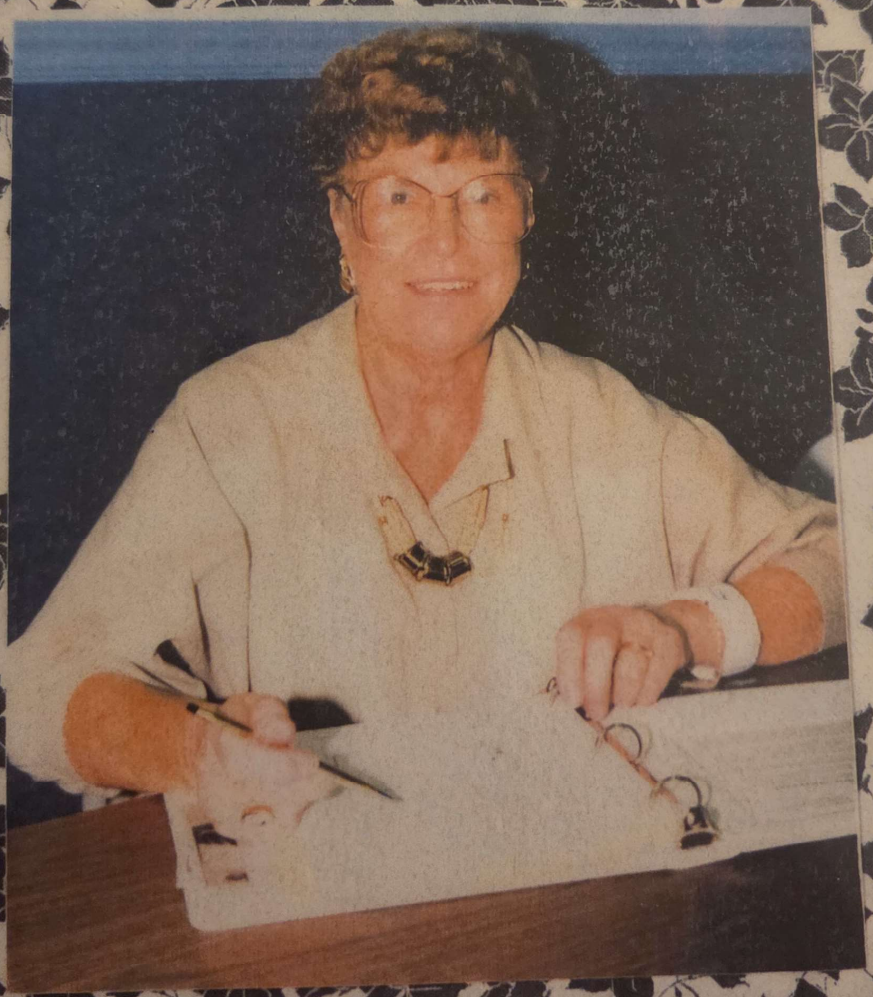
REFLECTION OF LIFE



D E D I C A T I O N

TO MY THREE CHILDREN

KRISTA, DIANA, GARY

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F O R E W O R D

R E F L E C T I O N O F L I F E

When I came to live in the United States after marrying your Dad, my first duty I felt was to become a complete American, an American mother and finally, after a period of time, an American citizen.

At that time I did not realize that, by completely immersing myself in an American life, it was my way of forgetting the frightening years I had just experienced.

During the first twenty five years of my life in the United States, I took part in all things customary to Americans, plus raising my American family. Living in a small rural community aided in my completely erasing my German background. Of course, I corresponded weekly with my family in Berlin, and your grandmother visited six times over the years. Even on my first trip back to Berlin after being in America for twenty years, I never really came to terms with the years during the war that I lived through in Berlin. My Mom and I alone; my father and brother fighting on the German side; the bombing of Berlin where my nights and even days were spend in an air raid shelter; and finally the destruction of our apartment and our possessions.

Only after approximately twenty five years, after your Dad and I joined a German American club in Des Moines and I talked to other women and men who also grew up during the war years in Germany,

did I come to realize the great heritage that I had put out of my mind -- all the years, all the good things, and of course, bad things too. I wanted again to remember and to tell you, my children and grandchildren, all the experiences I lived through.

As you know, the past winter we spent some time in Florida and there I took a course on "WRITING MY LIFE EXPERIENCES". Only after I started remembering and putting my thoughts on paper did I recall more and more. My therapy had started.

Here I am today, as I promised you children, trying to start writing my memoirs about my childhood years, growing up, the war years, how I met your Dad, and your earlier years. I had told you children, that you would have to wait until I was retired before I would have time to start. That day finally arrived nine month ago. I enjoyed these past month with your Dad tremendously, knowing how he has waited with anticipation for that day to come.

We took time making plans for the future. In the meantime we were taking little trips here and there, and spending leisurely mornings on our patio. Now we are in sunny Florida, where we are residing for the next three month, enjoying our first winter in retirement, leaving behind icy pavements, frozen windshields, slushy roads, bone-chilling winds, far beyond our expected dreams we had when we would reach that day. We are both in pretty good health and our motto is.....

LIVE EACH DAY AS IT COMES AND MAKE IT A MASTERPIECE

Now I am turning back the time about sixty three years. I am very exited to look into the past, but also a little scared too. Can I do it?

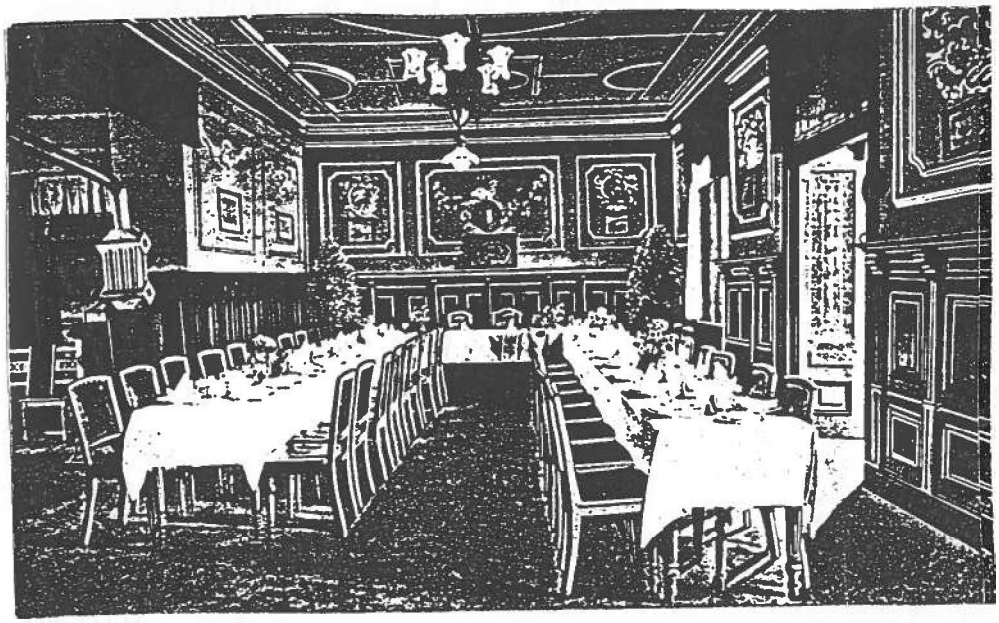
During the past year I started making little notes here and there. Long buried moments I thought I had forgotten came to my mind.

To get you acquainted with my family, I have a picture taken in 1928. The family evidently had been celebrating a special day

for my Dad's parents.



Seated in the center are my grandparents August and Berta Schnittke. To the left is my Dad holding my brother and Mom is seated on the opposite side holding me. Standing to the right of Mom is my godmother Aunt Irma. Way back in the center is my maternal grandfather Friedrich Nack and to his left my Stepgrandmother.



Prior to Dad's marriage, his parents were owners of a big restaurant establishment in Berlin-Pankow under the name of Schmuckkästchen which they operated for fifteen to twenty years.

The earliest memories I have pictured in my mind are of a restaurant an my parents, brother, paternal grandparents and myself living in an apartment above, which I believe was on the fifth floor. I must have been three years of age. Since Grandmother Schnittke passed away six years ago, I don't have her to fill me in on dates and places. My brother is of little help, being only three years older than I am. My parents and grandparents owned the restaurant. As long as I remember, my grandparents lived with us until they died. They were up in years when we were born.

Grandmother was a schoolteacher and forty years old when she and Grandfather married. She gave up her career when my Dad was born.

Grandfather was born on a farm in a small village in Pommerania in northeast Germany. They were a big family. I don't know when he left his home town to go to Berlin. Some of his sisters ventured out, too, destination Berlin.

My Dad was their only child. While our parents and grandfather ran the restaurant my grandmother was a nanny to us children.

I was born March 31st, 1927 and named
DOROTHEA CHARLOTTE SCHNITTKE

My brother was born October 26th, 1924 and named
ERNST AUGUST SCHNITTKE

Mom told me I was a very lively child. When we went for walks, they had to hold tight on to my hand so that I would not run away. I tried this especially with my grandmother, knowing she could not catch up with me. It was known that I would hug every "uncle" I met on the street. Mom also told me that she had my head shaved, because I had very little hair by the time I was two years old. In doing so, my hair had a chance to come back much fuller. Mom was very proud of my red hair, which I became to hate as I grew older. I was teased about having red hair by boys, and my own brother and his friend were not any better. Along with the red hair came the

freckles galore. I squeezed juice out of cucumbers and rubbed it on my face hoping that my freckles would fade. It didn't help. So I had to take the teasing all through my childhood years and went home crying more than once. When I came to America, I noticed nobody paid attention to children with red hair. I was glad, though, that you children did not inherit my color of hair. As I got older and the grandchildren started to arrive, by that time I liked my red hair, I wished that one of them would be lucky. It did not happen.

When the great depression came cracking down in 1930, my parents where hard hit. They tried very hard to keep the business above water but were unable to do so and lost the restaurant in 1932, heavily in debt. The depression years were hard on everybody. We had to move temporarily into a primitive apartment.

Dad was without a job for a long time and had to stand in line to get unemployment benefits, which had to feed six people. Since we lived in a big city, we had no garden to grow some of our food.

Dad finally got some part-time work, and later on he was lucky to land permanent employment at "GROSS BERLIN" in a restaurant as a waiter. He had this job until September 1939, when he was drafted into the infantry at the age of fourty in W W II. You will say, "Forty years of age?" Yes. My Dad was born in 1899 and in 1917 he was drafted in W W I at the age of eighteen. He served one year until the war ended. This made him a good target, since he was experienced, when war was declared on Poland. Dad was lucky. Because of his knowledge in cooking and preparing food for large groups, he was put in charge of feeding the soldiers. He was made Mess Sergeant and held this rank until that day in the summer of 1944, when two Nazi officers came to tell Mom that Dad was missing in Russia. We never heard from Dad again.

Things got better after Dad finally landed a permanent job. We were able to move to a better apartment again, but compared to today's standard of living, it was primitive. We had two bedrooms, one for my parents and one for my grandparents. I slept in the kitchen and my brother had a tiny room off the kitchen. The bathroom located on each floor had to be shared with another family.

We lived on the fourth floor.

We were blessed though. In our new surroundings we had a beautiful outside environment. Across the street from our apartment complex we had a park. The park had two gates. One on the south and the other one on the east side. If you had a key, which could be purchased by paying a yearly fee, you were able to enter. Mom, who was very conservative, would not buy one, but for five cents we could get a tag and with this identification, good for the season, we were able to enter the park. But you still had to wait at the gate, sometimes for a long time, till somebody came who was fortunate enough to own a key to get in and out. We did not think anything of it; everybody was poor. But our family always had enough to eat and we were dressed nice.

