

LOOKING BACK

by

Fritz Kempner

2006



The siblings: Martha and Max on my right, Fran on my left, at the 1999 family reunion in Austria. Behind us a genealogical display.

For Natalie

With thanks to

Mike and Linda,
Peter and Megan,
Nancy and Mary,
Nicholas and Julie,

for including me in their lives

1.

In the Beginning ...

I often find myself looking back. One easy way to do this is to browse through the many letters from my parents, relatives and friends that I still have, going back 75 years. From time to time, for purely practical reasons, I try to reduce their number. Many are hand-written in German, referring to people and events meaningless to others. I do occasionally throw out a few, but only with difficulty. I also find myself looking back when grandchildren - and others - ask, What was it like to grow up under the Nazis? - How did it feel to be in the US Army, fighting against your former country?

I don't have simple answers to these questions. Moreover, just because I have done a lot of reading about the history of the past and especially about the Hitler period, I am today often not sure what were my own observations and what are the opinions of others that over the years I have absorbed subconsciously. Thus my task here is one of constantly sifting and evaluating, and then putting it all in intelligible form.

So in a way I am addressing myself, saying, "This is how I see my past today." In writing this account I have in mind those who may not be familiar with the rise of the Nazis and the events leading up to World War II. I've tried to put myself in the place of my grandchildren, who - alas - are being exposed in their lifetime to such an unending story of violence all over the globe that they may well turn away from a study of *all* history. That would be a shame. It is my hope that by describing my own life and that of my family in its historical setting I will provide them with a meaningful glimpse into what is to them the distant past.

The beginning is easy - at least on a personal level. Both my parents were born and raised in Berlin. My father got a law degree and then, for health reasons, was declared unfit for military service and served with the German military government in occupied Belgium 1915-1918. As it happened, he was not a born soldier: he loved to tell how once, upon leaving a restaurant in Brussels, the headwaiter chased after him with these words: "Monsieur has forgotten his sword!" Evidently in Imperial Germany



**My father Paul &
his brother Fritz, c. 1916**

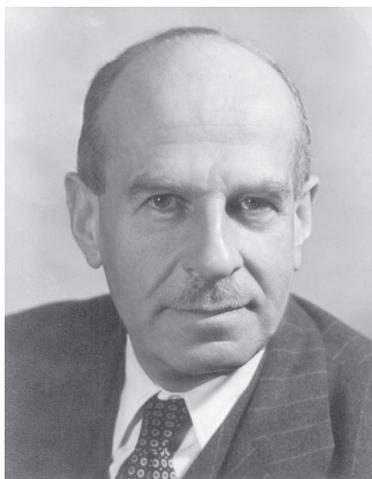
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(the Second Reich, see below) men in certain official positions carried swords. His only sibling, my Uncle Fritz, spent the four years of World War I in combat as an officer. My mother, one of five siblings, to all of whom we children came to be close, volunteered as a nurse during that same war. Grandfather Maximilian Kempner was a successful international lawyer. Grandfather Franz von Mendelssohn was director of the prestigious private bank Mendelssohn & Co., that had been in Berlin since 1795. The title of nobility (the “von”) had been awarded by the German Emperor in 1888 in return for the Bank’s services beneficial to the German Reich. (This was the *Second Reich*, or Second Empire. It was founded after Germany defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, with Wilhelm I as Emperor and Otto von Bismarck as Chancellor. The *First Reich* had been the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne, founded in 800 AD. The Nazis called their twelve year rule from 1933 - 1945 the *Third Reich*, as well as, with characteristic arrogance, the *Thousand Year Reich*.) My parents were married in Berlin on November 15, 1918, four days after the Armistice was signed to end the war “to end all wars.” In 1919 Franz von Mendelssohn invited my father to join the Bank as partner.

My father’s future looked set. And yet it was in 1919 that one of the cornerstones for the subsequent rise of Hitler was laid: the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles. To be sure, it was harsh, but, unlike what happened at the end of World War II in 1945, the German government was left intact, and Germany, transformed into the Weimar Republic, albeit vastly weakened, was allowed to continue to exist. This enabled German nationalists to raise the shout of *Deutschland erwache!* (“Germany: Wake up!”) and demand that Germany be restored to its pre-war condition of might. With the widespread economic depression in the 1920’s and the genius (many would prefer the term “deviltry”) of Adolf Hitler in the wings, peace was not destined to last.

But all these gloomy considerations had no effect on my early life. In 1921 my parents spent six months in Amsterdam to allow my father to open a new branch of the Mendelssohn Bank in that fair city. He did so, and I was born there April 2nd.

In attempting to put my reflections on my life into some kind of order, I turned to Shakespeare’s Jacques for guidance. His seven ages of man, from infant to school-boy to lover to soldier to justice to pantaloon, ending up with second childishness, seemed logic enough: all I had to do was to match the steps in my life to his.



My father, c. 1935

However, I immediately ran into difficulty: my recollection of my infant stage, with its mewling and puking is zero. Of course I could copy the list of my weekly weight in kilograms meticulously kept up to week 62 in a notebook that somehow has survived to this day. Here it is recorded that I weighed 3.450 kg at birth and had a harelip operation in week 60, at weight of 9.300 kg. (The mustache I have today was intended to keep that fact hidden.) In week 8, at 3.440 kg - evidently after a 10 gram loss - I (was) moved to Berlin. But, sad to relate, this potentially invaluable record ends after week 62, and there is nothing I can do about that.

While I indeed have no memory of those early days in Holland, I like to think that they left their mark: I have always had a soft spot in my heart for Holland. My parents had close friends in Amsterdam, Dan and Kikkie Delprat, whom I got to know as I grew up. We remained friends, even though after World War II they refused to speak German with us. What a remarkable illustration of the emotional power of language! Kikkie was the daughter of the portrait painter Jan Veth, whose drawings of my father, of his brother Fritz and of their father Max now hang in our dining room. My parents loved Holland, and even spoke some Dutch. I was proud to have been born in Amsterdam and visited Holland many times over the years. I came to love the canals (the *Grachten*) of Amsterdam, the ubiquitous bicycles, the countryside of wide open spaces, the Royal Family, the language, and of course the many museums with paintings from Rembrandt to Mondrian. But that was much later.

It was in Berlin that I grew up, in the residential area of Westend. Our house, which my parents had built in 1922, did not survive the war, but son Peter describes it aptly from a photo: "it is well-built and modestly refined; stately, with a rambling gait." There were cooks, servants and governesses and a large garden with a circle of six big horse-chestnut trees; in another part was a huge beech ideal for climbing, as well as all-important space for soccer, boccia, and "Faustball," (similar to volley-ball). To insure authenticity, I can again refer to a document: a diary I kept from age 6 to 10, miraculously still around.

"On February 11, [1928] there was a costume party. All children were dressed up. I was a Tirolese. Martchen and Zissi were dressed as Black Forest maidens. Pappi was a balloon salesman. Who Martchen and Zissi are will be explained later."

I must have had a huge audience in mind! I did indeed give an explanation later. I'll update it here: *Martchen* is my sister Martha, (*Mappa*), born in 1919, widowed, living in Ottawa, with four Canadian children, seven grandchildren and one great-grandson. *Zissi* is my sister Franziska, (*Fran*), born in 1923, widowed, living in Ithaca, New York, with two children in the US and two grandchildren.



Kempner Family with newly born Max, 1929

February 27, 1929: today we got a little brother - he is so small and so cute. His name is Maximilian. The little brother brought each of us a huge bag of wonderful chocolate. Max now lives with his wife Paige in Vermont; they have three married children and four grandchildren.

My diary focuses on vacations. In the summer of 1929 and 1930 there are entries mentioning enthusiastically the family-friendly pink house and surroundings in the Fextal, near Sils Maria in the Engadin in Switzerland, where we spent time every summer until 1939, the outbreak of World War II, and again after the War in 1948 and 1949, when it was sold. My diary lists many of the hikes which



The Fextal in the Engadin, SE Switzerland. Of the two houses in the exact center, ours is on the left.

Natalie and I, as well as grandchildren have walked and re-walked in the last 25 years, using the nearby Pension Crasta as a base. At 6,600 feet, the valley is even today virtually untouched by cars, since only homeowners are allowed to drive up into it. It was a thrill to introduce our daughter Nancy to it in 1972 and our son Peter, his wife Megan and then 15-month-old son Dae in the summer of 2005.

According to my diary, our family spent six weeks in the Fextal in 1930. An entry for July 17 of that year states: "Today we built a camp." I remember this "camp" well. It was a secret hiding place in among evergreens on a small rocky hill-top, some 50 yards from our house. A separate page, in my handwriting, lists eleven Camp Regulations, drawn up by the three of us siblings, Max being only one year old:

1. Betrayal forbidden.
2. Bad behavior forbidden.
3. Zissi may leave the camp only in Martchen's or my company.
4. Use of toilet only in emergency.
5. Only the East or West Entrance may be used.
6. When leaving the Camp, only important matters may be discussed.
7. No food may be kept in the Camp.
8. To enter the Camp you must give the password.
9. No loud talking is allowed in the Camp.
10. Changes are allowed only with the consent of all members.
11. When others are present, no talk about the Camp is allowed.

Signed: Fritz Kempner Martha Kempner Zissi Kempner
 Marga Kempner [our mother, age 36]
 Trudy Spahni [Swiss governess, age 28]

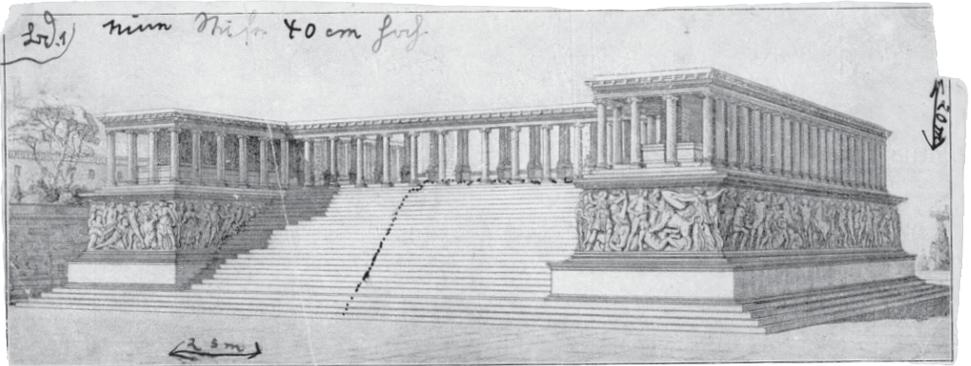
Today I marvel at the wonderful way we spent our time. I think my mother deserves the credit for allowing it all to happen. Trudy remained a lifelong friend until her death at age 90. We still see her daughter Kathrin whenever we pass through Zuerich.

In addition to hikes in Switzerland, my diary mentions rowing to a *Konditorei* for ice cream. This memorable activity took place in 1930 in Rindbach, a village in the Salzkammergut in Austria, where my Mendelssohn grandparents had a spacious house overlooking the *Traunsee*. At half the altitude of the Fextal, it lacked the exhilarating Alpine air, making hiking just a little more arduous. By way of compensation, the *Traunsee*, not unlike the New York State Finger Lakes, provided ample opportunities for water sports, which in those distant days consisted

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of swimming, rowing, canoeing and sailing. Motor boats were used for transportation only. It was here that my mother's sister, Aunt Enole, taught me how to swim. In 1999 and 2004, Rindbach was the site of two Mendelssohn family reunions. Our vacations were indeed active, educational and thoroughly enjoyable. It reminds me - if such a reminder were needed - what wonderful parents the four of us had.

Other entries in my diary mention visits to various museums in Berlin: Museum of Anthropology, History Museum, Museum of Trains, Frederick the Great's Sanscouci Palace in Potsdam, as well as the Pergamon Museum. I included a picture of the Pergamon Altar, indicating my route up the 40 cm steep steps up the restored Hellenic temple facade, brought to Berlin by German archaeologists in the 1880s from its original location in Turkey in the 2nd century BC. (The chief excavator was Karl Humann, grandfather of our family friend Marie-Louise Sarre.) I have revisited this Museum twice in the last ten years and made it a point to follow the same route again each time. As I write this, it occurs to me that the image of this impressive altar has been with me ever since age 9 and may well have steered my subconscious in the direction of Greece and Rome.



Drawing of the Pergamon Altar in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, taken from my diary. I ink in three dimensions: length 25 m., height 20 m., height of each step 40 cm. The dotted line indicates my route.

2.

Early Performances

I want to supplement my diary with some observations of my sister Martha that she made upon the occasion of my 80th birthday.

I think one of my first memories of Fritz is at the dining room table, actually sitting up to the table, no longer in a high chair. He may have been three years old. He said the German equivalent of "I wonder if we are going to have whipped cream today."

He was an entertaining little boy and we were a good audience. I remember our mother saying: "I don't have to go to the theater, there is good entertainment right here." Here are some more dining room table examples:

We were not allowed to sing during meals. If we did, our mother stopped us. On one such occasion I had been guilty of singing, but before our mother could say anything, Fritz, who at that time may have been six or seven years old, burst into song: "No singing at the table, no singing at the table!" ("Bei Tische singt man nicht...!"). He always had a good strong singing voice.

Another time, again we were sitting at the table having lunch, which was our main meal. Our butler came in and told my mother that grandmother Kempner had driven up and was just walking down the driveway. Fritz, as if on cue, burst into song to the tune of the famous toreador's aria in Carmen. The German text for this is "Auf in den Kampf, Torero!" (Prepare for battle, Torero.)

Fritz sang: "Auf in den Kampf, die Schwiegermutter kommt!" (Prepare for battle, your mother-in-law is approaching.) I don't think I ever saw our mother laugh so hard. EVER!! Fritz, sensitive as children are, had sensed that there were certain strains between the two women. But the speed at which he instantly translated this into operatic terms of the heroic sort made an enormous impression on me.

My own recollection of my early years is a sea of vagueness with just a few islands of memory. One such group of islands are the gatherings of the sixteen of us Mendelssohn cousins (separated by no more than fifteen years) in my

grandparents' house in the Grunewald section of Berlin. This spacious house, built in authentic Tudor style, had a room available for performances involving all of us at onetime or another. The producer, writer and director was one of my mother's three sisters: Aunt Enole, my occasional swim teacher. Her amateur theatrical talent was spectacular. Of the many shows of the late 1920's two are still with me. The first was set in the American Wild West and dramatized a hold-up of a train. At about age 6, I was to be one of several black Pullman porters, but getting my face painted black scared me so much that my presence on stage was severely abbreviated.

The second event I recall was a dramatic adaptation of Schiller's ballad "Dividing Up the Earth," (*Die Teilung der Erde*). The action focuses on the creation of people by Zeus and their assignments to roles in life. We impersonated a variety of professions, not all of them found in Schiller: farmers, hunters, merchants, an abbot, a lawyer, a doctor and patient, a psychiatrist (!) and - very belatedly - a poet. To the thundering noise of rattled cookie sheets, each impersonator-to-be was shot on to the specially built stage through a plywood funnel to receive his assignment from Zeus. We didn't mind rehearsing this endlessly! The poor poet arrived last and was told that all jobs had been given away. However, Zeus assured him that whenever he came, he would be welcome in heaven.

While I needed to reconstruct the approximate plot from my current knowledge of Schiller's poem, the central feature of the slide is as vivid now as it ever was.

Schiller's suggestion that the arts, as personified by the poet, have heavenly status did indeed represent the thinking of the Mendelssohn family. Beside the theater, there was the love of good painting. My aunts Enole and Emma were respected amateur painters. My grandparents were keen collectors of Degas, Van Gogh, Cezanne, Manet and Picasso, long before these artists became popular. Their gradual subsequent sale proved crucial in supporting many family members in the aftermath of World War II. But there was no art form more central to the Mendelssohn family than music. There was the tradition of Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn (both died in 1847), which was continued by many descendants. Chamber music, performed by family and friends, was a constant into the 1930's. Violinist Albert Einstein, a family friend, was a frequent participant; family tradition has it that he had a hard time with rhythm and was told "Learn to count: one-two-three; one-two-three!"

In the 1920's my grandmother's birthday November 4 came to be the day of musical recitation for as many of the 16 grandchildren as possible. I joined the performers in 1931 at age ten and promptly generated a storm of controversy. I arrived at my grandmother's mansion in the Grunewald all primed to perform

Schumann's *The Merry Peasant*. But it happened that my cousin Robi Bohnke, age 4, was also expecting to play that very piece. It fell to our respective governesses to come to the defense of their charges, and who knows what might have happened, had not Robi known a second piece, thus allowing me to perform *The Merry Peasant*. There is a sequel, but it's a sad one: at our 2004 family reunion in Rindbach, Austria, the same Robi Bohnke, now an internationally acclaimed pianist, and I played the First Mozart Sonata for Four Hands. I will confess that I felt free to skip notes here and there, knowing that Robi would cover up for me. I perspired profusely, but the applause was thunderous! (Perhaps for the same sort of reason that Samuel Johnson approved of women preaching in church - see page 35.) Sadly, Robi died of heart failure in his Tuebingen home two months later, at age 77.

While there were many joyous family gatherings, the Mendelssohn family was not spared tragedy. In 1928 our mother's younger sister Lili and her husband Emil Bohnke were killed in an automobile accident at age 30 and 40, respectively. Their three young children (the youngest being Robi) were then raised by our grandparents. And in 1932 Aunt Enole's husband, Dorl von Haimberger, an Austrian, died at the age of 44. But of these events happening I have only a vague memory.

3.

Ancient History

Most of the many family letters I still have contain no more than a passing reference to contemporary events. A noteworthy exception is a letter from my father to his mother, Fanny Kempner, of September 28, 1932. It was written on the train between Geneva and Basel in Switzerland. Some background first:

Except during the War years, my parents and I corresponded in German. So, regretfully, some translation will be necessary. What I find difficult to bring out in English is the immediacy of my father's style in contrast to the complexity of the subject. He had an uncanny ability to penetrate to the essence of literary, psychological or even scientific discussions, disciplines in which he did not have explicit training.

In this letter to his mother he is speculating what the then 13 year-old German Republic (the "Weimar Republic") might turn into. In the multi-party system in existence in Germany at the time, the President had considerable leeway in appointing a Chancellor, who could then select his cabinet. Paul von Hindenburg had been elected President for a seven-year term in 1925, and in April 1932 had been reelected with 13,000,000 votes over Hitler's 11,000,000. But von Hindenburg was 85, and everyone was speculating who would succeed him, and whom his successor would appoint Chancellor. My father mentions two possible future forms of a government for Germany: a parliamentary democracy or a British-style "democratic monarchy," possibly under the leadership of the Crown Prince, son of Emperor Wilhelm II. (The latter was in Holland in self-imposed exile.) He mentions two other well-known men as possible successors to von Hindenburg: Baron Konstantin von Neurath (1873-1956), a foreign service officer, and Gustav Krupp von Bohlen (1870-1950), the industrialist and manufacturer of weapons. My father knew both of them. They were representatives of the German nobility who never became full-fledged Nazis, but for reasons of their own agreed to serve in Hitler's government. Both were accused as "War Criminals" at the 1946 Nuremberg trials; von Neurath receiving a 15-year-sentence, von Bohlen escaping trial because of poor health. To study their involvement in National Socialism is to study the complexity of politics; it is to examine the slippery slope that leads from decency and loyalty in public service to serving the devil, even if not wholeheartedly.

I am saddened that neither before nor after the War did I get to discuss with my father the fate of these men and through their lives the nature of cooperation

with leaders one views as evil. I see two reasons why such a discussion did not take place:

1) The pervasive feeling of tragedy after 1945: after all, the destruction of Germany had been total, the loss of life in the millions, the treatment of the Jews beyond description. What good would it have done to go over that dismal bit of history? Of course one could discuss endlessly the inadequacy of the Versailles Treaty, Hitler's constant appeal to German nationalism and anti-Semitism, the disastrous 1929 stock market crash, the infighting among the parties of the Weimar Republic, but such discussions could not change the past and would only make one feel worse for all the missed opportunities.

2) The idea of personal failure on my father's part in not foreseeing the horrors of Hitler. I well recall my father's reaction to the radio announcement of January 30, 1933 that President von Hindenburg had appointed Hitler Chancellor. He felt it was a good thing to have happened; that once the Nazis were part of the government, they would inevitably be drawn into the daily ups and downs of German politics, and would no longer be able to blame others for problems with no apparent quick solutions such as widespread unemployment. He and countless others failed to anticipate the determination and skill that the Nazis displayed in setting up a ruthless dictatorship within only weeks of January 30.



March 21, 1933: Six weeks after his appointment as Chancellor on January 30, Hitler, in civilian clothes, in a carefully calculated submissive pose feigning respect for the Prussian military, before President Paul von Hindenburg.

Perhaps an additional reason was the dreadful nature of Hitler's speeches that we often listened to on radio. It was not only their content, which was bad enough; couched in emotional tones and a language that could barely be called High-German, to us they came across as insulting and sickening. Reading his *Mein Kampf* (published as early as 1924!) was equally offensive in its polemical, ranting tone. (Unfortunately a great many did not take its contents seriously.) I feel that it was all of these factors put together that took away motivation to go over the past.

But now - at last - here is my father's letter to his mother.

He begins with reflections of a general nature, but shifts to contemporary politics, with barely batting an eye.

I want to write you a letter from the train. For me, as a person who loves to go for immediate effects, the telephone has the potential of making possible the activation of the secrets of one's personality through the magic of live influence. Compared to this, the use of a letter represents a restriction. The letter, of course has the great advantage of archival force. With sufficient love of order on the part of the recipient and sufficient firmness of the material, it can be preserved for some 1,000 years. This, too, is not a great deal of time, but it is the longest possible. One must not forget that it took many thousand of years to develop the formation of the eye-lid, capable of opening and closing. How artistic that to allow the possibility of resting the eye, a cover can be pulled over the eye and can again be removed according to one's wishes. This just in passing.

The last few weeks were very interesting for me. For the first time an opportunity presented itself to me to reach an exalted position in government if I had wanted to. Of course I didn't want to. In Geneva proposals were circulated to make me Under Secretary for Business & Finance at the League of Nations, a post that became open because there was a new General Secretary. I am sure that Berlin would have proposed me for this post had I wanted it. With it there was a strong likelihood that after five years I'd be an ambassador somewhere or even Secretary of State if a Liberal regime were in power... But I had no intention to move to Geneva for five years and to leave the Bank (Mendelssohn & Co.)... I was also to be appointed to a conference for the preparation and restitution of southeastern European currencies, but I turned that down as well. I can't be visiting conferences the entire year. In my view my participation in the long run depends very much on the nature of the German state. Should a so-called "Democratic Empire" develop, i.e., initially the election of the Crown Prince as President of the Reich, and then as Emperor, ... my prospects would be the best because the

Crown Prince likes people like me and the nobility also likes working with me. I would be one of the popular elements, so to speak. However, if Germany ends with a true and genuine parliamentary structure, then the matter is more difficult. Then one has to measure up in front of the people and win their soul. That is very time-consuming and uncertain! If, instead of the Crown Prince, Krupp v. Bohlen or Neurath become President of the Reich, one has to wait and see.

From the above you can tell that one is already making preparations for the death of the old man, but hopes that this may not happen for awhile. All these above gentlemen would have to run against Hitler. How do you judge the possibilities? You know that sort of thing rather well. [This last sentence, tongue in cheek I am sure, was added as a postscript.] ... we'll find out November 6 [1932] whether the Nazis will lose votes [they did drop from 37% to 33% of the popular vote]. If they do, the way is open for a democratic monarchy and equally for pure parliamentarism, and the thought of a transfer of power to the so-called genius of Hitler finished. Otherwise one will have to wait a little. Herr von Wilmowski, with whom I was in Bucharest, who wanted to make me Krupp's financial advisor - and he is Krupp's brother-in-law - told me of the following scene: Hindenburg received Hitler and, after Hitler had suggested himself as chancellor, replied: "Herr Hitler, start thinking of the fatherland instead of always of yourself and your Party," and then simply turned his back on Hitler and left him standing. I absolutely don't know whom to admire more: Hitler, who in April had brought 13,000,000 Germans to believe in him, (just imagine: 13,000,000, although at the moment supposedly only 11,000,000,) or the Old Man, who doesn't even let such an important and distinguished man sit down. I am sure I would have said, "Please wouldn't you care to have a seat." ... It doesn't matter whether Germany becomes a monarchy or a republic, if only the Constitution will prevent a war from breaking out in Europe. Fortunately there are now bombs that destroy entire cities in an instant and for that reason alone there will be no war.

There is a postscript: *By the way, this letter contains no secrets.*

Two comments: 1. In his imagination, my father is considering treating Hitler like a gentleman, asking him to sit down. I very much doubt that my father's friends who, with many on the socialist Left, left Germany within months of Hitler's coming to power, shared such benign and civilized thoughts, even as early as 1932. I am equally sure that by 1935 my father no longer entertained such generous thoughts toward Hitler.

2. I find absolutely astounding my father's belief that the availability of bombs that could destroy cities would prevent wars in the future. Is it his decency or his naiveté or his thinking "in a box" that made him reach that conclusion? I don't know.

On the more humorous side: while my father saw fit to mention Paul von Hindenburg in his letter to his mother, I have a letter from my sister Martha, then 13, actually addressed to that worthy gentleman six days earlier, dated September 22, 1932. It is written in beautiful German script, and makes this appeal to him:

Lieber Herr Reichspräsident;

We thank you most sincerely for the holiday that you have given us in honor of your birthday. [Hindenburg had indeed announced a school holiday in honor of his 85th birthday.] All of us are of the opinion that this is decidedly one of the best things you have done during your entire administration [i.e., since 1925]. Hearty congratulations from Martha, Fritz & Franziska Kempner.

My brother Max, being 3 at the time, was evidently not asked to sign. My father sent a copy of this letter on to his mother with this notation: *Aren't these typical children? I approved.*

I regret that I recall neither the letter nor a response. I do recall what I thought of Paul von Hindenburg: a noble German, who had won a glorious victory over the Russians in the battle of Tannenberg in 1914, then promoted to the rank of Field Marshal, twice elected Germany's President, receiving a state funeral in Potsdam, the home of Prussian militarism, in 1934, at age 87. All of this I knew well. Was I then impressed favorably by Hitler's decision not to adopt the title of *Reichspräsident* with the cynical purpose of thus seeming to be honoring this highly respected leader? I'd like to think I saw through this charade, but I'm afraid I'm not sure how much of my "recollection" of what happened at that time is really "recollection," rather than knowledge gained subsequently.

Back to the beginnings of the *Thousand Year Reich*: There is one letter of Martha's that spells out very specifically what so many young people, even those who, like us, had some Jewish ancestors thought of the Nazis. On March 4, 1933 she wrote to me in the Fextal in Switzerland, where I was spending several weeks to improve my health:

"All of us are terribly excited to learn about the elections. Pappi, who has a cold, put the radio in his bedroom and listened to all of the speeches. What did you think of Hitler's speech? Omski [our father's mother] was so

enthusiastic about Hitler's speech that she said that if she were young, she'd be a Nazi for sure. If I were a boy, I'd be Nazi too; I'd definitely join the S. A. [Storm Troopers]. Last night there was a great torchlight parade through Berlin. I was not allowed to go, but several of my classmates went. Imagine, our (public) school is flying the swastika flag! And just about every house in Westend [our area] is flying the swastika flag, or the red-white-black [flag of Imperial Germany, 1871-1918]. We have no flag out at all. I am terribly excited about the election (March 12). I think the Nazis will get 51%: there are so many more now! [They did get 46%.] Well, tomorrow we have a test on French irregular verbs, so I've really got to hit the books."

What's behind this? How could someone with a Jewish ancestry think this way? Well, in the first place, we children had little awareness of any Jewishness in our family. Born and raised Lutheran, knowing very little about Judaism in general or Moses Mendelssohn in particular, we lived blithely along, unaware of our heritage, strange as that may seem today. What had appealed to my sister and countless other young people was the youth-movement aspect of the Nazis: hiking, camping, singing, nature, sports and gymnastics, the sort of thing promoted by the Boy and Girl Scouts in the States. The overruling political purpose and direction of the Hitler Youth movement was clearly not apparent to us. Secondly, what also was not yet known with all its horror were Hitler's plans concerning Jews which eventually led to the Holocaust. My guess is that, with the exception of a few extremists (Julius Streicher and his hate-weekly *Der Stuermer*), the Nazis for purely tactical reasons downplayed their anti-Jewish policies for about a year.

The power of Hitler's grip on so many of my contemporaries is illustrated by a letter that my German classmate Guenther Neubacher wrote me when I had just started going to school in England, in February of 1936. He had been very keen on horseback-riding, and had just participated in a high school competition in Berlin's Deutschlandhalle. (An outstanding example of Nazi architecture, which can still be seen in all its glory.) He writes:

... I first won a silver candlestick and later a cigarette case. But the most beautiful moment occurred when the Fuehrer shook my hand.

His entire letter is friendly; he clearly wanted to stay in touch. I am sure there was no connection in his mind between the Hitler who had shaken his hand and the Hitler who had signed the Nuremberg Race Laws a year earlier that had labeled our family "Non-Aryan," -i.e., inferior. Like most of my Berlin classmates, Guenther did not survive the war.

4.

On Being Jewish

Against this background of uncertainty or even ignorance of what it meant to be Jewish (or partially Jewish), the Nazis in 1935 crafted the infamous Nuremberg Race Laws. These Laws, “for the protection of German blood and honor,” were intended to make clear both the distinction between Jew and “Aryan” and what restrictions the distinction involved. The Nazis laid down that the crucial distinctive feature of Jews was membership in a Jewish congregation at birth. This was something that could be easily described and clearly documented. Making use of this definition, the Laws declared that with at least three Jewish grandparents you were a full Jew; with two Jewish grandparents you were a “Half-Jew” or *Mischling* of the first degree, and with one Jewish grandparent you were a *Mischling* of the second degree. You were “Aryan” if you had no Jewish grandparents.

My siblings and I were “Half Jews,” since our Kempner grandparents were both Jews. My grandmother’s conversion to Catholicism in 1932 under the influence of Romano Guardini, professor of theology at Berlin University and friend of the family, did not change her status in the eyes of the law. Ironically, my mother’s family, the von Mendelssohns, were “Aryans” in the eyes of the same law, even though they, like us, were direct descendants of Moses Mendelssohn, the eighteenth century philosopher and devout Jew. Since most members of the Mendelssohn family had been baptized from about 1820 on and since all my mother’s sisters had married “Aryans,” my Mendelssohn cousins were considered “Aryans.”

The other question the Nuremberg Laws tried to answer was what the consequences of being Jewish or partially Jewish were. I’ll spare the reader the morass of the complete answer and just indicate what it would have meant to me, a “Half-Jew.”

1. I would not be able to marry an “Aryan.”
2. I would not be able to attend university or become a member of most professions.
3. I would be required to serve in the army, but would not be allowed to rise above the rank of private.

These rules were by no means applied uniformly; a lot depended on “whom you knew.” Walter Schmidt, our Berlin neighbor and family friend, law partner of my Uncle Fritz, had a Jewish wife; both stayed in Berlin and survived, partially

through his ability to keep her out of sight and partially through the absence of denunciation, as well as through sheer luck. Two of their children emigrated to the UK in 1938 and now live in Scotland; two stayed behind in Berlin, an indication of the varied fate of “Non-Aryans.” Note that even the fate of “full Jews” - extermination - was not decided until January 1942 at the Wannsee Conference.

But I am writing all of this with the knowledge of hindsight. At the time my thoughts about my Jewishness and the Nazi policies on the subject were vague at best. Marion Kaplan, in her book *Between Dignity and Despair*, 1998, discussing Nazi Germany, puts it well: “Unless one reads history backwards, the 1930s were highly ambiguous.” In addition to the ambiguities of the Nazi treatment of Jews there was our parents’ desire to shield us from the subject altogether. It simply wasn’t talked about. For me the situation resembled the threat of an obscure disease: better not think about it and hope it never strikes me.

Of course if you knew a high-ranking Nazi, you could “become” Aryan. There was a well-known anecdote that gives the flavor of this situation. The # 2 Nazi, Hermann Goering, commander of the *Luftwaffe*, upon being notified that an officer friend of his, Erhard Milch, was denied promotion on the grounds of having a Jewish father, is said to have proclaimed: “I decide who is a Jew!” (“*Wer Jude ist, bestimme ich!*”) After a court battle, in which Goering saw to it that an affidavit proving the racial purity of Milch’s biological father was procured, Erhard Milch was indeed promoted.

Trying to avoid the slings and arrows of the Nazi race laws became the objective of my uncle, Robert von Mendelssohn (1902-1996). He was my mother’s youngest sibling and only brother and was a big favorite with our family. While the Mendelssohns were technically “Aryan,” he wanted to make sure that they were safe. His father, Franz von Mendelssohn, head of the Mendelssohn Bank, held many prestigious positions in national economic organizations and was respected by many in the Nazi regime. But he died in 1935. Now Uncle Robi took a remarkable step: to make the Mendelssohn Family look good in Nazi eyes, he volunteered for the German army in 1936 at age 34, well above draft age. He completed basic training in four months and was discharged with the rank of Pfc, a rank “Hitler took four years to reach,” as he put it. This somewhat unusual step was characteristic of Uncle Robi, who had made it his aim in life to help family and friends. His early life had been carefree: after secondary school, he became a professional boxer’s sparring partner, and traveled widely in both Europe and the United States. In 1938 he married the architect Lieselotte von Bonin, and had a daughter Angelika, the 17th of the Mendelssohn cousins. While his father had made him a partner of the Bank, in point of fact he functioned as the entertainer of visiting VIP’s. For this he was eminently qualified, knowing the Berlin entertainment

scene and entertainers well, a knowledge that he combined with a most engaging way with people, both male and female. In 1943, through friends among higher-ups, he was able to smuggle his mother Marie to friends in Sweden, possibly aided by the fact that five of my cousins were serving in the German Army at the time. She returned to Germany in 1946, where she rejoined the family and died at age 90 in 1957.

None of us Kempners will forget Uncle Robi's unannounced appearance in my brother's house in Englewood, New Jersey, right after our mother's death in 1961.

Like the rest of his life, Uncle Robi's married life was not exactly routine: While he loved Lieselotte, he had two daughters from Traute Kistner, age 23, early and late in 1967. Lieselotte asked for and got a divorce, but she and her new husband, an old family friend, Just Boedeker, (who had been married to my deceased cousin Enole Witt), kept in close touch with good old Uncle Robi. In 1972, at age 70, he married Traute and had 24 more years with her. In 1973 he fathered Benjamin - at last a male descendant - who today, at age 33, is a leader in a commune in Portugal, whose aim it is to bring about peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

After hitting financial bottom in the 1980's, Uncle Robi once again "struck it rich," when after the demise of the German Democratic Republic the Mendelssohn Bank building was returned to the family, and promptly sold. Uncle Robi's share was the largest - surely a case of poetic justice.

Was it through his actions that most Mendelssohns were saved from persecution? It is as impossible to know that as it is to know whether I had scared away a bear by scattering mothballs around my tent while camping in the High Sierras in the summer of 1975.

Sad to relate, there is grim proof that family members were indeed in danger: our grandmother's maiden sister, Elisabeth Westphal, took her own life in 1942, when she had been tipped off that the Gestapo was about to pick her up.

On the Kempner side, the four of us siblings were the only grandchildren. Our father's only living sibling (a sister having died at age 3), my Uncle Fritz (1892-1981) and his wife Barbara (1903-1997), had emigrated to the United States in 1938. They had no children, but were like second parents to us.

5.

