqueur were offered.

Katja, who had had to take the train to Long Island, had arrived while we were still at dinner. She was sent upstairs to change. The butler officially announced, "The accompanist has arrived." We interrupted our sipping coffee from tiny golden mocha cups to look at the staircase. Petite Katja slowly descended in her designer dress—it looked like a stage appearance. I thought she was more elegant than all of us. When she arrived in the living room, the host warmly introduced her to his guests and the Duchess immediately invited her to sit next to her. She started to involve Katja in a long conversation. Evidently, her sister was studying piano and she asked Katja many questions about teachers, technique and programs.

It took quite a while until I was asked to sing. We had prepared a group of ten Schubert and Schumann songs, and four more by Mozart and Beethoven in case there would be great interest in music. It turned out that the Duchess knew most of the songs and was delighted with our performance. We ended up doing all the songs we had brought and—maybe it was contagious—everybody seemed to like our program just as much as the Duchess. She later sat between Katja and me and continued talking mainly with us. We were thrilled and laughed with her a lot. She became so relaxed that she

even used a German word which we would never dare to use in public.

Meanwhile the other guests also seemed to have a good time and the evening was a big success for the Baron. He thanked us profusely when we left. The guest who drove us back to New York obviously had had too much to drink. There were several "close calls" on the road and we were glad to make it home alive. It was not a pleasant ending of a lovely evening.

One can imagine our surprise when several months later we read in *The New York Times* that the Baron had been indicted for embezzlement. I hope the Archduke and his charming wife never found out.

One evening I went to a social gathering and heard about an incredible incident. A German refugee couple had come to this country at the very beginning of the Hitler time, bought a farm in New Jersey with a few acres of land and worked hard to make it pay. They fixed and furnished the old farmhouse to make it a pleasant home in the United States. They had no children and worried about their relatives in Germany. After several years without any contact, they received a letter from a cousin saying that the family had decided to send their two young sons to America. Could they come to the farm for a while until they had perfected their English and learned a trade to make a living? The farmer was delighted, sent the boys affidavits and provided them with all the information they needed. The family sent pictures of the boys and many other relatives, and the farmer and his wife were very happy and looked forward to the arrival.

After many weeks of correspondence, two handsome German boys arrived, full of curiosity about America and eager to learn as much as possible in a short time. They were treated as if they were the farmer's children. Their knowledge of America was amazing; they went to evening school for a while, read a lot and quickly became quite independent. Their dream was to go to Washington and find work there for a while.

When the time came to leave, the farmer and his wife were very sad to lose them but tried to understand that these unusually bright boys had to get on with their lives. The farm could not offer enough. They urged them to come for a visit at Christmas and to keep in touch all the time. They regularly received cards and occasionally a letter about the boys' activities and experiences.

A few months after they had left, the FBI came to the farmhouse to inquire about the boys. The farmer was asked to explain how they were related, and he showed them the pictures the nephews had brought from Germany which were actual photos of his family. It took the agents quite a while to realize that the owners of the farm had no idea what had been going on in their house. It had been an ingenious plan to slip Nazi spies into the U.S. under the guise of being related to refugees. There was absolutely no connection with the farmer's family, and whatever the boys knew had been carefully constructed by the Nazi intelligence service.

The boys had contacted various Nazi organizations in this country and had begun activities in Washington. The FBI had known about them from the beginning and caught them in time before they were able to do any harm.

Immigration

During the war it was almost impossible for a German national to become an American citizen. I had waited the required five years but the immigration office delayed the procedure time and again. My uncle, who had given me the affidavit, finally found an experienced lawyer who sent me to Bermuda, where the consul was known to be lenient. The law required a visitor to go home again and immigrate officially from there on the quota of his country. Since we were at war with Germany I could not be sent home.

I did not mind at all going to Bermuda. My uncle had given me enough money to go to a good hotel, since I had to prove that I would never become a burden to the United States. I had a whole day before my appointment with the consul and enjoyed the beauty of the island, walking around

Hamilton and the beaches, getting accustomed to the climate. The next morning I went to the consulate and tried to make a good impression. The consul was very serious and asked me many questions. Among others, "How come a pretty girl like you isn't married yet—is there anything wrong with you?" I said in my best English, "Nobody took me yet." Then he sent me to another place where a doctor had to examine me. He found out that I had a temperature and said I could not enter the States before the fever went down. I already saw myself stuck in Bermuda for the rest of my life since I had no idea why I had a fever without feeling sick at all. The doctor asked me to come back in a few days. I returned to the hotel and decided to have a good time while waiting to become a "healthy" American.

The manager of the hotel was a handsome young black man with stunning blue eyes. He had a German mother and his father was an American citizen. We had many talks together and he offered to drive me around the island one day. However, he did not want anybody from the hotel to see us. It would have to be late at night.

One evening during the full moon I had to meet him outside a hidden garden door where a horse carriage, driven by a friend of his, was waiting for us. We drove to the tip of the island and through various parts of Bermuda which I had not yet seen. I was overwhelmed by the beauty everywhere, and I listened in awe to the enthusiastic description by these two gentlemen of life on this fascinating island.

At the end of our lovely ride we returned to the hotel and took a quiet dip in the pool since everybody else had gone to sleep.

One morning, during my walk around the island, I discovered the Hamilton Library. In front of it stands a large, beautiful poinsettia shrub. To walk into the garden and sit nearby looking at it is a great treat not to be missed when visiting Bermuda. I went back there several times and always had a chat with the gardener, who was a middle-aged man, tanned dark brown and rather handsome. When he asked me for a date I accepted with the thought no complications could

develop since I was leaving fairly soon.

The evening we met he was dressed in a regular suit but obviously felt rather awkward. We went to one of the big hotels and during dinner he watched how I handled the silverware and imitated my movements. I did my level best to make him feel comfortable and ignored his strange behavior. Afterwards he asked me to dance with him. It turned out that my partner could not dance at all and I had to gently push him around. The music was slow and nothing unpleasant happened. I talked and smiled and he seemed to enjoy himself. On the way home he behaved like a gentleman. At our farewell he begged me to come to the library garden once more because he had to tell me something. Although I had a suspicion, I promised to visit once more. But first, I had to go back to the consulate physician to be assured that my fever was gone. They made me sign a lot of papers in the office of the consul, who then said to me, "Try to become a good citizen—we need them."

The strangest thing in Bermuda, however, was something else that happened to me. Although I had come from Germany and had been exposed to anti-Semitism, I had my first personal experience in Bermuda. I had met a charming young couple from Brooklyn, who took me under their wing and acted very protectively. I joined them at the dinner table, and went swimming and dancing with them; they explained many things about America to me that I had not known. Yet, they constantly made anti-Semitic remarks, which bothered me terribly. I did not want to let them know that I was Jewish before finding out why they said these things. They decided without asking me that I was from the part of Germany where everybody is Catholic. And they felt that they had to warn me. I asked them, "But how do I know if someone is Jewish?" They said they could always tell immediately and I would learn that. They had been brought up in Chicago and claimed there were many Jewish people and they were all very bad. I asked if they had met any; they admitted they had never talked to them and would certainly avoid it. By now the situation had become so embarrassing that I decided not to

tell them about myself until the last day. They had to leave Bermuda a few days before me and on their last night they invited me to a nightclub, gave me a farewell gift and asked me to visit them in Brooklyn after my return to New York. I just could not get myself to embarrass them and again did not say anything. After they left I wrote them a long letter and told them the truth and how uncomfortable I had felt being with them. Although I had liked them both I could not understand their attitude and would not visit them in Brooklyn. They wrote me a very apologetic letter, admitting how stupid and narrow-minded they had been. They also promised never to be so thoughtless again.

On my last day I made another visit to the poinsettia shrub where my new friend told me that he wanted to marry me. I had to explain to him that it was impossible, basing it all on my music studies, which I had to continue, and that I could not make any other decision at this point in my life. He must have thought that the reason for my refusal was his profession or that it had been a question of money. He showed me his checkbook with a few hundred dollars in the account and also wanted me to see the little cottage in the garden where we would live together. It all sounded very sweet and romantic. When I finally left Bermuda by boat the next morning, the gardener was the only person who waved good-bye to the future American citizen.

The final celebration of my becoming an American citizen took place in 1945 in Central Park at the invitation of Mayor Fiorello La Guardia. I bought a new dress for the occasion, hoping to be able to thank the Mayor personally. When I got to the mall where we had to appear, there were, to my surprise, several hundred other people who were also becoming Americans. There was no chance to get near the Mayor. But there were speeches, flags and lots of American music. Everybody smiled and seemed to be happy. I certainly was.

CHAPTER IV

Hollywood 1937–1941

Married Life and the Movies

My husband and I were born and grew up in Germany. He came from Königsberg, which in Stalin's time was called Kaliningrad, part of the former USSR. We studied music in Berlin at the same time, but never met. Later in the United States, when fate brought us together, we could recall concerts and operatic performances we had both attended. He had had more formal education than I. His father had been a successful doctor who had specialized in internal medicine. His mother came from Berlin. She often told the story of her first visit with friends in Königsberg. They went to a city park and had dinner on a large terrace. Her future husband, whom she did not know then, was sitting at a nearby table with some friends. She was seventeen years old at the time. He set his eyes on her and told his friends, "I am going to marry that girl." He actually managed to be introduced to her during her visit, and proposed before she left for Berlin again. They were married the same year.

Königsberg was a beautiful city with almost unlimited cultural opportunities. The Korns (my husband later changed his name to Cordy, my name) lived a comfortable bourgeois life, had two children and opened their house to friends and relatives. Every summer they spent their vacation at the Ostsee, the Baltic Sea, and returned healthy and tanned to their home activities.

Henry spent most of his allowance on the Königsberg Oper and also went to many concerts. After his graduation

from the Kant Gymnasium, known as one of the best schools in Germany, he had to decide on his future. Professor Korn realized early that his son had a beautiful baritone voice and was unusually musical. He wanted him to enjoy music all his life, but did not want him to become a professional musician. To please his father, Henry entered an international tea company. Of course he was utterly miserable, and his only comfort was taking singing lessons with one of the baritones of the opera. After half a year of suffering at a desk, he finally convinced his father that he had to study singing.

He went to Berlin and studied with different teachers for several years, overwhelmed by all the cultural events so abundantly available in the capital. In 1930 he was engaged for the opera season in Schwerin, a small but very active town in the eastern part of Germany. It was ideal for a beginner. He had to learn all the baritone parts, large and small, in order to be able to step in at any time should someone be indisposed. The opera house was connected with a theater next door, where he had a chance to sing in operettas and act in dramas and comedies, an invaluable experience not available at the bigger opera houses. After two years of thorough training, he auditioned for the Städtische Oper in Berlin and was offered a contract which would become activated only if he would return to Schwerin for another year to sing more leading baritone parts. That was in the fall of 1932. In January 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany, and all the Jewish artists were fired from their positions. My husband went to Berlin immediately and was accepted at the Kulturbund Opera, which was founded to help the singers who had been thrown out of their jobs. At that time everybody thought the Hitler nightmare could not last long. After two years of living an isolated, although satisfactory, professional life, many singers decided to emigrate. Everybody was trying to get an affidavit from a friend abroad. Henry, also, wrote to the conductor Hugo Strelitzer, a friend who had coached him for a long time. He had left Germany earlier after marrying an American pupil, whose family arranged for him to become head of the opera department at Los Angeles City College. Strelitzer in-

vited Henry to come to America and live at their house in Hollywood until he could find enough work to become independent. He explained to him that the only way to make a living was to work at the motion picture studios. A number of German film people were there already and they could help him get on his feet. Hugo also promised him participation in the lively opera workshop he directed at the City College. Henry was thrilled to hear about all these possibilities and decided immediately to leave Germany. It took six months to process the affidavit, visa and boat ticket, but in the middle of October 1937 he left Germany for good. On his way to California he stayed in New York for six weeks. We met at the end of his New York stay through Katja, who accompanied him when he sang at a party. She was very much impressed by his singing and decided I should hear him too before he left New York for Los Angeles. The day he came to her studio I had a bad case of laryngitis and could hardly talk, let alone sing. But he sang beautifully for us that evening and wanted to sing duets with me as soon as I was better.

After a few days I recovered and my voice came back. Katja invited Henry once more and we discovered that our voices blended perfectly. That was very exciting and prompted us to prepare a few numbers for auditions. An acquaintance recommended us to the concert manager at the National Broadcasting Company, where we were tested over the microphone and told we sounded very good. We were asked to sing more numbers. Then they made us wait a long time. Other people joined them, and a big discussion seemed to develop. Finally the verdict was, "We could send you on tour with these unusual duets—but you have to be married." Did I blush! We had not talked about that at all although a lot had been going on between us already. Henry had planned to go out West alone, hoping I would join him later. I had just started to sing professionally at various radio stations, clubs and churches in New York. I was rehearsing to sing Hansel in the opera *Hansel and Gretel* at the Westchester Opera Company in White Plains. I hesitated to drop everything before knowing that things would work out for Henry in Hollywood.

At the end of a ten-month correspondence we started to plan for the wedding. The date was set for September 14, 1938, and Henry was to arrive from Hollywood about a week before. My aunt's friend Dr. Robinson, the minister of the Plainfield Unitarian Church, where I had sung several times during the Sunday service, was to marry us. Two days before the Saturday ceremony we were to go to City Hall with my uncle for the legal formalities.

The dining room in my relative's house could seat fourteen people. Henry had only one cousin in the United States. The other guests would be from the bride's side. My mother, who had come from Germany for the occasion, accompanied me to the then-famous store, "Klein's on the Square," with the largest choice of wedding dresses. I dutifully chose a white one with golden threads woven into it, which I could use for concerts in the future.

During the last month before the wedding Henry wrote me that he would have just enough money for the trip to New York but could not buy the wedding rings now. He promised to get them later. I would not have minded that at all, but I knew that the family would expect him to bring the rings.

What could I do about it? I did not have money either. The idea that my relatives would be disappointed in Henry was unacceptable. I racked my brains—and finally came up with a strange solution. In the course of time I had been given rings three times by different admirers whom I had decided not to marry. They had insisted nevertheless that I keep their rings. All three were gold; one had a shimmering opal stone, the second one was a plain band with two little diamonds and the third one had just a pearl in the middle. I took these three rings to a jeweler next door with whom I had chatted many times and who had often teased me, "You still aren't married?" I asked him if it were possible to make two wedding bands out of the gold from these rings, and if instead of my paying him he would keep the stones. He thought about it for a while and then burst out laughing and said he could do that for me, but one stone would take care of the payment. He later did keep the opal and returned the other stones to me. It

took a while since he had to send the rings away to be melted and molded again. But a few days before the wedding he delivered two shiny gold bands with our names engraved inside.

My family had only met Henry once before and had liked him very much. Katja, who had accompanied him then, assured them that, "Anybody who sings Schubert like that is all right." By the time we got married, we had actually only seen each other on ten different days. My uncle, at whose house we were married, was worried about that and asked us what we wanted for a wedding gift. Since we needed everything we said we would like to leave it to him. He suggested either the money for a little car, or even better, the boat ride from New York to Los Angeles, where we were planning to live. He thought that would help us to "get acquainted." My family has never stopped teasing me about the fact that Henry fell in love with me when I could not talk. Had he known what a good talker I am, would he have done it?

After the ceremony Uncle Ernest took me aside and said, "If it does not work out, let me know and I will send you the money to come back." Since his wife had been sick that summer, but had been up and around for the wedding preparations and the ceremony, she did not feel well enough to go on their yearly vacation trip. I then decided to "invite" him to come with us on the boat. It took a long time to persuade him, but I finally succeeded and later enjoyed my wedding trip with two men.

The boat trip through the Panama Canal was lovely. We stopped over at Acapulco and just missed a hurricane. We had to sail around it, which made the trip last two weeks. Henry and I certainly "got acquainted" and planned our future. We enjoyed all the benefits of an ocean voyage with swimming, dancing and the big Captain's dinner, at which we were asked to sing. That was in September 1938, when Chamberlain went to Munich with his umbrella and more trouble started for Europe.

The arrival in Los Angeles was painful because the long bus ride from the airport took us through some of the ugly downtown sections of the city. As soon as we arrived in Holly-

wood, with its charming little bungalows and Spanish-looking houses, I felt better. Henry's friends, Hugo and Frances Strelitzer, welcomed us warmly. They had been wonderful to Henry during the ten months of our correspondence. Hugo thought it would be better for us to be together than to be writing letters every day. They expected me to also stay with them for a while, but we wanted to have our own home as soon as possible and started to look for a place to live the next day. It was fairly easy in those days and a week later we moved to an apartment on Alexandria Street, where we stayed for almost one year. It was a furnished studio with a small kitchen and dinette. A large double bed had to be pulled out of the wall at night, and we had enough space for a rented piano and our few belongings that we had brought from the East.

Life in Hollywood was beautiful. Of course I was a bride! Shopping and marketing were exciting. Even the largest A&P or supermarket in New York could not have competed with the Farmers' Market in Hollywood. The abundance of fresh fruit on display and the low prices for vegetables and meat were breathtaking. One could buy five dozen oranges or three pounds of muscat grapes for twenty-five cents. Everything was cheaper than in New York. When my mother came to visit and wanted to play on our piano without being disturbed, she sent us to a French restaurant and treated us to a five-course dinner for sixty-five cents.

There were constant excitements. Auditions for different jobs—not always successful, but as soon as one project fell through, there was hope for the next one. I helped Henry with his English and his new songs. He too helped me with my singing, and whenever there was a chance we offered our duets in clubs and churches and made a modest living. We didn't care. As long as it went on and on, and we would not run out of money. In the summer Henry got a small part in the production of *The Barber of Seville* at the Hollywood Bowl, which meant a little more money than usual. Max Reinhardt, the great German producer and director, was in charge, and the show became a great success. We also got into the Hollywood Bowl chorus for all the summer opera perfor-

mances. I was already pregnant when I sang in *Aïda* with Dusolina Giannini, but would not have stopped singing for anything in the world. I just asked for a larger costume.

In the fall Henry developed technical problems with his voice. His former teacher in Berlin, who had also been the teacher of Lauritz Melchior, had once told him that the same thing that had happened to Melchior might also happen to him one day. In mid-life his baritone voice would change to tenor. Melchior had sung for many years as a baritone before he became the famous tenor. But he had stopped singing for a while which Henry could not afford. It was a very difficult time. He found a teacher whom he had to see almost daily to prevent having to interrupt his work. There was only an interval of one week between his last engagement as a baritone and his first concert as a tenor.

During this time he was also rehearsing for the leading part in a concert performance of a new opera by the English composer and conductor Albert Coates. Fortunately, the singing part was comfortably in the middle register and not too exposed. It also was a character part with lots of comedy. Mr. Coates had to go back to England for a few weeks during rehearsal time while the cast continued working with an assistant. We were very nervous how Mr. Coates would take the change. I will never forget his reaction when Henry said, "I have become a tenor since you left." He stared at him in bewilderment and said, "Was that really necessary?" Since it was too late to get another singer, he let Henry sing the part and the opera was very well received by audience and critics.

Several months after we had come to Hollywood, a New York friend, the conductor and accompanist Fritz Kitzinger, arrived in Los Angeles on tour with the famous Italian bass from the Metropolitan Opera, Ezio Pinza. They had several concerts in California and Fritz invited us to the first one at Philharmonic Hall in Los Angeles. Afterwards we were to meet Pinza and have dinner together. Henry had a rehearsal that night but insisted that I go anyway. He even said, "Pretend you are not married," since he knew that Pinza was a notorious Don Juan.

And he was right! The concert was beautiful and I was looking forward to meeting the singer. He immediately charmed me and started to flirt, upon which I declared that I had just gotten married. That did not discourage him at all. But there was another lady backstage who seemed to have know him considerably longer than I had. She was very attractive, but had a mean expression on her face which reminded me of Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni.*

Pinza took me aside and asked me to help him get rid of the woman. "But how?" I asked. "By sitting next to me in the car later on," he explained. "We will then take her back to the hotel and go on." I felt uncomfortable and stuck to Fritz Kitzinger. Pinza had to give quite a few autographs. Then the four of us proceeded to the parking lot, where Pinza skillfully managed to place me next to him in the front, leaving Donna Elvira to Fritz in the back. When we arrived at the Ambassador Hotel, Pinza opened the door and practically pulled the poor woman out of her seat. He walked her to the front door where they stood talking for a long time. Fritz explained to me that this lady came to all the concerts across the country and Pinza had been trying for a long time to stop her. He finally joined us again and seemed so relieved that he could hardly wait to take us to his favorite Italian nightclub, where one could dance after eating lots of pasta. During our first dance, Pinza asked me, "Do you have to go home to your husband tonight?" I answered, "Yes, and I even want to." That, of course, made Don Juan only more aggressive. He probably was not used to refusals. I don't want to sound holier than I am, but four months of marriage had fortified my resistance. Pinza certainly was one of the most attractive men, six foot two, very handsome, slender and painfully sexy. At the third dance he declared that he loved me passionately and would gladly pay for my divorce. I said, "I want that in writing," upon which he sat down and wrote the sweetest love letter on a napkin.

Later that night Fritz reminded Pinza of his concert on the following day and suggested, for the sake of his voice, to get some sleep now. He helped me out of a difficult situation by

taking me home himself. Of course, Henry had waited for me and I immediately confessed that I had had a very good time, showing him the napkin as proof. I never saw Pinza again but Fritz later told me that he kept referring to me as "the dark one who did not want me."

It is understandable that newlyweds occasionally feel the urge to kiss or embrace even in public. Henry surely took advantage of this habit but I was always mortally embarrassed and blushed when it happened. He kept assuring me that he did not mind my kissing him in front of people, and he would certainly never blush; I thought maybe some day I could prove the contrary to him.

The streetcars in Los Angeles had wide-open windows in the summer, so that everybody could look out and enjoy the cool air. One day Henry had a rehearsal and suggested that I walk him to the streetcar. When it stopped in front of us to let people out, I suddenly embraced him passionately while everybody looked on in amusement. He did not seem to be embarrassed at all but when he got on and waved to me through the window I shouted, "I hope your wife didn't see us." His cheeks had never been so red before. I walked home triumphantly.

For almost half a year we had to take busses and streetcars in Hollywood; but our friends were very considerate. We got many rides and hardly ever left a party without someone offering to take us home. Yet, as soon as we made a little more money than we needed for rent and food, we bought our first car. It was a second-hand Dodge and we paid sixty dollars for it. Henry could not drive and I was pregnant. On the first day we already had a slight accident: Parked in front of our house while we were unloading groceries, both doors wide open, our car was hit by a passing car, although there was plenty of space and no other car in sight. The driver was very embarrassed and his insurance paid for the damage.

As soon as I got used to our Dodge I started to teach Henry how to drive. The best place for that was the Holly-

wood Bowl parking lot, which is very large. He learned pretty fast and soon could drive himself to the distant motion picture studios where he worked in many films. It was mainly chorus work, but from time to time he got a solo part, which paid well. Unfortunately it was always popular music, which he did not like. He had been trained for classical and operatic music and longed to get back to it. We formed a little club with some of our American colleagues who were interested in the Lieder repertoire. Once a month they came to our place and everybody had to sing something new. We also worked on duets, trios, ensembles and occasionally on contemporary music. Our friends taught us American songs and we taught them German Lieder.

One day Henry received a call from a young German musician who had recently arrived in Hollywood. He did not know him but he brought greetings from a distant relative in Germany. Ingolf Dahl had good recommendations to influential people in the film industry. He was also very lucky. His first contact was Wilhelm Dieterle, a German film producer who had been very successful in America for many years. Dieterle immediately offered Ingolf a chance to work in a production he was preparing with other producers in order to help as many refugee artists as possible. They had chosen Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* for this purpose. Music was being written for the play by the composer Ernst Toch. Some of the best German actors and theater specialists were to be in the show. Ingolf was put in charge of the music and offered Henry the solo part in a soldier chorus. He also needed his help teaching some of the unmusical actors to learn the difficult modern composition.

When Henry came to the first rehearsal and met the other singers, Ingolf asked him, "Have you by chance met a soprano by the name of Meta Aschaffenburg?" Henry supposedly scratched his head, pretended to think hard and then answered, "The name sounds familiar—indeed I remember now—I think I am married to her." This coincidence immediately landed me in the show as well.

Stage rehearsals started soon. Leopold Jessner, one of Berlin's most important producers, was the director, and the well-known actor Lyonel Royce was to play the part of Wilhelm Tell. He had not only been a very popular actor in Germany, but also become famous for another reason. He tricked the Nazis in 1933. When he was removed from the stage because of his Jewish descent, he left Berlin and disappeared completely. After half a year, he returned, looking totally different; ten pounds heavier, now light blond, pretending to be a simple, but talented actor from the provinces who wanted to make it in Berlin. He had several readings and everybody was excited about this great new discovery. He received more offers to play than he could accept and acted his role so well and convincingly for the new Nazi audiences that nobody recognized him. After some time he got fed up with Germany and accepted an invitation to come to America. I hope the Nazis found out later.

Other leading parts were filled by Ernst Deutsch, Christiane Grautoff and Alexander Granach, all European stars. The latter had actually come to Berlin from the provinces. He was a great actor but had terribly crooked legs. When he read for Max Reinhardt, the famous director and producer, he was told that if he had his legs straightened by operation, he could join the Reinhardt Theater. That's what he did! He then played on stage and in films until 1933, when he was thrown out.

For Henry and me this whole experience was extraordinary. We had been struggling beginners until now, and suddenly we were working together with all these famous stars. Besides singing in the chorus, I was placed offstage with my violin to keep the soldiers in tune and play along, so they would not get off key. Wilhelm Tell had to start his beautiful entrance song backstage and I stood next to him with a tuning fork, because he could not hear the orchestra but had to arrive on stage in the same key. It was lots of fun, singing, acting and having these special duties.

Unfortunately, when we arrived one morning for a runthrough, Christiane Grautoff, who played Wilhelm Tell's wife,

did not appear. She had always been on time and we were worried. Just as the director decided to start without her, a messenger arrived to let him know that Ms. Grautoff's husband, the writer and poet Ernst Toller, had committed suicide in New York and she was leaving immediately by plane. We all thought that this might be the end of the show or at least a long postponement. For most of the participants *Wilhelm Tell* had become their livelihood and it could become fatal if there were a long interruption and no payments. Fortunately, Ms. Grautoff knew "the show must go on" and would not let us down. After a few days she returned, frail and exhausted, but willing to save the show.

However, it did not last. American audiences could not swallow all the accents, and the directors expected too much from some of the actors. One of them, not knowing much English yet, had learned his role phonetically and in the excitement he sometimes got his syllables mixed up. The audience laughed. After six weeks of rehearsing and three weeks of performances, *Wilhelm Tell* was closed down.

Besides staging this big production, Wilhelm Dieterle had always shown great concern for the refugees who had come to Hollywood from Europe. For the many who were connected with the arts, he made an arrangement with a fine Hungarian restaurant to serve them free meals, paid by him. We also went a few times and met many interesting people. Paul Andor, the German actor, who had been born in the United States and was taken five years later to be brought up in Germany, sat at our table and became a close friend. He told us that he was often asked to testify as an American citizen at naturalization procedures. Once a judge greeted him, "Wulfi, we all know you here. How are you?" Of course, he had read Paul's German name *Wolfgang* in his passport. What a memory!

Bert Brecht

When I was ready for a better car than our Dodge, we heard that Bert Brecht was in Hollywood looking for a cheap car. We called the people where he lived and offered our Dodge.

He wanted to see it, and I suggested that I pick him up and drive around with him. He liked the looks of it but did not want to drive the car himself. I took him along Hollywood Boulevard and then way up into the canyons to prove how powerful the motor was. He got more and more interested, and it seemed he wanted to buy the car.

Suddenly something jumped out of the floorboard...and I held the gearshift in my hand! I was mortified; this had never happened before. We had to stop immediately and it took a while to get downhill again. Unfortunately, Mr. Brecht lost confidence. I can't really blame him. He was very kind and even felt sorry for me. We somehow managed to eventually get back to town—that was the end of my encounter with Bert Brecht.

While working in the studios, Henry met a lot of successful people. It was always an experience to be invited to their fabulous estates. Sometimes these visits took place way up in the Hollywood hills in secluded areas with large gardens, swimming pools, tennis courts and outdoor bars. The food was always exquisite and the exuberance of the movie stars and their shop talk was fascinating.

One invitation started in a rather embarrassing way. The mother of the then-popular actress, Marsha Hunt, was the music director of the church where Henry sang on Sundays. She had invited us to a barbecue party to meet her daughter and had suggested that we sing at this gathering.

On Saturday night we arrived at their house. Mr. Hunt, the father, opened the door and seemed delighted to meet us. He led us into a small reception room from which one could look into the dining room. Then he disappeared for a while. We looked around and I began to feel uncomfortable. There were no other people arriving, and in the back one could see a table only set for a few. I asked Henry if something could be wrong, but he assured me that everything was all right. Finally, Mr. Hunt returned and asked us whether we had come in connection with the barbecue—for tomorrow. A first invitation and being twenty-four hours early! However, the gra-

cious host made it easy for us and would not let us leave without having a drink. We had to promise that we would come back on Sunday.

When I was five months pregnant, the composer Hugo Davies, who had written several duets for our first Hollywood recital, offered us his house in Los Angeles in the summer while he and his wife went to Europe. In exchange we were to take care of their garden. This was a godsend. We had just planned to find a bigger place before the new arrival in our family. Also, our landlady, who had permitted us to rent a piano and work in the apartment, suddenly declared, "When you sing, Mrs. Cordy, it's all right and even when your husband sings I can take it; but when you two sing together I lose my tenants."

In June we moved to the Davies' place in Los Angeles and decided to wait till the fall to look for a bungalow in Hollywood. Henry worked in the motion picture studios on a regular basis, first in *The Great American Broadcast* with Jack Oakey and after that in *Unfinished Business* with Irene Dunne and Robert Montgomery. I got interesting and amusing reports every night. Meanwhile I watered the garden and planned for Johnny's arrival.

A little gray cat "adopted" us and kept me company. Henry had told me, when we got married, that he did not like cats. But since I love them and always had cats, I suggested we should take turns; sometimes we should live without cats and sometimes we should have one. That would be fair. He gave me one of his big smiles but did not say no. When the new cat came to the door, he looked rather starved and I fed him immediately. Henry accepted the situation but made me promise to leave the cat with the house at our departure—because of the baby. Well, it turned out differently. When the Davies returned from Europe, they gladly took over the cat when we moved out. After a week they called us and said, "The cat is crying all the time and does not eat anymore." They did not know what to do with him. That did it. I had gotten too attached to the cat and only left him with the

Davies because someone had said it was not a good idea to have cats around small babies. They sometimes jump on them when they sleep and could choke them. Maybe this happened once—but I certainly could take care of my baby. We drove back to pick him up. I never saw a cat get used to new surroundings as fast as this one. From the moment he arrived, he acted as if he had always lived there. He later became Johnny's constant companion and stayed with us until we had to leave California under circumstances which unfortunately prevented us from taking him along.

Toward the end of the summer we looked for a bigger place to live. There was a great variety of places available, but when we told the various landlords that we were musicians, they did not want us. It became more difficult every day. Henry studied the real estate advertisements all the time. Finally, one morning he discovered something that sounded promising and immediately drove me way up into the Hollywood hills to look at a place. The location was gorgeous but there were seventy steps to climb up from the little plateau where we had parked our car. I was eight months pregnant with Johnny! I refused to even look at it. Since we had an appointment with the landlady, Henry went up by himself. After a long time he came back, beaming as if he had hit a high C and said, "It's absolutely perfect and has everything we want and need. The owner loves music and babies and pets." That did it. I struggled up the enormous staircase and fell in love with the house right away. Mrs. Mueller, who showed us everything, had been married to a German musician whose dying words had been in German and we had to tell her what they meant. It was a little embarrassing because he had asked to go to the bathroom. She promised to build fences for the baby and offered her daughters for babysitting, cleaning and sewing.

The house had two large rooms, a nice kitchen with a pantry and a backyard. A covered balcony ran across the entire front, from which one had a beautiful view of the Hollywood hills. The bedroom had a big closet that could be made

into a nursery, since it had a large window. The furniture was rustic Californian and the curtains and the china were very colorful. A garden with fourteen nectarine trees and small bushes extended from the house all the way down to the trail. My mother later planted a regular flower garden for us with little plants and rocks to walk on. There also was a garage and lots of storage space. The price for everything was thirty-three dollars a month. In this paradise Johnny would grow up. It was the first time since we had left Germany that we had a real home again and felt that "we had made it." Later I asked Mrs. Mueller if she knew somebody on Cahuenga Park Trail who had an extra room, since my mother wanted to come and help with the baby. That was no problem. She could stay with Mrs. Mueller, who owned a large house right across the trail. Yet, one had to climb up another seventy-five steps! For three years, my mother took that trip up and down several times a day, which is probably why she lived to be almost one hundred. Her room had a private bath and a private entrance. She paid fifteen dollars a month for it. *Tempi passati.* Her table stood at the window facing us, and we only had to call across the trail to get in touch with her. It was an ideal solution and kept her in Hollywood much longer than originally planned.

Some time after my mother had arrived from New York to be present at the birth of her first grandchild, our landlady invited us to come to her house on a Saturday afternoon. She had just bought a new machine to make ice cream, and wanted us to be the first to try it. Henry had to work that day but we promised to bring some ice cream home for him. Around three o'clock, Mother and I climbed down our mountain and up to Mrs. Mueller's place. One of the daughters greeted us and made us sit down a while until her mother would be ready. After a few minutes, Mrs. Mueller opened the door of another room and said, "Now you may come in." We were a little puzzled by the official announcement but proceeded to the other room which seemed to be the dining room. To our surprise there were six ladies whom we did not

know. They all sat around a large table which was covered with enormous packages with ribbons and flowers. "Oh," I said, "it must be somebody's birthday and we did not know it." Mrs. Mueller asked, "Don't you know what this is?" I shook my head. Then she turned to my also bewildered mother and said, "This is your daughter's baby shower." Silence. "What is a baby shower?" I asked. Then it dawned on all these nice ladies, who were our neighbors on the trail, and who had each brought one of the packages, that the beneficiary of this party did not understand what was going on. In Europe we have no baby showers. It is entirely an American custom. I had not been in America long enough to have been invited to one. The ladies seemed to be more surprised now than we were, but had a good laugh. For an American mother it must be hard to believe that one does not know what a baby shower is. In the packages were all the things I badly needed for the baby. Mrs. Mueller had secretly found out by talking to my mother. Everybody at the party told us another story of her own or her daughters' baby shower. We ate lots of ice cream that afternoon and had a wonderful time.

We had been doing quite well with our little Dodge, but Henry got more and more involved with studio work, and sometimes had to leave early in the morning and did not return till late at night. That left me on our mountain without transportation. Whenever I had to take Johnny to the doctor or wanted to meet other mothers in the park, I had to rely on friends to pick me up. It was most inconvenient and something had to be done.

We knew a very nice German mechanic who fixed our Dodge whenever necessary. I told him if he ever came across an old car with a strong motor that could make it up our hill, I might buy it. But it would have to be very inexpensive. Some weeks later he called up and said, "I think I have a car for you." We drove down and looked at it. It was a two-door, beat-up 1926 convertible Oldsmobile. The roof was worn-out canvas, the fenders all dented and there was not much paint left of the original tan color. Mr. Schmidt would fix the fend-

ers and also add some paint. I was thrilled. I had never had my own car and did not mind how it looked. Two days later he called again and said, "I am bringing her over now." Halfway up our hill he got stuck and had to return to his shop. After another few days he tried it again and it worked. He made me try it several times too, which settled the deal. The price was twenty dollars. He suggested that we use the cheapest gas and oil since it would make no difference anyway.

The next day I proudly rolled down our hill, and when I came to the main road—there stood a policeman. I put my arm out to show that I was going to stop. When he saw me he shouted, "For heaven's sake, don't you stop that thing, you'll never get it going again." That was not very encouraging but did not stop me from enjoying my new treasure. The cheapest gasoline was eleven cents a gallon and Western Oil was seven cents. The latter kept dripping out a little, but since the price was so low it did not matter. Most of the time I had the roof down, except when it rained—then I had a problem; it rained right through. Whoever drove with me had to keep an umbrella over our heads so we wouldn't get wet. I also kept a red plastic tablecloth with me, and when it rained badly I had to cover the motor. Some of our friends took pictures of this sight. The car kept me going for two years without major crises, and when the war broke out and we had to leave California, I sold it for ten dollars, mainly for the tires.

The wonderful first year without worrying came to an end. We got involved in bigger problems. The situation in Europe was getting worse. Henry's parents were still in Germany and we had to help them to get out. Something had to be done.

For our wedding somebody had given us a beautiful, green suede notebook "to write down what would happen in Hollywood." It turned out later while moving around, buying household necessities and trying to earn a living, that we had no time to write anything down. Yet, I always kept the Green Book, as we called it, on my desk waiting for an opportunity to start it.

Well—the opportunity had now come, though not for the

kind of events the donor must have had in mind. It was most important to carefully register our debts. Instead of buying a notebook, I "sacrificed" the Green Book for this purpose. Our financial situation was bad and there was no extra money to make advance payments, which became necessary. I took my fur coat to a pawn shop and recorded the amount in the Green Book. Then some of my precious, inherited jewelry had to go too. We also had to take a lawyer to help us with the papers and documents. After a while we did not have a penny left in the account and had to live from day to day. What we made with small singing engagements was just enough to cover the regular expenses. Doctors and lawyers were kind enough to give us credit and waited for their payments. When a possibility for Henry's parents to leave Germany developed, we had to deposit a large amount of money with an agency that assisted immigrants. We had to borrow money from various organizations and the pages of the Green Book were slowly filling. We felt most uncomfortable getting more and more into debt, but to help the family was too important and everything else became secondary.