In front of this park stood a big church, plus numerous buildings which housed a day-care-center, apartments for the faculty who ran the center, church secretary, vicar, custodian and three ministers with their families. These buildings and church were inclosed with a tall iron gate fifteen feet high and sixty feet wide. The gates were closed during the night and nobody had access except the people who lived there. The park became my stamping ground for many years to come. The day-care-center, where I was enrolled after school in my earlier childhood years, proved to me a most memorable place. We learned a lot in the church center. We were read to, did crafts, sang a lot and of course we had time to play. Needles to say, it was the Christian atmosphere which I liked more and more as I got older.

In 1933 when I was six years old, I started school. I think I can remember that day, or it was because of the picture Mom took of me, which so vividly stuck in my mind. I carried a "Zuckertüte" in my arm (a cone-shaped cardboard container) very pretty decorated, filled with a variety of candy and chocolates. I also sported a brand new school backpack, containing a blackboard, sponge, crayons, ruler and so on. When we were ten years of age, we were allowed to carry our schoolbooks in an attache case. When I did my homework, I remember your grandfather sitting beside me and helping me.

One summer day in 1933, my parents were waiting in front of

our church, where we attended Sunday School. They informed us we had better go to the hospital right away to see Grandmother, who had taken a turn for the worse. We picked up some bananas, those were her favorite fruit to take to her. Grandmother died that same night. She was seventy five years old.

As soon as I was old enough, I started going to Sunday School. As the years passed, I became very active. I participated in every thing. We put on skits and musical concerts for our families and church members for Christmas, easter or whenever the opportunity was there. Church activities became the center of my lifestyle until my Confirmation day, which was in April of 1941. It is sad, as I look back to that Sunday, that it all ended. I was too old to go to Sunday School and did not get any encouragement from church or home so that my faith could keep growing. My parents went to church only at Christmas and Easter. I was grateful, though, for their sending us. When my children reached Sunday School age, I too sent them, not yet realizing at that time, that we, as parents, should attend regularly too. But the seed was planted during my formative years which I applied later. I became a Sunday Shool teacher and served on the board of education. (Note my personal testimony, Page 66).

My school years went pretty smoothly. Nothing too exciting ever happened. The teachers were strict. We were disciplined. I was in trouble quite often, because I could never keep my mouth shut during classes. I was spanked with a stick over the palm of my hand and had to stay after school and write on the blackboard hundred times, "I must not disturb the class with my talking." Sometimes I had to write this on paper two hundred times. When I had to do this at home, my parents of course found out, I got a scolding from them too.

Boys and girls went to separate schools. The buildings were located on the same grounds.

When I was eight years old, we moved again. The new school was only a ten-minute walk, compared to an half hour before.

It is customary in Germany, that parents give boys a better education, if financially possible. My parents enrolled my brother

in a "REALSCHOOLE" (prep. for college) when he was ten years old. My formal education ended with fourteen years of age. We went to school two days a week from 8.00 to 1.00 P.M. three times from 8.00 to 2.00 PM. and on Saturday from 8.00 to 12.00 P.M. We had six weeks off in summer, one week for Christmas and Easter.

We did not keep in contact with classmates or teachers after we finished school. Graduation ceremonies were not heard of as as they have been all over America for decades. That was also true for senior pictures, for yearbooks, or class rings. Reunions were not practiced either.

WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN READING SO FAR WAS AN OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF MY EARLIEST CHILDHOOD MEMORIES. NOW I WILL GO INTO DETAILS ABOUT ALL THE SPECIAL MEMORIES I RECOLLECT AS I TRY TO REMEMBER CERTAIN EVENTS, TRADITIONS, THE WAR YEARS, HOW I MET YOUR DAD AND IN GENERAL MY LIFE IN A BIG CITY, SO DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY YOU HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UP.

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C H R I S T M A S S E A S O N

The Christmas Season has been my favorite and outstanding in my memory. It is a time of joy along with the Advent's preparation and the spiritual longing for Jesus.

Four weeks before Christmas we would purchase an Advent wreath



with four red candles and a white one in the center. On the first Sunday in Advent, late in the afternoon, when it started to get dark, we lit the first candle. While sitting around the table, we all joined in singing Christmas carols. What a warm feeling you felt inside. That increased in the following weeks. The following Sunday we lit two candles. This event was repeated until the fourth Sunday. Now we knew that in a few more days Christmas would be here. On Christmas Day we also lit the white candle.

Preparation in church got under way. We started practicing for the Christmas program and setting up the stage. The Sunday before Christmas we presented the Christmas story about the birth of "JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR".

Another traditional event took place December 6th, which is called "St. Nicholas day". That night before we went to bed, we put our shoes by the front door in hopes, if we had been good children throughout the year, "St. Nicholas" would fill the shoes with candy. However there also was the saying, that if you had been bad, you would get a stick. Naturally my brother and I were pretty well-behaved children so that there was no doubt in our minds, that there would be nothing but candy in our shoes.

Oh, wait a minute, I should have started telling you about the Advent calendar, which starts off the Christmas season. The calendar is very colorful and has twenty four tiny doors to open, with the first one to start December first. Inside these doors we would see little reminders of the oncoming season. My brother and

with our presents we received a big plate full of pfefferkuchen, nuts, chocolates, apples, oranges and figs. When the plates were empty, they were filled again and again for the remainder of the season.

The second Christmas day we spent with our maternal grandparents as long as they were living. When we became older, the first Christmas day was our traditional day to attend a theater to see a play or an operetta.

I look back with fond memories to many joyful "Christmas Seasons" in my growing up years, and I am thankful to my parents for making this possible in somewhat hard times.

S C H O O L D A Y S



I will give you a more detailed description of how our school system was run when I went to school.

The school year started in March of each year. When I turned six in 19333, I was enrolled in school. We had to go for eight years. School started at 8.00 A.M. till 1.00 or 2.00 P.M. We went six days a week, with six weeks off in summer, one week for Christmas and Easter. Boys and girls had to go to separate schools.

I loved school. My favorite subjects was history and geography. I did not do too badly in other subjects either, as I graduated on top of five in my class. If you had failing marks, you had to do the class over. We respected our teacher and were punished when we did not behave.

We had several breaks during our school days. One was twenty minutes long, one was ten, and three were five minutes long, indicate the end of each hour. We were in the same room all day long, changing only for home economics or singing to designated areas.

Twice a week we had to walk twenty minutes to a different school for gymnastics. Our school, being so small, had no gym.

When we were in the sixth grade, it was mandatory to participate in swimming instruction. I passed all the requirements. One of them will always be vivid in my mind. I had to swimm fourty five minutes without stopping.

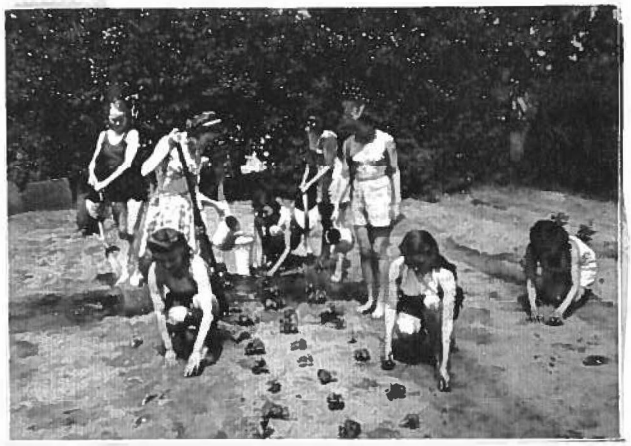
On our twenty and ten minute breaks we had to go to the school court yard where we had to walk around in a circle to eat our sandwich which we had brought along from home. We could buy milk or cocoa. Sometimes I used the money intended for milk to buy candy on the way to school. Mom never found out.

We had no study halls in my time, so it took us up to two hours

every day to do our homework.

I had three close friends in school. Once school was out for the day, you went home and did your own thing or played with children in your own neighborhood. Remember, nobody had telephones or cars, therefore, communication was somewhat difficult.

I also enjoyed the many field trips we took to visit museums, the botanical center, planetarium, zoo, castles and hiking in our beautiful forest.



In my last year we were given a garden spot where we could experience the planting and growing of vegetables. We had to take care of the weeding and watering after school

I am on the left side holding the hoe.

As you know, I grew up during the Hitler regime. We had been almost two years at war when I graduated. Being one of the five top students of the class, I was chosen to serve our country. Along with sixty other girls, I went to a camp in the Black Forest in the south of Germany, to help farmers in the field and around the house. In general, the purpose for this outstanding assignment was to receive special training and education in the Third Reich. I enjoyed these nine months tremendously. My thoughts wander back to that time ever once in a while and to the privilege which was given to me at that time.

I was accustomed to going to camp on weekends from the time I was ten years old, hiking and experiencing the fellowship with other children my age, sleeping in youth hostels and at night sitting around the campfire singing our German Folk Songs which are imbedded in my mind forever. So for me, this different life for nine months, was really a familiar one.

Our camp was settled in a valley surrounded by green tall mountains in one of the prettiest scenic regions in Germany.

Our days went as follows:
Roll call in the morning with raising the flag, was followed by outside exercise for twenty minutes. We had thirty minutes for cleaning up, dressing and making our beds. Breakfast was next in line and inspection of our bunk beds.

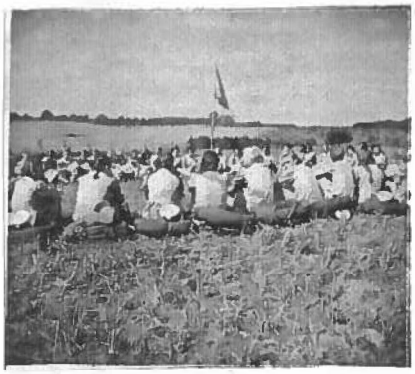
On our arrival we received uniforms to wear during the week and Sundays. Shoes were brown, which we wore with dark socks, and white for special occasions. We could wear our hair short or in pig tails. The picture you see gives you a little idea how we looked at that time. Also notice the back pack.





Every two weeks we were assigned to different duties. We helped the farmers or we stayed in camp. There was plenty to do. We worked in the kitchen preparing the meals or in the laundry room washing clothes and ironing, cleaning the rooms and halls, chopping wood for the stove in the kitchen, etc. Twice a week, the group who stayed in camp, attended classes.

Highlights of the nine month were several trips, sometimes up to one week. They took us farther down south in Germany. We hiked most of the time, twenty to thirty KM a day and we carried a fifteen to twenty pund back pack. We



fortresses and towns of interest. At night we slept on hay in barns and sometimes we were put up in private homes.

WHAT AN ADVENTURE FOR A CITY GIRL!
And so many fond memories to cherish all my life!

The evenings in camp we had for ourselves. We went for walks, read, wrote letters and did crafts.

As the night drew near and the sun disappeared behind the mountains, we assembled in the court yard to give tribute to our flag as it was lowered. Afterwards, it was our custom to sit around a roaring bonfire and sing our magnificent folk songs.

M Y C H I L D H O O D Y E A R S

Y O U T H A C T I V I T I E S

F A M I L Y L I F E

Not many mothers worked when I was growing up; therefore, dinner was ready by 2 P.M. when I came home from school. I don't recall if my brother was always present, but Dad, when he worked the evening shift, was home to eat with us.

