Against All Odds



Eva Hamlet

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By

Eva Hamlet

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my late husband, Eddie Hamlet. My only lover and best and true friend for fifty years, he was always in my corner, through thick or thin, good or bad times until death parted us forever. He is gone but not forgotten; I miss him more every day and will go on loving him for the rest of my life.

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FOREWORD

by Jennifer Willency

My personal holocaust

During the Holocaust in World War II, I lost relatives and history to Hitler's concentration camps.

My grandfather, Eddie Hamlet, died before he ever told us about his childhood, obviously quite traumatic for him. We do know that he was taken to a concentration camp at age 13, but somehow managed to make his way to safety in England.

Grandmother Eva Hamlet has been able to talk about her experiences.

The war has been over since 1944. I pray my parents, two brothers and I will never have to go through my grandparents' emotional torture as described in the following pages.

Please, God, never let this happen again.

PREFACE

I wrote this book at the request of my daughter, Ruth, son-in-law, Dick and my grandchildren, Marc, Joel and Jennifer Willency. The events in our lives, from early childhood to the present, have thus become a part of their own history.

Eddie and I "had it all". We were vulnerable but invincible through the sad and happy days when we worked to fulfill our positive thoughts on life with determination and compassion for each other.

May our story inspire Ruth, Dick and our grandchildren to seek their own fulfillment throughout their lives.

WAS I EVER A CHILD?

Much of my instinct for survival, no doubt, stems from the simple circumstance of my birth as a Jew in 1924 in Magdeburg, Germany. I have little recollection of my early childhood - no clear details about important or unimportant events.

My arrival on Planet Earth occurred on January 6, 1924, in Magdeburg, Germany, hopefully to the delight of my parents, Dr. Julius Riese and Else Riese. They named me Eva Johanna Riese.

My sister, Vera, was born in 1928 when I was 4 years old. The birth of a sibling is not unusual, until noticeable changes take place at home. No longer was I the center of activity. A governess came to live with us and began taking care of me. I cannot recall her name but recall very clearly the "spinach episode." I intensely disliked spinach but had to eat it regularly on orders from my mother. The governess pushed the stuff into my mouth only to have it promptly thrown back. This scenario was repeated and became a game. Refusal to swallow this delicacy brought immediate punishment. My sister and I played together, jumped on beds, bathed in one tub, enjoyed and laughed at our nanny's angry outbursts.

A happy family, we travelled to the North Sea, took hiking trips in the "Harz" - a mountain range located not far from Magdeburg. Gradually my happy little world started to change. My mother and sister would leave home and stay away for many days. I remember feeling jealous. What was the reason for leaving me at home - had Vera become the favorite daughter? My

father finally explained to me that their absences were necessary, caused by Vera's asthma. She needed regular treatments in a Bavarian sanatorium and mother had to be nearby during her confinements.

I recollect my "first day in school" as a special occasion. A lone photograph in my possession depicts a very proud girl cradling an "Ostertuete". A large, gaily decorated cardboard cone filled with an assortment of chocolates is presented to each first day pupil by parents and family. This sweet beginning for tough school years ahead is called "Ostertuete".

I grew into a full-fledged student, learned to read, write and started to grow up. Many holidays and vacation times were spent visiting relatives in Berlin. I travelled alone by train and stayed overnight with my many aunts and uncles. Most of my aunts and uncles were childless and I was always a welcome guest. This girl loved every minute of their attention. Those trips later became treasured memories of my early school years.

Throughout my life, I have often fantasized about my baby years. Were my parents elated with their girl or had they envisioned a boy as their firstborn child? What did my baby pictures reveal? Was I cute, fat, thin, maybe baldheaded or with a full head of hair. No baby pictures in albums existed; no little bronzed shoes or other mementos and no parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles who could have told anecdotes from my childhood.

We were a large family then, full of fun and with much love for one another until the holocaust annihilated almost the entire family and left me orphaned. The "Third Reich" with Hitler at the helm annihilated my past via the "Iron Furnace". My entire family was cremated by the Nazi inside various concentration camps, our belongings robbed, plundered and burned. In loving

memory, I devoted the next chapter to their stories, their lives to be remembered for all times and future generations.

THE FAMILY: THE KOCHMANS AND THE RIESES

My Parents

My father, Dr. Julius Riese, Rechtsanwalt and Notar (Lawyer) was a busy man with a flourishing practice on the Breite Weg (Main Street) and more often with a demanding schedule in the courts. He specialized in Criminal Law with Prussian perseverance and pride, an awesome combination. World War I saw him fighting for the fatherland, earning the Iron Cross and years as a prisoner of war in Siberia.

I remember him lovingly but also as a man to be reckoned with. He was strict about being punctual at all times, about always using correct table manners, and he simply would not tolerate bad or poor grades in school. Sixty years later, I still strive for perfection. His absolute disdain of failure and his insistence on obedience probably saved my life and my sanity during the hard years ahead. I regret that we were torn apart so soon and never had a chance to have Father/Daughter talks during my adolescent years. Our home life centered around Dr. Riese, husband and father. All activities, including meals, were planned around my father's availability.

My mother, Else Riese, Ne Kochmann, was an extremely well-mannered lady, an elegant dresser and a devoted wife. She supervised the cooking, cleaning, and the seamstress who came to the house on a regular basis to sew her childrens' clothes. Mother spent much of her time with my sister, Vera, who needed constant attention.

Once a week, well-dressed ladies would appear at our house for their regular bridge games. We had a special room for that occasion in our spacious apartment. We were "well-to-do", according to my mother's only surviving sister, Ida Weiss. We had a maid to cook and clean and a governess for Vera and me. My parents entertained frequently. Mother would dress us "cute little girls" and propel us into the drawing room where we would curtsy, answer a few questions and then out, off to bed.

Father's Family

Grandmother Hedwig Riese, affectionately called "Oma", was the matriarch of the family. She lived in her own house, not far from us. She was always old, or so I remember her, but stately, stern and cuddly - I loved her much. A stickler for punctuality, correct table manners and exemplary behavior - she would reprimand her grown sons and daughter, Aunt Wallie, as well as her grandchildren, for any "slipups" as they occurred. Our weekly Friday night get-togethers at Oma's house were a command performance with no excuses accepted. I have many treasured memories from these occasions, they bring tears to my eyes - wishing to turn back time.

Uncle Benno, Oma's totally blind brother, lived in the same house attended by his faithful companion, Emilie. Where was Oma's husband, my grandfather? Why was Uncle Benno blind? Children did not ask questions and grownups did not volunteer information. Many facts, questions and family history will forever remain unanswered as the destruction of our family occurred so early in my life.

Down the road from Grandma's house lived Aunt Wallie Sieburth, Ne Riese, with her children, Hans and Hilde. Their father was deceased and Aunt Wallie ran the Apotheke (drug store). She was a business woman and I really do not remember much more about her. Her children and I were not close cousins, as they were around 12 to 15 years my seniors.

Dr. Willy Riese, my father's younger brother, lived in Berlin with his wife, Else and their two children, Kurt and Ruth. Close in age, we enjoyed each other's company whenever they visited Magdeburg for Oma's command performance dinner. Uncle Willy, an engineer, was an ardent Zionist, frowned upon by some members of the family. But he believed in Palestine (now Israel), and decided to leave Germany in 1933 and take his family to the promised land. Shortly thereafter, Wallie's son and daughter emigrated to Palestine. They were the only survivors of the Riese family other than me. I fled to England in June of 1939.

Mother's Family

Two sons and five daughters were born to Moritz and Johanna Kochmann in Kattowitz, sometimes Germany, sometimes Poland, depending on which war raged at the time. I never knew my maternal grandparents, who both died before I was born. The Kochmann family was a different "tribe" from the "Rieses"; more relaxed, casual and fun-loving. No Iron Crosses among the boys, no doctors or lawyers in the crowd; few of them had a lot of money.

Aunt Marta, the oldest, was married to Uncle Fedor, and lived in a

splendid villa in Berlin with their son Carl-Heinz, servants and obviously a healthy bank account. They were connected with the Arts, with Uncle Fedor the "angel" and Carl-Heinz the actor. I clearly recall that they were my favorite people to visit. A chauffeur-driven, black limousine awaited my arrival at the train station. Perched on the back seat behind a glass partition, I could talk to the chauffeur on a gold handled telephone. We went to elegant restaurants (a first for me), order any meal; pastries, chocolates and other goodies. There was always an extended shopping trip to exciting stores for toys and clothes - no home-made clothes for their niece, especially not for the gala performances at the Berlin Staats Oper (Opera house). I saw my first opera, "Aida", at age seven, and still remember it clearly.

Years later, Uncle Fedor absconded to America with his son's fiancee', Friedel, and a few million dollars. He wanted to make her a famous moviestar, but never succeeded. When I caught up with them in New York around 1948, she worked in a factory and supported him. Aunt Marta died in Berlin of natural causes. Carl-Heinz followed his father to the USA and presumably found himself another fiancee'. I really do not know his whereabouts.

Uncle Richard, the oldest Kochmann brother, also resided in Berlin with his wife, Theresa. They were childless and I was in great demand as a visitor. Theresa ran a tight ship in their opulent apartment. No one, but no one, was allowed to dwell in the parlor nor sit on the golden Louis XV chairs. My father, a big man, had sat on a chair on a previous visit and demolished it, and the whole family was punished for his deed. They had the biggest bathroom I ever saw, with marble walls and gold faucets. I had to use the maid's bathroom. So much for Aunt Theresa. The only funny episode that still comes to mind was the "silk chandelier caper".

The entire Kochmann Family always spent New Year's Eve at Uncle

Richard's house. We would eat carp, a traditional fish for the occasion, drink champagne and break pretty, decorated fire crackers. That ritual took place in the gold room located near the balcony. Someone in the crowd got carried away with the fire crackers and set the chandelier on fire. Future parties took place on the balcony.

Aunt Frieda, her husband (whose name I can't remember), and their daughter, Annie, lived outside Berlin, the beginning of the list of the "have-nots". He was a navy man, not Jewish, and probably frowned upon by the clan. I remember nothing further.

My red-haired Aunt Meta was an artist who painted pictures. A swinging spinster all her life, she commuted between Berlin and Monte Carlo. A favorite Aunt, nevertheless, I was not allowed to stay with her in her apartment - by order of my parents. I clearly remember my mother reminding my father to "send money to Meta"- so she could return home from her gambling trips. She repaid loans with paintings, lots of them. Her sister's and brother's houses resembled art galleries. To this day, her work, a still life in a gilded frame, adorns a wall in my house. After the war and her death in Auschwitz, Aunt Meta's illegitimate son surfaced in Berlin. His father was an Italian Count, and naughty Aunt Meta never revealed his existence during her lifetime.

I introduced my mother, Else, in the beginning of this chapter. She was followed by her youngest sister, Ida, who was married to a chemist, a prominent man in his field with a personality resembling a horse's ass. They also were childless and eagerly awaited my visits. We never hit it off, even disliked each other right from the beginning. Aunt Ida was awkward around young people, too proper, molded and encased in a typical German environment with little sense of humor or caring qualities. My outspoken rejection of their company would come to haunt me later in life - more about

that, though, in another chapter.

Closing this chapter on the Kochmann family, I must not forget Uncle Adolf. How could a nice Jewish family have an Adolf in their midst? In retrospect, he deserved his name. That kid brother was a pip -- he never did meet the family's expectations. Always borrowing money from the "clan", he never repaid anyone, not even in paintings. He lived in a dumpy area of Berlin, not recommended for extended visits. He married several times and his wives frequently disappeared. I only remember him from pictures. He will surface again, however, in a later chapter, the orchestrator of an important event in my life.

I am the last survivor of the Kochmann family. Most of them were hunted down by the Nazis and exterminated in the various concentration camps. Once a normal family, bickering, arguing, loving, happy, sad, they suffered a cruel, inhuman ending to their lives. A few pictures, a couple of letters and memories remain as my heritage. I was left alone, orphaned, homeless and countryless.

Was I guilty of some crime? I listened to my parents, did my home work, worshipped in the Synagogue.

My question has gone unanswered, but I felt compelled to recall their presence on earth and commit the memory of their lives to history for remembrance by future generations.

VERA'S DEATH

My sister, Vera, was run over and killed instantly by a speeding car in 1936. I was 12 years old. Coming home from school on that fateful day was different from other days. I did not see my sister playing in our room. Several people had gathered in our house. Mostly strangers, they milled around my mother and father, talking in hushed tones.

I remember my father lying on his bed, crying, something he had never done before. Where was my mother? What was she doing? Who was going to take care of me? Why can't I remember other details or thoughts that went through my mind that day?

Writing this chapter is painful. A faded miniature photograph of my sister, me, Uncle Willy, my father and blind Uncle Benno is my only positive link with Vera - it stirs no other memories - even now. The photograph was passed on to me just two short years ago, in 1990, after Uncle Willy died in Israel. His son found it among his father's personal papers.

Fifty-six years after Vera's death, I saw her picture, finally admitting to myself and my family the existence and tragic death of my sister, a difficult time for me. For many years, my husband, my daughter and close friends did not know there had been a second child in my family. God, was I ever a child? Why are my formative years still such a mystery to me? Could it be the "sibling rivalry" syndrome?

In March 1992, I travelled to Magdeburg and visited Vera's grave.

LAST DAYS WITH MY PARENTS

After Vera's death, my parents sent me back to school, to the Lyceum, a prestigious learning institution. We wore uniforms and school hats in orange and black. We lived in a very formal, strict and demanding atmosphere.

Students showed great respect for their professors. In fact, the respect closely resembled fear. Plentiful homework was handed out regularly and we were expected to hand it in on predetermined due dates. Failure to produce results brought a punishment worse than death - a letter to our parents. Amid Latin and French studies, math, algebra and other hard subjects - I loved school.

One day, sometime in 1938, my father informed me that I would no longer be able to



Eva - age 13
Bat Mitzvah
Magdeburg, Germany

attend school. Jewish students were banned permanently from all German learning institutions. Magdeburg did not have a large Jewish population or Jewisn high school.

That was a big blow to me, abruptly crashing my ambition to become a lawyer. My parents secured a private tutor to continue my education in our house. He could come only in the late evening, after dark, because he was afraid of being seen entering the house of Jews.

How could a 14 year old kid understand being barred from school and playgrounds? School friends shunned me, my whole familiar world was coming apart. Slowly, the awful truth about impending doom was penetrating my mind.

My father had travelled to Palestine around 1937 to visit his younger brother, Uncle Willy, and his family who now lived and worked in Tel-Aviv. Father returned to Germany in a few weeks. There was no discussion or indication on his part about emigration for himself and his family to join his brother. I do remember that my parents discussed the ever-increasing atrocities against the Jews and probably still believed that they would pass. They should have known better.

My entire family could not imagine themselves becoming victims of "The Final Solution", the murder of a whole race. They were German; their forefathers were German; they had fought in every German war with distinction and decorations. It was simply more than they could comprehend.

However, in June, 1939, my parents decided to send me to England, alone, via a kinder transport train (childrens' transport). The British government saved 10,000 Jewish children before Hitler and his gang could slaughter them in the concentration camps.

It should be noted here that England was the only country in the whole world with enough compassion for children, to save them from dastardly atrocities and early death.



1938
Last Days With
My Parents

We were wearing "Judenstars" (a yellow star) sewn on our clothes by then, easy to recognize, easy to kill in the streets. Dressed thus, my parents and I travelled to the train station in Magdeburg. They settled me in a compartment with strangers; then my parents had to leave the train. We talked through the window and from the platform.

Why am I leaving alone? Why can't they join me? Why are they crying? I was not crying, this

was just a journey - I would be returning home again.

The tag on my coat read "Southport, England". This unbelievable picture, a child with a tag, her parents sobbing as the train slowly pulled away from the station, is branded into my heart forever.

I never saw my parents again. As the train sped further and further from my home towards the Dutch border and on to England and freedom, it suddenly became very clear to me that my parents had made the supreme sacrifice, giving their only remaining child the opportunity to survive.

I tried everything I could to save my parents. My efforts were in vain. After I arrived in England, I tried to secure enough funds to purchase two ship passages to Shanghai, China. Mother's sister, Ida, already living in Manchester, scraped up sufficient monies for one ticket. Desperate, I wired father's brother who lived in Palestine, and pleaded for help. He sent an absurd token amount of $25.00 and an excuse, claiming poverty (which was untrue, because he took funds from my father, his mother, and sister Wallie before his immigration to Palestine in 1933). They were all murdered in Auschwitz sometime between 1942 and 1943.

Fifty years after their death, I ordered and erected a tablet commemorating the lives of Dr. Julius Riese and Else Kochmann Riese at the foot of my sister's grave in Magdeburg, Germany. May they all rest in peace.

MY SENTIMENTAL DRESS

Two days before my hasty departure from Germany, my mother bought me a dress, a "good dress for parties" as she said. Little did either of us suspect, it would be her last purchase for her daughter. It became very special to me. Multi-colored in vivid shades of red, yellow and brown, it was simply styled with a demure, high neckline and an accordion-pleated skirt. A waist-long back zipper and a ten foot thin tie belt completed the silk dress. It gave me an elegant look.

Since it was the only dressy outfit in my small trunk, I wore it to services in the Southport Temple, afternoon teas at several English ladies' homes and other functions requiring "dress up" attire. After I moved to Manchester, my best dress appeared at dances, socials, Bar Mitzvahs and weddings, including my own.

My husband waited patiently to donate the well-worn, but luxurious piece of apparel to charity. Almost convinced to part with this sentimental treasure, my pregnancy rescued it from destruction. Lacking funds and clothing coupons for purchasing maternity clothes, the full, pleated skirt adapted obligingly to ever increasing belly sizes.

At pregnancy's end, the zipper was visibly strained, the long belt just about stretched around my waist, and the pleats opened into a generous full skirt. During my stay in the hospital, Eddie and friends conspired to remove the dress from my clutches and arrange a final resting place. He admitted it burned stubbornly in our open fireplace.

A REFUGEE IN SOUTHPORT

I arrived in Southport with my name tag still pinned to my jacket. My recollection of the entire journey is vague, maybe due to numbness and excitement.

Emerging from the train, alone and in total darkness, constituted my first experience in adulthood. How can I relate to anyone the desolate feeling of arriving in a foreign country as a child refugee? No knowledge of English added more complication to my situation. The word "refugee" is an ominous word because it reflected an almost hopeless situation. Since I was only 14 years old, that hopeless situation felt more like a disaster. Hunched atop my steamer trunk, I cried bitterly while pondering my fate. A kindly conductor came along, and tried to comfort me in a language totally alien to my ear.

Suddenly I remembered my father's lessons in discipline, and realized that I needed to implement those lessons. They saved me from self-destruction. That realization helped me to become an adult - a new human being about to be born into the world. My childhood ceased to exist in June, 1939.

My new personality started to emerge. Crying time was over, and I, Eva Riese, was determined to survive. My parents had parted with their only child, the ultimate sacrifice for loving parents. I had to carry on the Jewish tradition of survival, and honor that sacrifice. From that time, I had no more memory losses. Taking "for granted" times were over and the "give till it hurts" times had commenced. Comprehending my new responsibilities, I made

a solemn promise to myself that I would never again depend on others to help me but be master of my own destiny from that day on for the rest of my life. The tears stopped and self-pity became an emotion of the past. My new self spotted two ladies approaching.

Mrs. Stone, a German-speaking Austrian and Mrs. Livingston, an English lady, warmly welcomed me to Southport. Since my new courage and independence was still in its infant stage, I was most grateful to them. They proceeded to move me, my trunk and my few other belongings off that desolate platform and we drove to my new home.

The three of us arrived at the "Hostel" and were greeted by the "inmates," several other young girls from Germany, Austria, Poland, all victims of persecution. Our hostel is best described as a temporary shelter for homeless and countryless refugees financed by more fortunate citizens of Southport. The house was temporarily donated by a most compassionate family named Harris. The hostel was known as "Harris House".

Mrs. Stone was the "matron" in charge, responsible for running the establishment. Her mother, called "Granny," was our cook. She was the only true, warm-hearted soul surrounding all of us .

I think there were 16 girls in the house. We were very close in age and our similar backgrounds forged us into a fairly close-knit group. Homesick and frantically trying to find ways and means to save our parents before they would fall victims of the gas chambers, we approached every known agency, government facility, and individual to help us in our quest.

We all failed because the world failed us. No one would help. Still possible to obtain passage to Shanghai or Singapore for Jews from Hitler's Europe, we needed about $100 for each parent's ticket. The money had to be

guaranteed and the tickets acquired outside of Nazi occupied territory. None of us succeeded, and we were faced with that reality for the rest of our lives. My only consolation is the fact that since then I have never given up trying to achieve results - the words "cannot be done" no longer exist in my vocabulary.

During my stay in the hostel, I secured my first job. Working in a pharmacy was interesting; though I did little else but clean up after the pharmacist. But I was learning the language - most important to me at that time. My pay was 2 shillings a week. Most of the other girls were holding similar jobs and pay. We usually walked to work since we could hardly afford bus fare, ending our days by working in the kitchen, helping "Granny," washing clothes, cleaning rooms etc.

Saturday, the big day of rest, brought nice, local ladies to the hostel to "pick a girl" for the week-end. The first time I became Mrs. Royce's "pick a girl" for the week-end was also my last. She and I paraded up the Southport promenade for all the citizens to see-- the lady and the poor refugee girl. Yes, I was poor, a homesick refugee, but Mrs. Royce must have forgotten - or maybe she never knew - that even poor, miserable young girls have feelings. I deserted the good woman on the promenade with a friendly reminder to get herself a dog instead of a human being for future walks in the promenade. Admittedly, my popularity was not great with our hostel benefactors or the matron. I was never asked again to "promenade".

My independence was taking hold. I wanted to leave, have privacy, be on my own. My command of the English language was still poor. We spoke too much German in the hostel. I needed someone to teach me English in a hurry, to get a better job, to earn more money, to escape from the hostel. I verbally attacked any customer entering the pharmacy - talking, listening, trying to increase my vocabulary. During my lunch hour, I walked the

promenade alone. Watching the ocean, the waves and beyond - was one of my great pleasures, and it was free.

During one of my noon hour walks, I met a boy named Derek. His parents owned a "pensione," a guest house across the street from the ocean. He invited me for lunch at his house - a charming, friendly and warm family. The food was delicious. Derek and I became close friends, which assured me of good lunches. Saturday invitations for dinner required no parading on the promenade.

Derek, his family and their guests were enormously helpful to me by introducing me to the English way of life, and enabling me to improve my knowledge of the language. None of our hostel inhabitants cared to hear too much about my daily experiences; everyone had their own problems. My boss at the pharmacy had promoted me to saleslady with a three shilling increase in pay. I was happy to be learning more every day about life in my newly adopted country - it would bring me closer to independence and self-sufficiency.

WORLD WAR II

Just three months after my escape to freedom, on September 3, 1939, Great Britain declared war on Germany and the Hitler regime. The events that followed are as clear in my mind today as when they were unfolding that long time ago.

All the girls, the matron and granny were gathered around our one and only little radio in the hostel, listening to the news. Absorbing the somber and grave speech of the Prime Minister's Declaration of War, I suddenly became aware that within 3 months, I was chased from Germany for my religious beliefs, and became a German enemy alien in my newly adopted home.

At age 15 years, war was something I read about in school. Little did any of us realize, this war would become our personal war, that we would become the physical and mental casualties in a worldwide disaster. We knew there would no longer be communication between ourselves and our parents, family or friends; or even worse, that we would all become orphans. Those were fragile days.

As an enemy alien, my movements were restricted by curfew. I had to attend tribunals in a court of law, where it was determined that a 15 year old girl was not a dangerous spy, but a miserable, lonely and dispirited individual.

Early in 1940 came the final blow! Within 48 hours, the entire hostel was dissolved by order of the Southport police department. We were

instructed to move "inland," since Southport was a coastal town and off limits to all enemy aliens.

We were totally devastated. None of us had any money, nor any way to find shelter. Gone were the nice ladies who had made us so welcome at the train station and who had placed us in a nice safe hostel.

Hastily our matron purchased a school note book. On our last night together in the hostel, each of the girls entered her sad story, dreams, hopes and wishes for a better and more positive future. We affixed photographs of ourselves and returned the notebook to the matron. I never saw or heard from any of the girls, the matron or granny again until our reunion some 50 years later.

During our hasty departure from Southport and our hostel, "Harris House," the diary notebook disappeared and was found 45 years later at the town jumble sale (Fleemart). But that is another chapter in this book.

Our final moments of togetherness brought many tears as we said our final good-bye to each other, granny and the matron. We were handed enough money for a train ride to several inland towns and then departed for yet another lonesome journey. Several girls went to London in search of another hostel, others chose different towns to find shelter. Manchester was my next stop.

Aunt Ida, known as "Auntie," and her husband, Valentine, had escaped to England just before the start of the war. She was my mother's younger sister. I introduced them to the reader in the Kochmann Family chapter. Her husband, a well-known research chemist in Berlin, had managed to connect with a similar institution in Manchester and that company had guaranteed his position to the English government. At that particular time,

adult Jews could only enter Great Britain with an iron clad guarantee of employment.

It was never very clear to me why their only surviving niece was living in a hostel rather than making her home with them. Now there was no other choice; they asked me to come and live with them.

What now? I had no money, no job and no choice to live somewhere else. Uncle Valentine and I were never very fond of each other, but circumstances forced me into sharing their home. I tried to find a job, but sixteen year old enemy aliens were not in great demand.

With a darkened England, blackout in full force, we prepared for the worst. Building air raid shelters, receiving gas masks, ration coupons and generally getting behind the "War effort" took up most of our time.

A newspaper advertisement caught my eye for female factory workers to replace men inducted into the armed forces. Particularly anxious to help in the war effort, I sent in my application. My enemy alien status surfaced immediately. I tried to explain that I, as a victim of the Nazi persecution, was trying to do my share to bring about the defeat of Germany. My plea for acceptance must have been convincing. The Home Office (English FBI), finally contacted me and cleared my application for work at Bristol Aircraft.

After several weeks of intensive training, I could work on different machines, milling drills, center lathes, capstan turrets etc. Learning to read blueprints and work with complicated hand tools was rather difficult but determination was my taskmaster. We manufactured engine parts for Lancaster Bombers twelve hours a day, seven days a week, with three months on day shift and three months on night shift. I quickly learned the meaning of "hard work."

THE BOMBING OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Germans started intensive bombing runs on major towns; London, Liverpool, Coventry and others. Our defense consisted of a few fighter planes of ancient vintage, grey balloons attached to ground lines to trap low flying planes and anti-aircraft guns from a long ago war. Winston Churchill's famous statement "Never has so much been accomplished with so little by so few" was no understatement.