Schooling

But now it's time to say something about school, the gap left in my diary. My first 5 1/2 years of school preceded the Nazi takeover in January 1933. As luck would have it, our house was large enough to allow a room on the third floor to be converted into a classroom, with desks, wall map, blackboard, chalk and German-style sponge. Eight of us, boys and girls, all my age, had our first three years of school here, taught by Herr Jesse, a middle-aged, rather strict, no-nonsense type teacher. My recollection is vague, but I do remember that he stressed memorization of poetry, something that has stood me in good stead all my life. I came to love reciting ballads and probably would inflict myself on audiences today were my repertoire not in German... I remember well Herr Jesse punishing me once (for what I don't remember) by forbidding me to recite from memory a 52-line ballad by Theodor Fontane, a nationally known 19th century Berlin poet and novelist. It was about a farmer whose life-time love was to pass out tasty pears to boys and girls passing by. When about to die, he asked for a pear to be buried with him. Sure enough, the pear eventually grew into a tree, enabling future generations to enjoy its fruit by imagining the rustling leaves calling out to them in the farmer's voice. I loved that poem and was looking forward to reciting it. This instance of recitation denied has remained with me.

At this time I began reciting poems (usually 19th century German ballads) on festive occasions within the family. In addition, my sisters and I soon began memorizing and acting out small segments of German drama, as well as homegrown material. I loved this sort of thing and continued it into later years. Again I believe our mother was behind this practice; she herself knew vast sections of German literature by heart.

After grade 4 in a small private school, I entered the *Gymnasium* in grade 5. I have always been intrigued how different school systems handle students of varying abilities. Should the able go to the same school as the less able? That happens in the public school system in the States, where academic differences among students are handled by "tracking" (especially in skill subjects like math and foreign languages) and to some extent by course content. By contrast, the German system attempts to handle academic differences among students by separating them after grade 4 into three different types of schools. The *Gymnasium*, the school for the academically gifted (of any one age group c. 20% in 1931, and



My 5th grade class in the Grunewald Gymnasium in 1931. Since most of our section was together for three years, I still remember them well. The teacher is Herr Korte, who taught us English. The absence of wall decoration was quite normal.

Last on the right in the back row is Werner Woelber, immediately in front of him is Karlpeter Rahts, and second to Werner's right is Walter Kaufmann. Guenther Neubacher is third from the left in the back row. Little Fritz is third from the left in front.

c. 35% today), leads up to the all-important statewide exam called the *Abitur*, a requirement for university study. Next there is the *Mittelschule*, which ends after grade 10, and then the *Hauptschule*, which goes up to grade 9, but can lead to further schooling in trade and vocational schools.

A criticism often leveled at the German school system is that its three-tier system makes for undesirable class consciousness and elitism. The political Left, considering this charge valid, has since the 1960s tried to introduce the *Gesamtschule*. This type of school is similar to the American high school and the English Comprehensive School, all three of which are open to all, whether college-bound or not. The *Gesamtschule* thus does away with the three different types of schools, offering, under one roof as it were, academic courses leading to university as well as vocational courses. Here is the irony: it is the structure of the much maligned American high school that German reformers hold up as the ideal. The reformers feel that a school modeled on the American high school, as long as it is large enough, can maintain Gymnasium level classes, while at the same time ensuring a social mix through a program of music, art, drama, dance, crafts, student government, etc. However, over the last few decades the *Gesamtschulen* have been fighting a losing battle. They are charged with declining academic standards.

My school in grade 5 was the *Grunewald Gymnasium*, at that time for boys only, today called the Walther Rathenau Gymnasium, named after Germany's Jewish foreign minister, a good friend and frequent guest at my Mendelssohn grandparents' house in the Grunewald, near which he was assassinated by ultra-nationalists in 1922. I enjoyed school, both the academic and the social side. The Grunewald was - and still is - a well-to-do, artistically and academically oriented residential area, with a cosmopolitan orientation. Its academically strong *Gymnasium* was as much anti-Nazi as a school could be and still survive. Being "anti-Nazi" consisted in avoiding the subject of politics altogether. Of course attacking Nazi leaders and Nazi policies was out of the question, even here.

Friedrich Kempner

Charlottenburg 9
Giedentallee 2 14th IX 1931.

My dear mother!

Now I will write an English letter to you. Today is fine weather. I have played in the garden. I have played football with Mr. Stiller. Schwester Anna is here, she comes for dinner. She will be here for supper. In school we have written a composition. The name was: "Com In The Country." I have the second note. Aunt Kläre is now with us. I like her very much. She is so nice to us. Grandmother was here for tea. Is it nice in Gen? G has your husband much to work? All in this house sends their love.
Your loving child Fritz.

A letter to my mother (in Geneva at the time), dated September 14, 1931, proudly written in English. For Mr. Stiller see p. 42, for Aunt Cläre p. 62. Schwester Anna was a much loved nanny for all of us whenever we were sick. By "the second note" I meant a "2," or B. My father was in Geneva representing Germany on an economic commission with the League of Nations.

To put it differently, we were probably exposed to a minimum amount of Nazi indoctrination. I could have gone to a more average school closer to home. As it was, unlike Shakespeare's schoolboy, "creeping like snail unwillingly to school," I covered the seven miles from our house by bus, or in spring eagerly by bike, which - I am tempted to think - made me physically fit.

I formed close friendships. Three of us, Werner Woelber, Karlpeter Rahts and I were particularly close. Werner was our class president and star athlete, who like me was active in the German version of the YMCA (see p. 26), somehow

managing to avoid joining the Hitler Youth. Through his father's skillful finagling he was able to get his medical degree while in the army. Disgusted with life in postwar Germany, he emigrated to Canada in 1951, where he was a highly successful pediatrician near Montreal. He did not retire until 2005. During my annual visits we - inevitably - rehash the past, while his devoted and beloved German-Canadian wife Ann listens to us with apparent unflagging interest.

Karlpeter was more scholar than athlete. We were fierce competitors in chess and ping pong, and partners in soccer. I still have his many letters to me in England and the States. However, such is his fear of censorship that in a letter mailed in Switzerland in 1937 he asks me not to mention politics. What nationalism he shows, is of the innocuous variety. In 1938 he is wondering if the boxer Max Schmeling is getting a fair deal in New York. After the annexation of Austria in March 1938, he speculates how Austrian soccer players will blend in with the German team. In October 1938 he writes: *Now that we have managed to get the Sudeten Territory of Czechoslovakia, we are getting an excellent tennis player in Roderich Menzel.* When I got to the States, he - always the analyst - asked me to explain the difference between English rugby and American football.

After five years in the army with off-and-on combat and a semester at University after the war, Karlpeter died of tuberculosis in 1947. In one of his last letters, written after he learned that I had begun teaching, he asks why students in German schools will cheat during tests whenever they get a chance, while this does not seem to be the case in the States. (See my comment on p. 140.) He describes his medical status in detail, but without a shred of complaint. His last words are: "Lasse es Dir recht, recht gut gehen!" ("You make sure you stay real well!")

Politically, Karlpeter and Werner, though fully "Aryan," were no more Nazis than the Kempners and our relatives were. (My sister Martha's initial enthusiasm was gone in a year.) At the same time, I do not recall any serious political discussions between us. Hitler simply was a given. Probably not even those who subsequently conspired against Hitler were thinking of opposition in the early years.

Because my family and relatives were aware of Nazi control of all aspects of life, we and just about everyone else assumed that opposition of any kind was simply out of the question. Criticism would automatically result in arrest, frequently by way of denunciation. Had I stayed in Germany, I strongly suspect that I would have accepted Nazi rule as much as Werner, Karlpeter and my five "Aryan" Mendelssohn male cousins did, and, like them, would have served in Hitler's army. I would have found no way around the totalitarian nature of the Nazi regime: it rigged the system in such a way that by about 1935 all Germans became, willy-nilly, part of the Nazi system. Of course I grant that the majority of Germans cheered Hitler on, impressed by the reduction in unemployment and his foreign

policy successes, at least up to the spring of 1939. Once war broke out, opposition, à la Vietnam in the 1960s in the United States, was out of the question. What opposition there was, was wholly secret. That the carefully prepared attempt on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944, got as far as it did is truly remarkable; that it failed by a hair was a tragedy.

But now on to grade 7. Perhaps my becoming a teacher of Latin could have been predicted from the second day of my 7th grade Latin class: the teacher, Herr Gerstenberg, had me quiz the class on the vocabulary of Lesson 1 of the text *Vita Romana*. Herr G had been principal of the prestigious *Franzoesisches Gymnasium*, but being "non-Aryan" was evidently not allowed to continue as administrator.

Preparing me - unknowingly - for my future was my English teacher, Herr Korte, in grades 5-7. He stressed the spoken language and would frequently read to us from the *London Times*. This was not altogether harmless, since while the Nazis allowed foreign papers in the country, their use was not exactly encouraged. Herr Korte also had a favorite saying: *I give A's and E's without regard for race, confession or type! (... ohne Ruecksicht auf Rasse, Konfession, Art.)* My hunch is that he could not have said that in many other schools.

I have kept the composition I wrote in 9th grade on the "Italo-Abyssinian Conflict," in 1935. (I am still proud of the A I received!) My source was very largely what Herr Korte had said in class: *Was Mussolini right? Yes and no. Italy and Abyssinia are members of the League of Nations. Italy must have colonies, but it must not try to get them in a war. She must come before the League of Nations.* I am sure this was not the official Nazi line. Herr Korte clearly was no Nazi and I was the beneficiary.

At the other political extreme was Herr Hamann, my math teacher. A thorough Nazi, he was one of the few faculty who already in 1934 appeared in the brown Storm Trooper uniform. He insisted that the compulsory Hitler salute at the beginning and end of each class was conducted in the proper manner. (Herr Korte raised his hand in the salute and gave the signal to be seated all in the same sloppy motion.) Herr H. insisted that we stand at rigid attention, give the salute and shout "Heil Hitler" loud and clear. Four of us in the back thought we'd have some fun at his expense and shouted as loud as we could. To our disappointment, he merely countered with a proud smile. As I look back now, I doubt that it ever occurred to any of us to refuse to give the salute. Conformity was not questioned. (As it never is among the young, the 1960s being a big exception.)

Likewise, there was no questioning the validity of National Socialism. I have a letter to my father dated January 30, 1934.

Today we had a very impressive assembly in school [First anniversary of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor]. The talk of the principal was very boring

and sleep-inducing, as usual. But then a student in the Hitler Youth gave a very exciting talk about the life of Herbert Norkus (a celebrated young leader in the Hitler Youth).

I also recall the whole school being taken to a movie theater to see the fiercely propagandistic film, *Hitlerjunge Quex*, the story of a young man becoming a leader in the Hitler Youth. I suspect that most of us accepted such Nazi indoctrination not necessarily as valid, but as entirely routine.

Another highly competent teacher was Herr Hasselwander in German. Lots of grammatical analyses (right up my alley!) and learning to outline topics for compositions, such as “film vs. theater;” “Life in the city vs. life in the country;” “Value of vacations” for these topics there were no right or wrong answers, in sharp contrast to the following: “Value of service in the Hitler Youth.” The answer was given to us as part of the assignment: “Development of discipline and love of country;” and “Overcoming class differences.” Conclusion: “Influence of the spirit of Hitler among the young.” All this in my handwriting in my 7th grade notebook.

The Nazi indoctrination in the Grunewald Gymnasium was in all probability the result of the appointment of a new party-line principal, Dr. Waldvogel, in place of the older, traditionally conservative, Weimar Republic type, Dr. Vilmar. Waldvogel soon made his influence felt: in 1935 Jews and “Non-Aryans” were no longer allowed to attend the traditional annual week away from school in the *Landschulheim* in Werder, a well-run and most enjoyable camp in beautiful country a short distance from Berlin. We all loved it as a class in 1934, but then, in 1935, five of us *non-Aryans* were no longer allowed to participate. That hurt! I was not aware of anyone in my class expressing approval of the exclusion, not even the two members of the Hitler Youth. But protesting was out of the question. The five of us were also not allowed to participate in the two hour instruction on Nazism on Saturday mornings. For this many envied us.

At about this time I started attending bi-weekly sessions with the YMCA. At that time the German version, CVJM (*Christlicher Verein junger Maenner*), put much more stress on the *Christian* than on the *Association* element. In addition to meeting in Berlin, there were overnight camping trips to the vicinity of Berlin, at the core of which were Bible study and talks by adults on ethical questions. A position favorable to conventional (not fundamentalist) Protestantism was assumed. In 1935, my final year of school in Germany, I attended a one-week summer camp on the Frisian Island of Langeoog. While there were lots of outdoor activities, there was also an extensive Bible-reading program led by both Protestant ministers and lay people. All of us were urged to consider very seriously becoming “followers of the Lord,” and to pledge as much in the course of one of the many prayer

meetings. I remember doing so. I felt that these sessions fitted in nicely with the confirmation class I had been attending since Easter 1935 with Pastor Roehricht of the Confessional Church in Dahlem in Berlin. This was also the church of Pastor Niemoeller, consisting of those Protestants who had split off from the *Deutsche Christen*. The latter had endorsed the Nazis and had been endorsed by them. I was indeed confirmed as a member of the Confessional Church in 1936, an event that was dutifully celebrated with a huge dinner at our home with some 30 family and relatives.

I had become an orthodox Protestant, with belief in a Loving God and in the redemptive power of his Son Jesus Christ. This belief carried over into the 1950s, but then very gradually faded into a generalized “Love Your Neighbor” philosophy. I came to believe more and more in the importance of action as opposed to articles of faith.

6.

Channel Crossing

My week at the YMCA camp in 1935 kept me so fully engaged that I had no time to reflect on being away from my family for the first time. My father, by contrast, reflected on it most intently, as shown by his letter of July, 1935:

You know, in my view there is a huge difference that boys of your age are experiencing so much independence today, when compared to my youth, where such independence was extremely rare. Of course this involves a great deal of responsibility for oneself. I have to tell you that I am very much looking forward to having you at home again soon, so that we can exchange experiences.

Little did my father know that only six months later he would let me be away from home for much longer than a week.

Part of my father's concern was immediate: Might the Nazis hold membership in the YMCA against me? At that time in Germany it was a numerically small, low-profile organization, that tried hard not to interfere with the Hitler Youth, the virtually compulsory national youth organization. It presented itself as non-political, being concerned primarily with providing a religious atmosphere for its group work with young men. Worried about Nazi suspicions of non-Party organizations like the YMCA, my father sometime in 1935 went out of his way to talk to the person in charge of my chapter. He was assured that the organization was allowed to continue to exist, albeit with a very low profile. In all probability the international status of the YMCA as well as its small size saved it - for a short while. By 1938 it had ceased to exist.

A few weeks later my father made another, more significant, visit on my behalf. He went to see Dr. Waldvogel, the aforementioned newly appointed party-line principal of my school. For my father it must have been a horrifying glimpse of what the Nazis had in store. He apparently asked if my "non-Aryan" status was going to have further negative consequences beyond my not being allowed to participate in the week-long school camp once a year. Dr. Waldvogel's reply, which my father did not tell me of until many years later, was bitterly offensive:

Mr. Kempner, Germany is not interested in the well-being of your son. He belongs to an inferior race and is therefore of no concern to us.

In 1935, unless you were prepared to go to jail, you did not argue with this position; especially not my father who had always prided himself on obeying the law and being a loyal citizen. How insulting and painful it must have been for him at the time needs no elaboration.

It is my guess that it was the session with Dr. Waldvogel that helped my parents decide to send me to school in England, beginning in January of 1936. My parents had a strong international orientation; they spoke both English and French well; my father's brother, Uncle Fritz had studied in Christ Church, Oxford, in 1912, when Europe was at peace and the British Empire was still in its glory. (My uncle loved to quote the remarkable comment an Oxford professor made at that time on the importance of the study of foreign languages: "Kempner, it has been my experience that English, spoken loudly and clearly, is understood by everybody.") Both my father and uncle had many friends in England as well as in the States. All these factors made an immigration first to England in 1938 and then to the United States in 1939 not only possible but also relatively easy.

I don't remember being involved in any sort of discussion; I do remember accepting the decision fully. I am sure that the possibility of becoming fluent in English made going to school in England very attractive to me. My father quotes me saying: "Pappi, I rely on your experience." Of course I was sorry to be separated from my friends in Berlin, but I accepted that as unavoidable.

My father's first letter to me in England in January 1936 contained this - shall I call it oracular - pronouncement: *I think it will be extraordinarily advantageous for you some time in the future to be as good in English as you are now in German. That is meaningful for your entire life.* (This is not a made-up quote based on hindsight!) He adds that he had visited my Berlin school to insure I was going to receive a proper Final Report. "At a later date in Germany," he added, "a good 9th grade Final Report might possibly be of use." From these words it seems clear that at this moment my father was not envisaging the family leaving Germany. He adds this pledge, which must have been profoundly meaningful to me at the time:

While what I am going to tell is obvious, I want to mention it to you nonetheless. First and foremost, I want to tell you that you can always count on my thinking of your well-being as much as a father can, and that accordingly you can at all times count on my good advice and my experience and above all on my love and loyalty. This goes without saying, but I did want to make a point of it in my first letter to you.

Then he adds this ominous note: *This letter I can send to you quite openly because it is being mailed in Switzerland and the German authorities can't open it.* [My father was returning from Geneva, and was writing this letter during

a one-hour wait in Basel, Switzerland.] *I am sure you know that what you write from England on political subjects must take into account the German government. But of course you can write about everything you experience without fear.*

A most appropriate warning, which of course I heeded. This possibility of Nazi censorship does explain to me my father's occasional seemingly positive comments on Hitler in his correspondence. I still have a postcard he sent me showing Hitler and Mussolini in 1937, standing side by side in a black Mercedes, being driven down the Kaiserdamm, one of Berlin's show streets, proudly saluting the crowds that lined the street; my father's message: "Here is a most impressive sight that I witnessed from our friends' apartment." I am sure he felt that this would look good in his Gestapo file ...

7.

School in the *Scepter'd Isle*

My arrival in England in January 1936 coincided with the death of King George V and the accession of Edward VIII. I wrote to my parents on January 23 of that year:

I heard on the radio the proclamation of the new king ... It was closed by a triple 'Hip - Hip - Hurrah' and 'God Save The King.' ... A historical moment, in which I am allowed to participate. I added: There was general mourning for the death of Kipling.

Even though I did not actively participate in the decision to go to school in England, my interest in the Royal Family suggests that I had welcomed the opportunity. I loved the feeling of independence. I was traveling alone over wholly new territory: by train from Berlin to Hoek of Holland; across the Channel to Harwich; by boat train to London, where I would treat myself to the novelty of eggs-and-bacon. At Victoria Station I was met by Pat Bowman, a university student, who the year before had been living with our family in Berlin. He would take me via the tube to Paddington Station. Before saying good-bye, I asked Pat to watch me ask a passer-by: *I beg your pardon, Sir, could you please tell me the time?* I even understood the answer, which made me very proud. Then two more hours to Marlborough, for a total of about 24. I repeated this trip eight times in three years, the last trip, however, being one-way only.

I have no idea whether it was at all difficult for a foreigner to enter Marlborough College at that time, but I am sure that my father knowing a trustee helped a great deal. The school, beautifully situated in the Wiltshire Downs, was (and still is) a prestigious Public School, consisting at the time of some 800 students, ages 12-19, all boys and all boarders. (An English Public School is a private school to us. What we call a public school the Brits call a state school or a comprehensive school.) Sleeping in a room with 12 others, having to be in bed by 9:45 pm, getting up at 7 am, does not sound terribly rigorous from this distance, but at the time was in marked contrast to the privacy of my bedroom and routine in Berlin. Discipline within the dormitory was enforced by Sixth Formers (age 18-19), with the use of the cane. The chief offense was being late for bed. This system was accepted by all and thus worked well. There was no such thing as a Student Council or even any questioning of the system. Daily life was not exactly leisurely: breakfast and supper were served to the 60 boys in the dormitory building (mine

being Preshute House), and lunch in the huge “Hall” on the main campus, with all 800 fellow students. There were all sorts of locally developed eating practices, such as insuring that one received serving dishes before they were empty by being a member of a “syndicate,” whose members would pass on platters only to each other. It took Little Fritz from Germany some time to catch on, but I don’t recall ever going hungry. However, I do remember vividly that the bowl of delicious treacle tart was empty by the time it reached me more often than not. (Shades of Harry Potter!)

The “restrictions of custom” did not exist in the dining area only; access to a tub of hot water after sports was similarly “controlled.” There were four copper tubs for some 20 boys coming in off their “sweat” (i.e., a cross-country run when rain stopped team sports such as rugby, field hockey or cricket, depending on the season). Unless you were a member of a syndicate, your turn in the tub might not come until the same hot water had been used and reused a number of times. Why not refill the tub? That’s easy: no more hot water!

I mentioned caning. I was subjected to it not only by prefects but also at the hands of “Beaks,” the local term for teachers. Initially I was sure that this term was pejorative, but when I heard even teachers use it quite routinely, I came to realize the power of custom, especially in language usage. (An aside: on a recent visit to Marlborough I found beautiful shower facilities, but a Beak was still a Beak.) So Beaks had the privilege of caning. I experienced it at the hands of my Preshute house master, “Sandy” Sandford, who in his last year of teaching (at age 65) was not going to become soft by giving up his belief in this traditional form of punishment. *It takes up little time, is a forceful reminder to the offender that what he had done was not acceptable and it leaves no ill feeling*, would have been Sandy’s justification if challenged. (Which of course he was not.) The minimum number of strokes would be seven, and might reach a maximum of twelve. (Four being the maximum for a prefect.) The offense would usually be insufficient effort or attention in class, conveyed in the form of a note to one’s housemaster. In a letter to my parents on the eve of my caning, I explained that they shouldn’t feel concerned since Sandy was well known for his faith in the efficacy of the cane and that it was a matter of mere routine. I mentioned in passing that I had heard that one such note had been an invitation for tea, but that Sandy had already delivered the customary seven blows before reading it. At the moment, I told my parents, I was trying to find out *whether Mr. Sandford delivered the strokes in regular time, how rapidly, and how hard*. This was no esoteric subject among Preshute boys; many a Sunday afternoon was spent demonstrating how different Beaks used the cane - this on a pillow, with cane covered with chalk, so that precision in hitting the same spot could be demonstrated. The next day I did get my “seven,”

Sandy bidding me adieu with a big smile. I think he felt like saying, *we English have a rather good means of punishment, don't you think?* Did it have the desired effect? All I can say is that there were no repeats.

I should add that in the practice of Public School caning, Marlborough was about average. It did not have “fagging,” the practice of having younger boys do personal chores for older boys, such as shining their shoes or cleaning their study. The extremes of such practices are described hilariously by Roald Dahl in Boy. In his case (at Repton, I believe) it was the duty of a “fag” to warm the toilet seat prior to its use by the older boy. I was never subjected to this ordeal at Marlborough.

Of course I also attended classes. In those days teaching at Marlborough was by tradition authoritarian: teacher talked, students listened. When called upon, students responded as directed. Answers were expected to be factual rather than interpretative or speculative. While he may have been extreme, my 8th grade geography teacher typified the overall teaching style. I still recall his sonorous voice: *The North-American continent consists of a central plain, flanked by mountain ranges in the east and in the west.* We knew that this was something we had to memorize and that these and similar facts would be asked for on tests. At a more advanced level, our 11th grade English (and Greek) teacher, Mr. A.C.B. Brown, had us read Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson, always 24 pages for the weekly test. The ten test questions would be entirely factual, e.g., *Dr. Johnson was asked his opinion about women preaching in church. He answered: 'Sir,...' continue the quotation.* Our weekly preparation was greatly facilitated since items we needed to know were marked and numbered in the margin of the second-hand texts we used. Mr. Brown evidently saw no need to concoct new tests from one year to the next. In this case all we had to remember was: *Sir, women preaching in church is rather like dogs walking on their hind legs: it looks rather ungainly, but it's surprising it is done at all!* Said Mr. Brown also taught us the Odes of Horace, 20 lines per assignment, and again our preparation was considerably aided by our second-hand texts containing an exact list of questions, which proved unfailingly accurate. Clearly, Mr. Brown was as unfailing as Horace! Now I suppose it can be argued that my still recalling facts about the North-American continent and about Samuel Johnson proves that I did learn *something*. To be sure! It is also true that not all teachers were as rigid as Mr. Brown.

It may well be that the overall teaching style was the result of the “set books” concept, used in nation-wide “School Certificate” (today's “O-Level”) exams, taken after 10th grade. In my year, these “set books” were Richard II and Milton's Paradise Lost, Books 1 & 2. Admittedly, by the end of the year, we knew these works inside out, in the sense that we could spot even obscure passages and describe each

character in considerable detail. Unforgettable John of Gaunt's speech:

*This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd Isle,
...This precious stone set in the silver sea ...*

But did this approach develop a reflective and hence meaningful understanding of each work? Did it leave any of us with a love for the author? I have my doubts. I didn't get around to reading the rest of Paradise Lost until much later (see below). As for Shakespeare, I had developed a love for him in German through my parents long before setting foot on the *Scepter'd Isle*. In fact, as soon as I found out that Richard II was going to be our "set" play, I wrote home, in September 1937: *Could you please send me my German text of Richard II? What is this play about? Could you tell me that in a few words? Especially who the individual characters are, so that am informed.* Within a week my parents, Uncle Fritz and Aunt Barbara had teamed up to send me everything I had asked for. I couldn't have asked for finer support, not only in this "emergency," but throughout.

One of my more progressive teachers was Mr. A.E.C. Cornwall, who taught us European History in grade 9. Well do I remember his request of me as soon as he had found out my background: *Kempner, why don't you write a paragraph for next week, explaining what the Holy Roman Empire was?* He must have noticed my hesitation to agree to take on what seemed to me a formidable task, because after class he took me aside to ask if I minded doing that. No Internet to turn to for ready-made help! I felt I had to rise to the challenge. I wish I still had what I wrote. I do know that I came to like Mr. Cornwall's thought-provoking approach.

As for Mr. Brown, I'd like to give him the last word: at the end-of-term-report in September 1938, as my Classical Fifth Form (11th grade) Master, he wrote: *What I like about him is that he will never allow what he considers a difficulty to pass without insisting on having it explained. He is not at present very good, but there is a persistence about him which augurs well.* I think that he sized me up correctly, not only as a member of his class, but as a person. At the same time I got a very flattering report from Mr. Cheesman, my Preshute housemaster: *He can be relied upon to have the interests of the House at heart. His courage on the Rugger field always fills me with admiration.* Actually, it wasn't so much courage as enjoyment of playing team sports: rugger in the fall, field hockey in the winter, cricket in the spring. I always hated it when the game ended.

A final word on classwork: I still have two compositions of mine, written in 10th grade, in response to unprepared thought questions. One was entitled: What a girl or a boy ought to be taught at school. I dutifully list a variety of academic subjects that a student might take. I make no mention of such things as moral or

social values, but then in those days neither English nor German secondary education had such concerns, at least not explicitly. I would have displayed considerable insight had I commented on their absence! However, I do have this bit of wisdom to offer in my concluding sentence: *If somebody studies what he enjoys, he will always make good progress.* Reading this now, I am amazed how perceptive I was at age 16!

The other essay contrasted English and German schools. Again, I'll quote just the conclusion: *But one thing that is the same in both countries and always will be the same is that a boy [sic] has got to work if he is to get on.* Did I really mean it or was I just trying to please my teacher?

In trying to bring Marlborough to life, I must make mention of my friend Arthur Robinson. I visited him and his family near Chester, in Lancashire, and he spent that final August 1939 with us in Switzerland. We both took a liking to each other's sister. Although we were the same age, he looked at me from the very start as his protégé. Being keenly interested in history, he was eager to make sure that I held the proper views, especially on the evil nature of Prussian militarism. He believed firmly in the wisdom of those who had built up the British Empire, bringing civilization to so many in Asia and Africa. His hero was Winston Churchill. I had little knowledge of any of this, but was an eager learner. Fancying myself somewhat of a historian, I would challenge him where I could. I recall two notable instances of difference in point of view: I made a passing reference to Frederick The Great, King of Prussia. Said Arthur: *Who's that? Never heard of him!* I was nearly in shock: here was someone who hadn't heard of the hero of my youth, *Friedrich der Grosse*, whose palace Sans Souci in Potsdam I knew from top to bottom, and who had always been portrayed to me as the Enlightened Monarch, *par excellence*. I tried to explain. *Oh, I suppose you mean Frederick II*, he interrupted. *What's so great about him?* As our argument advanced, so did my appreciation of the complexity of history.

A second argument, over which we almost came to blows, came about as he claimed that the British Navy had never been defeated. Hoho, I said to myself, I'll get him on this one! My opener was: *What about Skagerak? - Never heard of it!* was his reply. So here was my opportunity. I informed him (so I thought) of the large tonnage losses suffered by the Royal Navy in the huge sea battle off the Danish coast in May 1916. *Oh, I see*, he said condescendingly, *you probably mean the Battle of Jutland. Remember, the losses that the German fleet suffered were sufficient to prevent it from ever leaving port again the rest of the War.* Indeed, victory or defeat, success or failure, are determined not necessarily by the facts themselves, but by the point of view. What a wonderful lesson to learn - at no cost. We remained good friends till his death in 1995.

8.

Sports

Before becoming fully established in my new school-away-from-home, I took a plunge back into the Germany I had left behind. While my family was enjoying the month of August in Switzerland, I had opted for daily attendance at the Olympic Games in Berlin, August 1-16, 1936. I was overwhelmed by it all, as I wrote to my mother:

The Olympics are fantastic! I don't know where to begin ... The stadium is always packed. It's a magnificent structure holding 110,000. Hitler always comes in the afternoon. Perhaps you have read about the Negro Jesse Owens, who has already won three gold medals for the US ...

Then I describe how my friend and neighbor Eike Schweitzer and I were able to listen in to Jesse Owens being asked by an American correspondent if he was pleased with his performance - this after winning his fourth gold medal. I quote Jesse Owens: "Yes and no. On the one hand I enjoy competing, and everyone is so nice to me, on the other hand my wife is waiting for me at home, and I would very much like to see her." I add: "He looks very nice."

Recalling it all now, I marvel how I was totally unaware of the terrible ironies at work. There was my grandmother Kempner, age 76, brought up Jewish, joining the 110,000 present in raising her arm in the Hitler salute during the playing of the two German national anthems at the opening ceremony. Similarly, Helene Mayer, the sole "non-Aryan" member of the German team, winning a silver medal in fencing, and likewise raising her arm. (The best German high jumper, Gretel Bergmann, was not allowed to compete because she was Jewish.) Then there was the universal admiration of the brilliant performance of the 18 black American athletes who, according to Nazi race theory, were "inferior." (One Nazi paper referred to them as *America's auxiliary troops, without whom the US would have done very poorly.*) Among Americans little attention was paid to the fact that upon their return home the black American athletes were subject to rigid rules of segregation, making the adoration they had received by an admiring German public grimly ironic.

But the biggest irony of all was the Nazi determination to make the Games a propaganda tool. No effort was spared to make Germany appear hospitable, progressive and friendly. The controlled press was careful to show no evidence of anti-Semitism; all anti-Jewish slogans in shops and public places were removed.

In my youthful enthusiasm, I wasn't aware of any of this. I just enjoyed the show, and was proud of Germany's remarkable success: 181 medals, compared to only 124 for the United States! I wasn't alone in my view: Frederick Birchall of The New York Times wrote: *The Olympic Games put Germany back in the fold of nations*. William L. Shirer proved more perceptive: *Berlin glitter hid a racist military regime*.

The Nazi leadership couldn't have been more pleased. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and organizer of forced labor in the last years of the War, quotes Hitler in 1937: *In 1940 the Olympic Games will take place in Tokyo. But thereafter they will take place in Germany for all time to come*.

What I also was unaware of at the time was the desire of groups and individuals in the United States to boycott the games. Among them were the American Jewish Congress, Catholic groups as well as individuals like Governors Al Smith (New York) and James Curley (Massachusetts). It was Avery Brundage, head of the American Olympic Committee, who was crucial in bringing about American participation despite such opposition. The AOC went to shocking lengths to accommodate the Nazis: the day before the 4 x 100 Meter relay final, two of the four members of the team, Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller, were told that their places would be taken by Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe, on the grounds that they were Jewish, and that this might prove offensive to Germany. (Many years later the AOC apologized.)

Looking back on the Games and everything that went with them now, 70 years later, I am forced to acknowledge the extreme skill of Joseph Goebbels and his propaganda machine. If I, a "non-Aryan" and already a semi-emigrant, could be so excited by it all, it is not surprising that to the vast majority of Germans what had happened in Berlin was proof of the greatness of the Nazi regime.

The Olympics weren't the only sporting event that captured my imagination. In the 1930s there was also tennis, with handsome Baron Gottfried von Cramm, member of the Rot-Weiss Tennis Club in Berlin. My sister Fran and her friend Ilse were not his only fans! He was renowned for his good sportsmanship, being prepared to refuse a point if it had been won illegally. Rereading about his loss to Don Budge, after leading 4-1 in the fifth set in the 1937 Davis Cup semi-final, brought my admiration for von Cramm back most vividly. For reasons never made explicit, he did not have Hitler's support.

An athlete that did have Hitler's full support was the boxer Max Schmeling. When he defeated Joe Louis in 12 rounds in 1936, it was trumpeted as proof of the Nazi claim of the superiority of the "Aryan race." The tables were turned in 1938, when Joe Louis knocked out Schmeling in 2 minutes. My Marlborough classmates did not fail to call it to my attention! Extensive obituaries upon Schmeling's death in

2005 at age 99 helped me recall my ambivalence: the interplay between pride in a famous German athlete and discomfiture caused by the claims made on behalf of race. Joyce Carol Oates, writer, professor, as well as boxing fan, responds to my ambivalence beautifully in her recent book review of David Margolick's Beyond Glory (all about Schmeling): *Did not a single commentator among so many make the obvious point that Joe Louis beat Max Schmeling in the ring because, that night, he was the better boxer, not because he was the better man, or represented the better country? Did not one commentator take note that boxing, like warfare, has nothing to do with virtue?* She says it all!

Only about a half-hour's walk from our house in Berlin was the automobile race track known as the Avus. I went to only one race, when I was about 14, but that did it - I was hooked. Standing inside the *Nordkurve*, one of the only two loops of the oval shaped course, I recall with what thrill my friends and I attempted to distinguish between Mercedes, Auto-Union and Alfa Romeo by the different engine noises as they approached. Unforgettable the high pitched "singing saw" Mercedes whine that is etched in my memory, along with the drivers: Rudi Caracciola and Manfred von Brauchitsch for Mercedes; Hans Stuck and Bernd Rosemeyer for Auto Union; the Italians Tazio Nuvolari and Achille Varzi for Alfa Romeo and Masarati. My friend Chris Schweitzer (now a retired professor of German at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill) and I reproduced the races on the floor at home, rugs pushed aside, on tracks drawn with chalk on the floor, pushing tiny models of cars by hand, with rules too complex for me to recall now. I also remember most vividly visiting the Nordkurve again in the 1959, after the French driver Jean Behra was killed when his car skidded on the wet, banked brick surface. I remember how the East German press claimed that the accident proved the West's inhumane priorities: the life of a racing driver was less important than the certainty of financial loss if the race were canceled. The East Germans probably had a point. The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 was the doom of the Avus: the southern end of the 12-mile oval extended into East Germany and was no longer accessible to West Berliners. Today the Avus is no more than a memory: what's left of the race course is integrated into the highway system. *Sic transit gloria...*

The name of Rudi Caracciola brings to mind my friend from Marlborough days, Patrick Pollock of Huddersfield, Yorkshire. He loved cars. Upon leaving Marlborough early in 1939, he enrolled at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, but spent most of his time working as a mechanic in a garage. In a letter to me, dated May 20, 1939, he has this to say:

"I had one of the great thrills of my life the other day, and I think you will be interested. At the local Casino, the Mercedes agency put on show a racing car, one of the 1937 5.4 litre cars, which you will remember swept everything

before them, and were one of the most successful types ever built. As I was looking at it in absolute ecstasy, one of the Mercedes people, a German sent from Berlin with the car, asked me if I would like him to explain all the details to me. This he did, and we became great pals and had a grand discussion in which I told him all about Billy Conn [English racing driver] and his E.R.A. Just as we were about to part, I asked him if I could sit in the car, and he said yes! So in I got, looked at everything and felt all the gadgets, and in fact was in heaven! The driving position was perfect, and one could get a splendid view in front. Also one felt very low and this gave one a great sense of security ... I felt very proud. Now I have achieved one of my greatest ambitions, and have surpassed it. Achieved because I have seen a Mercedes, and surpassed because I have sat in one. Fancy I have sat where old Caracciola used to drive, and where he did such great wonders. It will be a very long time before I forget that day.”