During this time Henry's father, being in frail health, became so overwhelmed by the events in Germany that he suddenly died of heart failure. In her desperation my mother-in-law planned to leave her home country immediately. Her eventual flight from Germany is an extraordinary story.

When I got married I did not know any member of my husband's close family, since I had only met him in this country. After the war his mother came to the United States. Her escape from Hitler Germany was most dramatic. At the beginning of World War II we received a telegram in California, saying, "Safely arrived in Switzerland," and then we never heard from her again until after the war.

Many times before we had tried to help my husband's parents to leave Germany, but it had never worked. The money we had borrowed from a Jewish organization was used to pay for a trip via Japan, which never materialized. Finally, we told our American uncle about it and he hired a lawyer in New York, but even he was unable to get them out.

There were all sorts of agencies and individuals who offered assistance to refugees, but often they were dishonest and only wanted to make money. My uncle believed one of them, was cheated and lost a lot of money. So did we. There were many incidents like this. All the Jewish refugees in America worried about their families in Germany and kept trying to get them out. My mother-in-law was now alone in Berlin since her only daughter and son-in-law had already been sent to a concentration camp. Henry's sister had been a nurse and was ready to go with her doctor husband, unaware of what was awaiting them. After they left, she wrote one postcard to her mother without complaints. The camp was large, her husband had to take care of the sick and she worked with him. Whether it really started that easily, or whether she did not want to worry her mother, we will never know. It was the last communication we ever received.

My mother-in-law then decided she had to get to America, where her son, the only remaining member of the family, was living and waiting for her. Two of her friends in Berlin, both widows without family, also had no other thoughts except to get out of the country. They investigated every possibility, and when they heard of a Swiss passage, where the control was not so strict, they even considered fleeing. They traveled to a little town near the border, took rooms at a small hotel and waited for an opportunity. On a rainy evening in the fall they left their belongings behind, took only their handbags and umbrellas and passed the border house where the German guards were singing and playing cards. Unfortunately, one of the guards saw them through the window and alarmed the others. When the three women heard the commotion, they started running in the direction of the Swiss border. One of them was shot in the back and died immediately; the second one could not run fast enough and was taken prisoner. Only my mother-in-law kept running, hearing and almost feeling shots passing her left and right. Finally, she fainted and fell to the ground. When she came to, a man was standing over her and said, "You are on Swiss ground. Don't get up, they are still searching for you." When the German

guards finally gave up, the Swiss still cautioned her not to move, fearing a searchlight might find her. He made her crawl to a place where the river Rhein was fairly shallow and told her to walk to the other side where he would then meet her.

We have never understood how she survived this experience and bravely made it through the river with the water up to her neck. When she got to firm ground again, the guard helped her to recover in the border station and then turned her over to the Swiss authorities. She spent four years in a *Diakonissenheim* in Basel, a home for sick and elderly nurses, where she was treated very well. She helped the Sisters by running little errands, tending the flowers and comforting the patients. We are forever grateful to the Swiss people who helped her through the four years of war until she could join us in the United States in 1945.

Many years after the end of the political trauma in Europe, I went back to Germany for the first time. One of the reasons was to search for the grave of my husband's family in East Berlin. For a long time I had regularly sent a check to the cemetery for the preservation of their grave. We had always been wondering whether this grave really existed.

My friends in West Berlin, where I stayed for a week, warned me not to go. If anything should happen to me at Checkpoint Charlie, the border, or behind the Wall, they wouldn't be able to help me. "I am an American citizen," I insisted, "I am protected by my government. And what could cause suspicion during a short visit to a cemetery?"

So one morning I took the bus from Halensee to the border, waited in line with many other people and, for the first time, saw the famous Wall that had caused so many tragic deaths. The officials checked my papers very thoroughly, counted my money and kept my passport. They also warned me that I was to be back in the West by late afternoon.

Here I was—in the city where I had started to study music and enjoyed the abundance of cultural events. Everything looked gray and unattractive. Since I had promised my friends to make my visit as short as possible and telephone them the

moment I was in the West again, I took a cab directly to the cemetery. The driver immediately poured out his heart about the bad conditions in the East. His trust surprised me. He dropped me off in front of the Jewish cemetery, which was very large. The entrance looked dignified, with a marble plate that registered all the names of the Jewish individuals from Berlin who had been killed by the Nazis. I walked over to the administration office, identified myself and explained my desire to see the grave. The attendant took me to a large map on the wall, and with a long stick pointed out the complicated route to the place. I did not want to admit that I could not quite follow his directions so fast, but decided I had all day and would probably find the grave.

After more than an hour of walking I realized that I had made a mistake. The cemetery covers hundreds of acres—it started raining and there was not a soul around to ask. The number of graves seemed unlimited. I must have run around in circles coming back to the same places. To go back and ask was not possible either. I seemed to be totally lost and started to feel most uncomfortable but kept walking and walking, hoping to find a person to direct me. I had visions of never finding the exit again, not being allowed to leave East Germany and other more unpleasant thoughts. When the second hour of aimless wanderings came to an end, a miracle occurred. Way in the distance I saw the back of a small woman bent over a grave. She must know where the nearest exit is, and if she is an attendant, she might even know the location of the grave.

It took ten minutes to get to her, but before I could open my mouth I recognized the name of my family on the stone the woman was cleaning. Eighteen thousand graves, two hours searching and the person I meet is tending the grave of my family. We had a long talk—she too complained about the bad conditions under which she had to work and how she was exploited in the East. I gave her all the money I could spare and she directed me back to the entrance. My mission was completed—after collecting my passport and crossing Checkpoint Charlie, I went to the next telephone to report

that I had safely arrived in the West again.

We finally stopped borrowing money and started to prepare for Johnny's birth. I constantly worried about all the payments which would have to be made. The hospital would be expensive and some things would have to be bought for the baby. While we were singing in the Hollywood Bowl chorus, Henry got a part in *La Traviata,* which would temporarily help us out of the worst. I insisted that the *Traviata* money would not be used to pay off debts but saved for Johnny's birth.

For the first operas we were paid right afterwards, but *Traviata* was the last one. Rehearsal time had already been scheduled, yet before we even started, an announcement that the performance had to be cancelled was sent out by the Bowl Association. They had gotten into a financial deadlock and could not go through with the project. When we heard about this we were terribly disappointed, but trusted that the company would live up to their responsibilities. The entire cast had signed contracts. Then word went around that nobody would be paid and the Bowl Association would not expect to be sued. It was the only opera company we had in Hollywood and all singers depended on it. Who would dare to sue the Association and expect to ever sing there again! We were horrified. There were no more people from whom we could borrow. The hospital room was reserved—the baby could not be cancelled—what would we do without the *Traviata* check? It was the lowest point since we had gotten married. In the back of my mind were a few relatives who could be approached for a loan, but we had always given them the impression that we managed our lives without family help. We were just too proud to borrow money from them now. Henry discussed other possibilities with friends to get us through this difficult time. I could have worked in a restaurant or a store for a while—but who would take me in my condition!

The executive director of the Hollywood Bowl Association was a Mrs. Irish, whom we knew well. She had been around a lot during rehearsals and performances and had always been very nice to us. I decided to write a letter to her

and honestly describe our situation. Maybe she would know a way out. It took me several days to compose the letter, which was endlessly discussed, changed, sentences added or omitted and finally mailed on a Wednesday. We thought she would receive it on Friday, think about it over the weekend and call us the next week.

Saturday evening we were sitting at the piano working, when a mailman brought a special-delivery letter from Mrs. Irish on Hollywood Bowl stationery. She thanked me for my letter and said she had immediately discussed the situation with the president. The enclosed check was the payment for *Traviata*. We later found out that everybody received a check and we were all relieved.

The most exciting event in my life was the birth of my son. This wonder growing inside—one waits—one suddenly feels it—and shudders at the finality. At that time I still prayed. Now I only thank. I prayed for Johnny's good health, sound mind, strength of character, intelligence and pleasant disposition. Also—although a little embarrassed—I asked for good looks, because it makes life easier.

Johnny did not arrive at the expected time, nor in the normal position. His head remained high up as if he resented entering the world upside down. There was talk of a Caesarean section, but I was hoping for a last-minute change. My husband was not at home when labor started, but it went slowly. When he finally returned from a rehearsal and saw my face, the first thing he said was: "I am going to put my new suit on," which made me laugh so much that labor accelerated. We called our German doctor, who had threatened, if the baby did not arrive soon, he would have to induce labor. Anyway, it was time to go to the Queen of Angels Hospital in Los Angeles, where I was expected. Since our car was a jalopy, our doctor friend picked me up himself in his Chevrolet and Henry drove behind us in our car. Walking around the hospital floor I saw, through a glass wall, a tiny baby in an incubator. In only a few hours, I will hold a little creature like that?

My husband gave me strong support during the next

hours, which were pretty grim. After ten hours of labor the two doctors who were with me decided on the Caesarean operation. By then I was glad to get out of the pain and inhaled the rescuing anesthetic as if it were a delicious perfume. Yet, not without first saying "Happy Birthday" to my doctor. On the clock above me I had seen that it was five minutes after midnight, a Sunday, and his birthday as well. Three hours later Johnny was born. He did not breathe right away. I suppose the anesthesia had been very strong. The doctors tried and tried to get him to breathe, and our friend was very tense. Other doctors came into the delivery room and made suggestions. Finally they gave Johnny an injection into the gums, which made him scream immediately. Thank God I was still sleeping during this procedure.

Sunday around noon a nurse brought the baby into my room, which I was to share with another woman. It was too early to nurse—I was supposed to just look at my son. As soon as the nurse left, I took his clothes off to make sure all fingers, toes, etc. were there. Only then could I relax and hold the "little stranger" in my arms. His eyes were open but the color was indistinguishable. I could not understand my feelings. They were so new—mysterious and overwhelming. After an hour the nurse returned and took Johnny away again.

In the afternoon Henry walked in—all smiles; but he had not yet seen his son. Later my roommate arrived. She had just given birth to her first child, a little girl. We exchanged experiences. She had been told during her labor that there was a singer in the delivery room next to hers which made her think, "I bet she is not singing right now!" During our week in the hospital Phyllis and I became good friends and had a lot of fun together. We later often visited each other with our babies and remained in touch until we left California. Sometimes Phyllis had very strange ideas. When I asked her why she let the baby use the same breast all the time and did not let her stimulate both sides, she answered, "Isn't the milk sort of flowing back and forth?" Another time she also said she never let her husband come near her after she knew she was pregnant "because he might have injured the baby."

Life with a Son

It was always difficult for people to find us in Hollywood, but the location of our tiny cottage was worth the effort. Coming up from Hollywood Boulevard one had to get to Woodrow Wilson Drive to find Cahuenga Park Trail, a narrow, steep passage with small houses at the bottom. High up at the dead-end stood a charming villa belonging to a Walt Disney designer, who kept a lovely garden from which he provided his neighbors with flowers, fruits and vegetables. Most people had trouble with their cars on the way up—either their motor stopped or the water started boiling.

Johnny now slept in the large closet of our bedroom. There was just enough space for a crib, and a big window let in all the light he needed. We were only too glad that we could close another door to protect him from the noise when we made music in the evening. For most people this was all very amusing.

One day we received a call from Baron Sonny von Oppenheim, a well-known German banker, with whom an uncle of mine in Cologne was associated. He was on a business trip in the United States, and wanted to bring greetings from the family. For days we cleaned the house and prepared for his arrival, but could not make the place look anything other than a Bohemian domicile. Baron von Oppenheim announced his visit for the late afternoon. We had to give his chauffeur the directions over the telephone, but even he had trouble coming up the trail. His boss got a little short of breath climbing up all those steps. He was a rather stout, middle-aged gentleman, immaculately dressed and his fingernails polished. We greeted him on the balcony and he pressed a gigantic flower arrangement into my arms. All I could do was to quickly place it in the bathtub, hoping he would not have to use that room. Vases for this size bouquet did not exist in our house.

We had to tell the Baron about our activities in Hollywood, and he was impressed by Henry's film experiences. Then came the time when I had to offer him something to drink. We had only one bottle of wine in the house. He mod-

estly asked for coffee. Relieved, I made a cup of instant coffee which he politely drank. He was telling us about the political situation in Germany and added that our uncle was considering immigrating to the United States with his family. He himself was of third-generation Jewish descent and could stay under the Hitler laws and save the Oppenheim Bank.

At the end of his visit he asked to see the baby, so he could tell the family about him after his return. We reluctantly led him to the closet. He looked around as if he had been taken to a cave. Thank God, Johnny woke up and gave him the sweetest smile. That softened our embarrassment.

We later heard from Germany how wonderful his visit had been, how lovely our place was and how happy the baby had looked. He had reported nobly—a Baron always remains a Baron.

During the time I was nursing Johnny, we befriended a young psychiatrist and his Dutch wife. They had a four-year-old son and were expecting a second child shortly. One day, Dr. Greenspoon called me and asked if they could come over sometime so the boy could watch me nursing Johnny. Since his wife was planning to nurse too, it would be nice if the boy could see it. Of course I invited them all for the next day.

When they arrived we settled down on our balcony. After a while, I went inside to pick up Johnny. The little boy did not pay much attention, but when I started nursing, he became extremely interested, stood in front of me with his forehead wrinkled and observed the procedure. When I switched to the other side, he shook his head, scratched it and finally declared, "I like to drink my milk from a straw."

I had often smiled about parents who repeat their children's latest expressions or conversations. Sometimes they are funny, but often they mean much more to the parents than to other people.

As soon as I had a child, I fell into the same trap. When Johnny, age six, was playing with a friend from school, I overheard their conversation and thought it was worth repeating.

Bernardo asked Johnny, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" After a while my son answered, "We believe in God, but I think it is the same family."

Some other time my mother had talked to Johnny about God, and in the evening, sitting in the bathtub, he asked, "Can God see us through dirty windows too?"

My two favorite incidents happened in Hollywood. A well-known actor entered the front yard of a house, where two little boys were playing. Both immediately shouted, "Hi, Daddy." When he disappeared behind the entrance, somebody overheard one boy ask the other, "Why did you say 'Hi Daddy'?—it was my Daddy." The other one answered, "We had him last year."

The five-year-old daughter of a friend of mine entered the bathroom when her mother was lying in the tub. She looked at her and observed, "Why am I so plain and you are so fancy?"

POSTSCRIPT

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought these early years to a sudden and unhappy close. With the outbreak of the war, new laws were passed which prevented aliens on the West Coast from working at night. That was the kiss of death for musicians, whose work usually begins at eight P.M. We had to decide whether we could stay in California. It would not have been so bad to be back in New York with the family, but we loved California and our exciting life in Hollywood. Henry thought it would be best for us to leave; but after long discussions he decided to first go to New York by himself to find out if he could make enough money to support his family. The only alternative would have been to stay, give up music and do something else. That would have been very difficult; for a singer not to sing for a long time is bad for the voice and what other work could we do? We had only studied singing and music and were hardly fit for unskilled labor. I was convinced that Henry could make it on the East Coast and planned to join him with Johnny as soon as possible. My mother was still with us and could help me sell our household

belongings and the cars. In New York we would not need a car and would have to start in an apartment with less space.

In spite of the sad and complicated time, we had some wonderful human experiences. One of our friends, a Wagnerian tenor, lived with his wife and two daughters in a house with a studio on the top floor. They invited us to move in and wait for the end of the war. "There would always be enough money to feed three more people," he assured us. Other friends who were not much better off than we offered us their small savings to get us through these trying times.

Yet there were incidents that supported our decision to leave. We knew a German refugee who was unable to work in his field, which was law. Since he had not been admitted to the California Bar, he had taken many different positions to survive. His last job was as a bartender in a nightclub and he naturally had to violate the curfew. He refused to give up his work and we all feared that he would be found out eventually. He did change his mind though when one night, fortunately on his day off, the police came to check if he was working.

One evening, after Henry had left, Johnny got quite sick. Our doctor told me on the telephone which medicine to get immediately. I called several friends and neighbors to avoid violating the curfew. Yet, when I could not reach anybody or they were too busy, I decided that the health of my child was more important than these ridiculous laws—so I went myself.

As soon as I sat in the car I got nervous. A law-abiding citizen might recognize me and call the police. At the pharmacy I had to wait a long time and felt terribly uncomfortable. I gave up all plans to buy anything else—the less conspicuous one would be, the better. When the pharmacist finally called my name, my heart was beating wildly. I never drove home as fast as that night and felt pursued by every car behind me.

This incident confirmed my decision to leave the West Coast as soon as possible.

CHAPTER V

Back in New York

Incredible Experiences

It was about half a year after Henry had left Hollywood that my mother, Johnny, twenty-one months old, and I took the three-day train trip from Los Angeles to New York. The farewell from Hollywood was touching. Friends and neighbors came to say good-bye and brought gifts. The funniest incident occurred when Paul Andor had to be prevented by his wife from giving Johnny a puppy dog to take on the train and into an apartment in New York. It was well-meant, but not the most practical gift at that moment. Many people bought some of our household goods and everybody expected us to return after the war.

Arrival on the East Coast was exciting. I returned to "Four Hills," my uncle's house in Plainfield, where I had begun life in this country. My brother lived there and helped me plan the future, while Henry worked in New York and could only come on weekends. He had several regular jobs: the best one was singing on a weekly radio show with a large orchestra. My uncle wanted to install Johnny and me in the empty chauffeur's quarters over the garage since he did not like to see a small child grow up in the big city. I have always loved "Four Hills" but had no desire to settle there permanently. The only wish I had was to find a place in New York where we could have a normal family life again. Henry had already started to look for an apartment. He was living in a small hotel in midtown. I went to the city as often as possible to look at places with him. But there again, it took time to find a land-

lord who would accept two musicians and a small child.

Meanwhile Johnny had no problem adjusting to a different life. There was a big dog in "Four Hills" whom he loved and hardly a day went by without somebody bringing him a new toy. Since birth Johnny had been used to my mother and never missed me when she was around. She had decided to stay at her brother's house until we were sure that we would remain on the East Coast. I worried a little about Johnny missing his father and getting terribly spoiled with all these doting relatives around him. But then—children can take a lot and quickly adjust to almost any new situation.

One Friday after Henry and I had seen almost a dozen apartments and were ready to go back to Plainfield for the weekend, there was one more place to see which might have been gone by the next week. So we went there, but with little hope. It was within walking distance of Riverside Park, which would be ideal for Johnny. What prompted us as well was the fact that it was close to Broadway, with all the stores and transportation. It turned out to be just the right place for us. Two musicians, who also had a small child, were going to Washington for half a year to play in the orchestra. They wanted to sublet their apartment to people who would take good care of their Steinway. They had to leave the following weekend and had given up hope of finding anyone. Not only did they leave us the piano, but also lots of music, toys and practically everything we needed. They trusted us completely and all of us were relieved and happy about this last-minute arrangement. We seemed to be the best solution for their problem, and they were for ours.

It was already winter when we moved into the new apartment on Seventy-Second Street and Johnny experienced his first snow. That was terribly exciting for him. He did not even have winter clothes yet, let alone a sled. I had hardly unpacked the essentials, when he insisted on going out "to feel" the snow. We walked over to Riverside Park and watched the children make snowballs, roll around in the snow and ride on their sleds down the little hills. Johnny's eyes were beaming and his cheeks got redder and redder.

When I saw a nice-looking lady pushing her two boys down the hills on a big sled, I asked her if she would let Johnny go down with them once. I explained that he had never seen snow, since we had just come from California. The lady stared at me a moment and then asked, "You just came from California? Are you Mrs. Cordy?" I thought I was hearing things. It turned out she was a friend of the people who had just rented their apartment to us and had heard all about us.

The lady, whose name was Hersh, lived three houses down the street from the Paeffs. Her husband was a musician too. She invited us to visit them and from then on Johnny had playmates almost daily. I now had a wonderful neighbor who explained the New York music world to me, recommended the best places to shop and had many other helpful suggestions.

Another curious coincidence was that her husband, a pianist, had accompanied our cousin, Emanuel Feuermann, on one of his concert tours.

As soon as we got settled in New York, I started to look around for work. First I sang at different churches, but after a while I felt ready for a permanent position. I auditioned for Dr. Hugh Porter, who had the reputation of being the best choir director in town. He was then conducting the St. Nicholas Dutch Reformed Church choir on Fifth Avenue. Mr. Porter had just lost one of the sopranos from his fine group and asked me if I could start the following Sunday. I told him that I would love to but had one problem. My husband also sang in a church and what would we do with Johnny? Mr. Porter suggested bringing him along, since the church had a very good Sunday school. The following week I cheerfully deposited my son at this Sunday school before the service. The teacher was charming and welcomed us warmly. When Johnny saw the other children and the many toys scattered about, he did not mind my leaving him. I only had to promise to pick him up again later.

I enjoyed my first service, the rehearsal preceding it and

talking with the other singers. Several had been there for many years. Then I went downstairs to collect my son. Some of the children had already been picked up by their parents. I did not ask him any questions about the morning, since I wanted to wait for Henry to come home and hear everything too. During dinner, Johnny told us about Jesus Christ, that little boy who later could do all those wonderful things. We were quite surprised. Coming from Germany, we had naively assumed that a Sunday school was just a place to take care of small children, but not a religious school. Should we have told the teacher that we belonged to another religion? She had not asked us. Should we leave Johnny there or take him someplace else on Sundays? Henry finally decided that Johnny had to learn about the New Testament someday—why not now?

One day we were on our way home from the church to the Rockefeller Center subway station, where I especially enjoyed looking at the underground store windows. Johnny was running in front of me, but just before getting near the stairway leading down to the trains, I realized there was no more Johnny. There were many open doors to offices and stores. I ran back and looked into every entrance calling him and asking people if they had seen him. Getting more anxious by the minute, I did not know what to do next. I wondered if I should call Henry—but he was too far away to be of any help. Was there a Lost & Found place or a police station? But it was Sunday and probably nothing was open. I suddenly thought that Johnny, who had gone through this building with me before, might have gone ahead to the platform. Terrified, I rushed down the subway stairs to our train. Lo and behold—there, among the crowd, stood Johnny holding hands with a strange lady who smiled at him. I embraced her passionately for having saved my child. She laughed and said, "I thought he was just too little to have come here all by himself—there will soon be a mother or a father looking for the lost child—I better watch him."

When the owners of our sublet returned from Washington, we moved to a small but lovely apartment on Central Park West.

Johnny spent his childhood at the park's playground with lots of other children. After several years we moved to an apartment on the tenth floor with considerably more space. Our next-door neighbor was Mrs. Frieda Ross, the mother of the then-famous singer Lanny Ross, the Sinatra of that era. When Mrs. Ross heard that we were singers, she came to see us immediately and introduced herself as a musician and accompanist. She told us that although she did not work professionally anymore, she would be available for us at any time. We invited her right away to make music in the evening and found out that she was an extremely talented and artistic person who could sight-read anything we put in front of her. That meant a lot to us and we not only took advantage of her offer, but also became good friends. We tried, of course, to do things for her, too, which was not easy. She was a very modest, undemanding person and constantly made us feel how much she enjoyed playing for us. Her dream had always been for her son to sing only classical music. However, Lanny preferred the lighter kind, became very popular and certainly made lots of money. His mother had always played for him, but had also accompanied other artists in her youth—she was particularly proud that at one time she had played for the famous Russian dancer Anna Pavlova.

Since Henry often gave recitals, Mrs. Ross worked on his programs with him and accompanied him many times for tryouts and dress rehearsals. She really was a godsend, patient and untiring. We had many wonderful years with her.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Ross, now getting older, became ill. I frequently visited her and tried to cheer her up. One day, after I had just bought a new dress at Bloomingdale's, I rang Mrs. Ross' bell to show it to her. She liked it very much and complained that she would never again be able to go shopping and try on dresses. I suggested that she put on my new dress, and if by chance it fit her, she could buy it from me and I would go to the store and get another one. This idea pleased her very much and it turned out that the dress, although a little too big, looked very nice on her and she bought it. I got myself the same one again and looked forward to the day that

we might both wear our dresses together.

Sadly, Mrs. Ross's condition got worse and she had to stay in bed and could not enjoy her new dress. After a few more weeks she died peacefully. We were heartbroken to lose our good friend and accompanist. The funeral service was scheduled at the Campbell Funeral Parlor on Madison Avenue. I decided to wear my new dress, which our friend had liked so much. My husband had to sing at a nearby church and planned to meet me at the service a little later, hoping I could save a seat for him. I went early and saw quite a few Broadway stars who probably were Lanny's friends. Entering the already-filled hall, I was directed to the open coffin—and there was Mrs. Ross lying in her new dress. I was so taken by surprise—I stood motionless staring into the made-up face. Suddenly I felt many eyes on me; people must have wondered about this coincidence. When I saw others behind me, I had to move and tried not to look at anybody, heading for a few empty chairs in the last row.

When Henry arrived, he also went up to the coffin, looked at it for a split second—and turned around with the strangest expression on his face. As soon as he found me, we had a hard time looking at each other without laughing. The whole incident was just too grotesque! I am sure Mrs. Ross would have laughed herself and forgiven us.

When the St. Nicholas Dutch Reformed Church was sold and torn down to become part of Rockefeller Center, Dr. Porter brought his entire group uptown to the Union Theological Seminary, where he was teaching. Young musicians were trained at the seminary to become organists and choir directors. We rehearsed every Saturday afternoon for the Sunday service in the charming chapel. On Tuesday evenings we prepared special concerts with the students. Once every year we performed Handel's *Messiah*. I have always claimed that no singer ever sang the *Messiah* under as many conductors as I did since every chorus was conducted by another student. Although it was a most diversified affair, the performance had the Porter stamp. The students adored him and respected his

enormous knowledge and integrity. Only the very best church music was presented and occasionally even a contemporary composition.

The president of the Dutch Reformed Church was Pitney van Dusen, who many years later committed suicide together with his wife. They both had a terminal disease and probably did not want to become burdens to their family or wait out years of suffering. Since many Christian leaders blamed the van Dusens for what they had done, and others admired their courage, the case was discussed everywhere and written about extensively.

I had the opportunity to hear many famous guest speakers during the seventeen years I sang at the seminary. Paul Tillich, the legendary theologian, who had left his native Germany in protest against the Nazis, was often the guest speaker, and we usually had a little German talk after the service, which I enjoyed. Reinhold Niebuhr, the religious author and philosopher, also came during the winter, and at Christmas time we always had the most beautiful candlelight service in town. People came from far away to hear us sing the traditional carols, and the special service for children was particularly delightful.

One of the seminary's sponsors, Mrs. Dwight Morrow, the mother of Anne Lindbergh, was a great admirer of Dr. Porter. She invited the entire choir one year to sing a program of Christmas carols at her house in Englewood, New Jersey. The choir was included in a reception afterwards with a grand buffet. Mrs. Morrow paid us handsomely and we were hoping that this evening would become a yearly tradition. Unfortunately, we were too optimistic.

One Sunday morning, a student asked to practice on the seminary organ. He could not start the instrument and came to the Porters for help. Mr. Porter was just having breakfast with his lovely wife, but interrupted immediately to assist the student. He crawled into the organ to find out what was wrong and did not return. He had suffered a massive heart attack and died inside his beloved instrument. Mr. Porter's early death was a terrible loss for everybody who had known him and worked with him.

While I was singing at the Dutch Reformed Church, we often had two services on Sunday. One evening we had a peculiar experience. The church was filled to capacity and the preacher was Dr. Joseph Sizoo, our regular minister. During his long sermon an unusually large cockroach was crawling between the choir chairs. On one side the sopranos and tenors were seated, on the other side of the sanctuary were the altos and the basses. I was seated at a corner and watched the cockroach approach; the altos had seen him too and obviously became nervous and fidgety. On my side the singers started laughing, of course, but soon we stopped because the cockroach changed his mind, turned around and crawled to our side, which made the altos and basses laugh triumphantly. I was determined to get up and leave because I could not face the creature crawling into my stall. But he sympathized with my feelings, and just at the critical moment turned around again to visit the lower voices. This back and forth in front of the altar went on for a while and the singers went from laughing to trembling and back to laughing again.

At the end of the sermon Dr. Sizoo descended from the pulpit and came to the altar to pick up the plates for the collection. He held them in his hands to say the blessing. When he proceeded toward the congregation to distribute the plates, the cockroach was ready to cross over again and got into the preacher's way. He stepped on the poor creature and ended his life.

That was also the end of our excitement. During the remainder of the service, we had to laugh so much that several members of the congregation later came to find out what had been so funny.

The Name Cordy

Every year around Christmas time when we got our new telephone directory, I made Johnny check immediately if we were still the only Cordys. I had invented the name when I came to the United States. I needed a name easy to understand, easy to write and vague on national origin. It would have been im-

possible to start a singing career with my utterly German name of Aschaffenburg. After many tryouts and debates with friends, I decided on "Cordy" and have never regretted it. In France, where I had studied before, I had also had problems with my name and was not even sure if I was permitted to change it. In the United States it is allowed to use another name as long as one does not change it on the passport.

At the beginning of my Cordy career the name of the French actor, Raymond Cordy, appeared in many foreign films. People often asked me if I were related to him, which I jokingly confirmed. After having lived as Cordy for three years, I got married and changed my name to Korn, also rather German but at least understandable. Occasionally it was written with a "C," which I did not like. When World War II broke out, Henry's agent told him that his name was too German and he should chose another one. After long deliberations we decided to go back to the name Cordy. I made Henry promise that in case of divorce it would be only my name; he would have to go back to Korn. He consented with his usual broad smile.

After we returned to New York, we were again listed in the telephone book under "Cordy." At the end of the year the new directory arrived and I made Johnny check if we were still the only Cordys. Lo and behold—there was a Napoleon Cordy right under our name. He lived way uptown in Harlem, so we presumed he was a black man and cheerfully adopted "Uncle Napoleon." He remained for approximately ten years and then, to our disappointment, disappeared from the directory, which either meant he had moved away or died. We really regretted losing Uncle Napoleon.

Many years later, after Henry had died, my phone rang one evening and a young female voice asked to speak to Mr. Cordy. I informed her that Henry had passed away and asked if I could help her. She said: "I wanted to talk to my father." I could not help thinking how amused Henry would have been to see my face. But I asked her if her father's name was Napoleon. "Oh yes," she answered, "I am so glad you know him—where is he now? I have tried to find him for a long time." I

explained to her that I only knew of his existence but had never met him. She started to cry and I felt very sorry for her. I suggested that she get in touch with the missing persons bureau and also visit the churches and stores on 125th Street, where he used to live. People there might remember him. She finally realized that I could not do more for her and hung up.

Later in the evening I called Johnny to report on the strange telephone conversation. He said, "She called me too, but I just told her she had the wrong number." Evidently he had already forgotten about Uncle Napoleon.

I had two other experiences with my name. A letter arrived in the mail from an organization that supposedly digs into family histories and lets people know who else has their name. They charge twenty-nine dollars for this service. They told me it would only take half a year to find all the Cordys in the United States. I wonder how long it would take them to find all the Smiths.

The last Cordy adventure occurred quite recently when I tried to go to Europe. It was shortly after the terrorist incident at the Heathrow International Airport in London. I showed my ticket at Kennedy International Airport, which was made out under Cordy, and then showed my passport, which was still under my married name, Korn. I was told I could not go on the plane. The names on ticket and passport now have to be identical. For years this had never been a problem. I put up quite a fight and they sent me to three different offices before I could find someone who believed that I was not a dangerous person. He took a pen, crossed out the word Cordy on my ticket and wrote Korn over it; then he initialed the procedure. That helped. I still made the plane.

I met Becky in my church choir and was immediately impressed by her personality. She had contracted polio as a little girl and moved about with two braces and two crutches. She told me that she came from North Carolina, where her parents had tried to make her life as normal as possible. She had spent some time in Warm Springs, the place where Franklin Delano Roosevelt had gone after polio had left him paralyzed.

Since he was convinced that the water from Pine Mountain was beneficial for people who have polio, he founded the Warm Springs Foundation, and donated a 2,600-acre farm so that other victims could also benefit from the healing waters. Becky had met Roosevelt at Warm Springs when she was seven years old. He took a special interest in her and started her on collecting stamps.

When I met Becky she was about eighteen years old and extraordinarily pretty; since she acted so relaxed about her affliction, one forgot about it completely. She had come to New York to study singing. I invited her to our house and we discovered that she had a beautiful, large voice, definitely professional material. She became a close friend and enjoyed meeting colleagues, and I regularly helped her with her German songs.

One night after one of our house concerts, at which Becky sang—she particularly enjoyed singing operatic duets with Henry—we kept her until everybody had left, so Henry could take her to the street corner to put her in a cab to go home. While they walked down a small flight of steps from our front door into the courtyard, she suddenly lost her balance and before Henry could catch her, fell all the way down. She got up as fast as she had fallen and declared she was all right. She did not want Henry to take her home. She left, smiling and waving from the taxi window.

Only reluctantly Henry had let her go by herself. When he came upstairs he was white as a sheet, and I had to give him a cognac to calm him down. While he was describing the incident over and over again, the telephone rang and Becky asked, "Has Henry recovered from my fall?" What we had not known was that one of the most important things people learn at Warm Springs is how to fall. There are many special stairs for them to practice falling, and teachers to instruct them how to relax so completely that they don't get hurt. Becky was laughing on the telephone, and I had to put Henry on so she could reassure him that "falling is no problem if one knows how."

When the United States entered the war, Becky applied to

the USO to entertain American soldiers overseas. She auditioned and they were so impressed by her spirit that they arranged for her to fly to the European theater. She wrote us many letters, claiming she never had had it so good, since the soldiers carried her wherever necessary. Her accompanist, Marc Ollington, was a very good musician from Australia and her singing was a big success. What she did not mention was that she had fallen in love with her accompanist. She later brought him back to the United States and they got married. The doctors told her she should not have children, since she was small and delicate and might endanger her health. However, she was convinced she was strong enough and could bear children. Eventually, she gave birth to two healthy boys. Her husband was offered a teaching position at a midwestern university in Manhattan, Kansas, and they left New York. I visited them several times. The household was a charming one. The boys helped her with the few things she could not manage by herself, like carrying the garbage out or bringing the shopping bags from the car to the house. When we went out, her husband, who was six-foot-four, picked her up like a doll and carried her everywhere. She often sang the songs he had written for her and was most popular with the university community. I always came home from my visits inspired by the extraordinary atmosphere of love and happiness.

After many years Becky came back to New York to visit her friends. She called me and we made an appointment at a bus stop on Fifth Avenue in front of a restaurant. I got there ahead of time and waited, seeing one bus after another arriving without Becky. After a long time I finally saw two crutches being lowered from a bus and realized, a little startled, that Becky had become considerably older and had lost her youthful charm. When she got down on the sidewalk, I embraced her passionately and kept her in my arms for a while. Then the astonished lady asked me, "Do you know me from my neighborhood?" It had not been Becky at all—but a lady with the same braces and crutches. I apologized and fortunately, she had a good sense of humor and laughed about

the mix-up. I went into the restaurant, and there was the real Becky, gorgeous and exuberant as ever. We laughed about this odd coincidence throughout the entire lunch.

I wish I could say Becky and her family lived happily ever after; but fate had other plans for them. After many years of a fairly normal life with joy at home and success as a singer, Becky's life ended in tragedy. She contracted a rare form of cancer and died after a long illness. I have lost contact with her family but recently heard that the children have a new mother now. Both boys are supposedly talented performers and although still in school, are already planning to become professional artists like their parents.

When Johnny was six years old I had my second pregnancy, during which I felt considerably less well than the first time. When I stopped feeling life and had to go through tests, it turned out that I was an RH-negative case, which endangers only the second birth. X-rays revealed that the baby was already dead. Now they give women an injection after the first child which takes care of the problem. The trauma of giving birth, knowing there will be no baby, is absolutely devastating. Labor has to be induced artificially and no anesthetics are used. I was in the eighth month of my pregnancy and weak from all sorts of complications. But in the end I was physically all right again. I stayed in the hospital for three days. On the last morning an attendant came to my room and asked me, "Do you insist on a funeral?"

The time of recovery was the strangest experience for me. At first I had no feelings at all. Only when Johnny was around did I feel drawn out of my numbness. My husband was wonderful and let me deal with my condition in my own way, which I needed. He took care of me constantly. One evening, he put the Beethoven violin concerto on the record player, knowing I would enjoy it. I became fascinated by the sound, pictured the artist playing and thought about him. I could not forget him during the day nor the following days and eventually fell in love with him. I now thought of him all the time and it never occurred to me how bizarre this was,

since I had loved my husband for the last seven years and felt no change in my feelings for him. Whenever the name of the artist was mentioned or I saw his picture in a paper, I got an enormous thrill out of it. As soon as I was alone, I played the record. I held on to this imaginary escape for a long time and only after I started my regular activities again, singing and studying, did this delusion finally evaporate. My love for my husband was never touched by the experience—if anything it probably deepened during this time.

One summer, when we returned from our vacation in Vermont and entered our apartment, I immediately had the feeling something was wrong. We had sublet our place to a young woman who was a model; she had seen our ad in the paper. Negotiations had been satisfactory. She was supposed to move out just before our return, which she had done.