I experienced my first bombing attack in Manchester around Christmas '41. It is still clearly detailed in my mind. The air-raid sounded a long wail of impending doom in the early evening, while people were still returning home from work. With the last wail of the siren, the thunderous sound of heavy planes could be heard in the distance. Unsure what to do, many headed for the nearest shelter, not knowing what to expect. I stayed in our house under the stairs, the safest place if a bomb scored a direct hit.

The first wave of planes dropped thousands of incendiary sticks which started instant fires as they exploded on contact with the ground. With the fires lighting their targets, the next wave of heavy bombers struck every civilian structure possible, churches, hospitals, train stations and most of all, civilian home districts. Wave after wave of planes dropped their loads all night. After that, waves of fighter planes would appear in the sky, zoom down and shoot at firefighters on their ladders, fighting to extinguish the blazes throughout the town.

We had so little defense; we were helpless. One old cannon mounted

on a truck drove through, just firing but not hitting the enemy. But its cracking sound was good for our morale; even the sight and noise from an ancient, ineffective cannon was better than no defense at all. No description can do justice to the horror I experienced that night. Only a participant can fully comprehend the true effect of murderous bombardment on a human being.

The morning after this first air attack proved a crucial and profound turning point in my life, as well as of many people around me. After daylight, we realized that the whole town was burning, or so it seemed to us. Familiar landmarks no longer stood. Only rubble remained. People were dead, or still worse, buried alive in their damaged homes. Rescuers were frantically digging to reach them as they heard cries and moans. Corpses, injured people and blown apart bodies were everywhere.

My reaction - I remember that very well - was "Thank God, I am alive". Then extreme anger set in. How could this happen to innocent men, women and children? My acute hatred for the German race turned into an obsession.

I went to work, more determined than ever to work harder at my job - we would have enough airplanes, lots of them - to defend our country against future attacks. Night after night the air-raids continued. Scarcely a single building escaped damage in Manchester. But with every bomb that fell we grew more determined to give our "all" to the war effort and wipe out the Nazi menace.

During my free time, I volunteered my services as an "air raid warden". My job was to check "Blackout" in my assigned street. Even the smallest streak of light from a house, threw a beacon into the sky and lighted a ready target for the bomber pilots. They certainly did not need our help in

destroying us. Other duties as a warden included assisting people to shelters, checking for "duds" (unexploded or time delay bombs) and helping evacuate folks from direct hit premises.

Shortly after I began the job, we were being shelled unmercifully one night, and our shelter took a direct hit. Five heavy bombs dropped along the road, directly in front of the entrance to the underground shelter. They shook the entire building but did not explode. Not sure when these "time delays" would go off, we were forced to evacuate the premises, one person at a time. I made many trips across the craters that night, helping those who were afraid or panicky, hardly an experience I care to recall.

Survival at all costs now became the number one goal for all of us. We no longer worried about the future. We forgot the things once deemed important. We lived with just one thought: will we be alive tomorrow?

A strong determination to believe in ultimate victory was growing in the country. Our situation looked grim but no matter how many shellings we had to endure, the "English" with their great sense of humor and undying loyalty to king and country would never surrender.

Food rations were scarce. I actually ate horse meat disguised as venison, not really all that bad. Sweets were unattainable, cigarettes rationed to five per customer a day, if you were lucky. Gasoline was nonexistent, so we rode buses and bikes. If the fog was too dense in the black-out, we walked in front of the bus until the driver could negotiate the road again. Coffee was hardly ever available - we used bouillon cubes in hot water as a substitute. No shortage could dampen our spirits.

Amid little food, very little sleep and constant attacks, Warden Posts commenced defense training against a possible German invasion. We now

carried matches for instant lighting of oil drums placed at intervals along every street. We were ready to fight the invaders every inch of the way.

Combat rifle training for civilians came next, except for me. My alien status prohibited carrying arms at any time. I took rifle practice with a broom stick. In case of an invasion, the enemy would have been clobbered to death by my broom.

My work at the aircraft factory was moving right along. We were now producing airplane parts all day and all night. We no longer evacuated to the shelters if the siren wailed. Desperately in need of defense planes, we kept our machines running. If the bombs were exploding overhead, we donned our helmets, readied our gas masks and ducked under the machines.

THE DEBUT OF AUNTIE, FRIENDS AND FIRST LOVE AFFAIR

During the early part of the war, most male refugees and a few women were moved to the Isle of Man and interned there. Because of the fear that many German spies and saboteurs may have reached England disguised as refugees, internment became a necessity. After the screening of each individual was completed to the satisfaction of the Home Office, they were released and sent home.

I was still making my home with "Auntie". Deeply concerned for her husband's welfare (he was also interned), she became extremely depressed and very dependent on me. She spoke no English, was hard of hearing and really had no one else to care for her.

Twelve hour work shifts, lost contact with my parents, continued shellings and caring for "Auntie" formed my routine. Character building perhaps, but how much character do you need when you are still in your teens? Since I could not change the course of events that were happening to me, maybe now was the time to again help myself and look for friends, companionship, and some fun somewhere.

On a rare calm day, I left Bristol Aircraft at 7 p.m. and caught a bus home. In the total blackout, it was easy to make a mistake and I got off the bus one station too early. Walking the last block to my house, I passed a church. There was laughter coming from inside the rectory. Summoning up all my courage, I walked in. There were kids like myself, boys and girls laughing and dancing. Simply asking if I could join them was a starting point.

I stated my religion, my enemy alien status and my utter loneliness, and they became rather serious. Until then, you see, they had never met a refugee and I had never met normal teenagers with parents alive, with homes full of love, who freely attended school and who had never been persecuted.

What they took for granted was new to me. I was a novelty with stories to tell, though no one quite understood my strange past. They were unfamiliar with the plight of Jews in Germany.

Several visits later (I was now an accepted member) we decided to meet other refugees and become acquainted. Visiting a hostel in town, there among my "landsmen," I met Eddie, then known as Egon. We later became man and wife.

The lifestyle differed dramatically in this hostel on Cunningham Road from the puritanical hostel in Southport. Boys and girls lived together, privacy was non-existent, no matron watched or cared for them. These guys and gals were orphans like myself and responsible only to themselves.

The "hostel crowd" welcomed us with open arms. I was delighted to be with my now "old friends" and making new friends. We had much in common and spent considerable time with each other.

Contemplating an escape from Auntie and moving to the hostel seemed a great idea. But was I ready to flee from my relatively sheltered existence into a "free for all" commune-type lifestyle? Tempted but not convinced, I decided against such a drastic move, realizing the casual approach to love and togetherness was not for me. Eddie, though a frequent visitor, also lived outside the hostel. We dated when possible, usually between air-raids and curfew hours. But we lived at opposite ends of town and the lack of transportation made courting a difficult task. During his internment on the Isle

of Man he had missed the earlier bombing raids and still became quite nervous at the sound of the sirens.

Now the Germans had found a new way to kill civilians. Buzz bombs, V1 and V2 rockets were their new tools of destruction. They dropped so fast there was little time to sound the alert of their impending arrival. These rockets exploded on contact, blasting and levelling everything in their paths.

Sheer endurance carried us through this latest onslaught, purely designed to undermine morale. Our courtship suffered badly, so Eddie and I tried to find a solution to our dilemma. Because of my elevated status as a "war effort" worker, my 10 p.m. curfew was suspended. Eddie was not that lucky.

My Uncle was finally released from the internment camp. The incarceration had taken its toll and his health failed. He died of a heart attack very shortly after his release. Auntie was inconsolable. Fearing a suicide, she could not be left alone and had to be watched around the clock. She and I became rather close during that ordeal. Although we had help to care for her during my working hours, most of my free time was spent in her company.

Hoping to make our love life a little easier, Eddie decided to rent a room and board in our house. We had a built-in chaperon with Auntie an ever present watch dog. There was no hanky panky in her house.

To supplement her income after her husband's death, Auntie now rented additional room and board to single men and women. We became a "new family," lived in the same house, shared meals, teased Auntie about her cooking, and enjoyed each others' company.

Eddie and I resided with our new family and our ever present watch

dog until we were married. Growing up together into adulthood resulted in a very special bond between us - a personal, private, wonderful feeling that I find hard to share with anyone else.

THE HORSE MEAT EXPERIENCE

During World War II, food was rationed in England. Meat products were so scarce that even presenting the appropriate coupons did not guarantee the sure delivery of your choice. Eddie, my boyfriend in 1942, two other men, my girlfriend Bertel and I were all living as boarders in my Aunt Ida's house. Auntie kept all our ration books because she shopped and cooked all our meals.

All of us knew of the prevailing meat shortage, but Auntie served roasts, chops and cutlets with almost every meal. Tempting and tasty sauces covered these delicacies as well as the potatoes and vegetables. We all agreed that our Auntie was an expert in the art of making a small ration go a long way. The presence of Lumpi, our female sheep dog, completed the happy household on 13 Park Road in Manchester. We also noticed that the pooch was devouring her daily ration of meat.

Finally, after a quick meeting of the minds, we agreed to question Auntie about the origin of the abundant meat supply. You are eating first grade horse meat, she informed us, and Lumpi was dining on the same thing, except the third grade version of the horsey.

To this day I am curious if she ever got confused with her grades. Now, whenever I spot a horse peacefully grazing in the meadow, it makes me ponder, which part of the horse was my meal for several years during World War II's ration years. I assure the horse and myself - never again will I swallow any part of you.

Abundant horse meat - yes - yellow, good tasting bananas - no. I actually had forgotten the taste and smell of fresh bananas until we reached the United States in November 1947. Passing an outdoor fruit stand chock full of fresh fruit and vegetables was equal to spotting a Rembrandt for the first time.

With my limited funds, I purchased two pounds of bananas and ferociously munched and gulped down all eight bananas in full view of curious onlookers. After repeating this sacred ritual for almost seven days, my husband deposited me in the friendly Doctor's office with severe stomach cramps and other unpleasant ailments. I still cannot pass a fruit stand filled with bananas without purchasing some, but have learned to eat them one at a time, slowly, savoring each bite.

THE WEDDING

Now we get to a happy chapter in my life, really one of my most treasured events. Eva and Eddie decided to get married. On August 28, 1943, two eighteen year old "children" marched off to the Alien Office to be joined in holy matrimony. That's the way "alien children" got married.

We did not have to worry about limousines, wedding attire, who would give me away or who would perform as Eddie's best man. There was no family to rejoice since neither of us knew if they were dead or alive, nor could we afford the limo or the clothes. The friendly Alien Office person administered the oath, no fuss, no muss, 10 shillings, sign here and it was over.

Eddie had tried unsuccessfully to buy some flowers for me, but his English was rather funny at that time, to say the least. Looking for a florist, he asked several good citizens to direct him to a Flower Shop and repeatedly ended up in a grocery store where flour was sold. He gave up and I had no flowers.

After the ceremony, we, Mr. and Mrs. Hamlet, walked back to our house. After due consideration by our watchdog "Auntie," we were awarded a joint bedroom and sitting room on the second floor.

The wedding dinner was an "afternoon affair," our friends and the newlyweds feasted on jam sandwiches and ginger ale. Our ration coupons were depleted and additional food was only available on the black market. I

refused then to buy "goodies" illegally, a rule that has stuck with me until this day.

My only regret - we have no pictures of our wedding day. Film was not available, again sold only on the black market. Soon, it was time to go to work. My nightshift started at 7 AM. Getting married was not a legitimate excuse for time off. I spent my wedding night cranking out parts for airplanes.

Eddie and I consummated our marriage in fragmented fashion. My night shift ended at 7 a.m., Eddie's job as an automobile mechanic apprentice started at 8 a.m.. We just left notes on the pillow, and we hardly ever saw each other during the week. Our "Honeymoon Day" was Sundays as his work week consisted of six days. Was getting married so young a good idea? We thought so. Finally, each of us had someone to care for - each other - a start of a new family. Our backgrounds were similar, our experiences the same, we understood each other's moods and feelings. Would our parents have given us their blessings? We have always tried to live in their image and be a credit to their memory. We were husband and wife for 48 wonderful years until death parted us in January 1991. Eddie died after a prolonged and heartbreaking illness.

PARENTHOOD

Buzz bombs burst in the air and I was now pregnant. Otherwise, it was business as usual. In early 1944, my nightshift months concluded. My now "delicate" condition not withstanding, I worked dayshift, still 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Expecting a child was not considered enough reason for a leave of absence. The physician at the factory advised me that he would determine the day and time that I would be permitted to stay at home. Two weeks before my "due date", my co-workers gave me a rousing good-bye and good luck party. My engineering days were over, my preparation for motherhood fast approaching.

Our daughter, Ruth, was born just two weeks after my great career came to an end. Amid never ending roars of aircraft throughout the night and with the hospital on Red Alert (Planes Overhead), a midwife delivered our bundle of joy on June 2, 1944. Four days later I learned that D-Day (Invasion of France) was in progress.

I was now responsible for a new life, an awesome task in itself. Never did that become clearer to me than my first time as a mother in our daily gas mask survival drill. Believe me, that was another never to be forgotten event in my life. In case of attack, we were instructed, "put on your gas mask at once, then lower your infant into her gas mask contraption and keep pumping air into the enclosure to keep your child alive."

Slowly I was beginning to understand the frightening responsibility heaped on my shoulders for my child's survival in the hospital during

war-time conditions. The need for gas mask survival never arose; the nightmares of "keep pumping for life" have affected me throughout my life.

Sufficiently recovered after the birth with our baby weghing a strapping nine pounds, Eddie walked over to Hope Hospital and walked us home.

A utility issue crib was all we could buy during the war with a birth certificate. Manufactured of wood, it collapsed on the first day, and fell apart with great regularity thereafter. Our utility issue pram (baby carriage) was not available right away. We did a lot of carrying and walking with our now 10 pound darling. After finally receiving the pram, the wheels fell off constantly, and it had no brake. It was the most dangerous vehicle on the block.

Breast feeding was expected if the Doctor deemed it possible. Milk was severely rationed, and mothers refusing to nurse their infants were denied milk ration coupons. Orange juice concentrate and cod liver oil were handed out through "baby clinics" located in the hospitals. Mother and baby were expected to visit the clinics every two weeks for check-ups. After 6 months, the visits were reduced to once a month. Prenatal, birth and postnatal were giver at no charge, with National Health Insurance covering all expenses.

Since we were people parents, we adopted our first dog, a mish-mash female sheep dog, and named her Lumpi. Auntie was now very deaf, and she could no longer hear the air raid sirens nor our baby crying. We trained Lumpi to tug at her skirt when Ruth was crying or awake and pull her toward the crib. For air-raid sirens, Lumpi tugged at her skirt and pulled her in the direction of the air-raid shelter that we had constructed in one of the rooms in the house. Our shelter consisted of a metal cage, reinforced with a thick steel plate across the top of the cage. We had to crawl in and out, and I developed claustrophobia for life.

Our Auntie had found a new lease in life. After her husband's early and unexpected death, she was a very sad lady with no children of her own; we decided to continue living with her in her house. When our daughter was born, she insisted on taking full charge of the baby, so the "young parents" could have a fun time. Training the dog to alert her was necessary. Convinced that Lumpi the Wonder Dog was ready to be the savior, we ventured out a little more, though never longer than four hours, because baby's feeding time had to be kept on a strictly regular basis.

Many times, on our return home, we found Auntie, the baby and Lumpi still scrunched in the air-raid shelter, long after the all clear siren had sounded. It suddenly dawned on us that we had forgotten to train the



Auntie Ida Weiss
London, 1965

dog for the all-clear siren. Quite a few times after that discovery, we all crawled into our shelter and waited for the all-clear. Now we taught the dog to pull Auntie's skirt away from the shelter.

Lumpi was a member of the family. She lived fourteen years with Auntie and was her friend and her protector. We were all very attached to that dog and we missed her a long time after our arrival in the U.S. A large portrait of Lumpi holds a place of honor in our home.

Ruth got older and hungrier, so the medic man decided it was time to discontinue the breast feeding and introduce this hungry baby to the solid food world. She was not a happy camper and feeding her become a challenge. Boy, was I glad that Auntie was so eager to take care of her. Eddie was not the most patient father and I decided that working was easier than making baby eat.

The threat of an invasion had diminished and the United States was now helping England in every way. The world began to look better every day - maybe, a new era was on the horizon.

THE YANKS ARE COMING

Fewer bombs were exploding over English skies, but a different "rocket" arrived on our horizon - American G.I.'s - noisy, fun loving men with money to spend.

I now worked for the F.W. Woolworth Co. as a part time shop girl, similar to a saleslady in this country. These wonderful, laughing, noisy boys bought everything in the store and never asked the price prior to a purchase. What a smashing way to live. Granted, they were afraid of bombs, a totally new experience for them. Beyond that, they were enjoying their life in war-time England.

The Americans! Extremely outgoing, attempts at trying to befriend the more reserved "British" sent shockwaves through the land. They were forever looking for dates; and confiscating the few available taxis with their girls, angered many of us. In fact, we were jealous! The Yanks seemed to have it all.

My twenty-first birthday was approaching, and I wanted to have a party to celebrate the fact that we were still alive at 21, something never taken for granted throughout the war. How can you make a party with food rationing, a continuous blackout, death raining from the skies and most important, no men, just a bunch of girls my age? Eligible English bachelors were fighting in the armed forces; and the ones left behind were older, boring and hardly interested in a bunch of refugees, especially German.

The joint Red Cross Clubs let it be known that American soldiers wanted to be invited to English homes to get to know the "Natives" and their life styles. Here was my chance to invite guys to my party. After reciting my sad, no males for the party saga to the American club supervisor, he agreed to dispatch about six G.I.'s to help me, my husband and friends celebrate the happy event.

Ten noisy, friendly soldiers arrived, marched into our living room, found the fireplace, took off their boots and made themselves at home on Auntie's good blue heirloom oriental rug. Armed with food, drink, candy and cigarettes, they also took over Auntie's kitchen. Maybe, she thought the invasion had begun after all. Drinks were poured, a ham was sliced and passed around, a real feast for all of us. My planned menu of jelly sandwiches was not in demand that evening.

Gathered around a cozy fire, the boys talked about their country, their homes, childhoods, attending schools, colleges and of exciting bustling big cities in the U.S.A. Never once did they talk about strict food rationing, nonexistent gasoline, or gas mask drills. Yes, that fabulous country they praised must exist, for they were sent from there to help us fight a war.

Particularly, I remember a Louis M. DeLuca from Chicago, a home sick kid with a big heart, who talked about his mom and dad, aunts and uncles, how much he missed them all. He was so grateful to be invited to our home; we became instant friends. He visited us several times after the party, and his family sent care packages of diapers and baby clothes for our daughter.

That night, after the party, Eddie and I started our campaign to emigrate to the United States, the land of plenty, which for decades had welcomed refugees in search of freedom. Maybe, we, too, could experience

a more tranquil life, with hope for a better and peaceful future.

On V.E. Day, (victory in Europe), the lights once again shone brightly all over England. Some normalcy returned throughout the land, but we realized there was no future for us here. The hurt, the enormous damage inflicted by the savage bombings at the hands of the Germans would not heal quickly and we would remain aliens for years to come.

The year-1947, Eddie and I were 23 years old with no known family left in Europe. It was time to move on. With the help of Eddie's aunt and uncle residing in the U.S.A., we set sail for the promised land.

SELF-PROPELLED TRANSPORTATION

Before leaving England, we sold what our few belongings that could not be transported overseas. Parting with the tandem and side car was sad , since our happiest memories of the war years were centered around the "Blue Monster Riding Machine".

As an uncoordinated specimen of the human race, I always had great difficulty with self-propelled machinery. As a ten year old, clumsy kid, my first bicycle ride ended with a broken right hand and a mangled bundle of wheels. After that experience, my parents encouraged me to take up walking, definitely less dangerous.

Ten years later, at age twenty, my husband decided to purchase a tandem, a blue frame bicycle built for two. With eyes closed and heart beating loudly, I was hoisted into the back saddle. Little brown belts kept my trembling feet on the pedals. We practiced going around the block, and to my surprise, I was still on my seat as we returned home. Shortly after my maiden ride, we attached a side car for our daughter and Lumpi, the dog. Our bicycle built for three became our mode of transportation during the war years. My fear of falling behind me, I started to enjoy our week-end rides into the countryside, the short hops to the movies and visits to friends.

New Years Eve 1944, a miserable evening of lightly falling snow, we mounted the blue monster dressed for a party. My high heeled shoes did not cooperate with the little brown belts attached to the pedals, so my feet kept slipping out. We arrived at the party covered with snow, with torn stockings

and minus one heel. Partying well into the New Year, we did not realize that ice had replaced the snow.

Numb with cold and fear, I climbed onto my saddle, my husband yelling instructions to me. Lean to the right on the next turn, lean to the left up the hill. Happy to see our street, with just one more turn to bring us home, I leaned the wrong way and fell off the bike. Sliding on the ice covered pavement through the turn and downhill was embarrassing and painful to my not too well-padded rear end. A furious husband retrieved me and my scattered belongings.

In 1985, my husband surprised me with a collapsible red bike with shiny lights, a tinkling bell and pretty tassels on the handle bars. This adorable piece of machinery graces my garage and reminds me daily of my lifelong struggle to master the art of self-propelled transportation.

COMING TO AMERICA

Coming to America, our dream was becoming reality. As usual, we never accomplished our goal the easy way. Because of Visa (Entry Permit) expirations and an acute shortage of overseas transportation, we were forced to travel separately.

My husband made passage to New York via a United States troop carrier with the help of our G.I. friends. I was still trying to book my daughter and myself with the airlines. Ruth suffered from motion sickness, so a ship crossing would have been too hard on her. In late October, 1947, we finally received our tickets.

Our flight to New York would leave from Paris, France. We said our good-byes, boarded the train from Manchester to the English coast, boated across the channel and made a final train ride to Paris. We were "fogged in". Air France transported us to a hotel, supplied "Eating Coupons," and advised us to sit tight until the fog lifted and our journey could begin.

My financial situation was desperate as my entire wealth consisted of 5 English pounds, the allowable sum for travel by the English government. My husband awaited our arrival, we were stuck in Paris, and I could not afford to call him. Four days in post-war Paris demoralized me and seeing the damage done by the Germans during their occupation was staggering. I simply could not wait to leave this ravaged European continent.

The jet airplane was still on the drawing board in '47, so Ruth

and I boarded the "propeller job" at Orly Airport early in the morning. New York, here we come, with one intermediate stop for refuelling. Soaring into the sky, getting further and further from Europe, my thoughts turned towards the "New World". Would this journey be the last in search of a better life? Could our destination finally be called "home"?

The flight was my first airplane ride, and I enjoyed it. Noisy but comfortable, it required no food coupons for meals. About "nap time," the flight attendant instructed us to remove our shoes, fasten seat belts, put a pillow on our lap and remain in our seat until further notice. Having complied with her requests, we fell asleep. I awoke to several hard bumps, strange noises and a moderate amount of panic around me. It occurred to me that there should be a better way to land a plane.

We had crash landed in Iceland. The wings were full of ice, and the landing gear was frozen. After deplaning, we were ushered into a barrack-type terminal and surrounded by friendly men in uniform. The "terminal" was a United States Air Force Base.

An eggs and bacon breakfast later, (I had not tasted these treats for many years), we boarded another aircraft for the continuation of our trip. The crash left no "fear of flying" scars, just another experience to commit to my memoirs.

Our eventual arrival at the Marine Terminal near La Guardia airport in New York was eventless, with no marching band, welcoming committee or fire works to be seen. I was excited, tired, numb and not ready for my next problem.

Immigration Inspectors discovered that my daughter was a British Citizen, travelling with her mother holding a stateless travel document. She needed her own passport and I didn't have it. Right then and there, panic set in. Immigration advised me to either go back to England or declare my daughter stateless. At three years of age, Ruth joined the "stateless parade" and we officially entered the United States of America. Released through the "Pearly Gates of Immigration," my husband and his relatives awaited us.

Totally void of any emotion, a yellow taxi drove us to the home of Aunt Herta and Uncle Alfred. I remember travelling along a highway to uptown Riverside Drive. So many cars, America must have all the gas in the world. Large apartment houses, skyscrapers, the Hudson River and people everywhere, hurrying along.



Ruth Hamlet
3 years old

I suddenly became very homesick for England and friendly Auntie. These new relatives, did they really want us here? Did we do the right thing in coming to America, the friendly G.I.'s country? It did not appear like the place I had pictured in my mind.

WOODEN LEG LANDLADY

Now what? After a meal and small talk in our friendly relatives' apartment we were on the move again. My husband had preceded us to New York by a scant two weeks, but already worked as an auto mechanic. He, his aunt and uncle were ready to show us our new "home".

The furnished room, which had been rented for us by the hospitable relatives, was dismal. Our landlady had a wooden leg, closely resembled the fairytale witch, and acted accordingly. She informed us immediately that $15 a week rent was due now and always "on time" in the future. I had only $10 and Eddie had not yet received his salary. We had to borrow $5 from the "family". The wooden-legged witch introduced me to my "cooking space" in the kitchen and laid down the restrictions for all other functions in her apartment.

My next introduction to the facts of life in the U.S. was "credit purchasing" at department stores; in this case, a bed for my daughter. A weekly $5 payment was added to our woes. Another start from scratch. We had no idea how we were going to pay for the room, the bed, eat and enjoy our new found freedom.

I determined to find a job and a safe place to leave our daughter. It would take much too long to describe the "green card" episode (a working permit for non U.S. citizens). We didn't even have a bike to get from place to place to obtain the necessary papers.

Jobs were hard to find in 1947. Eddie worked in a local garage, and walked to work because we could not afford the busfare. My career started at the F.W. Woolworth Co. located in the same building as the wooden-legged witch's apartment. I was hired to replace the toy counter saleslady until Christmas. The poor lady had passed away at a very inconvenient time. My salary started at a whopping 12 dollars a week. Additionally, Eddie became an usher in a local movie house, his second job and our sole source of entertainment. We got free movie visits at any time.