Alas, poor Patrick! He did not have much time ahead of him. As a pilot in the RAF he did not survive the war.

There is a fourth sport I must mention, and it's the one I not only watched but also played with great gusto and determination: the king of sports (as many will have it), soccer. I started playing the game early, and would like to be able to say that I'm still at it, but that would be stretching it. Initially I kicked endlessly against the garage door at home, which must have bothered many, but I was never reprimanded. Then I practiced in our garden, where a goal had been set up, which I guarded against Herr Stiller, our gardener and keen soccer player. He would take pleasure in beating me again and again with a carefully placed shot using the inside of his foot. (As a coach, some 20 years later, I called this the “push-pass,” a term I am still proud of having invented!) Beginning at grade 5, I played during gym class at the *Grunewald Gymnasium*. (German schools did not then, and most still don't now, field school teams.) Unfortunately, neither Marlborough, nor later Milton Academy, had soccer teams when I was a student.

In Germany I had a favorite team: Hertha BSC (= *Berliner Sport Club*) (German champion in 1931 and 1932). Even today my emotions are aroused when, in my mind's ear, I hear the chant “*Ha-Ho-He — Hertha BSC*” and I get a kick when I read that the team is doing well, even though I can't name a single player. That was different when I was 14, and could, of course, recite the entire line-up. My hero then was the crafty forward Hanne Sobek (1909-1989). When in Berlin in the early 90s, I dropped in on his widow, then in her 80s. I came with flowers, and she reciprocated with the traditional *Kaffee und Kuchen*. She couldn't get over the fact that even though I lived *in Amerika*, I could still remember watching her husband play some 60 years earlier.

9.

Rule Britannia !

Back to Marlborough, with a look at some unanticipated military activity. Caning was only one type of discipline we were subjected to, the military was another. It was known as OTC, or Officers Training Corps. Unlike the ROTC in the United States, this program involved everyone over age 15. Its purpose was to insure a steady supply of officers. It consisted of infantry training, including drill, knowledge of basic weapons, map-reading, shooting, tactics and occasional one-day maneuvers.

I remember one such maneuver: the scene was the beautiful nearby Savernake Forest, site of walks with my parents when they came on an occasional visit. Our platoon was advancing on the enemy when suddenly we heard close by a burst of enemy rifle fire, only to be told by the ubiquitous referees that we were all dead. That meant we had to stay put until the end of hostilities. That part wasn't bad; what was less pleasant was the dream stimulus for years to come of being shot at.

Decidedly less scary and a lot of fun was the annual House Platoon Competition. So much renown was attached to winning this award that endless polishing of boots, buttons and rifles was considered part of the game. The annual highlight was a lengthy inspection conducted by a visiting general. After one such inspection I wrote my parents that the general had faulted the fact that the shoe laces were not tied in the same way by all; after all, said he, the whole purpose of a uniform was to present a unified appearance. My letter continues: *The general went on to say that the boys are to become leaders and are to make a good impression everywhere. He ended with a proud reference to England's leading position in the world.* I am sure that at the time I found this fully acceptable. This basic military training stood me in good stead when I did Basic Training in the US Army some five years later. My fellow GI's then, and generations of friends since, would find endless amusement in my demonstration of the British manual of arms. I would bark out *On the command 'Lying Load By The Numbers, One' take a walking pace forward with the left foot to the right front, at the same time throwing up the rifle with the right hand, catching it with the left hand at the point of balance!* Whether the audience laughed at me or with me, it was sure-fire entertainment.

Before recalling a glorious event in British public life, I must mention an episode that was the subject of the keenest attention by everyone, teacher and student alike: the abdication speech of King Edward VIII, to allow him to marry Wallace Simpson, the American divorcée. At the invitation of Housemaster Sandford, we

jammed into his living room (I guess we were not allowed radios) to hear the King's speech at 10 PM, December 11, 1936. In a letter home I describe it as *very moving (sehr stimmungsvoll)*. I can still hear his voice (possibly reinforced by replays years later):

You must believe me when I tell you that I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love.

I don't remember what we boys thought of his decision. I approved, chiefly because I reasoned that his brother, the Duke of York, the future George VI, was fully able to carry on as King. But then I was not brought up on the Royal Family and their attitude toward divorce.

The "glorious event" was the coronation of George VI in May 1937. Three friends and I arrived in London's Oxford Street at 5 AM, waiting for the procession to reach that point in its route at 3 PM. I wrote home:

... suddenly there was music and then they came: at first soldiers in parade uniform - on foot, on horseback, Indians (I used correctly the German "Inder," i.e., inhabitants of India, as opposed to "Indianer"), Canadians, New Zealanders, sailors, pilots, Scotsmen, Australians, bands. And with each contingent tremendous applause: jolly good - tough guy - good old George - you look fine - Hurrah - good old boy - tough fellow - that's the stuff - fine chap - and so on. But when the carriages with Queen Mary, the King and Queen and Stanley Baldwin were coming by - then the cheering got so loud that had Max in a fit of madness shouted in my ear 'Fritz,' I would have missed it totally. No exaggeration! And that for 45 minutes, because that's how long it took for everyone to pass.

There has been just one coronation since then (Queen Elizabeth II in 1952). Could it have been any better? Certainly not.



Lining London's Oxford Street in May 1937 awaiting the royal procession at the coronation of George VI. I am in the middle, holding up a cardboard periscope.

10.

War Clouds Gather

The glory of the Coronation was followed by the grim developments of 1938. Hitler had been in power for five years, during which time German foreign policy successes had formed a veritable crescendo:

1933: Germany leaves the League of Nations.

1934: The restrictions on the German military written into the Versailles Treaty of 1919 are beginning to be disregarded.

1935: The Saar Territory rejoins Germany via a plebiscite (91% in favor).

1936: German troops reenter the west Rhine bank from which the Versailles Treaty had excluded them.

1937: The German government declares the “War Guilt Clause,” which called Germany solely responsible for World War I, null and void.

1938: Germany annexes Austria in March, followed by the fatal four-power meeting at Munich in September. I recall this episode only too well: France, England, Italy and Germany had agreed to meet in Munich to decide the fate of the 3,000,000 German minority in Czechoslovakia, known as the *Sudeten*. The Czechs were not invited. Hitler had claimed the *Sudeten* and the land on which they lived on the grounds that they were ethnic Germans. At Munich on September 29 he got the French, British and Italians to agree to the annexation of the Sudeten Territory by Germany, stating emphatically that this was going to be his last territorial claim in Europe. His *Meine letzte territoriale Forderung in Europa* still rings in my ears. Returning from Munich, English Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain landed at Croydon airport (London’s airport before the days of Heathrow and Gatwick), uttering the unforgettable words “Peace in our time!” holding aloft the signed Munich Agreement. On October 1, German troops took over the Sudeten Territory.

So much for Lofty Politics; now some personal reflections:

My father writes on September 21, 1938: “A very turbulent week is behind me. Fortunately the danger of war has been considerably reduced. To be sure, England’s prestige has suffered somewhat in the process.”

And here is my sister Martha, then 19, writing from London on October 3: *I am terribly happy (schrecklich gluecklich) that everything has turned out so well with Czechoslovakia...*

My own summary in my letter of October 3, 1938: *That was quite an*

exciting week that just passed... I often spoke with Cheesman (the new house master who had succeeded caning-prone Sandford), and he let me hear Hitler's speech on the radio. I translated during the applause - an excellent practice for me. Here everyone is now heaving a sigh of relief. An air raid drill had actually been scheduled, but since the situation had improved, it was fortunately called off.

While many may have heaved a sigh of relief, this feeling was far from unanimous. My roommate Arthur Robinson warned anyone that would listen that Hitler was not to be trusted and that a continuation of a *policy of appeasement* would prove disastrous. Ironically, opposition to Hitler's policy toward the Czechs also came from a surprising source within Germany: from Colonel General Ludwig Beck (Wehrmacht chief-of-staff), who resigned in protest, and from General Franz Halder, who was on the point of joining an anti-Hitler conspiracy, when Hitler's foreign policy successes caused him and several others to withdraw their opposition.

What made so many of all social classes all over Europe feel so relieved after Munich? I think that to a large degree it was the feeling that Germany, a big country, was getting only what any country deserved: control over its ethnic stock. And was it really fair to assign all the guilt for World War I to Germany? Surely, many felt, Versailles had gone too far. It is interesting to contrast the treatment of defeated Germany in 1918 with what happened after the end of World War II in 1945: after World War I a treaty was signed with a sovereign country; when World War II ended in Europe there simply was no German government with whom to sign a treaty. Instead "Germany" was occupied by the Allies for four years. In 1938 there was also the widespread sentiment that after the horrors of World War I, only 20 years before, another war was unthinkable. (See my father's letter to his mother in 1932, p.14.)

The hopes that Hitler would contain himself to reincorporating only Germans into his Reich were dashed when the Nazis occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. From then on most of us - family, friends, acquaintances - felt that war was inevitable, although no one I knew foresaw the horror the war turned out to be.

To me it is striking that my family's and friends' reflections on the fluid state of politics in 1938 and '39 share one underlying belief: that while we didn't like it, Hitler was there to stay. There was no thought among us (or anyone else I knew of at the time) that the Nazis should be overthrown. That grim conclusion was probably not reached even by the Allies until the fall of France in 1940. What became very clear by November 1938, however, was that Jews, or non-Aryans like ourselves, had better leave Germany if they possibly could. We Kempners

had three significant factors, lacking to many, going for us: Friends in England and the United States, knowledge of English and financial resources. Farsightedly, my father and his brother Uncle Fritz had transferred assets to a New York bank as early as 1937 after my grandmother Kempner's death in April of that year. The details of a plan to emigrate were not formed until the winter of 1938/39.

As it turned out, our family left Germany in piecemeal fashion: my sister Martha started studying in Oxford in the summer of 1938; my mother, my sister Fran and Max left Germany for a boarding house in Weybridge, Surrey, in October; our father joined them in November, and I simply did not return to Germany after spending my 1938 spring vacation in Berlin.

In Weybridge it was my mother who did the hard work of lighting the home fires, and keeping them burning. Having in all of her life had the assistance of an array of servants, she suddenly found herself in a rather cold, prim-and-proper boarding house in Weybridge, half an hour outside of London, where she kept the family spirit going for my brother Max and my sister Fran, while Martha and I were pursuing our studies at Oxford and Marlborough. Her first letter to me from England is dated October 9, 1938:

What do you think of my writing you from here? ... I am looking for a house (she found one in the spring of 1939), and when I have found one and we have immigration permits, then we can set up a cozy home. I am really looking forward to that! ... These have been exciting times, it's a good thing that everything has turned out so well. I do hope that Pappi will be able to join us soon and we then will be all together once again. ... If the pajamas are too large, it's possible to make adjustments - don't you have somebody that can do that? ... My mother never lost sight of basics.

Fran adds a one-liner: *Sieh da, sieh da, Timotheus!* (a most appropriate quote expressing surprise from a Schiller ballad most Germans know). *Ja, Ja, Hier ist es lovely!* (The mixture of German and English is a great touch of my linguistically sensitive sister.)

About Weybridge my sister Martha has written this account. I quote:

I want to write about the boarding house in Weybridge. It was my mother who kept us going there, much more so than she had been in Berlin where the domestic staff and all the social life took much of her energy. In the boarding house she was in much more immediate touch with our daily moods and experiences. She bought some grapes and some cookies and she kept a bottle of sherry in the desk of our living room. We took our meals in the dining room with the other boarders. It was a genteel sort of boarding house. There may have been half a dozen boarders in addition to our family. They were all quiet and middle age, as far as I remember. There was a slender,

quite good looking spinster, fortyish or thereabouts, who befriended us. Her name was Miss Moriarty. She was, I believe, smitten by my father, impressed by my mother. She had a glass of sherry with my mother on occasion, as did Mrs. Reid, who ran the boarding house together with her husband. For my mother, Shirley Hurst (that was the name of the big old Victorian house), must have been both dismal and challenging. She was often amused or exasperated by the inefficient staff, depending on her mood and the degree of inefficiency. But by and large she was in quite good spirits. She must have been enormously grateful that we were all safe in England, especially my father, who had played such dangerous games in Germany. [Martha is referring to the fact that he had delayed his departure from Berlin to look after affairs connected with the liquidation of the Mendelssohn Bank. He barely had escaped the horrors of Kristallnacht November 9, 1938, when Jewish stores were smashed and Jews killed randomly.]

... My mother had to leave her own mother, her two sisters and her brother, she had to leave Berlin where she had lived all her life and she had done so without showing any fear and without losing her sense of humor.

... In the early evening of Christmas Eve we all assembled in our boarding house living room and we were just about to sing Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht, which had always been our opening ritual in Berlin. The tree was decorated and lit by wax candles and I was just beginning to get into the spirit of this very reduced and intimate Christmas, when there was a knock on the door and in came Miss Moriarty to ask my parents to have a drink with her this Christmas Eve. This little intrusion destroyed our combined conscious or unconscious effort to give this little boarding house celebration some of the magic it had had in our house in Berlin. My mother with her usual innate dignity told Miss Moriarty that we were just about to have our family celebration. She thanked her for the invitation and Miss Moriarty quickly agreed to reschedule it for another time. So now we went ahead with our Christmas.

11.

Good-bye, England!

The decision to leave England for the States seems obvious in hindsight, but was not at all obvious at the time. On July 2, 1939, my father sailed to New York to explore the possibilities of reentering the banking profession there. Returning on the Queen Mary on July 24, my father writes me his conclusions:

As concerns America, I realize that it will be difficult to understand what general reason other than a job I could have to move with my family to America ... indeed, for me the possibility of a job is decisive. I have renewed my contact with bankers in New York City, and while there is nothing definite at this point, it is basically more than I had in England. Because I applied for a US visa a year ago, I am now able to get the whole family over to the States.

But these are just the external circumstances. At the bottom is my conviction that in a war between Germany and England - a war that will come sooner or later - you should not fight on the side of England, unless the situation demands it. If you stay in England, you'd have to do that because you'd be on your way to becoming an English citizen. While I have the firm wish that your connection with England will always remain the best, I would prefer that you became an American citizen along with me. By the way, you'll find many similarities between the English and the American school and university systems. After all, it was the English who founded the United States. To be sure, you'll feel very superior to the American pronunciation of English.

While I don't recall any face-to-face discussion of the subject, I have a hunch that my father was hoping that by moving to the United States our family would not be involved directly in a war against the country of our birth.

While my father on the Queen Mary was thus contemplating our family's future in July 1939, this is what some of the rest of us wrote at the time:

July 10, myself to my father: *As concerns the political situation, I'd wait [with the decision to go to the US] to see what happens in the Danzig situation, because this time it looks like either-or. [Danzig, a port on the Baltic, had the status of a Free City. Hitler had claimed it for Germany. Today it's called Gdansk and is part of Poland.]*

On the same date, July 10, Uncle Fritz writes: *The world is very restless and*

full of fears of war and rumors of war. Like the Greeks and the Trojans in Homer, the fighters yell insults and boasts at each other, in part to fill the other side with fear, in part to fill one's own side with courage. If it weren't so grim and dangerous, one would be inclined to laugh.

Unfortunately there is in Germany a great feeling of hatred towards England: one doesn't understand why the British oppose Germany's wishes concerning Danzig and the Polish Corridor. And England does not understand Germany's attitude and considers it duplicitous. Why, the English argue, if it has been bearable for so long that Danzig did not belong to Germany, why should it now suddenly be unbearable? And why, when the concern was the Sudeten Territory, we were also told it was because of the German ethnic issue? Yet it turned out that it was really about Czechoslovakia.

As always both sides are both right and both sides are wrong. Incidentally, I still very much hope that war will be avoided. It would be horrible if it came about.

What strikes me as particularly interesting was that at this moment my uncle faults the two sides equally. What he left out of the equation was Hitler's overall aggressive intent, but then that was not generally known at the time.

July 17, near the end of what would turn out to be my last term at Marlborough, I wrote my mother: *Are we going to Switzerland [for vacation]? If one is worried about a crisis, one could stay at home; it's just the papers that say something is going to happen in August. And how should they know what Hitler intends to do?* Nothing like a bit of clear thinking! Looking back, it was really remarkable luck that in the month before the outbreak of the war we were able to enjoy a last (prewar) family vacation in the *pink house* in the Engadin in Switzerland, along with my Marlborough friend, Arthur Robinson.



My father and I playing chess in our house in Switzerland in the summer of 1937. Note difference in attire.

The month of August 1939 reached a dramatic conclusion. As it turned out, my father had been able to get US visas for my mother, Fran, Max and myself, in time for sailing from Southampton to New York (actually Hoboken, New Jersey), on August 26 on the Dutch ship *Veendam*. He followed us several months later. Martha, then 20, stayed behind in England to marry Donald Camfield, an Englishman she had met while studying in Oxford the year before. In 1949 they and their children moved to Ottawa.

For my father, at age 49, the move to the United States represented the final resolution of a precipitate decline from worldly success. Up to this point, he had been extraordinarily successful in everything he undertook. In addition to his duties at the Bank, he was a member of the German Economic Commission to the League of Nations until 1933, when Germany left the League. Then in 1938, new Nazi race regulations did not allow “non-Aryan” directors. Since all of the directors of the Bank were “non-Aryans,” the Bank had to go into liquidation. There was, however, still the affiliate in Amsterdam. Then, during that fateful August vacation in Switzerland in 1939 came the final blow in the form of a late-night phone-call: Fritz Mannheimer, head of the Amsterdam affiliate, threatened with the revelation of failed speculation, had committed suicide. My father would never forgive himself: though not on the board of the Amsterdam affiliate, he felt he should have been aware of Mannheimer’s shady dealings. He feared, justifiably, as it turned out, that this disaster was going to prevent influential American banking friends from inviting him to join their firms in New York City.

Just to top things off: August 21 brought the news of the Hitler-Stalin Pact (a non-aggression pact between Germany and the USSR that neither side intended to keep). “This can’t be true!” was everyone’s reaction. But there wasn’t much time to try and puzzle it all out: the *Veendam* was awaiting our boarding in Southampton.

12.

Senior at Milton

The Atlantic crossing was made memorable by the news of Hitler's invasion of Poland, September 1, 1939, and the declaration of war by George VI two days later. The role of chance: our boat, being Dutch, represented a neutral nation; had it been English, we would have been interned as "enemy aliens" and shipped away, possibly to Canada. This happened to the three Cahn siblings, good friends from Berlin, who had left Berlin for England in 1936 and now live in Canada.

From Hoboken it was a mere hop to Summit, New Jersey, where our cousin Mimi Haimberger-Solmsen and her husband Max had emigrated two years earlier. From there it was on to Manhattan, where my parents lived until my father's death in 1956.

Within a week of our Hoboken arrival, I had been entered at Milton Academy in suburban Boston thanks to the friendship of my Uncle Fritz to Buck Hallowell, a Milton trustee. As it happened - something I found out much later - I could have entered college immediately on the strength of the five credits in the "School Certificate" exam I had taken at Marlborough the year before. Had I been aware of this possibility at the time, I might well have opted for college immediately, "to save a year," as I might have put it. It would have been a tough decision. As it was, I took advantage of the opportunity that being accepted at Milton offered, and in retrospect I am thoroughly glad I did.

It turned out to be an easy transition. After the relative rigor of Marlborough - both the Spartan atmosphere of the dormitory and living abroad for the first time - I found Milton to be warm and friendly in every respect: a room for myself as a senior, the total absence of caning, close contact with the faculty, and everything on a smaller scale. Compared to Marlborough's 800 students, there were only about 300 boys at Milton (grades 7-12).

I felt very comfortable with my fellow-students in the dormitory (Forbes House): in my second week I wrote home (from now once again in German): *The boys here are truly friendly, not just nice as at Marlborough. I am reminded of the boys in the YMCA (in 1934/35) and the patience they showed toward every boy before they labeled him stupid.* As I write this, I am surprised by my criterion for measuring friendliness!

Reading those letters now reminds me of things I had long forgotten: I write home about having to wear detachable stiff collars and a matching suit for the

Sunday evening meal and subsequent compulsory chapel service. At other times we can wear anything, as I put it in a letter, as contrasted with Marlborough, where variations in wearing apparel were very much restricted. Looking back, I see that I was learning an invaluable lesson: customs vary.

Marlborough had prepared me well for academic work: at Milton I worked hard and did well. I limited myself to four courses: Greek (Homer); Latin (Vergil); English (Hawthorne, Emerson, Keats, among others); US History. The latter contained much material new to me: while I knew where *Hessen* was, I did not know anything about the war in which Hessian mercenaries participated. Having always enjoyed history, I took part in a formal debate (put on by the Debating Society) of *Hamilton vs. Jefferson*, which got me thoroughly involved in the post-1789 period. (I had known that date well, but as a date of a revolution elsewhere.) Classes averaged about 14 students; in Greek, however, we were just three stalwarts.

In sports, I had a hand in getting soccer going as a sport at Milton, an activity that at that time was wholly informal, with no outside games. I remember a rope taking the place of the crossbar. In the winter term I chose basketball, totally new to me. There were four of us seniors who were put into a game when the varsity was far enough ahead so that our ineptitude would not cost Milton the game. The box score of one such game appeared in *The New York Times*, but - alas - with a player by the name of *Kemper*. (I still have that clipping.) In the spring I put my experience gained in Marlborough sweats to good use: I ran the mile. My aim was to beat five minutes, and I came close.

Were there no unpleasant memories? Well, there were a few dances at the Milton Club, rather formal affairs in formal attire. The girls came from the Girls Division of Milton Academy, which in those days was a separate entity. I write home in April 1940: *Last Saturday was another one of those dances, much like the others. There were some fox-trots and waltzes. Except for the extraordinary crowdedness I encountered no technical difficulties. I didn't enjoy the whole thing one bit.* I should add that dances were wholly new to me - no such things at Marlborough! I recall vaguely that during the 1939 Christmas vacation my parents had me take one or two lessons at a dance studio in Manhattan, so I'd have something to go on. It appears that at that time it was in the "technical field" that my interest in dances began and ended.

The thriving school life in beautiful suburban Boston became more and more overshadowed by the war in Europe. My graduation in June 1940 coincided with the fall of France; the prospect of the European continent under Nazi control was ominous indeed.

We were 50 in the Milton Class of 1940, and I am still in touch with four of them. In those days the relationship between Milton Academy and Harvard was such that a diploma from the former admitted you automatically to the latter. I don't recall taking any admission exams or SAT's. Thirty-five of us entered the Crimson's Hallowed Halls in September 1940.

In the preceding summer, with the active support of my parents, I had a wonderful transitional experience that took me to the country I knew so well through the novels of Germany's most widely read writer ever, Karl May, (1842-1912). I - and all my friends - had devoured him from age 12 on. As "Old Shatterhand," noble white friend of the American Indian, the narrator has thrilling adventures, read by millions, even today. All fictitious, but highly sympathetic towards Native Americans. Most Whites are shown as dastardly exploiters. The countryside is always beautiful, even though May allegedly was never west of Buffalo. I was headed west of Buffalo, to a riding camp, western style, in Encampment, Wyoming, just north of the Colorado border. I was thrilled by the train ride: *...the most beautiful part of the train trip were the Palisades in the Hudson Valley.* Then came a stopover in Chicago, a walk along Lake Michigan, *which resembled an ocean,* and finally Cheyenne, *with its endless bars and saddle shops - the whole State consists of horses, on the license plate is a bucking bronco.* For seven weeks, twenty of us, all male, about my age, were taken care of by a couple in their 50's, *just as I imagined old cowboys to look like,* as I put in one of my letters home. The riding, the caring of the horses, the overnight pack trips, the exhilarating 11,000 feet atmosphere, (4,500 feet higher than the Fextal!), the camaraderie - my letters home are ample testimony to a terrific summer. Just writing about it now - 65 years later - gives me a thrill!

This Wyoming adventure did something special for me: it gave me a glimpse into the size and variety of the United States. To be sure, I had studied about the "Conquest of the West" in my US History course, but it was this experience that made it real for me. *The central plain, flanked by mountains in the east and in the west* that I had learned about in geography class at Marlborough had suddenly become a reality.

13.

College Years

While I was thus getting ready for the rigors of college by riding high in the saddle, my parents, Franziska, Max, Uncle Fritz and his wife Aunt Barbara were living in Manhattan, as this quote from a letter of mine of April 1940 highlights: *Has Pappi broken Uncle Fritz's record of 13 Park Avenue blocks on one green light in our new Mercury?* I don't know about my father, but I know that in my countless attempts to break that record I never succeeded.

So the Harvard Yard welcomed me in September 1940. Life there was pleasant enough: after a week I write home: *So far everything has been as good as I can possibly wish. Everything is wonderful!* And after a second week: *I find out more and more how great an opportunity I have to be here at Harvard: an opportunity to learn, to make friends, to do sports, to discuss, and to work.* I go on to describe how despite the large numbers of students in lectures in Government, Economics and Chemistry, there are section meetings for only 15 and the opportunity to do individual lab work in Chemistry. In my other two courses, Beginning Spanish and Greek, there were section meetings of only 15 or fewer. In addition, all freshmen had individual advisers, who were very much available. It all sounds like Harvard publicity! I also show awareness of how Harvard contrasts with a German university by being more like "school." I attribute my evident understanding of the system to excellent preparation at Milton.

But I wasn't just doing academics. There was the FDR - Willkie election coming up. I wrote: *The approaching election is playing a big role. We talk about it all the time. Frank Billings and Henry Brooks [my roommates] are for Willkie, while I am for Roosevelt. I have to struggle hard. The Willkie people are in the majority.*

Why was I for FDR? Probably for the same reason that most refugees from Germany were: he seemed to have a better understanding of the true nature of Hitler. Of course I may well have been influenced by my father, who, despite his association with bankers and banking, preferred Democrats.

On another front, this quote from a letter to my parents in November: *"Although I have received about five invitations to dance series, I declined them all. The cost is from \$3 to \$4 and it takes up a lot of time."*

Then there was freshmen soccer, which I played with great enthusiasm. In a letter to my parents I noted with pride that I played the entire game against Yale. I

was on the Varsity squad in the next two seasons, but the coach used me only sparingly. I did win my Varsity Letter when he called on me for five minutes in the Yale game. But being only a lowly substitute did not stop me from loving the game the rest of my “playing career.” I continued to coach at the junior level until I retired from teaching. I still love watching it: recently in Spain I found it hard to bypass any bar that was showing a game.

Another extra-curricular activity I started then and continued for two more years was doing service volunteer work with Phillips Brooks House, Harvard’s community service organization, that is still going strong. In my case it consisted of doing a variety of tutoring in East Boston Community Centers and bringing me in contact with Blacks as well as recent immigrants for the very first time. A real eye opener. At least once a month some 30 of us participants would meet and discuss what we were doing. Chairman of our group - and he was excellent - was George Burditt from Chicago, who later became my roommate together with another lawyer-to-be, Thayer Drake. Both George and Thayer ran - successfully - for several student offices, calling me their “Mark Hanna,” or Campaign Manager. My help was minimal, but I enjoyed “my job” thoroughly. In 1974 George ran for the Senate from Illinois as a Republican against Adlai Stevenson’s son. It was a lost cause, but he fought to the finish. He, Thayer and I are still friends. My interest in service work was rekindled through Quaker “weekend workcamps” in Philadelphia some fifteen years later (p. 135).

In March 1941 I wrote my parents that I had decided to major in Greek and German and I added: *I am interested in languages and the teaching profession, and I consider myself suited for it. I like all subjects except the natural sciences, but I like languages the best. That, coupled with the fact that I enjoy the interchange involved in teaching and learning, has brought me to my decision.*

My father replied by return mail: *I read with the greatest interest that you are considering becoming a teacher. I am delighted! Because if one makes the basis of one’s life something for which one is talented, then one doesn’t worry about the future, but fights on with joy ... The teaching profession has an ideal and humane side (eine ideale und menschliche Seite) which makes it superior to all other professions.* My father’s total support of my chosen profession, even though it was so different from his own, meant much to me at the time and still moves me deeply today. While I had not yet decided between secondary school and college teaching, the die of my future professional life was cast.

I note sadly my failure back then to take more courses in the natural sciences. I did tackle Elementary Chemistry in my freshman year, and after a failing mark in November and a visit to the Dean of Freshmen, I did recoup and wrote a “B” final exam. However, that turned out to be the end of my work in the sciences. Today

I feel this gap acutely, especially in such an important field as biology. I admire my sister Martha, who is knowledgeable in the humanities *and* the sciences.

Between my freshmen and sophomore year I had a great “Americanizing” experience: I was a camp counselor at Camp Black Point on Lake George, near Ticonderoga, New York, with forty campers, ages 8-14. I was in charge of riding, with the use of four horses. I had my first encounter trying to counsel a “difficult” boy, but was in turn counseled at length by ‘The Chief,’ Mr. Morhouse. This from my letter to my parents: *“What he told me was most interesting, and I respect him much more now than before. Outwardly he appears rather gruff, but he means well. With an experience of 30 years, he knows boys well. My mistake was that I had wanted to cure a crying, spoiled 8-year old all at once, which is impossible. ‘The Chief’ compared himself to Hindenburg, gruff on the outside, but kind and gentle on the inside. I find the comparison most appropriate.”* I don’t know about the Hindenburg parallel, but I do recall that I did learn something important about handling “difficult” children. Counselors were worked hard since there was a great deal of farm work involved and a tennis court was being built which had to be rolled endlessly by hand. But I was fit, loved the riding, and my first job couldn’t have been in a nicer setting. A great learning experience.

My three undergraduate years were overshadowed by the war in Europe. Student opinion covered the entire range from seeking a separate peace with Hitler to declaring war on Germany. President James Bryant Conant was convinced that Hitler would have to be defeated at all costs, but he felt ambivalent about advocating going to war on the grounds that while he was not likely to see action, most students would. In a letter home I described my excitement hearing President Conant (in December 1940) urging us students not to let ourselves be distracted from our work and urging the United States to send military aid to England. Thereupon 500 students circulated a petition stating, “We students of Harvard do not agree with President Conant...we want books, not guns.” I was duly impressed by all this political activity.

Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941 put an end to all debate. I have many remembrances of this day, but I am not sure what belongs to back then and what was added later via discussions, readings and reflections. Discussions went from the historical analysis of FDR’s possible role in allowing Pearl Harbor to happen to speculations about the outcome of the war had Pearl Harbor never happened. All these and other considerations have blurred my recollection of my thoughts at the time.

A primary source I can quote from is a letter to my parents, dated December 12, 1941: *Since I wrote you last, much has happened. At first everyone was terribly excited; but by now things have calmed down: Germany’s declaration*

of war yesterday didn't make much of an impression. There was a huge meeting at which President Conant spoke. He again urged us to continue our studies, because for the time being we were able to do more that way than as soldiers.

With Pearl Harbor coming when it did, my undergraduate time (as well as that of most others in college at the time) was abbreviated: my junior year was squeezed into the summer of 1942, allowing me to graduate in June 1943, aided by a military deferment. Many in my class joined up earlier and didn't graduate until after their tour of duty. It was a hectic time of uncertainty both privately and publicly, but somehow studies went on. Proof are not only a few papers I wrote in those days that, like medieval manuscripts, have survived the vicissitudes of fortune, but also my vivid recollections of some outstanding professors. There was Karl Vietor in German literature, a former German, whose ability to recite and interpret poetry was unsurpassed. Interestingly, even in the small classes conducted in German, he did all the talking, never calling on anyone. Somehow he made it work; others thought as highly of him as I did. Then there was John Finley, professor of Greek, (and Housemaster of Eliot House, a position he took very seriously), whose lectures on Homer were spellbinding. Unforgettable was Professor Crane Brinton's opening of his lecture on the French Revolution: *Two prostitutes were walking down a Paris street, when one said to the other ...* I am afraid my memory fails me here, and there is no epistolary record either. But he sure got our attention! Less distinguished, but equally memorable was Professor Pitirim Alexandrinovitch Sorokin, who taught Introductory Sociology. I wrote home about him in this way: *Professor Sorokin's lectures are not easy to follow. How would you translate these words of his: 'The essential components of an empirical socio-cultural system are a system of meanings; articles that objectify meanings, vehicles; and human agents.'* (I must have copied this out of our textbook which he had written.) Did I understand this better then than I do now? I sure hope so.

My undergraduate career reached its climax with orals in my major that was called: "Literature: Greek and German." The setting: Professor Vietor and a professor of Greek, asking their questions, each being painstakingly careful not to ask questions in each other's field. The one slight exception was a question by Vietor: "Did Goethe ever visit Greece?" Inwardly I panicked because I wasn't sure. I decided not to gamble a Yes or No and said I didn't know, hoping that this answer would be interpreted as extreme intellectual honesty. (I learned subsequently that Goethe never did get to Greece.) Happily, I was able to write home: *At the end of an hour, I was sent out of the room for five minutes, after which time Professor Vietor called me back to tell me that I would be recommended for a BA cum laude.*

During these two years I attended the University Lutheran Church in Cambridge with some regularity. I very much liked its Pastor, Reverend Edmund Steimle. I joined this church since it seemed quite close to Germany's "Protestant" Church, into which I had been confirmed. I continued my membership in the Lutheran Church in Germantown in Philadelphia until I was drawn into Quakerism. But more about that later. I did teach a small group of 14-year-olds in Sunday School. In a letter to my parents in November 1942 I find the description of this young teacher's faux pas: *Discussing the day's news, we were listing the countries that were neutral. After Switzerland, Sweden, Spain and Portugal had been duly mentioned, one boy, who all along had known too much, mentioned Andorra. I told him he was confusing it with Ankara, the capital of Turkey. When I got home, I looked it up and learned the truth. Now I can well imagine how the kid reported to his family, 'There is a country called Andorra, isn't there? My teacher said there isn't.' So by now I've probably lost my job.* What a wonderful lesson to learn: you may *think* you know something, when in fact you can be dead wrong.

This same letter contains an aside of mine that strikes me as extremely wise: *Many subjects one writes about in college have the vast reach of Fran's paper on The Book of Job. The only reason one can tackle them is that one doesn't know much.* [Fran had written the family about an assignment she had received at Bennington College.] *The main thing is that one thinks about the issues raised, and in so doing one notices their vast extent.* Isn't that what learning is all about?

While I was learning all these valuable lessons at college - and even getting a degree in the process - my mother's time was considerably less cheery. As she had in World War I, she again served as nurse, this time at Beth-El Hospital in Brooklyn. At the end of the first week she writes: *My work here is probably quite different from yours: you wouldn't like it, but I am enjoying it and I am beginning to get used to it. Everything is a little slow at the beginning, because after 25 years I'm a little out of practice.* She compares her daily 8 hours at Beth-El with 14 hours in Berlin. *Yet people here consider the work too strenuous despite excellent meals. They are really quite spoiled; they have no concept of real need.*

I am embarrassed to have to confess that I read these comments of my mother with amazement. Life could not have been easy for her, but she did what she did as a matter of course. It was a far cry from her life in Berlin, where we had a staff of servants and her manual work was minimal. I like to think that all of us in the family were properly appreciative.

This was the time, early in 1942, when, as a result of the stepped-up Nazi persecution of Jews, we received word of the deaths of two people close to us.

My father writes in April 1942: *“My old friend Julius Seligsohn died in a concentration camp. (I had not known him, but got to know his widow and children, who had been able to reach the United States.) When I come to realize that such incomprehensible mistreatment has been inflicted on such a dear old friend, then I am overcome again and again by a huge pain for all the misfortune in our former country.*

From Berlin we received word of the suicide of Claere Kaufmann, age 50, a much beloved “aunt” of us children. A former student of philosophy at Berlin University and long-standing friend of my parents, Claere was a lover of the best of German poetry, a love she passed on to me by the way she read it out loud. Tragically, she had no surviving family, and thus will soon not be remembered by anyone. Her fault was that she was Jewish.