First we thought, different tenants leave different traces. But then we discovered strange black spots on the walls and sand on the floor. Henry rushed downstairs to the manager's office to ask if anybody knew what had happened in our apartment. The secretary said there had been some trouble, she was not sure what kind, but the police had checked fingerprints all over. Since it had happened only the day before, we could read the details in the evening papers. Very comforting!

My husband came back to report, and while we were guessing what might have happened, the girl arrived with a detective to talk to us. She was twenty-five years old and very attractive—but right now she looked terrible. She had been beaten by somebody who, she claimed, came through one of the open fire escape windows while she was washing her stockings in the bathroom. He tried to rape her and she fought him bravely, screaming so loudly that he jumped back through the window. We were horrified and full of sympathy. She apologized for the mess which the police had left and walked out the door with the very handsome detective.

We decided to ask our neighbors in the house if they had heard anything; they hadn't. After talking to the doorman and other employees, we heard to our amazement that the girl had

had night visitors regularly; nobody believed that she did not know her intruder. She probably had an argument with a "customer" who did not want to pay the full price!

In our apartment? We were shocked. We had trusted her completely—she had paid the entire rent in advance and nothing had been stolen. We were disappointed that we had totally misjudged her and had even considered ourselves lucky to find such a pleasant tenant.

After we had been living in our apartment for several years, the daughter of our friends with whom we spent every summer in Vermont came to live with us while attending Sarah Lawrence College. Since Henry was on tour with an opera company, I went to visit my family in Princeton for the weekend. Verena felt uneasy about being alone in the apartment—especially at night. I promised to be back Sunday evening. When I returned around six P.M. my first surprise was that my Siamese cat did not meet me at the front door as he always did. I called him but got no response. I looked at various places where he sometimes sleeps—no Floytsy. I finally discovered him crouched on a chair which had been pushed under a table, and kneeling down, I realized that he was so upset that he would not come out by himself. When I rescued him from his hiding place and talked to him for a while, he finally started purring again and seemed to forget what had bothered him.

While I was unpacking, Verena came home and could not explain Floytsy's behavior either. Talking with her, I opened a drawer in my bedroom and noticed that my jewelry box was not there. I asked her if she had taken it out. She jumped up shouting, "And where is mine?" But hers was in its place. Meanwhile I discovered that the cash I always hide under the shelfpaper in the drawer had also disappeared. We then found that one of the upper windows was open, although Verena remembered that she had closed it tightly, since she had been alone the night before. I called the doorman, who came up immediately and telephoned the police. When I opened other drawers, I realized that my jewelry box was in a place where I

would have never put it myself. The doorman said, "They only wanted money and were probably drug addicts." I thought the burglars might have also heard me come in.

Then the police arrived and questioned us at length. First they suspected both of us. They asked me if Verena could have taken the money. Then they took her aside and wanted to know if she had seen me put the money in the drawer. They obviously did not take our case very seriously since nobody was hurt and "only" money had been taken.

The next day we found out that the thieves had also visited a photographer, who lived in the apartment above us. They took his entire professional equipment worth several thousand dollars. That made our loss look considerably smaller.

The real victim was my cat, who had to witness it all.

One of my friends, who had a twelve-year-old son, asked me if I would be willing to talk to Nico's class about my experiences in Germany during the Hitler time.

What does one tell twelve-year-olds about that period in history? Just how lucky I had been to have gotten out in time? That I was grateful to be still alive? My friend said the teacher at the Ethical Culture Fieldstone School had prepared the kids thoroughly, and I should not hesitate to mention even the horrible aspects, which they had probably heard about already.

I had remained in my home country for over a year after Hitler had come to power. Being young, naive and optimistic, I was convinced the terror could not last. One always thinks, it cannot happen to me. I heard about people who lost their jobs and left the country—others had been arrested or even imprisoned for no obvious reason. At first, the Nazis turned fiercely against the Communists; then they planned to eliminate all Jews from the earth—then they started a war to conquer the whole world. It became such a mass psychosis—looking back one cannot believe these things really happened. How can one explain this to children?

When I was introduced to thirty-five children from two

different classes, I was facing an amazingly eager, serious-looking group of boys and girls, all twelve or thirteen years old. I told them about Germany and that the children in my native country had not learned anything about the Hitler period for a long time. The teachers and parents had been too ashamed to admit what had gone on. It took an entire generation until they finally put the facts into the schoolbooks.

I then proceeded to tell them about Hitler, who was not even born in Germany, but in nearby Austria. When he was young he wanted to study art. He applied to a famous art school in Vienna where he was told he could not be accepted. He then went to Munich, Germany, met a group of fanatics at the famous Rathskeller and started to incite them against the government. Germany had been condemned to enormous reparations by the Versailles Treaty in punishment for their actions during World War I. From 1914 to 1918, Germany had attacked many other countries and then lost the war. Hitler travelled around the country and aroused more and more people. He promised to bring them back to their pre-war power. It sounded very good and most people fell for his ideas. They all voted for him in 1933 to become the chancellor of Germany and called him their *Führer* (leader). He had founded the National Socialist Party, which now grew unbelievably fast.

As soon as he was elected, new laws were passed: all Jewish people were thrown out of their jobs, which made room for the Nazi Party members. Communists were put in jail and anybody who was against the regime was chased out of the country. Tremendous new organizations were founded, which all the children and teenagers had to join. The Hitler Youth, *Kraft durch Freude* (strength through joy), and different boys' and girls' Scout groups were formed to separate the children from their parents so they could be better instilled with the Nazi ideas. They were even asked to inform the authorities if they heard of anybody who said anything against Hitler, which sometimes resulted in their telling on their own parents.

I ended by explaining to the children that many of my friends had already left Germany by then, and my chances of

remaining became slimmer every day. After I had seen enough of the insanity around me and witnessed the boycott of all the Jewish stores and factories, there was no possibility left to pursue a normal life, let alone a career in my own country. It was time to leave and continue my studies in a foreign country. I made it clear to the children that this had been the most important decision in my life. Shortly after I left, things got much worse, and I am forever grateful that I have found a new home in the United States.

When Johnny finished kindergarten and first grade at a private school where he had been given a scholarship, we decided that he should now go to a public school. For the last three-month vacation period, we accepted an invitation from our friends, the Sterbas, to come to Vermont, where they had a large place and could put us all up. They had two little daughters and Johnny could play with them all summer. Henry would only be able to join us between engagements, because he would then be touring the summer circuit, entertaining at the big resort hotels around New York.

In order to save money we tried to sublet our apartment again. I was eager to interview many people to find the right person for our home. We told everybody about it and even put an ad in *The New York Times*. There were—in the good old times—many apartments available and tenants were scarce.

The first applicants, a young couple, seemed to like our place and settled down comfortably to discuss everything. The woman admitted that our place was by far the best place they had seen. Her husband asked me, "Are there any black people living in this building?" I told him that there probably were since the house was fully occupied. "Why do you ask?" He replied, "I don't like them and try to keep away from them." This remark in my living room! I asked, "Did you ever have a bad experience with a black person?" "Yes, during the war I had terrible experiences with them." His wife interrupted him, "Oh, honey, forget about it, the war is over." He insisted that there had been a black person in the elevator.

I calmly said I could never let anybody live in my apartment who felt that way. And out went our first tenants.

Later in the day a friend called to say that she had just found someone for her own apartment, but a nice young woman had still applied when it was too late. She had given her our address. Shortly afterwards this lady arrived, looked around without asking much except for the price, and then said, "I'll take it." We told her what she needed to know, and she gave us a check for the entire time and left. Obviously she was delighted to have found a place in walking distance from her office.

We felt satisfied with our arrangement and left for Vermont a week later. When we returned at the end of the summer, our landlord told us that we were responsible for the damage the subtenant had caused by flooding three apartments. The water had been turned off for a short time in the morning when she wanted to take a shower. She then went to work without turning the faucets off again. The damage to floor, ceilings and walls came to one hundred and fifty dollars, a huge amount in those days—especially for us. I called the woman in her office to inform her. She claimed the landlord was trying to "put something over on us"—the amount was much too high. She would not pay! What should we do? Everybody said, sue her. But I had never dealt with a lawyer except for immigration purposes. It ended at the small claims court. Henry was busy in the morning, so I took Johnny with me on the last day of his vacation. We had to wait for a long time but were finally ushered into the office of a lawyer to discuss the situation. Since the woman had mentioned she might soon go overseas, the lawyer thought it best to compromise and offer to pay half of the amount; she might then pay the other half. He was right. In the end she did pay the seventy-five dollars and the landlord had the damage repaired.

Several weeks after my visit to small claims court we were sitting at dinner one night when the doorbell rang. My husband went to open the door and in walked an FBI agent. They were investigating the woman who had lived in our apartment during the summer. She had applied for a high gov-

ernment position and they had to know as much about her as possible. Since our anger had subsided in the meantime, I felt we should not ruin her career by mentioning the incident. One glance at my husband confirmed that he agreed. The agent kept asking many questions, if she had paid on time, had left everything in order and nothing was missing. I told him that everything had seemed all right. Johnny was staring at me giving all sorts of signals, waiting to hear me tell the agent what had happened. I winked at him with my finger over my mouth while Henry spoke with the agent. When I was pressed for more information, I started to feel uncomfortable and finally broke down saying, "Maybe I should mention one incident...." Yet before I could finish the agent started to laugh and said, "I have been watching your son—he wanted you to tell me something—I have a son the same age, I know them well. Don't worry, Mrs. Cordy, I know what happened with your tenant but wanted to hear it from you, not only from your landlord. Let me give you a bit of advice. When the FBI comes to your house, don't try to protect people even if you mean well. The truth is too important to us. Your son would have told me everything if I had asked him." He then assured us that the open shower story would not prevent the government from offering the woman a position.

The only other time in my life I had to deal with the FBI was during World War II, when two agents came to see us. They had come up in one elevator while Henry went down the other. So I had to do the talking. I did not understand why they had to investigate us. They said it could be for many different reasons. We were still aliens, our name could have been mentioned by the wrong person, or it was just a routine check-up. They first made me write down how much money I had in the house, and before they left made me sign that it was still there. How humiliating for them. When they found a picture of a woman in flamenco costume in a drawer, they asked who she was. I informed them that it had been a former girlfriend of my husband. The young men actually were not unpleasant—it was only a waste of time for me.

A friend of ours had seen the Broadway play *It Can't Happen Here* and suggested that we take Johnny to see it. The streetcar which took us to Times Square was surrounded by police cars and black limousines. When we got to the theater, security officers had cordoned off the entrance and rumor spread that President-elect John F. Kennedy was going to see the show. Such luck! We had voted for him and Johnny wanted to visit him at the White House.

We had seats in the front row of the balcony and looked down on the tenth row, half of which was reserved for JFK and his friends. During intermission we went downstairs to get a glimpse of him. All his friends wandered around but someone told us he had disappeared behind a door in the back of the theater. We proceeded toward that door where an enormous security officer stood guard. We asked if JFK was behind that door; we would then wait just to see him come out. He said, "Yes, he is behind that door—even a president has to go sometimes."

After a while the door opened and President-elect Kennedy did come out, looking tanned from weekends in Hyannisport and sporting a charming smile. I said, "Good luck to you!" He bowed, thanking us, and returned to his seat. We were thrilled. It CAN happen here.

When Johnny was ready to enter grammar school, we had a problem. The neighborhood school had practically turned him down. I had gone to talk to the principal, who discouraged me strongly from taking him there. He insisted Johnny would not be happy after having attended a private school. The classes were overcrowded, many of the Puerto Rican children hardly spoke English, and most of the neighborhood children came from a less-advantaged background, quite different from that of the private school children. I would not have minded those facts at all but became worried whether Johnny would learn anything there. The principal even doubted that and persuaded me to try to get him into another public school.

I discussed the situation with Henry, who agreed that the

most important thing was to find a good school, no matter where. Since it would have been against the law to place a child outside one's residential district, I wrote a strong letter to the head of the Board of Education, putting the future of my child into his hands. I explained to him what had happened and that I now needed his consent to place Johnny at the Joan of Arc School, which was several blocks outside of our district. At that time it was known to be one of the best grammar schools in New York. To my great surprise I received an answer fairly soon saying my request was granted and I should show his letter to the principal of Joan of Arc.

I was greatly relieved and went to see the principal with Johnny. She welcomed him warmly and impressed me as an extraordinary woman. She had combined a "core curriculum" program of student activities with the general academic program, which was an innovative idea at that time. She also persuaded many parents to take regular responsibilities at the school and invited us to come to assembly as often as possible. I started working in the school library and enjoyed it immensely. I frequently went to the "rumor clinic," where the children were taught how dangerous it is to listen to rumors. They were also shown little sketches on stage, had to figure out how much they remembered afterwards and how much was often added by imagination. The principal spent a whole summer in Puerto Rico because she wanted to find out more about the background of the many Puerto Rican children in her school. Joan of Arc was one of the first schools where the mixture of white, black and immigrant children was fairly balanced.

I once went with the teachers and parents on a special train to Washington. Our goal was to persuade the representatives to use their influence to get more money for education. On the way home a young journalist from a newspaper interviewed us, and when he came to me he asked what had made the greatest impression on me during the day. I answered, "I never saw so many congressmen eating and drinking and putting their feet on the desk during a conference." The reporter laughed but later put it in his paper—fortunately without us-

ing my name.

Johnny spent four happy years at Joan of Arc and then the situation became even more serious. How could we now get him into an excellent high school? He was a good student but his grades were not overwhelming. The two most outstanding schools in town were the Stuyvesant High School and the Bronx High School of Science. Again we talked with many teachers and an official of the Board of Education. He told us that unless Johnny was extremely ambitious and interested in studying, not to send him to the Bronx School. Although he considered it the best in the country, it was difficult and demanding, with enormous pressure and competition. He comforted us by adding that bright boys learn just as much in less-demanding schools and by osmosis. This advice made us decide to send Johnny to the Stuyvesant High School.

The acceptance tests for both schools were given on the same day and we were hoping Johnny would make it. After having waited for a long time, we started to get worried. Finally Johnny arrived with a grin on his face and explained to us that he had been sent to the wrong room and taken the wrong test—but had been mistakenly accepted by the Bronx High School of Science. We were stunned! What should we do now? Accept the fact or complain and make Johnny take a separate test for the other school? Since he seemed unconcerned, and we were rather proud that he had made it into such a good school, we let it be and have never regretted this decision. Four years later it easily got him into Cornell University, an Ivy League school, which even gave him a scholarship.

My Neighbor Since His Birth

The young painter Gerald Huth, who was born in the house where we lived, and whose development as an artist we watched throughout the years, had founded the smallest art gallery in New York. It consisted of a medium-sized room with a bathroom and a two-plate burner to cook in the back. He lived in this place, slept on a mattress and hid his belongings behind a screen. A couple of large suitcases served as drawers and storage and were covered with beautiful Indian

cottons during exhibits. Gerald wanted to exhibit not only his own works but also those of his painter friends, who could not afford to pay for exhibits. He only took a small percentage from each sale.

Gerald was very proud of his "Indigo Gallery" on East 73rd Street and every month he organized a new show. Often several artists shared the limited space, or two friends exhibited, each on one wall. It was a pleasant surprise that there were always many people at the openings. They were served a simple wine, crackers and nuts. The atmosphere was delightful. Some of the artists were under twenty, most of them under thirty. Since Gerald insisted that prices be kept low, there were usually some sales, mostly under a hundred dollars, which nobody seemed to mind. The artists were happy to have a New York exhibit, but had to make their living with something else. Gerald did all the preparations for each show and always designed an artistic card, which was sent to many art dealers, newspapers and interested people. The paintings were displayed in a highly professional manner and leaflets distributed about each artist. There were always flowers at the entrance and classical music in the background to greet the visitors.

Unfortunately it took Gerald a lot of time to organize these shows, find the right artists at the right time and exhibit his own works frequently. After several years he told me that it was getting to be too much for him. He needed a larger place for his paintings and seriously considered giving up the Indigo Art Gallery. I was very sorry since I had occasionally recommended young painters whom I had met and enjoyed their happiness when they got a chance to exhibit. But I realized that Gerald had to go on with his life. It would be difficult, however, to find someone to buy the gallery since it was so small.

One of my Japanese friends, Kyoko Ouchi, a singer, had just returned from Europe, where she had studied music for several years. Her husband was a painter. Kyoko did not want to continue with her singing and was trying to make a career change. I asked her if she would consider buying the Indigo

Gallery and running it together with her husband. He could then exhibit his work regularly and their many Japanese painter friends could be given a chance as well. This idea appealed to her very much. I got Gerald together with Kyoko and Kuni, and after some negotiating the gallery changed hands. During this time Kyoko called me one night and said they wanted another name for the gallery because "Indigo" did not mean much to the Japanese who would be their main visitors. I first tried to persuade her to keep the name "Indigo" because it was so appropriate. But then I asked her what name she had in mind and she said, "In Japan we like to give the name of a friend to a gallery and we wanted to ask your permission to name it after you."

This is how the "Cordy Gallery" came into existence. It thrived for several years on East 73rd Street, across from the Manhattan Theater Club, whose members often came to the shows. Once I was introduced to a visitor as Mrs. Cordy upon which he asked, "Did you get your name from the gallery?"

Kyoko and Kuni changed the style of the exhibits and presented only Japanese artists. But they also decided after some time to do something else. I lost "my gallery," a sad event, for I had enjoyed it tremendously.

"A Private Life"

In 1976 my Russian friend Nadia Merzliakow was very active in helping refugees from the former USSR adjust to life in the United States. She asked me to help her with a special case. One of the new arrivals was the film director Mikhail Bogin from Moscow, who spoke very little English but was eager to meet someone in his field with whom he could communicate. I immediately thought of my cousin Peter Almond, a Yale graduate with years of experience in film and television. For three years he had worked as producer and reporter at New York's Channel 13 and had made a number of documentary films. He had also acquired valuable experience in organization and administration during several years of work at the New York City Mayor's office as well as for the Carnegie

Corporation. He was presently writing criticism and essays for television. Yet he was hoping to eventually get into independent film producing.

Nadia and I arranged for a meeting at my place. Although Peter and Misha could not communicate directly and Nadia had to do a lot of translating, they immediately felt they could be of help to each other. Peter arranged for someone from the TV station Channel 5 to interview Bogin, which also took place at my apartment. They used a professional interpreter and Bogin felt that a first step had been made in his new country. Peter continued thinking up possibilities for Bogin to meet people and learn English as fast as possible. I was working at New York University, which had an outstanding film department, and I was planning to get Bogin to work or teach there eventually. I arranged for a showing of one of the five feature films Bogin had made in Russia and had been able to take out of his country. *Ballad of Love* was shown at the University's film studio three times because there was great interest in Bogin's work among the students; many of his Russian friends also came to see the film.

Meanwhile Nadia was assisting Bogin with many other problems and was constantly urging him to concentrate on speaking English. It actually took him an amazingly long time to learn the language, because he thought it was not important; he could always manage to make himself understood.

During this time my friend Lotte Andor, a stage and film actress of long standing, decided to find a script for a short film. She came across a German play, *Das Wunschkonzert* (*The Request Concert*) by Franz Xaver Kroetz, which impressed her very much. She thought it would make an excellent script and showed it to Peter, who also approved it. They got in touch with the author and explained to him that they were in the process of forming a cooperative group of film professionals. They were interested in acquiring the rights to his play for a film script. It took a long time and many phone calls to Germany until the final verdict arrived: yes, the play was available—for forty thousand dollars! That was the end of Lotte's *Wunschkonzert*.

When the group got together to discuss their disappointment, Lotte casually said to Peter, "Now YOU have to write a story." Peter picked up on this idea immediately and discussed it in detail with Lotte and her husband. He wanted to know what should be expressed in the film and then got together with his friend, Nancy Musser, a script writer, with whom he had worked before. It took quite a while, but several months later they presented the group with *A Private Life*. The idea was a story about two elderly refugees from Hitler Germany and their different ways of adjusting to life in America. Lotte's part was to show a woman who goes through this process with a positive attitude, while Paul lived in the past, avoiding the painful change to a new life.

In the meantime Peter had started to raise funds, find locations for the filming and line up a cameraman, a make-up artist and whoever else was needed for the production. Of course he asked Mikhail Bogin to direct the film. He was the right person for it, since he knew all about the feelings of the immigrant, and his own experiences had taught him how difficult it can be to absorb a new culture without giving up the accepted values of the old one.

The film was to be launched through Steve Brier's company, Film for Thought. Steve took a personal interest in the production, became assistant producer and helped through the entire project with almost everything. Whether Peter had the perfect instinct or just luck I don't know, but the group consisted of exceptional people who gave their time and efforts to make sure the film would become a success. The congenial atmosphere during the work was remarkable and consideration and friendship remained throughout.

I thoroughly enjoyed the meetings and discussions I attended, watched Bogin come to life in his element, the Andors thriving in working in a film together and Peter going about this first big venture in a totally professional way. He knew at every moment what to do and kept his cool through any crisis, even when the work had to be interrupted because they ran out of funds. To make a living, Peter worked for a foundation in California but returned intermittently when the

New York State Council on the Arts came through with a grant.

Bogin decided he wanted classical music in the film, possibly all Schubert, his favorite composer. My friend Evelyne Crochet, the French pianist, was enlisted to tape a lovely Schubert waltz and excerpts from two different sonatas which added considerably to the lyrical mood in *A Private Life.*

The end result of this concerted effort was a beautiful, unusual television film that received many prizes and was bought by the Museum of Modern Art for their film collection and international distribution. PBS bought the film and showed it on cable many times, and last but not least it got marvelous reviews for the Andors' outstanding performances and the film's concept and timelessness.

I had already done some film work and got another chance through our friend Paul Andor, who was very busy himself playing the lead in the motion picture *The Love Life of Dr. Joseph Göbbels.* Paul had been known by his original name, Wolfgang Zilzer, in the many German films in which he had appeared before the Hitler time. When he arrived in Hollywood, he mainly got parts in anti-Nazi films, which made him fear retaliation against his family in Germany. So he changed his name. (Since Göbbels had a clubfoot, Paul had to have one too and was given the same clubfoot Leslie Howard had used in Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*).

Paul knew the agent who was in charge of casting for the film *The House on 92nd Street.* The company was looking for German types and Paul said to me, "Why don't you try?" I visited the agent in her office. She was very friendly but did not think I was the type they were looking for. She thought of the German Gretchen, blonde and plump, which I wasn't. I explained to her that in West Germany, where I came from, many people had black hair and looked totally different from what is usually considered typically German. We argued for a while until she finally said, "I still think you don't have much of a chance, but since you are so sure, I will let you try." I went home and decided to make myself look like a working

woman. I brushed my hair way up into a knot on top of my head; no make-up; a trench coat with leather belt and heavy shoes. I looked very ugly. Henry had already been accepted for the same picture and the next morning we went together for an interview with the producers. When we got on the street Henry asked, "Do you mind if I walk behind you?" At the theater there were many actors and actresses, and a group of people in the auditorium to look at us. They made us walk across the stage, six at a time, then turn and face the judges. I walked in with the first six girls and noticed that the judges gave each girl a long look but passed me by—I felt I was out. We were happy that at least Henry had been chosen.

At eleven o'clock at night the agent called me and said, "Congratulations! You were the first one they asked for." I was quite surprised. It must have been because I looked so different.

The film was about Pearl Harbor. Many Germans under suspicion had been rounded up at that time for interrogation and often put in prison. John Huston was the director. I was taken to the women's prison downtown and handcuffed. I was fascinated to see a prison from the inside. My room was large, the view of the East River was lovely, even through iron bars. I had my own cot, table, chair and toilet. To my disappointment an expert from the FBI was brought in, and when he saw me he said, "We never handcuff women." My work in the film took only five days but I enjoyed every minute of it.

With the *White Horse Inn,* originally a German show and a musical in preparation for Broadway, I was not so lucky. A friend of the producer had sent me to audition for the chorus, but they did not let anybody sing. They just did type-casting. Since there were so many girls being asked to cross the stage, I went several times, hoping the judges would forget they had already seen me. Without success! I later asked the secretary of Mr. Eric Charrel, the producer of the musical, why I had not been given a chance to sing. She said, "My dear girl, you are the dark Russian type—you would never fit in this show."

When Johnny started to work in New York, he and a friend took an apartment in the village but he came for dinner at least once a week. One of these—for us always special—days he called late to announce himself. I had everything in the house except for his favorite soda and immediately rushed to the corner market to buy some.

It was a lovely Indian summer day and people were still sitting outside at the only café on the block. A few strollers, some with their dogs, walked leisurely as if they were enjoying every step. I picked up a six-pack of sodas at the store and quickly turned around to go home. My street, located between Broadway and Central Park West, is considered a safe neighborhood. Looking ahead I saw that my block was empty now. I guess I was not the only one to go home and make dinner.

About three houses before my apartment building, a teenager jumped from between two parked cars into my way. I immediately thought that he would grab my bag, which was dangling from my left arm. I quickly held it behind my back and started swinging the soda bottles with a fierce expression on my face. He looked surprised and walked by as if he had no bad intentions. A few moments later, while I was wondering if I would have had the guts to hit him with the bottles, I heard a terrible scream behind me and turning around, saw the fellow running away with the handbag of another woman who must have just come out of the café. She stood there, thunderstruck, while a young girl was running after the thief screaming like mad. I ran back to the lady to offer my assistance. She explained to me that she and her daughter were visiting from Canada, and that she had everything in that bag she could possibly need for her trip, all her money, passports, credit cards, address book, appointment book, etc.

Meanwhile her daughter had almost caught up with the thief, and when he turned into Central Park West, there were many people around and the girl kept shouting, "Catch him, hold him, he stole the bag." The boy finally realized he could not get away with his loot and just dropped the bag before running into the subway. The girl returned, triumphantly

swinging her mother's handbag. When she reached us in front of my house, I could just catch her before she fainted. Fortunately, it was only a moment of dizziness after the excitement. When I praised her for her courage and invited the ladies to come upstairs with me for a strengthening cup of coffee, she recovered immediately. We had a pleasant little visit during which I told the girl that living in New York we had to be much more careful and that people would never have dared to do what she had done. They finally left, but not before inviting me to visit them in Canada.

Mexican Relatives

My great-grandfather on my father's side in Germany had fourteen children. We cannot trace them all, but from time to time have wondered what became of them. My grandfather had only six children, who were all interested in the surviving family members. They and their children had kept in touch although they were scattered all over the world during the Nazi years.

When we moved to California, our landlady, who had come from Arkansas, told us that her piano teacher's name had been the same as my maiden name, Aschaffenburg. She had been ten years old at the time, which must have been around the 1890's. All she could tell us about him was that he had come from Germany as a young man and that she had loved her lessons with this charming musician. He might have been one of the fourteen children of my great-grandfather.

One of my first cousins, who immigrated to the United States in 1934, went to New Orleans on a business trip and the hotel where he stayed was run by a family also named Aschaffenburg. He tried to talk to them but they were not interested in establishing any relationship. Maybe they were afraid there might be more relatives coming from Germany.

The most exciting incident, however, happened when my mother, living in the same house in New York as we did, received a letter from a Carlos Schaffenburg, living in Mexico City. He introduced himself to her as a businessman who had recently retired and was now trying to find out where his fa-

ther came from. His Mexican mother had survived her husband by many years and had always told him his father had come from Germany. She knew the name had originally been Aschaffenburg, but her husband had dropped the "A" since Schaffenburg was hard enough to pronounce. The letter writer did not remember much about his father, who had died when he was a small child.

Carlos Schaffenburg had three sons. One of them, a doctor, was living in Philadelphia and had given his father my mother's address from a New York telephone directory. Had she ever heard of a relative, two or three generations before her, who had gone to America? My mother, who did not know much about her late husband's ancestors, was touched by the letter and brought it to me right away to discuss how to reply.

The next weekend I took the letter to my brother Karl in Princeton and he became quite excited about it. He immediately wanted to answer it himself. He also made copies of it for several relatives in different countries and asked them to write to Mr. Schaffenburg and tell him whatever they knew about the family.

They all wrote enthusiastically. The new Mexican relative got swamped with information and was thrilled. He promised my brother in his thank-you letter, that together with his son Carlos he would visit him in Princeton during his next vacation in Philadelphia. It seems that the letters revealed that three or four sons of our great-grandfather had gone to America during the nineteenth century. What their reasons had been for leaving Germany we will never know, but we were delighted to meet a "probable" grandson after all these years.

Meanwhile "Uncle Carlos" must have written to his youngest son, a dancer, who was touring Germany with the Joffrey Ballet at the time. One day my telephone rang and a very cheerful voice said, "Meta, this is Roberto, your new cousin from Mexico—I met a friend of yours in Germany and bring you greetings from him." I was stunned—two surprises at the same time. Roberto was calling from the airport on his way home to Mexico and had no time to visit. However, he

promised to return to New York and then come to see us.

The climax of this exciting time was the visit of the two Carlos Schaffenburgs—the doctor from Philadelphia and his father from Mexico City—in Princeton with my brother Karl Aschaffenburg. They became very interested in each other, compared family traits and interests and ended up convinced that they were related. They even discovered a likeness in size and headshape and shared a common sense of humor and great interest in the arts. Carlos Senior had brought his Mexican wife and Carlos Junior his American spouse. These ladies enjoyed chatting with my brother's German wife. It must have been a delightful afternoon.

The families visited each other for years. Only when the Philadelphians moved to Washington and Carlos Senior became too old to travel were the visits discontinued. The only person from our side who ever went to Mexico and stayed with the Schaffenburgs was a cousin from Australia, who had gone to a conference in Mexico City. Since she had visited my brother in Princeton before, she called the Schaffenburgs from her hotel to bring greetings. They insisted immediately that she move in with them and gave her a marvelous time, wined and dined her constantly and kept her so busy that she forgot all about her conference.

My chance to meet the new relatives came when my husband sang with the Philadelphia Opera Company. Carlos and his wife had dinner with us before the performance and then we saw *Carmen* together. I liked them both very much and we had a lot of fun trying to figure out when and where our common roots had started. I told them about the relatives in the United States and they told us about the Mexican branch.

My brother Karl corresponded for a long time with Carlos Senior, who had once mentioned that they were all Catholics. It took Karl a while to let his new cousin know that he was actually half Jewish since our family tree was undiluted. How would he take that? To our delight Carlos, at age seventy-five, was thrilled to hear that he had Jewish blood, and he thanked Karl profusely "for having given him the good news."

My Art Collection

How does one acquire an art collection without having money, the necessary knowledge of art or a special interest in any period or century?

My mother had always been passionately interested in art. She painted when she was young, even large oil paintings, which were hanging in my grandmother's house. Her big success came after World War I, when the Belgian occupation army billeted one of their generals at my grandmother's home. He picked out the furniture, rugs and pictures from the entire house, choosing mother's largest painting to hang over his desk.

My brother and I had been taken to every museum reachable, especially during vacations. This form of art education did not inspire our interest in art at all. We got overfed and bored and could not share Mother's enthusiasm. Only once did my brother show a particular interest in Rembrandt's *Night Watch,* when we were vacationing in Holland. Our parents were delighted and right away took us to the famous painting at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Karl, age nine, looked at it carefully with searching eyes and asked, "Where is the cut?" He had probably heard of a recent incident when a crazy person had visited the museum with a large kitchen knife and made a deep cut through the middle of the invaluable picture. Of course, it had been immediately repaired by specialists and one could not see the cut anymore. Karl was very disappointed.

Although my parents had their house built by a modern architect, they filled it with old paintings, drawings and large wooden Madonnas, standing on specially made pedestals. Karl and I took it all for granted, and museums were nothing special for us. Fortunately, during adolescence we both independently discovered that art wasn't so bad after all, and we developed a keen interest in paintings and sculptures. During my two years of studying music in Paris, I had gone to the Louvre Museum almost every Sunday morning and still have not seen everything. I hope to catch up one day.

When we left home my mother started to give us pictures

for birthdays and other special occasions, and we started to become owners of artworks ourselves. It is a thrilling experience, at least for me, to take a print from the wall and put an original, signed painting in its place and call it your own. After we became refugees from Hitler Germany and immigrated to the United States, this experience stopped. There was no more money for luxuries. Henry and I had to build up new careers as singers and work hard to make a modest living. Since one could not take money out of Germany, my mother brought a few paintings and sculptures to America. She later had to sell some of them. When you have to switch from a large house to a studio apartment, the space for pictures becomes sadly limited. Mother knew many art dealers from Europe who had also emigrated to the United States and she started to exchange some of her paintings for smaller pictures until her room became a museum of drawings, graphics and lithographs. The only large painting she acquired and gave to us when we moved into a bigger apartment in New York, was a contemporary picture by an Israeli painter. Alfred Neumann, a German dealer, had discovered him and arranged for an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. Litvinovsky did not sell anything during his exhibit, but he was very grateful to Mr. Neumann for having given him this unique opportunity and presented him with one of his finest paintings before leaving for Israel. My mother liked it so much that she exchanged it for one of her newly acquired drawings which Mr. Neumann particularly liked. Today the Litvinovsky hangs in our living room. The subject is the Jerusalem Church in Tel Aviv. It has beautiful colors and the longer I live with it the more I like it.

My taste for contemporary art now started to develop. After the war I received a small amount of restitution money from Germany, which I should have saved for rainy days. However, the temptation to invest a little of it in art was stronger than the need for thrift. One of my German friends, an art historian, who had married the American sculptor Herbert Ferber, invited my husband and me to the opening of Ferber's first large exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. Be-

sides his marvelous sculptures he also exhibited sketches, drawings and watercolors. I fell in love with one of the small pictures that revealed his tendency to combine sculpting and painting. Mrs. Ferber told me towards the end of the opening that her husband had not yet sold anything and would probably give me a special price if I wanted to buy something. It ended with my getting the picture I liked so much for forty dollars. I am still proud and happy to own a genuine Ferber. His work is now hanging in museums of many different countries and I will never be able to afford another one.

Several years later, when Ferber exhibited again at the same museum, I noticed two people standing in front of one of his sculptures which looked like a porcupine. The title was *Portrait of Jackson Pollock,* which evidently puzzled the visitors. When I saw Ferber the next time, I asked him what that meant. He answered, "The museum wanted a name for every piece I exhibited and since Jackson is a friend of mine I named it after him." A good lesson not to take names of pictures too literally.

Our apartment walls were slowly filling and even the beautiful prints of the city of Nuremberg that we had been given by friends for our wedding could not compete with the original paintings around them. Meanwhile my mother had managed to make another exchange, through which we obtained two paintings by Israel Litvak. One of them, a fox hunt, she gave us when we presented her with our first RCA Victor recording of duets. Litvak lived in Brooklyn and had never painted before his seventieth birthday. From then on he could not stop and worked morning, noon and night until he reached the age of seventy-seven, when he died at his easel. He must have been greatly influenced by Grandma Moses, since all his pictures were more or less painted in her primitive style, just as charming and cheerful.

My second temptation to buy art came when I visited the French pianist, Evelyne Crochet, in Puerto Rico. She took me to the gallery of one of her friends, the Spanish painter, Manuel Botello. It was located right in the middle of San Juan, and his Haitian wife was the manager. They had three

adopted children—one white, one black, one Indian—who were running around the gallery. I was allowed to leisurely look at the pictures, and Mr. Botello hinted that as a friend of Evelyne's I could buy anything I wanted at 30 percent off. Again, I came home with an absolutely stunning graphic, picturing the Indian daughter talking to a little bird. Mr. Botello charged me only ninety dollars; nevertheless my feelings of guilt about having spent money on art lasted for quite a while, but eventually I overcame them.

My Toulouse-Lautrec I acquired in a particularly strange way. For approximately four years I had worked for the same boss at the Institute of International Education. He was suddenly offered another position, which was to start one month before his contract with the Institute would expire. During these four weeks I not only had to do most of his work at the office but also had to cover up his "occasional absence." Many times I had to reach him wherever he was, making him call people back within minutes, fill him in, ask questions and quickly feed him lunch.

I must have been rather successful doing this odd job: he returned many weeks later from a business trip to Italy with an extraordinary graphic by Toulouse-Lautrec that he gave to me as a token of appreciation. It was a portrait of the famous *diseuse* Yvette Guilbert, whose master classes I had attended in Paris years ago. I did not want to accept such a valuable piece of art but eventually succumbed to persuasion.

One day a friend brought an art dealer to the house who looked at our collection with great interest. He stood in front of a Corot drawing for a long time, another generous gift of my mother, and with a whimsical smile observed, "Do you know that Corot did at least four hundred of these drawings and seven hundred of them are supposed to be in the United States?" Never mind if it is a copy and the value is lost. I like it so much I would never part with it. The picture represents a landscape with trees. My mother and I used to argue about it. I was always convinced I saw an old man sitting under a tree, while she claimed there were only trees. Could Corot have meant it that way?

Many years later, after my mother had died, we had the big problem of what to do with her collection. Since we could not afford to have the pictures insured according to their value, we wanted to diminish the risk of theft and fire and divided the collection between my brother, my son and myself. One third was shipped to Seattle where my son lives, while my brother, residing in Princeton, and I decided to share our inheritance by exchanging the pictures from time to time. This would give us the illusion of owning them all. I sometimes cheerfully traveled to Princeton by bus with a Tiepolo or a Palma Vecchio in a shopping bag and returned at night with a Rodin or a Gainsborough.

Maybe some day when I am gone, one of my grandchildren will inherit the pictures and either be interested enough to keep and enlarge the collection, or give it to a museum, in memory of the great-grandmother.