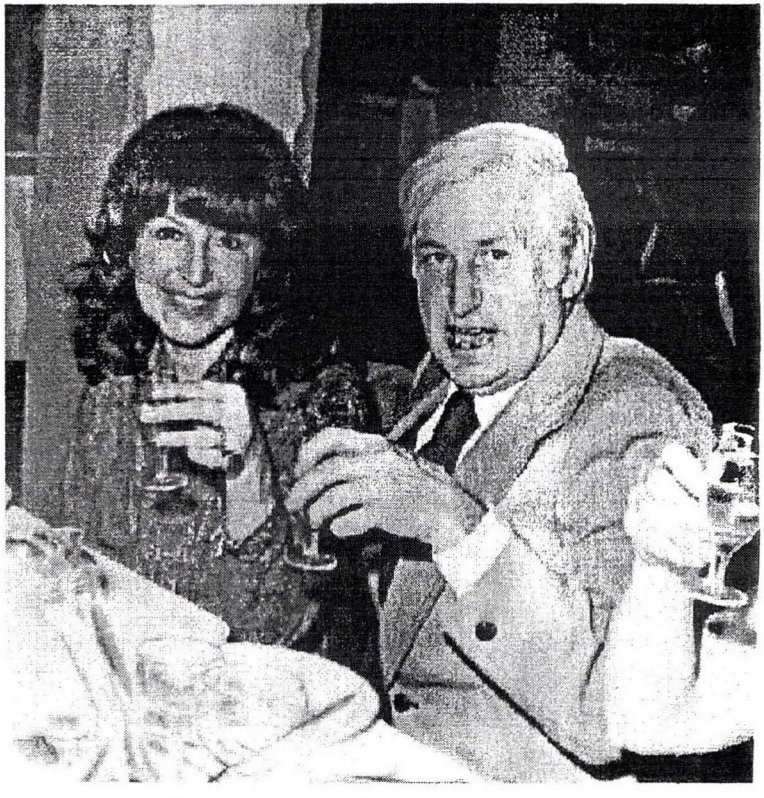
Last but not least, we had to arrange for the care of our daughter during our working hours. The Breuer Kindergarten, a very religious Jewish congregation, readily accepted Ruth on a "pay as much as you can" basis; everywhere else, the fee was too expensive. The teacher, Aunt Nettie, was a kind and understanding woman. Ruth was three years old, but had never been separated from us, and I was not comfortable about leaving her there for a full day, though Aunt Nettie was reassuring. Both of us had jobs, and Ruth was safely tucked away. Independent of outside help, we embarked on a wonderful, exciting, gratifying, and happy life in our new country.

Unless you have lived as a homeless refugee for close to 10 years, you cannot appreciate this country to the fullest extent. We realized that America was tough, but fair. There was prejudice, but that situation could be overcome. Hard work, yes, but the rewards were overwhelming. It was all right to complain, no one really listened too closely, and we grew accustomed to solving our own problems.

A few month's later, we moved from the "wooden leg" home to a rooming house on 103rd Street in Manhattan. Our new accommodations consisted of one room. We slept, ate, cooked and lived in our "mansion". One bathroom located in the hallway served all families living on that floor. We traded the wooden-legged lady for a "resident drunk," usually propped up

outside our door. This place was a far cry from a place called "home," but it afforded us some privacy and really, $20.00 a week was all we could afford to spend for a place to live.

Feeling thoroughly at home in America, it was time to join the crowd and buy a car.



"...happy new life in our new country."
NEW YEAR'S EVE
MANHATTAN CENTER, 1947

A FIRST CAR, VACATION, APARTMENT

We purchased our first car, a wreck, a vintage black Chevrolet, for the sum of $100 dollars in cash. That day dawned as "the miracle day" and ended as an "aspirin day". Since neither Eddie nor I had ever possessed a car, we were unaware of unforeseen problems. Overnight parking in New York City provided an instant shock. With no easy way to find a space, we often drove around for an hour, darting in and out of traffic. Tickets for various infractions ate deep into our pocket. Insurance fees- who needed to insure our wreck? We didn't, but the license plate issuing office did not agree with us. Eddie's ability to repair our "lemon" on nearly a daily basis kept the car and us together.

We moved the buggy along on one dollar's worth of gas at a time. Eddie was the only driver; I had not yet applied for my drivers license. Bored with trips to Central Park, Coney Island and Bear Mountain, we decided to embark on our first week-end vacation. Since everyone around us seemed to travel, we also wanted to go places, see the sights in our adopted country.

Flushed with excitement, we rushed home from work Friday afternoon, gassed up the car with our usual one dollar purchase, retrieved our daughter from nursery school and set course for Pine Hill, located in the Cats']1 Mountain Range.

The traffic along Route 17 resembled a parking lot, with cars moving a few feet at a time. The drive seemed endless, refuelling stops became a habit. We decided to splurge with two dollar gas-ups or we might still be

travelling. A dark night and few street lights greeted us at our destination. Hunting for an inexpensive cabin was difficult. Bedraggled travellers with child and antique car presented a least inviting picture.

Well after midnight, we spotted a remote log cabin on a gently sloping hill, nestled between beautiful trees with a small stream running alongside the property. Climbing up to the front door, we found it locked and deserted. A phone number and address was scribbled on a sign fastened to the door. After waking a rather angry landlord, we glimpsed a first look at our week-end retreat. By candle light, we spotted two bedrooms with half-way to ceiling partitions, a bathroom without running water, a kitchen minus stove or refrigerator, ample size living room with fire place and a giant size porch surrounding the lodge.

Our angry landlord changed into a happy camper after we rented the place for three months for one hundred dollars. He further assured us that the yukky smell would disappear, the water hose could be relocated into the stream, and electricity reattached in due time. In spite of the few inconveniences, three Hamlets slept fitfully in a single bed, probably left by the last inhabitant of this old hunting lodge. As Sunday rolled around, we regretfully climbed into our car and headed home in the knowledge that our "house in the mountains" was awaiting us for the rest of the summer.

Back in the real world, my career was in full swing, and my salary increased by two dollars and fifty cents a week. My enormous pay elevated my status to "inventory clerk," a very responsible job they assured me.

My husband was a first class mechanic working for Hoffmann Motors in New York City. As the first English and German cars appeared in this country, he was one of few mechanics familiar with the service and repairs of "foreign cars". A good increase in his salary and my $2.50 a week raise

started our climb from rags to riches. Eddie's ushering duties became history. We now paid to go to the movies.

Life was fun with all doubt about "coming to America" vanished. It was time to move "Uptown". A three room apartment on Riverside Drive in uptown Manhattan became our next home. Located on the top floor in a "walk-up" meant racing up five flights of stairs indoors plus two floors of high stone steps outdoors in front of the house.

The view was spectacular. The Hudson River teemed with barges, boats and ships splashing up or down river at all hours. The majestic cliffs of the New Jersey Palisades rose sharply from the river, still unspoiled by skyscrapers. The George Washington Bridge span rose in close proximity to my kitchen window. So close, I could have sworn that all the trucks and cars passed through my kitchen on their way from New York to New Jersey.

Finally, our own home! Eddie and I had our own bedroom with door for privacy and our own small bathroom. We did not have to share the kitchen or living room. Our first house - our personal domain - what a luxury! The streets of America were lined with gold, and we had just proven it.

We spent four happy years on Riverside Drive. Eddie and I were in love, and now had our privacy to carry on our "affair". Ruth was enrolled in public school, PS 173, developing into a wholesome human being and good student. The three of us enjoyed each other's company. Week-ends were spent at our "mountain retreat" with new and old friends. All the travelling was still accomplished with the hundred dollar car, now more antique than ever. But it got us to our destination; well, usually.

One year later, the building of a second span of the George

Washington Bridge added new excitement to our lives. Deafening drilling machinery and traffic noise now rambled through our apartment. We kept the windows shut, but still constant dirt and dust settled over beds, couches, etc., and who had time to clean? We were too busy working or partying.

We partied at Halloween, complete with costumes, witches and all the trimmings. But our New Year's Eve bashes were the best. Surrounded by our friends, we partied all night. With no volunteer designated driver available, everyone just slept over. No guest of ours dared to negotiate seven flights of stairs in an inebriated condition. Overcrowding in our apartment was easily solved. One flight of stairs up led to our "roof garden". Armed with binoculars we could spy on the Riviera Nightclub in New Jersey's Palisades, home of many Frank Sinatra concerts.

As those first few years in America flew by, we crowded all the missed "youth years" into every waking day and night. We cherished those memories and thanked the good Lord for the opportunities. Sandwiched between happy and carefree times, Eddie found a new interest, sports car racing. I discovered baseball and the New York Giants of Cougan's Bluff. The national pastime turned me into a fanatic fan. Eating endless hotdogs, arguing baseball with hated "Dodger" fanatics and learning batting averages became my new hobby. Occasionally, actually very often, I played hookey and bused out to the stadium to see my beloved team win a game. Proudly, I confess that I witnessed the 1951 home run hit by Bobby Thompson for the National League Pennant.

My husband hated baseball, loved car racing. His wife hated racing, well, you get the picture. We compromised, mostly on my part. With baseball, car racing, week-ends in the country and generally blending into the American way of life, we were invited to become citizens of our adopted country.

WHEN IMAGINATION WAS STRONGER THAN REALITY

The kidnapped daughter

In June, 1958, our daughter Ruth reached her 8th birthday. We occupied an apartment on Riverside Drive in Manhattan with a spectacular view of the Hudson and an excruciating painful seven flights of stairs before reaching our paradise.

Ruth's grade school was located on 174th street, a mile walk, and she crossed several busy intersections. I always escorted her to school on my way to work and arrived back at the school in time to walk her home. Feeling very grown up at eight, she pleaded with us to let her walk to and from school with her friends. We felt uneasy about her desired independence, but after several tearful discussions, agreed to a compromise. I would continue to walk her to classes and allow her to return home with her buddies.

Monday, her first day of partial freedom, quickly turned into a disaster. I shopped for groceries on my way home from work, stopped at the bank and proceeded to struggle up the stairs with my heavily loaded shopping bags. In pain, out of breath, with shaking knees, I opened my front door, only to be greeted by our poodle.

Ruth was not at home. I began my vigil at the window straining to catch a glimpse of the girls. Nervously stealing glances at the clock, my imagination switched into high gear. Run over, kidnapped, lost, sick, all evil thoughts tumbled through my mind. One hour later, crying hysterically, I

summoned my husband and the police. Both arrived at the same time, puffing and groaning up the seven flights. Just then, still scanning the street from my window, I spotted Ruth sauntering around the corner, alone, with no friends in sight. The police and Eddie exploded from the apartment, galloped down seven flights to await the little lady's arrival. My husband, furious and justifiably upset, beat her little rear end all the way up, where our poodle decided to defend Ruth and bit him in the arm.

After some tearful apologies from Ruth, we learned that she decided to stop at a friend's house on her way home and do homework. Her day old freedom was cancelled and we resumed our previous arrangement of escort to and from school until we moved to New Jersey the following year.

CITIZENS OF THE U.S.A.

Unforgettable impressions. We prepared to become a citizen of our adopted country, a permanent home. Filing first applications, posing for the required photographs and finally clutching the "Book" containing the questions and answers on the history of the country, we read and reread studiously to be ready for the final test on our citizenship examination. Needless to mention, the book became dog-eared from zealous perusal. Who was the first President of United States? When was the Constitution written? Much more - we knew it all.

We were summoned separately with my day in court coming first and quickly. With two character witnesses in tow, I was off to the naturalization office in downtown Manhattan. My name was called and I approached the desk nervously. The interviewing officer looked up, and dismissed my witnesses. We will not need them, he informed me. My heart skipped a beat and my knees trembled. He withdrew a thick manila folder from his drawer and smiled broadly. Your life's history is contained in here, he said, patting the bulging file.

Amazed at the wealth of information that was compiled in his notes, I realized he knew more about my history than I. In fact so complete was the file, it included the era before I was born. England's Home Office data had been forwarded to the U.S., and the officer knew about my war work in the aircraft factory, air-raid warden duties, exemption from alien curfew and events that I had already forgotten.

After reviewing some more recent statements on my application, he asked me to stand up, raise my right hand and repeat after him: I pledge allegiance to ----------!!!!, but the only thought going through my mind was that I studied so hard for the test and he didn't ask me any questions.

It was over! In 1952, Eva Hamlet, U.S.A. Citizen walked into the street, my street, my country and my home for ever. My husband became a proud citizen one month later. He did have to take a test on U.S. history but passed with flying colors. We have treasured the memory of citizenship day with deep appreciation to this country for allowing us the privilege to find permanent asylum.

Eddie and I have travelled the world, Europe, Asia, South America and more, owners of the best passports in the world. If this sounds corny, maybe it is, but not to me. "I am an American Citizen" will forever remain my most important and cherished sentence.

AUNTIE COMES TO LIVE WITH US

Citizenship brought responsibility. We registered to vote, tore up the "old green card," got a passport and dreamed of travelling around the world.

Auntie from Manchester must have been dreaming about travelling as well. Surprise, stated her letter, I am coming to America. Lumpi, her faithful companion had moved on to doggie heaven; she was lonesome, missed Ruth and probably even us.

Toward the end of 1952, a giant Pan Am Clipper landed in New York, Auntie and an assortment of luggage disembarked. After a period of hugging, kissing and screaming words of welcome, I suddenly realized that she had not heard one word of our conversation. She was completely deaf and still minus a hearing aid.

Thus started five years of constant yelling conversations. Politely but reasonably, we tried to persuade her to visit to a "hearing aid store," unfortunately without success. She adamantly insisted there was nothing wrong with her hearing - clearly a difference of opinion. Until her return departure to England, no hearing aid ever decorated Auntie's earlobe.

Firmly installed in our bedroom, Auntie took over. Eddie and I were stripped of our privacy, and slept in the living room on an extremely narrow and uncomfortable couch. Human traffic passed by our bed day and night, similar to living in Grand Central Station.

Auntie's lift (overseas packing crate) loaded with furniture, dishes, brooms and mops arrived from England. Small problem! How do we move an additional three rooms of furniture into an already fully furnished apartment? Easy solution! We move to larger quarters. Where to? How? Can we afford it? Hard questions and difficult solutions.

In the meantime, the lift had to be unpacked now! Storing it until we solved the space problem did not suit Auntie. The steamship company deposited the monster on the sidewalk in front of our building. Please imagine unpacking, unloading and transporting the contents up seven flights of stairs. We accomplished the chore, but I would prefer to forget the entire episode and the strained atmosphere among us following the event.

Adding to general bedlam, a dog was bestowed on us, Cocker Spaniel variety and promptly named Lumpi II. We must relocate at once - everyone agreed - where to - no one agreed. I made a decision, period.

The entire family loaded into the car, Auntie, child and dog included. We will drive to New Jersey, I say. No further than two miles from Manhattan - that's an order - said the voice from the driver's seat, sounding just like my husband. Ruth had no voice in the matter, the dog did not care and Auntie could not hear.

Our hundred dollar car had long since given up on the mileage meter. We reached a town called Ridgefield, New Jersey some ten minutes after departing from home. My husband decided that was far enough, and we would look here for a suitable place to live.

Shaler Boulevard, said the sign. Trees lined the paved sidewalks, rows of picturesque garden apartments dotted the street. Searching for the rental office, we encountered friendly folk who assured us of the merits of living

inthe suburbs.

The superintendent ushered us into a four room apartment. We will take it, Eddie said. No dogs or washing machines allowed, croaked the man, and two months rent in advance is due upon acceptance of the key. In seconds, we had doubled our rent with still no bedroom or privacy for Eddie and myself. Auntie volunteered to donate toward rent payments. We owned no washing machine, but the dog remained with us. Leaving for home, we noticed more dogs than humans along the street.

Two weeks later, the moving van appeared. We bid a fond goodby to seven flights of stairs and a hello to our new home with only thirteen steps to climb. With furniture in place, ours and Auntie's, we started living New Jersey style. 553 B Shaler Boulevard became our home for nearly thirty-five years, all filled with unforgettable memories of happy, successful and healthy times for our family.

After reaching the monumental decision to move to the suburbs, my husband decided it was time that I learn to drive. Happy to oblige, he also insisted that he would be my instructor. Reluctantly agreeing, we drove to the sanitation department complex. The area was deserted with plenty of room to accommodate inexperienced drivers. We switched seats and commenced my first lesson. Our vintage buggy was a "clutch model," and two floor pedals were most confusing. My efforts at changing gears became a grinding affair and turned my husband into a shouting maniac. Mad, upset and embarrassed, I bolted from the door and left the teacher plus that stupid car and took the bus home. A driving school took care of my problem and I passed the driving test with flying colors.

Eddie and I agreed to commit our vintage Chevy to its final resting place and purchase a newer automobile with automatic transmission.

MOVING TO NEW JERSEY

We missed New York, the Hudson River view, George Washington Bridge noise, the trucks rumbling through the night past our kitchen window and the debilitating seven flights of stairs.

Quiet suburbia was so boring. The only view was a park across the street, green and surrounded by trees. Chirping birds replaced rumbling cars and trucks. The daily challenge of securing an overnight parking spot disappeared. Our back door led to the private yard for depositing cars in numbered spaces. A slightly rickety fire escape was fondly referred to as "the porch" and sported a stunning view of the daily laundry display of our neighbors.

The candy store, a suburban invention, was the meeting place of Ridgefield. Stocked with everything from candy to shoelaces, it was ideal for browsing and yakking with friends. With New York style restaurants and coffee shops non-existent, we ate in diners. We did find a local delicatessen, but bagels and lox were deemed a strange request. No demand for such foods around here, stated the rotund owner over the none-too-clean counter.

To be quite honest, Eddie and I absorbed the initial cultural shock of suburban living quite well. We jumped into our car and drove to Manhattan to eat or shop. My husband's insistence on the two mile limit from New York was paying dividends.

Quickly, I will move on to emphasize the positive results of our move

to New Jersey. Ruth was enrolled in Ridgefield Junior High with small classes and an excellent reputation in scholastic programming, and located within easy walking distance. With new friends and little worries about crime, she easily adjusted to the transition from city life. Auntie was delirious. She could go out shopping without negotiating seven flights of stairs. The quiet life made no difference - she never heard noise anyway. She dominated our kitchen as the family's head cook and bottlewasher. Dinners were laboriously prepared and served only after Eddie returned home from work. I was permanently banned from entering the kitchen. Lumpi II, still with us, was the happiest dog in town. He had lots of trees, acres of grass and numerous female dogs in and out of heat, the delight of any dog.

Eddie had started a repair shop in New York and escaped every morning into Manhattan to tinker with his beloved foreign cars. I was still working for Woolworth. Spoiled by years of walking to work convenience, the two mile distance from my home to Washington Heights became a challenge. There was no bus service in Ridgefield. Walking one mile to the next town, riding the bus for half a mile and walking the rest of the way took up much of my time and energy. I needed alternate transportation desperately. I possessed a driver's license but no car. After careful consideration of our finances, we decided my resignation would be less costly than the purchase of a second car, insurance, tolls and parking fees necessary to continue working at Woolworth.

Informing the company of my decision, they offered me a full time position and an increase in salary. Additionally, I had started to work Saturday and Sunday, revamping existing full-service counters into self-service modules and inventory control. Excellent reimbursement, back braking work. Swayed by the promotion and money, I agreed to remain with the company. I was then asked by the company to avoid the mention of my religion. Outraged and insulted by such a request, I quit at once.

Unemployed, upset about the course of events, my husband asked for my help in his garage. I quickly became the "go for" coffee, parts, etc. With little salary and lots of verbal abuse, my "go-for" career lasted two weeks. Leaving Mr. Hamlet's employment, with friendly advice to "go get it yourself," I joined the corps of unemployed women once again .

AIRLINE-ALMOST CAREER

I pondered a new career and my next move. Scanning the help wanted pages, I noticed various airlines advertising for ground terminals positions, hostesses in their Idlewild airport (Kennedy International). They required a bi-lingual person, who would "welcome tourists and help them along in their native tongue". I spoke German fluently, French poorly and a pathetic Spanish.

Winging my way through four different interviews and written intelligence tests, I was rejected. My fifth and least desired appointment was Lufthansa, the German airline. My interview, conducted in German with the inevitable test completed in record time, concluded with a position offered to me.

Arriving home, flushed with my accomplishment, I informed Eddie that acquiring my own car was of the utmost importance. The airport was located in Long Island, 25 miles from home, with no alternate transportation available.

My first Cadillac, an Eddie "special" of ancient vintage, arrived the following day. Black and dented in strategic places, the car looked like a casualty from a race track, but it was mine and completed my journey to my desired independence.

On the maiden voyage to the airport for the start of my one week training period, my car suffered a seizure and died at the front entrance to the

office. Undaunted, a call for help went out to my husband. Our conversation was far from cordial, to put it mildly. Here I was on cloud nine with new career and broken down car, and he was just Eddie.

"You are crazy", he yelled,"day and night shifts at the airport, just forget it." Two hours of waiting for his help, he arrived with tools and tow bar to transport my rotten car and its inconsolable occupant back to New Jersey. My deflated ego acknowledged the end of a fleeting career that never had a chance to succeed.

I consoled myself with a new look at New Jersey. Who needed to work in New York anyway? Hackensack - the center for New Jersey's employment agencies - was close. My car was in the shop, so it was bus time again. That day, the dreaded bus ride changed my luck and lifestyle forever.

The interviewer in the employment agency was unimpressed with my recital of past experiences. She held out little hope for a job, but mentioned a low paying position as an "Expediter". The company was in the mail order business, located in Passaic, New Jersey. I agreed to travel there and she arranged for the interview with the company's personnel director.

Busing to Passaic was no easy feat. Three bus changes later I was planted outside an old mill, a dungeon, medieval look-a-like, with criss-crossing railroad tracks snaking through the compound. The steps to the office were tiny, built for children (factually correct, the mill was built prior to passing the child labor act). Entering through heavy mahogany doors, I passed over the threshold of my future.

A red-haired personnel manager received me somewhat disdainfully. "You are not exactly the person we are looking for," he informed me. "However, as long as you are here, fill out an application and complete the

intelligence test."

Lo and behold, the same test as the airlines. Three minutes later, I returned the test and application. Obviously impressed with my rapid completion of the usual thirty minute test, we rushed to the second floor and he deposited me in the merchandise manager's office.

Shelley Soffer, the MM, started the interview with an invitation to "tell me about yourself," and did I talk!! Stern, unsmiling, inquired, "Can you read a slide rule?" "Certainly," I answered, "doesn't everyone?" "You are hired," he growled and left the room. The Popular Merchandise Co. had acquired a new employee. It was 1957 and they remained my employer until my retirement in 1990.

To digress just a little, I must mention that Mr. Soffer was and will be one of my favorite people. His dynamic personality inspired me with renewed hope of reaching a professional career. He taught me the discipline and merchandising concept for success as a buyer in the housewares industry.

POPULAR MERCHANDISE CO.

Busing home from my interview, I could hardly contain myself, but waiting around at three different bus stops put a damper on my excitement. Running upstairs and bursting into the apartment, I demanded that Eddie have my jalopy fixed for the next morning. "Sure," he said, "Bigshot, how much money are you earning and what are your working hours?" Embarrassed, I conceded that neither were mentioned during the interview nor did I inquire about them.

Somewhat subdued and less euphoric, it occurred to me that the little matter of learning the art of slide rule reading was important. I ambled downstairs and persuaded my neighbor to administer the crash course. Practicing late into the night, I definitely knew the answer to three over five equaled fifteen.

Convinced of my slide rule expertise but apprehensive about my first day's work, the night was spent irritating my husband by bugging him about my car. Grouchy and tired the next morning, he agreed to chauffeur his big shot to work.

My first day on the job, the supervisor, Ellen Diorio immediately suspected that I was no expert slide rule reader. She handed me fifty stock record cards and told me to produce sales projection estimates using my slide rule. Since three over five did not match any of the cards handed to me, guessing and women's intuition produced reasonable results. Right then started my first of many attempts at "winging" it, a practice that will pop up

throughout this book. Admittedly, I was scared to death that my first work day would also be my last at Popular.

My co-workers came to the rescue. Norbie, Mel, Larry, too many gentle guys and girls to mention by name, helped me become a professional slide rule operator and expediter. I would like to thank them for their patience, cooperation and friendship from the first day until the day of my retirement.

Working conditions were far from perfect, considering it was one hundred degrees in the office and only fans for cooling. Air conditioning was only a dream. The ceilings were too high and the building was too old. Determined, however, to succeed, I worked hard and learned fast. My duties increased. I had close contact with our buyers, and became responsible for merchandising and selecting items to be included in the catalog, making my job more interesting day by day.

My starting salary turned out to be $4300 a year for forty hours work, so finally showing Eddie my paycheck was embarrassing. Six months later, I received my first promotion and salary increase to $5000 a year. Big shot!

Flushed with success as the apprentice/assistant buyer to Roger Leitch, in charge of purchasing gifts, tools, hardware and other classifications, I moved down to the floor below. Small partitioned offices with window air conditioners was an additional bonus. My duties?! Everything from getting coffee, keeping records, meeting our suppliers and scanning through an unending flow of new merchandise samples for the next catalog. Roger and I attended trade shows, lots of lunches and dinners (the beginning of life in the fast lane), and searched the "New York Market" for new, interesting and priced-right merchandise.

I could go on endlessly describing my wonderful job, (maybe another book), but my first solo market day just had to be included in this chapter. My initiation in buying with no boss in tow was a humdinger. My assignment, find a substitute salad set that was pictured in our most recent catalog. The original supplier had fallen down on the job and could no longer meet our demand, an additional 20,000 sets, each priced at nine-eight cents. I was sent to the New York Market, consisting of three buildings, each with twenty plus floors. Housewares, gifts, toys and related merchandise were exhibited in different showrooms scattered throughout the buildings.

Walking every floor, through every showroom, searching for the elusive salad set was a most humbling experience. After four days of diligently checking every lead, listening about and hunting down "sightings " related to me by my peers, my search ended. I had found the salad sets at the right price. Overjoyed, that my efforts were successful and that kind words of "well done" would await me on my return, I strutted into the office only to learn that results were expected.

My first lesson in "how to become a success" had found its mark. The road to stardom would be a long and difficult one, with expected praise and compliments a long way off into the future. The hard climb up the ladder depended on my behavior, peer respect and lady luck.

Wherever you all may be today, my sincere thanks for the advice, help, counsel and cooperation given to me from the beginning of the "salad set search" to the continued assistance, friendship and loyalty of Popular, the company I represented. Additional career events will pop up from time to time in upcoming chapters. Now it's time to get back to our family life and its trials and tribulations.

FAMILY SPLIT - AUNTIE LEAVES US

Happy, exciting, productive, and fairly serene times prevailed in the Hamlet household for the next few years. Every phase of our lives was "upbeat" - a harmonious home life, satisfying careers and budding friendships.