14.

My Father in a New Setting

While my mother was working hard as a nurse, my father was busy on two very different fronts: both as a student at Columbia University and as an entrepreneur in Rahway, New Jersey. He thought that a business degree from Columbia might prove helpful sometime in the future, in some way or other. As it turned out, it was not helpful, but in the meantime he thoroughly enjoyed his time in academia. In November 1942 he wrote me: *I am absolutely determined to continue my studies just out of a sense of honor and appreciation of the spirit of this University, a spirit that I find just wonderful (herrlich).*

From business theory at Columbia to business practice at Rahway: he and three others had started a small manufacturing business, making insulation tubing for electrical wiring used in all kinds of machinery. Lacking scientific knowledge, my father handled the business end. It was hard work. Perhaps it's wrong to say he loved the job, but he did find himself fully engaged, appreciated and useful, to say nothing of being able to contribute to the war effort, the US Navy being a customer. There must have been trying moments with his secretarial help: his words *with kindest regards from Mrs. Kempner and me* were corrected by his secretary to *from Mrs. Kempner and I*. This my father annotated on the carbon copy he sent me with *that's what my secretary suggested, which is not what I would have written*. He had an intense love and respect for things American, and so his secretary, a recent highschool graduate, surely had to be correct against his own better knowledge. By the early 50s the company had expanded from five to 150 workers, a fact of which my father was immensely proud. I worked there for two weeks just before being drafted in the summer of 1943, much to my father's joy. For me, it was a great learning experience: eight-hour work days, paid by the hour, punching a time clock. Teaching was going to be very different.

My father's feelings toward his work at the Rahway factory were ambivalent. Yes, he felt proud, but he also had his doubts as he reflected on the contrast of his life in Rahway with his life in Berlin. His full thinking appears in a letter of December 1946. Here he stands revealed as a citizen of two worlds: that of the mind and that of daily action. As if to illustrate this duality, he begins this letter describing at some length his being overwhelmed by the speech of Prometheus in the opening of Aeschylus' drama *Prometheus Bound*. Then he shifts gears (not unusual for him) and writes: *These small-town, middle class people interest and affect me*

much more nowadays than the 'leading class' folks I always knew and to an extent belonged to. You can place me face to face with any kind of man of the upper classes and I will know what it's all about. Some are lovely, some are terrible, all types and kinds are familiar. The Main-Street folks of the small Jersey town where I spend my entire life, represent, on the other hand, an entirely new and definitely important new world. If there is tragedy in daily happenings without too large an importance, it would be that I will never acquire their full confidence. They trust me as a businessman, as a gentle boss, etc., but they distrust the limitation of my faked interests in them. ... No doubt there is something wrong in my present life. The main fact that I have to get up so early during eleven months of the year in order to catch the 7:55 at Penn Station and before that the 7:35 E-Train at 53rd and Lexington day after day, and that I am too tired at night to do anything except go to Columbia University on the days I have to, is crazy. ... And then, on the other hand, I develop this passion for the factory and for knowing more about the inner life and soul of the small town people who give the immense strength to this country by their pride and their democratic independence. They are not impressed whatsoever by the big towns and their own enormously high standard of living and their astonishingly limited scope of more exacting mental interests. I always thought that only the very rich have little mental interests beside tea parties, cocktail parties and coming-out parties. I now find that small-townners have limited mental interests as well.

What I find remarkable in this letter is both his perceptive self-analysis and his willingness to state it openly. His interest in the *Main-Street folks* of Rahway was indeed to a large extent *faked*. The fact that he was determined to maintain his *crazy* commuting schedule is part and parcel of his ever-present extraordinary determination regardless of external difficulties. There is an incident that he told us of his daily subway travel: safely ensconced in the E-Train's lead car to shorten the distance to the New Jersey local at Penn Station, he would start munching on a roll brought from home. He did this until a woman of the people (*Frau aus dem Volk*) called him to task one day with these harsh words: *I have been watching you son-of-a-bitch eating your sandwich before; next time I'll report you to the police!* Nothing could have embarrassed my order-loving father more than this, and, as he tells it, he never ate on the subway again.

One of his last letters is from October 1955, half a year before he died, addressed to my brother Max, who at the time was doing his military service with the US Army in Bavaria, and for that reason was written in English. By that time he was fully engaged in the Rahway factory. Having gained his Columbia MA, he summarized his fate in his characteristic self-revelatory fashion:

At the end of my glorious life, which saw me at the top of my class in law school, in business competition with the great gangsters of our age, of whom I supposed myself to be entitled to become one in due course myself, and after meddling in diplomacy and international big-talk, surrounded by ministers of state and being photographed on Balkan railroad stations (Sofia, Bulgaria) with such people, — how do I end up? Watching over office girls spending the duly paid time on duly forthcoming office work. It is really very much like Eleonora Duse, the greatest actress I ever saw on the stage, ending up as a small cabaret performer in a suburb of a small town in Italy. She did not end up that way. But if she had, that would be me. (The Italian actress, Eleonora Duse, who died in 1924, was a friend of my Mendelssohn grandparents. We still have a photo showing her, theatrically poised, with her handwritten dedication to them.)

War Mail from England

Before my induction in June 1943, I had been trying to stay informed about the War through news media - no TV of course - as well as meetings and discussions. But I had an inside track, not available to many: accounts from my Marlborough friends. Here are some samples, in chronological order:

From Arthur Robinson, the history buff, at his family home in Frodsham, Cheshire, end of August 1939: *We are getting ready for inevitable war here. Everyone is taking it very philosophically. We have just finished our air-raid shelter one hour ago. From our house we can see 14 barrage balloons and there are lots of searchlights at night. We are heavily defended here: Liverpool - Manchester area (Danger Area No. 2). I had today filled 30 sandbags, blackened our windows and generally prepared for tomorrow's war. I am sure it will be declared then. Tonight I heard that Hitler has refused mediation; Fritz, that man is mad. He is going to plunge us all into a world war to satisfy an ambition completely out of date. I am a Frodsham dispatch rider on my bicycle! I hope I have my steel helmet in time! I believe our district has 500 planes to defend it. I am earnestly praying that they will do it well for the sake of my health in the near future! I fervently hope that after this, peace of a lasting sort will be firmly fixed in the world.*

Again, Arthur: Oct.1, 1939: *Well, Hitler wanted war with Poland and now he has got it with England and France; I hope he enjoys it. He is finished all right although it will be two or three years... Without being hypocrites in any way, most decent Englishmen are very sorry for the Germans.*

From Ron Thompson, May 20, 1940 (Ron was tops in everything: studies, sports, leadership): *The big battle that is now going on in Belgium and France, will, we all hope, decide the issue of the war in our favor. If it does not, we shall have to fight all the harder. You in America may count yourselves lucky that the British navy is still mistress of the seas. If you came in today, the war would be over in a little space of time. That is a vain hope I know.*

Paul Williams, also writing from Marlborough, July 1940: *You in the States must realize that we badly need your material aid. We are not starving - even in Preshute there is plenty. Nobody is afraid of the Germans, everyone wants to get at them, and we have the will to win, so win we shall. If any*

German tries to set foot in England he will not receive any mercy. The country is ready for parachutists - if they dare come. The L.D.V. (Local Defense Volunteers) is a new organization to deal with anyone - parachutists or Fifth Column. Germany is like a balloon - it is continuing to expand, but soon it will burst. You, in America, think that you are miles from the war, but you must realize that you are probably the next on the list. You know that we will win, so you are not bothering. We have got the will to win; all we need is continual supplies.

Again Ron Thompson, now from Cambridge University, May 8, 1941: *The general feeling in the country is very good and not much pessimism. Everyone hates the Boche [World War I pejorative for Germans], especially the bombing. Lots of people want reprisal raids. I don't think we will make peace unless we win. If invasion comes, I think we are ready. The Home Guard is pretty efficient. I'd like a crack at the Germans. I have great plans for the long vacation. Fishing, walking, hitch hiking. I hope Hitler puts off the invasion till September.*

Next, Paul Williams, Sept. 26, 1941: *... on the actual battle front we have seen an amazing increase in the activity of the Royal Air Force. Their raids on Germany must be having a great effect on their western industries. The daylight sweeps of our fighters must be making the German ground defenses a bit nervous. One day I hope that what started as an offensive patrol will turn in to a large-scale raid which in turn will turn into a landing and then into an invasion.*

I have seen a great number of American planes in this country and from all accounts they are good. The Tomahawk, the Grumman Martlet, the Hudson, the Fortress, the Catalina, the Maryland, the Boston, the Havoc, and the Harvard. ... We have moved long way since Sep 3, 1939, but we still have a long way to go before we can help free Europe from the Germans.

I was most surprised when I hear that Germany had attacked Russia. [June 21, 1941] It seems to me that it was Hitler's greatest mistake. He has certainly met a greater opposition than he expected. The Russians have proved that they are great fighters and it is for us - Britain, the Dominions and America, to help them as much as we can, and more.

In your letter you said: 'The amazing thing about this war is the way people get used to anything so easily, and accept it, as if it could not have happened in any other way.' I must say that I agree with you completely. One of my friends who lives in London slept through the heaviest air raid they had. People sit playing cards at night or listening to the wireless or occupying themselves in some way or other; soon you may hear the note of

German airplanes passing overhead. Instead of rushing down to shelters, they just say 'I wonder what town is going to get it tonight?' If the Air Raid warning goes, those with special jobs go about them quietly and quickly, probably saying, 'Why did he have to come the night I am on duty?'

One thing I am almost certain about. This time the Peace ought to be fairly successful thanks to Roosevelt and Churchill. The sooner we have peace, the better, but no one here is going to stop fighting until we get the peace we want.

And again Arthur, August 9, 1942, now an officer with the Armoured Corps in India: And how are you? In the US Army yet? What a predicament you will find yourself in. Still, you are not alone. I have in the last few weeks been bodily rooted out of my home-country by a ruthless Fate, to wit H.M.'s Government, and transported 15,000 miles to come to rest here. ... I wonder how long the war will go on for. That blasted Germany has upset the whole world. I do hope the Russians give them a beating but it seems the other way about at present. I hope we attack in the West this year The British Army is well-trained and equipped; now if only we can get the ships to carry our armoured forces. I believe you are doing marvelous things though in your shipyards over there, aren't you? There is one thing I am quite sure of in this War. If the Russians can hold out two months longer, Anglo-US production must begin to turn the scales. [It did.] By the way, what do you think of our 1,200 bomber raid on Cologne? I can imagine your conflicting feelings on these vast raids of ours and respect them: but this is Total War: they've asked for it, and they get it. I hope for your sake that none of your relatives were in those cities. It must be agony for the anti-Hitler German refugees to watch this destruction: one or two I met in London, however, thought it was the only way and they were right.

Back to Paul Williams: March 1943, training with the R.A.F. in Canada. I wish I could meet you and talk about England sometime. It is not the England we knew before the war; it is not a country bitter with hatred; it is not a country that laughs and plays games all the time, although we still have our humour and our sport. Although without luxuries, we still have all the necessities of life. If only America and Britain will stick together not only for the duration of the war but also for the duration of the peace! I will tell you quite honestly - and I hope you will tell your friends - that at one time we in Great Britain rather laughed at the Americans. Their big talk and their big figures made us rather skeptical of the possible results. But now as the results materialize, our admiration for them grows. And I hope it will not cease to grow. Paul Williams survived the war; he died only recently.

Last, again Ron Thompson, who had given up on a captaincy in order to become a paratrooper: April 14, 1944: ... *It must be hard for you to sit back, to be instrumental in the terrible destruction which is being leveled at your own fatherland. It will be harder still, I imagine, if you are ever forced to fight in Europe against men who were once living around you everyday. But it is a strangely chaotic world we live in now and I suppose it is really no worse to fight against those who are of your own stock, than to fight against fellow human beings, whoever they are.*” Ron survived the war. He died in 1998, having moved to France and become a farmer.

I find these letters a vivid comment on the effects of war on the warring sides: “feeling sorry” for the Germans very quickly turned to hatred, which in turn provided the determination to accept hardship and to overcome the inconveniences and dangers of air raids. Far from destroying the will of the British people at home, the effect, as well as the mere threat of air raids was the exact opposite of what was intended: it strengthened their resolve to win. The grim fact is that the bombing of Germany had exactly the same effect on the German population: far from weakening their resolve, it gave them determination to carry on. By now it should be obvious that massive bombing of civilians does not bring about military victory.

I have often been asked how I felt about the bombings of German civilian populations at the time they were happening. “Horrible, but necessary to get rid of Hitler,” was usually my short answer. A more accurate answer would have been longer and less clear-cut. I tended to tell myself that, after all, the Germans who hadn’t emigrated had it coming to them because “they” had supported Hitler for so long. But of course the word “they” lumped together those who held far from identical views, ranging all the way from gung-ho Nazis, to my relatives and friends like Werner and Karlpeter and even those who ended up working in the secret resistance movement against the Nazis. Then there were the many who had drifted into supporting the Nazis, but were wholly opposed to the continuation of a hopeless war after the German defeat at Stalingrad (February 1943). Of course this was only my general sense since I lacked the kind of precise information that didn’t become general knowledge until after the War. How then did my knowledge of different views of Germans, limited as it was, affect my thinking? To satisfy my conscience, I simplified. I said to myself: “The Germans are responsible for having a Nazi government, therefore they have to suffer for it now.” Of course I was aware that this was no more than a rationalization, and was full of holes. But it was a way to put my conscience at ease. Sadly, in wartime, when killing fellow humans becomes the objective, it is necessary to create an image of the enemy (*Feindbild*) that makes killing “the thing to do.” The enemy is labeled in terms that

are sub-human, so that one's own naturally humane feelings are undermined ("Japs," "Gooks"). Whether such a technique would have got me through conditions of combat, I don't know. It was my good fortune that I never got into combat. In that way, my task of dealing with emotions aroused by having to fight my former countrymen was made immeasurably easier.

16.

We're in the Army Now!

My deferment ended with my graduation, and I was a GI by the end of June 1943. I was 22. In a letter Uncle Fritz reminds me that he was exactly that age when war broke out in 1914 and he entered the German army. He wishes me well and adds, *It is hard to predict the future these days. The War can last a long time. At least two years, possibly longer.* Not a bad guess! It was still before Stalingrad.

My Army experience is well-documented: I still have some 100 letters of my own that somehow reentered my possession, as well as 100 or more from my parents, siblings, Uncle Fritz and Aunt Barbara. While all letters up until my induction were written in German, the language changes abruptly to English once I became a soldier. Well, that's understandable seeing who the enemy was. My father carried the adoption of English a step further, by addressing his first letter to me as a soldier with *Dear Freddie*. To this I replied: *By the way, please call me by my name! 80% of the men here have non-English names anyway; e.g., Kalitzky, Kametz, Sarvoni, Yalis ... etc. You can write me in German too - just as you like.*" The latter never happened, and I, too, wrote in English until the end of the war.

Those non-Anglo-Saxon last names did represent a population virtually unknown to me before: the famous American "melting pot." To be sure, Harvard had its share of non-Anglos, but they did not set the tone. The tone of the Army was that "of the people." Ivy-Leaguers were the exception. Our common tasks, close living conditions and necessary submission to Army discipline all acted as levelers. The simplicity of the humor I found a great help. No matter how often repeated, I still can chuckle over this one: "What's a soldier's pay?" Answer: "\$50 a day!" which was followed by the kicker: "Once a month!" While still at Harvard, I had attended a meeting organized by the National Ski Association of America, at which a flyer was distributed, enticing us to sign up for the Mountain Troops: *The Army still wants tough outdoor men for its Mountain Troops... the requirements are primarily a keen desire to serve in the mountain forces, and the physical fitness obviously needed.* We were informed that we would be joining many top skiers and thus would be in a position to serve our country through our skiing skills... This was too much to resist, and many of us signed up.

It didn't quite work out that way. My first two months consisted of basic training with an engineer battalion in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in beautiful

Ozark country. (Of course carrying an 80-pound pack reduces one's enjoyment of scenic beauty somewhat.) I have in front of me the single-page mimeographed sheet given to all of us recruits upon arrival. It reads, in part: *The barracks are of the new frame cantonment construction, amply lighted and heated, with full bathroom facilities. Each company has its own mess hall and kitchen where all men receive three hot meals daily, prepared by experienced cooks under competent supervision... Athletic equipment is provided for the men and no effort is spared to promote their health and general well-being.* All this struck many of us funny initially, but less so in the long run.

This was the time of the overthrow of Mussolini (June 1943), and the impending withdrawal of Italy as a combatant in the war. That, coupled with Russian successes in the east, made my usually serious Uncle Fritz write: *We are living in the year 999 Nazi reckoning: you'll recall the regime was supposed to last 1,000 years.* My reply: *The news of the fall of Mussolini was overshadowed by the fact that there was no toilet paper that day.*

It was at this time that US troops invaded Sicily. These developments made my father hopeful that the Germans' faith in Hitler's dictatorship would be seriously shaken. *As you know, he writes August 9, 1943, I am not very militaristic by nature; and I am more inclined to see the sorrows and hardships of war, wherever they happen. But I can honestly say that it fills me with profound satisfaction to see that the Anglo-Americans are doing better all the time, and that the Russians are having great successes in the east. Also I am confident that by now the Germans must be getting pretty scared. That's one of the things that can shorten war and open up some hopes for a better future.*

Unfortunately, my father's hopes that the pro-Allied trends in 1943 would shorten the war proved to be wishful thinking: Goebbels' propaganda machine was so powerful that it took a full-scale invasion of Germany to bring an end to the war. It seems to me that by now (2006) more and more evidence has accumulated suggesting that bombing from the air does not win wars.

Writing me at about this time, Uncle Fritz expresses a less optimistic view: *The really dangerous point seems to me that humanity has not developed a conscience in step with its technical progress. Hence the relative increase in blind destructive forces. If they are not bridled in time, they have a dangerous tendency of leading to self-destruction, the consistent negation of life whose essence is a tendency toward self-perpetuation.*

My uncle clearly faults both sides of the conflict. As for the tendency toward self-destruction, I'm afraid not much has changed in the 60 years since he wrote this.

Basic engineering training continued in its rigorous path in hot, dusty Ozark country, until late in August when I was suddenly transferred to the Mountain

Troops at Camp Hale, Colorado. I had asked for such a transfer a number of times, but was always put off. I now found out that my initial application to the Mountain Troops had been unintentionally overlooked and I had been put in the Engineers on the grounds that my background in Classics would enable me to learn something entirely new. (Clearly the shortage of Engineers was serious!) So I *did* learn a few new things; for example, how many pounds of dynamite it takes to knock down a tree eight inches thick. It's a skill for which fortunately I still have little use.

Camp Hale had existed for only six months when I arrived there in September 1943. There never had been Mountain (or "Ski") Troops before, when suddenly someone high-up felt the need for it. The camp was at 9,000 feet, which certainly sounds good, until the Army learned that it had acquired a terrible piece of land: it was in a sheltered valley, resulting in a steady build-up of dust from the soft coal used to heat the barracks. The dust was most noticeable a few hundred feet up into the hills above the camp, because at that distance the barracks were no longer visible. There were stories of the Army purchasing agents being cheated. Then there was a second equally disastrous feature: the top leadership looked upon mountain troops as regular infantry who happened to be training in the mountains. The same performances were expected; for example, to march four miles in 50 minutes, with a full pack. This would be quite an achievement in Fort Benning, Georgia, but at 9,000 feet it is a virtual impossibility except for the most athletic. The junior officers, mostly top skiers, were well aware of this, and gradually made their knowledge known to the higher-ups, but it took lots of respiratory sickness and an enlargement of the camp hospital to bring about appropriate adjustments in demands.

I had a fairly leisurely time, since the Engineer Battalion of the Division - the 10th Mountain Division - was just in the process of being formed. As it turned out, the supply of Ivy-League type skiers like myself was insufficient to complete the roster, so men who had never even seen snow were brought in from Alabama and Georgia. They didn't care for the Rockies one bit.

As part of ongoing training I did go on several overnight bivouacs, which I enjoyed for the simple reason that I thrived at this altitude. The equipment was carried by mules, which required a loading technique and new terminology learned in hour after hour of training. (How many legs does a mule have? Sorry, only two! The other two are called arms.) Camping out at 10,000 feet was fun - it says so in my letters! Being in open nature agreed with me. I wrote home, "*I never realized before why poets in their similes so often refer to springs.*"

In November snow began to fall, and ski school for instructors started. I was pleasantly surprised that that included me. I managed to keep up only because

there were many worse than I. It was exhausting: there were no tows, so we had to walk up every inch that we were going to ski down. In addition, it was deep powder, a condition I had but rarely experienced in New England.

Would I have made it as ski-instructor? I'm afraid I'll never know: early in December 1943 a *deus ex machina* appeared and sent me off to the ASTP - The Army Specialized Training Program. I was moved by my company commander's parting words: "Sorry to see you leave, Kempner, we were just about getting used to you!" I was lucky to get out when I did: in the summer of 1944 the 10th Mountain Division entered combat in Italy, slogging its way up the Apennines, in a bloody, drawn-out campaign. By chance, Natalie's first husband-to-be, Orlow Kent, who like me had chosen to serve with the ski troops in this same Division, was wounded in the Italian campaign and shipped home.

One vivid memory of Camp Hale: in addition to thousands of GI's, the Camp housed several hundred German prisoners. We were not supposed to talk to them, but at odd moments I managed to sneak brief conversations. They had all been members of Field Marshal Rommel's famous Afrika Corps, captured in about May 1943, when Germany was only just beginning to lose the war. Without exception, they were arrogant (or was it that the doubters didn't dare speak up in front of their peers? I never got them one-on-one) and confident in the effectiveness of the *Geheimwaffe* (secret weapon) and sure of the *Endsieg* (the final victory). As they marched through camp to their work sites, they sang their songs proudly, many of which I knew well. For me, those were tense moments of emotional turmoil.

Late in November 1943 Uncle Fritz writes: *The bombing of Berlin, inevitable as it is, makes me sad - too many innocent, decent people, children: homeless, crippled, and so on. It's a bad world.*

An addendum to my time at Camp Hale: as a member of the Armed Forces for the required 90 days, I took my citizenship oath on October 28, 1943 at the Eagle County District Court, Colorado. I looked upon it as the logical outcome of the loss of my German citizenship, my coming to the United States and my joining the US Army. It seemed just right.

For what followed at the Court House I was unprepared. I was asked if I wanted to make any changes in my name; I was told I could do it right then and there. I thought about it for about a minute and decided I'd keep my last name, but change my first names of Friedrich Franz Maximilian, which is how from time to time some of my college friends would refer to me, to Frederick Franz, omitting Maximilian altogether. (Friedrich was after my Uncle Fritz, Franz and Maximilian after my grandfathers.) My reasoning: "Frederick" would be more intelligible should an impatient First Sergeant ask me my first name during a roll call, and the

omission of Maximilian would provide a clear-cut answer to the command “State your middle initial!” (I suppose my action reflects my accommodating nature.) Why did I drop “Maximilian” and not “Franz”? The latter was shorter. Indeed shameful reasoning. I hope grandfather Maximilian Kempner has forgiven me. He died in 1927. I recall his full beard and warm smile.

17.

ASTP

So, as the snow began to fall, I shipped out to Lincoln, Nebraska, in charge of the “travel unit,” of which I was the only member. The Army had left nothing to chance. At Lincoln, I was screened most carefully to see where I was going to fit into the Army Specialized Training Program. It was going to be the kind of training that the Army is not set up to provide. As an official flyer put it: “*You should know that responsible assignments await graduates of the Program...*” Taking a rather long perspective, the flyer points out that the current war *requires all the traditional courage of the soldier of Colonial days, and something more*. In the case of my group this something more was to be the role of a foreign area and language expert.

So twenty of us, mostly born in central Europe, all with a German-speaking background, were shipped from Lincoln to Minneapolis, where we started taking courses at the University of Minnesota. We were free to choose: History, Government, Economics, Sociology - so long as it dealt with Central Europe and the 20th century. We worked quite hard: a little out of a sense of guilt, as I indicate in a letter home: *I am fully aware that at present I am almost out of the Army, and although I think and hope that soon I will be in it a little more actively, I realize that I am leading a very soft life in comparison to the men in training camps, not to mention all those in Italy and the Pacific.*

The most meaningful learning was from each other; in fact, we formed a seminar group, where each told as much as he could about his background and locale of upbringing. Prussians, Bavarians, Rhinelanders, Swabians, Austrians - by describing ourselves, our recent history and our dialects, we learned a great deal from one another. I recall lengthy discussions of winner-take-all vs. proportional representation, and still have a long letter from my father in which he attributes the downfall of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) to its system of proportional representation.

The ASTP did not have a good public image. A popular jingle said:

*Take down your service star, mother,
your son's in the ASTP!*

Thus it was a foregone conclusion that it did not survive the spring of 1944. It was a noble experiment that failed probably because it was just too difficult to administer effectively. In April, our group of 20 was shipped to Camp Ritchie in

Maryland.

As mentioned earlier, beginning with my service in the Army all correspondence was in English. For my father, this initially required a conscious effort. But then in March 1944 he writes: *It is quite strange that our relationship has more and more become bilingual. Formerly I would not have addressed you in any language but German, which after all is our mother tongue. This is still so when I talk to you. But in writing I more and more gained the habit of no longer translating but of formulating my words directly in the language of our home-country, which the US are gradually becoming, more rapidly day by day.* (He is proudly referring to my recently acquired citizenship.)

While my father was beginning to feel comfortable writing to me in English, we continued using German in conversation right up to the end of his life. It just seemed natural.

18.

Interrogation: Theory and Practice

Camp Ritchie turned out to be a complete contrast to Camp Hale. Located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Maryland with a pleasant spring climate, its gently rolling hills contrasted sharply with the mighty Rockies of Colorado. More important: the training program of eight weeks was carefully planned, well taught and altogether meaningful. The subject matter of the various programs at the Camp was Military Intelligence; ours was the interrogation of prisoners. To be able to interrogate effectively, we had to know German Army organization: its weapons, training routines, slang - anything that would enable us to interrogate intelligently. A great many of the trainees were German or Austrian refugees like myself, many of whom spoke English with a German accent. It was a situation that did not lack irony, often humorous. There was a constant temptation to assume the persona of a German soldier, especially for the ham actors among us.

The most fun were the practice interrogations. These were part of all-day "war games," in which we and the prisoners-to-be had been given elaborate battle situations, which in turn provided the setting of the interrogations. These involved a cast of three: a pretend-prisoner, a trainee, and an instructor acting as evaluator. This resulted in multiple role-playing: I, as the trainee, would be trying to size up the prisoner as he was brought into the interrogation tent to see what psychological type he was trying to portray; the shaken and scared weakling at one extreme, the proud, tough, determined Nazi at the other. If interrogated properly, the prisoner would yield the particularly valuable information he had; if not, the trainee was out of luck. The whole thing became a guessing game: What role is the prisoner playing? Should I yell at him or offer him a chair and a cigarette and ask him about his health? I often thought back on these interrogation practices once I began teaching: should I be firm with student X, or should I be easy going (or anything in between)? Unfortunately, in real life, whether as interrogator of real Germans, or as a teacher of a Latin class, or as a stepfather or stepgrandfather, I found out that the "correct" way would be far less obvious and feedback would be far from immediate or definitive. Still, despite its artificiality, we enjoyed the whole process and I know benefited from it.

My whole interrogation experience has just recently come back to me with the news concerning interrogation of Iraqi prisoners. The question discussed has been: What technique do you use to get a prisoner to tell you what he knows? Of

the many opinions expressed, Truth Extraction, an article by Stephen Budiansky (Atlantic Monthly June 2005) I feel has it exactly right:

Six months before the abuses at Abu Ghraib prison broke into public view, a small and fairly obscure private association of United States Marine Corps members posted on its Web site a document on how to get enemy POWs to talk.

The document described a situation very similar to the one the United States faces in the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan: a fanatical and implacable enemy, intense pressure to achieve quick results, a brutal war in which the old rules no longer seem to apply. Marine Major Sherwood F. Moran, the report's author, noted that despite the complexities and difficulties of dealing with an enemy from such a hostile and alien culture, some American interrogators consistently managed to extract useful information from prisoners. The successful interrogators all had one thing in common in the way they approached their subjects. They were nice to them.

Moran's report written in 1943, deals with interrogation of Japanese prisoners of war. He argues that the key to successful interrogation is *talking as a human being to a human being*. In other words, get the prisoner to relax, making him feel that he is now safe and that the war is over for him. Then, as the prisoner begins to talk, he may reveal what on the surface seems inconsequential, but which, when assembled into a larger mosaic at a higher headquarters, may be a significant link of important missing information. *Enlightened hard-boiled-ness* is how Sherwood Moran characterizes his recommended approach.

Of course there is one overriding difficulty in knowing what bit of information is significant or what isn't: unless the interrogators are close to the top of the intelligence-gathering pyramid, they have little if any way of evaluating the importance or the validity of information revealed by a prisoner. The information is passed on, and only higher-ups can evaluate its veracity and significance.

My own experience kept me far from the top of the intelligence gathering pyramid. After completing training at Camp Ritchie, we were shipped to a holding camp in Broadway, Worcestershire, in lovely rural England. We were there during June, 1944, (D-Day was June 6), and didn't cross the Channel until the middle of July. For the next four weeks we had as idyllic an existence as can be had in wartime. Our tiny team of two officers and four enlisted men (myself as a Private first class), two jeeps and a trailer had our "home" in a lovely old mansion in Mur-de-Bretagne, in the middle of Brittany, far from action of the front lines. We were in that out-of-the-way location in order to interrogate prisoners from the three encircled Atlantic ports of Brest, St. Nazaire and Lorient, which the Germans refused to surrender. It was a wonderfully uncomplicated assignment, since these three ports remained



Our Interrogation Team (two officers, four enlisted men) in Brittany in August 1944. All of us were first or second generation German-Americans.

isolated, German ground forces having been withdrawn from that part of France by early July. Since the military situation was wholly stationary, we soon knew the identity and makeup of all German units defending the ports inside out, often to the surprise of the prisoner. We knew the names of most of the commanding officers, and upon identifying a prisoner's unit were able to greet him with: *How is Hauptmann Mueller?* While most, though not all, prisoners were very willing to tell us what they knew, they unfortunately didn't know much we didn't know already. Learning which unit a PW belonged to was always easy, since it was entered on page four in his paybook (*Soldbuch*), and very few had followed the directive of tearing out that page, fewer still had taken the extreme step of throwing away the paybook altogether. To do so went against the ingrained pride of the German of being a soldier rather than a "partisan" or guerrilla fighter who would have no documents proving his legitimacy as a fighter. On both the eastern and the western fronts, the Germans scorned such fighters. This disdain for guerrilla fighters carried over to occupied Germany itself. I am not aware of German guerrilla activity (other than isolated cases) after Germany's surrender.

The Allies never attempted to capture either Lorient or St. Nazaire. Brest, however, was taken by the US Army in what has always seemed to me an utterly pointless action, since a devastated Brest, being several hundred miles to the west of the main action in France, could serve no military purpose. To quote Dwight

Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, in his book *Crusade in Europe: Brest fell on September 19. The harbor and its facilities had been so completely wrecked by our bombing and by German demolition that we never made any attempt to use it.* Surely photo intelligence could have predicted that. I think a good case can be made that it was the well-known arrogance of the defending German Parachute General Hermann Ramcke, hero in the capture of Crete in 1940, that made the Americans want to defeat him. Then any soldier on either side who was killed in this action had given his life to satisfy the pride of generals. As if war were nothing but a league in which generals tried to establish a superior won-lost record!

After our introduction to smallscale interrogation in Brittany, our team was moved east across France in August. Together with several other teams, we spent a few days in the beautiful city of Orleans on the Loire to assist in the interrogation of a large number of Germans who surrendered in southern France, then spent several days in Paris a few days after it was liberated August 25. To say that GI's were initially welcomed by the French with open arms was true in every sense, in contrast to a less forthcoming reception half a year later. Through sheer chance, I ran into the family of a flautist of the Paris Symphony and her family, and was treated as a to-be-celebrated liberator!

By the middle of September we found ourselves in Maastricht, in southern Holland, attached, along with several other teams, to US Ninth Army Headquarters. Here we spent the next six months, interrogating and writing reports. Billeted in private homes, we had it incredibly easy. Thanks to daily intelligence briefings, which covered the front lines from Holland to southern France, we were probably much better informed than most front-line troops. Knowing all this, we worked hard and cooperatively. That most of us were refugees from Germany gave us a common bond. From time to time we would meet interrogators from the British Second Army, stationed to our immediate north. We were interested to discover that very few of them were German refugees; the British interrogators were university graduates for whom German was a second language. While our German tended to be more fluent, their knowledge of German history, sociology and economics tended to be superior to ours. As for our native German, we soon learned to "Americanize" it when interrogating. Many PW's would react negatively when coming face-to-face with someone who sounded like a native German. Their reaction would be: *Isn't this man a traitor? Shouldn't he be on our side?* This reaction, while not universal, was frequent enough to put us on the alert and fake an American accent.

The 1944 winter months in southern Holland were beginning to take on a certain easy routine, when on December 16, with earthquake-like suddenness,

the Germans launched a major strike just to the south of us, an offensive that became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Eisenhower's perspective is interesting: ... *the fighting during the autumn followed the pattern I had personally prescribed. We remained on the offensive (a very limited offensive at best!) and weakened ourselves where necessary to maintain those offensives. This plan gave the German opportunity to launch his attack against a weak portion of our lines. If giving him that chance is to be condemned by historians, their condemnation should be directed at me alone.*

Of course, since in the long run Ike's plan worked, historians are not likely to condemn the risk he took. He adds three pages later: "*We had always felt the risk to be justified by the conviction that in an emergency we could react quickly.*"

As it turned out, our biggest ally was the weather, even if it delayed its support for a whole week. Taking advantage of fog and thick cloud cover, German troops during that week advanced some 50 miles westward in the general direction of the port city of Antwerp in Belgium. Our area was just to the north of the "bulge," and we knew that if the Germans reached the Channel, our units and those of the British and Canadians to the north of us would be surrounded. The Germans were hopeful that a successful outcome of their offensive would enable them to negotiate a separate peace with the Western Allies.

In anticipation of German successes, we burned every conceivable piece of paper that might be of interest to the Germans, while speculating on how they might interrogate us, soldiers they would consider traitors to the German cause. Thorough daily briefings told us precisely of German progress that week, which did not exactly put our minds at ease. Then on about the eighth day the fog lifted, enabling the superior Allied air force to hit the Germans troops and especially their supply lines so that soon their tanks simply ran out of gas.

It had proved a bloody campaign, with some 100,000 Germans and 77,000 Americans among the killed, wounded and captured (Eisenhower's figures). That the Germans were able to mount such a powerful attack after being driven out of Africa, all of France, parts of Italy and most of the Soviet Union, while undergoing almost daily heavy bombing raids on their cities, amazed us back then and I believe it is still considered remarkable by World War II historians today.

Our Ninth Army interrogation teams considered themselves extremely lucky.

19.

To The Bitter End

Every interrogation was written up and passed on to higher-ups. I have saved a few of these reports as souvenirs of my contributions to the Allied war effort. Many identify sites of military interest: bridges, industrial targets, training camps, PW camps, bunkers, warehouses, ammunition dumps and depots. Then there are reports that deal with individual prisoners. A prize example is the case of *Leutnant Stach*. In November 1944 this young German officer was captured behind our lines disguised as a priest while attempting to rejoin his outfit. He was duly interrogated. But three days later we heard an announcement over German radio *concerning the escape of a German officer from the clutches of Jewish interrogators and Negro guards at a U.S. PW camp*. Lt. Stach had escaped while being transported to a PW collecting point. The report was careful not to mention his clerical disguise. This was embarrassing for us, but fortunately it was the only incident of its kind that we knew of.