My mother's sister had lived in Turkey for many years, where her husband, a banker, had founded the first German bank. They had a beautiful apartment facing the Bosporus and enjoyed their life in Constantinople, now Istanbul. They started to collect Oriental rugs, paintings and china to eventually take it all back to Germany. One of their most precious purchases was a large Persian rug which embellished their spacious dining room. They later gave this rug to my grandmother in Germany. It was always admired by visitors and kept its beauty throughout the years.

When my grandmother died, I inherited the rug. This happened shortly after my husband and I had moved to Hollywood. The rug looked rather overwhelming in our small studio apartment but reminded us of the good old times before Hitler. We were never quite satisfied with the cleaning of the rug, which had to be done from time to time. Only after we moved back to New York did we hear of a special place outside the city that only took care of Oriental rugs. We decided to send it there, hoping that it would get back its natural luster. Unfortunately, that turned out to be a mistake. It did not come back on the day we expected it nor on any day after-

wards. We telephoned and were reassured there would only be a slight delay. We waited and waited but nothing happened. After several weeks we read in the newspaper that the plant to which we had sent the rug had had a huge fire and most of the valuable rugs were burnt. Several lawsuits had been started already. We were horrified and the prospect that we might get money from the insurance company was no comfort.

For us the trouble only began now. Letters, claim forms, lawyer visits and no rug in the middle of the living room. The aggravation became so painful, I was ready to give up. The rug was gone; whatever insurance money we would get could not replace a Persian rug, bought in Turkey. It had been in the family for many years and had sentimental value. Yet, neither Henry nor Johnny would give up so easily. When everything stalled, they decided to drive out to the plant and have a look at things. Maybe one could restore parts of the rug or cover the burnt spots with another rug. All I could say when they left was, "Don't expect miracles."

The people at the plant were not too pleased when they arrived. They kept saying, "You will soon hear from the insurance company; they are in charge of everything." My brave men insisted that they had to see the rug before leaving. Nobody at the plant was willing to go to the storage house with them. The owner got annoyed and left the office. Then the Cordys decided to investigate on their own. They had seen the open door of the storage place when they arrived, and knew where the rugs were. They went right in and started digging among hundreds of burnt rugs trying to find ours. At first it seemed impossible since there were so many and they were piled up in terrible disorder. Yet after a long time they discovered the corner of a rug which looked like ours. It took more time, patience and manipulations to dig it out, but finally they succeeded in pulling it to the surface. It was our rug! Although wrinkled and dirty, it bore absolutely no traces of a burn. It must have been lying at a different place, where the fire could not reach it. Henry brought his car close to the storage area and they loaded the rug into the trunk. Nobody

paid any attention to them. They left without saying anything and brought the rug home.

I was not there when they arrived. They carried the rug upstairs, stretched and vacuumed it thoroughly and put it where it belonged. When I came home it was just lying there as if nothing had ever happened. The miracle had occurred! We never heard a word from the insurance or the rug cleaning company again.

The only ring my husband ever gave me was a rather valuable one his father had given to him when he left Germany, hoping someday, in case of an emergency, he would be able to turn it into money. We had to retrieve it several times from a loan shark, but I finally kept it and wore it. It is a plain gold band with three medium-sized diamonds. It was a considerable shock to me when I discovered one day that the middle diamond was missing. No chance, of course, of ever finding it again, although I searched endlessly. I could not afford to replace the lost diamond with a real stone but was ready to accept a false one if it somehow fitted in.

How could this be done? I wanted so badly to wear the ring, but the hole between the two remaining stones looked ugly and disturbing. I took it to a jeweler who sent me to a wholesale place in Greenwich Village, where they sell imitation stones. He said sometimes one finds just the right replacement. I climbed to the seventh floor of the building—the elevator did not work—and found a strange little man. He looked at my ring for a long time, then went to the back of his old-fashioned store and returned with a box filled with shiny diamonds. He fitted many of them carefully into the hole with his pincers until one of them fitted perfectly. Since it did not look too bad I immediately decided to buy it, hoping the price would be acceptable. When I asked how much it was, the man said, "Just a moment please, I have to look it up." Again he disappeared and came back with an enormous black book, put his pince-nez into place, turned many pages and then studied one of them. With his index finger he started at the top and when he came to the bottom of the page he de-

clared, "That will be fifty cents. I cannot fasten the stone for you; that has to be done by a jeweler who will fit it in correctly." I thanked him from the bottom of my heart and rushed back to my jeweler. He approved of the stone, and when he heard what I had paid for it, he had a good laugh and said, "In that case I will not charge you more for the setting either." I was happy to wear the ring again thanks to the generosity of these two men.

A year later I inherited a ring from a relative which had a diamond in the middle just the size of my imitation stone. Again I went to the jeweler, who carefully removed the fifty-cent stone and put the real diamond in its place. That looked much better!

Carmen

In the fifties Henry was engaged to sing with the Chicago Opera Company. He had sung in *Carmen* many times before, since he had changed from baritone to tenor in mid-career. This time he was to sing Remendado, one of the Gypsies in the second act. It was only a small role but he loved the acting part of it and certainly the famous quintet, which is always sung at lightning speed. I often wondered if Bizet had intended it that way.

When Henry arrived in Chicago, he was told that the part of Micaela was to be sung by a soprano whose husband, a well-to-do businessman, was sponsoring the show and paying for everything. His wife had an unpleasant voice and was not very musical. The cast was told to show utter politeness and remain serious during the rehearsals. They all tried their level best but it must have been difficult.

Micaela, the sweet, naive country girl, has quite a bit to sing in the first act. The tenor who sang Don José was most considerate and helpful during their long duet—still the applause was only moderate. During her big aria in the third act, the singer got so nervous that she developed a disturbing tremolo and one could not tell if she meant the lower or the upper tone. I was sitting in the balcony and noticed that some people started giggling. I felt sorry for the singer but was con-

vinced that Henry and his colleagues were having a good laugh backstage.

Micaela had come to the mountain region, where Don José had joined Carmen and her smuggler friends. She wanted to plead with him to leave Carmen and return to his ailing mother. When Escamillo approached, José, who was on guard for the smugglers, let off a warning shot, which sent Micaela panic-stricken into the wings. At this point in the developing drama, a loud voice from the top of the balcony could be heard: "My God, they missed her." This was too much for even the most serious listener in the audience and such an outburst of laughter broke loose that the orchestra had to hold back a moment and wait until people had calmed down and the opera could continue.

Adelaide Abbot was a young American coloratura soprano who lived in our apartment building in New York. She had come from the Midwest and had to struggle through auditions, sing wherever there was an opportunity, hoping she would be "discovered" some day. We asked her frequently to join us at our musical evenings. She always amazed us with her perfect coloratura scales, runs and jumps. Her intonation was crystal clear and her rhythm simply perfect. Although the number of sopranos in the city could have frightened her, she never gave up. She met an eighty-year-old Viennese musicologist, who gave her a lot of encouragement and arranged for an audition at the City Opera. They liked her singing very much, but all they could do for her was let her understudy a few parts and promise to think of her in the future. They had recently engaged several high sopranos. The last one was a young Barrymore, from the famous acting family, who also was a coloratura. They featured her in Flotow's *Martha,* where she had received good reviews and continued singing the part.

Meanwhile, Adelaide studied all the high soprano parts to be ready when the opportunity would present itself. One Sunday around noon her telephone rang and one of the City Opera music directors told her that Miss Barrymore, who was to

sing the matinee performance of *Martha*, had just fainted in her dressing room and could not sing. Would she be ready to do the part of Martha to save the performance? Adelaide was still in her bathrobe, had not vocalized during the last two days and had never done Martha on stage. Although she knew the part and had seen the performance, she would have to do it without a rehearsal, which most singers would refuse. Since she was not the anxious or nervous type, she felt that this was a chance of a lifetime. She only asked that an announcement would be made to prepare the audience for this sudden change.

I met Adelaide on her way to the theater and accompanied her for part of the way to express my encouragement and admiration. I made her promise to come upstairs after the show and have dinner with us to celebrate. I went home, checked my *Martha* score and found that I had a good three hours before she would come. When Henry returned from a rehearsal and heard what had happened, he decided to go to the corner store to pick up a bottle of champagne.

While we were talking and figuring out which part in the opera Adelaide would be singing now, the doorbell rang—and there she stood! Her face was flushed red with make-up all over it. She was quite upset. What had happened? While she was hastily being put into a *Martha* costume, a make-up artist worked on her face and several people told her where to stand, sit or sing on the large City Center stage. All of a sudden the door of the dressing room had opened and Miss Barrymore, all dressed and ready to go on stage, appeared. It must have been a dreadful moment for everybody. Who would make the final decision? The two Marthas were cooly facing each other, both convinced the other had no chance. Miss Barrymore had recovered with the help of a doctor, and Miss Abbot had been prepared to replace her. First the director of the show told Miss Barrymore that it was too late and she had to wait for the next performance. Yet she put up such a fight, cried, shouted and insisted on her legal rights, etc., that the directors finally begged Miss Abbot to withdraw, promising her another *Martha* performance with rehearsals,

publicity and press information. Adelaide realized that if she insisted on performing now, she would spoil her chances of other work at the City Opera; so she quietly took off her costume, got dressed and left the theater.

Since none of us was superstitious, we drank the champagne anyway while Adelaide acted out Miss Barrymore's fury, which amused us all evening.

I have already mentioned that at the beginning of our life together, Henry's only reliable regular income came from work at churches and temples. As soon as he arrived in New York, he tried again to find a position with a religious institution. He took courses in Hebrew at Columbia University to make sure he could sing the cantorial portions, at least at a Reform synagogue. Although he got into the City Opera for several seasons and sang in a weekly radio show for a while, he dreaded the times in between without engagements. He finally found a good position at a Manhattan Reform temple, where he was engaged as a cantor. That made us decide to permanently settle in New York and stop worrying about the future. In Hollywood he had worked in the film studios, sung in concerts and done some teaching. In New York, however, the competition in every branch of the arts was considerably stronger and it took more time.

Henry became very popular with his temple congregation and did a marvelous job during the High Holy Days; he sang the service with the same intensity as he had performed his operatic roles. On Yom Kippur he had to sing all day without interruption and also had to fast, which was very difficult for him. I always sneaked a sandwich between his music, and he ate it in the men's room during a choir solo.

Occasionally there were other problems. We had a fine quartet singing the Friday night services, in which I sang the soprano part. Sometimes one of the singers got sick or was unable to attend for some reason, yet Henry always found a replacement and was able to have a good service ready. He led the rehearsals well and everybody respected him. Saturday mornings he was the only one to sing, and nothing ever kept

him from being there and giving his very best. The membership of the temple grew steadily and they were all proud of him.

One evening he came home from the temple and said: "We are in trouble—a member of the congregation saw me kneeling in a Catholic church and added that she saw me make the sign of the cross, which I never did. The president called me into his office and asked, 'Henry, tell me honestly, are you Jewish?' I laughed and said, 'Why do you ask that—you know I am.' He smiled and assured me that he trusted me but at this point it would be important if I could bring him some printed or written proof. 'Is your son bar mitzvahed?' 'No.' 'That is not good either. Think about what you can find, I must convince the congregation—I don't want to lose you.'"

There we were. What on earth could we show him? They all knew we had fled Hitler's Germany—wasn't that proof enough? Evidently not. We racked our brains half the night. Finally, Henry remembered that somewhere among his immigration papers must be his membership card of the Berlin Kulturbund Oper, where he had sung several years before emigrating. The rest of the night we spent searching for this card in desks, drawers and suitcases. Towards the morning we did find it. I suggested not to rush to the telephone or the temple to prove that he was Jewish, but rather wait till next week's service and casually mention there might be something to show.

Well, the painful week had a happy ending. Henry showed the president of the temple that he had been officially accepted by an organization which had been founded to help Jewish artists. Nobody ever doubted Henry's religious affiliation again.

In the fifties, Henry went to Germany every summer. He had done a lot of research on unknown vocal music, which several radio stations were interested in presenting to their listeners. While I spent the vacation with Johnny in Vermont, Henry visited many old friends in Berlin and usually had a wonderful time.

One fall, he returned from his tour and reported that he had met an old friend in East Germany. She was a manager and had the responsibility of engaging western artists for performances in the East. East Berlin was the center of many cultural activities. Walter Felsenstein, the most famous artistic director in Germany at the time, was head of the Berliner Staats Oper. Henry had seen some of their performances and had been enormously impressed. His manager friend, who had heard him sing many times over the years, offered to move him to East Berlin with his family. There, he could sing not only at the famous opera house, but also in as many concerts and oratorios as he wished. It was a tremendous challenge for a singer in his prime. Although Henry was slowly making a name for himself in New York and had good singing engagements, it was not the same as being in a secure position where everything would be planned for him and all he had to do was to perform. The market in the East was wide open, and the manager friend had full power to sign up good musicians. In New York, it was a constant struggle and the ups and downs were nerve-wracking. I felt that Henry would love to go, where he could find the perfect artistic fulfillment. But he would never want it without my honest consent.

Johnny was born in the United States, went to school in New York, and English was his only language. I had close family in and around New York, and most of our friends lived there too. The idea of going back to Germany was difficult to consider (although it was not the same anymore). It became one of the hardest decisions. We discussed it with everybody; very few people thought leaving was a good idea. I strongly felt the future and happiness of my husband were most important, but to bring an American boy to a communist country, with little chance to keep in touch with his former life, gave me sleepless nights.

The deadline for the decision to be sent to Germany came closer and closer and we still did not know what would be best for us. We weighed the reasons—and put the arguments for and against on a mental scale. Henry was 100 percent for going to Germany; I was only halfway with him and saw the

advantages of staying here too clearly. What finally tipped the scale was Johnny's decision. He suddenly declared, "Why don't you go to Germany if it is so important, but I want to stay in America."

That did it! The decision to remain in the country that had been so good to us was immediately made. We have never regretted it and luck has been with us most of the time.

CHAPTER VI

My Brother Karl

Tragedy and Change

I have already written about Karl in the first chapter, in which I described our childhood and adolescence. Since his life developed in a very unusual way, I now want to report what happened to him.

At the age of twenty, Karl had a terrible accident and became paralyzed. He was working in Budapest, Hungary, where a cousin, co-owner of our father's textile factory, was trying to establish a new branch of the German company.

Karl had always been very healthy, sporty and lively. His favorite hobby was skating, which he had perfected to the point of dancing and jumping like a professional. One day, he fell on the ice and hurt himself badly. That took care of his skating, although he was convinced he would eventually get back to it. He returned to Germany, and during the time he was recovering, my uncle arrived from the United States and tried to persuade Karl to come to America with him. He was hoping to get Karl interested in his business as soon as he was better again. This was a great challenge for Karl, and it did not take long to make that decision.

When they arrived in America, my uncle immediately took him to several doctors but none of them ever took an X-ray. It was not yet done routinely in the thirties. After two months the pain in Karl's back became so severe that he had to be taken to the hospital in Plainfield, New Jersey, where he was living. The doctor discovered that tuberculosis had developed in his back at the exact spot which he had injured in his

fall on the ice. He needed an operation. The surgeon took a piece of shinbone out of Karl's leg and transplanted it into his spine. It took three months to heal, but afterwards there were other complications. Karl developed strange feelings in his skin and could not tell the difference between hot and cold in his legs. Some of his nerves must have been affected during the operation. Every now and then it got better and he could even spend time at his uncle's office, to learn the printing business. He could walk all right, drive his car and lead a fairly normal life. But of course, he had to become completely healthy. My uncle took him to a famous Viennese specialist, who suggested relieving the pressure on Karl's legs, which caused his problems. He recommended placing him on a frame which was supposed to bend his spine backwards. At the first try Karl claimed it caused terrible pains and he insisted on being taken off the frame. The specialist then told my uncle that Karl would never recover completely unless he would stay on that frame for a while. Karl tried it a few more times, always insisting it made his condition unbearable.

One morning he was put on that infamous frame again. All of a sudden he felt the most agonizing pain he had ever experienced and thought his spine was breaking. He suffered from what is known as a "spinal block" which left him paralyzed from the waist down. Everybody, except Karl himself, believed that it was a temporary condition, and dozens of treatments and experiments were tried on him. His legs atrophied and his general condition worsened daily. The doctors had nothing more to offer and left Karl lying in his bed, condemning him to total inactivity. This was in the days before rehabilitation.

What frightened us the most was his mental state. He became terribly depressed, hardly talked to anybody and lost interest in everything. The first person who brought some hope into this awful situation was a chiropractor, who insisted that Karl get out of his bed and start practicing to walk with braces and crutches. He gave him chiropractic treatments and massaged and exercised his legs, which developed back into normal shape again. His strength returned and above all his

spirits were challenged and he started to believe in his recovery again. However, his paralysis remained the same and he was confined to a wheelchair.

The process of exercising took many years, and I was always worried what would happen if Karl realized some day that with all the efforts and treatments he would never be able to walk again. A young German doctor took great interest in him and became his closest friend. Dr. Bendix always assured me that the process of realization would be so gradual that Karl would eventually accept his fate. He was right! After many years, Karl did get used to being paralyzed and filled his time with intellectual activities. He had always been interested in handwriting, and started to study and read everything connected with graphology. Uncle Ernest found him a teacher at Columbia University who was willing to come to Plainfield on a regular basis to teach Karl. This, of course, meant more to him than all the other things his uncle provided for him. He was almost too well taken care of, and nothing he needed was ever missing. Yet, it was a terribly confining existence. Plainfield was a small town and could not offer the intellectual stimulation he needed.

Since World War II one treats paraplegics differently, and life has changed for them completely. Ramps are built everywhere. Now, they can use busses, go to school and participate in normal life. That was all unheard of when Karl was young. I visited him every weekend and he shared my life. Yet, it never occurred to me to bring him to New York. Only many years later, when much had changed in Karl's as well as my life, did we realize what could be done for handicapped people.

The first wonderful thing that happened to Karl during these trying times was the arrival of our cousin Katja. One day, she brought her new friend, the Viennese psychoanalyst Editha Sterba, to visit him in Plainfield. "Ditha" was fascinated by Karl's personality and his attitude toward life. She told us afterwards that Karl should spend the next summer with all of us in Vermont. We explained to her that this would not be so easy, since Karl was dependent on help and

facilities a summer place could not provide. Ditha said, "Of course, one would have to find the right place; don't say anything to him before I have found it." She lived in Detroit with her family and was determined to come back soon.

A short time later she discovered a house in Manchester, Vermont, which supposedly could be adjusted to Karl's needs. Then she went to Plainfield to discuss the situation with him. He was totally unprepared to leave his usual surroundings at my uncle's house. His first reaction was completely negative, but Ditha argued every difficulty away. She even promised him ramps for his wheelchair and a room downstairs near a bathroom. She would also write to the woman who had taken care of Karl since he became paralyzed, and asked her to come to Vermont with him. Who could resist such ingenuity and generosity? At the end of the afternoon Karl just said, "If you take all problems away and make it sound so easy, I have no choice and will come to Vermont with you."

Everybody was surprised and wondered how it would all work out. Only Karl and Ditha seemed completely confident. In early June the following year, Johnny, age five, Karl and I drove to Vermont in my uncle's car. I marvelled how little the strain of the long trip bothered my brother; he was probably looking forward to the big change in his life. Johnny knew his uncle's condition, but the two Sterba girls were a little bewildered at our arrival. However, later in the evening they settled on the floor next to Karl's wheelchair and listened to the first of many wonderful stories he told the children during the summer. Ditha's husband, Richard, was more reserved and took longer to warm up to Karl. Yet, by the end of the summer, they had already formed the basis of a life-long friendship. They spent many evenings discussing Freud, the mentor and teacher of the Sterbas. I cannot remember any problem or difficulty Karl had which was not taken care of promptly. He was so overwhelmed by everything, that his excitement and happiness created the atmosphere of a wonderful time for all of us.

Karl spent the mornings at his desk working on his graphological projects. In the afternoons we all took long

walks together, including children and dogs. There was a small brook where we usually separated. One of the grown-ups stayed with Karl, while the others climbed a small mountain with an enormous rock on top, on which one could sit and have a gorgeous view of the surrounding Vermont landscape. In August, there were delicious berries to be picked along the way, and the children never returned without a handful for Karl. They all loved him and shared their daily adventures with him, brought him strange leaves and insects they found, and took turns pushing his wheelchair. He developed a special relationship with each child, and at the end of the summer he had to promise to come back the following year.

Karl joined us again not only the next summer, but also every following one from then on. Katja, who had brought all this about, had already lived with the Sterbas in Detroit for a while. They had rescued her from the enormous professional strain and competition in the New York music world, which she had bravely attempted to conquer when she arrived in this country as a pianist. Katja was Karl's favorite cousin. Since she had arranged for all of us to meet the Sterbas, we started planning our summers together. They eventually bought "Sugar Bush," a permanent vacation place, which became our second home in the United States.

The biggest change in Karl's life began when his future wife, Margarete von Reischach, came to America from Germany on a business trip. Our cousin Dorothea, now living in Princeton, who had known "Rita" in Germany, brought her to Plainfield on Easter Sunday and introduced her to Karl. She was a German baroness, but wanted nobody in this country to know. Her father had been an officer and was killed in World War I. Rita was brought up in Stuttgart and had fiercely rebelled against everything that was happening during the Hitler years. She was small and delicate, had beautiful red hair and a winning smile. She also was quick-minded and full of vitality. This was her first trip to America, and she was enthusiastic and excited. She spent the Easter afternoon telling Karl about her new impressions, and they had a lively conver-

sation. After she left, my brother said to me, "I really regret that Rita is going back to Germany. I will probably never see her again. Of all the people who came here to visit, I liked her by far the best."

After their return to Princeton Rita told our cousin Dorothea that she had never met a person who had impressed her as much as Karl, and that he had everything she had always been looking for in a man. To make a wonderful long story short, she wrote Karl a postcard from the boat back to Germany, which he answered with a letter. They then corresponded for almost a year until Rita decided to immigrate to the United States to be with Karl.

In the beginning my uncle did not like the idea at all. He had offered Rita a room at his house until she had adjusted to life in America. Karl was like a son to him, and he felt that "this German woman" was going to lure him away. But first she had to improve her English and be able to work before taking Karl with her. She started working at a bank in Plainfield, but did not like it. She encouraged Karl to work and use his knowledge of graphology professionally. Of course, in Plainfield there was not much of a chance for him. Our cousin Dorothea and her husband, Gabriel, a political science professor at Princeton University, supported the idea of Karl and Rita's settling there.

Before they left Plainfield, we spent the summer vacation in Vermont, where we had the house of the Sterbas at our disposal while they were in Europe. During this time, Karl and Rita were married by a female justice of the peace on a lovely porch, with the most beautiful view of the mountains. It was a charming, simple ceremony and some of the country neighbors attended to help us celebrate. Karl and Rita's decision to leave Plainfield was finally approved by my uncle, who developed great respect for Rita and completely trusted her with Karl's well-being and happiness.

Rita went to Princeton and prepared everything in advance. For a long time, she could not find the right house. Then she met a young architect who was willing, for the price they could afford, to build them a small house that would be

specially designed for Karl's needs. It was one of the great days in Karl's life when he moved into his own house. It was located in a charming little dead-end street at the edge of town. Rita had found work in Princeton and started at the Educational Testing Service, where she stayed for many years. She had cards printed for Karl to advertise his graphological services. She sent them to business offices, even in New York. To Karl's delight, there was an immediate reaction by a large lamp company, who needed advice on whom to place in key positions. Karl carefully analyzed the handwritings of their applicants and told the directors who would be a reliable person and imaginative planner, or who would be better for organization and details. It did not take long until other companies wanted the same services. Since Karl had perfected his graphological analyses, he became very successful. In the course of time he specialized in examining documents for lawyers and courts. He frequently had to testify and became well-known in court circles. He also wrote articles for graphological magazines, and was finally asked to become president of NADE (National Association of Document Examiners). He had to turn it down because he could not travel for them but compromised by accepting the vice-presidency. Occasionally, he also lectured on his work, but only in and around Princeton. Rita became the society's secretary. She also taught German for a while at Princeton University. She later devoted most of her time to her husband's work.

Karl and Rita spent glorious years together, had many friends and took advantage of the cultural activities Princeton had to offer. Rita was a perfect driver and took Karl everywhere. His physical condition had improved very much through a healthy diet Rita had developed for him. At the beginning of their life together, a doctor had told her that paraplegics never pass the age of sixty. Karl certainly became a classical example of how wrong that was. He died at the age of seventy-six and even then (we think) his death could have been prevented for a while. The only problem he had from time to time was his skin. He developed sores, which had to be treated carefully. When they got particularly bad,

his doctors got carried away by his amazing general state of health and suggested skin transplants, which would take care of these sores once and for all. What they did not consider was his age and the enormous strain several major operations would have on his system. Although he recovered each time, he got weaker and weaker, and when he was finally released from the hospital, he had lost all his strength and resistance. Within a few months he developed cancer of the liver and died half a year later.

His passing was a great loss for many people. Until his last illness, he had always been a rock of strength. His maturity had drawn people to him, especially the young ones, whom he helped with their personal problems. He had become a wise man who knew human nature, and with his philosophy and his great sense of humor, he was able to comfort and encourage others. Nobody ever left Karl without feeling better. The idea of pitying him never entered anybody's mind in his presence.

Rita was shattered for a long time, but the knowledge that she had given Karl happiness and satisfaction in his work helped her to come back into the life stream. She continued working on Karl's notes for NADE, attended their meetings and conferences and from time to time sent them articles for their magazine.

CHAPTER VII

Sugar Bush

A Private Paradise

In 1942, when we returned to New York from California, we met the Sterbas through Katja. She had been a music counselor in a children's camp in Manchester, Vermont, where she became acquainted with the two Viennese psychoanalysts and their daughters, Monica and Verena, aged eight and five. The little girls fell in love with "Ketchup" as they called Katja, and had a marvelous time listening to her improvisations during "assembly" in the early morning and at "entertainment" at night.

When Dr. Sterba heard Katja play, he immediately recognized that she was not an ordinary pianist, but an unusually gifted musician with a perfect technique. He started to play sonatas with Katja, since he was a very good, although nonprofessional, violinist. The Sterbas were spending the summer at the Windsor Mountain Camp, run by the Bondi family from Germany. Gertrud Bondi was a physician and psychoanalyst, and her husband had owned a well-known school in Germany. Many children came from the Detroit area and quite a few from New York. Some of the New York children had come with their parents, whom the Bondis had already known abroad.

When I met Mrs. Sterba in New York she liked Johnny, age four, right away. When I mentioned that my husband had to make money during the summer, while Johnny and I stayed in the city, she immediately invited us to come to Vermont for one week. She could not put us up at the camp because

Johnny was too young, but she would find a room in a motel or inn where we could sleep; during the day we would be with the Sterbas at the camp.

When Johnny and I arrived in Manchester at the Old English Inn where we had a reservation, the owner told me that Johnny was younger than she had expected and might disturb the older guests; therefore she had taken a room for us on a nearby farm. At first it sounded all right, but when we went there, it turned out to be an ugly place and was too far from the camp without transportation. We left our bags at the Inn and walked up the hill to the camp. Mrs. Sterba was angry that her plans had not worked out, and decided to keep Johnny with her younger daughter in the room next to hers. I could then stay at the Inn, which was more convenient. To my greatest surprise, Johnny immediately liked Verena Sterba, whom he had never seen before. She just took over her new "little brother," showed him around the camp, and introduced him to all her friends. I did not exist any more. After three days Mr. Bondi said to me, "I have never seen such a fast adjustment of a four-year-old in my life."

The next summer we all returned to the Bondi Camp. This time Johnny was officially accepted and Henry and I, although living at the Old English Inn, participated in the camp activities. We entertained many times, singing duets and solos while Richard and Katja joined in on violin and piano. Meanwhile we had become close friends with the Sterbas, and the next summer was already being discussed. It was all too wonderful to be true.

One morning, Richard called me into his room and said, "We just found out that one of the children has polio. You have to take Johnny out as soon as possible. We have already decided to take the night train back to Detroit. The children do not know yet but all parents have been informed to come and pick them up." The Bondis asked Richard if we would give a concert that night, to calm the children after they were told. We rehearsed in the afternoon and picked a long and cheerful program with lots of variety. When evening came, there was a call to the large assembly hall, and Mr. Bondi told

the children what was going on. There was a lot of excitement, crying and objection to leaving. We just walked over, opened the piano and started the music. A few moments later, it was totally quiet, but the atmosphere was very strained. The children listened with such intensity—one could almost feel it. Right after the concert they were sent to bed and by noon the next day they had all been picked up. I think some parents drove through the night to make it as fast as possible.

Johnny and I helped the Sterbas pack their belongings and then took them to the midnight train. The owner of the Inn let Johnny stay for the last night and then we would have to leave. Richard had suggested that I give Johnny a little red wine, so he would be able to go to sleep. Unfortunately, it had the opposite effect. He jumped around half the night and remained wide awake. I guess he had a delayed reaction to all the excitement.

The boy who had caught polio unfortunately died soon afterwards; two other children, who had caught it too, miraculously recovered. Nevertheless, this whole experience meant the end of camp life for the Sterbas as well as the Cordys.

Once a month, Richard came from Detroit to New York to take a lesson with the violinist Adolf Busch, the founder of the Marlboro Music Festival. During these visits, we discussed the next summer in Vermont. The Sterbas were planning to rent a house in Manchester and took it for granted that we would join them. The furnished house Ditha finally found belonged to a family from Philadelphia named Clark, and had about twenty-five rooms. It was situated way back from the Manchester main street with an enormous lawn in front. The Clarks had closed off ten rooms but left us fifteen to use. Their children were grown up now and had their own summer plans. The Clarks rented out the house mainly because they did not want its beauty to go to waste. In the back of the mansion was a lovely meadow which extended down to a large pond with a boathouse and lots of facilities for children to play. For all of us, this was El Dorado. Although the

Sterbas were living in a nice house in Detroit, and we had a comfortable apartment in New York, none of us had ever lived in a millionaire's mansion. Every day, we discovered new wonders. The butler's quarters alone would have been large enough for a summer home. There were special rooms to take care of the flowers. There was half a wall with slits in it for different sizes of trays. There even existed a gas station near the stables, but it was not in use anymore. The Sterbas had brought four horses from Detroit, their only luxury for exercise since—as psychoanalysts—they had to sit all day.

We had lots of fun during the summer. Many guests came to share this unusual and even inexpensive place. Mrs. Clark visited us several times and helped our children learn to swim in the pond. It must have brought back memories of the times when she taught her own children. The only problem we had were the food stamps, never enough to feed the hungry children. Then Shorty, the groom, was of great help. He met the right people during his days off and, being devoted to the Sterba family, he had made up his mind to bring in additional food. One day he asked Mrs. Sterba, "Would you like some 'Shanghais' for Sunday?" She did not know that this was slang for a breed of chicken, eaten by the circus people, with whom he had been associated for years. Ditha was delighted and answered, "OK, by all means." Shorty said they would be delivered on Sunday.

Katja and I were doing the dishes after the midday dinner during the "holy rest hour," when the Sterbas slept between seeing patients. The children were playing quiet games on a porch far off. Suddenly, there was a hard knock at the back door and I said to Katja, "This must be the chickens." We went to the door with the money and a strange-looking fellow said, "I have six chickens for you. The price is fifteen dollars." I agreed and he handed me a large potato sack with six live chickens. We had no idea they would be delivered alive. Before I could ask any questions, the man was gone. And there we were. What to do with the chickens? Where to hide them? The kids would never eat them after they had "met" them. Who would kill them, if we really wanted to eat them?

All we could do in a hurry was to bring the sack to the garage and wait for Shorty or Gibson, our cook, to come home. They both were off for the day. When Ditha and Richard reappeared and we told them what was making noises in the garage, we all had hysterics, thinking we had to feed the chickens until someone could be found to kill them—without the children finding out about it.

This time Gibson saved us. When he came home at night and heard about our dilemma, he said, "No problem. I lived on a farm in the South and certainly know how to kill a chicken. I can do it right now and we can put them in the ice box and nobody will know where they came from."

At the end of the summer the Clarks unfortunately decided to close the house forever and sell the property. It had been a glorious experience for all of us. The hikes around the estate, the picnics in the hills and the berry picking will always be remembered.

I felt particularly sorry for Johnny, who had to get used to the cramped quarters in New York again, and wondered how he would take it. He had so enjoyed having playmates all day, spreading out and doing whatever he felt like. Fortunately, he liked school and looked forward to seeing his classmates and teachers again.

When he returned on the first day I said, "Today you can do whatever you like—I will play with you." He thought about it for a while and then said, "I want to drink my milk like Lupa," who was the Sterba's big shepherd dog. I had to put a dish with milk on the bathroom floor and Johnny went on all fours, crawling around and barking like a dog. Then he lapped up the milk, making sounds like Lupa. This was his identification with a happy summer.

After our experience at the camp and at the Clark house, the Sterbas decided to look for a permanent summer place, which in the long run would be cheaper and save time. We had to promise to come every summer, which was not difficult at all. But how does one look for a place in Vermont when one lives

in Detroit? Ditha contacted a Bennington real estate agent and told him exactly what she had in mind. She went to Vermont for a few weekends, but was not satisfied with what she was shown. One Sunday, Katja and Ditha looked through *The New York Times* and saw a little ad saying "Austrian Hunting Lodge for Sale," which made Ditha's Viennese heart jump. It was supposedly in Glastenbury, but she had no idea where that was. She called her agent, who said Glastenbury had nine inhabitants (the number it takes to get on the map) and was twenty minutes by car from Bennington, which, we all knew, was a charming little college town. Ditha suggested that the agent have a look at it and she would then come on the weekend to see it too. The agent tried to discourage her, because he thought it would be impossible for children to be so far away from the movies and the ice-cream parlors. In addition, it was situated high up in the mountains with virtually no neighbors. All this doubled Ditha's interest immediately. After she had seen "Sugar Bush," the name of the house, she described—I can only say—"Shangri-La." The place had been built by a passionate hunter, who used it mainly during the hunting season and in the summer with his family. In order to have the best view of the surrounding landscape, he had had the top of a mountain leveled, so the house could be built right there. It was a solid wooden lodge, had a swimming pool in the back and plenty of rooms. There were two bathrooms, one with a marble tub and three steps to get into it. After using Sugar Bush for many years, the owner lost his only son in the war, his daughter married and moved to Europe, and his wife died of cancer. He started to drink and lost interest in Sugar Bush. The house was sold to a New York film producer, whose wife and housekeeper spent the first summer there. He himself only visited from time to time. The two ladies furnished the house, bought antique New England furniture, charming china, lamps, hundreds of sheets, towels and whatever was necessary for a large household. But they never had visitors, got terribly lonesome, bored, and frightened by porcupines. They decided after one summer not to come back.

That's how Sugar Bush and 364 acres of precious Vermont land got on the market again for the price of twenty-one thousand dollars! This was at the end of 1946. It took less than an hour to get a mortgage at a Bennington bank. We were all ready to move in for the summer of 1947. The Sterbas had hit the jackpot!

The first summer at Sugar Bush was utterly exciting. Each child brought a friend, which meant six of them constantly around. The Sterbas had brought Gibson, the cook, Shorty, the groom, and their horses; everybody was in charge of something. I did the driving, watched the children and planned their activities. On warm days they stayed in and around the pool, but one could never leave them alone. Besides short hikes and picnics, we prepared an overnight excursion to the top of the Glastenbury mountain, where we planned to stay in a cabin.

The Sterbas had brought a number of their patients, who stayed either in Bennington or Manchester. They came up to Sugar Bush once a day for their sessions. Therefore, Ditha and Richard could unfortunately not accompany us on the Glastenbury trip, but sent their secretary along to assist me. And was I glad! It was a five-hour hike, and when we got to the top, the children were so excited that they had made it they had to climb the watchtower right away. I naturally followed them, although I don't like heights. When it came to climbing down again, I had a problem and begged everyone to get down first—I would definitely follow them. Well, since I could not possibly stay on the Glastenbury, I finally pulled myself together and took that first step down keeping my eyes on the stairs. Of course, everybody had waited in the bushes watching me, and they came out like howling Indians to celebrate my return. We made a fire, cooked our potatoes, roasted corn and marshmallows and drank lots of sodas. Three of the older children wanted to sleep outside the hut in their sleeping bags. Since it was fairly light because of the full moon, I had no objections as long as they stayed close by. Just when I thought they were all asleep, because the chattering had stopped, I heard a terrible scream. Suddenly they all ap-

peared at the door, because one of them had been nudged by a porcupine.

During that night we had another adventure. While the children were sleeping peacefully, I heard a strange rustle under a bench and took my flashlight to investigate. To my surprise, I discovered a skunk sitting in the corner. I trembled at the thought that he might get scared and let off his stench. I woke Bob, the secretary, and we opened the front door and gently waved a large stick behind the skunk to make him get up and out. Meanwhile some of the children woke up and realized what was going on, holding their noses in preparation. But we were lucky. The skunk eventually did get up, slowly crawled out from under the bench, looked around a while at everybody and finally walked into the night. We quickly closed the door and were saved.

Another interesting trip we took was to the Tanglewood Music Festival, where a young Detroit friend of ours, the pianist Seymour Lipkin, was playing the Tschaikowsky piano concerto under Koussevitzky. During the concert, a terrible storm broke out and all the cars in the parking area got stuck in the mud. It took us three hours to get dug out, but there were a lot of young people who helped to push one car after another back on the road. The kids sang all the songs they knew, ate lots of candy and enjoyed the adventure. I was surely relieved when we were finally on the way home. We arrived at Sugar Bush at two o'clock in the morning, where the Sterbas were anxiously waiting for us.