Our meals were simple. Meat only on Sundays and our soups were cooked mostly with bone meat. Fish or egg dishes were common during the week. In the evening we ate sandwiches. We had lunch meat, cheese or cottage cheese to put on our bread. We ate fruit and drank milk. By the way, the milk had to be bought every day, either at the store or a dairy farm close by, and had to be boiled right away, so it would not turn sour.

After dinner I did my homework and then I was free to do what my heart desired. Usually there were some neighborhood children playing outside and I would join them. We played hopscoth on the sidewalk or we took toys like jumping ropes, marbles, balls and went to the park to play. Sometimes I would take my doll buggy and went to my old stamping ground, the park I described previously. There I befriended myself with other children and we played house. I also loved to play in the sandbox, which was of enormous size, and build castles, fortresses and dream myself away. I won't ever forget, as I got older, the teasing I had to tolerate from some of the boys I knew, because they remembered my enthusiasm I showed playing in the sand.

One of my favorite past times was to go to the library. I spent hours there and forgot the world around me. I was an ardent reader, so naturally I took plenty of books home too.

In my childhood years you never heard of crimes being committed or being told to be careful or not to talk to strangers or walk in dark or lonely places. When I was old enough, I was allowed to go wherever I wanted to in our immediate neighborhood.

Of course I had certain responsibilities at home. On a week-

ly basis I had to dust the furniture and polish all the chrome knobs and door handles in our apartment. We had a long hallway where linoleum was laid. This floor I had to scrub on my hands and knees every other week.

As you can guess, in those days we didn't have a washer or dryer, so our bed linens and towels had to be sent out every three or four weeks. This was within a thirty minute walking distance. We had many others close by, but Grandmother wanted to patronize the one she had for so many years.

My Dad was the treasurer of the World War I Veterans Organization for many years and he had to collect dues on a monthly basis from about one dozen members. Guess who had to do this too? Right, me of course. Sometimes my brother helped and on a few occasions Dad did it. But I don't think I minded those chores.

This Veterans Organization gave us children lots of entertainment over the years, and I look back to several events which were outstanding in my mind.

Once every summer we took an all-day boat tour on our "HAVEL." We dined at noon in one of the many restaurants by the water and, of course, we children had many hours of play and fun. Another event took us all by bus into the forest, where we had a catered dinner in one of the garden restaurants. In the afternoon we played games. We were rewarded with prizes if we finished first, second or third.

Once or twice a year we also received free tickets to see on stage our famous fairy tales by the Grimm Brothers. They also were made possible for us children through Dad's Veterans Organization.

I have never mentioned that in Germany we celebrate three Christmas days and that was the day for their traditional Christmas party for us. I remember three long tables with presents on top. One Christmas I crawled under a table when I saw Santa Claus entering the room.

When I grew older, I went with a couple of girl friends or my brother to a municipal swimming pool. We had to walk about

one half hour to get there and could stay fourty five minutes in the pool for a certain amount of money. We may would have stayed longer, but this was all the money we received from home. We went swimming at least every other week. Every once in a while Dad, Mom, Ernest and I went as a family.

My favorite sport in winter was ice skating. Close by where we lived was a big pond; and when it froze over, we were allowed to skate. How I loved this sport! I do remember, and never will I forget, that certain Christmas, when one of my presents consisted of a wool gored navy-blue skirt and a blue sweater with small red little hearts. When I was skating and dancing on the ice, my skirt flared out and I pretended to be Sonja Henie the famous international champion Norwegian skater. When the pond was not safe for us, we went to an artificial outside arena.

Our Sundays went as follows: Mom served breakfast in bed. She baked a cake for Sunday or she bought baked goods. Then we got ready to go to Sunday school. When we returned by 12.30 PM, a big Sunday dinner was waiting for us and also dessert. This was the only day of the week we received such extravagances.

Our Sunday afternoon entertainment consisted for my brother and me to go to the movie matinee in one of many theaters in our area. Every Sunday morning Dad put enough money on our kitchen cabinet for us to see a movie. Usually we had some left for candy.

On Saturdays my brother and I studied the advertising pillar, a tabular construction, located on numerous corners, to see what movie we would like to see on Sunday afternoon. These pillars were of enormous size, seven to eight feet tall. Berlin was a big city so, of course,they only advertised movie theaters in our immediate area and all the big ones in the hub of Berlin. The opera houses and theaters also advertised this way. We had no newspaper delivery to homes, and seldom did my parents buy a paper.

In summer we did other things. On hot days Mom, my brother and I, (Dad usual worked) went to the beach. Pay special attention to the picture here. All dressed up and going to the beach?



Can you believe your eyes? In my time you would not go out of the house without proper attire. We had to use public transportation to get to places far away.

Several times during summer we took steamboat trips which took us to the suburbs of Berlin. A river, flowing from north to south and east and west, provided for us city people a nice get-a-way into pleasant environments.

Many memorable hikes I look back on too. The train took us in whatever direction we wanted to go to enjoy our beautiful forest. A green belt surrounded Berlin. We took picnic lunches along; and for coffee in the afternoon, we stopped in one of the garden restaurants. We purchased hot water and a coffeepot from the kitchen for a small amount of money. Then we would brew our coffee, which we brought along from home along with cake.

"IT WAS A WONDERFUL LIFE".

Whatever we did for recreation was fun and very little money was needed.

Grandpa Schnittke lived with us until 1940. An opportunity came along and he moved in to an apartment sharing with a couple. A few years later we had to put Grandfather in a nursing home where he spent his last few months. Grandmother had died a long time before. You remember me telling you about this. The fond memories of Grandfather will never fade. As a little girl, I remember, we took many walks. My brother went too. He held both our hands and we strolled through the city for hours. Quite often he would take us to Woolworth and buy us a cup of hot cocoa. Sometimes he wanted to be funny and asked a policeman if he could direct us to a certain street, just testing him, to see if he could

give him the right answer.

I remember one game we three played at home in Grandpa's room when it was dark. We would say: I see something in this room that is red, blue or some other color and we had to guess it. We sat in the dark a lot to teach us at an early age, I presume, to be conservative.

I also had the privilege to dust Grandpa's furniture. How I despised that job! I had to take a little brush to reach all the little curves. What a boring task!

From spring to fall I took an active part in sports. The Hitler organization I belonged to kept us busy on Saturdays. After practising diligently, we participated in the tournaments with other leagues.

In 1936 when I was nine years old, the Olympics were held in Berlin. What an excitement for those who were fortunate to see some of the games. The Olympic Stadium was built in the suburbs of west Berlin under the Hitler Regime.

We were within thirty minute walking distance from the famous Lustgarten. There where stands, promoting this event, selling T-Shirts, stick-on-pins with the Olympic symbols, flags and many other souvenirs. I went a few times out of curiosity. That one day I spotted something very catching to my eye. It was the Olympic stick-on-pin. I wished with all my heart that I had money to buy the pin. I knew that was out of reach for me. And then it happened. As I was walking along, looking at the ground once in a while, my eyes spotted, yes, guess what? The pin I so longingly wanted to have.

Our school vacation in summer lasted six weeks. Our church owned a camp where we could go for one month during summer. The camp was staffed with Christian teachers. My parents signed me up and I remember going two or three times between the age of seven to ten years.

The camp was located one-hour train ride from Berlin. The little village close by was called Königswusterhausen.

Our parents took us to the train terminal. Goodbys were said and with exciting adventurous feelings in our hearts, we were on our way. I don't recall being homesick.

This camp was a huge structure and consisted of several sleeping

halls, washrooms dining areas, kitchen and laundry room in the lower level. A balcony was surrounding all four sides. We had a lake by the camp and also a swimming beach.

For recreation in the evenings we had the opportunity to go on boat rides. As I remember, the lake was covered with beautiful water lilies.

We went on m any hikes in to the woods, singing our folk and marching songs imbedded in my mind forever.

Once a week we divided into two groups with one starting out one half hour before the other group, leaving notes on branches or the ground indicating which direction we were headed and how to find us.

The food was excellent. They encouraged us to eat. We were weighed once a week and were pleased if we had gained some weight.

Every noon, right after dinner, we had to take a rest. When the weather was warm, we laid on cots outside. I hated this time. Up to this day, this favorite pastime for many, did not excite me. After our resting time, we had refreshments which usually consisted of rolls and cocoa. Some more planned activities followed.

When the four weeks were up, some of our parents came to take part in our closing activities, which consisted for us children to play games, and of course prizes were given to the winner. When it turned dark, the festivities topped off with everybody walking through the woods with colorful luminary. This ended a wonderful vacation.

When Dad worked the day shift, all three of us, a couple or three times a week, would meet Dad after work. Oh, did we enjoy this! Before we would meet Dad, we would browse through a big department store close by. Occasionally Dad would say, Let us have a bite to eat." We would go to a popular chain restaurant called "ASCHINGER". We ate of course our traditional "KARTOFFELSALAT MIT WÜRSTCHEN" (hot dogs and potato salad). It was not a sit-down restaurant. You had to stand around big tables, very common in my time, for a quick snack. In summertime on our way home, of course you guessed by now, we walked again, we waited with controlled anticipation when passing an ice cream parlor to see if Dad would give

us money to buy an ice cream cone. We would't let on how disappointed we were if nothing happened.

When I was around twelve years old, Mom allowed me to babysit to earn some spending money. There was a bakery in the neighbor apartment house. The owners had a little girl. On nice sunny days, I would take her in her stroller to the park. Now listen to this. I not only received money for babysitting, but also received a big box of sweet rolls to munch on in the afternoon. I loved sweets so much that I told my parents what I would like to do when I grew up. In winter I wanted to become a salesclerk in a candy store, and in summer in an ice cream parlor.

In my last year of school I was given permission from my teacher to tutor after school. My student was a ten year-old girl. Six months later she was on her own and assumed I must have been a good teacher.

Mom had a favorite cousin, my aunt Agnes, and our families did things together. She had a husband, uncle Hugo and one boy, cousin Erwin. We got together for birthdays. They were always celebrated on Sundays. When we went to their place, we left right after dinner, because we had to walk and it took about two hours. My brother carried a package full of sandwiches prepared by Mom for our evening meal. A variety of birthday cakes were furnished by the hostess for the party, plus cocoa, milk and coffee. These were fun days for us children. At night, when it was time for us to go home, we took the subway. It was traditional for the hostess to accompany their guests to the transportation system.

I was very tired by the that time after a day of playing and visiting and I remember so vividly falling asleep on the way home and Mom waking me up when we had to change trains and when we reach our destination. We still had to walk to our apartment. I put my arm in Mom's and with eyes closed I was guided home. My brother, being three years older, acted grown up. He either walked ahead of us or behind. The age I was at that time was between six to eleven years old.

I have to mention too, when you made a visit you took flowers to the lady of the house; and if there were children, you took candy

for them.

Drilled into us at an early age were table manners. Sit erect, no elbows allowed on the table. This example I passed on to my children and grandchildren. That one special grandchild of ours watched me cautiously how I conducted myself when we were seated at the table. A few times he caught his grandma with elbows half on the table and I was reminded gently "GRANDMA, elbows."

We also had to eat what was dished up for us. Sometimes I sat there for a long time and was not allowed to get up until I finished my meal.

We had to show respect to our elders. When riding in a bus or streetcar or any other kind of transportation and we were seated, we had to give up our seats if no other was available. If we met somebody on the street we knew, we had to bow or curtsy.