Ruth was a wonderful daughter to both of us, a good student, conscientious and hard working. Her childhood and adolescent years were happy, so different from her parents. Girl Scout meetings, teenage parties with chaperons of course, sleep-overs, homecomings, graduation anticipation and more. Eddie and I were so involved; I even became a Girl Scout leader. We probably tried to recover a little part of our childhood through our daughter's eyes. We were fairly lenient parents, although I insisted that Ruth must learn typing, a means of support for her if "Doomsday" ever knocked on her door.

Travelling was still a great pleasure, but we always went as a family. Our goal - to see the world now, there may be no later - was still firmly embedded in our minds. How well we had learned that lesson. In the "distinct" shortage of money years, we travelled budget, inexpensive but never cheap. Our vintage cars took us to Vermont and New Hampshire, to mountains and lakes in the Catskills and the Adirondacks.

Our summer week-end home - the log cabin in Pine Hill was now appropriately named "The Nut House" - became the meeting place for our friends and ourselves. Glorious times were spent up there, and the lack of

running water, heat or proper kitchen facilities did not stop our fun. Our huge outside porch held up to thirty happy people with the parties at the Nut House becoming legendary. We barbecued with everyone chipping in for food, danced to live music as there were always musicians in the group, showed home movies and others, mostly suitable for stag parties. Carefree and unforgettable years.

During the summer of 1951, we motored to Florida. Actually, we started out for Lake Placid, changed our mind and travelled south instead. We had never experienced the sight of motels, restaurants and toilet facilities marked "white" and "colored". Needless to say, it came as somewhat of a shock.

Arriving in Miami, at the Kenilworth Hotel, I was politely informed that Jews were not welcome. We found a hotel that wanted us, including our dog. Ten days later, we arrived home, in love with Florida, but with a disappointing awareness of our adopted country. We thought that discrimination against race or religion was only in our past.

Our apartment seemed to grow smaller and our dispositions nastier as time went on. Eddie and I now slept in the living room, Ruth was becoming a young lady and needed privacy in her own room. We decided to ask Auntie to move into her own apartment in the neighborhood.

Unwilling to live alone, she decided that we should buy a house and she would contribute the down payment. My husband was not in favor of the arrangement but went along with it. After inspecting countless houses from New Jersey to Long Island, Auntie could not find a suitable home. We stopped house-hunting and talking to one another at the same time. Our happy home was coming apart at the seams.

In great secrecy and with help from some of her friends, Auntie informed us that she was leaving the U.S. and moving back to England. Furniture, brushes, brooms, suitcases and Auntie started their journey overseas. We did not part as friends, though some years later we became close again; but that is another chapter.

For the first time in five years Eddie and I had our own bedroom with privacy and love was here to stay.

I harbored some guilt feelings about Auntie's sudden exit, became restless at Popular and our dog had to be put to sleep. Time for a change was upon us.

QUEEN OF THE HILL

After four years of learning my craft, it was time to move on. I was an assistant buyer, a nice title with little pay.

My boss, Roger, was preparing to resign from Popular to take on new responsibilities with a competitor, but on a smaller scale. He asked me if I would consider making a change as well. This new company had their offices in New York City and that sounded exciting to me. Aside from that, he assured me a promotion to full buyer and eventually an increase in pay.

We hit "the big time" in New York. Our office was located in a penthouse opposite Macy's Department Store at the corner of 34th Street. The owners, two rather strange and unpredictable women, ran the company, financially backed by their even more unpredictable boy friends.

As promised, I was promoted to full buyer, earning less than before. My salary barely covered my travelling expenses to and from work, but promises of future raises and promotions blinded my logical reservations.

This stepping stone in my career was filled with serious problems. Manufacturers, salesmen, people I had been associated with for the last four years, suddenly became unavailable. Dunn & Bradstreet reports listed us as unreliable, underfunded, with a bad credit rating and little prospect of further growth.

My heralded position in "the big time" lasted eight weeks before the

company declared bankruptcy. Workmen appeared daily in our offices removing telephones, furniture and other equipment due to non-payment. Our two owners apparently lost their boyfriends as well as their business simultaneously. Frantically trying to find either new boyfriends or other financial help, they asked me to stay aboard their sinking ship. Finally using my brain, I realized that it was time to split and find steadier employment unrelated to boyfriends' whims.

Still enamored with New York City, too unrealistic and naive about the business world, I accepted a position in a "buying office ". This organization claimed a membership of several hundred customers spread throughout the United States. Small department stores, Mama & Papa shops, decorator outfits and more. Too small to afford their own buying staff, these businesses would use our expertise to advise them of new and fast selling merchandise.

My duties as a buyer included persuading manufacturers to advertise their products in our brochure and pay a sizable fee well in advance of possible sales results. Armed with a list of our published following, I collected lots of advertising dollars. Unfortunately, the big following never materialized and my resources and I realized that both of us had been mislead. Embarrassed and fed up with this "rip-off," I resigned and tore up all future pledges of advertising.

Convinced that working in "The Big Apple" was too nerve racking, I decided to have my last working lunch in New York and head home to New Jersey. Walking along Broadway, the great white way, I met the now former personnel manager of Popular. Noting my rather dejected attitude, he offered me a position as Merchandise Manager at the Newark branch of S. Klein Discount Department Store.

After several interviews with the store manager and his staff, I cast my die. I was queen of the hill at Klein's with a pay increase of nine thousand dollars and a considerable staff to train and boss around. The four years I spent in that capacity proved to be the real stepping stone in my career. Expanding my knowledge of the retail business, learning to make merchandising decisions, teaching my large staff of men and women my way of doing day to day business gave me a great personal triumph.

I am proud to say that many of my "students" achieved bigger and better jobs for themselves, and many of them are still active in the business world today. But I am proudest of the fact that they also remained my friends. Along the way, constant praise and pay increases from my superiors swelled my ego and considerably changed my personality. I literally became a terror, wanting everything my way and earning the well deserved title of "Dragon Lady". My husband and my daughter, totally unimpressed with my "queen of the hill attitude," really wanted a wife and mother and forced me to make a choice between career and family. Several soul searching days later, I decided in favor of family and resigned.

Shelley Soffer, still merchandise manager at Popular, offered me a buyer position at my first business, Popular Merchandise. Using common sense, my queenly position now just a memory, I returned and worked for Popular until my retirement in 1989.

At the time, I probably resented being forced to resign from a job which gave such great personal satisfaction. The knowledge of success and independence as a woman in a male oriented business became one of my cherished memories, as time went on.

REUNION WITH AUNTIE

The dethroned "queen of the hill" settled down and so did the rest of the family. Eddie was still tinkering with his foreign cars but his garage was no longer profitable as the neighborhood around 158th street in Manhattan was changing rapidly. His regular customers stayed away, afraid to drive their Jaguars, Porches and other high-priced cars into a high crime area. I begged Eddie to close his garage and open a new one in New Jersey. He was unhappy about moving out of Manhattan and starting over again. Agonizing over a final decision, he became a hold-up victim, an event which changed his mind without further discussion.

It was a balmy summer day, and Eddie was driving a convertible Chevy on the way home to New Jersey. At a traffic light, a man and a woman jumped into the back seat of the car and ordered him to drive on without turning around. Somewhere on Riverside Drive they told him to stop and get out of the car. After blindfolding him, they escorted him into an apartment. They robbed and threatened him with bodily harm to himself and his family if he reported the incident to the police. His wallet contained his business cards as well as our home address. Releasing him on the street, they gave him enough coins to pay the toll on the George Washington Bridge and trailed his car until he was safely out of Manhattan and on the approach to the Bridge. He could not identify or describe either of the people.

Shaken but unhurt, he agreed to close the garage at once and find a temporary job in New Jersey until he could find a good location for a new garage. He became the service manager for a foreign car dealer in Paterson,

not far from my office - convenient for meeting or lunch.

Our daughter's high school graduation was just around the corner and Auntie invited Ruth and I to visit her in England as her graduation present. Eddie could not join us, because he wasn't yet entitled to a vacation - he also wasn't invited.

Already accepted at the University of Connecticut, Ruth decided to visit Auntie right away. Rushing to apply for passports in New York, it came as quite a shock to find out that Ruth could not be issued a U.S. passport because she was not a citizen of this country. Our tickets were booked, and we were leaving for England within three days. As she was still under 18 years of age, we could travel on a joint passport and we agreed to that proposal.

In London, our reunion with Auntie was very emotional. She had missed all of us very much and quite honestly, I had missed her. Auntie joined us for one week of sightseeing, theater shows, shopping trips - and to my amazement - she wore a hearing aid. Further surprises included a fistful of money, $2,000 for a further two week vacation touring Europe. Quite a change from the Auntie that I remembered not long before.

Promising to visit again next year, we took a flight to Rome. Arriving there, already toting our purchases from England, I now needed lira to pay for a taxi to our hotel. At the reception desk of the Excelsior, the best hotel in town, I was asked for our passports. A very embarrassed mother could not produce such documents. They were no longer in my possession.

Sitting in the lobby, planning our next move, two rather stern looking gentlemen approached us. Left lying at the money changing window of the airport, my passport was turned over to the American Embassy and they

traced us to the hotel from the landing cards we had filled in on the flight over to Rome. Both of us received a rather stern reprimand and were urged to take better care of our papers. The passport remained in the hotel safe until the day of our departure.

Ruth and I travelled around Rome like millionaires, visiting the Coliseum and every other ruin of importance, either by taxi or horse drawn carriage. Surviving three fun-filled days as well as the mad Italian drivers, we travelled to Venice, visited Pisa, and bought jewelry in Florence. Loaded with more purchases, we flew to Paris. Living it up at the hotel George V, we ate in Maxim's, did the Louvre' and bounced around in various nightclubs. High on cloud nine, we left for Madrid. It was 104 degrees in the shade but we visited the palace and several museums. "Nice place to visit, but too hot to stay," thus uttered my daughter.

A vintage aircraft delivered us to Majorca, but not before we were treated to a hair raising flight featuring ups and downs reminiscent of dive bombing during the war. We were informed that the proximity of the Pyrenees mountains made this roller coaster ride a necessity.

Majorca was very beautiful, peaceful and yet devoid of tourists. Since money was no object, we hired a private car with chauffeur to drive us around the island. I purchased my first polka dot bikini and wore it, though my daughter was too modest and declined. We shopped and bought everything they had to offer, including a pair of swords, which we later abandoned in a ditch because they were too heavy to tote home.

Following three weeks of complete luxury and unabashed spending of Auntie's money, we were spoiled but convinced this was the only way to travel. Reluctantly, we bade farewell to Europe and flew home. Eddie met us at the airport, happy to see us but aghast at the sight of our numerous pieces

of luggage that he would have to drag to the car, and the duty I had paid for our purchases.

Ruth's high school graduation was now just a few days away, so we prepared ourselves for the inevitable event of our daughter's impending adulthood. Soon, she would live on campus and we would miss her company so very much.

UNCLE ADOLF RESURRECTED

Shortly after our wonderful trip to Europe, I received an interesting letter from Auntie revealing the following information.

The German Government had commenced with payments of reparation to survivors of the Holocaust now scattered around the globe. Applications for restitution of homes, factories and other Nazi-confiscated property had to be submitted, listing all family members killed in concentration camps. Auntie started the proceedings from England via lawyers in Manchester and Berlin. To the best of her knowledge, she and I were the only survivors of the "Kochmann Family."

To our surprise, brother Adolf, erstwhile black sheep of the family, surfaced, anxious to collect his share in our family's restitution. Not quite certain of the legitimacy of this person, Auntie flew to Berlin to meet her brother.

It was Uncle Adolf, and seeing him again was quite a shock. However meeting his newest wife simply blew Auntie's mind. The woman was a widow whose previous husband was a Gestapo Officer. He had killed himself after the war in fear of Allied reprisals. She inherited a lot of money, probably stolen from Jews during the years of Nazi plundering of our homes and businesses. Dear Adolf married her with the full knowledge of her background and the fact that she was dying of cancer. His next love was already waiting in the wings. Disgusted, Auntie flew home to London, pondering this brother's strange survival.

As planned, Adolf's wife died three months later and left her entire estate to this bum. At the funeral, with his girlfriend by his side, he caught a cold, which turned into pneumonia. His departure to hell occurred three weeks later and Auntie inherited this considerable wealth as his only living sister. Auntie's subsequent generosity to Eddie, Ruth and me was appreciated. She invited us to visit her several more times and bestowed us with additional funds for travelling to other lands.

Adolf's girlfriend was never heard from again.

RUTH PICKS A MATE

Ruth graduated from UCON in the Spring of 1966 with a B.A. degree and fond memories of college life, but relieved that her school days were ending.

We could not believe that four years had passed so quickly. As much as we had missed Ruth in the beginning, we became accustomed to her absence and lived our lives without concern for anyone else. No worry about a child at home waiting for her meals nor worrying about curfew, evening hours or homework. It was difficult to remember that we delivered a teenager to the University some four years before - we now welcomed home a competent and serious adult.

She already had a job waiting. I.B.M. had recruited her through the school. Her office was located in Harrison, N.Y., quite a distance from Ridgefield, New Jersey. With her starting salary, it was impossible to live and pay for her own "pad". Moving in with the old folks was not an ideal solution, but a necessity. We managed to lead a fairly peaceful life with some lapses here and there, but in the knowledge that this was strictly a temporary arrangement.

How do parents stop worrying about their kids? Our most difficult task was the acknowledgement and acceptance of our daughter's adulthood. I stayed up nights to wait for her return from dates, worried about her driving to and from work, and was offended as she arrived at decisions, made without asking Mom or Dad. We all muddled through, sometimes crying, sometimes

laughing, but enjoying our "little girl" again.

A few months later, Ruth paid a return visit to her alma mater and met the love of her life, another graduate of UCON. Eddie and I were disappointed, for we had hoped she would marry a Jew and Dick did not meet that requirement.

Our future son-in-law introduced himself to us, guitar in hand, on a surprise visit to our apartment. Well, he came, we saw, he conquered our affection. After a very frank discussion about my various objections to such a union, we hugged, kissed and let the festivities commence.

They entered into matrimony on November 19,1967, with Judge Malta, a Jewish woman from Brooklyn, presiding. The ceremony and reception took place in a New York hotel, mainly to accommodate the various guests from around the country.

The beautiful bride walked down the aisle escorted by her proud, handsome daddy. Surrounded by 110 family members and friends, the young couple spoke their vows and Dick stomped on the glass for good luck, a little Jewish tradition.

Their wedding was a moving experience. Eddie and I saw many of our dreams and hopes for our child come true with a formal ceremony and reception with all the trimmings. We remembered our Alien Office wedding, with no family or friends present. Both of us felt very blessed and fortunate that Ruth was spared such a fate.

The happy couple winged away to their honeymoon, the parents winged into the office to pay the bills, then home and to get on with their lives.



Ruth and Dick marry
in 1967

With their honeymoon completed, we picked up the happy couple at the airport, then dined in the Kleine Konditere, a favorite restaurant of Ruth and her father, located in the Yorkville section of Manhattan. After toasting the bride and groom again, we left the place only to find the car broken into

and looted, with their clothes, camera and more missing from the trunk.

Unable to do much about it, Ruth and Dick drove to their new home in Norwalk, Connecticut. He taught at the University there, Ruth continued working for I.B.M. We were happy that the young couple took up residence quite near our place. We met often for dinner. This happiness was shortlived, however, when Dick decided to reenter the University of Virginia to obtain a master's degree in Chemistry. They moved to Charlottesville, Virginia. Ruth received a transfer to an I.B.M. office in that town.

Eddie and I were constant visitors, with the mileage on our car adding up rapidly. During Dick's last year there, we were informed of an impending happy event. Ruth was pregnant and made us grandparents with the birth of Marc on May 25, 1970. We journeyed to Virginia and greeted our new grandson, and I stayed on to help Ruth with the baby.

The grandchildren chapter, and what a chapter, appears later in the book, but I am reminded of a funny little episode that took place right after Marc's arrival. My son-in-law was studying very hard, and a case of the 'zerstreute professor' was beginning to show. On the first time out since Marc's birth, we piled into our car to dine out and celebrate the happy event. Baby Marc and our new dog, Mr. Butterball, completed the group. At the restaurant, we left the dog in the car but took the baby with us tucked away in his little basket. Finishing dinner, Dick purchased some cigarettes from the vending machine. Back in the car - ready to go back to their house - I realized that the baby was missing. Dick had left him on top of the cigarette machine, obviously not yet used to fatherhood and little tag-a-longs.

After Dick's graduation as a "Master," the family moved to Midland, Michigan, home of Dow Chemical Co., for the start of his career with that company. Oh, yes, they did not forget the baby.

THE UNEXPECTEDNESS OF LIFE

Contentment reigned in the Hamlet household. Eddie and I were enjoying life to the fullest, dashing around New York City, seeing the Mets at Shay Stadium, the Jets at Giant Stadium and our beloved Rangers at Madison Square Garden. Concerts and the Opera at Lincoln Center were special evenings, complete with box seats and formal dress, I enjoyed every moment that we spent in the magnificent surroundings of the Opera House and adjacent theaters. Never an anxious cook, wining and dining in trendy, gourmet restaurants constituted the perfect lifestyle for Eddie and me. We thought it would last for ever.

Throughout my 69 years, surprises have been sad, interesting, humorous but none as far reaching into the future as this story will reveal.

Dining in good restaurants was always a treat that I could not turn down. In early 1972, my husband had just signed a contract for the opening of his new garage in New Jersey and we decided to celebrate the a happy occasion. The Holiday Inn in Little Ferry, New Jersey was our choice for dinner.

Waiting to be seated, we were invited to a complimentary dinner if we would attend the "Florida Living Show". The program consisted of a fifteen minute movie, introducing Ocala's Silver Spring Shores Community. I paid little attention to this presentation, neither did too many other guests. After dinner, during dessert and coffee, we were shown an artist's rendering of homes, and future community plans. Soon thereafter, land packages were

offered at ridiculously low prices. Needing a coffee refill, I asked my husband to summon a server. As he raised his hand to get the waiter's attention, the land peddler announced, "Sold to that gentleman with the raised arm for a $44.00 down payment." Surprised that we purchased a package of real estate instead of a cup of coffee, we issued a check for the down payment, went home and started laughing about our "Place in Ocala."

Knowing no details, we forgot about this whole episode until Eddie was invited by the Florida developers to visit "The Shores" at their expense. Eddie was elected to go there by himself; I still refused to believe in the whole scheme. He returned home, disappointed at finding just a motel and country club with golf course, but no houses. We debated vigorously whether to cancel or to hold. My husband won the debate. One year later we built our house and offered it for rent. Eighteen years later, we moved to Ocala and occupied our "Dream House". A strange way to purchase a house, you must agree.

GRANDCHILDREN - MARC, JOEL, JENNIFER

A new garage for Eddie, a Florida retirement home and grandchildren. We felt blessed and grateful for these happy events in our lives.

Grandma and Grandpa Hamlet, bragging about their grandson Marc, quickly learned that life was getting expensive in 'the grandparent's lane'. We shopped till we dropped, buying clothes, toys - whatever we saw advertised or shown we purchased at once. Baby furniture for Marc's nursery and a duplicate of everything for our apartment, in anticipation of upcoming visits.

Our numerous journeys to Michigan, by plane or car, became the most important part of our life. We were determined to watch Marc grow, surrounded with love from his parents and grandparents.

Marc's first Christmas was a memorable occasion. We arrived by car, toting enough toys for a boy scout troop. We spent the night assembling a rocking horse, tricycle, various push pull toys and a generous selection of other interesting gadgets for little boys. He was just one year old. Still wrapping gifts in the wee hours of the morning, Dick and I discovered a mutual "hobby," martinis on the rocks. Much to the chagrin of my daughter and my husband, teetotalers, we imbibed generously - in fact - we got drunk. Unable to negotiate the stairs to the sleeping quarters, we received a stern lecture on our behavior, and were left to "sleep it off" on the floor. Gosh, we were in the doghouse!

On Christmas day, Santa Claus straightened everything out. Dick and

I were forgiven, and Marc played with all the empty boxes.

In the spring of the following year, the family came to New Jersey. Mom and Dad deposited their fifteen month old son at our house for Grandma and Grandpa's first baby sitting assignment, before driving on to a reunion at their old alma mater, UCON.

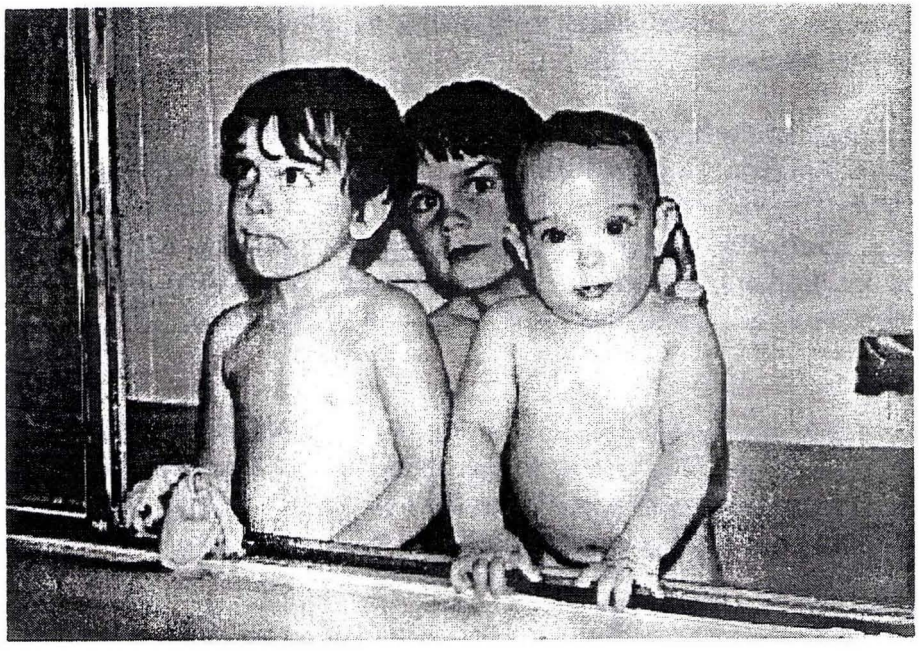
Assured by his mother that Marc was a good baby, never cried and was used to sitters, we waved good-bye, delighted with the thought of owning a baby for five full days. The young man had other ideas. Discovering their absence, he crawled all over the apartment crying for his mommy. My helpful neighbors, Eddie and I carried him day and night throughout his stay. From that time on, all babysitting took place in their house with no further problems.

Three months after Marc's third birthday, a new little fellow made his debut, named Joel. The family was growing, and a new house awaited Joel and his Mom after their release from the hospital. Of course, we were there to help and meet the new grandchild. Joel was a colic baby and Ruth was a busy mother.

Christmas holidays were becoming more expensive, it took longer nights to wrap gifts, endless hours to assemble toys, and we enjoyed every precious minute of our visits. Our little apartment was bulging with cribs, playpens and toys, instantly set up and ready for their arrival in Ridgefield.

The years passed quickly, the boys were getting older and Ruth was yearning for a daughter. Jennifer was born in 1976, again Mom and baby came home to a new house, big enough to accommodate the "Michigan Five," as they became known from that time on. Ruth and Dick had their little girl, grandpa was ecstatic, and grandma went shopping. No "hand-me-downs" for

our grandchildren. Birthdays, Hanukkah, Easter and Christmas, blended year into year as buying sprees. We earned money for spending on three little reasons and two big ones, who gave us such joy and happiness.



"We earned money for spending on the little reasons...."
OUR GRANDCHILDREN MARC, JOEL & JENNIE
MICHIGAN, 1973

It was surprising how many little and big bodies fit into our four room apartment Accommodations now included rented beds, sleeping bags and newly carpeted floors. One bathroom among seven people caused "queues" at all times, but we shared a "togetherness" that became priceless memories

for all of us.

The kids grew into beautiful individuals. We started inviting each grandchild separately to be spoiled by us and receive our undivided attention. Every visit was special and invokes unforgettable memories of events far too numerous to mention.

One of Marc's visits brings a chuckle, even now. He wanted to go to Greenwich Village and "hang around". We got caught in the annual Gay Parade; I still remember the expression on his face, confused - not sure he understood. Hanging around came to an abrupt halt. He called his father that evening!!! Henceforth, we stuck to baseball and hockey games, theater nights and shopping.

Joel, yah, the quiet one - sports was his game. Trips to ballparks, countless hotdogs and the purchase of souvenirs transformed him into a contented guest. Once, he requested a visit to China Town, which quite frankly confused us. He explained that he wanted to buy gifts for his family and they would be less expensive there. I never did find out who gave him that advice at just 7 years of age. A thoughtful kid, he did buy gifts for the family. Later on, we lost him in a Barnes & Noble book store. Frantically searching for our missing grandson, we found him sitting on the sidewalk reading his just purchased sports magazine.

Eddie and I usually arranged passage to New Jersey for the children. We preferred they would travel with an adult but Joel's return to Michigan could not be worked out. He was the first kid to travel alone. After delivering him to Newark airport and watching him boarding his flight, we returned home. As arranged, his mother would meet him in Detroit. Unbeknownst to us, the plane never left Newark. Our phone was ringing as we stepped into our apartment. A frantic Ruth was looking for her son. Eddie and I drove

back to the airport to find the missing grandson. Dashing to the original departure gate, we found Joel reading his magazines. He informed us, that his plane had developed engine trouble, so all passengers deplaned and waited at the gate for further instructions. What a guy, this Mr. Cool! Our Jennifer arrived at La Guardia airport, escorted by her father. She immediately announced her intense desire to shop at "Bloomingdales". Alright, we responded, but why? The mermaid in the movie "Splash" emerged from the water, she replied, and her first wish was "shop at Bloomies". Needless to say, Eddie and I spent several hours and much money in that store, and were firmly but politely asked to vacate the premises as the store was now closing.

Grandpa took great pride in escorting Jenny to the theater. She loved the entertainment world, and he took her out to dinner to show her off. She was and still is a delightful kid, full of life, songs and hamming it up.

As I said before, there were so many humorous 'kids' stories. We filmed enough home movies to create several full length features. Picture collages fill up entire walls in my house.

Family Christmas gatherings with too many gifts, mild curses during unending toy assemblies have come to an end. The kiddies became adults, with Marc and Joel in College, and Jenny in her last high school year. Grandpa passed away - holidays are not the same any more, but the memories remain vivid and comforting.

Thanksgiving dinners with turkey, trimmings and apple pie, laboriously baked by Dick and Jenny, are fondly remembered and still take place every year. Ruth no longer yells quite as loud about the state of her kitchen after Jenny and her father's apple pie episode, even though they still don't clean up the mess.