One morning, when the children went to the stables to be with Shorty, Ditha and I discovered half-a-dozen large snakes under a wooden plank on the porch. One absolutely had to get rid of them before the children returned. We took baseball bats and hit the snakes on the head until they were dead. I never thought I would be able to do a thing like that, but to protect my child, I had the courage to do it. Fortunately, in all the years we went to Sugar Bush, no large snakes ever came near the house again.

Editha Sterba never had to do any housework, since there had

always been plenty of help in her parents' home. She had studied psychoanalysis for many years, and after her marriage to Richard, they both started to practice as psychoanalysts in Vienna. She had also studied for a while with Anna Freud in London, and had specialized in the treatment of children for a long time.

While the Sterbas lived in Vienna, they engaged a housekeeper, who also took care of the children. Frau Marie emigrated with the family to the U.S. and stayed with the Sterbas until the end of her working life. Only in the summer in Vermont, when Frau Marie was on vacation, often in Europe, did Ditha have a chance to go shopping and decide the menu. Her housekeeper was much too independent to ever let her "interfere." In Sugar Bush, Ditha could do what she wanted. No matter how many guests were at the table, all plates were put in front of her and she served everybody. Of course, it took more time and people often got too much on their plates or things they could not eat. The children were permitted to come with their plates to Ditha's chair and ask for second helpings. The grown-ups received theirs across the table. A hilarious moment developed once when Johnny came to Ditha to ask for a third helping. She said, "I would love to give it to you, but you will get a tummy-ache." Johnny then lifted his plate to her and with a wrinkled forehead asked, "What's wrong with a tummy-ache?" It was wonderful to watch the intensity and satisfaction with which Ditha heaped the food on everybody's plate, always declaring in a loud voice for whom it was meant.

When I hear a violin play, I immediately think I am in Sugar Bush, because Richard used to practice many times a day, between patients and often also at night. The only summer when this was not the case was when he and Ditha worked on their book, *Beethoven and His Nephew*. I never saw such perfect cooperation. She had done a lot of research in advance, and he had sketched down the outline of the book and parts of what he wanted to write. She read dozens of books on Beethoven and reported to Richard about anything he

should include. Then he would sit down with a large writing pad, surrounded by noisy children and chatting friends, and write pages and pages undisturbed by what was going on around him. At night, he would read to Ditha what he had written and she would comment on it and make him change or add things. At the end of the summer the book was almost ready to go to the publisher. Many articles for psychoanalytic publications were written in Sugar Bush in the same way.

The next summer became even more exciting. Richard rented a fine Steinway, and Katja, who was preparing her New York recital debut, practiced many hours a day, a delight to listen to. She also played for us in the evening, accompanied Richard many times and worked with him on Mozart and Beethoven sonatas. Sometimes, the Rudolf Serkins visited us from Marlboro, where Adolf Busch, Serkin's father-in-law and Richard's violin teacher, had started the Marlboro Music Festival. Serkin occasionally played with Richard, and his wife said he even practiced for it, which made Richard feel like a Heifetz. Many other guests came, mostly musicians, so we almost had our own music festival.

From time to time, I had to take the children to the Bennington library to get or return books, and once in a great while we went to a drive-in movie. On the road to Bennington, we always passed a lovely little museum. It had originally been a tavern. Lord and Lady Gosford, an English couple, had not only changed it into a museum, but also used it as living quarters during the summer. They later donated "Topping Tavern" to the community. Their house was the perfect New England residence with furniture, pictures, rugs and kitchen facilities all in style. People came from far away to see this place, and Lady Gosford was an ideal hostess and took them around. On Sundays the road was often blocked with cars, especially on the day when the *Bennington Banner* had announced that Grandma Moses was going to visit.

Another attraction along the road was a charming country home belonging to Mrs. Rogers of Standard Oil. She had all her employees living in a special house to let them have a good time by themselves. When one passed her house there

was a big sign: GO SLOW, DEAF DOG.

One day, when we were in a hurry to get home from Bennington, we passed a farm where one of the chickens had gotten in the road. Monica's boyfriend, who was driving us, did not see it and ran over it. We were shocked and debated for a long time what to do about it. I decided we had to face the farmer and tell him what had happened. Maybe we could buy the chicken. We went into the house together. The farmer was not there, but his wife was very nice and made it easy for us. She said, "I meant to ask my husband to get a chicken so we could have it for dinner. Now we will see what is left of this one. No harm done—it was nice meeting you people." We were certainly relieved and promised to visit again.

One of Verena's girlfriends, age ten, was Catholic, and when she was invited to Sugar Bush, her parents had insisted that she be taken to church every Sunday. I was always ready to drive Emily to Bennington, but on the first Sunday morning she suddenly became sick and vomited and could not go to church, which, of course, made her absence legitimate. We all fell for it and pitied poor Emily. But when it happened a few more times during the summer—at the house of psychoanalysts—it was suspicious. To leave "paradise" even for a short time was just too much for Emily. I am sure God will forgive her.

Since the cook was off on Sundays, we always had a picnic on the meadow, where the original owner had built a beautiful barbecue grill. Enormous amounts of frankfurters, hamburgers and marshmallows were roasted and grilled and tasted ever so much better than those prepared in the kitchen. Potato salad, rolls, pickles, beer, sodas and juices disappeared in no time.

At one of these picnics with lots of guests, we had a frightening experience. Johnny had a little friend from nearby Shaftsbury, who often came to play with him. They had gotten hold of a large amount of firecrackers for the Fourth of July festivities. Nobody knew about this. During the picnic on the meadow the boys suddenly started to shoot the firecrackers, which made lots of noise and sounded like a bomb.

This shocked Dux, Monica's boyfriend, later her husband, and Richard tremendously. They had both been trained to react to shell fire—Richard during World War I, Dux during World War II—to throw themselves flat on the ground. This actually happened during the picnic at the moment the firecrackers went off. The two men flung themselves to the meadow and once they realized what the startling sounds really were, got furiously angry at the boys, who then ran away. We were surprised by this unexpected reaction to the boys' childish prank. Everybody tried to comfort them. And we especially admired Richard, who after all those years still had the reflex to protect himself.

The incident left me terribly embarrassed, because my son had caused it all. I was even reproached for having lost control of the children. To collect myself, I left the meadow to find Helen Wolff, a friend, who had kept her cool and disappeared into the house. She had to remind me of the fact that what the boys had done was perfectly normal. However, somebody who had been in the war might have an unusual reaction.

Fortunately, Dux recovered rather fast and the boys returned from their hiding place. He took them on a long walk in the woods, told them about his war experiences and they understood and apologized for having upset him.

After another one of these traditional picnics, I decided I needed a long walk, took the shepherd dog and the little schnauzer along and headed for the woods. The dogs were usually around me but occasionally ran ahead. At one point I heard them barking furiously and called them in vain. I finally struggled into the bushes myself to find out what had gotten them so excited. To my horror I saw that they had cornered a porcupine, which was thrashing its tail left and right. I pulled them away and put them on leashes to get them home. Each dog had dozens of quills in his head, and since they have nasty little hooks which dig into the skin, there is no way to get them out except to have them taken out by a vet. We had to call him and he was kind enough to meet us in his office on a Sunday night to treat the dogs. On the way, they were trying

to get rid of the quills and we had to restrain them from doing more damage to themselves. The doctor had to give them general anesthesia before carefully extracting the quills. It took three hours until we got home, and I decided never to walk the dogs again without having them constantly leashed.

On rainy days we would play cards, Scrabble or other games. Gigantic jigsaw puzzles were assembled, and whoever became interested was permitted to participate. Monica's main occupation was catching butterflies, mice and other animals who had found their way into the house; then she gave them back their freedom by letting them out again. She also never hesitated to leave a piece of cheese in the kitchen cupboard for a mouse who wanted to stay there overnight.

In one of the earlier years of our Sugar Bush life, Richard had met the writer Dorothy Canfield Fisher. She had spent a great part of her life in Vermont and wrote most of her books and stories with a Vermont background. She was very interested in Richard's work with Sigmund Freud and invited him several times to her house, to hear more about this interesting Viennese period. When she asked him again one summer, he mentioned that he had visitors who were musicians and would she not like to come to Sugar Bush to hear them perform. She immediately answered, "Oh, we have a grand piano too. You must bring them here. We would love to have them." That's how we got to sing and play for Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Despite her advanced age, she still had a charming childlike expression and was cheerful and lively. Besides the "Sugar Bush gang" she had also invited a Korean couple who had never heard Western classical music and became so enthusiastic that it was a joy to perform. Mrs. Fisher admitted that she had never before heard the old Italian duets Henry and I were singing. She was impressed by the fact that a couple was building their future on singing this kind of music together. "You will always be happy," she said, which is easy to believe when you are young.

During one of our first summers in Vermont, I decided to give Johnny a Siamese cat for his next birthday. He would need

consolation after leaving his playmates, dogs and cats behind. I asked around and found out that there was a farm near Bennington College where Siamese cats were bred. I called the owner who said, "You are lucky; we just got four brand-new ones, born last week. Of course it's too early to separate them from their mother, but in a few weeks they will be ready to leave." I drove Johnny to the farm to see the kittens. They were tiny and looked like tan-colored mice; their eyes were closed and they felt like a piece of fur. The farmer promised to reserve the best one for us.

We had to leave Vermont without the cat because the farmer's wife insisted that the kitten still needed its mother. One of the teachers at Bennington College, the pianist Claude Frank, offered to bring the cat to New York since he commuted regularly. It took another two weeks but then, one night at eleven P.M. our doorbell rang and Claude handed me a basket with the words, "Sorry, I'm double parked—have to leave immediately—the cat was very good, hardly cried on the way." Henry and I debated if we should wake up Johnny who, of course, had to go to school the next day. We decided that a new addition to the family was reason enough to take this unusual step. We carried the unopened basket to Johnny's bed and he heard a clear "Meow." Of course, he jumped up very fast, sat on the floor, unwrapped the little package of fur and held it to his cheek. The cat already started to purr, which we considered to be a good sign. It was a male Siamese seal point, no bigger than a man's hand. We all fell in love with him immediately. The farmer's wife had told me exactly how to treat the cat on arrival. The first night I should put a clock under his pillow so that he would not miss his mother's heartbeat. Then I should lock him in the bathroom with his litter box, so that he would learn to use it once and for all. To my surprise, he understood this and never had an accident in his life.

My second surprise was that the cat did not like milk and only drank water. Johnny wanted to name him after the Sugar Bush caretaker whom he much admired; his name was Lloyd. We called his attention to the fact that it sounded rather for-

mal for such a tiny creature; so he decided to call him "Floytsy." We took him to the vet and had him altered. Living without a mate is very difficult for a Siamese cat. Although Floytsy was a little cross-eyed, he became very beautiful and when he sat on the piano, we did not need flowers.

Johnny loved his new pet dearly and spent every free minute with him. He taught him how to retrieve like a dog. We had a long hallway and anything thrown into it would be brought back and put at our feet to be thrown again. He liked certain people when they visited and jumped on their laps, but others he would ignore completely. We have never found out what made him decide these differences, but his choices were obvious. The next summer we took Floytsy along to Sugar Bush, and it was touching to watch how slowly this apartment cat became used to the outside world. When we first took him on the meadow, he immediately ran into the bushes for cover, and only after much coaxing would he expose himself to the open spaces. After a while he started to like his new freedom, and at night we had a hard time getting him inside. Occasionally, he would run up a small tree and would not return when it got dark, but it never failed that when we went to bed, he would scratch at the door to be let in. We always had to keep him separate from the Sterba dogs, who did not even like the house cats, let alone a visiting one.

One day of course, it did happen. The dogs got out and chased poor Floytsy up a large tree and he lost his courage to come down again. Johnny became desperate, but Ditha assured him, "If Floytsy does not come down, we will cut down the tree." Fortunately that was not necessary. We locked up the dogs and after a long time and much persuading, Floytsy slowly climbed down. He stayed in his room for a whole day and every time he heard the dogs barking in the distance, he hid under the bed. He also did not like thunderstorms. They usually only happened once or twice a summer. Sometimes they were fierce and hurt his delicate ears. He crawled under a blanket when it started and was not seen until the sun came out again.

During the second summer in Vermont he got used to run-

ning around all day, only coming inside to use his litter box. I would not have worried too much if he had stayed outside, but we kept hearing a wild cat in the woods at night, which upset all our animals. When the Sterbas had to fly to Europe for a week, Ditha said to me, "I wish you could get rid of that strange cat while we are gone." I promised to try my level best.

But how? Every night I walked into the woods with a large flashlight. One evening I sighted the cat in the distance. It looked very thin and ugly and probably was not a real wild cat but rather an abandoned house cat. I called and called but it would not come closer. The next night I left a piece of steak at the place where I had seen the cat and to my delight in the morning it was gone. The following night we heard the awful screams again. From then on I brought leftovers and milk into the woods every night, placing them closer to the house each time. One morning I saw the cat outside the woods right on our property. Again I brought him his meals. He always ran away when he saw me but less far from day to day. When he felt safe enough to remain close, I sat down next to the plate and spoke to him in a soft voice. He finally accepted me and came closer to eat from the plate. Now he waited for me to come and feed him but would not let me touch him yet. Every day I put the dishes nearer and nearer to the open door of my room. When he had to come inside to reach his plate, he hesitated a long time, but his hunger was stronger than his fear. He slowly made it into the room and I closed the door.

What next? I had already become quite fond of the cat and would not take him to the animal shelter. Even Floytsy, who had never "socialized" with other animals and even hissed fiercely at the Sterba cats, did not seem to mind the new arrival at all. They only stared at one another, then smelled each other, ate from the same plate, and in the end became intimate friends.

When the Sterbas returned and saw the two cats peacefully sleeping together on my bed, they could not believe it was the shrieking monster who had so disturbed our peace. During the night Buster, as we had named him, slept on my

left side and Floytsy on my right. Both of them only growled when they met in the middle, trying to sit on my chest at the same time. They withdrew immediately when they heard my firm "No."

Buster had three wonderful weeks in Sugar Bush and Floytsy had his first real friend. They were inseparable and ate, slept and played together all the time. Only when I took a walk with Floytsy, who always accompanied me, did Buster stay behind and watch us from afar. My heart almost broke when we left and I could not take Buster to New York with us. Our apartment was too small for two lively cats plus Johnny. Henry worked at home a lot and I could not do that to him. Enough is enough. We had to find a place in Vermont for Buster. Our caretaker finally offered to keep him and let him live in the stable of his farm, where he could catch mice. On one of the last days of our vacation, Johnny and I drove Buster to Shaftsbury, where the caretaker lived. It was a sad moment when we had to say good-bye to our cat.

Just before we had to leave Vermont ourselves, we received the unfortunate news that Buster had disappeared. He was probably trying to find us again.

During one summer the Sterbas had to go to Europe and I was in charge of everything in Sugar Bush. All went well except for two incidents. At first one of the horses, which they had brought from Detroit, became sick. I wanted to call the vet immediately, but the stubborn groom did not permit it. He insisted that he knew much more about horses than any vet, since he had worked with horses all his life. A week later the poor animal died.

Now I had to console the children, who were terribly upset, because they loved "Domino" passionately. We organized the funeral and picked out a stone, on which they wanted to have his name engraved. Then we watched how an enormous grave was dug into which the animal was lowered. Afterwards we discussed whether we should write to the Sterbas or wait for their return to give them the sad news.

Hardly had we recovered from our shock, when the big

shepherd dog got sick. The vet came immediately and told us that "Lupa" was in grave danger. There was no animal hospital in our Vermont vicinity, yet Lupa needed an operation because she had serious bleedings. I called a hospital in New York which the vet had recommended and spoke with one of the doctors. Of course he could not make a diagnosis over the telephone but promised that if I could send the dog immediately, he would let me know the next day what could be done.

I called Henry right away—he was in New York—and told him to visit Lupa in the hospital, since she knew nobody there. Gibson, who had offered to take her to New York, would have to come back as soon as possible.

Late that night we fixed a comfortable bed in the big station wagon and sent Lupa and Gibson on their way to New York. The next morning the doctor called me and said that Lupa needed a hysterectomy, but could probably come home after a week.

I felt very relieved and asked Henry, who wanted to come to Sugar Bush soon, if he could wait until Gibson came down to pick her up. He later described Lupa's touching farewell from the hospital. The doctors and male nurses got together in the entrance hall and each of them shook Lupa's paw and said a few comforting words to her. Of course, we greeted her in much the same way when she finally returned home.

Many years later, when Johnny was away in college and I was still working, Floytsy had a rough time adjusting to being more alone. I am convinced that this change made old age much harder for him. After a while he got sick and stopped eating. I took him to the vet, who examined him and diagnosed a tumor which, if it were benign, could be removed; if not, he would have to be put to sleep. I was hoping, of course, he would recover. I think now I should have let him die in peace at home, instead of leaving him in his miserable condition with a strange doctor. I will never forget his last look at me when I left him at the cat hospital before going to work that morning. It clearly expressed, "Why do you do this to me?" When I returned from work it was too late. The doc-

tor had diagnosed the tumor as cancerous and put Floytsy to sleep. Now it was my turn to ask, "Why did you do this to me?" It took me the longest time to get over his death. He had been so understanding and made me feel he knew and shared whenever I was down. If there is a heaven for cats, I hope Floytsy is happy there.

One of the few unpleasant incidents in Sugar Bush occurred one summer when Richard had a rather sick patient. To make sure that her daily sessions would not be interrupted, she had driven all the way from Detroit to Vermont and arrived on the same day as the Sterbas. Her treatment had reached a very critical phase, which made her turn fiercely against her analyst. One morning Richard told us, "She might come to kill me today, so don't tell her in which room I am sleeping." We first thought he was joking, but the patient telephoned several times in the evening and demanded to speak with Richard. Each time he talked to her, he tried to calm her down.

After he retired, his secretary and I stayed up and conferred on how to protect him. Richard's room was way in the back while ours both faced the entrance court, where one could hear the dogs bark at the slightest provocation. Bob decided not to go to bed, and I left my lights on and did not pull the shade of my glass door down. It was impossible to come up the mountain by car without the lights being seen from far away. Of course, the patient knew that very well and could drive just close enough, so she could walk part of the way with a flashlight. About a hundred yards from the court was the garage where Bob planned to hide.

Shortly after 1:00 A.M. he heard a car come up the mountain. About a quarter of a mile before the turn to the house, the car stopped and a little flashlight moved slowly closer and closer. Bob stepped out of the garage, turned his own flashlight on and walked towards her. I am sure she thought it was her analyst. Bob knew her vaguely from Detroit, where he sometimes opened the door when she arrived or saw her waiting for her session. He greeted her by saying, "Oh, you like to take walks at night too? It's so lovely here; too bad the moon

isn't out." She insisted on seeing Richard, but Bob explained to her that he was already asleep and could not be disturbed. She said, "Go and tell him that I am here and must talk to him." He told her that any noise would wake up the entire household, and there would be a lot of commotion. Couldn't she wait till the next day? Then he took her by the arm and said, "Let me walk you back to your car—I would like a little walk right now." I must add that Bob was an attractive young man, much closer to her in age than her analyst. She was so taken by surprise—she let him calmly walk her down the mountain to her car. They talked a while about the viciousness of analysts and how they torture their patients. Her last words were that some day she would kill Richard. Bob replied, "Maybe you will still change your mind."

Of course, I had not slept, and when I saw Bob come up with his flashlight, I praised him for his courage, but he only said, "Her handbag was much too small—I knew she had no weapon."

One summer we had visitors from Detroit, and while the Sterbas were busy with their patients, I was in charge of entertaining the guests and showing them the beauty of Vermont. I took them to the Bennington Museum, which has quite a few charming New England objects worth seeing. The community is very proud of its collection. In the evening we went to Bennington College to hear one of the concerts of contemporary music performed by a group of composers who meet there every summer.

On the morning the visitors were to leave, already dressed for their departure, they wanted to see the horses once more. I took them over to the stables, and while Mrs. Wayne was patting one of the horses, it nibbled off the decoration of her beautiful straw hat. I could not help laughing; she did not appreciate that.

The climax of every summer was always when some of Richard's most intellectual friends came to Sugar Bush. Among his favorites were the German book publisher Kurt Wolff, whose wife, Helen, later became vice president of

Harcourt, Brace and Company; Professor Erich Kahler, historian and author of many books; my brother, Karl Aschaffenburg, the graphologist; Heinz Hartmann, president of the American Psychoanalytic Association, and many others. One always felt their deep respect for Richard, who was so well acquainted with their different fields. They could never hear enough about his association with Freud. These evenings were by far the most exciting events in Sugar Bush.

Both Sterba girls went to Sarah Lawrence College, near New York, one after the other. Although the students were supposed to live in dormitories at the beginning, Monica and Verena mainly stayed with us in New York. They are married now and have their own families, but I still feel as if they were my daughters. They cannot come to Sugar Bush as often as they did before their marriages. They visit me in New York whenever possible and they still love Johnny, their "little brother."

After the description of Sugar Bush, it would hardly be necessary to talk about the influence the Sterbas have had on my life and my family. It was certainly not only the time in Vermont that meant so much to us. From the very beginning they gave us the feeling that we were all one family, sharing everything: vacation, interests, experiences and friends. It was most unusual. It seemed only logical that when Henry died in 1965, and we wanted to bury him at a little country cemetery near Sugar Bush, Richard said, "Why don't we take a large plot—then we can all be buried together." Could one possibly have better friends?

I have not yet missed a summer in Vermont since 1947 and am not planning to ever miss one as long as Sugar Bush exists.

Postscript

It is with great sadness that I return once more to my story on Sugar Bush to report on the end of this paradise. Editha Sterba passed away after a long illness, during which she had been brought to Vermont several times to be together with family and friends. After Richard had a stroke, which left him

too sick to travel, he put the house on the market. It took longer than expected to sell it. I went two more times with friends to Sugar Bush—but it was not the same anymore, although Richard enjoyed at least hearing about it.

The house now stands empty and forlorn. The isolation of the place no longer held the same attraction for buyers. A businessman from New Jersey finally bought it with the intention to winterize it so he could live there all year round. However, we recently heard that he changed his mind and now wants to tear it down and put a modern house in its place.

In November 1965, the most terrible event occurred. From one day to the next my life changed completely.

For the first time, Henry and I had been in Europe with Johnny and enjoyed a most wonderful vacation, showing him the beauty of Italy and Switzerland. Henry finally relaxed after a busy season and looked better than ever. When he returned home he went to see his doctor for a yearly check-up. He confirmed Henry's amazing state of health. Hardly two months later though, Henry felt less well and had to go to the hospital for tests. There, within a week, he suffered a massive heart attack and died.

On our way to the hospital, Henry said to me, "Should anything happen, you have Johnny and your work—promise me not to mourn for too long. I give you five days! We have been very fortunate—not many people can say that. You are strong and must go on enjoying life." I did not take him seriously and only replied, "This is not the moment to say things like that."

Fortunately, Johnny was still living in New York and became a great support. One does learn that life goes on and is grateful for everything one had taken for granted. When I became depressed and life got unbearable, I remembered the five days Henry had permitted me and then went on. I gave up singing, worked at New York University with foreign students and filled my life with many activities.

Henry was buried at the little cemetery in Vermont and there I shall also be one day.

CHAPTER VIII

Foreign Students

A Worldwide Selection

During my vacation in Vermont in 1947, the president of Bennington College asked all the people who had summer homes in the vicinity if they could help him entertain the foreign students. They had come to the college for an orientation program before starting to study at different schools around the country.

While I was staying in Sugar Bush, the Sterbas sent me to the college in their place, since they were very busy with patients they had brought from Detroit. I was asked to drive the students wherever necessary, and participate in some of the activities the college had prepared for them. There were mainly Europeans from France, Italy, Holland and Germany, but also a few from the Asian countries, who interested me the most. On Sundays I brought some of them up to the house for a swim in our pool and hikes in the woods. These visits made the vacation for all of us much more colorful. At the end of the summer we invited four graduate students, an Indian woman, a Pakistani teacher, a Dutch social worker and a German law student to stay with us for the Labor Day weekend. During this time we became good friends.

In Bennington the students were introduced to music by American composers, played by well-known artists who came every summer to perform at the college. They also saw films on life in the United States and heard lectures on customs and behavior. Sometimes the students entertained their hosts with songs and dances from their own countries.

This interesting situation continued for several summers, and I gained a lot of knowledge of foreign students, their problems and interests. When I later applied for a job in New York, I was accepted by the Institute of International Education because of this experience.

The IIE handles exchange programs for foreign as well as American students, especially the Fulbright program. They also manage scholarships and aid programs in the field of education and among many other projects, organize international study visits. They were located at the Gould Mansion on Fifth Avenue. It was a pleasure to walk through Central Park every morning, since I lived just on the other side of the park.

For a while I worked in the Fulbright division, which gave me a chance to talk with the students who applied to study overseas. I had to collect the applications of the art students: records, tapes, photographs, pictures and whatever else would help them to become accepted. They also had to provide recommendations, which were usually given by their teachers. The applications were presented to a panel of judges. I had to inform the students of the results, and hated to disappoint them when the answer was negative. I could only comfort them by suggesting that they try again a year later.

Sometimes the recommendations were very funny. One professor at a major university wrote, "The committee agreed that the student was by far the most beautiful one who ever applied for a scholarship—but that was the only thing we could say about her." Another professor wrote only two words across the middle of the page: BEARDED REBEL.

After working in several different departments, I was assigned to the arts division, which I liked very much. Anita Warburg, whose assistant I became, was in charge of the foreign artists who came to spend a period of study in the United States to get acquainted with American art. We had artists from all over the world and had to help them with language and orientation. Many students wanted to meet with American artists. Miss Warburg was extremely knowledgeable in the arts, knew many of the top artists in the city and made

valuable contacts for the students. Since my background was music and musicians, she would sometimes ask me, "Can you pull another rabbit out of your hat for a musician we have to take care of?" This often meant getting in touch with one of my musician friends, or introducing the student to a conductor who would let him attend a rehearsal. I once asked Alexander Schneider, one of the most popular musicians in the city, if he could advise one of our students who wanted to specialize in chamber music. Schneider invited him to Vermont to audit at the famous Marlboro Music Festival. There the student met other musicians and got an excellent introduction to chamber music in America at its best.

The most interesting position I later had was as foreign student counselor at the American Language Institute of New York University. There I stayed for eighteen years. I have formed life-long friendships with students from strange countries, and have learned much from them. It has been a unique opportunity to meet so many fascinating people, and I have tried to remember as much about them as possible. Occasionally, there have been difficult times because of the problems these foreigners encountered while trying to adjust to our way of life. Yet, for the most part, they had a good time and appreciated what the university had to offer. My responsibility was to "simply be there," be available, sometimes act as a substitute mother, a new friend, a constant advisor; to offer a shoulder to cry on, to be a den mother and help untangle complicated love affairs, to explain differences in customs, to help with shopping, to chat with them at our regular coffee hour, to visit at a hospital bedside, sometimes to draft a business letter and often to accompany them on sightseeing trips around the city. I had to straighten out fights with landlords and roommates—even tensions with teachers; that was not always pleasant. Yet, when it worked, I felt just as relieved as the student.

Every day was different. I was asked odd questions and help was needed for the strangest requests. In the beginning I used to think, "What can I do now?" Later though, I got used to constant emergencies and learned that I had to have an an-

swer or a solution, even if I had to take advantage of friends or strangers. In the case of a student who beat up his roommate severely, I called my friend in Detroit to find out what I should do. Of course, no doctor makes a diagnosis over the telephone. What he did say, however, was that the student might have had a psychotic breakdown and needed to be watched carefully. It was no comfort for me.

The students often expressed themselves in curious and funny ways. One of them told me that he wanted to go back to his university and do the same thing I was doing at NYU, because "when you make people happy you are sitting right on top." Another one had spent a weekend in Washington, D.C., with a group of classmates and excitedly reported what they had seen and done. They had even gone to the opera. When asked which one it was, he answered, "We heard *Pinocchio* by Verdi." I guess he meant *Nabucco*. One of our Indonesian students wanted a job as a male model. I explained to him that I had to do some research and would let him know. He then told me that his family was very much against his doing this kind of work, since he then would be taken for a homosexual. He proudly added, "I am, of course." My favorite question came from a Japanese student, who had spent his first hospitality weekend with a Catholic family as their guest. He asked me while making the sign of the cross, "Do all Americans do this before eating dinner?"

My main concern was to keep the students happy. They do not study or learn well while they are worried, anxious or homesick. Just having me listen to their problems was sometimes comfort enough. One of our South African students who was white openly talked about his attitude towards blacks as he had learned it in his country. He had to be warned that he might get into serious trouble with American students. I gave him a long lecture and told him to use his intelligence to listen and understand how people here feel about this problem in his country. Several months later I had lunch with him, and he talked incessantly about how he had changed his mind and wanted to go back to Africa to help alleviate the situation there. I quietly listened and in the end he

said, it had helped him so much to talk "with me." Much later he married an American social worker, and together they went to South Africa in hope of a change. After two years they came back, totally discouraged about the situation. They settled in Connecticut.

When a black student arrived from South Africa, he asked me if he was the only one. I told him there was one other one. "Black or white?" he wanted to know. I firmly stated, "White." "Just keep him away from me," was his reaction.

Hartmut Friedrich

One of the young painters who had come from Germany was Hartmut Friedrich. He was a Fulbright scholar and I had to help him with all his problems. He moved into a YMCA near where I lived. Since Henry and I were also German, we often invited him to our place and became good friends. The dream of every painter is, of course, to have an exhibit. Hartmut had brought quite a number of his paintings to America. I knew a woman at Columbia University who ran a little gallery on the campus for the students who studied art. I persuaded her to make an exception and exhibit Hartmut's work for one month, although he was not a Columbia student. She was willing to consent under the condition that we do all the work connected with the exhibit. This meant publicity, hanging the pictures, inviting the press and taking the responsibility for the protection of his property. It was a big job, but we ended up with a wonderful show, and all our friends, colleagues, students and neighbors came to the opening. Hartmut sold two pictures and had good reviews. He also had the satisfaction of having had an exhibit in America, which later helped him enormously in Germany. Before he left, he travelled extensively around the country. He also spent a month in Mexico, which he claimed had the greatest influence on his work. When he returned to New York, his painting style had changed considerably. As a farewell gift, he gave me a charming Mexican watercolor, which I cherish as a precious belonging.

Hartmut Friedrich has become a well-known painter in

Germany, and his pictures can already be seen in many museums, especially his portraits of famous people. I have visited him in Berlin and after having seen his recent works, was very much impressed by his development as an artist.

ERNST NOLTING-HAUFF

One evening my phone rang and a youngish voice with a strong German accent asked, "Is this Mrs. Cordy?" I confirmed it and he explained, "My name is Ernst Nolting-Hauff. I am from Germany and Mr. Roland Proell has recommended me to you." I said, "I do not know Mr. Roland Proell. I do know, though, that he is a pianist and I have one of his recordings." Silence! "You don't know Mr. Proell? That is strange because my impression, when he spoke of you, was that he knows you quite well." I asked, "Have you any idea why he could have given you my name?" He did not. "Are you by any chance a pianist too?" "Yes, I am." "What are you doing in America?" "I have spent the summer at the Aspen Music Festival. I am now with friends in Connecticut and I want to come to New York this week to find a good teacher and apply to a music school."

I asked again, "With whom have you studied in Germany?" He answered, "With Konrad Hansen." Hansen had been a close friend of mine before I came to America. "Oh," I said, "he probably gave you my name." "No, it was Mr. Proell. That I remember definitely." Since he sounded rather nice but a little disappointed, I suggested that he should call me again when he would be in New York. If I were available, we might get together. He was delighted and asked, "How about tomorrow?" I agreed.

At one o'clock, Ernst picked me up at my apartment to go to lunch. He was over six feet tall, rather handsome and very charming. We went to the Lincoln Center Coffee Shop, where the salad bar impressed him enormously. He took the large plate a waitress had given him for the salad and then asked me, "Can I go twice?" I did not know but assured him that he could get a lot on that plate. I directed him to the salad bar and he started to fill his plate. I waited for him to come back

for quite a while, and became a little worried. He finally returned with a towering plate of salad, carefully balancing it through the restaurant. Everybody was watching him and we all had to laugh. I said, "If you can finish that I would be surprised." He assured me that he easily could—and indeed he did. He only "added" a big piece of cake and a large glass of soda. We had a good talk and I found out that he had excellent recommendations to well-known teachers and did not need me. But I liked him and was sorry he had to return to Germany three days later. We said good-bye and I asked him to let me know if anything should develop for him.

On the following day I accidently ran into him at my bank. He told me in great excitement that he had just played for Jacob Lateiner, a well-known pianist and teacher at the Juilliard School of Music, who had accepted him as a student for the next semester. That would be right after he had finished his studies in Germany. I mentioned that I regretted not having heard him play. "Oh, that can still be arranged—my plane doesn't leave until late tomorrow night—any time is fine with me." I invited him to my place for four o'clock. The next morning he called and asked if he could bring one other person who also wanted to hear him. That was all right. He arrived at three-thirty to try out the piano, and was joined a little later by Maxim Shostakovich, the well-known conductor and son of the famous composer. Mr. Shostakovich had supposedly only one half-hour to listen. He asked the student, "What are you going to play for me?" The answer was, "A Prokofiev sonata?" Mr. Shostakovich made a face. "What else did you bring?" "Debussy." "Why don't you play me a Bach?" Upon which the student played the saraband from one of Bach's English Suites, which seemed to impress the master enormously. When he finished, Mr. Shostakovich said, "Now play me the Debussy." Again I was amazed how musically and perceptively this young man played two lovely preludes. At the end he said, "I should have stopped earlier—you might be late for your appointment." But now the maestro demanded the Prokofiev. No doubt he liked the playing. He had forgotten all about the appointment. When the sonata was

finished, he talked with the student for quite a while, made suggestions on tempo and dynamics, but all in a very positive and encouraging way. He finally said, "I will conduct in Germany next season; pick any concerto you like, and you can play it with me."

That was the end of my encounter with Ernst Nolting-Hauff, whom I had almost refused to meet when he first called. Now I look forward to seeing and hearing him again when he returns for his studies at Juilliard.

Beaudin Sela

Beaudin Sela was from Albania and delighted when I told him he was the first student we ever had from his country. He did not stay at the Language Institute for very long, since his English improved rather fast. He then continued his studies at the university's history department. In the beginning we conversed in German, which he spoke fluently. He became rather attached to me, and later often came back to the office to talk with me. I was always fascinated when he told me about his country, squeezed between Greece and the former Yugoslavia. The population consisted mainly of mountain tribes. His family though, has always lived on the Adriatic Coast.

Beaudin had studied at a university in Yugoslavia and was well educated. He had many interests and was grateful when I gave him free tickets for concerts or let him know of special events in the city. He had contacted Albanians who lived in New York, and was soon included in their considerable community.

One day he came to tell me that he had been involved in the case of an Albanian who had disappeared several weeks ago. Nobody could find out where he was or what had happened to him. He was a middle-aged man who had come from Albania to work in the factory of an Albanian friend. He had met two strange fellows on the street who tried to involve him in an argument which he did not understand, since he knew very little English. As soon as these men realized this, they decided to put the guilt of something they had done on him. They had been mixed up in a theft and coaxed the poor

Albanian to come to the police station with them. There they reported they had seen him taking things at the place where the theft had occurred. He was immediately put behind bars, and no attempt was made to put him in touch with a lawyer, nor was anybody informed about his whereabouts. It was extremely neglectful that nobody had been found who spoke Albanian.

Beaudin Sela had tried to investigate the case. He spoke with the man's employer and many other people who knew him. He inquired at the city's prisons and finally found his countryman. The first visit with him must have been a shocking experience. The man had almost lost his mind in his loneliness and despair. Beaudin immediately contacted a lawyer to work on the case, and after a long time and a lot of translating in prison as well as in court the poor Albanian was finally set free.

I have never seen a man work as hard as Beaudin did to get this man out of prison. He went to comfort his countryman every day and informed him about the status of his case. Then he went to the lawyer to report on all the details that might be important. He skipped one semester at school to help the Albanian with everything, collected money from the community for the lawsuit and had nothing else on his mind. Sometimes I did not see him for weeks; he only called me from time to time to let me know how the case was developing.

When I finally saw Beaudin again, he told me that this experience had made him decide to give up his studies of history and switch to law, in order to be able to assist his fellow Albanians in this country.

The Japanese Girl

During the first years of my work at the American Language Institute, I met a young Japanese girl during registration time. Her English was fair since she had a good educational background, and obviously came from a well-to-do family. She was graceful and attractive and her manners were delightful. She must have gone to a good school, since her vocabulary

was excellent, but the going was still slow. This girl was not shy and tried bravely to get through the complicated registration process. She did realize, though, that she needed considerably more study to feel at ease. She told me, since I was her counselor, that she was staying with friends of her parents on the East Side until she could get into her dormitory room. The university had only put aside a small number of rooms for the American Language Institute students; she was lucky to have been assigned to one. I told her about our large activities program and encouraged her to participate in as much as possible, which would improve her English in no time. I told her if she ever had a problem, wanted to ask a question or just talk with somebody, I would always be available. She thanked me profusely and left.