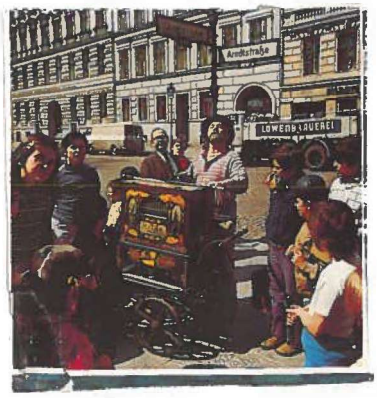
Oh, wait a minute. I almost forgot to tell you about my Aunt Minna. She was one of Grandfather Schnittke's sisters. She stopped at our place once in a while and sent the chauffeur to our apartment to ask me if I would like to accompany her on her shopping spree. Would I? I was delighted. We went to the most elegant dress shops. She also purchased yards and yards of taffeta. She liked to wear clothes which made lots of noise.

In the afternoon we ended up going to a cafe where I could choose whatever I wanted from a huge variety of tortes. Whipped cream, of course, I chose as topping.

One summer I was invited to stay with them for one week. They owned a big garden restaurant and hotel on the Spree river. This body of water runs through the middle of Berlin. The biggest fireworks in Berlin were displayed on summer weekends on a bridge adjacent to their property.

What an opportunity for me to relive all those special memories since I started writing my "MY PERSONAL LIFE HISTORY". The more I write and go back in time, the more I remember.

It was a difficult time for many people in the depression to keep above water, so naturally we had our share of beggars coming to the door. Mom never turned them down and we discovered that they made some kind of marks on doors where they received food or money.



Some of them were organ grinders and begged for money this way. They would perform in the courtyard of apartment houses and money was thrown down from the window. We children would go down and assemble around him. It was especially fun for us when they had a monkey who performed, too, and also held out his hand for money.

Let me tell you now about a very fond memory I have of your Grandmother. We had wide windowsills in every apartment and Mom, being at home, had time for leisure. One of her pleasures was looking out of the window into the street to see what was going on and especially when she expected me to come home. As I turned the corner into our street, about two city blocks away, I saw a little dark head peaking out of the window. As I came closer, we waved to each other. The togetherness Mom and I had have imbedded in my children too. We share very strong family ties.

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W O R L D W A R II

TEENAGE AND YOUNG ADULT YEARS

My teenage and young adult years took place during WW II. The first few years, from 1939 to 1942, did not interfere in such an important and exiting step in ones life.

I was twelve years old when the war against Poland broke out. Our household and family got interrupted with my Dad being drafted into the infantry. As I mentioned before, Dad was fourty years old at that time, but experienced, because he served in WW II. Dad was stationed close by at the beginning. I think he got frequent weekend passes. He was in charge of the kitchen and responsible for feeding hundreds of enlisted men.

Otherwise life went on as usual in the first years of the war. I had to finish school. When I turned thirteen I took instruction in catechism. These classes were scheduled in the mornings for one hour, once a week, and we were excused from school. Jewish and catholic children had the same privileges. I want you to take note, religious instruction or attending church was not forbidden in the "THIRD REICH", like you may have been reading, and nobody was prosecuted, that I know of, for practicing their religious beliefs.



Finally my confirmation day was here. Preparations started a month before. I contacted my seamstress, so she could get started sewing my dress. I chose a navy blue taffeta material. A tailor made my coat and I saved ration coupons for shoes and a few other necessities. Confirmation day was a big festive family occasion. All the relatives were invited; the apartment looked spic and span. All the food was catered in. What a big day for me! As you see in this picture, how proud

I was with my Bible and certificate in my hand for passing all the requirements. Looking back now, I remember it also as a sad day for me. I was all fired up, but there was no encouragement from church or home to keep growing in my faith. The following Sunday I received my first communion. That day is vivid in my mind. I never set foot in church again until eight years later. By that time I was married and it was a special day. That day, our first born, you Krista, was baptized.

I graduated from school in the spring of 1941, and as I mentioned before, I was one of the top students in my class. I was sent for nine months to a camp in the southern part of Germany to receive special training and education in the Third Reich.

In the beginning of the following year (1942), I earnestly had to decide what I wanted to do with my life. I contacted and applied several places as an apprentice for a two-year training. One of the intrigued me tremendously. I thought it would be exciting to work in a travel agency. It was the biggest one in Berlin, located in the hub, four stories high and conviniently located. I figured I would in time see many famous people who would come to our travel agency for service.

But I soon found out what they do with a fifteen-year-old apprentice.

I was stuck in a little office on the third floor and had to learn everything in the bookkeeping department. Very boring task, I thought, to do the same thing over and over, month after month. I survived and started to grow up. I received a little allowence money from my company. The requirement for an apprentice were to attend an area school once a week for two years to learn shorthand, typing and bookkeeping.

In the spring of 1944 I had to take my exams. I passed and became a full-fledged typist and took dictation in shorthand and converted it into letters on the typewriter. I also became salaried.

I never did make it to the front to sell plane and train tickets the way I had anticipated when I chose that profession. Also, towards the end of the war, in the winter of 1945, I was transferred to a smaller branch where I became the secretary for the

president of that agency. Now my desk was in a convenient place, where I could observe everything, but I still didn't see any celebrities.

Immediately at the beginning of the war we received ration cards. The allotments were generous and varied for infants, children and adults. We had plenty to eat, but I found out later, since we lived in the Capital, we were pampered more and received what was coming to us. This was not the case in other parts of our country, especially in the last year of the war. We also were rationed for clothing like dresses, coats, shoes, lingerie, hosiery and materials.

My personal life was not different from other children my age. I had belonged to the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth Organization) ever since my tenth birthday. We did the same things that you children learned and practiced as girl scouts and boy scouts.

1940 13 years old



On weekends we went hiking and stayed in youth hostels. I became a leader and had a group of twelve girls under me. We did crafts, sang, learned more about our country, and helped in catastrophes which we had to deal more and more as the war progressed. I will get more into details a little later on.

1941 14 years old



When I was thirteen years old, I became interested in the

opposite sex. I never really dated until I met your Dad. We were together in groups, talked to the boys we liked. If this was mutual, you felt as if you were in seventh heaven. I had two boys asking me when I was sixteen years old if I would like to be their girl friend. I said yes to one. The next weekend he invited me to go to a movie. We were together a few more times for a soda pop, and I also gave him one of my rings to show that we were going together. I did not like the way he was dressed. I noticed that he didn't wear a tie when we went to a movie. I must not have liked that, so I called our short-lived friendship off. What a snob I must have been.

1941 16 years old



The other boy, whose name was "KLAUS" was called into the army. He started writing to me and we corresponded. I waited for his letters but they stopped coming. I assumed he was wounded, taken prisoner, missed or killed in action. He lived on the same street, one block over. When we were bombed out in March 1945, I wasn't able to contact his family. I was wondering if they had died that day during an Allied Bombing Raid, which destroyed a large area that Saturday, or if they were placed temporarily some other place for shelter.

I thought I would never hear from Klaus again. I figured he was dead, and since I had no personal ties with him, just friend ship, I didn't feel obligated in any way and could go on with my life.

In the meantime I met your Dad and we became friends, which eventually blossomed into more than that. About a year later, when I happened to be home during the day, the doorbell rang and to my surprise, there stood Klaus. I was happy to see that he was

alive and well, but I had to tell him that I was going with somebody and there was no chance for us to continue our friendship. I know he felt hurt and rejected. Oh, war can be cruel and unforseen things can happen.

The war dragged on. What we heard on radio, read in newspapers and the news reel in the movie theaters, everything looked rosy for our country, until we became involved on too many fronts in Europa and in Africa. Then America declared war on Germany, and soon after that the bombarding on Berlin started.

My brother enlisted in the Marines in 1943 as soon as he turned eighteen years old.

Mom and I were now alone. How she must have felt to have two loved ones in danger and not knowing if they would ever return. I was so young at that time and didn't think that far ahead if something would happen how the impact would influence our lives.

Mom and I became very close. We did everything together. If it was to visit relatives, or go to a theater or movie, or on a Sunday taking the train and hiking in the woods and stopping in a garden restaurant for refreshments.

Double tragedy truck in the summer of 1944. Mom was informed by Nazy officials that Dad was missing in action in Russia. She was very depressed so I urged her to go for a few weeks to visit dad's and grandpa's relatives in Pommerania. As I mentioned before, they lived in Schlave, a little town, population 100 and were farmers.

During that time the Invasion began in France, June 6th, 1944, and we knew that my brother was stationed in Normandie. His letters quit coming and we were fearful what and when we would hear about his destiny. As much as I remember, about four months later, the Swiss Red Cross notified us that my brother had been taken prisoner by the Americans. He was not wounded and shipped to America. Soon afterwards, his letters arrived, informing us that he was well and was receiving good treatment. We heard from him on a regular basis. His prison was located in Greeley, Colorado.

Mom was forced to take a job during the last years of the war. They needed help in a small factory within walking distance from

our home. Later she became a clerk in a cosmetic department in a big department store, a few blocks away from where I was employed.

All this changed on day when, during an Allied Air Raid, that whole section of town, in a twinkle of an eye, disappeared.

My travel Agency was relocated to empty warehouses where we could resume our work. By the way, every afternoon, before closing time, our typewriters and records were taken to the basement for safekeeping, in case a war catastrophe would strike. It paid off. We still had our records and could go on. We never knew for how long. We lived from day to day. We saw the end coming, closer and closer.

Sometime later I was transferred to a smaller branch where a secretary was needed. I worked there until the fighting in Berlin started and everything came to an standstill.

The war raged on. We tried to live as normal a life as possible in such trying conditions. Living in the capitol, we were spared from air raids until later in the war. We enjoyed peace and quiet. Yes, we had some isolated squadrons reaching Berlin, but they caused little damage. The air raids on other cities increased considerable in 1941 and 1942.

Bur everything changed in the spring of 1943. The impact of the air raids on Berlin and the destruction they caused increased relentlessly. Whole districts, mainly in the center of the city and to the west, were burned to the ground or collapsed into rubble.

Drastic measures had to be taken to evacuate mothers, children and old people. The bombardment did not let up. Night after night, sometimes twice, the sirens went off. We got out of bed and dressed hurriedly. Mom and I, each packed down with one suitcase in each hand, then went to the air raid shelter in our basement. I want you to know that those shelters were not bomb secure. Those existed, but we hardly ever had time to reach them. When everybody was accounted for, the door was locked. We sat on makeshift benches, trembling and holding our hands over our heads and listening to the sound of high explosive bombs falling nearby. Also for protection we carried our gas mask. What a relief we felt when we heard the sirens announcing the end of the raid.

When we stepped outside and looked at the brilliant red sky, we were faced again with the grim reality of the war. The knots in our stomach got tighter with each day.

Emergency shelters and kitchens were set up after air raids and I helped wherever I was needed.

I realized that bombs were supposed to fall on military and assigned targets but because of circumstances were released at random. I changed my mind about this conception later on.

In March of 1944 for the first time bombs were dropped on Berlin in day light by heavy American bombers. The war in the air reached a new phase. The capital was under almost continuous bombardment. We Berliners got a taste of what was in store for us from then on. Heaps of brick and stone lay where familiar buildings once stood. Death toll ranged in the multiple thousands. Huge portions of Berlin laid in rubbles.

I was seventeen years old now and had to accept that miserable devastating life. It never entered my mind to turn to God. How much easier it would have been instead of walking alone. In this difficult situation it was remarkable that we could survive. Life went on. The police was in force, the postman delivered the mail, newspapers came out daily, telephone service continued, and garbage was collected. Theaters and cinemas had their doors open.