Another prisoner, with a story to tell, was PW Sauer, who had been Field Marshal Walter Model's driver for two years and was captured on April 22, 1945. Model had held several top command positions and was well known. Sauer correctly reported that Model had committed suicide six days earlier. According to Sauer, Model was an ideal commander, tough or kind to his inferiors, as conditions warranted. For example, in the preceding winter a captain had sat calmly in his military vehicle in a convoy stalled in the snow while enlisted men shoveled him out. Model, who had just grabbed a shovel himself, came upon this captain and was merciless. The unfortunate captain was demoted to private on the spot.

Characterizations of a field marshal were probably of little tactical value, but for us they were fascinating. Of equal interest were reports of so-called "secret weapons," referred to as *Geheimwaffen* or *Endwaffen*. Many prisoners referred to the existence of secret weapons to justify their having continued the fight against clearly superior Allied material resources. When the Allies crossed the Rhine in March 1945, prisoners from an elite parachute division were, paradoxically, jubilant: *Now the secret weapons will be used! Soon the war will be over!* Ordinary privates, upon capture, were less optimistic. They were aware of the alleged existence of such weapons, but their reaction was disbelief. A few prisoners had, or pretended to have, specific knowledge. Here's a report from April 4, 1945:

PW described the Endwaffe as a radio-controlled, rocket-propelled bomb of 22 tons, having a range of 1,500 miles, carrying 15 tons of explosives. This PW was promptly sent to the rear for specialized interrogation.

After the notorious rocket development site of Peenemuende on the Baltic was severely damaged from the air in August 1943, the Germans planned to carry out further work on the *Endwaffe* in underground sites near concentration camps. Fortunately for our side, this work had not progressed significantly by the end of the war.

The “Werewolves” were another German threat, shrouded in secrecy and vagueness. A PW stated that commanding officers of the Division Potsdam were to select young, able-bodied and politically reliable men for Werewolf service. He added that Hitler Youths were also being used extensively as Werewolves. We learned from others that the purpose of this organization, formed in the last few months of the war, was to infiltrate enemy lines and cause havoc in any way possible. Some PWs told us that the German military condemned the Werewolf organization on the grounds that it was “uncivilized” and went against the grain of the general German desire to fight according to the rules of warfare. It is generally accepted now that the rapid collapse of the German forces after the Allied Rhine crossing in March 1945 prevented the Werewolves from playing any role.

One recurring theme in our talks with prisoners was their view of National Socialism and the war. We had often been told that members of Rommel’s Afrika Korps, captured before the war had turned against Germany, were proudly confident and hard to deal with. As the tide turned against Germany, morale predictably declined and disgust with National Socialism increased. These feelings became very pronounced in the last two months of the war, when defeat was imminent.

Why the Germans kept up the fight as long as they did is a complex subject. My cousin Delf Witt, born in 1920, no more a Nazi than I, a soldier in the German army throughout the entire war, gave an excellent short answer when he wrote me in 2000:

In the army, I simply did what everyone else was doing. Unless I am mistaken, perhaps more than 50% weren’t real Nazis. One simply did what everyone else did, but found the Brown Sauce rather stupid. But one was not ready to risk one’s life by being critical. And one probably wasn’t even aware of how evil the regime was. One hoped that the war would be over soon. [“Brown Sauce” is Delf’s shorthand for Nazi ideology. Brown was the color of the shirts of the Sturm Abteilung (SA), the Nazis’ private army of activists.]

As for the Wehrmacht [Nazi term for the military], I want to add that it was not an organ of the Nazi Party. It was simply an army that people have had since time immemorial and still have. That loyalty to one’s country has been

misused by the megalomania of dictators has certainly not been rare in history. Real Nazis were siphoned off into the SS [Schutzstaffel: elite troops under the command of Gestapo Chief Heinrich Himmler].

Delf's own story is worth telling. In his youth he was handsome, athletic and carefree. Drafted in 1939, promoted to lieutenant in 1945, he was a commander of an anti-aircraft battery on the west bank of the Rhine in the last month of the war. At that time we interrogated several prisoners who identified their commander as *Leutnant Witt*, and from their description I was sure he was my cousin. He had led his men east across the Rhine, and was on his way back to his company's former position to see if any of his men had been left behind, when he was captured by the British. He came very close to being one of "my" prisoners, an "almost" that unfortunately never happened.

With Germans surrendering by the thousands, conditions were terrible in the open-air prison compounds (fields surrounded by barbed wire). Amidst all the confusion, Delf noticed a small group of prisoners off to one corner working on something together. They were organizing the distribution of rations to those who in the general confusion had not received any. The leader of this remarkable effort was a young Catholic who so impressed Delf that he offered to help. This set in motion a series of events that is still bearing fruit today. Within a year, Delf had converted from uninvolved Protestant to convinced Catholic. A few years later, he entered the Benedictine Monastery of Beuron in southwest Germany as a monk and was made *Gastpater*, the person in charge of visitors. After a few more years, he was attracted to Buddhism and started a Zen center, moving to a separate building nearby that was fully sponsored by the Beuron Monastery. (It was here that Natalie and I visited him in the 1970s.) There was a female caretaker at the Zen center and ere long Delf had fathered a child. This event terminated his career as a monk, but it propelled him into an activity in which he is still engaged—teaching weeklong courses on Zen Buddhism to all comers in a rural setting in Wuerttemberg. He is obviously good at it and loves it.

Delf was one of my two Mendelssohn cousins who served on the German side the full six years of the war and ended up as officers. The other was Hans Haimberger, born in 1915, son of my swim teacher, Aunt Enole (page 6). Although after the war we saw each other only rarely, I always felt close to both Delf and Hans. Hans was the most intellectual of all the seventeen cousins. In 1975 the German journal Mendelssohn Studien published his article entitled The Role of Illusion in Art according to Moses Mendelssohn. He was a lifelong student of philosophy, religion and history.

As an Austrian citizen, Hans was not drafted until Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938. In his extensive and deeply moving memoir, completed in 1992, he

writes: *Since my family was in Germany [except for his older sister Mimi, who had emigrated with her husband to Summit, New Jersey, as early as 1935 (see page 53)] and not being either a Jew or a Communist, I was not forced to emigrate in order to stay alive, and I decided against emigration. Ever given to reflection, he looks ahead to being a soldier: Born in a war, confronted since my youngest days with the military through my history books and tin soldiers, participant in my imagination in many battles of world history, soldiers and war were for me, viewed realistically, part of the world order. Since I did not doubt that Hitler's tyranny would be of short duration, I could become eyewitness to an absurd war and the dissolution of the Wehrmacht, whose supreme commander was Hitler. I was clear about one thing: I had to become very small, I should not become involved nor expose myself. As a person with a religious and philosophical foundation, who was conscious of history, I could in a detached way experience military training, the war and the downfall of the German army with its rich tradition.*

Several questions interested me: Were military training and a soldier's life really as full of chicanery and degradation as Erich Maria Remarque portrays them in his novel All Quiet on the Western Front? What effect did war have on its participants? How can normal human beings be induced to kill other humans whom they don't know and who have done them no harm? Fanatical supporters of Hitler were likely to join the SS; in the army there should be normal individuals.

In a letter to me dated October 4, 2001, he writes that the events of 9/11 have caused him to reflect once again on the nature of God, in whose existence he believes. He explains: *This God must be a being who stands outside the world of space and time and is wholly different from us small creatures, who can't even create an ant.* He illustrates how his philosophy played out during the war: *I would walk across battlefields in Russia and later in Italy after the fighting had died down. Death and destruction. Smoldering ruins where there had been houses. Craters left by bombs and shells. The air filled with the smell of powder. Fearful soldiers crouching in their holes, others caring for the wounded and the dead. And yet, despite all this destruction, I felt secure in God's hand. I felt there was another world above the world in which we live. Even if one cannot understand God's actions and has to suffer, one should continue to believe in Him and His love.*

I find it interesting that he does not give what I would think is the more orthodox believer's explanation for the horrors of war: man's sinfulness. His answer requires an extraordinary otherworldliness, which I admire but cannot share. (I am not aware of any answers he may have formulated to his questions about the effects of

war on humans beings.) In one important sense, his war experience was positive. Given a choice of branch of service, his love of animals made him choose the horse-drawn artillery. Not only did he stay with the same unit through campaigns in France, Russia and Italy, but after his promotion to lieutenant late in 1944 he rejoined his old outfit, which he says was most unusual. Ironically, despite his total lack of enthusiasm for war, he must have made an excellent soldier.

Just as Delf's life after the war took some unexpected turns, so did Hans's. His love of animals and nature made him study farming at the University of Vienna. In 1950 he emigrated to Canada and married a school classmate of my sister Martha. She had been sent as potential secretarial help by our shrewdly scheming cousin, Peter Witt. With their children, they spent many years homesteading in northern British Columbia before retiring to Victoria. He was much loved as a father and grandfather. Since his death at eighty-nine in 2004, his descendants have moved—once again—to Berlin.

To me, it is frightening how anti-Nazis like Delf and Hans, and of course thousands of others, were caught in a system that made them fight for a cause they did not believe in. It illustrates how easy it is to make humans kill fellow-humans in the name of something called victory. Of course, this art has been practiced throughout history. In 1993 Hans wrote me how revealing he thought it was to observe how we all tend to live in our subjective worlds. His illustration: *You have emigrated and find it difficult to imagine our life during World War II, and vice versa. It was impossible for me to run over to the other side during the war, although the other side was the side of friends and our side the side of the enemy. But that was only in theory. In reality, I was a human among humans, among companions in suffering because they were not Nazis but suffered exactly as did I.*

Is the conclusion that of the song, “We Ain’t Goin’ to Study War No More”? Hans would probably have said that it is impossible to abolish war since it is part of the human condition. But is it?

The conditioning imposed by a super-efficient totalitarian system ruled out the kind of open protest that occurred on the US home front in the 1960s in opposition to the war in Vietnam. Given such a system, I think it is all the more remarkable that there was a homegrown resistance movement against the Nazis. A close family friend, Marie-Louise Sarre, vivacious, attractive, intelligent and totally committed to the anti-Nazi cause, was a go-between among several members of the resistance in 1943/44, when an attempt was being made to involve Himmler in a plot on Hitler's life. She was arrested by the Gestapo in 1943, not for participating in the plot, but for sneaking food to a Jewish old people's home close to her parents' house in Babelsberg, near Berlin. Because her father and grandfather

were nationally known scholars and museum directors (see p. 6), the Gestapo saw fit to proceed with care. Even so, she spent twenty months in Nazi prisons under suspicion of being connected with the resistance movement. Indeed she was, but she was able to conceal her part despite constant interrogation.

In a letter to my father shortly after the end of the war, she wrote: *Interrogations were very strenuous because they never asked you what they wanted to know, but rather all sorts of other things. One had to be very alert all the time. Their idea was to tire you out so that you got careless.* She was kept in custody.

Her letter continues: *Then came July 20, 1944 [the date of the failed attempt on Hitler's life], and suddenly I saw several conspirators being brought into the courtyard of the prison.... [She names them.] Then I knew it was all over. Despite tight supervision, we were able to see each other now then and exchange glances, something so meaningful it transfigures a whole day. It was a dreadful time, since now one knew what was going to happen. I was much helped by the wonderful luck that for six months Helmuth James von Moltke [descendant of the von Moltke who was Prussia's victorious general in the 1870/71 Franco-Prussian War] was in the cell next to mine, and we were occasionally able to communicate by knocking on the wall and—very rarely—talk through an open window. What it means to know that there is a person next to you who has feelings and is alive and thinks as you do—that is so wonderfully consoling and words gain an importance that they can never have “outside.”*

Within a few weeks all the resistance fighters she had seen delivered to her prison were executed.

In early spring of 1945 she developed an infection in her jaw and was transferred to an SS hospital 50 miles from Berlin. There she befriended a caretaker who supplied her with a bike that got her to her parents two weeks before the end of the war. After the war, she lived in Ascona, Switzerland. Our family stayed in touch with her right up to her death at ninety-five.

Caught up in our day-to-day work with incoming prisoners, we knew nothing about the activities of the German resistance. Our job was to interrogate as best as we could every prisoner who seemed knowledgeable. In the last three months of the war, the overwhelming Allied superiority in equipment had a marked effect on the German soldiers' morale. *If we had only known how much you had of everything—guns, tanks, gas, planes, trucks—were constant comments.*

Once captured, two additional factors turned out to be of great significance for the ordinary soldier: First, he had been driven in a truck to our holding center. Because of gasoline shortages, this was often the first ride in a truck in his army

career. But what really convinced many that the war was lost was that the ration they received contained a tiny envelope of Nescafé. *The first real coffee since 1939!* they'd tell each other. No officer and only a few NCOs would react in this manner, but for the vast majority of enlisted men, these two factors played a prominent role.

A common theme was fear of the USSR. One interrogation report summarizes this feeling: *German soldiers appear to regard the conflict with the US and Britain as a temporary evil which will pass and allow the real issue to come to light, namely the eradication of "Bolschewismus."* This wishful thinking was expressed in the often repeated query: *When are the US and the English going to go to war against Russia?*

I don't want to give the impression that all German soldiers thought alike. Some defended the Nazis in the manner of one general captured in the final week of the war: *The original ideals of the Nazis were laudable but were perverted by the inclusion of too many misfits into the national leadership.* I am wondering which misfits he had in mind. Himmler?

To suggest the danger of facile generalizations about German soldiers' thinking, I'll quote myself from a letter home, dated October 1944: *I think there are still many Germans who seriously believe they can win this war; they have some kind of mystic hope in secret weapons. What the Nazis have accomplished with their propaganda is truly remarkable.*

In the midst of this period, in November 1944, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected for a fourth term. In October 1944 I had written to my father: *The majority of us here lean toward the Democratic side. That is certainly the way I feel. I can't quite see Dewey [Thomas E. Dewey, the Republican candidate] seeing it through with Churchill and Uncle Joe. If I remember right, even you, a Republican at heart, might "shift your allegiance" toward the President in this particular campaign.* In the end, my father did favor the Democrats, swayed by FDR's foreign policy.

Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. I wrote home: *Roosevelt's death is certainly a terrific blow, and is felt as such by all alike—Republicans and Democrats.* And I add sagely: *We'll have to wait and see what kind of a man Truman is.*

In Germany, the war was finally beginning to wind down. We got a good deal of evidence of low troop morale. We came across a German soldier's letter home, written on April 1: *How did you spend Easter? I am sure you had fun. With us things are very shitty. I have never spent an Easter like this.... In spite of everything, we must not get discouraged and we must continue until the Endsieg [final victory]. You'll have to carry on. So must we, and we'll*

make it. Many soldiers told us that their letters home were required to be optimistic. This writer had paid close attention to those orders.

The Nazis' desperate effort at morale building could be seen everywhere. I wrote home on March 28, 1945: *Dr. Robert Ley* [a cabinet minister who was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg war crimes trials] *said over the radio yesterday that although it may not look like it, the German victory is coming closer every day.* [I am reminded of what Vice President Cheney said about the insurgency in Iraq on May 31, 2005: that it was in its "last throes."] *Germans are apt to laugh at that, at least in front of us. Jokes are told: The Volkssturm is now called "Volkshauch" [the people's puff] and, while he was digging in the rubble in the streets of Berlin after a recent raid, Dr. Goebbels was asked what he was looking for. He replied: "The secret weapons must be around here somewhere!"*

This would have been funny had there not been so much suffering everywhere. Our overwhelming feeling in those days was of frustration and tragedy caused by Hitler's failure to surrender. An April 6, 1945, interrogation report states that even among officers the opinion was unanimous that Germany had lost the war. At the same time, many officers argued that *because of the oath we have sworn in his name, we cannot surrender as long as the Fuehrer is still alive.*

I wrote on April 21, 1945: *The German civilians one sees are all very, very war-weary. The great majority would like to see peace at any price. Many, however, are afraid, first of the Russians, and second of the "Anglo-Americans," who, according to their leaders, are beasts and barbarians. We don't have too difficult a time convincing them that the latter claims are a little bit exaggerated. And they are all immensely relieved to be out of the bombing attacks.*

It soon became obvious that the German civilians who had been overrun by the Allied armies had no intention of resisting. On March 16, 1945, I wrote home: *Most civilians seem to have the attitude, "I have never been a member of the Party, I didn't want this war," and when you tell them that they used to vote 98% in favor of Nazi policies, they hasten to suggest the "crookedness" of those elections. Others are more honest and admit that at one time they were Nazis but had lost their faith a number of years ago. One hundred years from now National Socialism may be looked upon as the most complete, vicious and successful enslavement of an entire people. It is tragic when you see men over 45, as there are many, fighting their second war, given a weapon that they have never been taught how to use (the Panzerfaust, a small hand-held grenade launcher), chased into battle by Hitler-Youth-trained youngster officers. I think that after this war a lot*

of the “denazification” in Germany will be taken care of by the Germans themselves.

I celebrated V-E Day (May 8, 1945) by lifting a 10-gallon milk can, why I don't remember. The result was an interlude in a military hospital in Paris, recovering from a hernia operation. I can measure the progress of medical science by the decreasing time I was required to spend in the hospital after each of four hernia operations between 1945 and 1975: from eight weeks to one day! Fortunately, I was not restricted to my bed in Paris after the first two weeks. I was able to get “light duty,” helping with the administration of German prisoners who were doing chores at the hospital. The Germans were eager to talk about what life had been like under the Nazis, both the good and the bad, to anyone willing to listen. Then there was the constantly recurring question: What is life like in America? I have never had a more attentive audience. Of course, because of General Eisenhower's non-fraternization order, such discussions had to be conducted surreptitiously, but that didn't prove difficult. Those were fascinating bull sessions that helped me refine my understanding of the German GI.

When I rejoined my little team in Helmsheim, some 30 miles south of Heidelberg, we interrogated civilians rather than prisoners, as part of the CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps). Our job was to screen Germans who were to exercise positions of authority at the village level, as well as to administer lengthy questionnaires to see if the responders were in any of the so-called “arrest categories.” This was tricky and unsatisfactory, since we often lacked evidence and had to rely on mere hunches. Needless to say, the Germans were eager to reveal as little of their Nazi past as possible.

Our assignment was the nearby village of Bretten, population 3,000. I describe it in my letter of August 10, 1945: *Here in Bretten there is a very powerful conservative clique... what is left of Nazism can be found in this clique. At one time, they all belonged to the local “Turnverein” —something like an American Legion athletic club. Several had been active Nazis. Their main interest is to support each other at all costs and form a united front against the “Leftists,” composed largely of the working class. Add a police chief, an illegitimate child himself, who has a two-month-old boy from his present wife, from whom he is going to get a divorce next week to marry a war widow, who in turn has an illegitimate four-year-old child, to whom she gave birth when she was sixteen ... and you have the picture of Bretten!*

This was also the time of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6 and 8). The radio news told of the dropping of a bomb, the equivalent of 20,000 tons of TNT. Could this be true? At that time we heard nothing about the loss of civilian life.

That news came much later. It seems incredible that today, sixty years later, the US administration wants to “improve” such weapons.

My mother wrote on August 15: *Today was a celebration on the village green of East Hampton. It was out of doors, quite informal. Everybody was standing on the sloping lawn and there was some chorus singing, some hymns, prayers, reading of psalms and a sermon as I have seldom heard one, very simple and, in the best sense of the word, democratic, stressing the United States' responsibility in the new world after the war, not emphasizing the glory of the victorious nation. And, just think, while the service was going on a complete semicircular rainbow showed up behind the church on the green; it was like a symbol; made you think of God's peace with Noah after the flood.*

A few days later, I received these words from my brother Max, age sixteen: *Well, it is wonderful that the war is finally over, and what it must mean for people all over the world to have a feeling of safety and a hope of getting back to normalcy again, because we felt the war to such a slight extent over here. It seems to me that generally people over here don't realize the dreadful state of world affairs as keenly as other nations perhaps. Maybe I'm wrong in this — I think that this is the time when the future of the world should be made secure, and what with the invention of the atom bomb and the opening of a new historical epoch, “world suicide,” as General Arnold says, can be committed in a short time, by merely one nation. Over here, people don't seem to grasp the full significance of this invention to the world, and are thinking too much about what kind of a model the 1946 car is going to be. Good for you, Max!*

September 7, 1945, my mother writes me excitedly that she, my sister and my brother had become citizens the day before, on the sixth anniversary of our landing at Hoboken. It clearly was a big event for all of them. She goes on to express thoughts similar to those of my brother: *I have no patience with those people who complain about scarcity of food. Nobody has gone hungry yet as far as I know, and if you don't have steak every day, what of it? If you hear about food conditions in Europe you ought to feel ashamed to say one word about it over here. That is what I try to tell people in stores when I hear them complaining.* My mother was a petite, soft-spoken, gentle woman; I like to think that her admonitions hit home!

My father also had conditions in postwar Germany very much on his mind when he wrote in October 1945: *... from the newspapers I gather that now the Russians claim the dismantling of IG Farben Ludwigshafen, Opel Ruesselsheim, some Krupp factories for transportation to Russia. All that*

new mass unemployment! Sure the Germans behaved terribly in Russia and as a whole. But if they are to be peaceful and democratic, how must they feel when all of this is happening to them now?

Looking back, it seems remarkable how the Marshall Plan of 1947 and the German currency reform of 1948 brought prosperity to West Germany in a relatively short time.

A footnote on the war years: On October 29, 1945, my mother wrote: *By the way, today I got back all the cameras we deposited at the police station in 1941. Seems a long time ago!* It must have made my mother feel good to be an American citizen.

20.

The Liberator

The end of the war brought with it not only the atom bomb and an immersion in local German politics, but also welcome and memorable reunions with my mother's family and friends. From July 1945 on our small team of six found itself stationed in Kornwestheim, a few miles north of Stuttgart. For me, this turned out to be an extraordinarily fortuitous location: I soon discovered I had many friends and relatives living within a 50-mile radius. Most of my mother's family, some twenty altogether, had left Berlin when bombing became constant, to live on a farm called Georgenhof that, amazingly enough, had been purchased at the advice of an uncle back in 1932, on the grounds that "some time in the future it might be good to have a place to go to in western Germany." This farm proved ideal: located on the lightly inhabited Schwaebische Alb not far from Stuttgart, it made - given the circumstances - for a comfortable life for all. To be sure, the Mendelssohns from their fashionable Grunewald villa in Berlin, were somewhat like fish out of water in a farming community where the nearest town of any size was an hour's drive away (if you had a car), but local arrangements couldn't have been better. The farm itself, with all its livestock and land, was run by efficient and loyal caretakers, who themselves felt fortunate to be able to be part of an arrangement that worked well for everyone. Not that my relatives did nothing: mostly women (the males were still prisoners-of-war at this time), they kept an extensive vegetable garden.

When I drove up to this Shangri-la in my Army jeep in the middle of a fine day in July 1945, I had no idea what I was going to find. A farmhand directed me to the manor house, a two-story modern stone building occupying one side of a huge yard. Upon entering by the front door I found myself in a large vestibule with a marble floor, an open stairway to the second floor and on the wall - to my amazement - both a Van Gogh and a Cezanne that I recognized from my grandparents' house in Berlin. Leading off the vestibule were four wooden doors, all closed, suggesting secrecy. I had a flash recall that Germans keep interior doors of private houses closed. With a pounding heart I opened a door closest to the sound of people talking. For a moment there was total silence as they were wondering what this soldier was doing interrupting their lunch and I was staring at them, looking for a familiar face. Out of the crowd of some fifteen people I suddenly recognized my mother's sister and said: *Tante Emma, Fritz Kempner.*

(Aunt Emma was Delf's mother.) I shall never forget the shouts of joyous recognition that this simple statement elicited. After all, there had been no direct contact for four years. I shall spare the reader who is not related the enumeration of those present; suffice it to say that unending excitement, confusion and questions prevailed as we told each others' stories. I do remember being served two fried eggs, which I knew was a special treat, and which in my excitement I ate very, very slowly. A little later, schnapps was brought out and a toast was drunk to the blushing Liberator.

Fortunately, I had brought with me what at that moment was more meaningful than either a Cezanne or a Van Gogh: chocolate, coffee, soap and toilet paper, for which I was thanked as if I had brought bars of gold.

21.

Back to Milton

The beginning of 1946 found me discharged from the army and thinking about the future. It was natural to revisit Milton. I indicated at the time to Arthur Perry, Head of the Upper School, whom I admired greatly, my interest in teaching. He suggested I volunteer my services at the Hackley School in Tarrytown, just north of Manhattan, to see how I liked it. His good friend (and Milton graduate) Mitchell Gratwick was headmaster there, and allowed me to sit in on Latin classes and learn what teaching was all about. I did just that and quickly decided that teaching was for me. In April when I received a telegram from Arthur Perry offering me a position in Latin beginning in September, I accepted with alacrity.

The atmosphere that I enjoyed so much as a student in 1939, I found duplicated as a member of the faculty. “Halo effect”? Perhaps. I now know that my years as teacher of Latin and Greek and coach of soccer and basketball at Milton gave me a running start into a life of teaching.

It must have been “real love,” since my living conditions were not exactly luxurious. I lived in a dormitory of fifty boys. My third-floor bedroom/study was connected by one door to an area of seven 9th graders, themselves called “alcoves” after their habitation, and by another to a stairway leading to the quarters of four 8th graders on the fourth floor. The twelve of us shared a common bathroom. Could I entertain friends? I don’t think the thought ever occurred to me. I accepted everything as a given, happy to have a job at a top-notch school.

In addition to being responsible for these eleven boys in the dormitory, it was my duty to preside over a table of ten boys at meal-time, three times a day. After supper I enjoyed a brief period of “rest & relaxation” during which my immediate superior served coffee in his quarters that were palatial compared to mine. He was Jim Carter, also my boss in Latin and a bachelor. As a Commander in the Navy he had been nicknamed “Smiling Jim,” because he never smiled. (It’s a figure of speech known as *lucus a non lucendo* - sorry, I couldn’t resist showing off.) He was as predictable as a well-functioning alarm clock, with set times for coffee as well as stock remarks. He was easy to work for provided you accepted his routine, which I did. This very predictability made life easy, but it came at a price: the price of restricting myself to a certain behavioral rut. During six years of doing the same job out of the same room - though with different boys, I gradually became aware of this as a trap and was ready for a change. My Uncle Fritz, frequent giver of sage advice, wrote me:

... routine is the worst enemy of true growth since it counterfeits a security that is not based on inner growth. It can not only fool others, but also yourself.

Fortunately I had some provocative friends on the Faculty who prevented my succumbing to a deadening routine. One was Ted Holmes, teacher of English, fresh out of Princeton's avant-garde English department, where he had been a protégé of R. P. Blackmur, one of the leaders of the New Criticism movement. What got us going was a discussion about Robert Frost's Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening. Ted convinced me that this poem was about much more than a sleigh stopping by woods in winter, that in fact it deals with the whole human condition. He suggested that to arrive at the meaning of any poem it was not necessary to know anything about the author's life, but that whatever meaning a poem had was contained in the words of the poem itself. The poet may have intended this or that, but if the meaning was not contained in the words of the poem, if it required knowledge not contained in the poem itself, it was for that very reason a poorer poem. We discussed this issue at length, and in the end I had become his disciple.

My closest friends on the Faculty were Toby Smith, Air Force major in World War II, teacher of English, with a strong conviction in favor of teaching the canon, and his wife Audrey, vivacious innovative teacher of Spanish and chef extraordinaire. Teach Moby Dick or Malcolm X? John Keats or Wilfred Owen? Our conversations were ongoing. We also entertained each other with less erudite topics: our interest in Good Teaching made us work on such down-to-earth topics as How To Look Like A Good Teacher Without Being One, for our mutual edification. Toby was known as a "character." Once, while supervising evening study hall for 8th and 9th graders, he climbed on top of a desk, shaded his eyes, and announced that he was looking for "outside reading."

I soon became aware of the fact that teaching involved acting. Toby and I would entertain ourselves endlessly with the dramatization of officers vs. enlisted personnel and teacher/student relationships, with ourselves keenest admirers. Our friendship continued long after I left Milton up to his recent death.

While Milton took academics seriously, it did not neglect the spiritual. There were two compulsory chapel services: one on Sunday evenings, with a sermon by a minister and one on Wednesday mornings, with a talk by a faculty member. Of the former, I still remember the Reverend Vivian T. Pomeroy of the nearby Congregational Church, one of whose sermons, delivered with a strong British accent, bore the intriguing title: Don't park too long on Joy Street, a small street close to the Boston State House, where parking is severely restricted.

When it came my turn for a Wednesday morning talk, I used the opportunity to describe my view on religion, as revealed in Lessing's 1779 play Nathan The

Wise. Set in 12th century Jerusalem, the Muslim Sultan Saladin asks the wealthy Jew Nathan, which of the three religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, he considered best. Nathan, after some hesitation, answers in the form of a parable, the Parable of the Three Rings. I knew it well, having recited it in a family setting as a teenager.

Here it is, in brief: once upon a time in the Orient there lived a man who owned a ring of great worth which had the special power to make the wearer beloved in the eyes of God and men. This ring passed from father to favored son until it came to a father of three sons, all equally deserving. What to do? The father had two identical copies made and gave each son a ring - and died. Now each son believed that his ring was the true one. They argued fiercely. Unable to agree, they sought out a judge to decide the issue. Said the judge: *since it is impossible to prove which ring is the genuine one, I suggest this: let each of you demonstrate his belief in the power of his ring by conducting his life in such a manner that he fully merits the love of God and men. The outcome of your lives will be a reflection of the power of the true ring.*

The three "Religions of the Book" - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - each rely on a written tradition handed down over many centuries. Setting aside conversions, believers base their faith on what they have read or what they have been brought up to believe. Which faith is the most valid? I cannot get myself to consider one tradition superior to the other two. To me, what's most important in our lives is not our faith but how we act. Or, to use the image of the parable of the three rings: it is up to the owner of each ring to prove his/her ring genuine. The real test will be the quality of life that a person has led. As Matthew 7:16 puts it: *You will know them by their fruits.*

The play has particular meaning for our family: Lessing - a Lutheran - modeled the figure of Nathan upon his friend Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), Jewish philosopher of the Enlightenment in Berlin, who believed strongly in assimilation of Jews into their surrounding society as opposed to segregation in ghettos. This stand orthodox Jews opposed, but in Germany it gradually won out. I can modestly but proudly claim Moses Mendelssohn as my grandfather's great-great-grandfather.

22.

A Gap Year

During my first year of teaching at Milton I decided to return to Harvard for a year of graduate study to find out whether to work for a Ph.D. and teach in college or continue to teach in secondary school. By midyears I told Arthur Perry that I wanted to take him up on his kind offer to hold my old position at Milton for me. Not that the year was a loss! I had some great teachers: John Finley in Greek Lyric Poetry; Sterling Dow's Greek History (I later taught his son Greek); Peter Elder for Lucretius; Carl Joachim Friedrich in Political Philosophy. The latter was an excellent lecturer, but just a little on the arrogant side: I remember his entering his lecture class late one day with these words: *You have probably been waiting for me as for the Second Coming ...* Actually he was away quite a bit, helping in the drafting of a new constitution for the then still occupied West Germany.

Life that year wasn't all studies: I continued playing rugby, begun in my last undergraduate year. Strictly speaking, I had no business doing this, since most others were former football players, considerably better athletes and larger than I was. But I knew the game well from having played it enthusiastically at Marlborough, and I was in good condition and thus able to hold my own. Not supported by the University, rugby existed as a club. This meant we planned and financed our own activities, which always included conciliatory post-game consumption of beer - win, lose or draw. The highlight was a spring vacation trip to Bermuda, where we played both Ivy League schools and teams from Her Majesty's Royal Navy. What made this so much fun was that we all played the game because we enjoyed it and for no other reason.

It was downhill skiing that took up many weekends and vacations. I had begun it in Switzerland at age 10 and 11, at a time when a ski lift was a rarity, and took it up again in New Hampshire and Vermont as a student in Milton and an undergraduate at Harvard in the winters of 1939 to 1942, as well as briefly with the Army in Camp Hale. Our base was usually the Harvard Ski Club Cabin in Jackson, New Hampshire. Walking into Tuckerman's Ravine and up the Wildcat Trail (no lift in those days) was a most exhilarating form of exercise. (No, I haven't yet schussed the Headwall.)

This activity resulted in a lifelong friendship. To find a room and to stay close to university life, I was a freshmen proctor in the Harvard Yard. A fellow proctor - and fellow skier - was Dick Ulin, like me someone who loved to teach. We are

still friends. Dick taught English at both high school and college level. His special skill, in addition to being a person truly concerned in the well-being of his fellow-men, is helping those engaged in controversy articulate just what it is they think. I watched him doing this formally in a “Great Issues” program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and have always admired his pointed, yet always gentle questioning in countless informal conversations with friends. Throughout he has had the steady support of his wife Polly, whose specialty was social science research in international health, especially in Africa. She, too, remains a close friend and “fellow-traveler.”

During those days at Harvard I got to know a most remarkable man: Professor Werner Jaeger. From 1921 on he had held the prestigious Berlin University Chair of Greek and had been a friend of my parents for many years. Having married a Jewish woman in 1931, he decided in 1936 to emigrate to the States. In 1939 he was appointed University Professor at Harvard, a position he held until his death in 1961. In his warm and friendly personality he combined scholarship (far beyond my range to appreciate fully) with true humanity. He was the opposite of the stereotypical German professor. There was no question of mine, no matter how elementary, that he wouldn't take seriously and respond to in detail. His three volumes of Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture still grace my shelves. Most marked, and, to me, amusing, was the contrast between Werner and his wife Ruth. Where he was generous and permissive, she was severe and authoritarian. But it was clear that they loved each other. She taught Latin to Milton Academy girls, made her students work hard, and was highly respected. I managed to visit her class once - unusual for a faculty member of the Boys' Division - and was impressed by her thoroughness and precision. Come to think of it, her husband was every bit as thorough and precise, but he did it by indirection, whereas she was very much up front about it. A memorable couple!

23.

I Change Teams



Last family vacation in the Engadin (1949): my parents and I on top of Piz Longhin.

So I returned to secondary school teaching in 1948 and stayed with it until I reached 65, an age I considered appropriate for retirement. I thus taught full-time close to the Biblical 40 years. If you are awaiting some profound reflections about teaching and learning, you are waiting in vain. For nothing comes to mind that is in any way original or subject to proof. Of course it is possible to write good books and papers on this subject, as my friends Rob and Paula Evans, formerly of Philadelphia, now of Newton, Massachusetts, have done so admirably. I'll leave it to them. I'll just quote one characteristically compact Latin saying: *Docendo discitur*. You learn by teaching. This time-honored principle has not only helped me understand the intricacies of subject matter - be it the uses of the Latin ablative case or the meaning of Oedipus Rex - but it also enabled me to discover the great variety of students' learning styles.

This dual challenge was not with me from the start, because at Milton Latin was taught in the "traditional way," by Jim Carter and colleagues. With no discussion

of different methodologies, there was just one methodology as far as Milton was concerned. The turning point for me came while I was still teaching at Milton. My Harvard Greek History professor, Sterling Dow, suggested I apply for the 1952 University of Michigan summer workshop on Linguistic Approaches to the Teaching of Latin. My decision to join this venture proved crucial.

Crucial, because up until my work that summer in Ann Arbor with Professor Waldo Sweet (who at that time was a teacher at the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia), I had thought that there was just one way to teach the subject: the way Milton did it. I now realized not only that there were a variety of Latin textbooks in use, but that the materials whose birth I witnessed and worked on that summer were something different again.

What was this difference? The term “linguistic” in this context refers to the findings of “linguists,” used in the sense of “scholars who study the structures of different languages,” and not in the sense of “speakers of many languages.” These scholars (leading among them were Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield in the 1920s) maintained that each language must be analyzed in its own terms, and not in terms of universal categories, as they allegedly appeared in Latin. For better or worse - and in the opinion of above linguists largely for worse - early (18th century) descriptions of English were based entirely on Latin. Latin, as the mother or godmother of so many languages, and as the language of the Catholic Church, contained the basic categories of all languages, at least so early grammarians thought. Most Latin textbooks that were based on this belief presented Latin structure as if it were similar, if not the same as English. They contained generalizations such as “English, like Latin, has six tenses,” or “the subject of a sentence in English, as in Latin, is in the nominative case.” It is of course true that Latin has six tenses and a subject in the nominative case but, applied to English, this description is an ill-fitting strait-jacket. Those advocating the so-called “Linguistic Approach” argue that the focus in the teaching of Latin should be on the differences of English and Latin structures, rather than the similarities. Among other things, texts should highlight the very different role of word order in the two languages.