I remember Marc's drum playing period, mercifully relegated to the basement area and the "sleep-over" gangs with boom boxes and other noisy instruments. Joel's trumpet playing period was hard on the ears, but passed quickly. Jenny's piano recitals were kinder to our ears but practicing her lessons became a fight to the finish and eventually came to an end.

My son-in-law's taste in music was referred to as "klapperkasten" by Eddie and myself, but is known as Bluegrass in musical circles. He played with a group named "Chicken String Band," a curious and somewhat strange group of musicians.

Ruth played nothing. She was the premier volunteer worker of Midland and knew practically everyone in town. Walking with my daughter was equal to escorting a presidential candidate, just pressing the flesh. I admire her for her efforts in working for the community, her commitment toward every task, which she does with pleasure. Nowadays, few people can lay claim to that statement.

There was one other noteworthy event. Ruth made an infrequent solo visit to Ridgefield. After hugs and kisses, she informed us that her "shrink" blamed us for her "now" problems, real or imaginative. We were surprised, a little shocked and my husband started laughing. We explained to her, though, that we tried our best as parents, to give her the love and guidance we never had the chance to experience. We never asked her, but think the shrink got fired.

Eddie and I never had the privilege of knowing our grandparents and only knew our parents for such a short time. We wanted to spare our children and grandchildren from such a fate by forming a strong and lasting bond between our families.

AROUND THE WORLD- FIRST CLASS

I mentioned in one of my previous chapters that I was hooked on travelling. Now, it was time to convince my husband to share my new "hobby". Just to whet his appetite, we travelled to London for the annual visit with Auntie.

Pleased to see Eddie again, she overwhelmed us with her usual generosity. Armed with a fistful of money, we shopped on Oxford Street, at Fortham & Mason and other stores affordable only to the rich and famous. We dined at Claridges on mediocre food but served with a dignity matched only by the undignified, outrageous prices. Both of us enjoyed the theater, and attended four evening performances and one matinee in four days. An outstanding concert in Covent Gardens and supper at the Savoy left me gasping for more of the same. But Eddie had other ideas.

He rented a car and drove to Manchester firmly intending to surprise his cousin and other old friends. He had not seen them for twenty-years. Forty eight hours later, he returned to London suffering from a severe case of shellshock. "They were so old," he said, "and none of them recognized me right away." I am sure our friends were as bewildered as Eddie.

On the way home to New York, my husband grudgingly admitted that he, too, enjoyed travelling. Overjoyed, I started to plan our next adventure.

Little did we anticipate the fabulous trips looming in the future. No description could do justice to our travel experiences in many around the

world. Places, once only existing in my imagination. To this day, I cannot believe our good fortune to have been part of those thrilling journeys.

Following are just a few highlights to justify my enthusiasm in writing this "travel chapter".



EDDIE and EVA
""No description could do justice to our travel experiences..."

Right after my permanent return to Popular Merchandise Co., a salesman from the Philco Appliance Co. invited me to attend their annual sales convention in Honolulu, Hawaii. The agenda included the introduction of their new merchandise, sales promotion plans for the coming year, meeting the executives, etc.- all designed to increase sales and profits for all companies.

I was asked to bring my husband because I would be the only female buyer in a male-oriented industry. Merchandisers from all over the U.S. and Canada invaded the Honolulu Hilton, 1000 strong, to work and play in ultimate luxury. We swam, snorkeled, sailed and worked - first class, of course - even my husband was impressed.

Year after year, sales conventions and trade shows in far away places saw us cruise in the Bahamas, sample Puerto Rico, and cavort around Nassau, always escorted by manufacturers showing new products and spouting new ideas how to increase everyones' business.

We worked in Rome, complete with a "Ben Hur" Chariot race through the Rome Hilton ballroom. We exchanged ideas on gondolas in Venice, compared jewelry prices in Florence, and held up the leaning tower of Pisa. In Mexico, we handled new merchandise before and after bullfights. Pyramids and firedancers appeared before us in the football-sized ballroom of the Camino Real Hotel in Mexico City.

Dressed in authentic Spanish costumes in Madrid, we danced the night away and then struggled through the country in search of innovative cookware, dinnerware sets, figurines and more. Next we were off to London for factory visits seeking can openers, blenders and other well designed appliances. The Churchill Hotel will remember us for ever, the fun loving, hardworking Americans who were addicted to shopping, eating and partying.

Beautiful handmade crystal was presented to us in Dublin. The Mayor of this lovely town invited us to a formal dinner. The table was set with so many place settings and wine glasses, we needed Emily Post to instruct us all in the use of this finery. We golfed and worked on some of the finest courses in the world; so busy, we had to leave Ireland without kissing the Blarney Stone.

Once again on the road, we flew off to Venezuela to shop for a new line of vacuum cleaners, floor scrubbers and carpet sweepers. Just got home - gotta leave again - to find new tableware, exotic new gifty goodies, new pots and pans in different countries.

These whirlwind jaunts were hard work, all that eating, drinking, frolicking and keeping our minds on the real purpose of the trips. We all wanted to increase our business, stay one step ahead of our competitors and most important, become more profitable. The results were very satisfactory for everyone involved, because we chased around the world for almost twenty years in search of new ideas and soaring profits.

Eddie was invited to escort me on all trip. This enabled him to share those exciting years with me and that was my own treasured reward.

For our personal vacation plans, we chose Israel in 1972. It gave us an opportunity to visit the few remaining relatives of the Hamlet and Riese families and their children. We toured Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Haifa and many historic places, truly a memorable journey. From the desert in the Middle East to the desert of Arizona, we toured the state, and met some friends in Tucson and Phoenix.

One of our "not so good" business trips involved the Annual Frankfurt Fair in Germany. My company asked me to attend that show and I could not

refuse. Eddie and I worked there for seven days. The overabundance of varied merchandise certainly impressed me. Manufacturers from around the world exhibited their goods. Housewares, gifts, furniture and hundred's of other items I had never seen before were presented there.

Speaking German fluently, I overheard too many derogatory anti-American, anti-Jewish and anti-world remarks to entice me into doing business with the Germans. The little humor we could muster grew from listening to their conversations about us and other American buyers present. These pitiful remnants of the Third Reich, the losers, were too arrogant to believe that we might just understand their language. Since I had no intention of buying any goods that were "made in Germany," it was time to let them know that my German was as good as theirs and that I had overheard all their nasty remarks.

Watching those men squirm and realize they had just lost a prospective customer became the highlight of the trip. The best part of Frankfurt was leaving there, my low opinion of the German people and their behavior unchanged.

From our erstwhile enemies in Europe to our former foes in the Orient, my first of several buying trips to Asia was a unique experience of plain hard work and few frills. Fourteen hours after take-off from New York I landed in Tokyo. Hotels, food and merchandise were very expensive, out of line with the small Japanese men and their inflated egos, small women with no egos and the generally low standard of living for Japan's inmates. Unimpressed, I decided to fly to Taipei, Taiwan. Arriving at the Royal Taipei Hotel, impressed with my luxurious surroundings, I did not know what misery was in store for me.

All dressed for my first appointment at 8.00 a.m., I stepped outside

and nearly fainted. The temperature topped 100 degrees with high humidity. My agent was waiting for me outside the hotel with a non-airconditioned van. The traffic was in an acute state of gridlock. I crawled through forty five non-airconditioned factories in three weeks and rode in questionable cars, all prone to breakdowns. My professional wardrobe was replaced with the purchase of a cotton tee shirt, matching pants and sneakers. Every evening, the hotel laundry received my sweaty clothes and returned them to me in the morning, laundered, pressed and ready for another 100 degree day.

In Hong Kong, we met more of the same uncomfortable heat and humidity. A Peninsula Hotel staffer met me at the airport in a Rolls Royce, then called to have my favorite drink available upon my arrival, an indication of luxury to come. In this fascinating town, so close to mainland China, I found untold treasures of merchandise for our catalog. My two week trip a considered success, my management decided to return to Asia on a regular basis in search of more merchandise.

My boss and I made three more trips to the Orient. Eddie travelled with us and became a popular addition to the group. He always insisted on carrying my brief case, which grew heavier with each trip. We developed a substantial import division in the company with excellent results and profits.

Eddie and I spent a personal fortune on these trips. We purchases clothes made to order, jewelry, watches, statues and other great things we thought we needed to own. Our biggest problem became the transport of this stuff back to the U.S. of A. Spare suitcases, "Made in China," are still stashed away in my garage. My house in Ocala has many rooms and many walls but there still is not enough space to show all the pictures and mementoes we collected in thirty happy, fulfilled, never to be forgotten travelling years. My own museum is even more meaningful today, because Eddie is no longer with me.

MOVIE CAREER

My short movie career started with a bang. In the fall of 1983, I arrived in my office early one morning, when our friendly telephone operator informed me that I had received a telephone call from England. "A movie producer," she went on, "wants to talk to you." My reply, "yeah sure, someone is playing a joke on you."

Shortly thereafter, the phone rang in my office. The caller identified himself as a documentary film director, affiliated with the Yorkshire Television Network in London. Would I be able to come to England and appear in a film production? Not believing one word of the entire conversation, I listened, disinterestedly, and contemplated ending the call by simply hanging up. Sensing my reluctance to continue, he finally explained the reason for his call.

A black notebook had been submitted to him. It contained a diary written in 1940 by sixteen refugee girls who lived at Harris House in Southport, England. The book was purchased by a local Southport woman at a rummage sale and she remembered those young girls and their matron.

I was one of the sixteen girls from Harris House, and believe me, the voice on the phone received my full attention. Much effort had gone into locating all the women. We were spread around the world, known only by our maiden names, and 40 years had passed since the diary was written.

The television research staff received my name through a coincidence.

Our matron, then 84 years old and living in Manchester, remembered that I was married in England during the war to a refugee from a neighboring hostel for boys. She contacted their matron, then also in her eighties, also living in Manchester. She remembered that we immigrated to the U.S.A. and were residing in New York. Advertising in the Jewish Press produced my address and the discovery of another one of the girls, the treasurer of the newspaper. The painstaking search went on until everyone was located and contacted. Remarkably, we were all alive and kicking, residing in different countries throughout the world.

Unfortunately, the T.V. company had a limited budget and could not afford to fly all of us to England. After numerous phone calls and correspondence between Yorkshire T.V. and me (and to the amusement of my boss), Eddie and I flew off on Virgin Airlines to London. Per our instructions, we boarded a train to Liverpool and were met by the producer on our arrival.

My first meeting with him was an unforgettable experience. At his request, Eddie, my interviewer and I walked endlessly through the streets of Liverpool, finally arriving at the "Pub". The Beatles were discovered here, the producer informed us.

We settled onto small beer barrel seats, crowded with the "locals" of Liverpool. The informal and raunchy atmosphere in this miniature-sized pub matched my warm martini served in none-too-clean water glasses. Tables and ice cubes were non-existent.

As we squirmed uncomfortably on the hard seats, the interviewer started the serious question and answer period. He wanted to know details about our daily life in the hostel 40 years before, unusual events, my friends there, etc. For the first time in my life, I was lost for answers, my memory

a total blank.

He showed me photographs of young girls I could no longer remember, and mentioned names that meant nothing. Disappointed with my loss of memory, we adjourned the interview and walked back to the hotel. Passing the still visible ruins brought back memories of World War II bombings. Once more I thanked the good Lord for my survival and the escape to the good old U.S.A.

We spent the night in the "Waldorf Astoria" of Liverpool, an old, old hotel, its faded glory still visible. Giant sized crystal chandeliers, with dusty, burnt out bulbs, dangled from the ceiling. Worn, torn leather chairs graced the cavernous lobby, while once elegant, tasseled drapes drooped alongside dirty windows. We waited in the lobby for the producer who would escort us on the train ride to Southport, our final destination. I spotted a department store with a giant sign advertising the sale of "Cabbage Patch Dolls," my granddaughter's wish for Christmas. With the dolls in short supply at home, I jumped at the chance to please the young lady.

In line at 8:30 a.m. outside the store, forty minutes later, I became the proud owner of the treasured doll. Cradling this still unwrapped darling, Eddie, the producer and myself boarded the train to "Moviedom". Chugging along past the still visible, bombed out scars of the war, I received instructions for my first scene in the movie: when the train pulls into Southport station, stand by the first door of the train, exit slowly, look melancholy and think back about your arrival here as a child refugee. Follow instructions from the director and the filming crew. Your husband, doll, luggage and I will exit via another door.

Sounded easy, right? The train stopped, the doors opened, I stepped out slowly - a fellow with a clapboard - yelled "take one" and a monstrous

long microphone rose from the floor straight up into my face. I shook with laughter and the director yelled, "cut." Back on the train for a second try, "take two" claps the clapper, microphone is in place and I am doing fine. Just then, a moving camera rolled toward me and enormous lights engulfed me. Unable to control my laughter, the director yelled, "cut." On the third "take," the camera rolls and I am emoting. Almost at the end of the scene, I saw the train moving slowly away from the platform. Losing my cool, I chased the train, yelling, "my doll is on the train and so is my husband!"

I was dismissed from the station, sent to the hotel and told to stay out of sight until the evening filming of the "reunion" scene. Another girl was chosen for the "train scene" and completed her task on the first "take".

Our official "reunion" scene was filmed in the ballroom of the St. George Hotel in Southport. Entering the room one by one, on cue from the director and with cameras rolling, eight of us began the difficult process of recognizing one another. We left the hostel as children and met again as sixty-year-old women. I recognized no one, not even Gina Bauer, although we had shared a room in the hostel. All the eight women invited and present gave good performances in the art of a little lying, crying and pretending to remember. We had neither corresponded nor seen each other for 45 years.

I must confess that we had a grand time, our reunion a nostalgic interlude into the past, and especially interesting because many of the indoor scenes were shot in the Harris House. The present owner leased it to the film company, who refurnished the house with some relics of the past. The outdoor scenes were filmed on the beach, the promenade and other areas once frequented by us so many years before.

We worked full days, rain or shine. The documentary only covered "A One Day Reunion". Thus, the crew had to remind us constantly to wear the

same clothes, hairdos, jewelry etc., depending of course on where and what scene we were shooting.

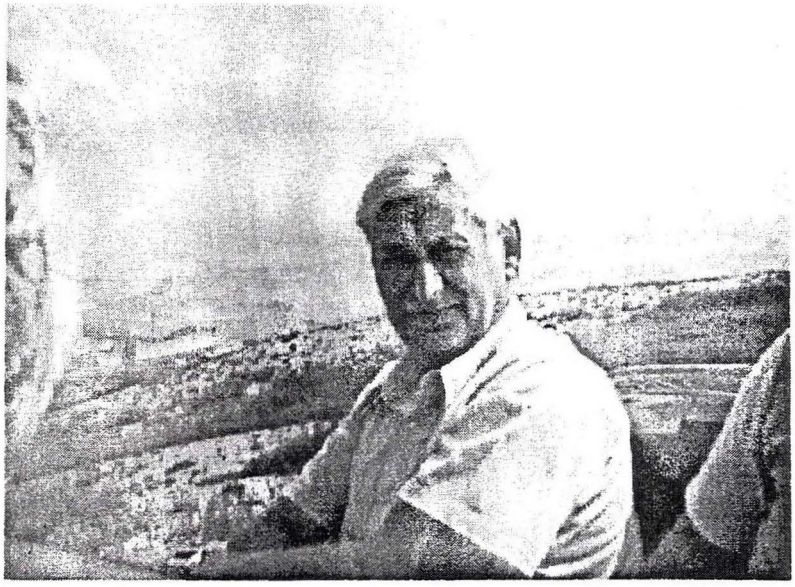
Camera close-ups and individual interviews were most frightening and intimidating. Movie making was an interesting, exciting experience but I was quite content to go home and resume my career as a buyer and end my film career.

We attended many parties in our honor, received newspaper coverage and vowed to stay in touch with each other. Only some of us kept that promise. I correspond with three of the woman on a fairly regular basis. We have managed to bridge the forty-five year gap with our letters and pictures. I have met Jutta Schultz, Margot Bauer, Ilse Maurer a number of times since our movie was completed.

The "documentary" premiered on a program called "First Tuesday" in 1985, aired a number of times on British Television, and also has been shown in the U.S., Germany, Israel and some Latin American countries. I have my own copy, and view it from time to time.

EDDIE'S FIRST SICKNESS

From 1970 through 1984, the years flew by, and our lives were picture perfect. Both our careers were in full stride, with advancement and promotions for me. Eddie's garage, his prized possession, had fulfilled his dream. Ruth and Dick were happily married, and our grandchildren were growing into fine, young people.



EDDIE - 1976 - NEW YORK
"Grandma and grandpa were aging, though not willingly."

Grandma and Grandpa were aging, though not willingly. By nature an optimist but no fool, I strongly believed in practicing preventative medicine, which included yearly check-ups, exercise, sensible diet and all that good stuff. Much to my regret, my husband was unwilling to submit to that same regimen.

Exercise was "off limits". Just mentioning physicians and checkups to him put him into an ugly mood. My pleading fell on deaf ears. He considered himself indestructible. He ignored occasional pain, and neither wife, family, nor friends could induce him to heed the warning signs.

During one of our delightful babysitting assignments in Michigan, Eddie developed severe chest pains. Ruth and Dick were on vacation and could not be reached. Marc and I rushed him to the emergency room of the Midland Hospital. The admitting Physician ordered several tests but was unable to render a specific diagnosis. He advised my husband to remain there for a few days. Convinced of his immortality, he refused.

The following day, during a call from my daughter to her children, Marc informed her of Eddie's condition and they returned at once. We flew back to New York and drove straight to my Doctor's office. Eddie was in great pain and agreed to an immediate hospital confinement for further examination.

Further tests revealed that although he did not have a heart attack, he needed a by-pass operation. Assured that it was a fairly routine procedure and he would be up and about in a short time, he very unhappily consented. The recommended cardiologist and surgeon necessitated a move from Doctors ' to Lenox Hill Hospital, a better equipped facility for the surgery needed.

Eddie had difficulty recovering consciousness. He appeared

disoriented, belligerent and unable to function normally. He was discharged three weeks later into my care with numerous medications and the assurance that he would recover at home.

I was unprepared to handle the situation by myself. We hired nurses around the clock to wash him, feed him and tend to his needs. One month later, a nurse and I summoned an ambulance for an emergency trip to a hospital in Teaneck, New Jersey. Eddie was near death, unable to breathe or move. He was diagnosed with "drug poisoning," with little chance of recovery. For six long, agonizing weeks, he was semi-conscious, though he did not recognize me or members of our family.

His physician advised me to locate a nursing home, since there was no hope of recovery and the hospital requested the transfer. Completely numb and miserably alone, I agreed, I had no other choice. The morning of the transfer to the home, as I gathered his belongings, he sat up in bed and yelled at me for never visiting him in the hospital.

He did not remember his release from Doctors' or Lenox Hill hospital, had no recollection of that nightmarish month at home, and did not realize he had been in the Teaneck Hospital for such a long time. Relieved that he was talking to me, but dismayed at his loss of memory, I summoned his physician. He also was astounded to find Eddie talking and gave me some hope for a partial recovery.

One week later, he was released and requested breakfast at the diner. He was not the same person I had once known so intimately. Upset and distraught, unable to function as his former self and no longer capable to operate his garage, we became even closer to each other.

No stranger to adversity, I was determined to force him into recovery

and into leading as normal a life as possible. He willingly gave the effort his best shot. His request to keep his various handicaps a secret from family and friends was kept and became our secret. No one would know the pain and frustration he suffered through the next four years. I respected and loved him even more for the monumental effort on his part to achieve a life of normalcy.

Throughout our ordeal, both he and I learned the true meaning of "friends". Who held and hugged me when I needed comforting, who cared and sat in Eddie's hospital room, hoping he would wake up? My bosses at Popular, my assistants and secretaries, business contacts, sales and factory people. Without their support, their many visits and kindnesses, I would not have survived.

Our so-called "personal friends" disappointed us to such a degree that we dropped most of them and ignored their later, pitiful attempts to reach us again. We were in great demand during our healthy years. Eddie repaired their cars, usually free, gave credit on their gas purchases, treated them for dinners and drove their abandoned wives home after fights with their hapless husbands in restaurants or in our house. I was always called upon to purchase their desires at wholesale prices and deliver them to their door at no charge. Until there was no more! We no longer repaired cars nor delivered bargains. Looking back to this difficult period, I lost my enthusiasm for friendship, my trust and compassion for the human race.

REVIEW OF CAREER

Summing up a successful career is a difficult task. A detailed rendition of my thirty-two years with Popular Merchandise Co. would fill volumes. My most gratifying achievement was the acceptance and respect of my co-workers. Working with manufacturers, a male-oriented community, was a gruelling chore. Gaining their respect through constant bargaining for lower prices, and harassing them for better delivery dates, without loosing my femininity was probably my most treasured accomplishment.

Preparing, selecting and finishing a catalog was an exacting process. Product knowledge, price awareness, and photography presentation, all painstakingly detailed in every phase, were essential. My buying responsibilities included housewares, gifts, electric appliances, vacuum cleaners, china, sewing machines and more. My last four years, I headed an entire import division. I attended about 46 housewares and 25 gourmet shows in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas and several other towns, and visited dozens of factories from the east coast to the west coast, and from Europe to China.

Some of the more memorable visits included the Hoover Co. in North Canton, Ohio, where I had the privilege of staying at the fabulous Hoover House. Their guest book now holds my name alongside former U.S. Presidents and the Shah of Iran.

Freezing winter visits to the Mirro Co. in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, were always informative and fun, especially a game at Lambeau Field, home of the Green Bay Packers. A rather embarrassed Eva thought that Vince Lombardi worked for the Pots and Pans Co., since he was having lunch with

us. After he explained his position to me, I quickly promised to learn all about football. After my first game, even Bart Starr, their quarterback, did not escape unscathed. My dinner host and I, now an authority on football, dispensed our criticism of his plays by interrupting the team's dinner. Crazy days!!!

The Hamilton Beach Co., home of the electric knife with the hole in the handle, was located in Washington, N.C. and I visited there often. I was eager to learn about the manufacture of steam irons, blenders, coffee makers, etc., observing and absorbing all phases of their operation. Since North Carolina was a" dry state," we carried brown bagged liquor bottles to dining rooms located in precious old plantations. "Gone with the Wind" clad waiters and beautifully gowned hostesses catered to our whims, including the reappearance of our brown bagged liquid.

The many tiring visits almost always included a quick week-end visit to Midland to see the kids, where Eddie caught up with me.

Of course, I also spent time visiting New York factories, such as Farberware in the Bronx, or an importer in Brooklyn. He also owned the "Peter Luger" restaurant, famous all over the world for their steaks, which I enjoyed with great regularity. Travelling, lunches and dinners, and having fun - all part of the job, too.

Yet, there is no free lunch. My workload was awesome, to borrow a phrase from my grandchildren. The brain, mouth, ears and pencil worked around the clock. Every semiannual catalog was the culmination of ten months' work. The final product was utmost gratification, provided of course, that product was a financial success. A happy boss is a buyer's finest hour.

Some very special friendships developed over the years with many

associates, who showed enough patience to teach and instruct me throughout my career. I consider it my privilege to have worked with them. Sid Mitchell from the Loroman Co., was a great teacher and good friend during my time of despair. Paul Jay was always willing to help me and my company and was a true friend in need. There were many other fine individuals, too numerous to mention.

Being a woman was a definite asset in my job. I often used it to my advantage. Unfortunately, there were also definite drawbacks. The crime situation in New York was beginning to worry me, walking to appointments became hazardous, and muggings and holdups were rampant throughout the city.

THE ICE PICK

I hurried along New York's Fifth Avenue. Was someone following me? Breathlessly entering the Empire State Building through the heavy revolving glass door, I was relieved to be greeted by a uniformed guard.

My working appointment with a closet shop manufacturer was scheduled for 9:30 a.m. I was early, still time to lean against the cool, long marble wall and catch my breath.

High heeled, brown booted, black shoed and sneakered male and female feet rushed along the black marble floor. Would I be safe riding the elevator to the 35th floor with a "Sneaker"? I decided to wait for high heels only to start my ascent. Arriving unmolested at the office entrance, I found the door locked and heard a voice from within asking for my identification. Satisfied, a buzzer unlocked the bullet proof glass door to the showroom.

Working in New York had become dangerous to your health. Countless muggings and robberies at gun or knife point had transformed secure working conditions into a civilian battlefield. Sneaking furtive glances around at people while planning an escape route in case of attack became standard procedure.

My assignment with the manufacturer completed, the robust and unafraid gentleman became my protector during the descent to the main floor. Clutching my purse, my heart beating louder then Big Ben, I rushed to my car, parked nearby in a lot, and fled to safety into New Jersey. Still

trembling, I was determined to arm myself with a weapon suitable for self-defense. Guns reminded me too much of ugly, brown Nazi shirts and World War II. Bow and arrow would not fit into my briefcase. Urgently rummaging through my overflowing sample room next to my office, I spotted an eight inch, wood handled ice pick, complete with cover. This innocent looking bar tool had the capability of a deadly spear. I feverishly practiced unscrewing the cover with one hand while the ice pick was still hidden in my coat or resting under my sleeve near the wrist.

My wooden rod became my trusted, constant companion. Walking hand in hand, we faced bustling streets, crowded bus stations, sneaker-attired feet and hazardous crowds with the utmost confidence. During the summer months, my wooden defense travelled in my skirt or pant pocket for a quick draw. The months of wearing multiple layers of clothing, "woodie" nestled in my hand or hid in a sleeve.

During out-of-town trips, my weapon travelled in my suitcase. On overnight hotel stays, "it" joined the alarm clock, the remote and my glasses on the night stand - ready to defend its owner against unexpected visitors. Then, one day in late July, we were separated.

I was in Chicago, attending a Housewares Show. Tired and hungry after prowling McCormick Place (Showplace) for nearly eight hours, I headed back to the hotel. Stuffing myself with fresh oysters, I realized too late that my oysters were suffering from old age. Agonizing hours later, curled up in bed, clutching my stomach from its attempts to separate from the rest of my body, my brain pleaded for a quick death.

Instead, I packed quickly, descended to the lobby to pay my bill, and pleaded for a fast taxi to rush me to the airport. My stomach and intestines were determined to stay in Chicago, but I jumped from the cab, checked my

thrown together suitcase and hurried to the gate. Unsteady on my legs, I placed my handbag onto the slow moving security belt and watched it disappear into the black hole. A raspy voice ordered me through the "arch". No whistles, chimes or bells sounded during my march through.

Emerging as a "safe" passenger, a uniformed, blonde amazon asked me to step aside. My handbag had not yet exited from the black hole. Onlookers were curiously staring at me. Ms. Amazon finally removed the bag and transferred it very gingerly to a waiting table.