During registration I was involved with many other students, some of whom could not speak English at all. I had almost forgotten about the nice Japanese girl until school started. One of our teachers came to my office to ask if I had heard anything from Yowko, or if I had a telephone number to reach her. She had not yet shown up in class and since nobody knew her, but I had talked with her, could I phone her. Indeed I could, getting concerned immediately. I looked up her number and address in the file and after I had dialed, the gentle voice of the lady she was staying with told me there had been a problem and Yowko was not feeling well, but was planning to come to school the next day. She also intended to see her counselor before going to class. I assured the lady I would expect Yowko in the morning, and would try to help her and keep an eye on her.

The next day Yowko appeared, looking very pale and upset, and I felt that there must have been a big problem. I closed the door and asked if she wanted to talk about what had happened or come back after class since it was getting late. But she wanted to talk to me first. Then in a soft voice and with long pauses she told me that on her first Sunday she woke up early and felt so excited to be in a new country that she got up to take a little walk around the neighborhood, planning to be back for breakfast. There was nobody on the

street, but when she walked about three blocks away from the house a black limousine passed her slowly and stopped a block ahead of her. When she came closer, a big, heavy fellow jumped out of the car and tried to grab her around the waist and pull her towards the open door of the car. He held one hand over her mouth to stifle any attempt to scream. She put up an enormous fight not to be drawn into the limousine. Fortunately, she had studied jujitsu, which took him by surprise. He let her slip for a second, which she used to run as fast as she could. He followed her for a few moments and then gave up, since she had reached a street where people could be seen in the distance. Trying to catch her breath, she leaned against the wall of a building. Then she dared to turn around just as he was driving off in the other direction.

Once back home, the poor girl had to answer many questions, since the police had been summoned. It did not help her to get over the horrible kidnap experience. A doctor was also called to give her some medication, since she was quite shaky and nervous. She had already made up her mind that she wanted to return to Japan. I told her that I fully understood her decision and would help her to get a refund for her first semester payment and assist with any other departure problems. The only suggestion I made was that she should wait a few more days because such a big decision should be made with a clear head and be discussed at length with her friends. She had had the courage to come to the United States from Japan—maybe she would feel differently in a week. She said she did not think she would change her mind, but it was all right to wait a while. To my amazement, she then went to class and told everybody what had happened to her, which, of course, made her a heroine among her classmates.

I must have underestimated her strength. After some time she casually said she was not leaving and never mentioned the incident again.

Masao Kinoshita

Masao Kinoshita from Tokyo studied at our School of Business Administration and also took language courses to perfect

his English. He was one of the most eager participants in our activities program, and even developed a detailed chronicle of everything he did outside the classroom and wrote it all down. He included the dates, localities and names of the artists he had heard and seen and added his own remarks on their performances. Masao insisted on hearing every opera of the season at the Metropolitan Opera and sometimes even went to the City Center to hear the same opera with other singers. I am sure he saw more Broadway and Off-Broadway shows in the two years he had stayed in New York than many New York theater fans. With equal enthusiasm he attended ballet performances. He was lucky because the City Ballet always gave me a student discount for their performances. The more tickets I bought from them, the lower the price became. It ended up being fifty tickets at only one dollar each, while twenty-five cost two dollars. Of course this was thirty years ago, when the City Ballet was still at the Mecca Temple on 55th Street, which is so large that they hardly ever sold out. For our students this was a golden opportunity to see the ballet with friends or family and sometimes even their whole class. Masao topped them all with his insatiable desire not to miss anything while studying in New York. His lists were filling up and he developed into a real connoisseur of New York's cultural life.

When his English became more fluent, I introduced him to the executive director of ISRI (International Study and Research Institute), where he was permitted to hear free lectures on social, political and international problems. This impressed him immensely, and the director took a special interest in Masao. He invited him to come to meetings with executives who went to foreign countries, prepared by the Institute on what to expect in their respective fields.

Before Masao left, he showed me his "list of activities" and I was very proud of him. At the end of his study period he was so grateful that he wanted to do something to express his feelings. Since the lectures at ISRI had meant the most to him, he made a donation to the organization, which was highly appreciated by the director.

Many years later, on my way home from China, I stopped over in Tokyo for a few days. Since I was travelling with a group, I only had a few hours to spend with Masao. Until then we had just exchanged Christmas cards. He went out of his way to entertain me, picked me up at my hotel by car and drove me around the city. He invited me to a precious dinner in a separate room at one of the finest local restaurants, where he had ordered a special meal in advance. A charming hostess served us many different Japanese dishes at the traditional low table. We had a long talk and he told me of his development in the business world, where he was extremely satisfied. It was touching to realize how loyal he still felt toward New York University and his friends at the American Language Institute. I had to promise him that if I ever came to Japan again, I would visit him at his parents' home. Meanwhile he got married and still writes beautiful Christmas cards together with his wife.

AZZEDINE LAYACHI

Azzedine Layachi was an Algerian student whose family I had visited in his country. They had been extraordinarily hospitable and friendly to me. I often spoke with Azzedine about the wonderful time I had had, and how much I was hoping his parents would come to New York to visit him. In the course of time they actually managed to come several times.

One Friday morning, Azzedine came to the office and asked about home hospitality for the weekend. I scolded him a little for telling me so late and explained to him that all available families had students assigned to them. Only if someone would cancel could I still place him. "How about next weekend?" He gave me a broad smile and answered, "Mrs. Cordy, I am sure if you would look into your files, you would find one more family." His confidence was contagious and I pulled out my hospitality file. I found a card which I had not yet used and asked, "Would you consider visiting a Jewish family?" He immediately answered, "Yes, why not, but they would never invite me." I said, "Let's try—I do not know them but they are on our list of people who provide

hospitality for our students."

I called Westchester and the hostess was quite willing to have an Arab student join them for the weekend. It was a Jewish holiday and they expected guests. If Azzedine would consider going to the temple with them on Saturday morning, they would pick him up at the station on their way. She gave me the train schedule and all the necessary information. Then I had to tell her a lot about Azzedine, which ended with my putting him on the phone to introduce himself. He was thrilled. He embraced me as if I had given him a winning lottery number and promised to come back Monday morning to report.

During the weekend I could not help thinking about this arrangement and wondering how it would work out. Azzedine was a very outspoken fellow, who never hesitated to say what he thought or to insist when he felt he was right. Of course, I was hoping nobody would start talking about politics. He was waiting for me when I arrived Monday morning, beaming all over. I made him sit down to describe the weekend. His expression became very serious when he said that he had spent the most wonderful weekend in his life. The family had been extraordinarily warm and generous. Every single member had talked with him at length, including the old grandmother. The rabbi had invited them all to his house. They had even talked about Israel.

Azzedine had stayed with this family until late Sunday night. They had gone out of their way to make him feel at home, and showered him with gifts, which included a small television set. At the end, they had invited him to come back the next month for another weekend.

The Israeli

Once a year, while I was still working at the Foreign Student Center (after five years I changed to the University's American Language Institute), we organized an International Student Festival. Each nationality had to present their native culture within a small booth with posters, pictures, photos, artwork and books. The booths were assembled in the large hall on

the ground floor of the Loeb Student Center, and several students had to be there constantly to protect what was displayed. Some years there were more than twenty different nations represented. Those students who did not want a booth offered national food which they had cooked and baked themselves and sold at very low prices. This presentation was almost the most popular one. There were many dishes and delicious cakes nobody had ever eaten before.

In the evening, we had great performances in the main auditorium: poetry readings, musical presentations, short plays, folk songs and lots of dances. The public was invited. Many consular officials and heads of other schools came to see the show. The demand for tickets was so overwhelming that the performances had to be shown several times on different evenings. The festival was always a great success.

It was very important to make sure that nothing would be stolen during these exciting days. People could walk in from the street, and most items were borrowed from bookstores, consulates and ethnic stores. The students took turns sitting in front of their booth, or asked friends to relieve them when they had to go to class. My responsibility was to make sure that everything was ready on time. The students discussed their plans with me, and I helped with making choices and watching the rehearsals; but mostly they were in charge of everything themselves.

One year, in the middle of the festival, the German students asked if I could help them find somebody to sit at their booth in the afternoon, because they had an important class meeting which they could not miss. I assured them I would do my level best and they left. It turned out not to be as easy as I had presumed. The time came closer and closer and no student showed up whom I could ask. I already saw myself sitting at the German booth, which was not such a good idea, because then other students would come and ask me too. About half an hour before I had to go over to the student center, a very nice Israeli girl walked in. She was a student at the School of Social Work, very popular with her classmates and always eager to participate in cultural activities. I asked her if

she could help out for a couple of hours at the festival. She immediately said she would love to, but when I explained that she would have to sit in front of the German booth and talk to German visitors, she became hesitant. I immediately said that I fully understood if she did not want to do it, but there were really no Nazis involved. Our students were born after the war, and the visitors were mostly Americans. She became very upset and blamed herself for having these feelings, but she could not do this for the Germans. I said, "Forget it. I am going over myself." That made it even worse for her, because she knew that I had been a refugee from Germany. I explained to her that I could not afford to let personal feelings interfere with my work. She then said, "I cannot do it now. But I will think about it and maybe some day I will be able to do it."

I was glad that she said that. A few weeks later she told me she had conquered her feelings, and besides, in the future, as a social worker she would not be able to afford to let personal feelings interfere with her work.

Mr. Wang

In the seventies we had a very unusual student from Shanghai. He was a wiry little man, around sixty years old and rather lively, which most of our Chinese students at the time were not. His English was poor, but he had studied philosophy at a German university and was very happy that he could at least speak freely with me. His teachers reported that he worked diligently in their classes and with his little English expressed himself as best he could.

One of the first things I had to help him with was finding a room where he could study without being disturbed. He also needed to store his food, since he could not eat anything American, and the Chinese restaurants were either too far away or too expensive. I found a nice lady on the West Side who had a room with a private bath for rent. Mr. Wang took a look at it and moved in the next day. Although the lady had offered him the use of her kitchen, he never made use of it and kept all his food in the drawers of his bedroom. It was sent from Shanghai by a brother, so that Mr. Wang would

never have to buy anything and could live on dry old Chinese food for years.

His appreciation for the little help I gave him was enormous. At Christmas time he came to the office to bring me a gift. He put it on my desk without a word, and with a very embarrassed smile disappeared again. It was the last day before the holidays. I had a suitcase under my desk and was planning to go directly to the airport to catch a flight out west to be with my grandchildren. From the size of the package I could tell that it was impossible to take the gift along, but I thought I could leave it in a closet until the New Year. It turned out to be an oversized raw chicken, which, of course, I had to give away.

When I returned, I was very busy during the registration period. It had not occurred to me that I had not seen Mr. Wang yet. After classes had started, one of the teachers asked me if I knew where he was. I immediately called him and learned from his landlady that he was sick. She said that she had urged him to see a doctor but he would not hear of it. He was up and around, obviously had a fever and was coughing through the night. I asked her to tell him that I needed to see him as soon as possible. He did come the next day and looked so bad that I suggested he should see a university doctor at the Student Health Service, which was right across the street. He first refused again to go, but I became very firm, took him by the arm and led him over. The doctor was busy and could not see him right away, but Mr. Wang was told to wait. I went back to my office and expected him to return and report. After two hours, the doctor called me to explain that Mr. Wang had a bad case of pneumonia and should be admitted to a hospital immediately. He had, however, refused. I asked the doctor to make hospital arrangements, and said I would be over right away to take him there myself. At the Health Service I argued with Mr. Wang; I told him the situation was too serious to act like a child. I would accompany him now. We took a cab, which he also protested, and went to the hospital, where we had to wait again for a long time to see a doctor. Mr. Wang became so weak and coughed so badly

that I made him lie down on the sofa in the waiting room, where he went to sleep. We were the only people left when a young nurse came in, saw us and asked, "Which one is the patient?" I was so startled that I answered, "Take a guess." Well, she led us into the doctor's office, where more X-rays were taken, and then they placed Mr. Wang in a room with three other patients. He did not seem to mind that. The nurses put a hospital gown on him and gave him something to make him sleep. I assured him that I would inform his landlady and be back the next day.

It took five weeks for Mr. Wang to get over his pneumonia. They had to feed him intravenously for a while and then persuaded him to eat some of the hospital food. I visited him every few days, and he behaved perfectly well. The nurses liked him, since he never objected to anything. In the end he looked better than ever before. After he returned to school, he came to my office to discuss what he could do for me, since I had "saved his life." He took me to lunch and suggested a big banquet at a hotel. Of course, I talked him out of it. We had several lunches and during these meals he started to explain his "personal philosophy," which seemed slightly confused and hard to understand.

One day I came home and saw a gigantic box in front of my door. I immediately thought that this had to be a mistake, since I had not bought any large objects. To my surprise it came from Bloomingdale's and had my name on it. Then it dawned on me who could have sent it. When I opened the box I found several gifts, all of them neatly wrapped. The first of the presents was a huge globe, and I decided right away to send it to my grandchildren. The next package turned out to be a lizard handbag with the price tag dangling from it, which made me shudder. I have never owned such an expensive bag in my life! It was the kind that lasts forever. The third package contained a beautiful wool scarf in tasteful brown colors. The last box contained a twenty-five-inch round Chinese copperplate, which would look gorgeous on my piano. I was mortally embarrassed to accept all these gifts, but knowing Mr. Wang quite well by now, realized it would only hurt him

if I refused them. He had two relatives in this country, no personal friends at all and had gotten quite used to me over the last months. His frequent visits to our office made everybody expect him to propose. Fortunately, he had a wife in Shanghai whom he had—so he told me—not seen in thirty years.

My encounter with Mr. Wang ended rather sadly. His mental condition deteriorated, and his teachers complained that he disturbed them in class. They asked me what one could do about it. His landlady also complained that he never opened a window, and the Chinese food in his drawers started to smell. She definitely wanted to get rid of him. I finally contacted his family and they came to pick him up. One more Christmas card arrived later and that was the last I heard from Mr. Wang.

Baldur von Schirach

One day, while I still worked at the university's Foreign Student Center, I was in the office after five P.M. Suddenly the telephone rang. The call came from another university office, where they told me about a young German student who had just walked in and needed general counseling. Would I be able to see him? I agreed and they sent him over. By the time he arrived, I was the only one left in the office. Since the young man looked rather tired and unhappy, I immediately spoke to him in his native German. He gave me his name which startled me, "Werner von Schirach!" Baldur von Schirach had been the leader of the German youth in the Third Reich, a passionate Nazi, and a favorite of Adolf Hitler. I felt most uncomfortable, but since it was my duty to help foreign students, I disregarded my personal feelings but asked him, "Are you related to *the* Baldur von Schirach?" He softly answered, "Yes, I am. He was my father's brother." Then we both remained silent for a while. He must have sensed what I was thinking. After hesitating, he finally told me that his father had not agreed with what had gone on in Germany, and there had been bitter fights between him and his brother. His father had finally decided to leave Germany with his family. Before the war broke out they had gone to England, where he tried

to find work, which was very difficult. He became more and more depressed, could not shake the German tragedy and finally committed suicide.

The student had been a young boy when it happened. I felt great sympathy for him, since he had suffered from the Nazi regime more than I had. We talked for a long time. I told him why I too had had to leave Germany. Although our reasons had been totally different, we suddenly felt that we had a lot in common.

Following this encounter I only saw him in the distance from time to time. He always smiled at me as if we were secret accomplices. After one semester, however, he left NYU and I never heard from him again.

Two Koreans

There were many strange events and unusual incidents during the time I worked with the students. Two Korean undergraduates had walked around the neighborhood of the school and had discovered a flea market. They went inside, looked around and saw many things which one cannot get in Korea. They were attracted by a pair of handcuffs. In the course of playing with them, they actually managed to handcuff themselves to each other. At first they laughed and asked the manager to give them the key to unlock the cuffs. He coolly said, "I don't have the keys." He was busy with other customers and paid no more attention to the boys. That was when they stopped laughing. In the excitement, they came over to see their counselor in her office, who certainly did not have a key either. They were mortally embarrassed, because people had seen them in the street and probably thought that they had escaped from prison. The entire office staff, teachers and other students, gathered around the two "escapees." Everybody made suggestions about what to do and tried to separate them. Nothing worked. I finally called university security, explained what had happened and asked them to come over with their tools. After long manipulations, they were finally able to break the cuffs open, leaving two badly scratched-up wrists.

ANNA MARIE AMA-FIELD

In 1978, Anna Marie Ama-Field, a student from the Ivory Coast, came to study at New York University for a bachelor's degree. She was twenty-eight years old, chocolate brown, very attractive, well-dressed and eager to participate in student activities. She obviously came from a fine family, was married and had two children. She told me that her husband was a businessman and had to travel constantly to other countries. She was hoping that he would have to come to the United States during the year, because she wanted me to meet him. I thought that he had to be a very generous person to let her study in the United States for such a long time. Meanwhile, her children were being taken care of by her parents.

Anna Marie was passionately interested in everything our activities program had to offer. I sent her to different families for weekends. She also went to Washington and Philadelphia with a group of other students, and during the Thanksgiving break to the Amish-Mennonite communities in Pennsylvania. She hardly missed a sightseeing trip or a concert for which we arranged free tickets. At the weekly coffee hour she practiced her English, made friends and became popular. I liked her very much and introduced her to some of my personal friends, who also invited her.

One morning during spring registration, when the office was full of new students, Anna Marie came to my desk to tell me that her husband was in New York and with her right now. Could she introduce him to me? I was busy with a new student and said that I would love to meet him in a few minutes. When I was through with the newcomer, I got up to find Anna Marie. I looked at all the new black faces and wondered which one was her husband. Suddenly Anna Marie waved to me from the end of the hall and came over with a small, elderly, white gentleman, at least twice her age and rather European looking. We went to my office and sat down. It turned out that her husband was from Vienna and had emigrated to Africa. We immediately started to speak German. He had left on account of Hitler's invasion of Austria, and we had a lot in common. We talked for a long time, while Anna

Marie sat between us with a big smile on her face, although she did not understand a word. Her husband told me that he had married her when she was fourteen years old, which was not unusual in the Ivory Coast. He dealt in business machines, mostly in Europe, but occasionally also in America and the Far East. He only stayed in New York for a few days, which was his only chance to see his wife and make sure that everything was all right.

During the summer Anna Marie went to see her children and only returned late in fall, when classes had already begun. She came to see me first, and I immediately noticed a change in her. She looked much older and had lost her lovely smile and talked with a very high, hoarse whisper which, she explained, was due to a throat infection. After talking with her for a while, I suspected that it was a nervous reaction and something must have happened to her. I told her to come back after class and have dinner with me. She agreed, and during the evening it all came out.

When she arrived in Abidjan in June, she was told that her husband was living with another Ivory Coast woman, and wanted to divorce her. This was such a shock to her that she became very sick. Being back with her family, and especially the children, she recovered enough to accept her parents' offer to return to America and finish her studies. After all, her husband had not been as nice as I had thought. It took a few weeks and a lot of counseling for Anna Marie to recover her voice and her ability to concentrate on her studies. She stayed at the university for a long time and ran into trouble when her parents could not send her any more money. Her husband supported the children, but there was no provision for Anna Marie. Naturally, she took much more time to finish her degree than other students. I helped her to find little jobs now and then but it was difficult, since she did not have permission to work. Even after she finally received it, there were problems with her visa, which could not be extended indefinitely. In the end she succeeded and got her bachelor's degree, with which she will be able to find a job in her country. It will not be easy for her to live in Abidjan again.

THE MEXICAN STUDENT

One of our Mexican students was looking for an apartment and, of course, had great trouble finding one. I told him to not only look in the papers, but also tell everybody about his search, so that people could let him know, if they had heard of anything. One day, when he mentioned his search to a girl at a party, she immediately told him that he could rent her place, since she was leaving New York for approximately one year.

It was a newly furnished place, rather elegant and with enough space for the student to buy himself a new desk, a stereo and lamps. After he had lived there for about a month, enjoying his new home, the lady returned and told him to get out. He reminded her that she had said that he could stay for a year, but she cooly gave him three days to move out. He was stunned. She had been so friendly before and now seemed completely changed. When I discussed the situation with him in the office, I had to warn him that it would be difficult for a lawyer to help him, since there was nothing in writing. However, he was determined to get legal advice, and decided to ask one of our university lawyers as well.

Before we could get enough information, the three days had passed and the lady called the student again and declared, "I am moving in tomorrow." He told her that he would not let her into the apartment, but she said she had a key and added, "Do you want me to bring some of my Mafia friends?" When I heard that, I was horrified and called the university lawyer again to tell him about what had happened. To my surprise he said, "The student should immediately move out." The student's lawyer shared this opinion. Meanwhile, the lady visited the student once more, accompanied by the biggest Danish dog he had ever seen. The student started to argue with the lady, but when the dog began to growl, he decided to move out.

A week later the student was in the hospital with a nervous breakdown. I visited him a few times and after some treatments and enough rest, he recovered his old self again. However, the experience had been shattering for him. When

he was finally discharged from the hospital, he immediately left the country to go home.

Subway Crime

One of our Latin American students came to the office one day, terribly upset because he had run into trouble in the subway, and the police had caught him. I asked him to describe exactly what had happened. The "crime" he had committed was not a serious one, but he would probably be called to appear in court. It was important for him to act calmly and correctly.

He had entered the West Fourth Street subway station, and for an unexplainable reason, one of the doors leading to the platform had been open. He had looked around, and since nobody stood in line for tokens, he presumed he could go on. No sooner had he walked through the open door, when an attendant called him loudly several times until he understood that it was meant for him. He returned to the window from where the shouts came and realized that a policeman was already standing behind him. It looked like a trap. He had stuttered some explanations in bad English and had to give his name and address.

A few days later he received a summons. I had told him, that if he had to report to a judge about this incident, to first come and see me "for a rehearsal." I warned him to be absolutely truthful, and let the judge know that he was very sorry about this unfortunate incident. He should also tell him where he came from, that he did not know the laws and regulations in the city and was hoping not to be punished too harshly.

The student was very lucky, since the judge was rather understanding. He himself had once visited Bolivia, asked the boy many questions, and in the end admonished him to be careful in the future and beware of "open doors."

The "Enfant Terrible"

One of the stunning looking Latin American girls, who had long, blonde curls and dark brown eyes, came to the office

wearing a light-green T-shirt. I could not believe my eyes when I saw what was written on it: "I am still a virgin—but this is an old shirt."

THE IRAQI

One year we had a student from Iraq who was a little older than his classmates and very eager to improve his English. He had been sent by the organization in his country for which he was working, and had to return as soon as his English was good enough to communicate with customers.

When he arrived at New York University, he needed a lot of help and information. I tried my best to make him feel comfortable. He took advantage of my offer to come to see me any time if he needed help. When he was able to talk more easily he came to my office and with a very serious expression said to me, "I have a problem." I immediately got up and closed the door behind him, so that he could talk freely. After a long silence he said, "I need a woman—I am not used to living alone and it has become very difficult for me to be without a woman. What shall I do?" In my twenty years at the institute I have heard almost all the questions a student could possibly ask. But this one was new. Should I say the university does not provide that kind of service? The student was over thirty years old and I sympathized with him. He said he had not met any women since he arrived in the United States, and did not know how to go about it. I gave him a long lecture on the differences of cultures, and explained to him that it was a matter of time. He should go to the student center and talk with the American girls. If he were lucky, it might develop into a closer relationship. I warned him though, that American girls were very proud, and if they sensed his intentions, might not react. It would take a while to find the right friend. He was an attractive guy and there were many unattached girls at the center. He left, determined to try what I had suggested.

For the remainder of the afternoon I was busy and forgot all about the Iraqi. After two hours, he returned and said, "It did not work!" I had to admonish him once again that it

would not go so fast and he needed more patience. A week later I met him on the campus and he was beaming. He had found a woman and was very happy. I asked where he had met her and he said, "On 42nd Street." I wanted to know if she was a nice girl and he said, "Yes, she is rather nice. But the only thing I do not like about her is that she always wants money to buy things." This, I explained, was not considered to be nice behavior. He thought I might be right and he would try to get rid of her.

After a while I saw him only occasionally from a distance. He looked considerably more relaxed, able to speak English fluently, which he seemed to practice with many different girls. I assumed his problem had finally been solved.

The Fight

Another Iraqi had left his family behind and was often homesick and miserable. He came to see me frequently to discuss how he could find the money to bring his family to the United States. He felt it would take too long to learn English and get a degree without his family being with him. He shared a dormitory room with a student from the Cameroons, but had not yet developed a relationship with him. They had different class schedules and ate their meals at different times.

One morning several students who lived in the same dormitory came to my desk and told me the Iraqi had been sitting in his room eating a late supper when the student from the Cameroons came in and they got into a political argument. All of a sudden, the Cameroonian attacked the Iraqi from behind, pulled him off his chair and beat him severely. The students heard him scream, went to his room and saw him on the floor. The attacker said he had been insulted and had to take revenge. He then left the room and the students took care of the poor fellow as best they could. They decided to inform me in the morning.

Knowing how easily students can exaggerate when they are upset, I said I had to see the Iraqi first, and then would talk with the dean to find out what should be done. The Cameroonian probably had to be sent home. When I saw the

Iraqi, my shock was great, indeed. His head was swollen enormously, his eyes could hardly be seen and his cheeks and forehead were black and blue. I sent the student to the health service and asked one of the others to take a picture of the horrible sight. I went to report to my boss who immediately sent me to the dean, who took it rather calmly. He said he had to talk to both students, and whatever was the outcome, we had to protect the reputation of the school and the respective consulates. It should not become a political issue. He also said that both students were probably guilty, and the whole incident would soon be forgotten. All we had to do was to separate them. I should come back in a few days when everybody had calmed down. The Cameroonian later told the dean that the Iraqi had threatened him with a knife, upon which he had lost his temper and beat him up. Neither the students nor I believed this, since the Iraqi was short and thin and the Cameroonian tall and heavy-set.

The students remained excited but eventually calmed down. The Iraqi healed rather fast, and the Cameroonian was placed in another building. The school paper published a story about the incident without names and in the end the dean was right; it was all forgotten.

Two Turkish Students

On one of our monthly tours for foreign students, we took the subway to the Metropolitan Museum's Cloisters and spent the day on its lovely grounds.

In 1914, the museum was first opened on Fort Washington Avenue. Much later it was rebuilt after the model of a southern French cloister, St. Michel-de-Cuxa. In the course of time, John D. Rockefeller donated many additional works of art. He also acquired the notable Barnard Collection, which was then exhibited at the Cloisters. The Metropolitan Museum has remained in charge of the Cloisters Museum to this day.

We took a long visit through the exhibit halls, for which many students used the guided tour headphones and marveled at the detailed explanations and the easy handling of the me-

chanics. One can stop the lecture at any time, retrace what one did not understand and keep the phones as long as one desires. Afterwards we proceeded to the outdoor facilities. The students, who had not brought their lunch for a picnic, bought their sandwiches at the cafeteria and we all settled on the grass and rested a while. Then we played games with balls and Frisbees, walked around all the grounds and out to the point where one has a beautiful view over the Hudson. The weather was ideal and everybody enjoyed the perfect day.

At the end of the afternoon we discussed the return trips. Most students were by now familiar with the subway system, but we had two from Turkey who had only arrived recently and were still bewildered. They told me that they had to go to their consulate afterwards to get information. I suggested they should come to Times Square with me; from there I would put them on the train, which would get them close to their destination. The subway was terribly crowded and we got separated. I squeezed through the car to find them and told them they should not move after getting off the train and wait for me right there. At Times Square, many students got off, said good-bye and thanked me for the good time they had had. When the platform seemed a little emptier, I started to look for my Turks, but could not find them. They had assured me that they knew what to do, and would get off at the right station. I ran up and down along the platform and was finally convinced they had not made it. What next? I waited for another train but they did not show up. I decided to go to the consulate and wait for them. They had not yet arrived when I got there but I was hoping they would take a cab, since they knew the address. The consul received me very kindly and we had a long talk about all the things that might have happened to the students. He was a very nice man who felt my uneasiness and tried to comfort me. He said in case the students did not find the consulate, he would get in touch with me later. Although it was getting late, he decided to wait for them for another hour. I was worried because it was Friday and I would not be in the office before Monday. A weekend with this uncertainty could be most uncomfortable. I finally left,

went home and waited. Nothing happened during the weekend. On Monday morning I called the consulate and was told that the two students had never shown up. The consul was unable to reach them because they had no telephone. He had sent them a telegram, which could not be delivered. The university authorities, several teachers and I tried in vain to locate the students. I kept in touch with the consul for several days and we finally decided that the students must have left the country, since one could not find any trace of them.

I must say that this was the only time in my twenty-three years with foreign students that I "lost" any. Since nobody ever reported their whereabouts and no further search could be made, we had to assume that nothing had happened to them. They must have simply decided to leave the country without telling anybody.

The Student from the Philippines

A young woman from the Philippines, whose name I have forgotten, frightened us terribly one day. She had quietly studied for several months and did not appear to have any problems. The teachers told me that her grades were not above average and that she did not seem to be particularly interested in what she was doing. She was twenty-eight years old.

One morning when she came to the office to obtain a paper from her files, I received an urgent call. She had suddenly started to talk incoherently and insisted that she had been told to leave the school: "I clearly heard the voices who told me that." Everybody around her tried to convince her that there were no voices, and that she was imagining all this. My psychoanalyst friends, however, had taught me that this was the wrong attitude to take when somebody has a breakdown. To calm a disturbed person until professional help was available, one should go along with their hallucinations. I told the student that I understood her, and that she should not pay attention to the others. Then I took her by the arm and led her into a small room, where we were alone. I assured her that I would help her with all her papers if she wanted to leave. There would be no problem.

Meanwhile the medical people from the health service had been informed and I hoped they would come soon. The student had stopped talking incoherently and sat down in a very stiff and upright way, not answering my questions anymore. Her expression had changed, and her thoughts seemed to be in another world. I kept talking to her in a soft voice to prevent her from going to sleep before being picked up. When the paramedics arrived, she let them put her on a stretcher without resistance. They immediately took her to Bellevue Hospital.

The doctors later told us that the student was mentally very sick and could not continue her studies for a long time. All they could do for her at the moment was to prepare her to make the trip back to the Philippines, where her parents had to take over. Evidently that much she understood; she had to join her family in order to get well again. I was not encouraged to visit her before her departure. We sent her the papers which she needed to leave the country, and also had to clear the situation with the consulate, since they are aware of every student who comes to study in the United States. Later I wrote to her to let her know we expected her to come back to continue her studies. This, unfortunately, never happened.

The Thai Student

From time to time, foreign governments sent groups of students to study in the United States. One year, we had a large number of students from Thailand. They all needed to learn the language before going on to other departments at the university. Except for Japan, governments seemed to prefer sending male students. I suppose this will change in the course of time.

We had arranged an elaborate orientation program for the newcomers, which gave me the chance to talk with some of them more leisurely. About a week after this program, one of the Thai boys came to my office and brought me a package, saying: "You have been so nice with me." I have often received gifts from students who brought things from their countries. We had a policy in the office that permitted us to

accept gifts if they did not seem too expensive. Gifts were usually given later in the semester, or at the end as a farewell gift. Nobody had ever brought me a present upon their arrival. I showed the student my surprise and wanted to refuse to accept his gift. However, he insisted. His mother had given him this Thai blouse for any woman who would take care of her son. The blouse was embroidered beautifully in typical Thai style. After resisting for a while, I gave in and accepted the—maybe—expensive gift. He obviously wanted to get rid of the package and had chosen the very first person.

At home I realized the blouse fit me perfectly and I decided to wear it someday at a student coffee hour to show it to all the Thais. When the day came I put it on, but it looked so colorful and shiny that I put a loose jacket over it, hoping not to appear too conspicuous in the office. The coffee hour was in the afternoon. In the morning I was sitting at my desk and noticed through the open door that the benefactor of "my elegance" had arrived with a group of Thai girls and they were talking with some of the office people. I got up to greet them and looking at the boy, I opened my jacket wide to expose my entire front and then asked, "What do you think of this?" The student stared at my breast and blushed to dark purple. So did the girls. Then I realized it was a different Thai student, who could not understand what I had meant. I quickly said, "Don't you see that this is a Thai blouse?" They all relaxed, admired it and pretended they had not misunderstood my gesture.

When they left it was my turn to blush. I am sure that outside the students had a good laugh.

Empire State Building Tour

One day I took the foreign students on a trip to the Empire State Building. We first gathered at my office and waited a long time for everybody to arrive. Some of those who had planned to join us never made it. When we were thirty-two I decided to leave.

It is not easy to get on a bus with so many people. The driver always gets annoyed. I divided the group in half and

asked the student whose English was the most advanced to take the bus up Sixth Avenue and get off at 34th Street. I would be right behind them, taking the next bus with the other students. They should wait for us at the bus stop.

As soon as we got there, I realized it was lunchtime and the streets were full of people. I would probably lose sight of some of my charges. I explained to as many as possible where the Empire State Building was and should they get lost, to ask someone to direct them. We squeezed through the crowd and finally they all made it to the entrance.

Inside the Empire State it was also terribly crowded and an attendant lined us up against the wall. He suggested that I collect the money from the students to go to the observatory and then to the cashier for the tickets. Of course, nobody had the right change and it took a long time. At the cashier another line awaited me. Meanwhile the students got restless, started to run around, asked questions and wanted to leave. One of them, whom I did not remember, was a little older than the others and told me that he had already been at the Empire before and helped us to find the right elevator to get everybody to the top. He explained the beautiful view to the others, talked with them and was very helpful, which was a relief for me.

The students had a great time taking pictures, looking through the telescopes and buying lots of tourist items at the gift shop. We then visited other parts of the building, and I kept counting constantly to make sure that everybody was still there. When we finally returned to the lobby I had to find out how they would get home. Some wanted to take the subway, but others, especially the girls, preferred to go by bus. In the end they were all taken care of except for the student who had helped me. He asked which bus I was taking and then added that it was his bus, too. We walked to Fifth Avenue together and I decided to show my appreciation by thanking him profusely. In the course of our conversation, it turned out that he was actually not a student at NYU at all. He admitted that he had observed me in the morning with all those foreign-looking people and had become very interested. Since it

was his day off he started to help me and when he found out that I mistook him for another student, he cheerfully joined us. He was an attendant at the Empire State. And his accent? Well, he had come from Czechoslovakia twenty years ago. Then he invited me to have coffee with him, but unfortunately I was too exhausted after this "mass excursion." However, I reciprocated by inviting him to the next foreign student coffee hour at the American Language Institute.

A Real Catastrophe

One of our Iranian students went to a prostitute on 42nd Street. He had been told never to leave cash in his dormitory room, so he took along the nine hundred dollars he had drawn from the bank to last him a long time. When he came out of the "Place of Ill Repute" there was nothing left in his pockets. It was a traumatic shock for him and he came to me to unburden himself.

How could I comfort this student? He had not yet paid for the next semester and had to live till the end of the term. We offered him a refund on the remainder of the current semester, hoping he could get enough money from his family to continue his studies. Yet, he was too shaken and insisted that he had to go home where "prostitutes are under police control and nothing like this could ever happen to anybody in my country."

Amadeus

One of my most pleasant duties while working with the students was taking them once a year to Central Park to hear the Metropolitan Opera give a free performance. Since one had to be there early to get a space on the lawn, we always planned a picnic and brought our supper along. One sat on blankets and shared the food. There was plenty of bread, cheese, cookies and sodas. When it was not too crowded in the park, one could even stretch out after the meal, lie flat on one's back and look into the stars while listening to *Traviata, Carmen,* or *Madame Butterfly*. For those students who did not come from big cities, it was their first time to hear an opera, which usu-

ally meant an extraordinary treat. Not too many students were interested in opera, but usually at least ten or twelve did join me, along with two or three teachers. During the intermission we walked around the park, bought additional refreshments and tried to get as close to the stage as possible in order to see the performers and the musicians. Sometimes we were lucky and even got a glimpse of a famous star. The opera always took place on Central Park's "Great Lawn," where a stage had been constructed to provide space for the orchestra. It was a concert performance, but usually the singers acted out their parts as much as possible. One person of our group had to stay behind to protect blankets, sweaters and the remaining food.

Once, when it was my turn to stay behind, I settled myself in the middle of the space we had been using and looked around to see how other people were enjoying the evening. Some had brought folding chairs and even boxes they had covered with a tablecloth, using regular china and silverware. Many brought containers with ice cubes for their wine. A group of nice-looking American girls and boys had been sitting on blankets right next to us and had watched my mostly Oriental group with keen interest. Now they were all walking around except for one young man who was sitting and guarding their belongings. He was reading a book, and after a while he looked up and smiled at me, since we were evidently in the same situation. I noticed that he was reading a book on Mozart. I had just seen the Broadway play *Amadeus* and was interested in finding out more about the composer. I told the young man why I would like to know the name of the author of his book, and he eagerly asked me how I had liked *Amadeus*. I explained to him why I had disliked it very much. The play had shown Mozart to be a vulgar person, which I was convinced he was not. I had read his letters and some books about him in his language, and found him terribly misunderstood. His little jokes in Austrian slang were definitely not vulgar. The young man then told me that he was very much impressed by what I had said, since he himself was trying to find out everything about Mozart. He was an actor and

had just been engaged to play Amadeus on the road with the New York company. We talked through the entire intermission and in the end he said, "I can promise you one thing—you have convinced me—I will definitely not play Mozart as a vulgar person."