That is the theoretical background of the Linguistic Approach. But how would it reveal itself in a textbook? Back then, I used to think that the early versions were “it.” Since then I find that there are many ways of implementing “linguistic” concepts. Not only that: in my youthful idealism of my early work as Wally Sweet’s “disciple” I underestimated the strength and resilience of the “traditionalists.” Since the 1950s there have come about all sorts of adaptations and renovations, so that the current textbook picture is a crazy quilt that defies easy characterization.

As Jupiter willed it, in 1953 the University of Michigan hired Wally Sweet away from Penn Charter, and he recommended me as his replacement. Abandoning

the 24/7 comforts of a boarding set-up, I rented an apartment and began teaching at the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia, a day school.

For me this was a huge change. For the first time in my life I had to make my own decisions on such mundane items as food, laundry, furnishings and housekeeping. Mine was a small, two-room apartment on the top floor of a converted private house in the racially integrated West Mount Airy section of Philadelphia. The landlady, Mrs. Kuehnle (no husband), lived in the same building. She loved me dearly: I think in part because I made it a point of not objecting to her keen desire to observe and study my habits. For example: from time to time she would call up to me at about 5 PM to ask if I had begun to cook yet. Whenever I said that I hadn't, she would send up a full meal. It was usually too much. One time I discarded a baked potato in the trash. Upon my return from school the next day, she greeted me with: "Mr. Kempner, I see you didn't like my potatoes!"

From time to time, upon her stated request of some "medicine," I would "loan" her my bottle of gin. This she would always return the next day, almost as full, with alcoholic content somewhat reduced.

Was I much of a cook? There is some documentary evidence of how I began, in my letter to my parents in New York City in September 1953:

... Last night I 'dined' at home for the first time. The menu: spaghetti with tomato sauce. Coffee with milk and sugar. Bread, butter & liverwurst. Beer. The latter was the best.

I improved rapidly. A little later my aunt Barbara and uncle Fritz, who were used to stylish living, came to visit. I felt immensely proud when they praised the prize meal I served them: lamb chops, spaghetti, salad and red wine. Given the fact that I didn't entertain often, my culinary skills remained modest. The trouble was that in those days I often secured a dinner invitation by asking my friends if I could drop by, bringing with me slides of a recent trip, always offering to bring my own sandwich. That, of course, was no more than a ploy, which always worked beautifully. I had some very good friends back then.

Upon my return from my first Thanksgiving vacation, I was greeted by a ribboned piano which Mrs. Kuehnle and my sister Fran had schemed to have delivered as a wonderful surprise. This piano is still with us in Maine.

In November 1970, near the end of my stay in this apartment, I found a carefully typed letter from my landlady, which I feel deserves to be reproduced here in its entirety, if for no other reason than for its socio-economic revelations:

Mr. Kempner:

Because of the high cost of living, increasing almost daily, and unionized skilled labor's wages going up and up of which I am a victim, to say the

least, I must raise your rent. For years I have gone along with my slipshod method, with rock-bottom rentals, being satisfied with a mere existence, and now I am caught in the middle and who cares!

My records tell me that during 1954 and 1955 we paid a cleaning woman \$6.40 for eight hours of work, compare this to today's wages! All this may be beside the point to you, but it is not to me.

Mr. Professor, can you afford to pay \$9.00 a month more including garage, retroactive from September 1st. This is not kosher nor according to Hoyle, but it will be a big help to me.

I agreed.

At Penn Charter I was at that time the only full-time Latin teacher, and thus was my own boss, free to use a variety of materials. Fortunately my new headmaster, John Gummere, himself a Classicist, co-author of popular Latin textbooks, and teacher of one class per year approved of both of me and the method. He had supported Wally Sweet in all sorts of ways, including securing sizable grants for his work at the University of Michigan Summer Workshops in both 1952 and 1953. But Dr. Gummere's direct involvement in my teaching was minimal: as a busy administrator he evidently felt that Fritz was doing okay, no need to worry about him, as long as there were no parental complaints. I do recall one exception: "The Chief," as he signed his memos, once left this typed note in my mailbox: *Harry [his second year student, mine the preceding year] today did not know how to say 'you are' in Latin; how is that possible???* Of course an answer was neither given nor expected.

In fairness to Jack Gummere's busyness, I should make it clear that during his 27-year term as headmaster, from 1941-1968, (on the Faculty since 1924) he did much to improve the running of the school, making it more "Quakerly," and less of a "monarchy" than it had been. He introduced the position of Assistant Headmaster, Director of Admissions, a department of Development, a business manager, a parents organization and a Student Council. He increased the number of Quakers on the Faculty from three in 1941 to 19 in 1968, involved Overseers in the compulsory weekly Friends Meeting and introduced a pension program for custodial and kitchen help. At the same time, he kept a firm hand on the running of the school.

His assessment of himself is characteristic: *For some reason, I remember how I was able to quote Roy Campanella on one occasion. He came to PC when he was MVP (1955) with the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Pirates finished last. 'Do you think I would have received this award if I had been playing for Pittsburgh?' said he, when congratulated. My occasion was an award at a national conference in New England when I was elected as one of the 25*

living people who had done the most for secondary education in the USA (1964). My remark: 'Do you think I would have received this if I had been at Centretown Consolidated School?'

We each and every one of us benefited from PC.

Well do I remember the assembly program with Roy Campanella. The Chief "told it like it was."

During the 1950s I spent a total of four summers at the University of Michigan Summer School of Linguistics, ending up in 1960 teaching the summer course on the methodology of the teaching of Latin along with Dr. Sweet. It was a treat to be a colleague of this superb teacher, an excellent Latinist, who also had profound insight into the language learning process and a keen sense of humor. It happened that Gerda Seligson, an old family friend from Berlin days, was his side-kick. Her teaching style was the complementary opposite to his: deliberate where Wally Sweet was flashy, but equally knowledgeable and precise. Both wrote Greek and Latin textbooks in subsequent years. They made the Ann Arbor summers exciting experiences.

The 1960 Summer Session was made particularly challenging by the presence of a dozen nuns and priests, whose Latin was excellent and who kept us on our toes. I have never been in a more interactive teaching situation. We learned from each other.

During these summers the Linguistic Society of America held its annual meetings in Ann Arbor. Through these meetings, reinforced by a strong Linguistics Department at the University, I developed a lifelong hobby. (See appendix: Frustrations in the Teaching and Learning of Grammar.)

From time to time someone has asked me how effective I have found the Linguistic Approach, or its adaptations. I find that hard to answer. First, there are so many variables that make a direct comparison of one class to another difficult. There are the variables of student ability, previous exposure to other approaches, effort as well as the inherent difficulty of measuring student progress, assuming that the teacher's effort remains the same throughout. Then there is one overriding factor: that of overall class morale. I know that students have learned more Latin in some of my classes than in others, even after making allowance for all variables. In some years things come together, in others, they don't. A scientific observation? Of course not! But in my case valid. Does this reduce the significance of what method to use? Perhaps it does. But of one thing I am sure: teaching along the lines developed by Dr. Sweet was fun. I also feel confident that - provided the teacher is at least moderately competent- the key variable is the effort a student puts in that will determine how much he or she is going to learn. A profound conclusion? Hardly. But worth stating.

What attracted me to teaching was the give-and-take in the classroom. I liked informality, and probably carried this too far from time to time. I was not immune to student “jokes;” finding all desks and chairs turned around upon returning to my classroom after recess; having every boy (there were no coed classes at either Milton Academy or Penn Charter in my days) take a tennis ball out of his pocket and throw it against a wall upon my customary exhortation to “put the ball in play.” Of course from time to time miscreants surfaced. I remember a gifted senior in a class of only three students, whose thinly-veiled personal sarcasms made my life miserable. Several years later this student sent me a copy of Catullus with the inscription: *To Mr. Kempner; although he didn't think he inspired this student, he did. Sincerely ...*”

I wasn't aware of it at the time, but compared with what happened later, the curriculum in the 40s and 50s was quite rigid and strict classroom discipline was taken for granted. Not so in the 60s and 70s, when course offerings multiplied; electives became common; rules of attire became relaxed, much to the chagrin of many colleagues, and the foreign languages found themselves in competition with each other and with other subjects more than before. Spanish was introduced in grade 9, one new class a year beginning in 1970, until soon there were more Spanish classes than all other foreign language classes put together. The temptation to be an easy marker to gain students for one's language was always present. When I took my turn as head of the foreign language department, it was my unpleasant job to insure that this did not happen. It made me sympathize with administrators.

Dr. Gummere's successor, Wilbert Braxton, teacher of physics, headmaster from 1968 - 1976 (on the Faculty since 1946), was the complete opposite: gentle, soft-spoken, strong in his Quaker beliefs of non-violence and of the importance of achieving consensus. His son John - my student and friend - was a member of the *Golden Rule* that sailed into the Pacific nuclear test site to protest such testing, and subsequently served a jail sentence for failing to register for the draft. Wilbert's administration coincided with the extremes of the protest movement of the 60s, which was very much in evidence at Penn Charter.

A note I wrote to Wilbert Braxton in June 1969 summarizes my view of “student unrest” at the time.

... I think that those among us who most like to refer to the past as The Good Old Days will grant freely that even in those days the great majority of students were motivated extrinsically, i.e., by grades and by praise and/or urging of parents or teachers. Few were motivated intrinsically, i.e., by interest in the subject matter for its own sake. Of the majority it could surely be said that they did not challenge either course content or the fact of grading, but

were perfectly satisfied to go along with the system. (How much they learned is another story.)

For a variety of reasons, many more students now than in the past are challenging or even rejecting extrinsic motivation as being insufficient. They want to be convinced of the relevance of what they are studying: they want intrinsic reasons. It will be a difficult task to satisfy these kinds of students. Nevertheless, we must be prepared to face their questions, and we must not expect to be able to satisfy them with an evasive 'You'll find out when you grow up' type of answer.

I believe that the distinction between intrinsically and extrinsically motivated students is as present today as it was then. Whether the spread of students between the two poles of motivation is the same now it was then, I don't dare judge from my distant vantage point in rural Maine...

24.

I Change My Marital Status

But back to Penn Charter in 1969.

Conditions were often noisy and hectic: fiery statements in the weekly Upper School Friends Meetings ranging from opposition to the Vietnam War to anger at experiencing theft; a questioning of the content and value of much of the academic work; opposition to the awarding of grades, over against pass/fail, and of year-end prizes for character. There were “underground” newspapers that contained bitter attacks on the School and its philosophy. This and much more proved as severe a test as an administrator can expect. In 1969 a Penn Charter senior published an article in an inter-school newspaper, which he sarcastically entitled On the Possibility of Allowing Penn Charter to Exist, in which he summarized the thinking of many members of his class. He claimed that Penn Charter ignored coeducation, that it failed to develop non-compartmentalized education (such as courses in the humanities, ecology and multi-media workshops), and that it spent excessive amount of time on “keeping people in line, keeping their hair short and their clothes proper.” At the time such views were revolutionary.

I happen to have saved a six-page analysis by another student of that year, John Makransky, who sees the time as a period of transition from what he calls “instruction-learning” to “experience-learning.” The former is the traditional method of instruction, which consists essentially of the teacher talking and the class listening; the latter is learning “by experience;” i.e., via projects, small group tasks, etc., where the teacher acts more as a guide and less as a lecturer. He strikes at what was to me the core of the problem: while ideally the transition from “traditional” to “experiential” learning can for practical reasons be only a gradual one, in effect many students were demanding an immediate change, right then and there. He argues that while the administration (Wilbert Braxton and others) were fully sympathetic to a more experiential learning style, they did not think it could be done as rapidly as the students would like. He sympathized with the administration, urging his fellow students *to give up a little of our pride*.

Some 20 years later coeducation was firmly established, inter-disciplinary and project-oriented courses were numerous, teachers “lectured” less and hair style and dress had receded in importance. However, back in 1969 and in the early 70s, such ideas were controversial and emotionally charged, and Wilbert Braxton did not have an easy time establishing a “Quaker consensus.” By 1976,

when he handed over the administrative reins to Earl Ball, the waters had calmed, and new ideas were gradually being phased in.

In the midst of these hectic days, my protected life under the wings of Mrs. Kuehnle was destined to end. It happened in this way: for many years I had been visiting my sister Fran and her family in Ithaca, New York - a four-hour drive from Philadelphia - always with much pleasure. In August of 1970 I received a note from our common friend Celia Sieverts, who, like us, had left Germany in the 30s and was now living in Ithaca, to drop by her house the next time I was visiting my sister Fran. A woman friend of hers, a fellow-Quaker named Natalie, would also be there. "Do bring slides of your latest trip!" she urged. I did, and the rest, as they say, is history.



Natalie and I flank Celia Sieverts

That same winter, during Christmas vacation, came the acid test: I knew of a country house with lots of rooms for rent near Lake Bomoseen in Vermont. On this wintry spot, well off the beaten path, there descended not only Natalie and I, but also three of Natalie's four children: Mike, Nancy and Nicholas, and a goodly number of their friends, all 60s teenagers, as well as a nephew and niece of mine and a former student and his wife. I didn't think of it as a test at the time, but Natalie was wondering if I was up to this kind of



Natalie



Natalie's four children at our wedding, at the Ithaca Friends Meeting, June 1971: Peter, Nancy, Nicholas, Michael. (There has been a change in hair styles since then.)

a crowd, over whom I lacked the institutional authority of a teacher. Well, it must have been Hermes, god of games and tricks, who was my unseen guide: games of all sorts were played, none of them needing equipment, with lots of improvisation and laughter. The action was lively, but within bounds. Food appeared through Natalie's doing - to me it seemed miraculously. In short, things couldn't have been better had they been planned (which they hadn't, except in my mind). Natalie, for me the key person, approved enthusiastically. Even the one and only untoward event had a positive effect: Natalie's son Peter missed the entire affair because on his way to join the gang he was picked up by the State Police for hitch-hiking (age 19, his hair long, in keeping with the fashion), was searched, and incarcerated for having a crumpled up, forgotten joint in his jacket pocket. My taking this incident in stride - so Natalie told me subsequently - meant more to her than any achievement credential I could have presented. Of all the many ski-trips I undertook before or after, this easily turned out to be the most memorable. It removed any doubts that Natalie or I might have had about my joining her family.

We were married June 27, 1971, at the Hector Friends Meeting House in Ithaca, *in the manner of Friends*, with family and friends/*Friends in witness thereof*.

Natalie's and my debt to Celia is, I feel, best described by my sister Martha's poetry, as she read it at a our wedding:

There are some women who can't rest
Until each man has found his nest.
And settled down to married life
With mortgages and bills and wife.
Of several ladies do I know
Who looked and hunted high and low
And planned and summoned all their wits
To find a perfect Frau for Fritz.
They all agreed she must be fair
And fond of skiing and fresh air
And interested in current thought
Political - and how it's taught.
Such ladies do in fact occur
and were invited everywhere
Where Fritz decided to alight -
Unless his schedule was too tight.
He never said an outright no,
And to each party he would go -
Polite and pleasantly disposed -
But there the incident was closed.
No letters, phone calls worth a dime -

In fact it was a waste of time.
His friends gave up - it was no good,
And that was how the matter stood.

I don't how and why and when
But things have changed a lot since then,
And Ithaca, that seat of learning,
Filled Fritzie with particular yearning.
At weekend everyone could feel
It had astonishing appeal.
In snow and ice and rain his car
Would come from Philadelphia.
In fact the car was pretty smart,
It knew the way quite well by heart.

For every turn and sign and tree
 Proclaimed "This way to Natalie!"
 There was no rest area, no stop
 And Cupid was the traffic cop.
 The moral of this merry tale
 Is helpful sisters often fail,
 But CELIA SIEVERTS' magic way
 Made possible this happy day.

Natalie had been married before, to Oakie Kent, in 1946. In 1962 they and their four children went to Tanzania to lead a program of the American Friends Service Committee that placed college-age volunteers from the US in community development projects. Part way through the two-year assignment, Oakie died in an automobile accident. Natalie and the children (then 7 to 14) returned to their house in Ithaca. She then got an MA in Teaching at Cornell to add to her Smith BA. By the time we met she was teaching in an Ithaca elementary school.

After we were married I terminated my seventeen-year happy lease with Mrs. Kuehnle, and we bought a house in Conshohocken, in woodsy suburban Philadelphia. Its trademark were its red cedar walls and transparent plastic ceiling; it served children, grandchildren and countless guests. After we had left it for Maine, Katie, our oldest granddaughter, at age eleven, remembered it this way:

Goodbye, old home, I'll miss you so much.

Goodbye, old house, with the last touch.

I'll miss you. I'll miss you so much.

Natalie was not going to be a stay-at-home wife; she started working for her Pennsylvania Teacher Certification. One course was on the teaching of science. One fateful night, as she was leaving one of her classes, she was confronted by a flat tire. Her instructor, Bernie Whitman, principal of the W.F. Miller Elementary School in North Philadelphia, not only helped her change her tire, but offered her a job at his school teaching a class of 4th and 5th graders. She accepted and found herself in a classroom with 36 mostly Puerto Rican children, with only three reading at grade level. Along came a city-wide teachers' strike, which she used to take students in groups of five or six to explore Philadelphia from the Liberty Bell to the Zoo. This turned out to be so successful that with Bernie Whitman's approval, she left classroom teaching and started an urban environmental neighborhood center in the school's basement. This soon expanded into its own three-story building, right next-door and came to be the nonprofit Norris Square Neighborhood Project, still very much alive 35 years later. In 1976 the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

awarded Natalie its annual School Teacher Award, which gives an indication of the nature of her work and her success. It reads:

Many a city teacher has dreamed of instilling in her students an awareness of the natural world. Few have been able to turn that dream into actuality. Natalie Kent Kempner is one of those few.

Working with minimal funds at an eighty year old elementary school in a part of Philadelphia's Spanish speaking section, she has led her pupils in ever widening circles of discovery by cultivating their intuitive curiosity and encouraging their boundless resourcefulness. Their museum in the school basement has housed insects (dead and alive); leaves and seeds; tiny fish and animals and their bones ; plants (miraculously alive); and a wide variety of other artifacts.

Their gardens have produced some vegetables and a fine crop of weeds with pretty flowers. Their collecting expeditions have visited trash cans, markets, parks and the Poconos. They have exhibited in our Junior Flower Show and they have planted their bulbs for the spring of '77.

Natalie Kent Kempner practices what Wordsworth preached: "Come forth into the light of things, let Nature be your teacher." We salute her with our 1976 School Teacher Award, the first presented by the Society. She has set a high standard for future recipients.

25.

Beyond the Classroom

I want to return to the 70's at Penn Charter and say something about the feature that is unique at Friends' schools: the weekly Friends Meeting. I mentioned that Jack Gummere prided himself for paying more attention to it than it had enjoyed before his time. I am sure he did, but in the 50s Friends Meeting still remained a formal affair in which students spoke rarely. Then came the upheavals during the 60's when things sometimes got so lively that often Meetings had to be ended early. In the mid 70's Meetings had again become quiet. With the coming of the new (and current) headmaster Earl Ball in 1976, Meeting gradually became more meaningful: the format was made less rigid and topics were introduced for discussion, something that in Quaker circles is referred to as "Worship Sharing." The purpose was to bring the group together spiritually, without the use of ritual as it is used in the services of most established religions. When I retired from Penn Charter in 1986 I had the feeling that Friends Meeting was gaining in significance. I give Earl Ball and the many on the Faculty as well as students who worked on this much of the credit. The great difficulty of course is to develop an accepting attitude among the vast majority of students who have no Quaker connections and to whom sitting in silence for 40 minutes (less for young students) is a totally novel experience. Since the student population is always changing, the challenge to make Meeting meaningful is ongoing.

I had started my teaching with Latin and Greek, the latter often with just two or three boys before the school day had officially started. Despite this handicap, I found Greek especially rewarding since only the highly motivated attempted it. I also taught German, which as a modern language provided a nice contrast with Latin and Greek.

I have mentioned my Penn Charter classes, but there was much that kept me busy outside of class. In the 50's I was the Penn Charter representative on the Germantown Schools Community Council. This Council consisted of seven private schools in the area, as well as Germantown High School. Its aim was to provide ways in which students from the different schools could become involved in the community of Germantown through speakers and discussion groups and above all through service projects in the many run-down sections of Germantown. While the number of participants was never large, (not more than thirty at any one event), their spirit was excellent.

One popular project was “Inter-School Visiting.” Groups of about six students from different schools would visit one member school for one day. The visits involved classes, assemblies, student council, administration, teachers and lunch. The visiting group wrote up their observations in detail, which then went back to the host school. The purpose of the project was to break down stereotypes that the schools had of each other, especially those that existed between Germantown High School and the private schools. In my view this project was highly successful, in that it improved inter-school understanding and cooperation.

With the percentage of Blacks from the South steadily increasing in Germantown, race relations became a crucial topic. At that time (in the 50s) private schools had virtually no Black students. The economic divide between the White middle class and most Blacks was huge. The Council became one of the few places where the two groups could meet and get to know each other.

I recall the project particularly well because of its coordinator Jean Evans. She had the wonderful gift of being able to gain the confidence and respect of teenagers, and it was largely through her that the program touched the lives of many students. She, Natalie and I were close friends until she died of cancer at age 65.

Then there was coaching, chiefly of soccer, mostly at the younger levels. I enjoyed the opportunity it provided of playing some soccer myself, if only for a few minutes now and then, to show a learner how to play his position. Natalie’s son Nick, then fifteen, loves to cite this story: after an undefeated season, I invited the squad of some twenty 8th graders to our house in Conshohocken for the customary cider and donuts. What was not customary was that recent flooding had caused large sections of our entire yard to be covered with about six inches of rocks. How to get rid of these rocks?

Nick and Natalie watched from our balcony in utter disbelief as the squad set in motion shovels and wheelbarrows, and within a half hour had diligently cleared the area of the rocks that didn’t belong. And this *prior* to refreshments! Nick, shaking his head, just said, *All this work for a couple of donuts!* Of course I wasn’t acting as parent, but as coach, a coach of an undefeated team at that.

The extra-curricular activity I am most proud of was the Greek Society. My uncle Fritz had asked me the simple question: why not read Greek plays in translation outside of class? I started in on this in about my third year at Penn



The soccer coach is using a deflated ball to demonstrate the point of contact in heading.

Charter, meeting monthly in my small apartment, with just three students. Numbers soon mushroomed, until there were fifteen, and we started meeting at students' homes where parents provided refreshments. The procedure was simple: one or two volunteers selected a play, explained the setting, assigned parts, and we were off. By occasionally leaping over choral passages, one evening was long enough to get through a play. The boys discovered Aristophanes, and plays like *Lysistrata* and the *Clouds* were much enjoyed, in the spirit of the Ancient Greeks. I liked it that my role was restricted to supplying information while the chief part of a play - the text - was wholly in the hands of the boys. I had the fun of introducing high school students to good literature and at the same time benefiting myself by getting to know many Greek plays well.

26.

South of the Border

So much for professional activities; it's time to recall vacation. I am amazed to discover that in forty years of teaching, I had close to eight years of vacations. Which profession can match that?

The summer of 1946 I spent in Mexico City, the Coyoacán section, with the Schuenemann-Hofer family, old family friends from Germany. The father had fought in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) on the republican side and the family ended up in Mexico City in 1939. I did attend courses in Spanish at the university, but my chief learning came through the family. The mother, a sculptor, introduced me to the murals of Diego Rivera, who lived nearby with his on-again, off-again wife, Frida Kahlo. I think it was through this double contact: the mother as a practicing sculptor, and Frida Kahlo as an internationally famous painter, that my eyes were opened to art, especially to women in the arts. Of course it wasn't that I had never seen women practicing art before: there was my aunt Barbara Kempner, a professional violinist with the Adolf Busch Chamber Orchestra; my mother's sisters Emma Witt and Enole von Haimberger, and my sister Martha Camfield, all painters; my sister Franziska Morris a pianist. But somehow I had not moved from these specific cases to women in the arts in general. That happened only gradually. And at that time I knew nothing yet of Fanny Mendelssohn, Felix's sister, who today is considered by many experts her brother's equal as musician.

CUBA

Castro's Cuba is one of those topics that elicits either black or white responses: some look upon it as an evil totalitarian system, others as a country that despite a 45-year embargo has instituted laudable social reforms. Natalie and I managed two two-week visits: one with a group of teachers in 1980 to look at education, and one as guests of Quaker communities around Holguín in eastern Cuba in 1983. (While there have been changes in Cuba since the 80s, I believe that what I am describing is still valid today.)

Rather than attempt to analyze - brilliantly or otherwise - the history of the Cuban Revolution (done expertly by our friend Professor Allen Wells at Bowdoin College), I'll instead give a few vignettes that characterize Cuban society for me.

- Public school dormitories with 30 double-decker bunks for five-day boarders. Most students came from out-of-the-way rural areas and were first in their communities to go to school. They showed us their vegetable gardens with great

pride, explaining how they grow everything they eat. They also were thoroughly familiar with the Revolution and its heroes, including Ché Guevara.

- Clinics and excellent medical care were available at no cost, though because of the US embargo there was a great shortage of medicines and supplies. Health care was superior to what we saw later in Central America and it was far more accessible than in inner cities in the United States.

- Conversations with college students on a beach, who felt they were getting an excellent education. At the same time, they wished for bluejeans, sneakers, American music and American consumer goods.

- Chats with Cubans everywhere: easy to talk to; much music and dancing.

- Talk with a retired journalist and his wife in his apartment in Havana, who expressed the hope that political dissent would soon become possible.

- We attended several of the five Quaker Meetings (there are about 1,000 Quakers in Cuba). Meetings were “programmed” (as they are in most Third-World countries as well as in parts of the United States, unlike ours in Brunswick, Maine, which is “unprogrammed”) with hymns and sermons based closely on the New Testament. One meeting allowed a five-minute period of “silent worship,” which was largely drowned out by piano hymn playing and noise from the street. (No window glass.) There were active Sunday Schools as well as activities for youth. Our discussions with adults avoided politics, for while Quakers had official sanction “to practice their religion,” they were not to engage in any sort of “politics.”

My conclusion: nothing justifies the US embargo. While it is true that Cuba treats dissidents harshly, it is also true that Cuba has acknowledged successes in health care and education. But even if Cuba had as despicable a government as Washington says it has, what justification is there for an embargo? That Cuba is communist? We trade extensively with China and with Vietnam. That it is authoritarian? So are many of our allies in the Middle East: Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. That Cuba is a threat to us? Not since the demise of the USSR. Furthermore, the effect of the embargo is counter-productive: it unites Cubans in Cuba against us. Surely the real reason behind the 45-year-old embargo is presidential politics: both parties are afraid to lose the support of Miami-Cubans, and with it Florida’s electoral votes.

Most of the world sees no sense in our Cuba policy. The last annual vote at the UN (November 2005) condemned the US embargo 179-4, with only Israel, the Marshall Islands and Palau voting with us. In addition many American businesses are eager to reopen trade with Cuba, following the lead of Mexico, Canada, China and Venezuela, among others. Of course our government would have to admit - at least to itself - that it has pursued a wrong policy for 45 years. I grant that this wouldn’t be easy.

CENTRAL AMERICA

After our brief stays in Cuba, we became involved in Central America. The murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero while saying mass in San Salvador, capital of El Salvador, in 1980, together with the murder of four Catholic nuns in December of the same year also in San Salvador, alerted us to the fact that priests and nuns throughout Central and South America had become engaged by the teachings of Liberation Theology to seek social justice. Priests and nuns, labeled “Marxist” by their country’s military, the landowners, the conservative wing of the Catholic hierarchy and by the US Government, were persecuted or driven into exile by government-sponsored death squads. It is true that Liberation Theology used Marxist analysis in that it looked upon the poor in Central and South America as a “class,” “exploited” by rich and powerful landowners. However, in our view men like Archbishop Romero did not seek a resolution via class struggle and revolution, but through non-violent change grounded both in the thinking in the Old and New Testament, as well as in that of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church at the Vatican, known as Vatican II, 1962-65. It was at that time I came to realize how many crucial verses in the Bible urge mankind to show concern for the poor. Two samples:

Seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the poor.
(Isaiah 1:17)

And the King (i.e., Jesus) will answer them: ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ (Matthew 25:40)

In fact, Jesus has few nice things to say about the rich.

In subsequent years the Council’s formulations were supported by the majority of the bishops of Central and South America. Bishops like Oscar Romero of San Salvador and countless priests saw it as their duty to help the poor in their search for social and economic justice.

Many of those fleeing death squads in their country found “sanctuary” in churches in the United States which welcomed them by following the principle stated in *Leviticus* 19:33:

The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself.

Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting (our Quaker Meeting in Philadelphia) became part of what was called the Sanctuary Movement. The latter had a dual role: to provide sanctuary to refugees (primarily from El Salvador and Guatemala) who were fleeing because of fear of persecution and to call attention to the policies of our Government that allowed this persecution to take place. As Clerk of Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting Natalie played a leading role when in 1985 the Meeting declared Sanctuary, meaning that it was prepared to take on and shelter a Central

American refugee. Our Government had labeled such action illegal, and there had been some arrests. Chances of being arrested were small because of the negative publicity such action created. But in the climate of the Reagan years, when those who thought as we did tended to be labeled ‘communist,’ we couldn’t be sure.

It was “Paz,” a 17-year-old student activist from San Salvador, who became our refugee-in-sanctuary. She had been personally threatened by government-sponsored death squads for participating in anti-government action. For a year she lived and slept at the Meeting House, with someone with her at all times. Then, for a second year, she came to live with us. Natalie took her to dozens of schools, colleges, rotary clubs, churches and synagogues where she talked about what was happening in El Salvador. Not only did she talk with thorough knowledge, but also with sincerity and conviction. By the end most audiences were on her side. Those who disagreed, rarely spoke up, realizing that she knew much more than they did. We also went to Washington to protest President Reagan’s support of right-wing governments in Central America. The photo shows us with “Paz.”

Several years later, now under her real name of Ariel Peña, she was able to return to El Salvador without fear. There she met and married Tom Gibb, a BBC correspondent. Earlier on, when asked if she was married, her proud reply had



Demonstration in Washington in 1987 on behalf of Central American refugees and in opposition to US policy of supporting military dictators. Natalie and I are carrying the banner for Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting (in Philadelphia); on left is “Paz,” our refugee from El Salvador in sanctuary.

always been that she was already married - “to the Revolution!” But then she met “love on the barricades,” as she put it. She is now back in El Salvador with Tom and their son, Max.

In the late 80s several members of Paz’s family fled El Salvador and were taken into Sanctuary by other churches and now live in Philadelphia. They have found work, but, like so many Latin American refugees, are uncertain about returning.

In 1984 we each spent several weeks at different times in Nicaragua to learn about the Sandinista revolution from the inside. Natalie went with a cotton-picking brigade, while I, less energetic, joined a ten-day trip through Nicaragua of 180 activists, mostly from the United States, with Witness For Peace, an organization opposed to the use of armed intervention. The climax was a day-long demonstration along the Nicaraguan border with Honduras, protesting the action of the *Contras*, who were anti-Sandinista Nicaraguans operating out of Honduras with open support from Washington. To back up: in 1979 the Sandinista Revolution, a popular uprising, kicked out Nicaragua’s brutal dictator Anastasio Somoza, whom the US had backed, and set up in his place a popular leftist government that was not to Washington’s liking. President Reagan attempted to bring down the Sandinistas by supporting their opponents, the *Contras*, Nicaraguans who had gathered across the border in Honduras. Witness For Peace felt that the United States had no business undermining a popular revolution in a foreign country, a revolution that constituted no threat to us. I found it an uplifting experience to be standing in line with so many others taking a strong stand on an issue that we all felt deeply.

In the winter of 1986, after I had retired from teaching, Natalie and I spent three months at a Spanish language school in Antigua, Guatemala’s ancient capital. Classes were one-on-one. We improved our Spanish and explored the spectacular country-side with its smoking volcanoes and romantic lakes. I stayed on for another month with Peace Brigades International (PBI) which had volunteers from Western nations “accompany” (i.e., be with) Guatemalans whose lives were threatened by the military on the grounds that they were subversive. PBI assumed - correctly, as it turned out - that death squads would not do their dirty work if there were human rights activists around to observe.

Two years later I got to know a remarkable woman, Rigoberta Menchú. Born in 1959, as a Quiché Mayan in rural Guatemala, she had grown up in a family that had been active in organizing farmers (CUC = Committee for Campesino Unity) and their fight against exploitative landowners. In 1980 her father, mother and brother were murdered in separate actions and she, fearing for her safety, fled to Mexico. In 1982 she told her story on tapes to a Venezuelan anthropologist, who published them in a book entitled IRigoberta. After early praise, the book was challenged by some anthropologists for not being factually

accurate. For instance, she does not mention her excellent education in a private Catholic boarding school, schooling that of course was not available to most of the Mayans. She has fully admitted to inaccuracies in her account, arguing that any inaccuracies were justified since her aim was to present a valid picture of the oppression that her people, the Mayans, had to undergo. Her critics grant that her overall account of the plight of the Mayans and of government oppression is indeed valid. (Of her it can indeed be said that she “has invented the truth.”)

In 1988 Rigoberta decided to return to Guatemala to see if the waters were safe. I felt honored to be one of a group of five, sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, to accompany her. We were three from the US, one from Canada and one from Mexico. Our job was to make sure that one of us was always with her. Wearing Mayan dress, replete with earrings, bracelets and jewelry, her short, squat figure, her round, smiling face exuded enthusiasm and love of life. Walking through markets in Guatemala City proved exciting because countless Mayans and occasionally *ladinos* (i.e., people of mixed ancestry) would recognize her, embrace and talk at great length. Most of these conversations were in Quiché or other Mayan languages that she had made a point of studying in her teens in order to bring together as many Mayans as possible. The Spanish she had begun at age 19 in order to be able to face those in charge was beautifully clear and easy even for me to understand, whose comprehension of spoken Spanish is only mediocre. Since my duty was no more than to be an accompanying presence, my job was easy. Given her popularity and the presence of outsiders like us, we felt secure about her safety. However, after a week her Guatemalan friends urged her to return to Mexico, which she did. In 1992 she won the Nobel Peace Prize, which read: *In recognition of her work for social justice and ethnic and cultural reconciliation based on respect for indigenous peoples.*

Since then conditions in Guatemala have improved sufficiently to enable her to return for good.

Our latest Hispanic venture was of a different nature: in the fall of 2004 we walked the 455 miles of the Santiago Pilgrimage Trail from Roncesvalles on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. My detailed account is in the appendix.

Is our Spanish now fluent? Alas, far from it! Natalie’s strength is understanding, mine is speaking. What is my standard? I call that person fluent who can join a conversation of four domino players in a village bar when they discuss their game. I’m afraid that for me that would be like listening in to two Lancashire men discussing the latest Manchester United - Everton match: I wouldn’t understand a word!

27.

Vive La France!

While my Spanish blossomed, my French and France were not forgotten. At Marlborough I had taken French; I had parents and sisters who were good at it; so that when a 12-week summer vacation materialized, I decided to do something about it. I spent the summer of 1947 at the University of Grenoble in a beautiful part of southern France taking “Courses for Foreigners.” Some were indeed excellent: I vividly remember Professor Thibeaudet’s lectures and drills on the *e-caducque*, as in *je n’sais pas* and *rue dla poste*, proof of either my great interest in phonetics or his good teaching, or possibly both. I stayed in a pension, together with a number of Western Europeans, all of us in our twenties. We had a great time together, loved the countryside, but, alas, the language of communication among us was English. I made a second attempt to perfect my French during four months in the spring of 1962 at the University of Lyons, having taken a year off from teaching. Again, it was perhaps more pleasurable than functionally effective. As I write this, I feel my love of French resurfacing. Odd fragments of memory: my Marlborough French teacher’s spelling rule for the past participle (*Make it agree when you can see!*); my snobbishly looking down on Québec French; my enjoying listening to - and understanding reasonably well - French radio news direct from France; my occasional glimpse at a copy of *Le Monde*. Even a line of poetry by Lamartine is surfacing:

Ainsi toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages...