Bent over in pain, I was summoned by two uniformed officers to remove the contents of my hand bag to the naked table. Amid wallet, make-up case and other hurriedly packed goodies, my ice pick appeared.

My slurred explanation about a self-defense weapon transformed their stares into looks of disbelief. Convinced that I was not a terrorist but a suffering body, they gestured my dismissal. My weapon was transferred to the "forward cabin," to be reunited with me upon landing in Newark.

Experiencing debilitating pain, I transported my stomach, intestines and the rest of my body straight into the Doctor's office.

He diagnosed an extreme case of food poisoning. I grabbed my medicine and taxied home to die. Worried about my condition, I forgot to reclaim my trusty ice pick.

RETIREMENT - DECEMBER 1989

Did I really want to retire? To this day, I don't know. In February 1987, Eddie and I attended a Panasonic Seminar in Orlando. We scheduled a full day of meetings on Friday. A gala reception and party were planned for the evening. Eddie had no interest in the day meetings, but rented a car and drove to Ocala for a closer look at our house. Our tenants had moved out the month before and he wanted to check for possible damage or necessary repairs.

During the evening's entertainment, he asked me to retire and move to Florida. Eddie had never interfered in my career, and his serious request shocked me. Procrastinating throughout that evening, I reached the decision to retire based on Eddie's need rather than my selfish desires.

Early Saturday morning, we journeyed to Ocala, contracted with a painter, hired a handy man and bought two beds for immediate delivery. Upon returning to New Jersey, I rendered my resignation. My company requested a twelve months waiting period for the purpose of acquiring my replacements.

We travelled back and forth to Ocala, buying furniture, appliances, carpets and building an addition to the house. Eddie presided over the various deliveries and enjoyed being master of his castle.

The twelve months waiting period stretched into December, 1989, and I was working furiously to complete my last catalog. Every factory visit

ended with a party in my honor. Constant doubts haunted me during the last months. Would there be regrets, would I miss the excitement and attention?

My final, final farewell party turned into the pinnacle of my career. A complete surprise, I was perplexed about how my staff managed to stage such a production right under my nose. Usually, I knew everything that took place in and around my office.

Jack Jaust and his wife, friends and business associates, invited us for dinner on the night before December 20th, my final day of employment. They requested that we meet them in the Marriott Hotel's dining room. Mr. Jaust met us in the parking lot, because Mrs. Jaust preferred to eat somewhere else. We parked our car and joined the Jausts for further travel.

Finally settling the dining problem, we arrived at my favorite restaurant. We quickly entered the lobby, since it was twenty degrees outside. Once inside, and upset about being seated "downstairs," I stomped down the steep steps. Hungry, cold and angry, I spotted John Jurgen, a salesman from Connecticut. What was he doing here?

Finding my glasses, I witnessed the unfolding of a "This is your life, Eva Hamlet" production.

Co-workers, bosses, past and present, salespeople, manufacturers, many flown in from the Midwest to California, were applauding my entrance. Personal friends and oh yes, my daughter - some kind soul finally pointed her out to me - had all assembled to "retire" me.

That night, my husband was very proud of me. Both of us were humbled and extremely grateful for the accolades from my peers. This "Queen for a Day" has no recollection of leaving the party nor of the content

of my acceptance speech, just the memory of an unforgettable and memorable evening.

Among the many gifts showered on Eddie and I was a giant sized television console to keep us amused in Florida. But that is another chapter.

EXODUS FROM RIDGEFIELD

December 21, 1989, was our scheduled departure date to Ocala and retirement in sun drenched, fun-filled Florida. We planned to retain our apartment in Ridgefield and spend our summers in the cooler climate. In addition, I had worked out an agreement with Popular for a temporary part-time work schedule.

The living plants were dispatched to various neighbors for safe keeping and watering. Take along treasures were loaded into our LeBaron, a tight squeeze. Best described as the "Icecapades on Hamlet's stairs," we slid down thirteen ice covered steps, balancing bags, suitcases and boxes filled with "breakables". Fighting to prevent the demise of our VCR and stereo was no easy feat.

Then, a few goodbys, see you next June, we slithered sideways, down the drive-way, slid left on to Shaler Boulevard and hoped for sunny skies. Passing the smelly fields of New Jersey along the New Jersey turnpike, we reached the outskirts of Washington, D.C., the metropolis of "gridlock". Grinding gears, squealing brakes and sufficient inhalation of carbon monoxide propelled us to a motel and overnight relief.

The 5:30 a.m. weather forecast for the following day was most discouraging. Predictions of snow and ice storms for the next forty-eight hours forced us out of bed. We decided to leave at once, as it was still clear outside and pray for better travelling conditions south of the border. After an hours' drive, small drops appeared on the windshield. A battleship grey sky

and snowcovered cars meeting us from the opposite direction should have warned us.

Thirty minutes later, we were participating in the "Daytona 500 on Ice". Sliding from side to side, trying to avoid cars and trucks, we managed a full 90 degree turn right down an escape road and into the entrance of a Holiday Inn. The premises resembled a recently created cemetery for not yet dead cars. Fender bendered vehicles and their bruised ego drivers were looking for car doctors. The hotel lobby was filled with dishevelled travellers fighting for rooms to stay overnight and ride out the storm.

Eddie and I arranged to acquire a room by late afternoon only to find that the pipes were frozen and the hotel was unable to supply heat. The food supply was exhausted, the liquor was gone, and neither hot nor cold drinks were available. We went to bed and waited for the sun.

Awaking cold and hungry, I ventured outside in quest of our car. Eighteen inches of snow was spread evenly over the Virginia countryside. Unprepared for snow removal detail, I swept off twelve tag plates on red cars before locating our buggy. My feet were as frozen as the car doors. Our shovels, scrapers and my snow boots were safely tucked away in New Jersey. Eddie was not feeling well, so we abandoned all plans for an early departure.

Day three of our happy retirement journey appeared worse than we expected. The highway resembled the Icecapades of 1989. The snow had melted a little the day before, but the subfreezing temperature the night before turned highways into solid sheets of ice. Police patrols advised travellers to stay off the road, at least until noon.

Disgusted with the delay, we ventured out and started to inch our way onto the highway. Traffic moved at a snail's pace. Damaged, abandoned

trucks and overturned vehicles littered both sides of the road. Neither snow nor ice removal crews were at the scene, even sand dispensing trucks appeared absent. We did encounter several men with pick axes trying to hack the ice away.

Convinced that the sunny South was a myth, we decided to spend the rest of the day and night in yet another motel. On day four, at the crack of dawn and regardless of conditions, we hopped in the car and drove away. We reached Jacksonville during the afternoon only to be met by the state police and informed of "rerouting instructions." All bridges were closed as they resembled ice skating rinks rather than thoroughfares.

The funhouse maze of detours seemed perilous, confusing and endless. As darkness turned the countryside into an ice engulfed fairyland, we limped into Ocala. We congratulated ourselves on reaching our destination alive, with the car unscathed. One mile from home, we hit a pothole, damaging the rear wheel and loing the cover.

"It was the night before Christmas" as we approached our house. Shimmering icicles hung majestically from the roof, and our shrubbery was encased in ice. Completely bewildered, tired and hungry, we seriously questioned our decision to retire to "sunny" Florida.

Throughout the dreadful trip, Eddie was not feeling well and I was forced to handle most of the driving chores. An ominous start for the long sought retirement, but we never anticipated the future horror that awaited us.

RETIREMENT GIFT BLOWS UP

At my retirement party I had received a full color picture of a Panasonic 35" screen television cut out of the catalog, gift wrapped, bowed and presented to us with a promise of speedy delivery to Ocala.

This magnificent walnut creation left Panasonic's warehouse on December 21,1989 on its perilous journey.

At the end of January, I called the speedy yellow freight trucking company to inquire about the current whereabouts of our treasure. With deep regret, the manager informed us that the trailer had overturned on the highway during a snowstorm in the Carolinas. "Please don't worry," he carried on, "the snow and ice will melt eventually. At that time, we will be able to haul the truck to an upright position and continue to Ocala."

Early February, "yellow fast freight" instructed one of their ambitious telephone operators to inform us that the errant trailer had arrived in their terminal. Gently inquiring about a date for home delivery, I was shocked to hear that we must pick up the set ourselves.

A hurried phone call to Panasonic in New Jersey for details about weght and length of this pricey "boob tube" revealed that we could expect a five toot carton, weghing 125 pounds. We stared at our LeBaron two door car, barely large enough for us -- and let our fingers do the walking through the yellow pages in search of help.

We hired a furniture delivery service at prohibitive cost. Twenty-four hours later, the "present" was inducted into our barely large enough living room. Anxious to enjoy our "retiree" t.v., we plugged in, flicked on the remote and stared in horror at the black tube as we listened to numbing silence. The yellow pages produced an expensive "Mr. Fix-it" to determine and rectify our treasure's serious ailment. Finally, the long awaited event of live television came to pass. We watched the world unfold, entranced with the size and color of the "magnificent one".

One month later, lightning struck and burned the chassis beyond repair.

WELCOME OCALA

A small pole lamp alongside our driveway illuminated the ice covered shrubbery and cast a soft glow on the icicles surrounding a dark house. With shaking, frozen hands we entered our new permanent residence.

Warm air rushed up to us, what a relief. We had left a key with our neighbors. Informed of our imminent arrival, they had activated the furnace, turned on our little lamp and decorated the dining room with a handsome poinsettia plant.

The new carpet, with our furniture in perfect position, and curtains adorning the windows made us feel at home. The kitchen sparkled with spanking new appliances; pots, pans, dishes were in place - just waiting for the arrival of the cook. Television, VCR and stereo were quickly connected, as well as four telephones. Our two door garage already had one occupant. My 1974 Buick workhorse was resting comfortably. We had transported chests of drawers, paintings and other heavy objects to Florida six months prior to our final move, left the car, and flew home. Our dream house was complete - but we had no food and the stores were closed. Another night of hunger did not dampen our spirits. We knew tomorrow had to be a better day. But it wasn't. Eddie was not feeling well and he only wanted to sleep. Listless and showing little interest in his dream house was an ominous sign. My pleading with him to see a physician fell on deaf ears. I was extremely upset as well as experiencing serious doubts and regrets about our retirement to Ocala.

My part-time working agreement with my recent employer included a visit to Chicago and the National Housewares Show. Considering such a promise binding, Eddie and I flew to Chicago one week after our arrival in Ocala. He insisted on accompanying me, refusing to stay alone in the house. I completed my work there in three days and we travelled home.

Unfortunately, we also had invited some friends to visit us at the end of January. I suggested a cancellation, but Eddie looked forward to their arrival. We spent endless hours accommodating their demands. The lights were too bright, we changed the bulbs. The pillows were too hard, the house too cold. Their requests for diet food were unreasonable, especially since they expected their meals served at all times.

We could hardly wait for their departure. Two weeks later, their one hundred and one pill bottles stowed away in their bags, we watched the taxi fade away from our house, their never ending complaints and demands still ringing in my ears. Grateful we had survived this onslaught, we permanently removed the departed visitors from our "friends" list. Never again will I utter the "come and visit us" words.

Unflappable me, used to pressure, changing times and undaunted by occasional defeats, finally began to realize that I was no longer superwoman. Eddie was really not himself, and talked about going back to New Jersey. My armor pierced, it became a chore to fulfill the necessary requirements to set up a Florida residency. Our dream house turned into the haunted castle.

New Jersey driver's licenses became invalid after 30 days. Tags for the two cars could not be issued without valid Florida licenses. I flunked the written test three times but passed the driving test with flying colors. Eddie passed the written one and flunked the other. We spent days commuting to the above offices. Finally, clutching my new license with my ugly picture staring

back at me, I treated the Buick to its new tag.

When not chasing after licenses, I changed insurances, mowed the lawn, watered on even days, cooked, and cleaned - in short - I turned into the "Cinderella" of Silver Spring Shores. Eddie was unable to help as he neither looked nor felt well and finally consented to see a doctor. But before we had a chance to seek appropriate medical help, he suffered a mild stroke in early February of 1991.

Once again on our way to the license office, he complained of a severe headache. Determined to pass the driving test, he ordered me to drive him there. Emerging from the office, grinning from ear to ear, I concluded that his wish had been fulfilled.

Later that afternoon, he complained of numbness in his hand and right arm. A local M.D. suggested an immediate visit to the emergency room of Munroe Hospital. A physician was assigned to us as we were new in town, with no knowledge of the local medical professionals. Several tests later, Eddie was admitted as a possible stroke patient.

The following day, with his hand and arm not functioning at all and disoriented to a greater degree than he had previously experienced, I panicked. Totally alone in this town and unwilling to alarm my daughter, I felt my life shatter into a thousand pieces. For the first time, I was unwilling to suffer more pain and contemplated an easy way out.

Five days later, he was released to home care. With my first home care experience still fresh in my mind, I knew that we needed competent help around the clock. Eddie made some progress. We went for physical therapy once a day and he regained partial use of his limbs. One month later, we decided to dispense with the night nurse.

Shortly thereafter, he awoke during the night, tripped on his way into the kitchen, fell and broke his hip. In pain, best described as hell on earth, an ambulance delivered him to Monroe. On arrival to the emergency room, I cautioned the admitting staff that he was allergic to overdoses of medication, especially codeine and related drugs. He was wearing a medic alert medallion to that effect. Assured that no harmful medication would be administered, mainly just a painkilling substance, I watched Eddie become incoherent and totally unable to fend for himself.

I left the hospital around 3:30 a.m., not sure of finding my way home in a driving rain, on the most devastating night of my life, but I never imagined the full year of horror that was awaiting me.

YARDS

Determined to go "native" and turn ourselves into instant Floridians with house and backyard, I started on a journey of total stupidity, blatant futility and humorously expensive calamity.

Neither Eddie nor I had ever owned a house. Manicured lawns and healthy green shrubbery had always belonged to other people. Tall trees grew in forests, everybody knew that. Weeds, crabgrass, the names of bugs of every description were added to my vocabulary.

To my surprise, nurseries in Florida dispensed plants, shrubs, grass and other high priced landscape specialties, not services for children. By special appointment, a long haired, earring sporting lawn specialist sauntered up to my door. Inspecting our brown, bald lawn, he dispensed an immediate remedy. Bulldoze the entire front yard, fill in with new earth and grass seed. Two thousand dollars and numerous hand held hose waterings later, we sported the greenest weeds in town.

After further consultations with our genius lawn specialist, he blamed the $2000 failure on the absence of an in-ground water sprinkler system. Enter the "irrigation" specialist: $1,500 later, with my newly dug lawn staring up at me and a hefty water bill haunting me, we now sported the tallest, greenest weeds on the block.

Why, I implore my various specialists, can't we grow grass without weeds? Well, you may have chinch bugs, crickets and other strange sounding

critters destroying your yard. Round three in the green lawn derby commenced with the arrival of the Pest Control Truck, promising no more bugs after a full year's service.

The moral of this story: beginners become experts, especially dumb and stubborn beginners, who do not accept well meaning advice from more experienced "yard" people, like neighbors.

This story has a happy ending. My yard is fairly grassy now, the stubborn weeds are blooming in the neighbor's yard, and the friendly pest control mechanic assures me that my bugs have taken their leave and will only return if I stop using their service and painstaking expertise.

'TIL DEATH DID US PART

I find myself almost incapable of committing this chapter of my life to paper. No words in the dictionary could express the despair, isolation and helplessness that I experienced in 1990.

Watching my husband deteriorate into a helpless human being over eleven months was punishment beyond endurance. Unable or unwilling, the physicians in Munroe Hospital decided to delay Eddie's hip operation until his mental and physical condition could be stabilized. After a prolonged hospital stay including numerous infections and complications, I was ordered to move him into a nursing home for an indefinite period.

The physical and moral dehumanization of the human form commences with confinement in such institutions. Understaffed, inpatient aid, unsupervised by state or other officials, and the flagrant overcharges bordered on gross negligence. Patients check in but seldom walk out alive was an attitude expressed obviously, almost blatantly, by the staff. Doctors checked on their patients just once a month, casually, to say the least. I spent eight to ten hours a day with Eddie and hired private aides to take care of his needs during my absence.

Uncounted ambulance trips to the hospital for tests, implanting of feeding tubes, treating a now incurable foot infection and several more procedures were especially hard on Eddie and me. Waiting endlessly in doctors' offices on stretchers or wheelchairs in halls or examining rooms took on nightmarish proportions. We became prisoners of the medical profession

with no other choice available.

I was under the erroneous impression that the "medicals" took an oath to heal, care for and assist the human race. I can now prove otherwise. Degrees and diplomas are useful legal documents to justify outrageous fees. Medicare, our great national insurance, is staffed by distant, uninterested and mostly incompetent employees. Their unwillingness to listen to injustices to patients, proven overcharging, misappropriations and numerous other blatant incompetencies destroyed my faith in that organization.

My husband was admitted several more times to Munroe, especially after his very questionable hip operation, which was irresponsibly performed too late. Ordered once more to a nursing home, I simply refused. The hospital administrative staff informed me that Medicare would no longer cover payment for a prolonged stay.

My house was turned into a hospital, complete with nurses and aides around the clock. A hospital bed, wheelchair and feeding equipment were delivered as an ambulance brought Eddie home. No longer willing to see my very sick husband suffer the trauma and indignities of institutions, I was inducted into the nursing profession. Home care staff instructed me in the art of administering injections, drawing blood, setting up the feeding machine and other needed procedures too numerous to mention. I further learned that only R.N.s and untrained wives are authorized to administer injections; skilled aides are excluded, so state the rules in the home care manual. Registered nurses require a $25 hourly fee, not covered by health insurance, so I was forced into immediate battle condition. Every day and night, for twelve weeks, Eddie required twenty-one antibiotic injections, given into a catheter that led straight into his heart.

Unless any reader was unfortunate enough to experience a similar

situation, nothing on earth is more frightening, upsetting or difficult for an inexperienced wife. Working with life-threatening instruments on your loved ones is stress beyond reason. Any mistake, such as air in a syringe, could kill instantly. Nurse Eva dressed open wounds, injected insulin (no experience required - training on the job - stated the manuals of the national health insurance).

Reliving the months of torment for Eddie and me makes it difficult to continue writing this chapter, but essential, because that year was an important part of my life.

On our forty-seventh wedding anniversary, August 28th, Eddie was readmitted into Munroe with complications too horrible to mention. It was also his last hospital confinement. Both of us were now resigned that we were fighting a losing battle all alone but closer than ever, and we consoled each other. His suffering was unconscionable, my suffering led him into constant apologies. Our love for each other kept us alive.

On Christmas Eve he was committed to a nursing home in Inverness against my wishes, but Medicare and the "medicals" of Munroe ordered his confinement. Totally paralyzed and knowing death was imminent, he asked to be released from his ordeal. On New Year's Day 1991, I brought him home, where he peacefully went to sleep on January 4th, knowing that I loved him so very much and had to let him go with dignity.

All of us would like to be surrounded by family and friends in time of despair. My true feelings about support from the "kids" will remain my secret. Eddie's feelings were best described by his continuous question, "Where are the kids?"

THE FUNERAL

Dying in the privacy of your home is comforting for the patient, complete agony for the family. Compassion for the widow is short-lived. The coroner, funeral director, police, a host of perfect strangers arrived almost at once. Regardless of emotional and physical exhaust, endless forms had to be completed at once with my checkbook becoming the focal point of everyone's attention. Dying during the night is not recommended. Eddie's attending physician suddenly became unavailable to give answers to the coroner. I was questioned, harassed, treated suspiciously and hounded for information pertaining to Eddie's death that should have been handled by the medical profession.

It was comforting that my daughter was present. We were not a very religious family. Shortly before his death, Eddie became concerned about that and I promised him that he would be buried within the Jewish tradition. We were not affiliated with a congregation in Ocala. The local rabbi had neither interest nor intention to perform a service.

Ruth and I sat "shivve," in our house, a century old custom. We purchased two "Rest in Peace" plots in Riverside Cemetery in New Jersey, our happy hunting grounds for many years. I had the feeling Eddie would have approved of my choice.

After concluding the shivve rites at home, we flew Eddie's remains, along with the living remains of myself and my daughter to Newark. With a "rent a Rabbi" in attendance, my family at my side and so called friends in

the background, I buried my husband. He hated funeral parlors, lengthy eulogies and wake parties. He loved life, people, his family and I hoped that he would have wanted it the way I did it.

My partner was gone forever, his ashes in the ground, his long suffering over and his soul at peace. On January 6, 1991, my 67th birthday, I lost my very best friend, husband, companion, lover and my forty-eight year long reason for happiness.

My granddaughter's poem poignantly describes our sentiments on our great loss.

TO WITNESS

Ten slow cars

like little tiny ants,

going to get some food

only this isn't food,

this is death,

which is a very different mood.

We surround the grave

like a shoe does a foot,

to witness the rising soul.

The possessions of this spirit,

lie deep within the ground,

buried beneath a hole.

The feeling of death,

is not very grand.

Tears flowing,

the grave being covered with land.

The soul has risen,

it is going very far,

we cry very hard,

when we love our grandfather.

Jennifer Willency, Granddaughter - 9th Grade.

THE WIDOW

Leaving the cemetery in my rented car, escape was the only thought on my mind. I had neither spoken to nor looked at family or friends during the interment. Hollowed out and bereft, idle words could not have eased my pain.

If sheer numbers provided any proof, my tumultuous life had taught me flexibility under all circumstances, but I was ill-prepared for Eddie's death. He had put up such a valiant fight for life, had I let him down?

My family and I were staying at the Holiday Inn in Saddlebrook. We no longer owned the apartment in Ridgefield. I had severed the lease during Eddie's prolonged illness, knowing we would never live there again.

Summoning enough willpower, I joined Ruth, her husband, and our three grandchildren for dinner in the hotel dining room. We chatted amiably about current events, procrastinated about menu selections. Other tables around us were occupied with laughing, happy folks enjoying their dinner. Didn't anyone realize that I had just buried my husband?

After dinner, the children asked to be excused. They wanted to watch television, probably a reaction to the shattering experience of burying their grandfather. My daughter and her husband were discussing plans for their return to Michigan. Slowly, an unbelievable and explosive feeling of complete emptiness engulfed the entire room. There was no one left but me, sitting alone, no longer needed, no longer loved, with no one planning my

tomorrow.

Unable to control my grief, anger and resentment toward everyone around me, I fled to my room, packed and left for Ocala without speaking to my family. Roaring through thick clouds towards Orlando Airport, I felt lightheaded and abandoned, even by my God.

Driving home to Ocala forced me back into reality. Trailer trucks lumbered past my car at high speeds, small and large cars whizzed along the highway. Frankly, the traffic demanded my attention, unquestionably, an agonizing trip. For a brief moment I would have welcomed my own death.

Entering my house, alone, finally opened the floodgates for gut wrenching tears. After almost a year of painstaking personal attention to my husband, always hoping for a miracle recovery, the house was empty and I was no longer needed.

Soul searching nights and meaningless days followed a constant flood of tears. No longer desiring communication with former friends, acquaintances, even family members, the telephone remained unanswered. Unread letters filled garbage cans.

Forced to accept the dreaded "widow" existence, bills that had to be paid and insurance to cancel or update, pushed my days into becoming routine. Endless tormenting forms arriving daily. Medicare harassment grew to intolerable proportions, causing strange behavior which began to alarm me and my family.

The time had come to honor a promise to my husband and fulfill my mourning period, then find sufficient courage and continue my life according to Jewish tradition.

SEARCHING FOR RENEWED FAITH

I joined Temple B'nai Darom in Ocala, mainly to say "Kaddisch" for my husband for one year, a Jewish prayer for the dead. Eddie had requested that I do so. With no sons, and my daughter nor her family practicing religion, we had no other family.

The holocaust and World War II events made us cynical, so believing became difficult. Attending services every Friday night, praying and saying the Kaddish gave me solace in those agonizing months after Eddie's death. I rediscovered my faith, which had just been buried deep in my heart for a very long time.

The inevitable, foremost duty as a Jew is survival in order to carry on our traditions and keep in touch with our past - how well I knew that sentence. It was a compelling mandate, to be honored and fulfilled. Questioning my fate was easy, receiving answers decidedly more difficult. Why did I have to suffer another loss? Oh God, my life was already filled with enough tragic death.

Members of the congregation tried to befriend and console me. Crawling even further into my protective shell, I acted most unfriendly. Watching man and wife, sitting contently with each other, was disconcerting and it angered me beyond control.

Trying to escape my misery, I went to Las Vegas. At the hotel, I watched laughing couples enjoy each other's company, and those scenes

entirely unravelled my tangled emotions. Fleeing to Vegas was really an escape from myself, and proved an intolerable and unsatisfactory solution. Twenty-four hours later, after Kaddish in the local Synagogue, Northwest airlines brought me back to Orlando.

Driving home, rationalizing my situation, deciding about a continued existence on this earth, my widow status began to take shape. Signs of assertiveness were surfacing, and momentarily unsettling me, they represented such a departure from my current, desolate feeling. Unaware of any alternate choice, I set my course on a new phase in my life. Several trips to the cemetery in New Jersey were hard but necessary in understanding the finality of death. Long talks at Eddie's gravesite helped to unburden my pain, with his silent presence comforting me. He always was a good listener.

Visiting New York afforded me the opportunity to meet old, true friends. Going out to dinner, long chats and encouraging words eased my loneliness. Their loyalty and true concern helped my recovery of mind and spirit. Sid and Cecile Mitchell, Irv and Norma Bahrt, "Popular" girls Linda I and Linda II, the Mirro Gang, and other special, compassionate human beings deserve much of the credit for my survival.

With my mind now functioning, my body needed attention. Eddie's long illness left me weak, tired and unable to eat or sleep. Forcing myself to pick up lap swimming again was pleasant and beneficial. Still unable or unwilling to face strangers, most of my days were spent indoors.

Determined to overcome the "I want to be alone" syndrome and spend more time outdoors, I prepared to become a golfer. After five lessons with our local pro, the purchase of golf clubs and suitable attire, I ventured forth onto a nine hole course, ideal for raw beginners. Trying to entice the ball to leave its tee became my new challenge. I practiced diligently every day,

determined to hit instead of missing the ball. Slowly, I actually began enjoying golf, chatting with lots of "golfers" about the game, and occupy the better part of the days. Evenings and nights remained empty, meaningless. Looking at picture albums, reading and a few phone calls brought temporary diversion, a little comfort.

Widowhood is widespread, and displays loneliness at its cruelest. Advice from well wishers is totally meaningless. Applying self-reliance, faith and willpower was my only hope for eventual peace of mind.