We still had a roof over our house. But the end was approaching faster than we had thought possible. The Allies advanced closer and closer and were not too far from Berlin. The thunder of Russian heavy artillery could be heard off and on for weeks. I started to become scared, wondering, what could happen to Mom and me when we met face-to-face with those Mongolian savages. Through our German propaganda and the refugees fleeing the Red Army coming through Berlin and continuing west, we heard what might be ahead for all of us. They left night-marich stories. The advancing front line troops were well-disciplined and behaved, but the secondary units that followed were drunken men that murdered, looted and raped. How much was fact? We average Berliners had no information about the mass murders committed by German SS troops in Russia or what was happening to Jews in concentration camps.

The repeated Allied raids day and night now were going well into the second year. We were becoming exhausted and wishing for the war to end. Statistics showed 360 raids on Berlin.

We reached the middle of March 1945 and only one month away before the first Red Army troops reached the outskirts of Berlin. It was a Saturday and a four-hour working day for me. I prepared to go to work as usual. Once getting there, the first thing we did, was to listen to the radio. We were allowed to do so, because of the serious experiences we were facing. Everything sounded peaceful but around 10.00 A.M. the announcement was made that thousands of bombers had been sighted. It was feared that the target would be Berlin. So true! The sirens went on at 10.30 A.M.

Fate must have been with me and my co-workers that crucial day and also with Mom, who was at home. All of us went to a bomb-secure air raid shelter. It was a distance to the shelter and I remember all of us running, our hearts pounding, so frightened. We could hear bombs exploring far away.

That air raid seemed to last forever. It was the longest one Berlin had experienced so far.

Finally the sirens began wailing the "All Clear"!.

We went back to our office. Nothing in our immediate area had happened. Our building had suffered only superficial damage, not serious enough thatit could not be straightened out in time. It was almost noon by that time and we were told to go home.

A short distance away you could see fires burning and clouds of smoke miles high. As I started out I became very disillusioned when I arrived at the subway station. We were told that there was no subway or elevated railway functioning in Berlin.

HOW COULD SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPEN IN THE FOURTH LARGEST CITY IN EUROPE WITH 4¼ MILLION INHABITANTS?

I started to walk. I didn't have to walk far before I saw the destruction. We lived about five miles from my place of work. I walked for a while, and my eyes could not believe what they were seeing. Was I seeing right? I passed city block after city block; nothing was there only rubbles and isolated walls standing and fires burning every where. How many square miles were wiped out? How many

innocent people were killed? Now I grew frantic. What will I find when I reach home? Where will Mom be? Will she be alive? I felt so alone. The people I met looked dazed and were crying.



As you see in these pictures, this was the scenery I encountered for five miles. Both explosive and fire bombs were unloaded that tragic day.

As I drew closer and closer to our home, I thought to myself it would be a miracle if our house would be standing tall and erect. I knew deep down that the slightest flicker of hope was even impossible.

Now I was only one city block away from home. Walking was

very difficult over the rubbles, besides watching for burning de-



bris falling down. What I was about to see was a nightmare! Evidently people just a few houses from us were not able to reach safety and their charred shrunken bodies were lying pitifully on top of the ruins. I stood motionless for a while and then kept on walking. Only a few more feet left; and as I turned the corner and looked up, I had to face the grim reality of war. Our apartment house had vanished, where only a few hours earlier, I had spent the night. I remember speaking out loudly some unkind words how Hitler brought us Germans into this terrible situation. Here I was, barely eighteen years of age, living by now in war for about six years; Dad missing in action in Russia, my brother a P.O.W. in America, and all I had to my name were the clothes I was wearing. I started to cry. For the first time in my life I felt helpless. Where was my Mom? Is she buried underneath the rubbles? Will I be able to find her? Is she still alive? Mom was all I had left!

I must have stood there appearing completely helpless, when I noticed an elderly man walking towards me. I guess he came out of curiosity. He noticed I needed some kind of help and I told him what all had happened so far. He took me under his wings for the next twelve hours. I was forever thankful to have somebody at my side in this hour of need.

I knew, from the looks of our apartment house, that if Mom would have stayed in the house shelter, she would not have survived. As I mentioned before, fate was with her too. When the sirens went on that tragic day, she too decided to go to a public secure bomb shelter. God must have known we needed each other.

Before I left I carved a note on the remaining standing wall with these words:

I am alive Dorchen

This was to inform our relatives or friends when they came looking for us. I also hoped that if Mom should return, she also would see the note.

All what you have been reading so far may sound like a movie script to you. It is not fiction. It actually happened and, believe you me, I had a hard time believing that myself, that a human being could endure so much. That day, I thought I was one of the only people left on this earth. What would be going on in your minds, when all you could see was rubble around you, fires burning everywhere, and just a few people here and there.

That nice man stayed with me and suggested that we should go to the nearest subway station, a few minutes from my home, and take refuge since night was approaching. When we arrived there, we noticed a train was standing there, but it could't go anywhere without electricity. We stayed there a while but preferred to leave, when they started bringing in all the dead bodies from around the vicinity. and placing them in the corner of the train where we were seated.

We had some daylight left so we walked a few more miles until we reached Alexanderplatz. There, we two went to the subway station. Since this was the subway hub of Berlin, we figured this would be the meeting place and refuge for the many thousands and thousands bombed out people in this area. When we arrived there,

it must have been around 7.00 P.M., I finally got my first meal that day. The Red Cross was all set up for us. I met people I knew and asked if anyone had seen my Mom. They all shook their heads.

Knowing that I wasn't alone anymore, that nice man said good-by to me. I thought of him often and was so grateful that he stood by me when I needed somebody to lean on.

After spending the night, we all received breakfast and I had to decide what to do. What step should I take to find Mom? I had no grandparents where she would go to find refuge. Then it hit me. Of course she would try to reach her cousin, my "aunt" Agnes.

The electric train system still did not run. I started out on foot. I walked and walked. You have to visualize how I must have looked by then. It was early in the afternoon now. My shoes, they had heels, were torn to shreds walking on rubble all the time. My clothes and hair were saturated with the smell of smoke from the burning city.

After hours of walking I finally reached my aunt's apartment house - what was left of it. Come to find out they too lost everything the day before. I found a message, left behind on the wall, informing anyone where they found refuge.

When I arrived there, I was greeted with tears of joy by my aunt and uncle. They took me into a blanket-divided room in a warehouse basement where I found my Mom sleeping after thirty six hours of physical exertion and anguish. Mom heard my voice and was overcome with emotion seeing me alive and well. I also fell into an exhausting sleep.

The following morning we faced the grim reality. We were homeless, no clothes to wear, our belongings, including pictures and memoirs were destroyed, nothing we could call our own.

The coming day we went to tell the authorities that we had been bombed out on Saturday. They took over. We happened to know that there was an apartment empty where Mom's aunt Anna and cousin Doris lived in west Berlin, two miles from where we found refuge a few days before. That apartment was assigned to us.

Mom's aunt and cousin were of great help to us. The government

allowed us to buy two changes of clothes, some dishes and what we needed to set up housekeeping. The apartment was furnished, including bedding and so on. The family who owned all of that had fled Berlin sometime before. We heard that they were high ranking NAZIE officials.

Some days later after we were settled, I went back to work. My co-workers in the meantime collected clothe for me. That was very much appreciated. My Mom's aunt, who was a seamstress, added some more to our wardrobe.

The days went by. They were numbered now. Our hopes were fading wishing for the Allies to get to Berlin ahead of the Red Army.

The first Red Army troops reached the outskirts of Berlin in the middle of April. Twelve days of bitter fighting followed, often street for street and block for block. The Red Army broke into Berlin from the east and also pushed in from the south. We were living in the west of Berlin. By the time the fighting drew clocer to us, about one mile, the war was over.

On May 2nd, 1945, Berlin, greatest city of the European Continent, capitulated to the Russians after twelve days of deadly fighting. Europe's fourth largest city, with a population of 4½ millions, lay in ruins. The futile defence of Berlin cost the city around 350,000 more casualties. The dreadful suffering of the civilian population and wounded should have been stopped sooner.

I will now go into more details about what went on in those twelve days after the Red Army pushed into Berlin and the weeks following the war.

Berlin was completely cut off. Factories, shops, offices, grocery stores were closing. Streetcars had ceased to run and also the subway. Garbage was no longer being collected and the mail could not be delivered. Electricity stopped, making it impossible even to get water. Gas was also turned off until the battle was over.

After eight days of fighting, the Russians had closed in on the center of the city. We heard that desperate battles were being fought in the last two days along the edge of Charlottenburg about two miles from where we lived. Because of the shelling; we were

afraid to go out. Many were injured when standing in line for water. We, too, had to venture out and the shrapnel from artillery fire were flying around us and at one time almost target me. I jumped back in time and a shrapnel, four inches in diameter, landed in front of my feet. I kept it for a long time and then must have found of no importance to me in that time of my life.

In the early days when the fighting started, we had to figure out how to get food. We did what we thought was right to survive in a situation like this. We raided stores and helped ourselves.

As I told you before, Mom's aunt and cousin lived in the same apartment complex, so we decided we would move in with them. We chose their place because they lived on the fifth floor. We thought the higher we were are the safer it would be for us. The fear of sexual attack loomed over us.

The time had come now to barricade our apartment door. We piled furniture and heavy objects against our apartment door, hoping it would discourage any Russian Mongolian Savage from trying to enter. The courage we showed to figure out how to get through this time without ending up with the short end was amazing. We were frightened to death by now. The time had come for us. What would it bring? (You hang in there and I fill you in on the happenings.) If all these things would happen now-a-days, the stress and tension would put you in to depression, anti-depressants would be prescribed and maybe therapy. Many suicides were recorded in Berlin, most of them were women. On the other hand, the six years of war had hardened most of us and had made us survivors.

On the 2nd of May the Germans asked for a cease-fire. Later that day powerful loudspeakers all over the city announced the end of the hostilities.

We stepped out of our apartment buildings. The streets were quiet, trees were blooming, the sun was shining and spring had made its appearance. The street were littered with dead civilians, soldiers and horses. People were so hungry that they started carving up horses. My Mom, aunt, cousin and myself, armed with knives, wanted to do likewise, but we went home empty-handed. We could go hungry a little while longer.

As I mentioned before, we lived in a big apartment complex with individual courtyards in the middle. About two days after the war ended, it was noon time, we heard a commotion below and we could not believe what our eyes were seeing. Mongolian Russian Soldiers with horses and wagons were setting up tents below. Our house doors were of tremendous size, which made it possible for them to make an entrance.

Now Mom put me under house arrest. We women were all in danger, but, we were very fortunate. Some of those soldiers come up to the fourth floor where some old people lived. They knocked on their door and most likely were disappointed what they saw. When they were told only real old people lived above on the fifth floor, the soldiers believed them. Our belief that the higher we were the safer it would be for us paid off. All four of us escaped sexual attacks. Many unfortunate women in our apartment complex could not say that about themselves.

In the coming days we must have received some more instruction over the loudspeaker. I remember that we were told to bring our telephones to a certain place. Of course, in order to do so, we had to cut the electric wires. We could not figure out why. Most of those Red Army troops appeared never to have been in civilization before. They had the impression that if they took the phones home, they could be made to work anywhere. They also unscrewed light bulbs and carefully packed them. Water faucets were taken out of the walls for the same reason. Bathroom plumbing was a mystery to most of them and they sometimes used toilets to wash potatoes.

When the Russian soldiers with their horses and wagons pulled out, it was safe for Mom and me to move back into our apartment.

When the fighting stopped in Berlin, the trouble for us Berliners was far from over. There remained the immense task of reconstruction, a job to be done by those who started the shooting. Even before the Allied Occupation Troops entered the city, the Russians put the Berliners to work.