(Looking for a poetic translation, I typed the quote into Google and got an identical version on four different links! All are *automatically translated from the French* and read: *Thus always thorough worms of new shores*. Well, well... How was the poor computer to distinguish between *vers* meaning *worms*, and *vers* meaning *towards*? And what about *thorough*? That’s beyond me. I thought, dear reader, you might want to know to what lengths I went to help those who don’t master French (like myself). My research suggests the following bare-bones translation: *Thus always driven to new shores...*)

But it’s no use: I’ll never get that translator’s job at the UN, which I have aspired to in my dreams ever after sitting in the translator’s booth with Harry Coulter, a former Latin student, translating from French (and Russian) at the speaker’s speed...

28.

The Glory that was Greece and the Grandeur that was Rome

My interest in modern languages was always matched by my interest in Latin and Greek. So it was natural to attend eight-week summer sessions at the American Academy in Rome as well as at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, the former in 1947, the latter in 1951. Henry Rowell of John Hopkins was the professor in charge of 20 teachers of Latin and Greek at both secondary and college level in Rome, Professor George Mylonas of George Washington University in St. Louis led an equally enthusiastic group in Athens. Due to the obvious interest in the various sites as well as the high motivation of all of us (after all, this was going to be the underpinning of our future daily work) we readily overcame the often exhausting Mediterranean summer heat. Two flashes of memory: on one particularly hot day our Greek group was visiting the battle site of Thermopylae, where in 480 BC three hundred Spartans gave up their lives in a vain attempt to stop hordes of invading Persians. It happened to be my turn to give the report on the site. Looking down over what is now a grassy field, but at the time of the battle was a sea inlet, I recreated Herodotus' unique account of the entire episode with all the elocutionary skill at my command. It happened to be right after our picnic lunch by an olive grove. Near its end I interrupted my presentation to allow a distant tractor's noise to die down. A class member informed me later that my sudden silence near the end had woken him up! I am now wondering how often this sort of thing happened in my subsequent teaching without my ever finding out.

At another time, seated in the Theater of Dionysus at Delphi we listened to one of our group (she was a professor at Mt. Holyoke) describe the action of Aeschylus' prize-winning play *The Eumenides*, performed in 458 BC. She related how Agamemnon's son Orestes, in order to avenge the murder of his father by his mother Clytemnestra, had killed the latter and was now appearing in court on the charge of matricide. After the dramatized debate, the twelve jurors were divided equally, six for acquittal, six against. The presiding judge was none other than Pallas Athena. She cast the deciding vote. Was Orestes guilty of matricide? (No one was dozing off this time.) Then came her concluding words: "If you want to learn what happened, read the play." Those of us who did not know, or had forgotten, made sure to find out as soon as possible, and are likely to remember it the rest of our lives. It was my introduction to the device that I call "incomplete telling," which I kept in my bag of tricks from then on. My favorite use of this

device is to show a class a copy of Robert Frost's Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening with the very last line *and miles to go before I sleep* omitted. I'd ask students to supply the poem's last line. There'd be many good answers, but never Frost's brilliant repeat.

Suffice it to say that the two summer sessions in Rome and Athens served as a source of information as well as of inspiration for all of my work in the Classics - both in teaching and in my own reading - from then on.

29.

Three Summer Workcamps Abroad

Summer workcamps were the natural follow-up of what I had begun as a Penn Charter teacher in the 50s: accompanying groups of about ten high school and college age volunteers who would spend a weekend working with a family living in poverty, painting, wall-papering or cleaning part of their living quarters. These “Weekend Workcamps” in inner-city Philadelphia were organized by David Ritchie, a Quaker activist all his long life. Contacts were carefully planned with the people involved to bring about a meaningful relationship between inner city poor and upper-middle class idealistic volunteers like myself. These weekends made us participants aware of the huge gap between rich and poor in this country and planted in us concern for economic justice and social welfare. They made me aware of the huge obstacles that inner-city families have to overcome in order to raise children, get an education and make a living. In a practical way, David Ritchie’s work anticipated Michael Harrington’s *The other America* (1962). It argues that ... *the land of the poor is invisible to middle class America ... a monstrous example of needless suffering in the most advanced society in the world.* I remember reporting in a Penn Charter assembly along with two colleagues about our workcamp experiences in an attempt of encouraging others to volunteer. In the 50s, this was no easy task.

Stimulated by these weekend workcamps, I decided to participate in summerlong workcamps that the American Friends Service Committee had been organizing for a number of years. The AFSC began as an organization founded on Quaker principles of non-violence in 1917 to provide conscientious objectors with a constructive alternative to military service. It sees each human being as of infinite worth and therefore opposes war as well as any form of economic and racial injustice. This has led to projects in communities of racial and cultural diversity where poverty and powerlessness are evident.

My entry into work with the AFSC was via a committee that was in charge of planning eight-week summer work camps, both in this country and abroad. AFSC staff and interested outsiders like myself met monthly. Our specific task was to plan eight-week long college-age summer work camps in the US and abroad. Camps would be located in areas of socio-economic need, always at the invitation of the local community. Over the years this led to my participating in three such summer-long workcamps: in Bellingham, Washington, and as leader in Port Harcourt, Nigeria and in Unterweissenbach, Austria.

The first one was on the Lummi Indian Reservation on Puget Sound in 1957, WA, within sight of towering Mt. Baker, a constant reminder of the natural beauty of our location. This beauty contrasted sharply with the life of poverty of the Lummis. For all of us - two Indonesians, three Western Europeans, one Haitian, the rest from the United States - this was the first close look at an Indian Reservation. Our impression was not encouraging. Morale among the Lummis (about 600) was low due chiefly to the lack of jobs on the Reservation. We were told that most of the young were leaving the Reservation to find jobs in Seattle and other metropolitan areas. The chief opportunity for work on the Reservation was salmon fishing.

Our work project was building a rectangular multi-purpose hall. The foundations had already been poured before we arrived. We did wall building and carpentry work, directed by an elderly German-American carpenter, hired by the Lummis. Fortunately Siegmund, one of our participants representing a West German workcamp organization, had excellent building skills and was able to act as a liaison between us and the hired man. (Siegmund and I are still friends; recently, while visiting, he helped our son Peter remodeling our house here in Maine.) Our contribution proved sufficient to enable the tribe to finish the project within a year.

Halfway through the summer, the leaders (a couple) had to leave for health reasons and I, as the oldest camper was asked to take over. I made it clear that all decisions of our group would continue to be made by Quaker consensus, using a rotating steering committee, which meant no directives from above nor taking of votes. While my memory is hazy - no diary has survived - I know that we managed to do the work, feed ourselves and get along. As a farewell gift the campers gave me a hammer with the inscription "Use only if love fails!"

My next summer workcamp, in 1962, was in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, a city of 100,000, in just the third year of that country's independence. Locals speak English and Ibo. The British past had not vanished: bookkeeping was made a headache because of pounds, shillings and pence; the British curriculum at the local high school included a Latin class that studied Vergil's *Aeneid* (something that even I, as a Latin teacher, find of dubious value for Nigerian teenagers); and then there was Port Harcourt's Assistant Welfare Officer Maureen Olphin. Maureen, Caucasian and thoroughly British, was anything but the stereotypical colonial officer who looked down upon Africans as inferior. She had been in charge of all external preparations with the local authorities, which had been extensive, to welcome twenty international workcampers mostly of college age. The project, to be carried out with local help, was to construct a "Remand Home," that is to say a building to house prisoners during their initial time after release from

jail. As at the workcamp on the Lummi Indian Reservation, an American Friends Service Committee representative had done the planning in cooperation with Maureen Olphin and her office. Seven participants came from the United States, smaller contingents from Germany, France, Ghana and Nigeria. Appointed by the AFSC, I was the leader, Quaker style, which meant that my job was less “leading” than developing a consensual process that allowed the project to move forward despite conflicting views on how to proceed. My diary records these notes on the weekly “business meeting:” How many hours do we work each day? West Africans want shorter hours. Pamy (West Germany) suggests leaving it up to each individual. Rejected as impractical. What is going to be cooked? How to prepare beans, plantains, cassava? Keith (US): suggests not using a fridge in order to be able to identify with Nigerians. Rejected. What topics for evening discussions? Admission to our compound: how to be regulated? Lively discussion of different marital customs. John from Ghana in his presentation about Ghana Today calls Westerners “imperialists” and “neo-colonialists”. Eight live roosters brought in and killed. Town people work with us. Hi-Life dancing. Pamy demonstrates twist. Surprisingly, I record no criticism of sexually separate sleeping arrangements. I guess it was still very early in the 60s.

Differences in cooking and eating practices gave us some trying moments. I recall Bimpi, 20, an Ibo woman, always wearing multi-colored tribal dresses, deciding to prepare her own meal. That part of it was fine; the only trouble was that she had left the oven and pots uncleaned when our appointed cooks came to prepare the evening meal for everyone else. Tempers got hot. Eventually, at a “business meeting,” we made ourselves aware that in group life such as ours, individual wishes had to accommodate themselves to the needs of the group. Since Westerners were in the majority and set a western cooking style, this was harder for Africans, whose practices and tastes differed from ours. We reached a compromise: alternate dishes where appropriate, provided there was careful planning. My diary suggests that from then on we made it without further incident and with a fuller awareness of cultural and culinary differences.

The camp taught me much in two areas: group dynamics and newly independent Africa. But chiefly there was the thrill of being part of a mixed group that was able to work well together and be of use to others at the same time.

The third workcamp, in 1965, was organized jointly by AFSC and a European workcamp organization. It was located in the rolling hills near the village of Unterweissenbach, in a poor area of rural Austria, northeast of Linz near the Czech border. Our college group of 21 worked for four weeks on the construction of an access road for farmers as well as with two families on their farms. Eleven of us

came from the United States and England, others from Holland, Sweden, Italy, Turkey, Czechoslovakia and the United Arab Republic, as the Czech Republic and Egypt were known back then. It proved a healthy mix, although English speakers tended to take over discussions. An old truth was reaffirmed: native speakers, when excited, tend to find it difficult to slow down. But we did manage to have at least some good discussions, especially after talks by the Czech and the Egyptians about their respective countries, the latter on the subject: “What Nasser has done for Egypt.”

Relationship with locals was good, despite the lack of a common language. I was kept busy translating, reducing my pick-and-shovel time considerably. I have this memory: we received regular visits from Herr Windischhofer of the Unterweissenbach mayor’s office to see how we were doing. The very first time we met, he greeted me exuberantly with “Good-bye, Mr. Kempner!” He said it with such gusto and pleasure that I couldn’t get myself to correct him- not then, nor thereafter.

While officially I was in charge of the camp, we rotated leadership weekly, much as we had done at the other two camps. However, unlike in Port Harcourt, here we were quartered six miles from the nearest village. Fortunately, an inn within 100 yards, frequented by farmers and lumberjacks, served as center for relaxation and entertainment in the form of singing, guitar-playing and much non-verbal communication. While the intellectual level of the discussions did perhaps not measure up to those at Port Harcourt, the overall spirit was high, as shown in several moving letters:

From Ahmed in Cairo: *Very surely I cannot forget what a very fine days we had stayed together, very interesting days, very joyful and a very large amount of merry.*

From Jane in Sewickley, Pennsylvania: *I think the greatest beauty of the camp was the relaxed natural atmosphere which pervaded it at all times, and for that, you, as the leader, should feel nothing but pride. You forced nothing upon any of us, maintained the exemplary and disciplinary role of the leader, and allowed yourself to become member of the group when the occasion demanded. It was an experience I shall never forget.”*

And here is Willibald Hoelzl, a local farmer, for whom several of us worked from time to time: *I’ll never forget saying good-bye to all of you. Tell all of them that they all deserve much credit. In a few years we can live like human beings. We’ll never forget what you did, and we, in turn, will do good where we can.”* (My translation).

30.

An Iron Curtain has descended across the Continent

In the summers of 1963 and 1964 I led two high school age groups on trips behind the Iron Curtain. Between the end of World War II and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, Churchill's *Iron Curtain* (a phrase he coined in a speech in Fulton, Missouri in 1946) had divided two very different styles of government, "democracy" and "communism." This division soon became buried in stereotypes: our side was good, the other side evil. Further thought was deemed unnecessary. To many of us, the idea of visiting *the other side* seemed important to fight this sort of black/white thinking. The idea of such trips for high schoolers originated with my friend Dick Hiler, Philadelphia Quaker and frequent visitor to East Bloc countries. In the climate of the times, this was a bold move. When I was looking for prospective participants at Penn Charter, I was promptly labeled "communist" by a parent... Now I was really determined to go!

Each trip, coed and interracial, lasted eight weeks; nine of us on the first, eighteen on the second. We used VW vans for transportation. Participants did not know each other before. The first trip started in Amsterdam, then went through West Germany, East Germany (East Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden), the then Czechoslovakia and Tito's Yugoslavia. The second followed the same route through West and East Germany, and continued through Warsaw, via Minsk and Smolensk to Moscow, then south to Kiev and Odessa on the Black Sea, and back through Hungary and Austria. We stayed in hostels, college dormitories or with private families. In East Bloc countries all arrangements were made by the national Communist Youth organizations. Except in Yugoslavia, where we had no guides at all, we were under the wings of official guides, following a set schedule.

I considered it my job to make sure that there was ample opportunity for exposure and discussion of different and often conflicting points of view in as constructive a manner as possible. To prepare the ground we did a lot of role playing, having different participants act out the West and East German points of view.

One was the question whether the United States should have any relations with the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). One extreme was official recognition, the other was to treat it as the Russian Zone of Occupation. It's an issue that is still around elsewhere: Vietnam until recently, and Cuba still unresolved.

Another area of controversy I identified with personally was the complex

case of Hans Globke (1898-1973). His predicament is my Exhibit A for the difficulty of maintaining one's integrity in a government headed toward evil. He had been a high-ranking lawyer in the Ministry of the Interior in the Weimar Republic and continued in that position when the Nazis came to power. In 1935 he helped draft and write a commentary on aforementioned Nuremberg Race Laws. Surprisingly, he was not a member of the Nazi Party. When Germany began losing the war, he had distant contacts with anti-Hitler conspirators. He might have passed into oblivion had not Germany's first post-war Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, made him his chief-of-staff. He held this post from 1953 to 1963. The East Germans, gloatingly, gave him a life sentence *in absentia* in 1963. In his defense, Globke always argued that in his Commentaries on the Nuremberg Laws he had shown a degree of sensitivity toward Jews that someone else might not have shown. Several times he tendered his resignation, but Adenauer, whose anti-Nazi credentials were impeccable, did not accept it. (Adenauer may well have kept him on to secure the support of former Nazis.)

Given the viciousness of Nazi race policy and his having had a hand in it, my own feeling is that Globke should have stayed out of government service in post-war Germany. But I acknowledge that that is easy for me to say. I wish I had asked my father and Uncle Fritz their opinions. I never did. (The current Iraqi government faces the same dilemma in its treatment of former Baath Party members: Does it use their expertise or does it consider them unemployable because of their past? A tough call.)

In preparing ourselves, we did not overlook questions that the other side might ask us, such as about race relations and inner-city poverty. On both trips we had Blacks from the North as well as the South, so that we could provide answers to the frequent question: "What is it like to be Black in the United States?"

Anyway, we were prepared! I soon found out that each group was highly motivated, quite knowledgeable, and not afraid to ask questions. An illustration: with the first group we visited *Gymnasium* classes in Braunschweig, West Germany, in a school with which I had developed an annual student exchange with Penn Charter, and which was therefore delighted to welcome us for three days. One of our girls opened a classroom discussion period with this question: "We have been told that there is much cheating in German schools. Why is this so?" To break the ensuing silence, the teacher in charge, far from denying the underlying assumption of the question, suggested the proximity of desks during tests as possible cause. His statement was promptly challenged, and other causes were suggested, such as the pressure of grades and the force of tradition. The ice was broken; both sides were involved emotionally as well as intellectually, and a lively discussion ensued on a whole variety of topics.

On the subject of cheating in German schools: it is indeed widespread, if not to say prevalent. I believe the major reason is the amoral way in which German students regard their teachers. Somewhat simplified: in Germany the teacher is considered an impersonal part of the educational machinery whom students look at the way motorists look at cops who check on speeding. Personal feelings don't enter in. By contrast, students and teachers in American schools are much more apt to enter into a personal relationship with each other, where cheating just doesn't seem right. I remember providing answers during a test to a neighbor in my German school, something I would never have considered as a student at Milton. Many German as well as American exchange students have reported similar experiences.

Our concerns centered around the East-West conflict, so prominent at the time. Some of our best informants were our official guides: they were with us for at least a week at a time, were generally intelligent and well-informed and we had lots of opportunity to get to know them and their thinking. There was Roland, a 22-year-old student at East Berlin's Humboldt University, who loved his job with us. While I'd certainly call him a Marxist, he clearly did not feel comfortable with the many Stalinist restrictions in East Germany. In what was perhaps a rationalization, he argued that just as germs can bring disease to a healthy person, so in a state harmful ideas can infect the citizens. If this takes the form of censorship of news, books and western ideas, this is indeed regrettable. However, such restriction can be lifted once the citizen-patient is well enough to resist such germs. This is of course the same line of reasoning used in *all* censorship, like school boards in the United States forbidding the teaching of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn or of evolution. To be sure, communism practiced in the Soviet Union and in East Bloc countries was much more extensive in its application of censorship, but in principle I see an embarrassing resemblance. Censorship is intended to protect the innocent mind. In return for the loss of freedom of the press as well as other civil rights, as one GDR functionary put it, conditions for a healthy body and mind are guaranteed by the socialist system: free education, free medical care, vast opportunities in sports and in the arts, paid vacation, and, above all, the assurance of employment. Drew Gilpin Faust, one of the participants, put it this way in her evaluation: *The Marxist considers freedom in Marxian terms. To him, freedom means freedom from exploitation of one man by another, freedom from 'alienation' between man and the opposing economic unit.* (Drew is currently Dean of the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Studies.) Roland would have approved of her succinct summary.

Our relationship with Roland was good-natured with much mutual kidding; we enjoyed each other thoroughly. He paid a price: when I dropped in on him in

East Berlin shortly after the end of the trip, he informed me, with obvious embarrassment, that he had been told that he would not be able to lead any more trips of Western groups. He supposed that a Party member listening in to one of our many discussions had reported him to headquarters as unsuitable for this kind of work. Needless to say, I commiserated with him profusely and perhaps a little disingenuously.

In the '63 trip Roland, an East German, had to pay the penalty for what was considered excessive closeness; in the trip the following year, it was I who was struck down. It happened this way: Peter, age 21, the younger of our two guides, had taken us to a Dresden swimming pool. There Juergen, an East German, befriended our Bill, asking him to mail a letter of his in Warsaw, our next stop, addressed to a jazz fan in the United States. Bill agreed and took the letter. I knew that such transmission of letters was strictly prohibited. However, when I saw our guide Peter letting it happen, I took no action. Well, that same night, the other guide, Arndt, age 28, a doctrinaire Party member with high hopes for promotion, told me brusquely that his colleague Peter had informed him about the letter, that Peter had been wrong to allow it to happen, and now he, Arndt, was asking for the letter. "Since we were breaking the laws of the German Democratic Republic, we would have trouble leaving the country." Bluff or no bluff, after meeting as a group, we decided to surrender the letter. (In subsequent letters to me Juergen gave no indication of having been hassled by the State.) So far, so good. But when I tried to reenter the GDR at the end of the summer as well as several times in later years I was not admitted, but told: "Sie sind bei uns unerwünscht! (You are not welcome among us!)" After the fall of the Wall in 1989, via the German version of our Freedom of Information Act, I was able to confirm that the letter episode was indeed the reason for my having been declared *persona non grata*. I felt it was ironic that a person with my views on the need for engagement between West and East, who had been called a communist by the parents of a Penn Charter student, should have been treated in such a way by the East.

Another incident of misconduct on our part had a happier outcome. We were having a two-hour stop-over in a collective farm near Kiev. Sonia, our Kiev Intourist guide, young and attractive, took us on a guided walk. We had thus no opportunity to get in touch with the many Ukrainians watching us. Suddenly Sonia interrupted herself, asking, "Where is John?" John, a Princeton sophomore, our only college student and strong extrovert, was one of the three of us who had good Russian. He had evidently stayed behind, using his Russian to ask questions of members of the collective. Sonia faulted me angrily and at length for not keeping our group together. In the middle of her lecture I saw John reappearing. I rushed

up to him, and whispered: “Pay no attention to what I am going to say!” and proceeded to give him a dressing-down. Quickly realizing what was up, he accepted my reprimand, appropriately dejected. Sonia was satisfied. The next evening she and John were off on a date. His report: she made no political concessions.

In sharp contrast with the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union we found Tito’s Yugoslavia a great deal less restrictive. We had no guides, possibly in part because of a devastating earthquake in Skopje at that very time. By chance we were able to participate for one day in an international workcamp building a road near Belgrade. Western Europeans, Americans, Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, 200 in all, worked together in a remarkable show of unity and common purpose. Differences in ethnic, national and religious backgrounds became unimportant: the absence of a common language (except for broken English) and the presence of a physical work project - road building - acting as unifiers. Subsequent conversations with Yugoslavs of a variety of backgrounds made us aware of deep-seated differences among them. But such was the strength of Titoism that we heard no Tiresias predicting a grim future. Marshall Tito didn’t die until 1980, at age 88.

Our next stop was a Youth Hostel in Sarajevo in today’s Bosnia-Herzegovina. This allowed me to locate the plaque that marks the spot where Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by Serbian nationalists in June 1914, the spark that ignited World War I. Sarajevo had still been part of the education of my generation. For me, seeing the very spot where the murder took place was a moving experience. I stayed behind for a while; it was clear that the place had little or no meaning to anyone else among us.

The last leg (of the ‘63 trip) took us along the Adriatic coast, today’s Croatia and Slovenia. Steep hills on the right, the glistening Adriatic on the left, glorious sunshine overhead ... it was a spectacular climax. However, I was made aware of a terrible oversight on my part: as Trieste appeared in the distance, Shirley, high school sophomore from Syracuse, New York, youngest member of our group, threw this request at me as I was driving our VW Microbus, in emotional turmoil at all the natural beauty: “Fritz, tell us something about Italy!” I had indeed neglected this venerable country in our preparation. So by the time we reached the Trieste Youth Hostel, I had traversed the history of Italy from Romulus to Mussolini.

While communism in Europe is a thing of the past, forms of it live on in China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba. Once again, there are two opposing views on how to approach these countries: engagement vs. blockade. (I would like to think

that military action is not being considered an option.) For me it's engagement, contacts and recognition.

I feel that these two trips were the most successful projects with the young I have ever entered into. I suppose today it would be in character to be organizing such a trip to Teheran...

31.

Teaching in Germany

After the kaleidoscopic description of two trips behind the Iron Curtain I want to narrow the focus somewhat by taking you to one school in Germany and one in England, in each of which I taught for a year.

Looking back at my teaching career, I just discovered a pattern that I had never been aware of: the recurrence of the sequence 15+5! To wit: I began teaching in 1946; 15 years later, in 1961, I took a year off; five years later, in 1966, I taught for a year in Germany; 15 years later, in 1981, I taught for a year in England; five years later, in 1986, I retired for good. Was my life being controlled by some mathematical force, wholly outside of me? It was Thomas Mann who saw his life regularized in a similar way. I am glad to be in such company.

The facts are these: I exchanged jobs with Rudolf Hillebrecht, teacher of English at the *Martino-Katharineum Gymnasium* in Braunschweig, West Germany, in 1966/67. (Braunschweig soccer fans remember 1967 well: it was the first - and so far the only - time that *Eintracht Braunschweig* was national champion.) There had been an annual exchange of individual students initiated via the American Friends Service Committee, beginning in 1963. I had handled the Penn Charter end. It continued until 1988, when, regrettably, it died a natural death because of the decline and eventual demise of Penn Charter's German program.

My year in Braunschweig was fun for two very different reasons: first, measured by German practice, my bearing both in and out of the classroom was much less formal and it was easy for me to establish good rapport with my classes. Then, since I did not have German teaching credentials, I was not given classes at pivotal spots in the curriculum: it was feared that a potential low grade might expose the school to a lawsuit brought by an irate parent charging that I wasn't qualified. Thus I ended up teaching only 60 students in 12 classes a week, all in the subject of English. The material was rigidly set - I couldn't pick and choose. I was pleasantly surprised when the one student I failed bore me no grudge, but agreed that he had indeed deserved it. There was no lawsuit.

A word about the atmosphere at the *Martino-Katharineum*. In appearance it could have been my Berlin *Gymnasium* in the 1930's: bare walls with bland paint - seen one classroom, seen 'em all! By contrast: the faculty, both then and now, was highly competent, with excellent academic background in not one, but

two subjects, including extensive practice teaching. The school prided itself on its antiquity (founded in 1415) and exuded the feeling that there was no real need to take advantage of technology developed since that time. (With the advent of computers, I am sure that is less true today.) As in most German schools, there was very little contact between faculty and students outside of the classroom.

American exchange students almost always comment negatively on the more formal student-teacher relationships in German schools. Exchange students from Germany, in turn, like the more “student-friendly” atmosphere they find over here.

My firsthand information is of course dated; however, my regular contacts with both teachers and students in Germany suggest that there has been no major change. As for my relationship with the faculty at the *Martino-Katharineum*, I could not have asked for greater friendliness and support.

Two special events stand out: the first was a weekend conference organized by the school on race relations in the United States. I was asked if I’d like to provide the background for the situation to date. Though awed by such a task, I felt I couldn’t say no. Of course I had been following the events of 1963-65: Martin Luther King’s I have a dream speech in ‘63; the Civil Rights and Voting Rights legislation of ‘64 and the career and assassination of Malcolm X in ‘65. Like so many of us involved in the Civil Rights movements, I had read Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. In the racially integrated area of West Mount Airy (where I had lived since 1953) I had been active in neighborhood associations who had made it their aim to stop “White flight” to the suburbs. Weekend workcamps and my work with the Germantown Schools Community Council rounded out my knowledge. In addition, I had learned much through the responses that our Black participants had given to the many questions of Eastern Europeans on this subject in the two Iron Curtain trips in ‘63 and ‘64. Still, it’s one thing to have lived through tempestuous times; it’s something else to attempt to describe them.

Then came a lucky break: in the *Amerika Haus* in nearby Hannover I discovered Gunnar Myrdal’s book *American Dilemma*. Written in 1944, Myrdal saw a dilemma in the contrast between the lofty ideals of American democracy on the one hand, and poor performance on the other. The background he provided gave me exactly what I needed: a structure that supported my unstructured knowledge. There were several speakers and lots of discussion; the conference went well. For me, it was another instance of *docendo discitur*: by having to explain, I learned.

The other experience was of a different nature. A German colleague at the school who had been a submarine commander in the German Navy during World War II invited me to join him in a reunion of 15 former U-Boot commanders in



Admiral Doenitz and World War II U-Boat commanders reuniting in Braunschweig in 1967.

Braunschweig to honor a distinguished guest: Admiral Karl Doenitz (1890-1980), who had commanded the German U-Boot fleet prior to becoming Supreme Naval Commander in 1943. It was he whom Hitler had appointed to lead Germany after his suicide, and it was Doenitz who signed Germany's unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945. At the Nuremberg War Crime Trials of 1946 Doenitz was given a ten-year sentence for his part in conducting unlimited submarine warfare, so that by this time he was once again a private citizen.

The gathering took place in a formal clubroom. Everyone was dressed immaculately in suit and tie. The Admiral, then 77, at the head of a long table, the only one in the room wearing a hat. He looked small, emaciated and frail. All talk was addressed to him, always with the preface *Herr Admiral!* The tone was one of awe and admiration, bordering on subservience. Talk centered on pleasantries and anecdotes, naval style. I remember this one from him: "Mombasa - that was really something! Air temperature 42 degrees, water temperature 42 degrees, for a total of 84... that was some heat!" Appreciative laughter everywhere. Of course no mention of the war or of the Nazis. German has a lovely expression: "Schwamm drueber!" ("Erase it all!") Needless to say, my input was zero. I should add that I attach no profound symbolic significance to this episode; I just found it unique and memorable.

32.

Teaching in England

My second year of teaching abroad (1981/82) was in England. Since Natalie and I were able to share experiences, my enjoyment of the year was doubled.

It happened with a minimum of red tape: Colin Fraser, teacher of Classics at the Canon Slade Comprehensive School in Bolton, Lancashire, had written to a number of private schools in the States, Penn Charter among them, asking if an exchange was possible. That's all it took. We exchanged houses, cars and pets and Colin and I taught at each other's school.

Colin came with his wife Maria and three young children, Vicky, Danny and Adam, to Conshohocken PA, while Natalie and I moved into the Fraser two-story "estate" house in Astley Bridge, one mile from the school. Like a development in the States, it consisted of identical small two-family brick houses with well-kept lawns. Unlike in Braunschweig, where after a hard school day I returned to my lonesome rented room and a liverwurst sandwich, here in Bolton I had Natalie to come home to and we could bring ourselves up to date on "Life in Bolton." There was no shortage of human interest stories. We shared in the general excitement when our neighbor's 18-year-old son (really only 17), went off to secure the Falklands from Argentina. The mood upon his return, not many weeks later, was decidedly less cheery, as he was expecting to be treated like the glorious returning hero to be waited upon by his mother. Alas, his mother had her own troubles: her husband had left her, not without first chopping down their lone tree in front of their house as a revenge for ... what? Natalie served a brief stint as therapist for the abandoned wife.

Then there was the near-blind woman across the street, who experienced a "chips fire," the result of oil meant for frying chips spilling onto a hot stove, a not uncommon occurrence. Our circle of acquaintances included the green-grocer, the butcher, the postmistress, the seamstress, with all of whom Natalie established close rapport. She caught much of our local life in a weekly column she wrote for the *Bolton Evening News*, including accounts of the celebrations surrounding the birth of William to Princess Diana. From time to time we'd stop by The Last Drop, the local pub, where I was delighted to find the supposedly stand-offish English willing to engage in conversation with total strangers.

Canon Slade differs from most Comprehensive Schools in that 15% of its budget comes from the Church of England, and so is attended largely by children

of Church of England families. This meant there were almost no students from minority groups, such as Pakistani, of whom there were many in the Bolton area. The result was a more homogeneous student body than in most Comprehensive Schools. Discipline was fairly strict, more so than at Penn Charter, and more like the *Gymnasium* in Braunschweig. The separate schools of the three-tier German set-up appeared here within one and the same school: those not inclined academically leave for Vocational School after their *O-Level* exams, taken at the end of grade 10. Those staying on specialize in 3 or 4 subjects, in a manner similar to pre-Abitur classes in German Gymnasiums, and after usually two years take their *A-Levels*, which are virtual university entrance exams.

As a teacher at Canon Slade, I was used to the fullest: I had 230 different students per week in 20-25 classes. Unlike that of the States, the English system of education requires a student to take many subjects, some meeting just once a week. Class size varied from 6 to 32. I was involved in teaching German, Latin, Greek and a subject called Classical Studies. The latter consisted of Greek mythology and Roman archaeology in grades 5 and 6 to all students and Greek drama in English for 12th grade college-bound students. For me it was a pleasant change to teach the material of the Classics without having to worry about the vagaries of the Greek and Latin languages. In a way it's what I have done with our grandchildren when things to do with Classics have come up.

Classes were coed, a first for me, and, with the exception of occasional post-retirement substituting at Germantown Friends School in Philadelphia and at Concord Academy in Concord, Massachusetts, my only such experience. I liked it a lot. The presence of both males and females in discussing works of literature seems to me to be a natural. A discussion of Aeneas' abandonment of Dido and her subsequent suicide takes on a new dimension with both sexes present.

The greater emotional maturity of girls in their teens when compared to boys is another plus. I saw that girls at ages 12 to 14 tend to do exactly what they are told - no more, no less. They can be excellent memorizers, something that in language learning is so crucial. This can be overdone, as it was in a Beginning German class (the School offered French, German, Spanish, Russian, Latin and Ancient Greek), in which the top three students, all A's, all girls, were memorizing German sentences at the expense of meaning. I once called them the "Mechanical Girls," a designation they defiantly appropriated for themselves in an end-of-school year farewell card.

An especially nice feature of my year at Canon Slade was the close relationship with the five colleagues who taught Latin and Greek. I happen to have kept the minutes of a Classics department meeting at which I had described the 7th grade Introductory Course to Foreign Language Study that we were using at that time at

Penn Charter. The minutes report me saying that ... *it was hoped that the course, which would delay the start to a foreign language, would make the approach to it more considered, and would lead to greater sophistication in English ... The advantages of the course, as Mr. Kempner stated with that absolute and tranquil fairness of mind we have come to expect from him, are hard to measure. Teachers could hope that the weaker pupils would progress more quickly in their foreign language after their delayed start than they otherwise would have done. At any rate it was welcomed by the weaker pupils as rescuing them from a position of failure, and allowing them to compete with their equals.*"

I like this minute.

We attended a Quaker meeting in Bolton, unprogrammed, and thus similar to what we were used to. Early in the fall it was announced that next "First Day" (i.e., Sunday) we were going to "assault" Pendle Hill (in Derbyshire), following in the steps of George Fox, founding Quaker, who described it in his *Journal* of 1652 in this way:

As we traveled we came near a very great hill, called Pendle Hill, and I was moved by the Lord to go up to the top of it; which I did with difficulty, it was so very steep and high. When I was come to the top, I saw the sea bordering on Lancashire, and there, on the top, I was moved to sound the day of the Lord, and the Lord let me see in what places He had a great people to be gathered.

We did do the "assault" in about 45 minutes, but from the top were unable to see *the sea bordering on Lancashire*. However, we were assured that it was only cloudy conditions that blocked our vision. Having often been to the Pendle Hill Quaker study center outside of Philadelphia, it was a revelation to see the real thing.

Vacations allowed trips further afield. We explored the Lake District and the Yorkshire Downs (where my sister Martha joined us), as well as Edinburgh and precipitous Stack Polly in the Scottish Highlands, with loose slate slopes proving a little steep for comfort. In the opposite direction we imagined the adventures of Tess and Angel in Thomas Hardy country in Dorsetshire and the French Lieutenant's Woman at Saint Regis. Of course we also didn't miss mighty Manchester United playing football at home.

One of the best things that happened in our year in England was the beginning of a friendship with Colin and Maria Fraser. A few years after our exchange, with Ancient Greek (his specialty) becoming rarer and rarer in state schools, Colin changed to a Public School, which - of all places - turned out to be Marlborough College. There he became not only Head of Classics, but also housemaster of my old dormitory, Preshute. Since then we have visited the Frasers several times. This has given me the chance to relive my school days of 1936-39, a haunting

experience, reminding me of the many classmates who did not survive the war. To be sure, Hitler was gone, but at what cost! Colin's wife Maria, nurse and epidemiologist, takes care of us, treating us to a re-creation of her ethnic background in the form of Ukrainian delicacies.

In 1999 Natalie and I, together with granddaughters Katie and Libby, were guests at daughter Vicky Fraser's wedding, in the nearby small 14th century Romanesque church (which I had passed daily on my way to class), followed by dinner and dance under tents on the lawn surrounding Preshute House.