Visits by Ruth, my grandchildren and caring friends were greatly appreciated, eagerly anticipated and enjoyed. Their departures were difficult to handle. The silence in the house from the void of their company was quite oppressive.

By divine intervention or coincidence, a flyer from American Express contained an offering for a cruise to Alaska. Advertising a fifty per cent reduction for a second passenger per cabin, I called my daughter and invited her to come along. She agreed to join me for an August, 1991 departure. The prospect of an uninterrupted week of Ruth's company on board the Sun Viking immediately improved my overall wellbeing.

ALASKA

My daughter and I met in Vancouver and boarded the Sun Viking around five p.m. We were pleasantly surprised to find that the luscious travel brochure had not exaggerated. We enjoyed elegant surroundings, excellent food and impeccable service.

Cruising the majestic thousand mile Inside Passage, we passed an ever changing panorama of natural beauty. This vast maze of deep channels, quiet bays and lovely forested islands calmed and relaxed me. Waterfalls cascaded over sheer granite cliffs and immense glaciers released great slabs of ice to crash into the sea. We glided past basking seals, migrating whales, brown bears feasting on fresh salmon, and bald eagles flying majestically through the air.

We dropped anchor in Skagway, the gateway to the Yukon. An unforgettable helicopter ride flew me over Glacier Bay, landing on top of North Sawyer Glacier. Outfitted with "moon boots" and waterproof parka, I slipped, slid and mostly skidded along on my non-waterproofed fanny. It was a once in a lifetime experience. My daughter chose the tamer railroad from White Horse which travelled towards the Yukon.

The following day, we anchored in Haines, a quiet, unspoiled and picturesque little town, and tendered ashore, where we took the opportunity to purchase badly needed gloves, ear muffs, hats and sweat suits in the one and only store in town. The average temperature was forty degrees, with wind and rain throughout our journey. My Florida clothes selection was

inappropriate.

Our next stop was Juneau, where the State Capitol building is located. Through intense persuasion on my part, my daughter relented and accompanied me on shooting the Mendenhall Glacier Rapids. Garbed in life jackets, ponchos, giant-sized rubber boots, hats and gloves, we ambled toward the rubber dinghies. Tossing through the cascading rapids was a challenging adventure, though we were thoroughly soaked with every dip of the dinghy. Two hours later, wet and freezing, we headed for the single outhouse available. Back on board ship, we were hailed as "the brave ones".

Ketchikan was our last port of call before sailing through the "Misty Fiord National Monument" on our return to Vancouver.

During the seven day journey, Ruth and I were able to talk about our loss of Eddie, and the future without a husband or father. Mentally and physically bolstered by the Alaska experience, I flew home hoping for continued improvement of mind and body.

A VOLUNTEER

For most of my life, working was necessary - primarily to earn a living, fulfill pre-set ambitions and finally justify my presence on planet Earth.

I was called a dynamic, bossy activist, claiming emancipation years ago. True, I considered myself a professional and intellectual equal to most of my business contacts and co-workers.

The privileges accompanying my lofty position began with the roll of the dice because Lady Luck was in my corner. There are uncounted memories - they seem just like fairy tales now - precious, indispensable. Everyone must have his or her history, her narrative. You do not really know who you are until you possess an imaginative version of yourself. You almost do not exist without it.

My working years gave me only a kind of abstract triumph and left a void.

After my husband's death, the world seemed to fall apart around me, and it has been a slow process to install my own authority for the future. Many old habits seem useless and almost destructive now. Exploration of my own behavior in my retired status condition, examining possibilities for a meaningful future existence, and accepting the consequences of my decisions certainly needed immediate attention.

Venturing into new territories where habit no longer sufficed, and becoming a volunteer - without pay - seemed appropriate. Preferring isolation and being incurious about the nuances of others had to come to an end. I was aching to achieve a new life for myself. I wanted to be more selfless, more giving, more grateful and more compassionate to my fellow inhabitants on planet Earth.

The past few months as happy volunteer at the Economic Development Council in Ocala has confirmed my decision to become a non-paid worker a worthwhile and morally uplifting experience.

COLLEGE IS CALLING ME

Stacks of mail awaited my return from Alaska. A fall schedule newsletter from Central Florida Community College, addressed to current resident, caught my eye.

Scanning the available courses in the continuing education program suddenly convinced me to go back to school. The following day, a planned campus visit proved my first hint of renewed interest in myself. Computer adaptation, travel agent and biographical writing were the courses I chose.

My student commencement was scheduled for January, 1992. I spent the Christmas holidays in Michigan with my family. It was my first visit without my husband. With patient help from Ruth and her family, I greeted the New Year with sadness, but was determined to return to a productive future.

Meeting other older students taking varied courses and pursuing their curiosity about everything from beginning new careers or recording their personal histories to exploring zoology gave me an emotional lift. Except for occasional relapses, my upbeat and optimistic outlook for the future has resurfaced.

Autobiographical studies produced this book, under the patient guidance of my instructor, Jeri Baldwin. Her relentless demands that we, her students, remember the events of our past and commit them to paper have kept me spellbound as well as busy. Reliving delicious and traumatic

experiences as a wife, mother and grandmother played a large role in my mental healing process.

The challenge of becoming computer literate at my age dragged me from "who cares" to "you are never too old to learn". Travel, my favorite pastime, was a demanding course. The instructor, herself a travel agent, transformed her course into a particularly challenging endeavor for me. I was the oldest student in the class, but passed my first and second semester with flying colors.

No longer upset about my retirement in Ocala, my activities have begun to shape my life in a new direction. Events, once deemed essential and necessary, cease to be important. Furiously cramming activities into each day and planning exciting evenings are no longer vital to my well being.

Time out for life and the fulfillment of meaningful endeavors seeps to the surface. A review of pent up emotions has served as a guide to a better understanding of another self, one I am not yet well acquainted with. My mirror reflects a face older, but recognizable. Goals, once deemed unattainable, may in time become strong possibilities.

Already, my fervent wish to return to Magdeburg, Germany, my birthplace sixty-nine years ago, has been fulfilled. Only after the fall of the Berlin wall could this be accomplished. Magdeburg, once home to a child named Eva, watched a woman return, older and not very much wiser, but it ended what seemed like centuries of frustration.

The decision, preparation and mental anguish of making such a dramatic journey is the subject of my next chapter.

A LONELY JOURNEY INTO THE PAST

The date was February 10,1992. Still unable to sleep through the night, my feverish brain made a sudden, insane decision to revisit Magdeburg.

I could not believe it. For fifty-five years, all my hate had been directed toward Germany, the country that massacred my parents and the rest of my family in the ovens of Auschwitz.

Was I seeking solace or refuge in my past? My fervent wish to dedicate a tombstone to my parents remained thwarted until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Finally, the ability to fulfill my obligation must have prompted my unprecedented desire to return to a country that exiled and orphaned me.

The loss of my husband left me vulnerable and lonely. I wished that my daughter would accompany me. Troubled, the possibility of additional mental anguish almost convinced my conscience to cancel the proposed trip.

On February 28, wind still quiet and still dark outside, I started to reminisce with the aid of photographs of my mother, father and other relatives. It saddened me, knowing all were dead. Would my sadness grow deeper or would I be buoyed, encouraged and come to grips with my long hurt? Silently begging my late husband for advice, my heart knew his answer. "Go for it," he used to say.

Using my recently gained expertise in the travel agent profession, my quick call to Northwest "frequent flyer" Airlines confirmed a March 18

departure date from Orlando to Frankfurt. But how to get to Magdeburg? My "outdated" European airline manual listed no airports for (formerly) East Germany. My contact with the German Railroad brought in reply a train schedule and an apologetic agent with urgent advice not to rely on it.

The Selig's treated me to a Bon Voyage dinner, complete with cake and candles. A friendly send-off to an unfriendly destination. As usual, I attended Friday's Shabbat service. Where would I worship the next week? Perhaps in the old Synagogue in Magdeburg, where I worshipped as a child with my parents? Our Purim holiday would commence the next week, so memories of family holidays were starting to surface, events buried deep in my mind that night.

March 18 was "D" day. With my car ready, I took one last look at my friendly surroundings, then ventured out to face my past, calling on all my courage and self-assurance, but mostly on my faith in God to lead me through this difficult journey.

Blue skies and a pleasant sixty degrees helped my drive to Orlando seem routine. I missed Eddie today more than ever before, but I could feel his presence and knew his thoughts and good wishes surrounded me.

The airport was busy with amiable couples excitedly discussing their upcoming trips. Families travelled together with parents soothing their children, persuading them to be patient. Alone and angry about it, envying fellow passengers with spouses, children and family, I headed for the bar and a quick fix martini.

My discounted ticket to Frankfurt led me into a first class seat to Detroit, our intermediate stop. Reboarding the plane, my seat was in the rear, too bad. Squashed in "cattle car" formation and seated next to an Aryan kraut

lady, who began testing my German speaking ability right away, we thundered down the runway to "Deutschland". An almost efficient flight crew served free cocktails and headsets, as hungry passengers patiently waited for dinner. Unfortunately, the movie screen was too far away and partially blocked.

Whipping out my writing pad to start recording my thoughts, I found the pencil without tip and the sharpener still on the desk at home. My kraut lady donated her writing implement along with another barrage of conversation in her native tongue.

Finally, a pasta-like concoction, tasteless and cold, was served, but the wine was good. An additional snack later, we landed in Frankfurt.

Seeking a porter was fruitless; there were none. Luggage carts were scarce, with angry travellers fighting each other for possession of any recently vacated cart. I struggled with my bags to a taxi stand. The rude, arrogant, German bully of a driver sped through the streets toward the railroad station. Thirty dollars and twenty curses later, he dumped my bags and me on the sidewalk, jumped into his cab and disappeared.

Inquiring about the availability of porters, I was sternly advised that "portering" was undemocratic and discontinued in Germany. Schlepping my belongings to the ticket window inside the station was decidedly undemocratic - my arms were falling off. An unpleasant, rotund and ugly female ticket agent glared at me through a dirty glass window. Explaining my intent to purchase a round trip ticket to Magdeburg with my credit card elicited a grunt from fatso. "Marks are all we accept," she spat out.

Dashing off to find a bank, kicking the shins of the rush hour crowd with my luggage without so much as an apology, I started cursing in German.

The only open bank was located at the opposite end of this cavernous R.R. station. Exchanging dollars for marks necessitated three different teller stops. One for talking, one for signing, and the last one for receiving the money.

Now clutching a fistful of marks, and aiming a luggage cart that I had confiscated outside the bank toward the ticket window, I was transformed into a fanatical driver. Damaging more German legs with my cart, breathless from frustration, I snarled angrily and waved my marks at the agent's face.

She disdainfully pushed my railpass through a narrow slit and sneeringly informed me of my train's immediate departure from Gleis (Platform) seven, at the opposite end of the station. Grabbing the outstretched hand of an almost friendly conductor, my luggage and I were hoisted aboard the train. Firmly planted in my upholstered seat in the first class section, my impression of the new "democratic" Germany was as unfavorable as the old Nazi one.

Unsmiling fellow passengers and this disgruntled, reluctant American female chugged through unfriendly looking towns, forlorn villages, aboard a none-too-clean train.

Too tired to walk to the "Speisewagen" (dining car), an eager conductor delivered a lukewarm pot of coffee with a minuscule bun and a bill for seven dollar plus tip. Even the Japanese don't charge that much.

First stop, Fulda. The platform appeared creepy and old. What secrets were hidden there? How many trains passed through on the way to concentration camps, cattle cars filled with helpless men, women and children? I could not overcome my distress about, my hatred for, this country.

Slowly, the train moved away from that dismal platform. The scenery changed to a mountainous terrain. At full speed, we raced through tunnels and passed small villages with red-roofed houses and white window frames. Tall trees lined the hills, gently sloping toward lush green farms and meadow; a clean, pleasant countryside.

We approached Kassel-Wilhelmshoehe, its old houses built close to the tracks lining each side of the station. The contents and inhabitants surely rattled with each passing train. The terrain changed drastically as we rolled again. Giant chimney stacks bilging unending smoke polluted the air. Rain fell steadily, creating a gray, misty atmosphere that matched my mood.

Pondering all this misery, a pleasant thought snuck into my mind. I don't live here, thank the good Lord, and I will never malign my Florida again!

A railroad yard outside the town seemed endless. Rails criss-crossed, freight and passenger cars stood in endless lines. Engines roamed over rails like busy ants. Our conductor in his shiny, faded and bulging blue suit no longer smiled. Clutching a worn, plastic change purse and an orange "stop - start" paddle, he passed through the cars collecting or checking tickets from new passengers.

A fat lady with sensible shoes and a man with a briefcase and a half eaten sandwich joined us at the last stop, both bugging the harassed "paddle" carrier for train connection information. Germans are rude!

Totally bored, I stared at more grimy smoke stacks and familiar factory signs, such as Toyota and Mercedes Benz which dot the scenery. Graffiti rich freight trains constantly rumbled alongside. Traffic was non-existent on the country roads. I saw two trucks pass by and a few cars

waiting at railroad crossings.

Goettingen was the next stop. Two unsmiling natives and the half eaten sandwich individual exited the train. A one minute stop, the orange paddle waver came into view and we were on our way.

Half way to my destination and wondering if this trip was really necessary, we approached Hildesheim and finally, some newer, cleaner buildings to gaze upon. A modern apartment building and office complex built smack opposite the refurbished train stop left me doubting German intelligence.

Depressingly wet, more passengers wearing raincoats to their ankles and toting worn briefcases joined us. These unsmiling folks were beginning to get on my nerves. I had the urge to run through the train and punch out a few lights. It was only 10:30 a.m. but my hate and frustration were already at their ugliest.

Braunschweg Bahnhof (Station). I remembered that town would be our next stop. Another railroad yard filled with rows of freight cars, standing idle now, were they used for transport of Jews to the slaughter houses? My thoughts ran wild now, as the conductor, waving his stupid orange paddle, climbed back on board.

We entered "East Germany," as it was known for forty years. Helmstadt was the border town. A personal change was taking place. Differently uniformed, a younger, smarter looking conductor smiled at his passengers.

The passing scenery was deplorable. Streets were unpaved, the mud knee deep. Uprooted trees were rotting alongside barren and unfarmed land.

The train no longer stopped at towns. Smashed clocks, shattered neon signs and garbage littered crumbling platforms. Rusting dump trucks, half submerged in mud, cluttered the countryside. Factories, half or all in ruins, with only their giant smoke stacks still jutting up into the sky, remained as a visible reminder of war and occupation.

I saw very few people, only dirt and destruction, as the train moved through this desolation at snails pace. The rails looked damaged, unrepaired and dangerous.

My spirit at its lowest, we crept into Magdeburg. The long awaited and dreaded moment became reality.

MAGDEBURG, MY ROOTS!

Standing on the platform, alone, was indescribably painful. Fifty-five years ago, my parents and I waved goodbye to each other, possibly from this same spot.

Sadness gave way to awareness. Suddenly, remembering the countless, steep stone steps to the street, I spotted them lurking around the corner. The town stood frozen in time, the convenience of elevators or escalators still a secret here.

I faced the awesome task of moving my rain drenched luggage from the bowels of the station to drier surroundings. Inquiries about a Gepaecktraeger (porter) fell on deaf ears. Two smiling and courteous young men came to my aid.

Finding a taxi was easy, getting a ride impossible. "Not far enough," grumbled the driver. "Your hotel is located across the street, you can walk there," he went on. Carefully negotiating my steps through mud, broken sidewalks and open ditches, I arrived fifteen minutes later at the International Hotel. Wet, hungry and hating, I entered through the self-opening glass portals and announced my arrival.

For a fleeting moment, it seemed, I was back in the U.S.A. A helpful concierge escorted me to the reception desk, additional polite and friendly personnel moved me through the elegant, marble floor lobby. A real elevator gently lifted upward to the sixth floor and my suite, complete with shower,

T.V. and mini bar. The immaculate accommodations lifted my spirits. I unpacked and headed downstairs to wine and dine, duly noticing that "all credit cards were accepted".

An up-to-date bar and bartender created a perfect martini, his curiosity about my visit to Magdeburg genuine.

Elegant twin dining rooms awaited my presence. Suitably dressed for dinner, the "maitre' d" led the way to a window table, overlooking open street ditches and traffic jams due to heavy rain.

White china plates, crystal stemmed glasses and silver flatware decorated the tables. Professional waiters and waitresses moved around the room, silently serving drinks and meals. Men, dressed in impeccably tailored business suits, escorted their ladies, who dressed in up-to-date gowns and furs.

I was astounded by this display of opulence and it must have showed, for the head waiter decided to enlighten me, unfortunately in great detail. This hotel was built by the Russians during the occupation and used solely for their pleasure and entertainment, he confessed.

Enlightened, I ordered my dinner. Medallion of Pork, parsley potatoes, fresh vegetables in mustard sauce and "Rote Gruetze" with rum-vanilla topping for desert. The bill for this gourmet meal matched New York prices -- but the tip was included.

Lingering over coffee while taking stock of my surroundings, I concluded that news reports about the acute shortage in East Germany were obviously inaccurate and their constant demands for more help from the United States should be ignored.

Unsympathetic and uncaring about Germany's arrogant citizens, I headed towards my boudoir. Before jumping into my feather bed, I ordered a taxi for the morning, ate the chocolate on my pillow and fought for sleep. Twenty-eight hours had elapsed since my last nap.

Friday, March 29, I slept tight and needed a wake-up call. The water closet went askew, interfering with my first planned meeting. Moving right along, though, I showered, dressed and floated to the dining room for breakfast, included in the price of the room.

It is quite impossible to describe the variety of breakfast food offered, following are but a few examples. Seven freshly squeezed fruit juices, dispensed from glass pumps. Countless cereals, three different grades of milk, cooled in crystal clear dispensers. Smoked fish, twelve different breakfast meats, different rolls, all kinds of cake and a generous showing of fresh fruit. Impossible to sample all the food - I still stuffed my stomach for the day. Did that menu show a shortage of food, as claimed by the (formerly) east Germans? I hardly thought so!

Admiring the fresh cut floral bouquets in the dining room, I found myself surrounded by businessmen and women, holding their meetings during breakfast. Bankers discussed finance, realtors spread out blue prints and sales people peddled various products. Listening to their conversations, I got the definite impression of an optimistic future for the German business world.

My first appointment of the morning took place in the "Buergermeister's" (Mayor) office. My taxi failed to arrive. Not wanting to be late I started walking, although it was raining steadily. My first purchase in Magdeburg was a pink umbrella, made in Taiwan. I questioned a dozen people along the way to help me find the mayor's office, and each person sent me in a different direction. Forty minutes later, soaked to the skin, I climbed

three flights of stairs inside an old stone building, in dire need of repairs. My pink Taiwan umbrella was discarded after it tried to turn its owner into Mary Poppins. The "Buergermeister's" secretary enlightened me about the confusion of addresses. During the Russian occupation, street names were changed. After their departure, they reverted to their original names. When I visited, corrected maps were not available. Unfortunately, the good man was not in his office, as he had promised, but his number one assistant was well informed about the reason for my visit.

The restitution by the West German government for Nazi confiscated property from Jews had been instituted several years previously. Occupied East Germany had refused any responsibility until the present time. My application for immediate restitutive action was filed prior to my arrival.

Number one assistant and I researched the file and discovered a serious error. I was listed as an American citizen by birth, living in Germany during the Nazi era, therefore not entitled to any "Wiedergutmachung" (restitution).

Her suggestion to procure a local attorney was appropriate advice. The week-end was approaching, and I tried to reach the recommended lawyer's office, only to find out that all offices close Friday noon and do not reopen until Monday.

Disgruntled that my stay in Magdeburg would have to be extended, I stopped at one of many department stores, all in different phases of major reconstruction. Contrary to newspaper reports of serious shortages in consumer goods, the store was filled with up-to-date electronics, photo equipment and state of the art computers. Fine jewelry, expensive clothes and renowned perfumes were on display. Aisles filled with shoppers, constantly ringing cash registers and knowledgeable salesclerks tending their customers, belied any poverty reports by the press.

Visit to the cemetery

My next stop was the cemetery, with the appointment for 3 p.m. sharp. I walked to the RR. station and hired the reluctant taxi driver for the remainder of the day. Relieved that he knew the cemetery location, we were greeted by the caretaker, Frau Schaver. Armed with a large bundle of keys, she unlocked the gates, asked for my identification, but refused entrance to the driver. The Nazi era may have been over, but the destruction of Jewish cemeteries had not ceased and strict surveillance was necessary.

All records pertaining to burial locations and dates were destroyed by the "gestapo". Frau Schaver and I walked through the entire cemetery, row by row, hoping to find the last resting place of my sister Vera, possibly my grandmother and other family members. Damaged, overturned and desecrated gravestones lined the sidewalks.

Frau Schaver's explanation of the uprooted stones started a flood of tears. The Nazi, she went on, used the stones to fill holes in the streets after allied bombings. After the war, the town retrieved a few and returned them to the cemetery. The names were eliminated and could no longer be matched with the now nameless graves. After a two hour search of every grave, we found Vera's and one uncle's burial site, their monuments in readable condition.

I spent a short time in the chapel, rumored only - not substantiated - to be the last home of my parents and several other Jews until February 22, 1943. A document, listing their deportation to Warsaw and Auschwitz is in evidence. There were no survivors.

Magdeburg was 80% destroyed by allied bombs, including the hated gestapo headquarters. Exact records of atrocities against the Jews of this town, final deportation dates and other hideous crimes committed by the Third Reich, went up in smoke. Commemorative stone monuments were erected near the front entrance of the cemetery.

My decision to add a stone tablet to my sister's grave, in memory of our parents, was accomplished months after my visit to Magdeburg. May they all rest in peace.

Emotionally drained by the experience, I declined the caretaker's invitation to return, escaped into my waiting taxi, and returned to the hotel and my sorely needed privacy.

A NEW CONGREGATION OF 16 JEWS

Saddened, but slightly more at peace with the knowledge that my fifty year long quest was accomplished, I prepared to meet the Spiritual Leader, Mr. Levy, who presided over the current Jewish congregation of Magdeburg.

We met in the lobby of the hotel. A child survivor of the holocaust, he settled here after his liberation from Auschwitz. Seventy years old and in poor health, he had devoted the last forty years to preservation and memory of the horrendous genocide of Jews, clergy and individuals who dared to defy the Nazis. Thirty survivors from Magdeburg returned to their home town after liberation from various camps and related their experiences.

Following are a few documented facts and figures:

Our conservative Jewish congregation in Magdeburg consisted of 2,300 members in 1938. Thirty survived the camps.

On November 9, 1938, the inside of the Temple was destroyed, the Scrolls and prayer books burned. The structure remained. Aryan houses were too close for a complete destruction. Allied bombings finished the job.

Mr. Levy fought for and received a new building from the city of Magdeburg. Few available records from the bloody Nazi era are preserved there and religious services are conducted in the sanctuary.

A legal document was procured from the city, citing, "In the future,

no Jews will be forced into Ghetto housing again." The ten foot high permanent monument to our slain people was erected, paid for and maintained by the city. Located on the old site of the destroyed Temple, it depicted a burning prayer book.

Every year on November 9th at sundown, a ceremony is conducted at the monument. A large round Star of David, holding thirty candles, is placed around the monument. The candles are lit as the few Jews now living there remain on one side of the structure. Between 600 to 800 non-Jews surround the opposite side, separated by their religion, reenacting their behavior on "Crystallnacht." After chanting the "Kaddish," the Bishop explains the symbolism of separation - so few Jews and so many Christians - yet no one came to their aid, as the gestapo killed, shot, beat up and humiliated their helpless, Jewish neighbors.

After additional prayers and joining each other, everyone lit their hand held candles and placed them around the monument. As the flames soared towards the sky, the Bishop led a joint prayer.

Shabbat was approaching; Mr. Levy was preparing to leave. I wanted to learn more. He invited me to visit the Temple building the following Monday.

EXPERIENCING GERMANS

Quite upset about spending an unexpected weekend in Magdeburg, I decided to check my purse for available marks. Fearing the worst, there were no more and the banks closed at 2 a.m. After donning my soaking wet raincoat and grabbing my Mary Poppins umbrella, I started my search for a bank, possibly still open. Passing a house trailer, marked "Dresdener Bank" and "open" ended my poverty in German currency. The clerks were friendly, but confused. We never changed dollars into marks, as this branch was recently established and you are our first foreign client. With the help of a manager, a phone call to Berlin and my pitiful whimpering, the impossible was accomplished. The transaction had consumed two hours. With new money in my wallet, and the increasing rain pelting me like ice cubes, I ran back to the hotel and plopped down at the bar.

Serving me with a perfect martini, the bartender inquired about my history. Soon, surrounded by other waiters and fellow bar stool occupants, I narrated the reason for my Magdeburg visit. With tears in their eyes, they declared their regret, apologies and sympathy for my exile from Germany. I wanted to believe their sincerity but found it impossible to forgive or forget.

A new friend, the food and beverage manager rescued me from the never ending questions and escorted me into the dining room. He had just returned from Washington, D.C. where he had trained with the Hilton chain. Practicing his recently acquired knowledge of the English language in our conversation exhausted the rest of my patience. After ordering an excellent dinner, wine, dessert and Irish coffee on my behalf, he joined me at the table

with more questions about my past.

Desperately searching for another subject to discuss, I inquired about the possibility of acquiring Magdeburg tee-shirts for my grandchildren. Leaving instantly, he returned two minutes later grinning from ear to ear, and waving such a shirt across the dining room. I will be marketing these shirts, he explained. Samples were prepared for me in the U.S.A., and please accept a shirt as a gift. Several yawns later, I thanked him and escaped for some well deserved quiet time in my room.

Saturday, March 21 looked exactly like the previous day. Forty mile an hour gusts of wind swirled the unending rain around. Stepping outside the hotel equalled a shower. Preferring to shower in the privacy of my room, I washed my hair and spent the next twenty minutes looking for a hair dryer outlet. Unable to locate one, I decided that the remainder of my stay would be with dirty hair.

While filling my stomach with breakfast, determined to try all of the irresistible array of food, I tried reading a German newspaper.

Vowing silently no more food until tomorrow, my friendly taxi driver arrived and offered his services for the entire day. His suggestion for sightseeing and searching for possible familiar looking places was greatfully accepted. The fee was capitalistic but worth it.

Our first stop was my old school, Victoria Lyceum, corner of Augusta and Plank Strasse. It is no longer used as a school, and the streets are renamed, my driver informed me. This was the Russian police and administration headquarters during the occupation. Empty and in need of repair, I didn't care. No happy memories of my school days came to mind, just the hurt of being expelled as a Jew.