I didn't have to help shovel the vast ruins of Berlin but had to be at a certain corner every morning and we were taken with others

to a nearby factory. There we boxed up whatever the factory had manufactured, destination Russia. In return we received a hot meal.

In time we were given ration cards and at least we did not go hungry to bed anymore. For a spread on our bread we made a paste of flour and water.

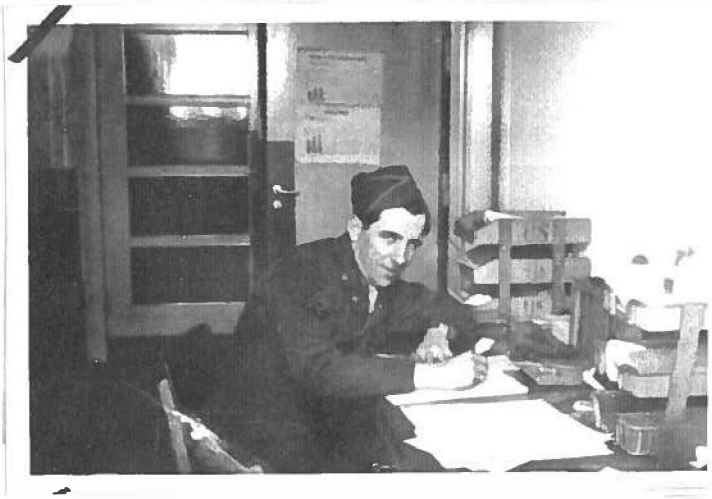
When Mom thought it was safe for me to venture out alone, she agreed to let me go and find out how her brother and family were doing. Since walking was very difficult, it took a couple of hours to reach their place. I was so happy that I found them all well. They showered me with food. Of course I wasn't able to carry much because I still had to walk back. My Uncle WILHELM was anti-Nazi, so when the Russians came into Berlin, it didn't take him long to qualify to get on the police force and naturally they were privileged in buying more food.

About two weeks after the war was over, Mom and I went to my former place of employment to find out if there was a chance for me to get my job back. All of the travel agency were destroyed except one. The ones with more seniority were the lucky ones.

Jobs were not plenty full in the first six months after capitulation. We hung in there and waited.

I told you before that I visited my girl friend in the American Occupied Sector one July summer weekend. There I met your Dad and a turning point in my life began.

Dad was stationed in Berlin-Tempelhof where he worked in an office awaiting to be assigned to his occupation post. While there, he needed an office helper, and, of course, I was fortunate to get that job.



Finally he was sent to "ZEHLENDORF", a suburb of Berlin, to be in charge of senior officer's homes. They were

owned by Germans and had to be evacuated by them for the duration of the occupation. Dad needed assistance there too, so I could keep my job.

He was in charge of those houses and supervised the work of 120 maids and 10 German laborers and was responsible for the general care of the officers' quarters.

His knowledge of speaking the German language made his job much easier.

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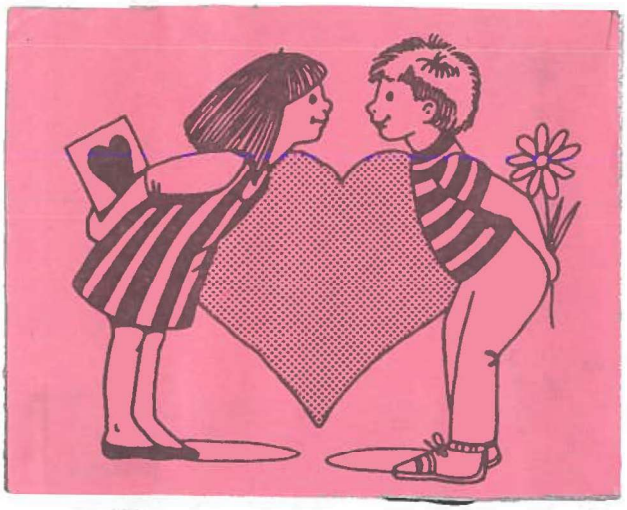
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6808 Sharon Drive
Des Moines, Iowa 50322

H O W I M E T Y O U R D A D

AND

C O U R T S H I P Y E A R S



As I look back to that sunny Sunday afternoon in July 1945, I am wondering if I sensed that something different was in store for me.

A whole new world opened up for me. World War II had ended six weeks before, and law and order returned to Berlin. The Russians occupied Berlin in the beginning. Then the city was divided between the four Allies into four sectors, American, English, French and Russians.

Mom and I lived in the English sector. My girlfriend, who lived in the American occupied sector of Berlin, invited me to visit her for one weekend. A big turning point in my life began. I was eighteen years old, had grown up in a hurry, and had never experienced the care-free youthful life like you children have.

My girlfriend and I decided to go to the park to enjoy the sun and beautiful summer day. We were sitting on a bench when two G.I.s were approaching. One of them was tall, dark-haired, handsome and he started talking German. What I didn't know until later was that your Dad had wanted to talk to my girlfriend since he remembered that his Dad had warned him about the red-heads and girls with brown eyes. Nevertheless, he must have disregarded the warnings and Dad started a conversation with me, noticing I could't talk much English. My girlfriend conversed with Dad's buddy. That day our friendship began and eventually blossomed into more than that.

I wanted Dad to meet your grandmother, so I gave him directior

how to use our public transportation. Every major street had its bus line, streetcars or U-Bahn (Underground Subway). Once you paid the fare, you could freely transfer and move across the whole city. The elevated electric train system took you across the city outwards from the loop. This was a new adventure in your Dad's life since he was brought up in Iowa and Minnesota on a farm and never got close to a big city. The ability of speaking the language in the country he was staying made everything easier for him. Grandmother and your Dad hit it off instantly. It didn't take long before he called her Muttie.

Dad's base was located about fourteen miles from where I lived and it took fourty five minutes or longer for the train to get to our place. This was not fast enough for Dad, so he purchased a bicycle and cut down on travel time.

We lived in a big apartment complex with individual courtyards in the middle. He parked his bicycle when he got to our place, whistled a certain tune for me to announce his arrival and in no time climbed the four flights of stairs, three steps at a time. When I opened the door for him, there he stood with his big famous grin on his face.

We were inseparable. Your Dad came every evening and he also supplied us with luxury food from the PX or bought it at the Black Market by selling his cigarettes to the Germans for money.

Our friendship continued and the following year, Dad had a furlough coming and had a chance to visit Switzerland. I encouraged him to go, thinking he might never have the opportunity again. While there, he decided to visit a jewelry store where he purchased our wedding rings.

On our first evening together after his return to Berlin, your Dad asked me to marry him. I said, "YES". We became engaged shortly afterwards. We were aware at that time that it was forbidden for Americans to marry German women. So we waited and were confident that the time would come when the restrictions would be taken off and we could go ahead with our marriages plans. It did happen, sooner than we expected. The RED TAPE" to get my papers in order, took a long time, since I had been a member in the HITLE

YOUTH PARTY.

Your Dad was scheduled to be sent home in November of 1947 and we were saddened when told that my papers were not ready for us to get married. Dad had to go back to the States without me.]n the spring of 1948 I was cleared and allowed to go to America to join your Dad.

We had 2½ wonderful courtship years together. I introduced him to our culture and the way I was brought up in a big city. He enjoyed himself. We took your grandmother along as often as possible. We attended theaters to see operas and operettas. We visit historical museums and memorials, botanical center and zoo. In the evening we took time out to go to a cozy club to dance to our favorite music.

THESE YEARS ARE CHERISHED BY BOTH OF US.
WE WERE YOUNG, CAREFREE AND SO IN LOVE.









P O S T W A R Y E A R S

MAY 1945 THROUGH JUNE 1948

For two months after the capitulation May 2nd 1945 the control of our city Berlin was entirely in the hands of the Soviet Administration and the Communist Party.

Life wa at a stand still. All our food provisions were destroyed in the bitter fighting in our city and the Russians were responsible for the feeding of 3½ million people. They did take care of us and opened up the most important offices, hospitals and a new administration. Berlin was physically shattered and the population was undernourished and epidemic-ridden.

Berlin was a heep of burning rubble. Immediately the Russians put the Germans to work. The Berliners, in exchange for ration cards, worked willingly. We didn't get much, but we got by. Life returned to somewhat bearable conditions in the following weeks.

To start with, there was neither electricity nor water. Having no power was especially bad, because we were unable to get news. We had no idea what was going on. There wasn't any kind of newspaper going to press either. What we most wanted to know was:

WHERE ARE THE WESTERN POWERS?
ARE THEY COMING TO BERLIN OR NOT?

The task that lay ahead of us Germans was some what scary. Everything had to be rebuilt and the whole town of Berlin reconstructed from scratch. Debris had to be cleared, destroyed factories and homes rebuilt, and work found for the refugees and all the soldiers on returning home. Comments were made that Germany would never recover. But it illustrated again, that the German miracle was mainly the fruit of the courage and the relentless effort of people who calmly returned to work. After all, we Germans are known as industrious. The world knew that and helped to bring Germany on its feet again. Knowing the eyes of the world were on them they were striving even harder to gain respect.

All banks were closed. As I remember, we were given an amount

of money the first few months. Mom had some cash at home, which got us by for a while.

We finally heard rumors that the Allies were coming to West Berlin. Though the electricity was restored after a few weeks, we could listen only to what the Communist Press Party wanted us to hear.

Then in the beginning of July everything changed. Where we lived we started seeing English soldiers walking in the street and slowly the Russians disappeared. Finally the Americans, English and French occupied their assigned sectors.

Now we were able to think about the future again. It was much easier for us junger people, but for your grandmother, you can imagine, it was very difficult. She not only lost all her belongings, but also hope for your grandfather ever returning home from the war. In addition my brother was a P.O.W.

One day there was a knock at the door and a friend of mine, who was living in the American Occupied Sector of Berlin with her sister and children, visited us and was glad to see us both well. She invited me to come to visit her that following weekend for a couple of days. How excited I must have felt after months and months living under depressed and almost impossible circumstances.

I started out early that Saturday morning, full of enthusiasm. The sun was shining brightly and my heart felt happy.

My destination was a western suburb of Berlin which the war left untouched. The trees stood tall and green, all the houses were intact, almost unbelievable to my eyes.

In the afternoon we decided to take a stroll through the park. Later on we sat down on a park bench and you all know the

"REST OF THE STORY".

That was the day I met your Dad.

Everything got better for Mom and myself. Dad provided luxury items from the P.X. The other necessities, which we didn't receive with our ration cards, were exchanged with cigarettes at the Black Market.

I will have to mention this: Dad corresponded with several Amer-

ican girls during the war and they sent him parcels with goodies. I asked Dad to write these girls that they wouldn't have to send him anything any more, and at the same time tell them it would be appropriate to stop corresponding with each other, since his interest had changed.

When your Dad's family at home heard that he was dating a German girl, they started sending packages with sweets and clothes.

For the Berliners the first post-war winter was cold and many went to bed with their stomachs not too satisfied. But at least the war was over and we all could start thinking of better days to come.

Mom and I were waiting with anticipation if we would hear anything about my Dad's whereabouts. Prisoners of War drifted slowly back to Berlin. You could tell by their appearance where they had been held. If they had come from Russian prison camps, they were in rags, while soldiers released from England sported new uniforms.

As I told you before, we did get the offical telegram that your grandfather was missing in action.

We decided to put in an advertisement in the paper asking if any of the returning soldiers could tell us something about Dad's outfit. We gave the area where we assumed Dad was captured.