ABDELKADER

In 1978, the Algerian government sent thirty students to the United States for graduate studies. They had been chosen from large cities, as well as smaller communities, and had all been at the top of their classes. None of them spoke good English—most of them none whatsoever. They enrolled in English language courses at our institute. As usual, it was my responsibility as student counselor to help them with all their problems outside the classroom. And they had plenty! The main question was housing. At the time, the university had a strange policy: students who were not enrolled in a degree program (which the language courses are not) cannot live in the dormitories. These students take full-time courses, pay the same amount as the degree students, and many of them later continue their studies at our university departments.

The housing situation in New York City was very bad. It took quite a while to place all the students, but in the end they found furnished rooms or shared apartments. Fortunately, they came from a socialist country and were not spoiled or demanding. Their fields of study were varied, since the knowledge they would acquire was meant to benefit their home country in many areas. Some of them were planning to study economics, others law or business, and many of them later enrolled in political science. Shopping for household and personal needs was discussed in French, the only language in which I could help them and which they all spoke fluently. One day the political science students were in my office, and I asked them if they had ever studied from the books of Professor Gabriel Almond, who was a cousin of mine and taught at Stanford University. This question brought a tremendous reaction, since they had all studied from his books in Algeria and respected and admired him enormously. The fact that I

not only knew their teacher but was even related to him became the foundation of a very special friendship between us. Of course, they wanted to meet him, which I was later able to arrange when he came to New York. Two of them even flew to California to discuss their study programs with him.

Abdelkader was one of the students who needed me the most and somehow became my favorite. He walked with the most unusual limp I had ever seen. He had to jump up at each step, which seemed to be a great effort for him. He was tall and extraordinarily handsome, had long tight curls hanging down to his shoulders, very large black eyes and the tanned skin one only sees in Arabic countries. I asked his friends about his handicap, and they told me that Abdelkader had had an accident as a small child. Since his family lived in the countryside and no hospitals or doctors were available, they had permitted a leg, broken several times, to heal without being set. This left him with one leg shorter than the other and strangely out of shape. It bothered me no end that this charming, highly intelligent fellow should spend his life so handicapped. I was sure that in the United States we have brilliant surgeons who could probably do something for him. It took me a long time to approach him about this, but finally I asked him if he had ever considered having his leg fixed while he was in the United States. He said, "Oh no, it's much too late and besides I have no money." I explained to him that these were two different problems. The main thing would be for him to decide if he wanted to do something for his leg and improve his walking. The money question was something else one could also approach. I said I would not expect an answer from him right away, but was definitely sure of one thing: if he wanted to talk to a good doctor, I would try to get him one of the best surgeons in the city and all the help and support he would need. He should think about it and then let me know his decision. Abdelkader was silent and looked bewildered, but after a long time he got up and said, "I will think about it and let you know."

Three weeks later he returned to my office and started questioning me about what I had meant the last time I talked

with him. I repeated again that he had to be absolutely sure and be prepared to go through a long time of problems and difficulties. He again mentioned money and I replied, "That is secondary." Problems like lack of money could be solved. He then consented and agreed to let me find a doctor.

The moment he was gone I went to the office of my very nice boss, Professor Milton Saltzer, and told him what I had initiated. "Are you lucky," he said, "tomorrow I will have lunch with the head of the University Medical Center, and I will ask him for a conscientious doctor who would be willing to see Abdelkader." A few days later he was put in touch with one of the best orthopedic surgeons in New York for an appointment. After a thorough examination the doctor told him he needed two, possibly three, operations, but there was no reason why he could not walk normally afterwards. The day I heard this I felt utterly relieved. Yet there were still many hurdles to overcome. When Abdelkader went to the hospital for his first operation, I realized what an enormous responsibility I had taken on. Suppose something went wrong. Suppose he suffered terrible pains and regretted his decision. Yet, luck stayed with us all the way through. The doctor was satisfied with the first operation. He did not charge a fee for himself, but the hospital and the tests had to be paid. That problem we solved too. Abdelkader did not want to believe me till the last minute, that his own government would pay for everything. It did not work right away. They first said "No." Then we asked if Abdelkader could borrow the money and pay it back later while working for them. Even that seemed impossible; maybe they were afraid to set a precedent. I insisted that Abdelkader go to Washington to discuss the problem with his embassy. Only as a last resort should he say his American friends had promised they would take up a collection for him. That did it. I guess the Algerians are too proud to accept charity. They just said, "Send us all the bills." And there was never any money problem again.

I went to the hospital almost daily and sometimes brought Abdelkader Chinese food, since he did not care for the hospital food. He then insisted that I eat his dinner. His Algerian

friends did the same. He stayed only three weeks and then we were lucky again. One of the Algerians' friends was the bodyguard of Averell Harriman, our former New York State governor, who owns a large estate in Harriman, New York. When Governor Harriman heard of Abdelkader's story, he invited him to live there until he recovered from his operation. He stayed in the country for four weeks and was well taken care of.

The second operation was considerably less complicated, and Abdelkader had to stay in the hospital for only ten days. He came out walking with two crutches. He did not need a third operation. After extensive physical therapy he could stand up straight and walk with two canes. This lasted for several months and I sometimes thought that it would never get better. Yet eventually he recovered completely. Abdelkader now walks without any help and looks perfectly normal.

CHAPTER IX

Travel Experiences

A Selection of the World

Toward the end of January 1979, my close friend Gretchen Dykstra told me that she, as well as her mother and sister, had been asked by the alumni association of their former school in Philadelphia to join them on a trip to China. She became very excited, of course, and prepared herself most thoroughly by reading dozens of books on China, going to lectures and slide shows and talking about nothing else.

Five weeks before their departure in March she called me one morning in my New York University office and said: "We may not be able to go after all—the Chinese Travel Office insists on twenty-four people in a group and we are only twenty-three. Do you think within twenty-four hours you could decide to come to China with us?" I thought she was joking and said, "I might need twenty-five hours!" But Gretchen kept talking and talking—I should consider this a unique opportunity. I might never get to China otherwise. We would share a hotel room to make it cheaper, etc. I laughed and said that my office would never let me go in March; my vacation time had always been in August and anyway, it would be much too expensive for me. However, when I hung up, the thought would not leave me. At that time very few people had gone to China, but the doors were wide open and many professionals were planning to go.

I walked over to the office of my boss, Professor Milton Saltzer, and told him about the telephone call. He had lived in China for many years as a young man and had enjoyed it im-

mensely. He immediately said, "You must go!" He also added, "If you can swing it," which was another question. In the evening I called my son in Seattle to find out what he thought of the idea. He got just as excited as I had become in the meantime. I asked if I should dig into my savings for something like that. "What are you saving for?" "For old age," I answered. "Fine," he declared, "That's now. So go to China." That was all it took to convince me.

When I called Gretchen she was thrilled and promised to help me with all the information I needed for visa, ticket, clothing, etc. Professor Saltzer promised me a letter of introduction from the president of New York University in order to discuss student exchange with someone at the Ministry of Education in Beijing. My excitement now turned into nervousness. I was not a teacher. As a foreign student counselor I was able to talk about student life and student needs but I was afraid to be questioned by Chinese officials on the different university departments and policies, of which I knew very little. I had five weeks, which was not enough to read much on China or go to lectures, but certainly enough to inquire, talk with people and collect information.

I started by trying to find out to whom I could send my letter of introduction within the Ministry of Education in Beijing. If only I had known about the size of that department or the bureaucracy inside! Whomever I asked, nobody knew a name, let alone a person to address. I called the Chinese departments of other universities, scholars on China, journalists and the United Nations. Everybody referred me to somebody else. In the end, I forgot who made the final suggestion that gave me a direction. Someone just said that a Mr. Chung Lee, First Secretary of the United Nations Mission to the People's Republic, had recently arrived to take care of the Chinese students studying in the United States, and he might know of someone in the Ministry of Education. I called the mission and modestly asked for the secretary of Mr. Lee. I was told that she had left already (it was Friday afternoon) and would I like to talk with Mr. Lee. Indeed I would. He immediately came to the telephone and sounded very nice but matter-of-

fact. He said he would probably send my letter to the right person himself, if I could bring it to the mission. I was so thrilled that I told him I lived only three blocks from the mission and could come over any time that suited him. He said, "Come Monday morning at ten; then we can talk about this letter." This may now sound perfectly normal, but in 1979, after years of hardly any contact with that enormous country, it was a big event to be invited to the Chinese mission. Professor Saltzer had tried for a long time to meet the people at the mission, but it had been impossible. He could hardly believe it, when I told him that I was going there.

Monday morning at ten sharp I arrived at the mission entrance, which was guarded by a police officer. I had to explain what I wanted and was permitted to ring the bell. Three Chinese men appeared at the glass window of the door and looked me over. I asked for Mr. Lee and they let me in, pointing to a chair in the hallway. One of them disappeared and came back without paying the slightest attention to me. A few minutes later a good-looking gentleman appeared and motioned me to follow him upstairs. He led me into a small room with lovely Chinese rugs, pictures and books, and pointed to a closet where I could leave my coat and umbrella. Then he left the room. I got nervous again because I thought he might bring other people to question me. However, he returned with a tray on which stood the traditional Thermos bottle and two little cups, into which he poured delicious hot tea. I gave him the letter from my president, which he read slowly. He then put it away, saying he would take care of it as soon as he knew the exact date of my arrival in Beijing. He mentioned that there already were quite a few students in New York, but not many at New York University. He added that one Chinese scholar in the city had enrolled at the Courant Institute of Mathematics. This was my great moment. I said, "You mean Mr. Wang?" Mr. Lee stared at me and asked, "You know him?" I then explained to him that the Courant Institute was part of New York University, and that Mr. Wang had been brought to the American Language Institute, my division, because he needed to improve his English. He was

then introduced to me to familiarize him with our program of student activities. From then on Mr. Lee became very relaxed, smiled, and said, "Mrs. Cordy, I think we can help each other. I have only been here for a short time and do not know much about your educational system yet." I immediately told him about Professor Saltzer, who spoke Chinese and would be delighted to help him in any way he could. From then on we had a lively conversation about many different subjects, and after two hours I finally had to go back to my office. We parted, already friends. The next day Professor Saltzer invited Mr. Lee to have lunch with us at the university.

The American Language Institute had a large number of books on the study of English. Since new books on the subject were coming out all the time, many of the older ones were not used any more. When Mr. Lee told us that educational material, especially for the study of English, was badly needed in China, we suggested making a donation of all the old books. Mr. Lee was only too glad to have them picked up and sent to his country.

Since many of our teachers also wanted to meet Mr. Lee, we arranged a little "book donation ceremony" and invited Mr. Lee to attend. He not only met our teachers at the occasion, he later arranged for several of them to teach English in various cities in China and give courses during the summer in Beijing.

Meanwhile, I enjoyed my new friendship with Mr. Lee and invited him to come to my house to meet Gretchen Dykstra, for whom he also arranged a teaching position at the University of Wuhan for two years. He invited me to the mission several times to see Chinese films or to attend cocktail parties, which they frequently gave for United Nations diplomats. Mr. Lee made me promise to call him immediately after my return from his country.

I never wanted to give detailed descriptions of my trip to China because there have been so many by other travelers for newspapers, magazines and in books. Yet I do want to mention my experiences in connection with the letter I had brought to Mr. Lee. He had assured me that he had sent it off,

but I received no acknowledgement. According to our Chinese students, this is supposed to be normal in China. My travel group was fortunate; we had very charming, intelligent guides. Right at the beginning, I started to ask them how one could get in touch with the Ministry of Education. Each one declared that this would be extremely difficult, but I might be contacted directly, if my letter had arrived. I was determined not to return to the university without having spoken with someone. We spent our last five days in Beijing and I kept urging our guide to help me. When I threatened just to go to the Ministry by myself, he was utterly shocked. I must add that making a telephone call in China was a major problem at the time. Often the phones did not function and nobody understands English at the various public places. The same goes for getting a cab. Only at certain hotels and through the manager, who usually does speak English, can one obtain a taxi. But to walk into a government office without being asked is absolutely impossible.

Our departure came closer and closer. The time was filled with sightseeing, and we were also invited to visit the American Embassy. On the last day, and only under great pressure, did our guide finally dare to make a few telephone calls to the Ministry. He succeeded in enlisting two officials willing to see me at my hotel at three o'clock. They said they had never heard of my letter and explained to the guide that there were hundreds of people who might have received it. The conscientious guide kindly offered to stay with me during their visit, in case I needed an interpreter. He also arranged for a taxi to get us back to the hotel. We arrived five minutes before the two officials arrived. I had tried through the hotel manager to get a room where we could talk, but nothing was available. Thus I had to ask them to my rather small room, and the guide had to sit on my bed. Nobody besides me seemed to mind this crowded situation. We started with the usual tea ceremony. I must say that I find this tradition wonderful. Somehow one feels better after drinking hot tea and is certainly more relaxed.

One of the gentlemen was an elderly person, who let me

know through his companion that he could understand English very well, but needed the translator for speaking. The younger man spoke fluently. We talked about student exchange for a while, and they let me know that they considered it a big problem. American students come to Chinese universities, where they get free tuition, while only a small number of Chinese students receive scholarships in the United States. Life in China is considerably cheaper than in America, and only few Chinese have the funds to afford study abroad. I suggested what many Third World countries do: they lend their students the money to study abroad, and it must be paid back gradually, when they return and work for the government. This was something my visitors had never heard. They now decided to discuss it with their superiors.

Then we talked about sending groups of students to New York University, and how we could provide reasonable housing and inexpensive living for them. In the middle of this conversation, the older gentleman suddenly asked me, "How old are you, Mrs. Cordy?" It came as such a surprise that I could only think, "This is probably acceptable in his culture." So I stayed in my own culture and made myself a little younger, which was calmly accepted. After more tea and more talk about the differences of study in our respective countries, they finally left. I will never know if the students who later came to New York University were sent in connection with the information I had given. In a country with over a billion people it is hard to trace these things.

After this visit the guide and I rushed to the American Embassy to hear about the development of the Chinese-American relationship, which had started only recently. The spaciousness and elegance of the place startled me instantly. We had visited so many simple, modest places, and here we were back in the "affluent society." It was an interesting visit though. The ambassador, Leonard Woodcock, had invited several experts in economy, agriculture and sociology to talk to us. We were able to ask questions and heard a lot about China we would not have heard through our guides.

On the next day, we were to leave for the United States.

Before our departure, I still had a strange adventure. Our travel company had been very efficient during our stay in China. We were notified long in advance when and where to leave our suitcases; the luggage was then always at the hotel when we arrived. No problems developed during the trip, but on our last night in Beijing I created my own problem. Some of us were out very late, driving around by taxi to see a few more places we had missed. Then we went back to the Chien Men Hotel, to prepare for our departure the next morning. Most of my travel companions were returning to the United States, while I had joined a small group flying to Japan. I have later regretted this decision a little. It became extremely difficult to absorb another culture after spending three weeks in China. Actually, I did it mostly out of fear, that I might never be able to return to that part of the world. It was just not fair to Japan! Anyway, I was impressed enough to decide that I must go there again.

We had been told during dinner to leave our luggage in front of the door, so it could be picked up in the early morning. We all packed until late at night and did as instructed. I slept till the last minute, since I had only a small carry-on left. When I woke up and started dressing, I could not find the pants of my slacks suit. I looked all over, and then it dawned on me that I must have packed them by mistake. I rushed to the door in the hope the luggage would still be there. But it was not. What now? I could not possibly go on the plane without pants. My coat was definitely too short and would not cover enough. I might have to take it off during the long plane trip. I became desperate, but put on the coat and went downstairs to find the only manager who spoke English. He sympathized with my trouble and assured me that my suitcase was still in the storage room in the basement. He also added, "I can give you the key if you want to try to find it. It will not be easy though, since there are hundreds of bags from different travel companies." I replied that I had no choice, and simply had to find my pants. He handed me the keys and showed me to the elevator. I landed in the lowest part of the gigantic hotel, found the door to the storage place and faced—I was

convinced—thousands of suitcases. At first I thought it was hopeless. I would never find my bag here—not even the place where the bags of my travel group had been placed. Again, I was surprised how orderly everything was stored on shelves, according to size. I went from aisle to aisle looking for a familiar sight. Time was getting shorter—no breakfast today. Suddenly I saw a green suitcase which I must have seen before. It stuck out of a shelf and looked familiar. There had to be more luggage from our group. It took some time to recognize other suitcases and in the end I discovered my own. It was tightly wedged between other trunks and hard to move. I think my fear of having to travel without pants gave me the strength to pull it down to the floor. It took only seconds to open it, and right on top were my pants. Being in the storage room all by myself, I quickly put them on, placed my suitcase back and was saved. Fortunately, the manager had a sense of humor; when I brought the keys back to him and he saw me wearing long pants, he had a good laugh and shouted, "Congratulations!"

After my return to the United States, I promptly reported to Mr. Lee how much I had enjoyed China and how impressed I had been with our reception and the kindness of the Chinese people. After Mr. Lee had worked in New York for several months, his wife arrived, and since she was a physician, she was put in charge of the people at the Mission, which gave her a chance to stay with her husband. Their charming young daughter was permitted to enroll at a midwestern college, but spent her vacation with her parents in New York. We invited her, of course, to our NYU Christmas party.

One of our new Chinese students came into my office one day to tell me that Mr. Lee had left for China, and that the staff at the Mission did not expect him to return. I was most surprised and tried to find out what had happened. One insider finally assured me that Mr. Lee's sudden disappearance could have had many reasons; maybe they had not been satisfied with his work, maybe they needed him badly for another position in Beijing, or maybe he had associated too closely

with Americans. We never heard from him again. He had appeared like a meteor and disappeared in the same way. A quiet ending to a very interesting period in my life.

Trip through France

While I was studying in Berlin I had met Anna Marie Merkel, the sculptress and writer. For many years a close friend had told me about her, but I never thought we would ever meet, let alone become friends. She had just married for the third time and lived with her husband, who had an important position at Lufthansa. He was considerably older than she, and since he frequently had to be away on business, he had comforted her with a stunning Mercedes convertible. Immediately after Anna Marie finished her driving test, she invited me to come along on a trip. She said her husband would never let her travel without an experienced driver. If I accompanied her on a vacation through France, everybody would think I did most of the driving. Although I had a license and had been driving on and off for a year, I was far from being an experienced driver.

My friend must have convinced her husband that I could drive well, and he cheerfully let us go. Some of our mutual friends predicted that we would probably not even make it to Potsdam, an hour's drive from Berlin. The challenge for us was tremendous. We had to get very far on the first day, and then write postcards to everybody. No interruptions besides getting gas and stretching our legs during meals. We mainly stuck to the big highways, took turns driving and enjoyed ourselves immensely. One of us held a map and directed the other. The weather was perfect and the car lived up to its reputation. Of course, we had the top down during the entire trip. Speed limits were ignored most of the time, and on the first day we actually made it to Weimar, the famous Goethe town, which was a considerable distance from Berlin. Pretty good for beginners! We were so exhausted that we went to the first hotel that had a restaurant, ordered a meal and, while waiting for it, started to laugh about everything around us, especially after drinking German beer on an empty stomach.

Being overtired, we could not stop. The owner of the place came to our table to ask what was so funny, but we could not tell him except that we had come from Berlin, which impressed him. He did not seem to see why that was so funny. The situation became most embarrassing—two women sitting there laughing hysterically. The more people watched us, the more we had to laugh. Thank God, nobody knew us in Weimar.

The only thing we could do now to preserve a bit of respect around us was to retire to our overnight quarters. The double room was large, with enormous closets which we did not need. The beds were comfortable, and we went to sleep in no time.

Anna Marie was the first to awake in the morning, and when I sat up in bed a little later she stared at me and said, "Oh, my God, you look terrible." I jumped up to look into a mirror and discovered to my horror that I had an enormously swollen cheek. It must have been from getting the sun on only one side of my face all day. I had not noticed anything and had hoped to get a nice tan. Instead, my right cheek was three times bigger than my left. To comfort me, Anna Marie suggested that I sit on the other side of the car to make my face even. Strangely the swelling lasted only one day and then subsided completely. But at age eighteen, looking ugly for even one day is too long.

We continued our journey, driving a little slower now, visiting a few cathedrals along the way and stopping at a lake for a swim. Yet, we were most eager to get to France. After crossing the border we had our first problem with the car. Climbing a modest hill, it just stopped and, of course, we thought that was the end of everything. Neither of us knew anything about the mechanics of a car and we wanted to get help immediately. I suggested stopping a passing car for assistance, but Anna Marie decided we should first investigate the problem ourselves. She opened the hood and we both "studied" the motor. I saw some black soot at the side of it upon which Anna Marie took out a little handkerchief and actually wiped the soot off the motor, saying, "Let's try to turn it on

again." Lo and behold, it worked. We were impressed how easy it was to repair a car. Again, we spent the whole day laughing, eating, writing postcards to Berlin and planning the days ahead.

Getting further into France, we mainly stayed in the countryside, since we had both been in Paris before. Anna Marie, being a sculptress, had heard of a museum of sculptures by the nineteenth-century artist Bourdelle, and after a few detours we found the little town where the museum was located. When we got there, we were told that they were in the process of remodeling and only half of the place was open to the public. There was a special room with small animal sculptures, which Anna Marie wanted to see, but the door was locked. Since her French was perfect, she asked one of the workmen if he could let us into that room. She told him that we had come all the way from Germany to see these particular artworks. The man hesitated at first, but then agreed to let us in if we would lock the door from the inside and return the key to him upstairs, where he would be working later. This was just perfect. We had the room to ourselves and thoroughly enjoyed the exhibit. I fell in love with a little horse and kept looking at it and going back to it. Anna Marie watched this for a while and suddenly said to me, "Why don't you take it? Nobody will ever know. You saw how casually they handle things here." I couldn't believe my ears. "You mean I should steal a work of art? You must be crazy." She kept urging me to take it and pretend that I bought it somewhere. I was shocked and disappointed in my friend. We finally left the special room, returned the key to the worker and walked through other parts of the museum, mostly through separate rooms. I did not enjoy myself anymore because of that strange incident. At the end of our visit we met outside at the car and started driving. All of a sudden Anna Marie stopped, saying that she had a surprise for me—out of her pocket she pulled the little horse. This time I got very angry and insisted that we go back and return it. We argued for a while and I threatened to take the next train back to Berlin. At this, Anna Marie burst out into laughter and enlightened

me, that today was April Fools' Day and that she had bought a copy of the little horse at the museum art shop. Not exactly my idea of April Fools' Day!

Trip to Puerto Rico

The younger Sterba daughter had been living with us for a long time, while going to Sarah Lawrence College near New York. We had tried to take good care of her, but could not prevent her from getting sick and having her appendix removed. This worried her parents very much and they wanted to send her to a warmer climate for a week, where she could recover completely. She refused to go alone, but none of her friends were available. Since my husband was out of town during that time, singing with various opera companies, he was perfectly willing to let me go with Verena. We discussed good places for our trip and finally decided on Puerto Rico. There was a late-evening flight, which we booked for the next weekend. When we showed our tickets at the check-in counter, the attendant looked at us and asked, "Are you girls afraid of a jet?" We laughed and answered that we had never been on one and thought the price would probably be too high. He asked again, "Would you like to try it out?" Yes, of course we would. He smiled and declared, "We are going to invite you right now. There is a plane leaving at the same time as yours, and there will be no additional charge." This generous offer was probably part of the company's advertising campaign. At that time, a flight in a jet was as rare as flying in a Concorde today. Well, who would not have accepted a chance like this? We boarded the plane and were seated in the first-class section. They showed us everything before we took off, and wined and dined us generously. Needless to say, we had a great time all the way to Puerto Rico.

What we had not realized was that the jet would get us to our destination much faster, and we arrived in San Juan at the crack of dawn. It took quite a while to get a cab into town. On the way to our little hotel, which the travel agent had suggested, we witnessed an accident which changed our happy mood considerably. Although there was very little traffic, a

young man had been hit by a car and was lying in the middle of the road. We were told that he was dead. Several days later we found out that he had been the son of the governor of Puerto Rico, and the entire island was mourning him.

Our second shock was the hotel, which was small and unattractive, and the night clerk gave us the key to a dingy room in the back without glass in the windows. It was pretty depressing to think one had to spend a vacation there, but nothing could be done about it at five o'clock in the morning. We were tired and decided to first have a good rest and then ask for another room or, if necessary, change hotels.

After a mediocre breakfast, we argued with the manager, who finally showed us a room on the top floor which would cost only two dollars more, was very light and had a view of the harbor. Since there were no mosquitoes nor other insects, we did not mind the big holes in the windows. Little did we know that the Puerto Rican prison was located between us and the ocean. Occasionally we could even witness friends of the inmates throwing small packages over the wall, probably containing drugs. The first thing we did after unpacking was to go out and rent a little Volkswagen, with which we immediately ran into all sorts of trouble. Not being aware of the local traffic regulations, we were stopped from time to time by the police. They were very kind and smiled when they found out that we were tourists from New York and let us go unpunished. Tickets are probably only given to residents.

We drove to different beaches and once met a group of university students, who invited us to go on a fishing trip the following day. As soon as we arrived at the appointed place and saw hundreds of dead fish lying in the sand, we turned around and went back to our hotel. Fishing is not for everybody.

Strolling around by herself one morning, Verena met a young man who had been sent to Puerto Rico by a real estate firm in New York to explore the local territory for possible purchases. He asked her for a date in the evening, which left me to go out by myself. I walked around for a long time up and down San Juan's main street and looked at all the charm-

ing stores, boutiques and galleries. I asked someone where I could have a good seafood dinner, and then walked over to a local restaurant, which was pretty crowded already. I was seated at a table near the bar, where a few noisy American sailors were having a good time. When they started to sing the "Star Spangled Banner" I could not help smiling. One of them got up, took his glass, came over to my table and asked if he could sit with me, which I permitted. He was considerably younger than I and immediately started pouring out his heart. In spite of the cheerful singing, he must have been very lonesome and homesick. He was still far from his first furlough. I felt sorry for him and let him talk while I ate my dinner. However, I wondered how I was going to get rid of him eventually. When he offered to walk me home, I felt uncomfortable and decided to avoid his company. He then became quite insistent, upon which I invented a great story. I told him that I was working for a detective, which kept me in touch with the police all the time. They were watching and protecting me and I could not confuse them by being seen with anybody they had not assigned to me. There were certain rules and regulations one had to follow. The poor kid got so bewildered, and before he could recover from his shock and ask questions, I rushed out through a side door, fearing he might follow me. I ran all the way back to the hotel and waited for Verena, who had not yet arrived, although she had promised not to be late. Even though her young man had made a good impression when he picked her up and I met him, I slowly started to get worried. Maybe she too had a strange adventure. Finally I went to bed, dozed off and only woke up when Verena returned at two o'clock in the morning. Of course, she immediately broke out into laughter because I had forgotten to lock the door in a place with rather peculiar characters running around. She had enjoyed herself immensely, dining at a lovely restaurant and later on dancing at the Hilton Hotel. She learned a lot about Puerto Rico, since her date knew the island well and gave her good advice on what to see and to do. Unfortunately, he had to leave the following morning and there was little chance to see him again.

Later in the week, we met one of my former university colleagues, who was now living on the island, making a documentary film on Puerto Rico. For our last night, he invited us to a party at his house. We were delighted to have a chance to meet some residents. When we got to his bungalow outside San Juan, there were quite a number of artists and film people, who all seemed to know each other well. They had planned to have a pot-luck dinner and then visit several bars and discotheques. They would be glad to take us along. We were introduced to very special dishes, which some of the guests had prepared themselves. After listening to a lot of local gossip, we were driven to many places we had only passed during our walks through the town, but had never dared to enter. It was lots of fun, but since I am not a good drinker and still had to pack before our departure in the morning, I went home with the first group who left. Verena, however, had met another charming young fellow who would not let her go home with me. I was glad that she was enjoying herself before going back to school. Of course, she made me wait again, even longer than the first time. I worried more and more—imagining anything from rape and kidnapping to murder. Yet, in the early morning she reappeared triumphantly—her date had offered to marry her. A good reason to be late! I was too sleepy while listening to the whole story and did not bother to ask for his name or other details. The first proposal in a pretty girl's life is not necessarily the final decision. Fortunately, the last I heard before falling asleep, was, "Of course, I did not accept."

Berlin Airport Incident

In the seventies, I visited Germany to see friends in Berlin and Munich. I had a wonderful time and everything went according to plan. The only unpleasant incident happened at the Berlin airport, and it still makes me angry when I think of it.

One of my friends took me to the airport, where we planned to have lunch after checking my luggage. I gave the attendant my suitcase, and after she checked my ticket to Munich she put the suitcase on the conveyor belt and then

asked to see my passport. I told her that I was not yet leaving the country. "Nevertheless, I have to see your passport." "Why?" "Berlin falls under special regulations because of its ally status." I admitted that my passport was in my suitcase. She smiled and suggested I take a later plane; she could not let me leave without having examined my passport. However, she could arrange for my suitcase to be returned on the next plane from Munich. I was desperate. Friends were expecting me at the airport and were probably already on their way, since they were now staying outside the city in their summer home. It would have been most inconvenient for them to wait for another flight hours later. I could not do that to them. I started to argue with the attendant and expressed my indignation about not having been informed. Who would have thought that it was necessary to show one's passport for a one-hour flight within Germany? She coolly referred me to the police department on the other side of the airport, where complaints were taken. My friend could not believe that I wanted to go there but came along with me. When we entered the office, a big husky fellow was sitting at his desk, leisurely reading the *Berliner Zeitung*. He stopped, slowly folded his paper and asked what he could do for us. I explained the situation: as an American, I had not been aware of the special stipulations and had unfortunately left my passport in my baggage. Yet, I absolutely had to leave on the same plane. Could he help me? He first gave me the same information the attendant had already given to me; I should wait for my luggage and leave on a later flight. I refused to accept that. We discussed a few other possibilities which were also unacceptable; yet he maintained that he could not let me leave without a passport. Suddenly, my usually shy friend said to him, "Maybe I could vouch for my friend. I am the wife of Senator Schmiljan." This evidently changed the officer's mind. He became much friendlier and said, "Well, in that case, we might be able to make an exception and do something different." Then he took a special sheet of paper from his desk, asked for my name, address and citizenship and filled out a certificate which read:

> Mrs. Meta Cordy has the permission of the West Berlin Police Department for a ONE-TIME departure from the city of Berlin.

Then he signed it and added a big red seal to it. We were delighted, shook hands and thanked him profusely.

I rushed through the passport control without the slightest delay. They looked at the paper and were satisfied. My plane was still standing at the gate and the ramp was just being rolled aside to close the door. They pushed it back, gave me a hand to climb up as fast as possible and took it away as I arrived in the plane. The door closed and off we went. I collapsed into my seat with a pleasant feeling of triumph.

Morocco

One summer I met an American friend in Paris. He had lived and travelled in France for many years and probably knew the country better than many French people. We had spent our vacations together for a long time and each year went to another country. This year it was to be Morocco. We started our trip travelling through parts of France I did not know and thoroughly enjoyed the countryside with the old farmhouses. Our plan was to get to Perpignan, park the car and take a boat down the Spanish coast to Tangier. In Morocco, we wanted to travel by train and bus to the various places we had planned to see.

When we arrived in Perpignan, we found out that the boat was not leaving until late in the afternoon, which left us some time for sightseeing. It was a charming little town, where we had a chance to observe a strange water sport on a narrow river. Strong, husky men stood erect in small boats and tried to push each other into the water with a long pole. First they only succeeded in unbalancing the rider approaching from the opposite direction. Then they turned around to pass one another again until the loser ended up in the water. Hundreds of spectators were shouting wildly for the one they wanted to win, and even more wildly when one of them disappeared in the water. All over the city, there had been

announcements for evening festivities, celebrating the winner. I suppose the one who pushed the most riders into the river and never slipped in himself would win the prize. Since there was only one boat to Morocco a day, we had to leave before the festival.

The boat ride to Tangier was beautiful and relaxing. When we wanted to check our luggage at arrival, we were told that the only place where this could be done was the railroad station. We walked several blocks to get there, only to find out that the checking place was filled, but an old man, standing nearby, would gladly watch our luggage for a little money. Being a New Yorker, I immediately decided that this was too dangerous. Yet my friend was unwilling to walk around with his suitcase and assured me that everything would be fine. We finally left our belongings with a strange creature, who did not understand a word we said, just smiled and mumbled something in Arabic. I was convinced that we would never see our bags again, while Mike insisted one should trust people.

At first I could think only of the wardrobe in my suitcase and whether I would be able to manage without. Then Tangier became so fascinating that I pushed the thought out of my mind, and let this fabulous place distract me. We had a quick look at the harbor district and then walked through the town. It had hardly any industry, and everything was near the water. When we got tired, we picked up some food and had a lovely picnic in a park, looking at plants and flowers different from those in our western parks. Continuing our sightseeing tour, I needed a restroom, which could not be found. In despair I walked into a bank to inquire, and they directed me to a Turkish bath. I had no idea what to expect and decided that there had to be a possibility. When I entered, I saw all sorts of strange-looking women running around, but nobody paid attention to me. I found a large door that looked like an entrance to a place from which I could hear voices and water splashing. I opened it and faced dozens of naked elderly women sitting in a pool chatting noisily with each other across the water. I asked them in French where the ladies'

room was located, but they did not understand me and only laughed. However, one younger person seemed to guess what I wanted and motioned to follow her. She led me to a door behind which there was a hole in the floor and handles at the walls to hold onto. Other countries, other customs.

When we returned to the station it took a long time to find the old man, who had gone home, but had asked somebody else to watch our luggage. Eventually he returned and we got everything back. I considered it a miracle.

We traveled for a week to Fez, Rabat, Casablanca and eventually to Marrakesh, where we stayed a little longer. I was most impressed by the kasbah and the marketplace, with many people trying to sell their merchandise. Little monkeys on long leashes performed for money, snakes stood up and scared people; jewelry could be tried on and bargained for. One afternoon we spent shopping there and after getting tired, we settled a little further away at a café, watching the goings on. It was particularly crowded and several musicians made a lot of noise on strange instruments. All of a sudden, the people started to rush away, and within a few minutes the marketplace was deserted. We were puzzled and could not understand what had happened. A man at a neighboring table, who saw our surprised faces and spoke English, explained to us that during Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, everybody was permitted to go home and eat as soon as the sun had set.

During our train trip back to Tangier, we had our first unpleasant experience. Mike had his wallet with all his money and identification papers stolen. This happened in a crowded compartment, just before the train arrived. A quick search convinced us that only a smart thief could have snatched the wallet, since Mike still had it when we boarded the train. He had never gotten up or slept, but had spent most of his time reading. When the train stopped, we had to give up the search. I started walking toward the exit, but many people had already pushed their way onto the train. I could hardly get to the door, while Mike was still checking pockets and asking around. When the train started moving again, I pan-

icked and, with two bags, jumped off and landed right in the arms of a tall Arabic man, clad in the traditional white gown. Without him I would have had a bad fall. I turned around to see how Mike had made it, but the train had picked up speed—and no Mike was in sight. I was shocked, knowing there would not be a stop for many hours. Mike had no money and where would we meet in Tangier? My only hope was that he would manage to join me on the pre-paid boat to France, two days later. I sat down on my suitcase and wondered what to do next. The beautiful Arab who had prevented my fall and all the other passengers had left the platform. I felt totally abandoned. I might find a small hotel, but the thought of spending two days in Tangier all alone was most disturbing.

After a long time, I got up and looked one more time in the direction where I had last seen the rear lights of the train disappear. Way back, I discerned a figure with a large box or package, limping pitifully toward the platform. When he came closer, I realized it was Mike. He had also jumped from the moving train—but there had been no Arab to catch him, so he had fallen and hurt his leg. Fortunately, it was not broken, only bruised. We were certainly glad that we could travel on together. From now on, we had to live on the remainder of my money, which was not very much. Mike had a list of hotels in Tangier and, of course, we had to pick the cheapest. It turned out that it was in the center of town, very clean and had a charming little garden, where one could sit for a simple breakfast. We counted our money before each meal and decided that we could have either lunch or dinner. Each time I looked at a store window with food, Mike reminded me, "Oh no!" which constantly made me laugh. On the first day we went to the American consulate to find out if we could borrow some money. They were not very cooperative and said they never helped people out with cash.

On the second day, we saw almost everything of Tangier we had not yet seen and then had to rest in our charming hotel for a while. There was more laughing when Mike said, "We have to save money for a tip on the boat and maybe also

for one drink." In the late afternoon one was allowed to board the boat. The odd situation of being on a fairly luxurious boat without any money did not spoil our fun. We cheerfully made it to Perpignan, where Mike immediately went to his French bank and all the worries were over.

Algerian Trip

During my twenty-five years with foreign students at New York University, I received many invitations to visit them in their home countries. I always felt their intentions were sincere; yet it seemed to me that after they had returned to their family and friends, a visit by their former counselor might not be as important anymore. The only time I changed my mind was when we had a group of Algerians with us. They would not take "no" for an answer. They kept on and on persuading me, describing their country and promising to show me everything. One of them said, "How can you refuse when you have so many 'sons' waiting for you?" Another one said, "If you were thirty years younger I would propose to you." Well, who can resist such warmth and love? One day, when they were at it again, I suddenly heard myself say, "All right, I will come next summer." Half of them would probably not even be there, either going to summer school or visiting somewhere themselves. Yet, my special inner circle discussed, prepared and planned my trip constantly.