Leaving fast, we travelled in the opposite direction to Friesenstrasse 48, once my home. I barely recognized the house. Dilapidated after fifty-three years, it bore little resemblance to my parents' elegant apartment. The front door had been relocated, trees and shrubbery had disappeared and a poorly painted bierstube (bar) now enhanced the building.

Unsure whether to enter the house and look at the old homestead with dirty curtains in the appalling neighborhood was depressing. Remembering the happy times spent here with my parents and their horrible deaths left me in tears.

Back in the car, we drove to my grandmother's house on Diesendorf and Bakestrasse. The location was correct though the house had disappeared. Thinking back to my childhood about the wonderful, wise old lady and her blind brother Benno and Emilie made it difficult to comprehend that they had vanished from this earth. Neither a house nor a grave commemorated their existence. Saddened beyond understanding, we drove on to locate Tante Wallie's Apotheke (Pharmacy). Still called "Adler" and still gleaming clean, it stood on the same property, just as I remembered.

After trying to shoot a picture with my Japanese on-again, off-again camera, we drove to main street, the Breite Weg, once my father's law office location. On the way, we passed the "Gericht" (Courthouse), where my father tried his cases for many years. Half bombed away, slightly restored, still gaping holes in the middle of the buildings are left untouched.

The Breite Weg was once a bustling center of commerce. I only found the Strassenbahn (surface electric train) recognizable. Tall cranes, deep open pits, partially erected stores and numerous street vendors dot the scenery. My father's office building was gone, a giant, one hundred table outdoor cafe had taken its place.

Riding from "nothing left to remember" to my last stop, the town Museum, my driver and I parted company. Paying one mark entry fee, trudging on glass-like polished wood floors through this ancient (built 1847) mausoleum, I remembered the artifacts, skeletons, steam engines and more "stuff," from visits during my childhood. Seeking artifacts from the Nazi era, an ancient custodian politely answered my inquiry. No historical data had been added since 1933. Ashamed of their recent past, they removed and destroyed the infamous and incriminating evidence of the Nazi years. Anxious to leave this cluttered hill of bones, I walked back to the hotel and resumed my quest for a hair dryer plug.

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

Rested from the "glimpses into the past" expedition, my decision to go shopping for a pencil sharpener reached an abrupt failure. On Saturday, all stores closed at 1 p.m., including fast food stands, food stores and coffee shops.

Retreating once again to the hotel, I found the lobby filled with "cake eating, coffee drinking" citizens, lolling comfortably in deep leather arm chairs and plush couches. Folks looked relaxed, neither overworked nor stressed out and enjoying their leisure time. Quite contrary to my expectations and memories of the "ever busy Germans".

Bearing in mind that my observation of the recently liberated East Germans was a mere three days old, I was willing to state that they were less arrogant than their western brethren. Their attitude towards the U.S.A. was friendly, their open disdain of the Nazi years showed in their discussions. I was surprised, however, that they viewed the Russian occupation with few regrets.

Tired of my celebrity status and never ending questions, I resumed my search for the plug. Locating the darn thing inside the light fixture in the bathroom, I quickly learned that the ancient receptacle was 40 years old and couldn't be adapted to new appliances. Would this Saturday never end? Around 7 p.m., almost desperate, I tried to call my daughter in Michigan. Two hours later, my patience exhausted from trying to reach an operator, I hopped down to the lobby in search of the chief telephone operator. She

calmly informed me that the hotel had only one outside line to reach the rest of the world, and it was "out of order". They did expect the repairman during the night, she went on. All calls would be handled in the order received after repair.

Cut off from civilization, I strolled into the deserted dining room. Relieved that my menu consultant was absent, I chose my own dinner. The smoked pork chops and Kalbshackse were superb, the Citronencream dessert was yummy delicious and the silence at my table was golden. Busy eating, I was unaware of an almost filled up dining room. Germans dine late, an obvious conclusion. Checking the lobby for the still absent repairman, it seemed inevitable to go to bed. While I was fast asleep in my chair, the telephone rang at 2:30 a.m. with the long awaited phone call. I woke up the entire family on Saturday, 8:30 a.m. in Michigan, their day of rest. Unable to go back to sleep, my thoughts wandered toward Sunday, another day of useless activity.

The weather was simply atrocious. Storming all night, doors rattled and rain was pelted against the window panes. Sunday brought no relief, with deserted streets and no activity in the hotel. I decided to stay in bed and sample German television. Wishing to order breakfast, I learned no breakfast was served until noon. Back to T.V. The channel selection was endless - variety shows, old American films dubbed into German, soccer games, all with no commercial interruptions. Bored, I wished for a few of our commercials.

Trying to rest my brain, strained by speaking German all day, I patiently waited for the only enjoyable pastime in the homeland - eating . I spent six hours in the dining room, downing breakfast, lunch and dinner without leaving my table, returned to my bed and prayed for Monday, my last day in Magdeburg.

LAST FULL DAY IN THE FATHERLAND

I felt elated! The weather improved! At breakfast, I stuffed myself for the last time. Business people were seated all around me, their constantly ringing cellular phones cluttering their tables. Curious about the need for such a glut of individual AT&Ts, I learned that the entire communication system in (former) East Germany was breaking down and would take years to modernize into a smoother working service.

As a matter of fact, along with new plugs, better plumbing, and working phones, they also need an introduction to toilet paper. The recycled, gasoline-smelling stuff they now used was disgusting. And the addition of tissues would be welcome. I spent my entire stay with a roll of recycled toilet paper stashed in my handbag in place of tissues. The natives used only handkerchiefs.

My interview with Mr. Kuehnert, the recommended lawyer, was scheduled for 9 a.m. Travelling on the Strassenbahn to his office was decidedly less expensive than a taxi. I travelled free, since no conductor appeared to collect the fare. Mr. Kuellnert promised to unravel the botched application for restitution proceedings.

Blue sky began peering through the clouds, so walking back seemed an appropriate idea. Passing the library, I decided to stop and search for old newspapers or documents from the 1930's. The result was the same as in the museum. All Nazi data had been destroyed.

Resuming my walk, I caught my heel on a broken sidewalk, fell and bloodied both knees. Passers-by stared, but no one came to my rescue. With torn pantyhose, and one shoe in hand, I hobbled back to the hotel. First-aid kits were unheard of, so a minuscule band-aid adorned each knee.

I was determined to keep my last appointment with Mr. Levy in the Jewish congregation building. Feet clad in sneakers, my aching knees dictated a very careful negotiation of the broken and uneven sidewalk. Unable to find my way, I abandoned my walking. Stopping for a frank on bread, my pleading motivated the friendly frank dispenser to call a taxi for me. He drove one block, stopped, and opened the door. Embarrassed about the short ride, I asked him to pick me up in one hour and gave him a New York-sized tip.

I stared at the fortress-like congregation building, complete with T.V. monitors, entry buzzer and double locked gate, which convinced me that Jews and Jewish buildings were still targets for destruction. Sitting in the tiny sanctuary, I remembered the beautiful ornate Temple in this town, a place of worship for me, my family and 2600 other congregation members.

In the library, Mr. Levy was lecturing twenty-five Christian students on Jewish history, a class prescribed by the Magdeburg school system. Every day, youngsters from different schools attended his lecture.

I was presented with copies of two important documents from the Memorial Room: a book called *The Beginning And End Of A Betrayed Minority*, published ca. 1988 by survivors of the holocaust. The book contains a detailed account of the "Haldensleben" Jewish congregation, founded in 1824 and wiped out in 1938.

The list of remaining Jews in Magdeburg, written by the gestapo, prior to the last deportation to Auschwitz. Scanning the alphabetical list for familiar

names, my father and Aunt Wallie were among them. My mother, Grandmother and her brother Benno were not on this list, presumably already murdered.

Mr. Levy's congregation had sixteen members plus some recently arrived Russian immigrants. I was given to understand that they did not know the difference between Hanukkah and Passover, through no fault of their own. They were unable to practice religion in their former country. I did not want to hear any more or stay any longer. The clerk called for my taxi. We said good-bye; I knew I would never go back.

Driving through town one last time, wondering how many times we walked here as a family during my childhood, my usually unfailing belief in God and religion was badly shaken. Since arriving in Magdeburg five days before, my survival composure was crumbling. I longed for the comfort of my husband. Passing up food and drink, I packed my bags and sat up all night, crying, remembering and unable to rise above my depression.

Leaving Magdeburg for the second time from the same platform my parents said good-bye to their only child some fifty-three years before overwhelmed me. I left alone in 1939 and again in 1992. That statement speaks for itself.

The pilgrimage to my birthtown was joyless, but necessary. Many doubts, questions and guilt feelings for so many years were partially laid to rest. My extreme hatred of Germany was and is justified. All monuments erected, commemorative plaques nailed to buildings and talk of remorse, cannot explain how educated, cultured peoples could stoop to such depth of inhuman behavior. Sympathy and apologies are and will always be unacceptable.

Seated in the slow moving train, I knew it was time to leave the past behind and get on with the future. My hope made me realize that we have enough monuments to the dead. Our, and my, commitment must be to preserve the living. Either I did not pray hard enough or He was busy, because the train came to a screeching halt as a rail broke apart in front of the train. One hour later, we were rerouted to Frankfurt.

To complete my pilgrimage into the past, I flew to Manchester for a mini reunion with old friends. We spent the evening reminiscing, scanning photographs, commiserating about old age and remembering the friends no longer with us.

Finally, squashed like a sardine in the Jumbo jet with headset in place to watch "Billy Bathgate," I concluded life was not so bad after all, especially right then - I was going home! Landing in Orlando, I considered either kissing the ground or singing our National Anthem on the plane.

God bless America!!!

HADASSAH'S MADAME PRESIDENT

We were nearing the election of a new president in November 1992. This was hardly news or surprising to anyone beyond a few media-deprived peace corps volunteers or hold-out cave dwellers. Few secrets are hidden from view about the presidential candidates and their running mates.

Fortunately, my election as president of Ocala Hadassah did not make headlines in newspapers, television, radio -in fact- it was a dark secret to me. You might think that I volunteered and actively campaigned for the position. Wrong! I received a call from a member of the organization that the membership voted for me as their new "Commander in Chief". I demurred, yelled, and screamed that my leadership talents were untested and I would therefore respectfully decline such an honor.

No one else wants the job, the pleading voice informed me! And that was the democratic way I became president of Hadassah. My ugly secrets are still safely tucked away in the closet, since I did not have to submit a financial statement, nor reveal my illicit love life - in fact, my anonymity is still complete.

My installation took place in an obscure, small dining room hidden from view at the Howard Johnson Motel. The attendance of my fellow officers on the Board was sparse, with two out of eight appearing; a vote of confidence would have been in order. The guest speaker for the occasion had travelled to Ocala from out of town. She was overcome with joy at the sight of her rapt audience of twelve warm bodies strategically placed at eight tables

set up for the occasion. We munched on salads only rabbits would have appreciated.

After this spectacular inauguration, I prepared for the first board meeting with members whose names I had never heard, much less met. Let us say, we weren't exactly homebodies. I smiled like the queen of Sheba, shoved out my jaw and called the meeting to order. Serving up my unique brand of lofty relationship philosophy broke the ice, but my inexperienced proposals turned into furious debates.

I learned immediately the true meaning of President Truman's utterance of "the buck stops here". Once seated on a presidential "throne," you are closely scrutinized, criticized, second guessed and in charge of all positions. "Goofs" made last year are blamed on the past president and become his or her dilemma.

I concluded after four more board meetings that they were designed solely to register opinions on every issue, or comment on other officers' suggestions, sometimes with downright stupid and flat results. Adding to my confusion, officers resigned via telephone or split town without telling the "boss" to fill their deserted positions, I needed a degree in negotiations very badly. However, I will take my raps, hang in there and vow to turn this presidential task into a rousing success.

In conclusion, I wish to convey my sympathies to any candidate, drafted, volunteered or railroaded into presidential politics. Rowing a canoe upstream without paddles would be an easier task.

MARC'S WAY OF COLLEGE LIFE IN THE 90'S

During my 1991 midsummer trip to Michigan, I was treated to an extensive look at college life in the 90s. My oldest grandson, Marc, invited his mother and grandmother to visit the campus of Western University and his pad, which he shared with 3 other male students. Thank God for that. Driving through the pleasant Michigan countryside, we finally approached Kalamazoo. My first impression of the town reminded me of dilapidated Newark, New Jersey rather than the "Yale" of the Midwest. After a few more turns through small streets my daughter and I reached the off-campus resident student district sporting worn down houses, dilapidated garages and lawns that were crying from neglect with sporty 1992 cars in most drive-ways. Arriving at my grandson's swiss chalet, a monster truck was protruding from the remains of a garage, its wheels spilling over onto the sidewalk. Carefully picking our way through "Mudsville," we rattled the side door which opened after several violent kicks.

The foyer was fashionably decorated with golf clubs and bags, slightly demolished Coca-Cola cartons holding or losing their empty cans, and plump bundles of clothing clutching each other to avoid spilling their contents. Stepping into the parlor to meet the boys, we gingerly seated ourselves on upholstered chairs and couch, where their springs gently massaged our derrieres. An abused recliner had surrendered its footrest, and a table filled with a varied selection of artifacts completed this elegant living room. I must not forget to mention the large screen color TV, the VCR and other electronic devices that were placed in strategic positions. The draperies, expertly installed on string and the flashy, graying carpet were a decorator's

nightmare. The occupants, in various strange looking outfits, deftly complemented the decor.

Ambling up the narrow stairs of this three room house, we declined to view the bedrooms. However, a necessary visit to the bathroom was quite an experience since the plumbing was of vintage origin, merely matching the rest of the decor. We arrived on the third floor, the attic, also my grandson's private domain. Up there, my faith in our college youth was somewhat restored. The decor was "art deco" from floor to ceiling, very neat, complete with oversized water bed and, lo and behold, several books stacked on a modest bookshelf.

Before departing the "Kalamazoo Hilton," we found the kitchen in perfect order, complete with every tool needed to feed the troops. Who ever said guys cannot cook? After a delightful lunch at a newly opened "Student Heaven Restaurant," we toured the University complex.

Old dignified buildings, blending with handsome new state of the art structures, surrounded the wide open, manicured lawns, where quiet, small ponds and tall, majestic trees completed a serene atmosphere appropriate for learning, studying and preparing for life in the real world.

JOEL BLOWS INTO OCALA IN 1993

Joel's visit to Ocala was a whirlwind event

Fours hours late, I almost pitched a tent

At Orlando airport - but then he arrived

A quick dash to Chili's, where we survived

His long trip here and drive home in the dark

Then we were home, the car safe in park

We drove to Tampa, checked in at the Inn

And waited for hockey to begin

Crossing the highway with traffic around us

It might have been safer to ride on the bus

I shopped for chips, beer and noshes galore

As Joel piled his empties along the Inn's floor

Then off to Universal and when we got there

Found few people, the sidewalks were bare

The ride through the "Future" was furious and fast

Not really sure, if I would last

More rides later, fast food but no beer

Joel said, enough, King Kong's for next year

Searching for Red Carpet Inn, our next heaven

We found it hidden behind the 7/11.

Struggling to Red Lobster through mud and bush

The car was there but Joel was in a rush

I needed a martini - I was getting unnerved

Joel counted seconds until we got served

Eat and run accomplished - we stopped at the store

To replenish refreshments for the T.V. viewing chore

A visit to Beltz's outlets, Joel's claim "nothing to wear"

We shopped till he dropped, and left my money there

Back in Ocala, the young man wanted rest

I got ready for the Ziti Dinner fest

Joel wowed the old ladies as I knew he would

But made his exit as fast as he could

I loved his visit - even rising at five

To stuff him into the van for the long drive

To Orlando and home, I miss him very much

The kid is a mensch, he has the right touch.

A CRUISE ON NOAH'S ARC WITH JENNIFER

My granddaughter Jenny was nearing her 16th birthday! What special way should we celebrate this event? I had planned to take a relaxing cruise to Nassau with the "Silver Foxes," a charming group of seniors, chaperoned by "Millie," the ever patient tour director. My own cabin was waiting for me - then it struck me - why not take the young lady to the Caribbean on the "fun-filled" good ship Mardi Gras.

All such important decisions have to be cleared by my daughter, the Commanding Officer of the Willency family.

Excitedly, I called her and advised her of my brilliant idea. "Why on earth would a 16 year old want to travel with the Over the Hill Gang," she wondered, then went on to say,"But ask her, if she is ready to live it up on her first cruise."

"Cool," was her answer, "when do we leave?"

With her mother's blessing, we first had to work out a few minor obstacles. The ship was leaving from Cape Canaveral, Jenny lives in Michigan and Grandma in Ocala. We solved the entire problem. Grandma flies to Michigan to pick up the kid, then Grandma and kid fly back to Orlando, drive back to Ocala and pick up the tour bus to the Cape.

Several purchased cruise outfits packed away in her now bulging suitcase, over water and underwater instant cameras tucked in her carry-on bag and my few belongings packed in my car, we drove three miles to catch the bus.

Luggage tugged away, with seniors and Jenny comfortably seated on the bus, she was beginning to have serious doubts about the cruise. Imagining herself to be the one and only youngster with about 800 oldsters put her immediately to sleep.

Two hours later, we caught our first glance of the Mardi Gras. Checking in at the tour desk resembled an unemployment office. Four clerks and 800 sweating bodies stood in endless lines. The Cruise Lines budget obviously did not allow an air conditioned Lobby.

Jenny did not care. She witnessed the endless arrival of buses unloading teenagers with boom boxes, clutching beer cans, Coca Cola bottles and stranger than fiction outfits.

Finally, equipped with numerous instructions relating to locating state rooms, and duly posing for the first of many pictures costing $10 each, we marched up the long, steep ramp leading to the ship. Out of breath, another picture stop later, we entered Noah's Ark.

Advertised as 27,250 tons of fun, refurbished in 1985, and claiming over half-a-million people of all ages cruise aboard this "Fun Ship" was no lie; it sure looked it.

Our outside stateroom was not so stately, more the YMCA variety. The porthole was near the ceiling, either you were a 6 footer or a chair climber. The head, also known as the bathroom, was designed for slim clients, and that included the throne seat. Advertised private facilities were so private we never found them, nor radio, clock or telephone.

All dressed up and on time for first seating in the Flamingo Dining Room, the brochure neglected to advertise the long lines that would lead us

to the eventual gourmet meals. We spent four days in line for breakfast, lunch, dinner, midnight meals, and early morning, mid-morning, afternoon, late-afternoon snacks.

The two outdoor swimming pools resembled wading holes, mostly minus water. The "Point After Discotheque" was meant for deaf people only or you could end your cruise newly deaf.

The generation gap could have hardly been more clearly defined. Half of the passengers were recent high school graduates, celebrating their liberation from exams, and entranced with the idea of being on their own. The drinking age laws were not enforced, the alcohol flowed freely, the boom boxes blared constantly and the kids roamed the ship all hours, day and night. I was very proud of Jenny, who passed up all drinks and conducted herself responsibly.

We sailed one full day and docked in Nassau, where it rained most of the day, but we did not have to stand in line for anything.

In the evening, Jenny had made friends with some more civilized young men and experienced her first taste of the "Big Time Casino". Gambling and drinking was limited to the "over 18 crowd". But grandma said, "Go ahead, put a quarter in the machine, no one will see you." Wrong as usual. A guard stopped Jenny before she could initiate her descent into the underworld.

Sailing home from Nassau, back in the "Chow Line," the Over 50 Crowd was tiring from the sometimes lunatic behavior of our younger generation. Disembarking in Cape Canaveral, I noticed that five of our "Silver Foxes" were taken off the ship in wheelchairs. They embarked on the cruise under their own steam. The chow lines probably had exhausted them.

As Jenny and I searched for our luggage in another non-airconditioned barn, the ships crew prepared to clean up the ship and add another coat of paint to a well worn Noah's Ark. Only a miracle would restore that tub.

After several attempts to locate our tour bus, we climbed aboard, sat down, got up and searched for our missing Silver Foxes, who could neither find their luggage nor the bus.

Finally, all aboard, all asleep, worn out, hot and hungry, we stopped at McDonald's to recuperate from our fun cruise. Jenny had a good time, and I enjoyed her company. After all, how often does a grandma have the opportunity to have a "kid" all to herself.

THE GENERATION GAP

By comparing four female generations, my mother, myself, my daughter and granddaughter, the difference in lifestyles is apparent.

My mother and I dressed appropriately as we attended different occasions. My daughter is a more casual dresser, my granddaughter follows today's in-fashion for teenagers. Watching her depart for school in jeans and a tee-shirt amazes me. I would never have dared to attend classes dressed in that manner.

On education, it is impossible for me to guess the extent of my mother's overall schooling. However, I speculate that she did not pursue college, but attended a finishing school instead. She never worked and married an established professional.

My educational hopes crashed abruptly in 1938 with Hitler's persecution of Jews. After my escape to England, funds for further studies were unavailable. It always was my dream to attend a university and attain a degree in law. It remained a dream, but I did attain a career in merchandising.

My daughter, a serious student in high school and college, graduated with a B.S. degree. She showed no further ambition for additional education, nor interest in a career. Ruth is a patient, good and devoted mother, involved in her childrens' activities, quite the opposite of her mother and grandmother.

My granddaughter is a conscientious scholar, determined to further her education and pursue a career. Jennie is very impatient, and craves instant gratification, a trait she may have inherited from her grandmother.

Undoubtedly, the glaring generation gap appears markedly concerning sex education. My mother and I never had a mother/daughter talk about the "birds and bees," so I was totally ignorant about sex until my escape to England. My daughter and I were still hesitant to talk about the subject; we felt ill at ease about these discussions. My granddaughter and her mother have an open and honest approach to sex education. Neither is embarrassed to ask or answer questions about sex.

My granddaughter and I have strong personal identities, including the desire and need to do things "our way". We are impatient listeners, easily annoyed about unforeseen obstacles, but determined to triumph and move forward towards our preset goals.

I remember my mother as a placid woman, content to follow and agree to her husband's way of life. My daughter acts similarly, comfortable and at ease with her husband. Her children are grown and no longer living at home, so she now strives to develop and follow her own interests in the workplace.

All four of us have different tastes in music, from my mother's love of opera to Jennie's unending rock and roll noise. Ruth listens to contemporary ballads and Frank Sinatra, while I enjoy concerts and big bands.

Three of us, mother, myself, and my daughter were and are avid readers; my granddaughter's reading habits remain erratic.

Travelling near and far, together or alone, must be in the family

genes. My parents travelled extensively, usually without me. My husband and I, Ruth and my son-in-law enjoyed a diversity of travel with our children.

The men in our family bridged the generation gap with less obvious differences. My father, husband and son-in-law shared equal pride in their families, and in their professional lives. Their code of ethics, honesty, kindness and compassion toward all peoples, remained identical. Their personal preferences in dress codes non-existent, all needed "wifely" assistance for appropriate attire. Their love affair with cars was shared equally and passed down to our younger generation.

My grandsons, Marc and Joel, show respect toward their elders, display ambitious study and work habits. The boys are blessed with sound ancestral role models; may they follow in their footsteps.

Continued harmony in bridging the "generation gap" within our family remains my fervent wish.

70 Years Old - Still Ticking

My recent 70th birthday faded into history - but, the dinner party remains indelibly forged in my mind.

Memorable feasts appear to me to be incomplete unless surrounded by the most important and loved people in life, and this held true for my birthday celebration. My grandson Marc and his charming Colleen, both recent residents of Nashville, arranged the celebration. My daughter flew in from Midland, and grandma jetted from Ocala. Unfortunately, grandchildren Joel and Jennifer were unable to attend as school schedules preempted their presence. My son-in-law was out of the country on business. My milestone event took place at Morton's Steak House in Nashville, Tennessee. Seated by a tuxedo-clad maitre' d, the wine steward appeared at our table and suggested various wine selections at astronomical prices. We declined for obvious reasons. The elegant crystal wine glasses promptly disappeared from the table.

The menu for the evening arrived on a serving cart, each entree wrapped in saran wrap for perusal. Assorted cuts of oversized steaks, lobster tails, catch of the day fish, a giant sized stuffed veal chop and foot long ribs were cradled amid baked potatoes and appetizing veggies. Mr Chef recited his masterful recipes for these delicacies, including a rendition of prices which chilled the appetite.

Leaving us to our gut wrenching selection of "what would you like to eat," our white-gloved waiter placed previously ordered drinks before us and removed our imported-from-Japan china plates. Home baked loaves of bread, tiny urns of butter and nondescript plates now adorned our table, obviously to help us munch our way through the difficult ordeal of entree selection.

My lobster tail (cooked to perfection), fresh asparagus and baked potato deserved compliments to the chef. My daughter's salmon steak tasted scrumptious and the young couple's selection of ribs disappeared in rapid fashion, all meals impeccably served. Southern style cheesecake completed the meal.

As a finishing gesture, maitre' d, chef and waiters combined in a chorus of "Happy Birthdays" and bore with them a birthday cake.

Presentation of the check, delivered via a silver tray to the honored guest, amounted to an eye opening $240.00, tip not included.

My family and I deemed the entire evening a monumental success and brought forth my solemn promise to start saving for the next decade's birthday celebration.

CONCLUSION

On January 6, 1994, I celebrated my 70th birthday.

Seven decades have passed, my autobiography, encompassing many of those events, happy or sad, is completed. Reviewing, reliving and polishing my story, I feel grateful, blessed, lucky and humbled, but privileged in reaching this plateau. My achievements and disappointments, the loss of my family during the Hitler years, the death of my beloved husband, Eddie, and the emergence of the Willency family is now firmly committed into this book of life.

Would I have wished for a calmer life? Yes, of course. I learned quickly, too quickly, to accept adversities beyond my control. My faith in God, severely shaken during the gloomiest occurances, but never abandoned, helped to cushion and overcome despair.

My philosophy on life is simple. My parents, especially my father, taught me the importance of honesty, compassion, independence, dedication and obligation in fulfilling promises. When I recalled his teachings, they enabled me to draw inspiration and comfort during the darkest and despairing years.

I am proud of my honest, close relationship with Eddie, my husband for 48 years, the impenetrable bond between Ruth and her family and me; and my ability to give 100 percent during my professional career.

Am I satisfied with my conduct as a human being? Aware of my limitations, striving for improvement remains an important task.

Improvement of mind and body, cementing relationships with my grandchildren and proving my worthiness to remain on planet Earth will dictate my endeavors into the next decade.



"I am proud of the bonds between Ruth and her family and me."
L to R - Ruth, Dick, Joel, Eva, Marc & Jenny
INDIANAPOLIS, 1992