We didn't have to wait very long. A few later there was news for us but, unfortunately, not what we had expected. A uniformed Soldier came to us and during our conversation and the answers he gave, we noticed, to our disappointment, that we had fallen into the hands of a swindler. When we told him we did not believe him, he got up and started running towards the door and quickly disappeared.

It was Saturday afternoon and your Dad was with us. Both of us decided to run after him. Your grandmother felt so let-down during this interrogation that we felt we should tell him not to do this again and give loved ones wrong hope. We persuaded him for ½ mile and the poor soldier couldn't go any farther. He stopped and we finally caught up with him. He told us he was so hungry and desperate. We felt very sorry for him and made him promise us not to do this again. Your Dad gave him money to get by for a little while.

Mom remembered her cousin, whose husband was in the same outfit as your grandfather. After finally locating her, being bombed out too, she told us that she had been notified that her husband had been killed in action. She was very doubtful that your Grandfather could have been still alive since the whole regiment was wiped out or taken prisoner and sent to labor camps in Siberia. We all knew what that meant. There was no return. Death would be inevitable. Dad had told us that he would never let himself be taking prisoner by the Russians. The last bullet would be for him.

My brother's letters arrived regular from Greeley, Colorado, where he was in a P.O.W. prison camp. He was treated well and the food was excellent. This picture of him was taken in 1946. He looked as though he was well taken care off. Most of the German soldiers helped farmers to prepare the fields for planting and later harvesting.



Early in 1947 he was shipped to England where he served ten more month as a P.O.W. Christmas 1947 your grandmother and I rereived a special Christmas present. My brother was given a release and finally, at the age of twenty three, was a free man again.

I told you a little in one of my previous stories how we spent our leisure time the 2½ years in Berlin after I met your Dad and before I went to America. Of course I had my job during the day helping your Dad in the office.

It didn't take too long for the entertainment world to start up again. In the first year after the war, mainly the theaters and opera houses were allowed to open. The film industry had to find competent German operators, artists and technicians who were not Nazis. In the meantime they asked the U.S. movie industry to send movies suitable for German audiences. They were synchronized and many movie theaters were able to open their doors. The French and

British were doing likewise with their films.

On weekends your Dad, grandmother and myself attended many cultural entertainments which were part of my life from early childhood.

We kept company with a small group, especially a German couple. We attended private parties or Dad and I would go to a little club, just a skip around the corner from where we lived, and danced the night away.

We also enjoyed the nature Berlin had to offer. It was everywhere. We went on hikes in our beloved forest. Several times a year we visited the Botanical Gardens with native and exotic plants and trees from all over the world. Our Zoo and Aquarium, the biggest one in Europe, was of much interest too.



The following year after the war, when the first rays of sunshine in March appeared, chairs began to appear on cafe terraces and there they remained until September, sheltered beneath colorful awnings or behind flower boxes. This was another step of progress for our war-torn country. Things began to shape up and looked better which each new day.

The black market flourished. Your Dad was able to buy most everything to fill our needs.

When Dad returned from Switzerland, where he was on retreat, he purchased our rings and asked me to marry him. I decided then it was time for me to concentrate earnestly on learning the American language. I looked for a teacher and found the reading and writing were very easy for me, but speaking it was a little bit of a problem. Dad and I spoke German while he was in Germany and after coming to America, we still conversed in German. It was not until you, Krista, arrived that we decided that we should talk English from then on. Something came into my mind a while back that you will find interesting to hear. As you know, Dad took care of senior officer's quarters and supervised domestic help while in the Army of Occupation. He was befriended by one of the housekeepers and, come to find out, it was



Marlene Dietrichs

house, the famous German movie star, which she had to abandon hurriedly, fleeing the Nazi Regime. She left a friend in charge of her house in her absence. She eventually felt so grateful that she could remain in that house and be a housekeeper for the officers who were assigned there that she gave Dad one of Marlene Dietrichs fur coats for me to wear and a pair of knee-high leather boots, with part fur on the sides. How elegant I looked, never dreaming I would own a

coat like that. Our winters were cool and raw and we did a lot of walking in the city, so it gave me real comfort. She also gave me a wool scarf, which I later used on all you children as a wrap around your neck when you had a sore throat.

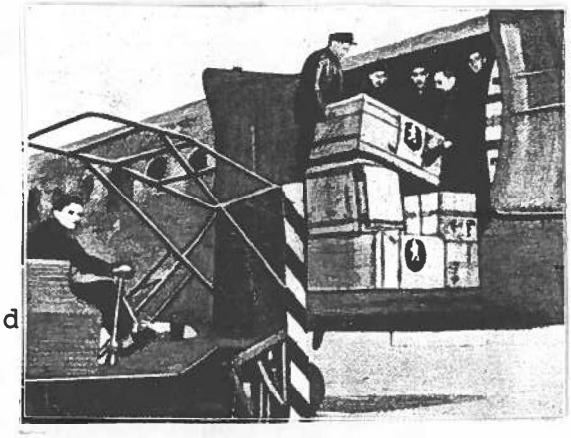
Several month before my departure for America in April, 1948, the Soviets tried to force the Western Allies to evacuate Berlin and to starve the city's western population of over two millions. They demanded to control the allied traffic between Berlin and western zones. The Soviet Administration announced the closing of the railroad and highway which gave the Allies access to the island city, 100 miles behind the Iron Curtain.



Around the same time the introduction of the "WEST MARK" began in the "WEST SECTOR OF BERLIN" therefore the Soviets immediately inflicted the

"BLOCKADE ON BERLIN".

AIRLIFT COMMERCE OUTWARD BOUND



The Air Lift began June 26th, 1948 and the Soviets imposed the Blockade, which lasted almost eleven months and affected the life of every Berliner.

After we were married and started our life here together in America, money was tight, but we shared with your grandmother and Uncle Ernst. and supported them with the most essential food items. Every month we filled two big boxes and kept this up for several years.

M Y F I R S T W E E K I N A M E R I C A

A whole new world opened up for me when I left my homeland. After a tearful goodby with my Mom and Brother, I boarded the plane on June 26th, 1948, destination New York. I was happy, finally, to be reunited with your dad and get married soon. The courage you show at a younger age, leaving your loved ones behind, is amazing. But I found out a little later that the homesickness will hit you, almost impossible to bear, but gradually will subside when you hold your firstborn in your arms.



We had a smooth flight. After arriving in New York, I had to change planes. Dad was waiting for me in Minneapolis, Minnesota. But there was an unforeseen change in plans for me. Thinking back, I don't know how I handled all that was ahead of me.

Your Dad had to set bond of $500.00 upon my departure in case we would decide not to get married, thus my trip back to Germany would be secured. Upon my arrival, we learned that the document acknowledging payment could nowhere be found at the immigration office. The officials immediately got in contact with the office concerned, but were told that it could maybe take up to twenty four hours to straighten out this mixup. So there I was, an immigrant at the New York Airport, very frightened, wondering what would happen to me in the meantime.

Are you still there? Wait until you hear about this! I had an interesting little adventure ahead of me. They summoned a police officer who was to escort me to "ELLIS ISLAND". My English wasn't too good at that time, so I felt more at ease having a German-speaking officer beside me. He assured me that it was not uncommon to spent a day a"ELLIS ISLAND" when papers were not in order. After all, it is the country's major federal immigration facility. Within a few minutes after boarding the ferry, we reached the island and the officer handed me over to the people in charge there.

A friendly employee took me to my quarters where I was to spend the night. I vividly remember a large room full of bunk beds. She pointed out to me where I would find shower facilities and where I had to go for meals. Supper time came around and we had a scrumptious meal.

After a good night's rest I had breakfast. Shortly before noon I was told that everything seemed to be in order and that I could go on with my journey, hopefully not to another adventure.

The ferry took me back to land, and a cab driver was waiting for me to take me to the airport for my flight to Minneapolis. He took me the long way around, I figured. A thought struck me. How would I pay him? I had no American money on me. When we reached the airport, the taxi meter showed $25.00. I told the cab driver about my dilemma. By the way, he also spoke German. I told him that I had $ 15.00 worth of stamps on me. He accepted them and I promised him I would send the rest of the money. It was a very embarrassing situation, but who could predict that all these episodes would happen to me.

Finally boarding time came, and I was so happy that in a few hours I would be reunited with your Dad. I didnt' know until later how much he knew about all my problems. The officials had been in contact with Dad by phone. When the plane landed in Minneapolis, there he was with his famous big grin on his face and open arms, so happy that we finally were together.

By that time, it was very late at night. I was so tired and was glad to hear that we didn't have far to drive. He had stayed with his cousin Elmer and family in St.Paul, Minnesota since the day before. Elmer also came to the airport to meet me. When we arrived at their house, I received a friendly greeting from his wife. She noticed how tired I was and suggested that I go right to bed. I fell asleep instantly, relieved that I was reunited with your Dad and everything would be all right.

In the morning at breakfast I met their two children. After they were off to school, Dad and I made plans about our wedding arrangement. We decided to get married right away and not wait until we got back to his brother John's house, 150 miles away. He had

been staying there, waiting for my arrival from Germany and helping his brother John with his farm work. Since I could't have any of my family members attending the wedding, it was best to go that direction.

His cousin Elmer and wife were of help to find us a doctor who gave us our blood test. Then we went to the courthouse, where we obtained our marriage permit. Their friend, a Justice of Peace, performed the marriage ceremony at Dad's cousin's house the next evening, June 3oth, 1948. Elmer's wife baked us a wedding cake, made sandwiches, salad, coffee and punch and we celebrated. Very simple but meaningful. As I am writing this, we celebrated this year our 46th wedding anniversary.

The next morning we said goodby to those wonderful people, who went out of their way to make all the special arrangements for our special day.

At last we were on our honeymoon which involved driving a distance of 150 miles. We called brother John to announce our arrival. Elmer took us to the bus depot, destination Mt.Lake, Minnesota, where Dad's brother John was waiting for us. We intended to stay there one week or so, before we started our journey to Portland, Oregon. Dad had a job waiting for him there as a bricklayer with his brother-in-law's construction company.

Arriving in Mountain Lake, I received a warm welcome from brother John. I could hardly wait to get to their house to meet my sister-in-law and their children, Joyce and Lou Ann, whom I learned to know real well through correspondence which began while Dad and I were still in Germany. John and Lucille will always have a special place in our hearts. We were saddened by her unexpected death many years ago.

When I helped setting the table for my first meal at their house, I thought to myself, "Wow", what delicious food she has prepared just for me. By the time the next meal came around, the table was loaded again. Meat every day, vegetable, potatoes, bread, pickles and pie for dessert. Five meals a day. It didn't take me long to get uses to this eating habit.

The worst thing I had to adjust to was the terrible heat and

humidity. The temperature stayed around 100 degrees for a long time. I still was very tired, not recovered from the jet lag and not used to going to bed later than 8.30 - 9.00 PM.

Lucille gave us a wedding shower that first weekend. That was a good opportunity to meet Dad's brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, friends and neighbors. Dad's parents had died many years before. I felt sad I would never be able to learn to know them and also for later in life, when we had children. They would not experience the love and understanding you get from grandparents. I did have my Mom, but living so far away, she was not able to come for a visit very often. Dad's brother Elmer and wife Hulda invited us to come to their house before we left for Portland, Oregon. After a couple of enjoyable days with them and their children, it was time for us to start our journey out west. They took us to "WILMER" to the train depot. Now we were on our way to start our life as husband and wife, and we were overjoyed when, about a year later, a sweet little baby girl was put in our arms.