They all left at the end of the spring semester, some to return for the summer, some to return in the fall. I had to work until my vacation in August. Youcef Guernah wrote me a letter, asking me to visit him first, since he was spending the month of August with his older brother and family at the seashore. It was a little outside Algiers, and I could stay with them as long as I liked. All I had to do was send him a telegram with my arrival time and he would pick me up at the airport. I did exactly as he had suggested. When I changed planes in Paris to fly to Algeria, I suddenly got nervous. My friend Mike, who wanted to travel through Algeria with me, could not meet me until three days later. Women do not travel by themselves in Moslem countries. Suppose Youcef had not

received my telegram and would not be at the airport, what then? With him I could speak French, but at the airport I needed Arabic, of which I did not know one word. Neither in New York nor Paris had I been able to get dinars for my dollars. It could become a difficult situation with nobody there to help me. I arrived on time, went through customs, and started looking around. No Youcef! A lady, sitting on her suitcase, was obviously in the same situation; as it turned out, she too was from Germany. The most important thing now was to get money at the airport. On my way to the appropriate office, I suddenly caught sight of Youcef in the distance. Realizing that I was about to enter the exchange office, he was frantically making signs to stop me. He himself had to stay in the waiting area. I finally went outside to meet him. He immediately offered to provide me with all the dinars I needed. Upon my return to America, I could give the money back to him in dollars. We went to the parking lot, where two of his brothers were waiting to take us to Club des Pins, their summer place. This meant driving all the way through Algiers, an old and dignified city, quite different from any I had ever seen. It was an hour before sunset and everything looked luminous. We arrived at a charming house, where a little girl came running out, embracing and kissing me as if I were her grandmother. It made me feel at home right away. The mother greeted me with the same warmth and familiarity, and showed me the curtained-off corner of a large room I was to share with three teenage girls. Then she asked me to get ready for dinner.

The dead-end street where we lived had eight similar houses, built for the yearly meetings of the Organization of African Unity. The rooms were very large and each had to be shared by several family members. Furniture was scarce, mattresses were put up at night and large cushions to sit on were scattered all over. The grown-ups had beds and the children slept on the floor. There was one bathroom for the family of nine and several guests. Who cares, when you spend much of the day in the ocean, which could be reached by a twisting, turning downhill path? The houses were surrounded by lovely

plants, bushes and flowers, which the government took care of. Youcef's brother was working for the government, and they had made an exception by letting him rent one of these houses for the summer.

On my first evening there, I could not understand everything, since their French was different from mine; they all talked very fast and peppered their French with Arabic words. Yet eventually I got used to it and could participate in the conversations. Meals were taken at a tremendous conference table. Mornings were spent at the beach, with lunch consisting of baskets full of French rolls, cheese and fruit. I was introduced to friends and neighbors and included in shopping, visiting and sightseeing. One morning, walking along the ocean, I met the German lady from the airport among hundreds of people. She too was full of praise for Arab hospitality and kindness. Even my host's superior in the government, a charming, elderly gentleman, invited us to his fabulous house with interesting art objects. We ended up discussing schools for his handsome teenage son, eager to study in America.

After a week of leisure and being spoiled, which I had not expected in a socialist country, my friend from France arrived and was immediately included in everything. When we felt we had exhausted our host's generosity, we decided to move on. Youcef let us stay in his apartment in the middle of Algiers for a week. It was on the ninth floor and had a balcony overlooking the city and the ocean. The elevator did not work, which did not hamper our delight in keeping house in a different world.

Azzedine Layachi, a political science student who also lived in this part of the town, came over every day to accompany us on our sightseeing tours. He showed us the highlights of the city, took us to the governor's mansion, the kasbah in the Old City and many other interesting places. Then he invited us to meet his family, which became yet another memorable experience for us. They lived in a simpler neighborhood and were considerably less well-to-do than our first hosts. (The Guernahs still lived in the comfortable way to which

they had become accustomed during the French rule of Algeria.)

Now we were introduced to a family with seven children, five of them girls. The father, who was working at a city hospital, told us his greatest responsibility in life was to marry off his daughters. Girls are not permitted to leave the house without a parent and stay together all day, helping their mother with the household, playing games and doing needlework. Evidently, they are never bored and enjoy home life until they get married. I spoke with the oldest one, who told me that she was engaged, since her father had found a husband for her. She was going to be married in the fall. That would be the first time she would meet her husband. She only had a photograph of him and obviously had fallen in love with the image of this person. I wondered what would happen to the marriage when she found out that this man was different from her fantasies. One hears and reads about these strange customs, but to meet the people who actually live by them makes them even harder for Westerners to understand.

Here the girls also slept on mattresses in the living room, and the parents had their own room. Azzedine told us that they had recently decided to sleep in separate rooms because they did not want more children. In Algeria nobody believes in birth control.

We had several lovely meals with this family, sitting with the father and Azzedine at a table, while the mother and two sisters served us. Of course, we had couscous—the most popular dish in Algeria—no forks or knives—everybody dipping their fingers into the large dish in front of us. Another custom to get used to without showing surprise.

Our third visit brought us to El Asnam, a small town about one hundred miles south of Algiers. Abdelkader Haireche had invited us, although the town had not yet recovered from a horrible earthquake in 1981. It took three hours in a bus that was packed to the last seat with farmers and tradespeople, loaded with boxes, baskets and packages. There were only men, except for one other woman, who looked Eu-

ropean. At a rest stop I found out that she was German and visiting a friend, with whom she was studying philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris.

When we arrived in El Asnam, Abdelkader was not at the bus stop as promised, and we had no address or telephone number. It must have been over one hundred degrees, since it was close to the desert. In different languages we asked several people around the station, but did not get very far. El Asnam is not very populated, and we were hoping someone would know Abdelkader, since he was probably the only person who had gone to America. The stationmaster finally suggested that we go to the police headquarters, where they know everybody. He showed us the direction and we had no choice but to walk in the stifling heat. After a few minutes, a motorcycle caught up with us and a nice-looking Arab said, "I heard you talk at the station. I think I know your friend and where he lives; I can drive there and tell him that you have arrived. Why don't you go into the shade and wait." He jumped on his motorcycle again and returned ten minutes later to let us know that Abdelkader would come immediately; five minutes later he did arrive. Evidently we had gotten off at the wrong bus stop and he had waited at another one. We were welcomed again in the typical Arab way. The family, considerably smaller than the one we had last visited, made us feel like old friends and put us up in their living room. I was given a cool dress by Abdelkader's sister, to adjust to the climate. Here, we felt for the first time that we were in a socialist country. They talked with respect and admiration of their government and lived like ordinary workers, who had accepted that the luxuries in life were not a necessity. Abdelkader's sister worked in a factory which produced men's shirts. The next day, she took us to visit her working place and introduced us to her director. He himself took us around and, with great pride, showed us each machine that makes a part of a shirt. The first machine picks up the material, another one makes the front of the shirt, a third one the sleeves and a fourth one the back. Out of the last machine comes the complete shirt, which is then folded by hand and packed to be

shipped; a fascinating demonstration.

We were taken to several relatives to see how they live, and joined them to eat more Algerian specialties. The middle of the town had been totally devastated by the earthquake, but all the stores were temporarily functioning through makeshift cardboard stands—even the bank and the post office. Outside the town were large crevices which looked like craters. The houses where people lived had big signs on the front door. If the sign was green, the house was livable; if red, it had not yet been cleared and a sign read: DANGER—BUILDING UNSAFE. Many people had perished during the disaster, but fortunately, the families of my students had been spared.

Our last trip in Algeria brought us to the province Ghardaia, a famous place in the South with an even more famous state-owned hotel, the El-Roustomid. It took six hours by bus to get there, but the effort was worthwhile. We arrived late at night and a full moon accompanied us on the climb from the road to the entrance. The elegance of this place was breathtaking; evidently it had been built for state visits and VIPs. The rooms were large and had balconies facing a blue swimming pool, for this country an unheard-of luxury. Whenever one looked down, only a few people were sunbathing and sipping drinks. It was unbearably hot during our visit.

After we had toured the main street and the charming little side alleys, we walked half a mile to Beni-Izguen, a small Berber community. Here we planned to visit Brahim Bendrissou, a student of economics, who also wanted us to meet his family. He had not been sure that he himself would be at home, but we tried anyway. Other students had told me that Brahim came from the most beautiful spot in Algeria. Beni-Izguen was entirely closed off by high walls and an old guard stood at the entrance, letting in nobody but visitors who could properly identify themselves. We told him in French that we wished to see Brahim and he informed us that someone had to first go and find him for us. Several young Arabs, sitting around the entrance, were enlisted and after a while returned with a very old man who seemed to have the

same name, but was not related to our Brahim. Meanwhile, quite a crowd of people had gathered around us and seemed very curious to find out what we wanted. One man seemed to know Brahim and stuttered, "He in America." We begged the guard to let us visit his family, but that was out of the question. Strangers, let alone a man, could never enter a woman's house in the absence of her husband. We finally gave up, but asked for a guide to take us around the village. That was permitted. Another old man accompanied us through the little streets, but we were unable to communicate with him. He did manage, though, to show us Brahim's house, but nobody seemed to be around. I hope his wife saw us through her lovely lace curtains. Occasionally, a couple passed us, the women staring through their veils as if we were from another planet. We felt as if we were walking around in the Middle Ages. The streets were narrow little passages and animals were running around wild. From atop the village tower we enjoyed a breathtaking view of the fascinating landscape stretching toward the desert.

When we finally left this unusual place, we tried once more to ask the guard a few questions. He then pointed to a young man outside the gate and said, *"Il parle anglais."* We approached him and found out that he was an Arab student who had recently graduated from the Business School of the University of Oklahoma, and had just returned home to enter the army. We were delighted to meet somebody who could give us more information on the Berbers and their protected life behind the walls. He also told us that he was soon going to be married to a sixteen-year-old girl he had not yet met. Asked what she would do when he went into the army, he answered, "She will stay at my parents' house and I will visit from time to time." I can only wonder whether an American girl would have accepted that situation. He seemed almost more delighted to speak English than we were. For the remaining three days he hardly left us. Every day after breakfast he picked us up and drove us to many places in and around Ghardaia that we would have probably never seen. At the end of our visit, he even took us to the airport. He insisted on

waiting for our flight with us, although it would not leave for another two hours. When we said good-bye, he had tears in his eyes. We all felt very fortunate for having met.

CHAPTER X

Friends and Others

Arthur Kaufmann

The painter Arthur Kaufmann came to a housewarming party which my cousin Dorothea and I gave in New York after having moved into our new apartment on West 119th Street. He had recently immigrated from Germany and had visited our uncle in New Jersey, who suggested to him, "Why don't you just show up at their party and tell them that I have sent you?" Arthur rang our bell while we were still getting ready. I opened the door and he explained who he was and how he had heard about the party. I jokingly said, "But you weren't invited." He suggested that we make an exception, so I let him in. He was considerably older than we and our guests, but he became the life of the party. He told us about his first job as a student, when he and an artist friend of his got a chance for a free performance as "lightning caricaturists" in a London music hall. They had to do quick sketches on stage and in the excitement of carrying easel, canvas and brushes, they constantly bumped into each other, stumbled and fell. The audience roared with laughter, taking them for clowns. The manager was delighted and engaged them for a whole month.

Arthur had been a very successful painter in Germany. When Hitler took over, he lost his position in Düsseldorf, where he had been professor at the *Kunstakademie* (Fine Arts Academy). He was one of the founders of a young avant-garde group of painters called *Das junge Rheinland* (The young Rhineland). New schools of painting originated from

their work, and they organized meetings and exhibitions in their own gallery. Later, many of them became well-known in this country and large museums bought their work (e.g. Lehmbruck, Rohlfs, Dix, Hodler, and Pankok).

When Arthur came to New York, he started his own projects and painted famous contemporaries who had immigrated in the thirties (Thomas Mann, Kurt Weill, Albert Einstein, and Arnold Schoenberg). Kurt Weill once came to his studio and Arthur did a stunning portrait of him with a perfect likeness. After Weill's death, it occurred to Arthur that Lotte Lenya, Weill's widow, might like to own the portrait. He sent her a photograph of the painting, which interested her very much. She wanted to buy it for a lower price than the one Arthur had quoted. He agreed and sent her the painting. However, while he was waiting for the check, he suddenly received a letter from a lawyer. Apparently, a painter friend of Miss Lenya had told her that the painting had probably been done after Mr. Weill's death, most likely from one of the many existing photographs! They even claimed that the paint had been fresh and still smelled. The reason was that Arthur had added some varnish before sending the picture to Miss Lenya. It was a humiliating experience for him. Fortunately, he had a copy of the magazine *Directions* with a picture of Weill sitting in front of his portrait in Arthur's studio, which he sent to Miss Lenya. A letter of apology never arrived.

Arthur also did a beautiful portrait of George Gershwin, whom I met several times at Arthur's studio. This was just after Gershwin's big success with *Porgy and Bess*. He told us that he was planning to take the show to Europe. I asked him, "Are you going to Germany?" He laughed, "No, there is nothing Aryan about this show." Arthur gave him the portrait as a gift, since they had become good friends. Several years later, after Gershwin's tragic, early death, Arthur asked the family to lend him the painting for a New York exhibition. They did not know where it was. Arthur desperately tried to get hold of it. The Gershwin family finally gave Arthur permission to go to the warehouse where most of the estate was

stored. He spent many hours searching for the portrait and eventually found it, covered with dust and slightly impaired. He fixed it up for the exhibition, but since none of the Gershwins seemed to care about the painting, he decided not to return it.

My big chance came later in Hollywood, when Arthur visited us and asked me to drive him to the estate of Edward G. Robinson, whose portrait he was painting. He said the actor would probably not be at home, but he would work on the painting without him for a while and would like me to see it. Edward G. might even return before we left and permit me to see his fabulous collection of paintings. I had heard what an interesting man the actor was and what treasures he had collected. When we arrived, a handsome maid brought us something to drink and said that Mr. Robinson would be late today. The view from the windows was very pleasant, a garden full of flowers and odd plants, all well-tended. For a while I watched Arthur work from a distance. When he finally permitted me to come closer, I saw a wonderful portrait of the actor in a relaxed position with that famous faint smile. The painting was almost ready and he told me that he only needed two more sessions; this made him sad because he had enjoyed his conversations with Edward G. very much.

A beautiful large dog had come to visit us and gone to sleep at my feet. All of a sudden, while I was looking at the precious furniture, rugs and small sculptures around the room, the dog jumped up and ran to the front door. A moment later, he returned with the actor, who greeted us warmly. I was startled, since I had seen him in many movies, but here he looked so natural and easy-going, making me feel at ease. Arthur told him I was very interested in art and that my mother was a collector as well. He then took me around, talked about each work of art and gave me a tour of the entire house and the garden. He asked me about my mother's paintings and we exchanged ideas about the differences in artistic taste.

I wish Arthur could have taken me to some of the other artists whom he painted during his visit in Hollywood. Unfor-

tunately, that was not possible. Maybe Edward G. Robinson was his most illustrious model anyway.

Arturo Toscanini's Concerts

In 1937, a special orchestra was founded by the National Broadcasting Company solely for Arturo Toscanini. It was the most exciting event in the music world. For years they performed at the NBC building, but later moved to Carnegie Hall for regular Saturday afternoon concerts. The tickets to hear this extraordinary group of musicians under one of the world's greatest conductors were free.

But how could one get the tickets? They were always gone. Nobody knew how it happened—whether one telephoned or went to the box office or even asked insiders, there were no tickets. Only once were we lucky: one of Toscanini's musicians gave us two tickets. We were so thrilled, we talked about nothing else except how to get to another concert again. Somebody told us that if one wrote to NBC from out of town, one had a better chance than as a resident New Yorker. We telephoned Richard Sterba in Detroit and asked him to write to NBC in New York. He did and received two tickets with a note saying that he could only get them once. But our doctor friend had his own idea about how to solve our problem. The Toscanini concerts were sponsored by General Motors, and one of the executives was Richard's patient. He asked him if he could do anything about getting tickets for the New York concerts. The patient laughed: of course, he could. All he had to do was tell his secretary to send us the tickets. She could easily find out who was in charge.

It worked immediately. First she sent us two tickets. The next week we received six. Then we got more and more tickets as the weeks went by. They always arrived on Wednesday or Thursday, which gave us time to make somebody else happy. All of our friends, colleagues and neighbors got their chance.

One day in April thirty-five tickets arrived, but only on Friday. We telephoned and offered tickets to everybody, but for the first time were unable to distribute them all. While

walking over to Carnegie Hall, we still had tickets left. On 57th Street we met three people we knew. They immediately changed their plans, turned around and came right with us. The arrangement was always that we would meet everybody in the foyer of Carnegie Hall. On this day we were greeted by the largest crowd of "customers" we ever had. I cheerfully distributed the tickets and everybody proceeded into the auditorium.

Henry was already inside as well when I discovered that I had counted wrong. I was left without any tickets for Johnny, age six, and myself. For a moment I was shocked. To go to a Toscanini concert with thirty-five tickets and not to be able to get in, was inconceivable. I knew that nothing in the world could make an usher let somebody in without a ticket. What comforted me was that Johnny did not mind at all. He really preferred to go to a cafeteria and have a chocolate ice cream. After the concert we went back to pick up daddy, who then sarcastically suggested that I call Detroit "collect" and thank our friend.

Erich von Kahler

Erich von Kahler (he later dropped the "von" in the United States) was a German historian and philosopher, freelance lecturer, writer and teacher at different universities. He lived in Wolfratshausen, a small Bavarian town near Munich. He was a friend of Thomas Mann and very popular among the intellectuals of his time.

The demise of Germany at the beginning of the Nazi period deeply affected Erich, and he voiced his opinion without hesitation. His friends warned him that they feared for his life because of the forthcoming publication of his book *Der deutsche Charakter in der Geschichte Europas* (*The German Character in the History of Europe*). They wanted him to leave the country as soon as possible. When Erich and his wife went to visit his mother in Vienna, they heard that his German home had been searched by the Gestapo. They had not found the manuscript because it was hidden behind a painting. However, they did find Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*

with Erich's annotations. This made them put him on the Gestapo blacklist. Erich's wife then convinced him that they could not return home under the circumstances. It must have been a traumatic experience for Erich to leave behind all his belongings, especially his large collection of books. Fortunately, his friends were able to save his books, and they later arranged for everything to be shipped to Switzerland.

For several years the Kahlers settled in Zürich, a first stop for many immigrants. The Sterbas joined them later in Ascona. They admired Erich very much, loved him for his sense of humor and his special relationship with their little daughters. His quick wit and his enormous knowledge of history and literature made the Sterba's period of waiting for their American visa considerably more bearable.

I met Erich later in the United States in Sugar Bush. He was the most popular guest, and it became my annual duty to take care of "the professor," to make him feel comfortable and to assist with whatever he needed. His room looked like a library, since he always arrived with a large number of books and papers. From the first day on he complained about the amount of work he had to do; and he never got it all done. He was always in the middle of writing a book, or under pressure to make a deadline with articles for literary as well as political magazines in the United States and Germany.

Breakfast with Erich could take hours because he enjoyed it immensely and always involved, whoever was taking it with him, in a lively conversation. The children told him jokes and teased him, and he planned their evening games with them. At Chinese checkers, he considered every move for such a long time that it drove us up the wall, but since we all loved him, we patiently waited. When we asked Erich to join us for a swim in the pool, he appeared an hour later in a colorful wide robe, gigantic sunglasses on his nose and a tremendous straw hat. Then we watched him as he slowly took everything off except his tight trunks. Holding his hands at either side of his considerable stomach, he then proceeded according to ritual, slowly putting one foot after the other into the water, waiting, splashing himself all over until he finally immersed into the

cold pool, not without producing horrible sounds and wild grimaces, to our delight.

All around the pool and neighboring territory there were quantities of delicious blackberries. It was a summer tradition to organize a berry-picking party without nibbling any before the pies were ready. Erich was the only one who could resist, while we all secretly stuffed ourselves.

I remember one summer, just after I had learned how to type and take shorthand, Erich asked me to do a few letters for him. I wondered if I should dare to comply, but was willing to try. It turned out he was the slowest dictator. I had to wait for every sentence which he changed, repeated, corrected until it was on the paper in perfect form. His letters were a delight to read—so were his books.

One year, we had a long spell of bad weather. On the day Erich was to leave, it poured without interruption. A young friend of the Sterbas, Nico Wolff, offered to drive him to Albany and put him, with his luggage, on the train to Princeton, where he would be picked up. At breakfast, I offered to help Erich pack his clothing, which he dreaded. Nico packed all the books and papers in cartons, tied them on top of his small car and covered everything with plastic sheets. The suitcases fitted inside. They left early and got into a terrible storm. The wind blew the plastic off, rain drenched the papers, and half of them fluttered away. When they arrived in Albany, Erich was shocked. Some of the papers belonged to Albert Einstein in Princeton. He and Erich had become good friends ever since Erich's arrival in this country. At one point Einstein even offered to help Erich and his mother, when he heard that they could no longer stay in their rented house unless they bought it. At first Erich would not hear of it. Under great pressure, however, he finally consented—if he could pay interest. Einstein's reaction was, "Am I a Shylock?"

Other documents that blew away had been borrowed from the Princeton Library. Nothing could be done to retrieve them. Erich had to take the train, go home and face the consequences. Nico drove back to Sugar Bush, but could not find any of the lost material on the way. After he reported to the

Sterbas what had happened, they saddled their horses and slowly started riding towards Albany, hoping to recover at least some of the invaluable documents. However, it was too windy, and everything must have been scattered much further than one could see from the back of a horse. A few days later, Erich called to say that Einstein had copies of what he had lent him and had laughed about the incident. The library staff was less amused, but felt sorry for Erich, who was so embarrassed.

The end of the story happened during the next summer, when one of Mrs. Sterba's analysands, on her way to a session, walked through the woods and found several pieces of much-weathered paper with German print. She brought them to her analyst, curious to hear the translation. To her surprise, Ditha recognized Professor Kahler's long-lost papers.

Belva Kibler

I met the singer Belva Kibler shortly after I arrived in Hollywood. Henry had frequently sung with her, especially at the City College Opera Department, where they both participated in performances under the direction of Hugo Strelitzer. Henry had been impressed by her unusual musicality and her beautiful voice. She had studied in Cincinnati and started her professional career in Los Angeles as a mezzo-soprano. She also played the piano very well and was able to accompany her fellow singers at any time. When she came to our house to make music with us for the first time, I sang duets with her and we immediately became friends. This friendship lasted until her untimely death. At our weekly gatherings with friends and colleagues, at which we all sang for each other, she became the most important member.

In 1942 we left for New York, but not without having coaxed Belva into following soon. She had been singing in Los Angeles for quite a while, and her performance as Carmen with a local opera company was unforgettable. We thought that she was overqualified for the opportunities Los Angeles had to offer. There, everything was geared toward the movies. Within a year she came to New York and we were de-

lighted. She went through the usual problems a newcomer encounters, sang in churches and temples, auditioned for conductors and music directors and made a good start. She got a chance to sing in the world premiere of Virgil Thomson's opera *The Mother of Us All* and became a member of the Bach Aria Group. They gave regular concerts at Town Hall, and Belva established herself as the ideal Bach singer. Her fine voice had an instrumental quality, which was also well suited for *Lieder* singing. She had never studied German, but her pronunciation was so perfect that often, after concerts, German listeners came backstage and addressed her in their language. It embarrassed her because she had to tell them that she did not speak German.

Her biggest chance came when the composer Gian-Carlo Menotti engaged her to sing an important role in his opera *The Medium* to be filmed in Italy. This movie became a tremendous success and Belva's reputation grew steadily. When she returned from Italy, she surprised us by bringing her future husband with her. He had been the leading baritone in *The Medium,* and they had fallen in love during the filming. They decided fairly fast that they wanted to get married. Donald Morgan, a tall, handsome singer who had studied in Germany, told us about his friends in Cologne and we discovered that we knew them too. He also became a close friend and joined us at our musical evenings many times.

When Belva was in her thirties, she noticed a strange numbness in her right hand, which was first diagnosed as a circulation problem. After a while a slight trembling developed and she consulted several specialists and took many tests. Then she was told that she had the beginning of Parkinson's disease. It took a long time to develop into a real problem. She continued singing for a while, but got terribly nervous trying to hide the trembling. Eventually, she had to give up singing in public. It was a real tragedy, since she was in high demand, had made wonderful recordings and would have gone straight to the top.

When a famous specialist suggested brain surgery—at the time a rarely performed operation—she reluctantly agreed to

go through with it. It must have been a traumatic experience for her, since the surgeon had to keep her conscious to get her reactions while working inside her brain. She came through all right and the trembling in her hand disappeared. She went back to singing again and we all thought she would stay well. After some time her left hand started to tremble and the doctors were confident that it would improve with a second operation. Once more, she went through this agonizing experience and the trembling stopped completely. However, she lost her capacity to speak. She was assured that this was a temporary condition and that her speech would come back. But she was never able to speak again, and the Parkinson's slowly got worse.

Henry and I took turns visiting her, reporting on what went on in the music world. Her expression assured us that she understood. She nodded or smiled and even wrote down questions. Her husband took such good care of her that nothing was ever missing to make her comfortable and keep her alert. Don's sister worked in Hollywood in artist's promotion. He soon opened a branch in New York for her, which developed into a full-time job for him. At the same time, he occasionally worked for the German Hoechst AG Corporation in order to provide for Belva's ever-increasing medical needs. As time went on, she became more and more incapacitated and needed constant nursing care. She could only move with much help, and one could never leave her alone for a minute. She had to have nurses all day and Don took care of her at night. One day, a nurse called Don in the office and said, "I think Mrs. Morgan has died." He sent an ambulance to the house and called the doctor to come immediately. Belva was still alive and the paramedics gave her oxygen and revived her, so she could be taken to the hospital, where she recovered from the attack. Over the years, she had to be taken to the hospital many times and often spent weeks getting over all sorts of additional diseases, which she could not fight properly on account of her Parkinson's condition. We all think Belva would not have lived as long as she did if Don had not watched over her so patiently. When he retired, he devoted

himself completely to her care and moved her to California by plane with the help of two nurses. There, they continued to live in a small house with a garden, so Belva could enjoy the sun and be close to nature. I went to visit them in Hollywood and marvelled at their household, with three little Thai nurses taking turns, and Don now getting older, still taking care of her at night. I never saw anybody fight death for his love as passionately as he did. When she finally died, he lost the purpose of his life. It took a long time until he recovered from all these years of worries, lost hopes and enormous physical efforts.

Then Don did a wonderful thing, which helped him to go on. He established the Belva Kibler Memorial Fund at Stanford University, his alma mater. He collected all her records, the film, her concert programs and reviews—anything which was connected to her professional life and could help music students in the future.

Gerhard Bendix

Gerhard Bendix, a young German doctor who was a close friend of my brother, had immigrated to this country in the thirties. He had to return to medical school again in order to start practicing in the United States. We went through this trying time with him and together celebrated the end of all his exams. His next problem was where to open an office. In the big cities there was too much competition. Gerhard had always said he would prefer a small town where he could combine working and owning a house with a garden. He dreaded the early phase of his practice, not knowing anybody and waiting for patients. Since we were sure it would not take much time, we teased him about his worries quite a bit.

After a long search, he decided to move to Boundbrook, a small town in New Jersey. He found the ideal house, where he could have his office on the ground floor and live upstairs; there even was a little garden. On Sunday, we went to see it and predicted great success for him. We made him promise to spend the next weekend with us and report on the development.

When he came to see us, we heard an amazing story. On Wednesday afternoon he had put out his shingle. On Thursday morning nobody showed up, but in the afternoon a policeman came to consult him. He complained that he was losing his hearing and would probably have to give up his profession. He was only fifty years old and much too far from retirement. Gerd, as we called Gerhard, examined him thoroughly and discovered that this man had a lot of wax in his ears. It had become as hard as a rock. Our friend had a terrible time loosening it and getting it out. Yet, the result was that the policeman had perfect hearing again. He was so overwhelmed by this "miracle" that he could not thank the doctor enough. He embraced him, kissed him and promised to send him friends and colleagues.

On Friday morning at eight o'clock, even before Gerd was in his office downstairs, the bell rang and another policeman stood at the door. Coincidentally, he seemed to have the same problem as his colleague and was just as happy with the result of the treatment, praising the new doctor for being so efficient.

At ten o'clock a woman arrived and introduced herself as the first policeman's sister. She thanked the doctor profusely for having helped her brother so completely. According to her description, he was a changed person. She herself had developed arthritic pains, but had never taken any painkillers. Gerhard prescribed a harmless medication and made her take some pills he had in his office. After he finished the examination, she declared that her pains had subsided. It seemed like another "miracle."

In the afternoon, several people came and patiently sat in the waiting room. It turned out that every single one of them was either a friend or a relative of the first policeman. Gerhard had already made it in Boundbrook.

Gibson

When the Sterbas moved to Detroit, Michigan, they hired Gibson as their cook and "child protector." He had come from the South and had worked at General Motors for a

number of years, but did not like it. He was six feet four, very handsome, and loved children. The Sterba girls were five and seven years old, and it was a touching sight when he walked these little blond creatures along the lake, holding them tightly by their hands and telling them stories from the South. They adored him of course, and loved his cooking, as everybody else did. During the summer vacation, Johnny, four years old, was included in his care and became just as attached to him as his playmates. Gibson was so devoted to the family that he stayed with them for the rest of his working life. After he retired, he moved in with friends. I always visited him when I went to Detroit. The last time I saw him he told me that his friends had driven him to his former church, and when the minister came out, he looked around and announced, "Good heavens, I have not even started my sermon and there sits brother Gibson already fast asleep!"

A very nice thing once happened to Gibson. One Sunday in Vermont, when he was "off" and in his best outfit, he returned at night and told us about a pleasant experience. While he was sitting in the garden of a restaurant, sipping his beer, he noticed that a little girl at a neighboring table was staring at him intensely. Obviously, the distinguished-looking gentleman with her was her grandfather. He suddenly came over to Gibson's table, introduced himself, shook hands with him and said, "Would you mind coming over to our table and sitting with us? My grandchild has never seen a black person in her life, and I want her first experience to be a pleasant one. I would appreciate it if you could talk to her." Gibson went over and made friends with the little girl, had a long talk with the grandfather and enjoyed himself immensely.

Nan Merriman

On April 12, 1945, I had dinner with the American mezzo-soprano Nan Merriman. She was in a euphoric state of mind, since she had just signed a contract with a manager, who would arrange for her to sing many concerts. We had already known her in Los Angeles, where she had studied, and we thought she had an absolutely unique voice. She later sang at

many of the major opera houses and music festivals in Europe, often under Toscanini. She always claimed that he had the greatest influence on her musical development, and made her sing way beyond what she thought herself capable of. Other singers have also insisted that the maestro inspired them to sing better than they had ever sung before.

On this evening, Nan was very happy. We talked about her blooming career and celebrated her new success. When we left the restaurant and walked towards Fifth Avenue, a man passing us said, "President Roosevelt just died." We were thunderstruck, since we both admired him. Nan, being a Catholic, suggested that we walk up to St. Patrick's Cathedral and pray for his soul. When we arrived at the church, only a few people were there. Yet, a short while later, more and more grief-stricken people came streaming in, and the cathedral filled rapidly. The dreadful news seemed to have struck everybody around us. Small groups formed and people talked softly. Strangers shook hands and embraced each other. It felt as if we all had become one family, sharing the same thought: what is going to become of us without Roosevelt?

Suddenly, the organ thundered into the silence and Bach's music engulfed us all. I looked at Nan and realized that the joy had gone from her face and her expression was one of sorrow and despair. By the time we left the cathedral, there was no more space for the many people who wanted to get in. We will never forget this evening as long as we live.

Otto Julius Merkel

Otto Julius Merkel, the husband of Anna Marie, who was my close friend during the time I studied in Berlin, was involved with the Nazi regime. Yet he pretended that his association was strictly professional and linked to his work at Lufthansa. He claimed that he had to play along, and everybody believed it. He became extremely popular among the Nazi officials when he introduced the American aviator Charles Lindbergh to Adolf Hitler. Through this connection, Otto was able to bring the *Hubschrauber* (helicopter) to America.

In the thirties, Otto was one of the first to say to me, "If I

were you, I would go to America now and study at the Juilliard School of Music until things have calmed down here in Germany." That made sense, but I did not know how to make a living. He kindly offered his help, although he had to be very careful. It was strictly forbidden to take money out of the country. I was delighted and immediately arranged for a transfer of several thousand Reichsmark to his account. Anna Marie later told me that from now on we should use the word "book" instead of "money" in our correspondence. Otto would arrange for the funds to be sent to my new address in America.

A few weeks later, Otto called me and said I could send him more money to make the transaction worthwhile. In order not to arouse suspicion by taking a large amount from my mother's bank account, I asked several members of my family to lend me some money, which I brought to the Merkel's home myself. It was the last time I would see them before leaving Germany for America. Otto assured me that everything would work out just fine and that he would get in touch with me as soon as he arrived in the United States on his next business trip. Several weeks after my arrival in America, I wrote to Anna Marie, telling her that unfortunately I had not yet received the "book" she had wanted to send me. In her ensuing letter she explained that Otto was soon to come to America and would call me to arrange for a meeting. Three weeks later, he actually did call and invited me for dinner and a movie. While we enjoyed a delicious meal, he told me a bizarre story. He had supposedly given my money to a South American friend who had recently been to Berlin and promised to send it to the United States after his return to Brazil. However, he had suddenly died and the estate was being handled by a lawyer who, of course, had nothing in writing about our transaction. This would only delay the matter. Otto assured me that he had written to his friend's family and was convinced everything would turn out all right. He added that the money might even arrive while he was still in the United States. In any case he would call me once more before leaving the country.

After dinner, we went to Radio City Music Hall to see the film *Green Pastures*. It had hardly started when Otto went to sleep. Since his jacket was hanging loosely open and his wallet was showing, I could not help thinking that if I took his money now and left, he could not make an issue of it. After all, I had a hold over him and could inform the German authorities of the transfer. Of course, I waited until he woke up and accompanied me home.

Later at night I began to have serious doubts about Otto and the story he had told me about his Brazilian friend. His description of the circumstances and the unlikely details made me think that I would never see the money again. The only weapon I had was to write to Anna Marie and make her put pressure on him. I trusted her completely. She had once mentioned that her husband led a strange life. He had apartments in different countries and travelled all the time, but Anna Marie did not know in what capacity.

The next morning I received an envelope from a bank in Connecticut, containing a five hundred dollar check—and no explanation! I presumed that this was a first payment of Otto's debts and went to the telephone to call him. I was told by the clerk at the registration desk of Otto's hotel that he had left for Germany in the early morning.

I suppose he had some money remaining from his trip and had it sent to me by a bank, to make me think that it was the beginning of my reimbursement. He might also have hoped that I would write to his wife about this. I let her know that a small "book" had arrived.

Several months later, another check arrived from an American bank; shortly afterwards the Merkels came to the United States together. I did not see Otto during this visit, but Anna Marie assured me I would get the remainder of my money soon. Otto had promised to write another letter to his friend's family in Brazil.

Many years later, World War II broke out and I did not hear from the Merkels for a long time. When I visited Germany after the war, I contacted Anna Marie and found out that Otto had died. She was very upset about the fact that I

had never received the full amount of the money I had given to her husband. I assured her that all this belonged to the past. She was still mourning her husband and I could not expect her to make up for his sins. I often wondered if she ever found out about his strange activities over the years.

Anna Marie's feelings of guilt lasted forever. She came to America a few more times, always showering me with gifts of considerable value. On her last visit, she wanted me to have a beautiful ring her late husband had given her. I, of course, refused to accept it. Yet she was so insistent that I eventually gave in but only under one condition: she had to promise me to ask for her ring should she ever repent this unusual gesture.

Anna Marie had tears in her eyes when she said good-bye. I am sure now that she felt she would not see me again. A few months later I received the announcement of her death.

Epilogue

This is the end of *Not for Johnny Only*. I have tried to remember as much as possible to show him how differently the life of his parents had developed after the National Socialists took over in Germany. Without Hitler I might not even have met his father, but maybe would have been singing at one of the countless German opera houses, spending my vacations in Mönchengladbach. That was my dream at the time.

Johnny's father, with his beautiful voice and superb musicianship, could have easily had a career without the enormous difficulties, doubts and uncertainties which he constantly had to face. We tried to overcome the obstacles thrown in our way, and kept going. Later, when we heard about the terrible things that had happened in Europe to so many friends and members of our families, we realized how lucky we had been to get out in time and find a new life in America. Pure luck had saved us.

I hope my grandchildren will be spared similar experiences, will enjoy reading about their grandparents' lives, and some day, maybe, will help to prevent a recurrence of the tragic events of our time.

"The vignettes in Meta Cordy's book focus on the richness of the human relationships which she formed even as the tragic events of the Hitler period took her from her small-town beginnings in the Rhineland to Berlin, Paris, Hollywood and New York. Whether she is interacting with famous musicians and film stars or is counseling foreign students on personal decisions and the enjoyment of New York's cultural offerings, she manages to enrich the lives of those who share the warmth of her personality. The bitter flavor of the Hitler years comes through as subtext."

—Gabriel A. Almond

"The first part of Meta Cordy's endearing, unaffected, and optimistic memoir offers an entrancing look into a world that is largely gone, a world redolent with the perfume of a foreign country, not just literally, but also in the sense that the past is a foreign country. And her adventures in this country also show us an America with vistas beyond those that we who live here necessarily know."

—Michael Steinberg



About the Author

Very active in music and education, Meta Cordy has worked as a writer, professional singer, Director of Student Activities and Foreign Student Counselor at New York University, and Assistant to the Director of Information at the Institute of International Education. She lives and writes in New York City.

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