Two years later I celebrated my 80th birthday here in Maine in July, when as a total surprise to me, Colin and Maria arrived to join some fifty extended family. Colin had written a skit on my life in the form of a Harry Potter parody, spiced with references to my life gathered in secret from my siblings and friends by way of Natalie. Our garden served as perfect setting with Apollo all smiles. Max was me as Harry Potter, Colin was Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, and Natalie was the house-elf, Dobby. Maria Fraser had conjured up costumes out of nothing in no time. The result was an extraordinarily clever and witty work. Here's a sample:

A linguist who with facility could wrap his tongue
 Round sauerkraut and fettucini with high zest
 But pronounced firmly that Fritzola* was the best.
 And were German prisoners the first to face the questioning art
 That drew the pompous into thoughtful depths?
 (For Fritz like Socrates was never one to hurt
 But equally might engineer
 A loving spouse's help by asking
 "Say, Natalie, could you teach me how to iron this shirt?")

In this unexpected manner our English exchange year is paying us lifelong dividends.

* "Fritzola" was what the grandchildren called my version of Granola, since it wasn't "Gran" who had made it.

Afterthoughts

I have reached the end of my story - but have I? Is my account really complete? Before writing the first page, I read William Zinsser's Inventing the Truth, subtitled The Art and Craft of Memoir. Have I *invented the truth*? Indeed I have! What did I include? What did I mention in passing? What did I leave out altogether? I know and I don't know. Some omissions have been conscious; after all, your time is limited. But again and again I have had to trust my memory, and memory often takes on a life of its own. You just have to trust me that I have come as close to "the truth" as possible.

But before I lay down my pen (what a lovely metaphor of long ago), I feel the urge to take advantage of a practice that we have developed here at Brunswick Friends Meeting: what we call "afterthoughts." It works like this: the formal unprogrammed worship comes to a close after one hour; there may have been silence, there may have been some speaking. Either way, anyone who didn't feel sufficiently moved by the spirit to speak out, can feel free to do so now, as if it were an *afterthought*. This may then lead to an interchange of views. And while I regret that I am in no position to hear your comments, friendly or otherwise, I think I will use the tone of informality inherent in this practice to add a few bits that do not fit readily into my preceding account. While occasionally an afterthought is of no interest to anyone other than the speaker, I trust that this will not be entirely true here.

Does a three-month trip through Asia qualify as an afterthought? No, because it covered many places in a short time many years ago (1967), and my recollection is hazy. However, what is not hazy is the memory of my friend Lou Connick, who, as a member of the Asia Foundation, had arranged many excellent contacts for me. He was my age, of a well-to-do Irish-Catholic family in New York City, a graduate of Hotchkiss and Yale, a Marine Corps lieutenant in the landing in Iwo Jima, who then via work at Yale Admissions became a colleague at Penn Charter teaching English for four years until 1960. At that point he felt the need to see the Third World. He spent the rest of his life with the Asia Foundation, doing humanitarian work in community development and education at the village level. His focus was Southeast Asia, especially Laos, where he adopted two boys, members of the Hmong tribe. On my trip I spent two weeks with him in Laos, where I was able to observe him working in close association with Laotians. I have never seen anyone relating to people of a totally different background as well as Lou did at that time. He had gained the Laotians' confidence, respect and love.

We shared political views, especially in our opposition to the Vietnam War. He knew George Plimpton on the Left as well as William Buckley on the Right. I admired him for his dramatic and musical skills; he acted, directed and sang (in Philadelphia's Orpheus Club), always with infectious enthusiasm. Surprisingly, foreign languages were not his strength; when no translator was present, he would communicate through gestures and personality.

He left his Catholicism behind in college, and got more and more into Buddhism. I still have the text of a talk he gave during one of his brief visits back to the States at the First Congregational Church in Old Lyme, Connecticut, in 1988. He describes his ideal in this way:

What I have learned in my life can be summed up in the Buddhist view of the unity of all life. The Buddhists teach that this truth can only be realized when false notions of a separate self - whose destiny can be considered apart from the whole - are forever annihilated. When the individual seeker has finally acquired this supreme sense of the oneness of all life, he has, indeed, reached the bliss of Nirvana. That is a state, it seems to me, that is worth striving for.

While I find the concept of "the oneness of life" difficult, I do find it appealing since it stands in such sharp contrast to parochialism, self-centeredness and self-righteousness. To me it is thus an ideal that though it seems unattainable, is worth striving for. I can thank Lou for widening my view. Alas, he died in 2005.

Since 1990 Natalie and I have lived in Woolwich, Maine. We did not anticipate the wealth of intellectual and artistic fare in which we have been able to partake. I dare say that in my case my love of literature was nurtured by my getting into the habit referred to earlier of reciting poems. Over the last ten years it has taken the form of participating in reading groups sponsored by the Maine Council of the Humanities under the leadership of Steve Cerf, jovial professor of German and the Humanities at Bowdoin College. Steve is verbally so nimble and is so much in touch with his audience that he can wish a sudden sneezer *Gesundheit* in mid-sentence and never miss a beat! He is a superb discussion leader, able to encourage even the shy to express themselves while at the same time magically restraining the talkative. A participant's comment that is not exactly profound will at least elicit the response: "Very interesting!" Here are some of our readings that I have found memorable.

Radetsky March (1932), by Joseph Roth, is a historical novel that portrays the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as reflected in three generations of a family of officers. I suppose I felt attracted to the story since I had known the Radetzky March by Johann Strauss from childhood on. I loved marches, even though my upbringing was not exactly Prussian.

In The Joke (1967), Milan Kundera deals with the complexities of surviving in

a totalitarian state. The protagonist has written a joke on a postcard to win his lady-friend, an act that has disastrous results. His fate and that of his friends tell the story of trying to survive, not only in Czech society in the 1950s and 60s, but in a totalitarian milieu anywhere.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many novels I found memorable deal with the transition from one culture to another. The contrast of life of Jews in communist Poland with life in the West is told in the autobiographical novel Lost in Translation (1989) by Eva Hoffman, who left Poland at age 13 in 1959 first for Canada and then the United States, where she won prestigious literary awards. Here the difference in language stands literally as well as metaphorically first for life in Poland and then for life in the West.

The stories of emigrants and their lives in their adopted country are told memorably in the form of short stories of emigrants from India and Pakistan to the United States in Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies (1999), and of emigrants from Germany in the 1940s and 50s in the German writer W. G. Sebald's, The Emigrants (1992). The former are shown coming face to face with cultural differences; the latter have to come to terms with their past in Nazi Germany.

Another displacement is made the subject of Ann Fadiman's The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down (1997). It is a factual account of the conflict facing Hmong refugees from Laos in California between their traditional beliefs in treating epilepsy and the very different practices of Western medicine. Everyone on both sides of the cultural divide comes across as sincere, but there is little if any understanding of the approach of the other side. No common language is only one obstacle; it is each side's view of the human psyche that is incompatible.

As an example of literature dealing with utopia, we read Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with those wonderful words by young Miranda, uttered when she miraculously sees her first humans (other than her father Prospero):

How many godly creatures are there here!

How bounteous mankind is! O brave new world

That has such people in it!

I have always been attracted by books about teachers and teaching. Here are three of my favorites from different periods and different countries: Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks, a lengthy novel of family decay of 1901, Margaret Edson's short play W;t, of 1997, and Kingsley Amis: Lucky Jim, (1953). In the first, the artistic, shy Hanno, last of the Buddenbrooks, has little in common with all but one of his crude, cheating classmates, who care nothing about learning. Ironically it is Hanno who is punished wholly unfairly, not by one of the brilliantly portrayed authoritarian teachers, but by a young, weak teacher-in-training. I know of no better description of classroom dynamics.

Margaret Edson's protagonist is a woman professor of poetry whose domineering way of teaching John Donne we see in a flashback. She knows more about literature than she does about people, a fact that she learns painfully while hospitalized with terminal cancer.

What turned out to be one of the funniest books I have ever read is Lucky Jim, by Kingsley Amis, a satire on British provincial universities in the late 1940s. Here is Professor Welch, incompetent head of the history department, (*tall and weedy with whitening hair*), trying to negotiate the revolving door of the library: *pulling at the now-jammed door, changing his semblance to that of an anchor in a losing tug-o'-war team. With a sudden bursting click the door yielded and Welch overbalanced backwards, hitting his head on the panel behind him. Jim* (the protagonist, lowly junior lecturer, seeking a full appointment) ... *felt that it was things like this that kept him going.* Welch is the man who will decide Jim's academic fate! *No other professor in Great Britain, Jim thought, set such store on being called professor.* I still chuckle every time I read of Jim's ill-fated attempt to secure a teaching position. Kingsley Amis has my sense of humor.

Further intellectual stimulation was provided by auditing classes at Bowdoin College. Many of these Natalie and I attended together. The process was simple: look in the course catalogue, find out about the professor, ask permission, which was almost always granted. Our prime area was History of Art. We discovered that both the quality and the variety of slides have improved considerably since our college days! I learned and got to love a great deal of good art. While I know I cannot distinguish Florentine from Venetian painting with the refinement of my Uncle Fritz, I learned enough to appreciate the Durer engraving of Melanchthon that graces our living room as well as our Rembrandt engraving of Christ driving the money changers out of the temple. Other painters and sculptors that we unfortunately do not own that have become more meaningful, often because of some additional personal connection with their work:

Gustav Klimt, some of whose scenes have particular meaning through the Austrian scenery I know from summers in Rindbach in the Salzkammergut; Alberto Giacometti, whose emaciated figures I associate with our frequent visits to the museum of his hometown of Stampa in the Bergell, a regular destination of trips from the Engadin; the Engadin painter Giovanni Segantini, with his landscapes, farmers and cows, so characteristic of our favorite vacation spot; Corot, whose translucent foliage worked its magic on us in Conshohocken, but whose woody landscape we sold in 1989 when insurance became out of reach. Fortunately my mind's eye sees it as clearly as if it were still gracing our walls today. Lastly, there is Goya, whom Natalie and I got to know in the Prado in 2002 and again in 2004

and 2006. We own 30 engravings (from my parents' library) with bullfights as their subject. We also found memorable the not so-subtle exposure of the vulgarity of the family of Charles IV, his many drawings illustrating the horrors of war and his satirical drawings of the foibles of mankind (The Caprichos).

We have been balancing auditing courses in the arts with courses in literature. I thought it was high time that I joined Chaucer's pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, this time under the inspiring guidance of Bowdoin Professor Frank Burroughs, himself an accomplished writer. He reflects on nature, animals and people in our immediate area of Maine in a way that lets me see things that I never noticed before. In a similar way he made the Pilgrims and their tales come to life. The Nun's Priest Tale of Chanticleer and Pertelote and the fooled fox was a *déjà vu*: I had been brought up not only on Grimm's Fairy Tales, but also on the adventures of crafty Reineke Fuchs, whose tales are indeed among Chaucer's sources. It was a memory that had lain fallow for at least 60 years.

A classic newly visited was James Joyce's Ulysses. I struggled in two Joyce courses with two different professors with only partial success. I did enjoy the challenge of seeing how Joyce had used history, music, philosophy, religion, literature, et al., to tell his "story." The much easier fifteen short stories in Dubliners I have come to love for their sharply drawn characterizations of his Dublin contemporaries. Superbly read cassette recordings have shortened many a car ride. I don't think I'll ever get tired of hearing or reading the last story, The Dead, in which the remembrance of unanswered love of a young man long dead rivals the love of a caring husband.

Deep-seated memories are revived when rereading Goethe's Faust, Part I. My sisters and I once recited parts of the Prelude in the Theater as well as the scene between Mephistopheles and the eager but naive Student. (It had to be word-perfect since our mother would have noticed any departures from the original.) Mephistopheles, with humor and irony, pretends to be endorsing conventional wisdom about the importance of taking meticulous notes at lectures, to which the Student readily agrees:

*Don't say that twice - I understood:
I see how useful it's to write,
For what we possess black on white
We can take home and keep for good.*

(The translator, Walter Kaufmann, and I were in the same 5th-grade class in the Berlin Gymnasium in 1931; a brilliant student, he skipped grade 6, emigrated to the States, graduated from Williams in 1941, and was teaching at Princeton by 1947.) For me, this scene has lost none of its magic over the many years that I have been reading it.

Here in Maine I was, at last, able to take care of one piece of unfinished business: to complete Paradise Lost, begun in Marlborough, but never finished. In a Bowdoin course I finally reached the concluding lines:

*The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitary way.*

Despite what Adam and Eve have been through and have lost, they seem determined to make the most of what lies ahead. These are lines that strike me as extraordinarily optimistic and encouraging. I call them to the attention of succeeding generations.

*Are the riders going to race with torches and hand them on to one another?
(Plato's Republic)*



Maria (age 3) and her grandfather at Greek Peak, NY, in 1991. (Photo by Linda Kent; it won a prize of a weekend accommodation!)

A good meal needs a good dessert to top it off. Tiramisu fills that role for me: it spreads the glow of pleasure over the entire meal. The trips that Natalie and I have taken with various younger family members have left that sort of feeling with me. Starting in 1998, we traveled with Maria (who knew the Odyssey and Greek

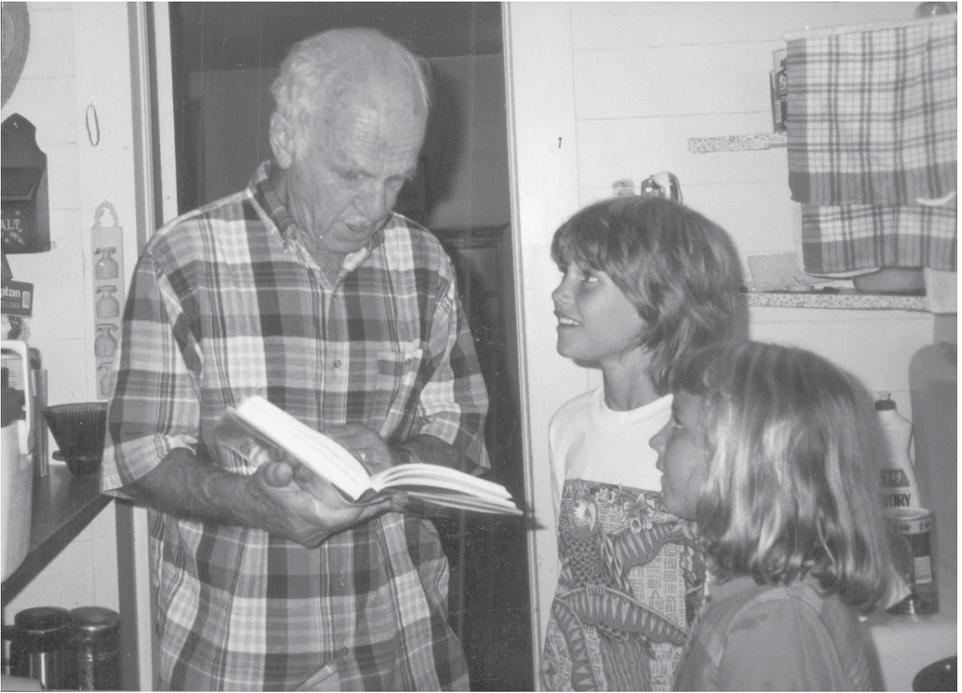


Natalie and Maria, age 10, in front of Parthenon, 1998.

myths at age 10) to Greece and Holland and in another summer to Tuscany and the Fextal in Switzerland and more recently to Berlin, Prague, Vienna and ending again in the Fextal. With Libby and Maria we visited our friend Iris Brown from the Norris Square Neighborhood Project in Puerto Rico, and with Katie and Libby we were in Rindbach (Austria), for the 1999 Mendelssohn Family reunion, followed by visits to the Fextal, Berlin and Marlborough for Vicky Fraser's wedding. With Libby we visited Moorish, Jewish and Christian sites in Spain's Andalusia, as well as Toledo and Madrid. In 2005, Peter, Megan and Dae were with us in Berlin and in the Fextal. Our most recent trip, in 2006, was with Maria, again to Spain, with special attention to Catalunya.

Many of these places contain much of my past. It is a source of profound pleasure and satisfaction to know that "the torch has been passed."

How fortunate I have been to spend the last part of my life here, on the banks of the Kennebec, in natural beauty, together with Natalie, my partner for 35 years. Her children and grandchildren, for whom she cares so deeply, are always in my mind, and it is to them, as well as to Mappa, Fran, Max and Paige that I dedicate these concluding thoughts.



With grandchildren Katie and Libby, when I still knew more than they did.



Traveling with grandson Joe



With grandson Dae, born April 8, 2004, to Megan and Peter



Framed!



Homesteading in Sagadahoc County in Maine.



QUOD PETIS HIC EST: From Peter on my 80th birthday, a very special bird bath in front of our house. As Horace put it in 23 BC: "what you're looking for is right here."



Looking south from our front door down the Kennebec River, with our retriever Zuke.

APPENDIX A

WALKING THE CAMINO TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

September 11 - October 24, 2004

With thanks to Natalie, whose project this was and who never had any doubts

In trying to tell about walking the Camino, I find myself facing a dilemma: what was most memorable and meaningful to me was not what we saw and did, but rather the experience itself. While I am going to try to describe - as well as I can - what we saw and did, I feel that what was most significant was the *process*. If I succeed in giving some sort of indication of what this process was like, I'll be well satisfied.

It all began when one of the apostles, James the son of Zebedee, was put to death by King Herod Agrippa in Rome in 44 AD (Acts 12:2). The legend then developed that since it was believed that James had tried to spread the gospel in Spain, some of his followers took his body to Spain in a stone boat and buried him there. Early in the 9th century a hermit (Pelayo) was guided by a bright star to a field (hence "Compostela," from Latin *campus stellae* = field of the star) where the Saint's body was discovered, miraculously intact. He was soon seen, mounted on a white horse, helping the Spaniards defeat the enemy of the Christians, the Moslems. It was then that in Spain James received the title *Matamoros*, Spanish for Slayer of Moors. The image of the Saint on a white horse, drawn sword in hand, with headless Moors at his feet, is still very much in evidence in Spain today in paintings and sculpture, along with his image as a pilgrim, staff in hand, with water gourd and scallop shell.

I wonder how St. James would have reacted to the label of "Matamoros:" would he have found it in conflict with his 1st Century Christian faith, or would he have accepted it as an appropriate way to propagate this faith?

With the gradual defeat of the Moors (their final defeat did not come until 1492), there developed within medieval Europe a movement with double purpose: one of honoring Saint James in the form of pilgrimages to his tomb in Santiago in Galicia, in northwestern Spain, and one of seeking absolution for one's sins. These pilgrimages, beginning in various points in western Europe, traversed France and entered Spain chiefly at Roncesvalles, some 30 miles east of Pamplona, (of Hemingway fame in The Sun Also Rises) in the foothills of the Pyrenees. From there a route soon became well established as pilgrims by the thousands labored

along the 450-mile stretch to Santiago. A 12th century “travel guide,” part of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, written by a French priest Aymery de Picaud, gives picturesque details: pilgrims are readily recognized by their huge cape-like cloak (which served as blanket at night), sandals, long staff with water gourd attached and a broad-brimmed hat, decorated with a scallop shell. The latter had become a symbol for the pilgrimage, and is so to this day. All along the route churches as well as hostels sprang up to take care of the spiritual and physical needs of the pilgrims.

Many of these churches, some as early as the 11th century, survive today and were very much part of our own pilgrimage. I loved the simplicity of the Romanesque style, preferring it to the elaborately decorated later Baroque. The hostels, known as *albergues*, were fortunately of somewhat more modern vintage. With the steady increase in the number of pilgrims in the course of the last 100 years (after a sharp decline in the previous century), technology has had its beneficial impact: most albergues, in addition to anything from ten to fifty double-decker bunks, have up-to-date shower and toilet facilities, usually with hot water, places for washing and drying clothes, as well as for cooking. These hostels are built with funds from state, provincial, church or private sources.

Procedures in these hostels, which must number well over 100, are remarkably uniform: lights out by 10 PM; everyone leaves by 8 AM, to allow time for cleaning by staff. The latter are mostly volunteers, all very devoted, and in our experience without exception sympathetic with pilgrim needs. When Natalie had a bad cold, we were allowed to stay over for two days; when I had blisters, I was treated - expertly - by *hospitaleros*, sort of paramedics. In my case one was a fiery woman, perhaps 60, whose fierce and demanding nature were matched only by her empathetic concern for her patients. This took the form of a good-night kiss after I had already dozed off. We named her Nurse Ratchet. On a later day, another *hospitalero* spent a good bit of time correcting my pronunciation of the Spanish word for blisters (*ampollas*), before telling me that he was a *hospitalero* from another *albergue*, who was just visiting... We had a good talk, but he was not going to interfere with the work of his colleague, who at that moment was busy elsewhere. In the smaller hostels the head staff person would occasionally prepare an evening meal for the 15-20 pilgrims “in residence,” charging a minimal amount. A night’s stay was around 4 Euros.

The hostels are at about 5 to 10 mile intervals, thus providing the pilgrims a great deal of latitude on how far to walk each day. Natalie and I deprived ourselves of that choice by opting to send our packs (together with several other similarly minded pilgrims) on ahead by taxi to a previously selected stopping place. After the third day we had discovered that a 20-pound pack gets heavier as the day

progresses, (we were told by those in the know that a pack should not exceed 10% of your body weight) and we decided to avail ourselves of this automotive possibility. We did not regret it. What we didn't realize right away was that several *albergues* are open only to those who walk *and* carry their packs. This became an issue just once, when the person in charge of one *albergue* accepted us in view of our ages, but turned back our younger fellow-travelers. Fortunately that proved no hardship for them because, as elsewhere, there was an alternate *albergue* nearby. We were told that in July and August *albergues* tend to fill up in the course of an afternoon; beginning our walk September 12, we always found space at our first try.

We learned that there was one requirement for staff members at *albergues*: you had to have walked the entire Camino. (The word Camino refers not only to path, but also echoes Christ's: "I am the way." The widely used greeting *Buen camino!* was an all-inclusive good wish for a successful pilgrimage.) I believe that it was this requirement that was crucial in helping to bring about an amazing sense of community and togetherness among users of an *albergue*. Since the staff (rarely more than two) had experienced the great variety of pilgrims firsthand, they set a tone of cooperation and friendliness such as I don't recall ever witnessing among so many individuals for so long a period. I am thinking of the consideration everyone had for everyone else: getting up quietly in the morning and climbing into one's sleeping bag quietly at night; sharing one's food and drink supplies in the (mostly) excellent kitchen facilities; sharing one's experiences or respecting someone else's privacy, as well as in all sorts of small ways. Differences in nationality, language, religious beliefs, dietary practices, age and sex were of no consequence when it came to spending time together. Beer and wine were much in evidence, but always in moderation. After all, everyone wanted to feel ready for an early departure the next morning.

We did not spend every night in an *albergue*. As the weather declined in the last ten days of the trip, we tended to head for the greater comfort of pensiones or hotels. After all, Official Certificates of Arrival in Santiago Cathedral (in Latin!) were given out to anyone who had walked at least 100 km, 200 km if on horseback or bike, regardless of where nights had been spent.

So much for life in an *albergue*, but what did things look like on the Camino itself? In one word: random. People would walk at all speeds, in groups or alone, stopping by the roadside (weather permitting) or in cafés, bars, *cafeterías*, *cervecerías*, restaurants et al., (with a separate brochure badly needed to help foreigners distinguish between them) for long or for short rests. In the same way, distances covered varied: an athletically oriented young Frenchman said he was covering 25 miles a day. By contrast, we averaged about 12. This daily walking

called to my mind a very simple truth, a truth that I have needed to be reminded of: large tasks are accomplished in tiny steps. I have always been impressed by Thomas Mann's writing schedule: a page and a half a day, no matter what. (Of course his wife did the cooking.) On the Camino this "Principle of Regularity" became very evident. Unless every morning you took the first step, you were never going to get anywhere. The total distance had to be covered a step, a day, at a time. There was absolutely no magic! I hear you mutter, "There needs no ghost, come from the grave to tell us this!" To me, it was an eye-opener.

The variety of speeds resulted in general unpredictability on whom you would meet, remeet, or never see again, often with regrets. I recall striking up a great conversation with a young Spanish couple, who suggested that Natalie and I visit them in their home near Madrid, but - alas - we never saw them again to exchange names and addresses. Things turned out more fortunately with Nicole from Australia, who gave us the name of her cousin in Onati, a small town in Basque Country, with whom we had a great visit on the way home. At one time I got to talk to four Germans, recent retirees, about the nature of Hitler's rise to power. The discussion was continued off and on, as we met and remet. (A dismal topic, to be sure.)

As in the days of old, most pilgrims were from Spain, then France and the rest of Western Europe. But today there were also a good many Canadians, Australians and Americans, as well as a few Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans. I have no exact numbers. Social class? Hard to estimate; probably at least half with the equivalent of a college education. A good many were holding jobs and were taking a few weeks off, covering the entire length of the Camino in two or more years. Judging by the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, things were different 1,000 years ago: according to William Melczer, translator of the *Pilgrims Guide*, "truants, simulators, jesters, fools, and vagrants were as much an integral part of the scenario as the topography and the weather, the pilgrims' constant fellow-travelers." For better or for worse, such "pilgrims" were not in evidence in 2004.

What motivated these many pilgrims? While it is probably safe to assume that there was a spiritual element present with most, it is my impression that the nature of this spiritual element took on many different forms, both among individuals as well as within the same person. To be sure, there were some orthodox Catholics who attended and participated in Mass when there was an opportunity. But there were also those of us who attended Mass from time to time, without participating formally, and yet feeling strong spiritual involvement. I find this hard to describe for myself, and even more so for anyone else. Call it what you will: there was a universalizing quality in the experience brought about by the long history of the Camino and the contemplative atmosphere accompanying many hours of steady walking through beautiful scenery. The Christian story, as revealed in the many

churches and cathedrals en route was ample reminder of the religious and historical dimension prominent in the experience of 12th Century pilgrims. It was easy to imagine illiterate pilgrims in earlier days studying and rereading the Biblical story by looking at the elaborate sculptures and paintings all along their pilgrimage route. For me the most noteworthy example was the 12th Century Romanesque *Portico de la Gloria* of the Santiago Cathedral: there Old and New Testament figures are shown in remarkable portrait-like detail, with St. James appearing twice, with facial features that set him apart from the Old Testament prophets Moses, Isaiah, Daniel and Jeremiah and the four evangelists of the New Testament. What a wonderfully concrete way to teach and learn the Christian story. What got in the way for me was the *Matamoros* aspect referred to above: again and again St. James was also shown in the act of killing and decapitating Moors. The implied celebration of force and violence used by the Christian Church was a grim reminder of force and violence - past and present - committed in the name of religion everywhere.

It is much easier to describe the pilgrims' physical motivation: it was to cover the distance in good health. I found it immensely pleasing and enjoyable to walk from 4 to 7 hours daily through varied, but always beautiful countryside. There is the satisfaction that comes through unassisted lengthy physical achievement. (This enjoyment is, needless to say, diminished to the extent that one experiences physical pain in the form of blisters. In my case that was fortunately only a passing nuisance. Apart from a two-day cold, Natalie seemed to have been immune to such mundane distress.) "Unassisted" achievement? Pilgrims of 1,000 years ago might differ. Today's pilgrims were significantly assisted by footwear and clothing of the very latest technology and top quality. To say nothing of a myriad of ointments, medications, energy foods, bandages, etc. I saw no pilgrim who wasn't superbly equipped. Ourselves included.

The countryside deserves more than a passing reference. It was a treat throughout. First came the foothills of the Pyrenees at Roncesvalles of the province of Navarra with its gently rolling hills. Then the vineyards of Rioja: grapes never tasted better than right off the vine, in 80 degree (dry) heat. Fig trees, olive trees, fields of vegetables, including artichoke and sugar beet, occasional streams. Gradually the land leveled out, and for some 60 miles we crossed the *meseta*, Spain's Kansas. Friends who know Spain well had recommended we take a bus over that stretch. I was all set to suggest to Natalie that we do just that, until I actually experienced the flatness, extending all the way to the horizon, in magnificent light. I decided to walk it, and I am glad I did. (Natalie would have walked it without me.) Then came two large cities, Burgos and Leon, with magnificent cathedrals, where we "took a break" and stayed a couple of nights in hotels. In

Leon Cathedral we attended a concert of Schoenberg's orchestral piano piece "Transfiguration," an unusual experience. The weather continued perfect up until the last ten days when it was already past the middle of October in Galicia, which has the reputation of "rain all the time." Well, it wasn't quite that bad. The countryside, with its lush, green hills, reminded many of Ireland. There was an abundance of horse-chestnut and eucalyptus trees. Ups and downs were never precipitous: no Alpine need for work on hands and knees.

Much could be said about the many memorable individuals that we got to know in the course of our walk, but not being either Chaucer or Dickens, I shall check myself. Suffice it to say that there was a variety of old and young that proved a constant source of stimulation and fun. It was the "people element" that linked together the many elements of the Camino.

I see them walking in spirit now, just as I still find myself striding along on the path to Santiago.

Footnote: For those who know the geography, or - better yet - who are planning to do the walk themselves, here is a list of the villages and towns where we stopped overnight. (*) = rest-stop of more than one night.

- (1) Roncesvalles (2) Zubiri (3) Arre (4) * Pamplona
- (5) Puente La Reina (6) Lorca (7) Estella (8) Los Arcos (9) Viana
- (10) Najera (11) Santo Domingo de la Calzada (12) Villamayor del Río
- (13) Villafranca (14) * Burgos (15) Hornillos del Camino
- (16) Castrojeritz (17) Frómista (18) Carrión de los Condes
- (19) Terradillos de Templarios (20) Bercianos (21) Mansilla de las Mulas
- (22) * León (23) Villadangos del Páramo (24) * Astorga
- (25) Rabanál del Camino (26) Acebo (27) Cacabelos
- (28) Vega del Valcarce

APPENDIX B

What is an article on the teaching of grammar doing here, albeit in Appendix B?

Reason # 1: I have spent a great deal of time on what it's all about, and can therefore claim that it has been an important part of my life.

Reason # 2: I am proud of what it says. Again and again teachers of English have agreed with it - in private. AND YET - - - in practice my conclusions have been generally disregarded by both textbooks and teachers.

I feel like the captain of a sinking ship, as I raise my flag on high in the hope that these thoughts may not vanish unseen.

Here then is a short article I wrote in 1990.

Frustrations in the Teaching and Learning of Grammar

-- Frederick F. Kempner
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During forty years of teaching, much of it centered on the teaching of grammar, nothing irritated me quite as much as the recurrent complaint, voiced by students and teachers alike, that grammar classes are dull.

Why should the analysis of one's mother tongue be considered dull?

At the risk of being charged with oversimplifying something obviously complex, I would like to suggest that the chief reason for this state of affairs is that much English class time is spent in having students memorize definitions that turn out to be useless - useless in the sense that they fail to identify the entities that they are supposed to define.

Students don't usually become conscious of this uselessness; instead they arrive at correct identifications of grammatical entities in ways that are below the level of consciousness, ways that have never been set forth explicitly in class or textbook. What they do works, but only in a covert sort of way. They are not aware of the criteria they are in fact using. As a result, it is really not surprising that, instead of feeling stimulated and challenged, students develop a sense of futility and irrelevance of the entire subject of grammar.

To be specific: picking up on a tradition going back to Plato, most of our students today learn that a noun is "the name of a person, place or thing" and a verb is "a word expressing action or a state of being" (or words to that effect). But to apply these definitions the user has to know the meaning of the word in question. These definitions would be appropriate if

- 1) meaning were indeed a useful criterion for defining a noun or a verb; and
- 2) students were actually putting these definitions to use in identifying nouns and verbs.

Unfortunately, neither is the case. Many nouns describe actions: e.g., the wave, the fire, revolution, movement.

To encompass these words in a semantic definition of a noun, the concept of action would have to be included. But

the concept of action cannot possibly be omitted from a semantic definition of a verb. We

cannot use the same criterion to define both noun and verb or our students will have good reason to complain!

Many will argue that, based on their experience, traditional semantic definitions such as those cited above have worked well; after all, students working with them have indeed learned to identify nouns and verbs correctly. I would counter that it has not been the rule, but rather the illustration of nouns and verbs in context given by both teacher and textbook, that have enabled students to figure out for themselves what nouns and verbs are. Unfortunately, however, students are rarely aware of the criteria they have used. This claim is at the core of my argument. Let me attempt to provide proof.

Over the years, I have given all of my beginning Latin classes (grades 6-9) the following "test" on the very first day of the school year, when they could have no knowledge of what their teacher expected.

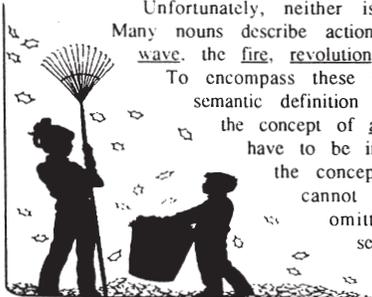
"Test"

Read this four-line verse; then answer the questions.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outrabe.

1. What gyred and gimbled?
2. What did the toves do?
3. What kind of toves were they?
4. Where did the toves gyre?
5. Did the toves gimble?
6. What kind of raths were they?
7. What do mome raths do?
8. Encircle all nouns in the poem.
9. Underline all verbs in the poem.
10. How were you able to answer question 8? Give details!
11. How were you able to answer question 9? Give details!
12. What is a noun in English?
13. What is a verb in English?

Virtually all students considered toves, wabe and borogoves to be nouns, and gyre and gimble to be verbs. With equal consistency, questions 12 and 13 produced the traditional, obviously well-memorized definitions: A noun is the name of a person, place or thing, and A verb is a word that shows action or a state of being (or



words to that effect).

What revealed unambiguously the students' thinking were their answers to questions 10 and 11. Only a tiny fraction indicated any awareness of what had in fact enabled them to identify with near unanimity these five nonsense words as nouns and verbs respectively. Their attempts to "give details" clearly indicated their unawareness. Their answers were "I guessed," "Because I know English," "It is hard to describe," and a host of similar "details," all indicating various levels of frustration. Clearly their frustration did not stem from stupidity or laziness. The definitions they had memorized were not usable because the words in question were nonsense: they lacked semantic content and thus refused to be classified by semantic criteria. And yet the vast majority of students did classify the words correctly as nouns and verbs. Only a small minority were able to point to those features that had enabled them to identify lovcs, wabe, and borogoves as nouns and gyre and gimble as verbs: position after the, after did, etc. These formal features that provide unambiguous clues are, of course, revealed not only in the four lines of Jabberwocky, but in questions 1-7 as well.

From the above data, the following seems to me to be clear: students are taught and subsequently memorize semantic definitions of nouns and verbs, but they don't apply them. Instead, by having been exposed to a vast number of examples of each, they have learned for themselves the features that set nouns and verbs apart. Unfortunately, they have never been made aware just what these features are. I have found that references to formal features, such as "position after the", appear to many students (as well as teachers!) somewhat illegitimate - after all, the student wonders, "Isn't a noun the name of a person, place or thing? Why worry about position after the?"

At this point, some readers may well point out that structural grammars, calling upon the work first formulated by C. C. Fries in the early 50's, have "infiltrated" textbooks to some extent, and in some texts have even been implemented extensively. (e.g., Dashwood-Jones, D. 1966. Patterns for Writing. Toronto: W. J. Gage, and Myers, Doris F. 1984. Understanding Language. Upper Montclair, CT: Boynton/Cook). To be sure, these and similar texts have been used in some junior and senior high schools. But, as far as I know, such approaches have hardly ever been used systematically in the crucial early exposures to formal grammar, usually in grades 3 and 4. It is at that level that semantic definitions of verb and noun are as firmly rooted as if there never had been any structural or transformational grammar analysis. There can be no doubt that what students learn first in a new subject,

especially if it is taught thoroughly, tends to stick with them, and grammatical definitions are no exception.

Other readers may argue that the traditional noun and verb definitions, important as they are, constitute only a part of grammar teaching and therefore do not justify my generalizations. However, other central grammatical categories, such as sentence, subject and predicate, have traditionally been defined semantically with equal ineffectiveness.

I therefore conclude:

1. The vast majority of students are unaware of the complicated grammatical analysis they are performing on their own.
2. They learn definitions that make no reference to their analysis.
3. They find such definitions irrelevant.
4. This perception of irrelevance is not likely to instill an interest in the study of grammar.