M Y P A R E N T S

I would like to tell you a little more about my parents. I left my homeland when I was twenty-one years old. My close contact with them was short lived, except for visit and correspondence.

Mom was a gentle and quit lady. She never raised her voice. No wonder Mom was in shock when I talked back to her and she had to punish me by slapping my mouth. I had to learn to keep myself in control and I am pretty sure I was trying. I rerember only one spanking performed by my Dad.

My brother was a model. He never talked back, always did what he was supposed to do. I remember Mom asking me, once in a while, why I couldn't be like him. That hurt me deeply. I made a promise to myself that when I had children, never would I compare one child with the other, always remembering that little scar left in my heart.

I loved my Mom very much. That didn't change my feeling for her. Already when I was young, I must have had a soft and forgiving heart.

Mom was home raising us children. Naturally we were a close-knit family, especially after my Dad was missing in action and my brother was taken prisoner by the Americans and shipped to U.S.A.



I never saw very much of Dad in my growing up years, because of his job. But whenever we did things together as a family, we had fun. I was twelve years old when Dad was drafted into WW II. After that I got to see him a few times a year when he was given a furlough. I do remember one summer, during the year of 1942.

Dad was taking care of French prisoners in the southeast part of Germany. Mom and I went to visit him for one week. The following year he was given a furlough and we traveled by train to Pommerania to visit his Dad's family who were farmers. That same year, 1943, he came home for a few days to say goodby to us. His regiment was sent to Russia. I believe that he knew, deep down, that he would never return to us. I was old enough to realize, too, that our beloved fatherland, led by a ruthless dictator, soon would be taken over by the enemy.



To get back to Mom once more. She recalled an event which was told to her by your great grandmother. It intrigued me tremendously so that I reminisced about it with your Grandmother every once in a while. Mom and her sister, Aunt Erna, (their brother, Uncle Wilhelm, was no born yet) were taken by their nanny to the park for their daily outing. The park surrounded the Royal Castle in Berlin-Charlottenburg. Mom and her sister were busy picking flowers and Mom had enough to make a little bouquet. Along came the Empress, wife of Emperor Wilhelm II, on horseback. She bent down to Mom, asking her if she could have the flowers. Mom handed them over to her Majesty. Mom, with her curly black hair, and her sister, with red hair, dressed in white cotton-laced dresses, looked like little princesses, too, I thought.

M Y B R O T H E R E R N S T

As I mentioned in my Foreword, I have one brother. He is two years older than I. Being a few years my senior, he recalled things from our childhood years which have been of help to me. He told me some of his remembrances, so I will try to set back the time again and tell you about our growing-up years together.

We were born into a world economy crisis, plus inflation, which followed World War I. High unemployment was everywhere. To make matters worse, people from the country flocked to the cities. That resulted in more unemployment and also housing shortage.

My brother was aware of that and old enough to understand. Each week he went along with our Dad to the labor office to receive unemployment benefits. The German people seemed to be whipped and acknowledged Hitler as their savior, not knowing what would lie ahead in years to come.

In spite of it all, we had a good childhood, thanks to our parents who made that possible.

For Christmas and birthdays we were richly blessed with presents from our well-to-do grandparents and my Godmother Aunt Irma.

I remember one of my brother's presents very well. It was a fortress. It was staffed, of course, appropriate to the time, with soldiers, Nazi orchestra, first aid station, torch bearers and a replica of "ADOLF HITLER" and "HERMAN GÖRING". I played with my doll house and dolls. Together we had a miniature candy store. Every once in a while Mom bought candy, so we could play store. We weighed out the candy with small little scales. We made tents with blankets and played house. We also had a rocking horse as big as a pony with real fur, which at one time belonged to Uncle Wilhelm, Mom's brother. Round games was a favorite passtime for us with grandfather and Mom taking part.

I remember one time Grandfather, Ernst and myself sitting in his room and talking about money. I asked my brother the question, "Why can't we just print some more money, so we are not so poor?" Ernst must have answered it intelligently to satisfy my inexperience.

In winter, when there was enough snow on the ground, we both went sledding. A nearby park with a big hill offered us the thrilling adventure we had been waiting for. We pulled our sled up the hill and screaming with delight, down the hill we went.

As we grew older our activities led us into separate directions because of age and sex differences. Ernst had his friends and I had mine. I do remember, though, how thrilled I was when I was noticed by them.

When I was fifteen years old, my brother enlisted in the marines, but served on land. He took his basic training in "EMDEN" and was sent to Belgium for further training.

Once during that time, Ernst came home on furlough. He brought me a gift, it was an aquamarine ring, which he purchased in Paris. I still have that ring in my possession.

When the Invasion of France began in June 1944, Ernst was stationed in the "BRETAGE" region as a "RADOR OPERATOR". He was captured in August 1944, taken to England, and immediately shipped to America.

M Y M A T E R N A L G R A N D P A R E N T S

I don't remember much about my Grandfather Nack, your grandmother's father, but there are highlights that are still vivid in my mind. My grandmother died before I was born.

My grandparents owned a hotel and restaurant, the "KAISER FRIEDRICH ZELT".



It was located 500 feet from the Charlottenburger Castle in Berlin, where the "EMPEROR WILHELM THE II" resided from around 1903 untill the beginning of WW I in 19 4. Grandfather sold this establishment and purchased two others before he retired.

My grandmother died in 1924 after a lenghthy illness, shortly after my brother was born. Grandmother hurried my parents marriage along, because she wanted them to be settled, since she knew that her end was near. She had tuberculosis and at that time that illness was almost always fatal. Grand father, of well means, sent her to the best sanitariums, but they did not heal her, only prolonged her life.

Two years later grandfather married again. My stepgrandmother was very dear to me and she also treated my Mom as a real daughter, so that they became close. She had been married prior to this mar-

riage and had a grown daughter. That daughter, my "AUNT IRMA", was my sponsor at my baptism. I will tell you more about her later in my memoirs.

Birthdays celebrations plus first Christmas Day, which we spent at my grandparent's house, were very special for my brother and me. When we arrived at their apartment house, an elevator took us up to the fourth floor. When we rang the door bell, a maid answered the door. Her name was "TRUDCHEN". She took our wraps and ushered us into the parlor, where we were greeted by our grandparents. My brother, of course, had to bow and I had to curtsy. There was very little touching. We didn't know any difference. We knew they loved us, but we had to show respect rather than affection at all times. We answered when we were talked to and we had better not display any rowdy behavior.

Grandfather resembled Chancellor "BISMARK", with his snow white hair and mustache. He looked distinguished.

It would be very difficult to describe all the food that was put on the table. It was impossible to taste everything.

I will never forget their Christmas tree, standing tall from floor to ceiling, decorated in full splendor with sugar and chocolate candy hanging on the branches for us children to eat. I told you before, how sparsly our tree was decorated. We were never envious, we just thought all grandparents had everything.

Grandfather died in 1936 when I was nine years old. I remember my Mom going to grandfather's place every day for about two weeks to take care of him and assist grandmother in his last weeks. He had stomach cancer and nothing could be done for him anymore. Mom was very close to her Dad.

Mom had one sister and one brother. Her brother, my Uncle "WILHELM", was estranged from grandfather, because he had married, against his wishes, a woman below the family status.

Uncle "WILHELM" was my godfather. I was his favorite niece and I loved him very much. He was a funny and happy person and our two families celebrated many birthdays and get-to-gather's. Aunt "MARTHA" was very nice and we enjoyed our cousins also. Your Dad had the opportunity to see them during his stay in Berlin.

After grandfather died, grandmother moved out of her big apartment into a new row-apartment complex. She kept "TRUDCHEN" her maid.

I went to visit grandmother occasionally on weekends. Grandmother died four years later in 1940.

A U N T I R M A

Aunt Irma was my Mom's stepsister. She became my godmother when I was baptized. I will try to relate what I remember about her and what intrigued me.

My aunt came into a big inheritance when her dad died. So naturally, being her nature, she was dressed very elegantly and being I was her Godchild, she spoiled me with presents.

She married a Nazi officer in 1934, blond, tall and very handsome. The marriage took place in our "BERLINER CATHEDRAL" with Nazi honor guards standing at attention with their pointed weapons as the couple walked out of the Cathedral. I remember that Mom took me to the seamstress who made me a dress for that occasion. That green velvet dress, with a beige lace collar, is still vivid in my mind.

The marriage didn't last long. Her husband spent some of my aunt's money chasing after other women.

After my aunt married him, they lived in an elegant apartment. A little baby boy was born to them. His name was HORST. My Mom became his godmother. This must have been around 1935. So we were always invited to his birthday parties and on special holidays. This is a picture of Horst's fourth birthday with Aunt Martha, grandmother, Mom, myself, Horst and cousin Inge. My aunt bought a villa in the suburbs of Berlin in 1938. It took us an hour and a half to get to her place. It was a little adventure for us. We enjoyed riding the subway, streetcars or busses. We thought our aunt had a beautiful place. As I mentioned once before, being her godchild, I had e few privileges, and she invited me one summer to stay for a lengthy visit.



My cousin Horst had an abundance of toys. One of them was a

child-size candy store. Whoever played the storekeeper weighed out the candy with small little scales and put the candy into decorated, colorful cone-shaped bags. Eating all that was the most fun. My brother and I had a store too, but ours was a miniature model.

I don't recall seeing much of my aunt and cousin in the last two years of the war. If grandmother were still with us, she surely could help me out. I assume that they both were evacuated to a safer place in Germany to escape the constant Allied bombing air raids.

When the war was over, Mom and I were wondering if we could find their whereabouts and if her Villa was still intact. At this time your Dad was already in our midst so we both took off one Sunday morning. The subway, plus bus, took us to Frohnau by Berlin. When we got off the bus, I remembered to walk back a few hundred yards and, low and behold, her villa was still there. We rang the door bell and to my surprise, my aunt opened the door. It was a happy reunion. Life had changed her life style. She wasn't rich anymore. Money in the bank wasn't worth much after we lost the war. She also had a baby. We had never heard that she was married or what happened to the father of the child. I don't recall seeing my cousin Horst that day, but years later we heard that he had died.

My aunt came to visit us a few times in Berlin, but eventually we lost contact with each other.

over

M Y P E R S O N A L T E S T I M O N Y

While growing up as a young child in Berlin, I truly had an understanding of God. I attended Sunday school regularly and also went to Catechism at our local church.

As times elapsed my desires and interests began to change. My focus was more on the urgency that the war inflicted on my life. Towards the end of the war, just living through an Allied bombing and having enough food and water became life's priorities.

After marrying Arnold and moving to America, we started going to church occasionally after the birth of our first child. When our children were old enough, they all attended Sunday school and we attended church more regularly. However, I still had the same understanding of God. It wasn't until our children were grown that Arnold and I had an encounter with Jesus Christ. We were invited to a Christian retreat, and it was during that weekend that our lives were eternally changed.

Arnold was raised in a household that went to church regularly but, like myself, looked at Jesus as only an historical figure. We believed he existed, but we weren't trusting in Him for eternal life. We always thought that by being good neighbors and friendly people someday when we died, we would go to heaven. At that retreat they told us that our good works would not get us to heaven. It must be a gift from God, for by grace we are saved through faith. It is a gift of God, not of works. When I realized that my sin was going to separate me from spending eternity in heaven, that's when I became concerned. I began to understand that Jesus Christ died on the cross to purchase a place in heaven for me as a free gift. Arnold and I both prayed on separate weekends and invited Jesus Christ into our lives.

I am so thankful that I made it through WW II. Had I not, I would have never met my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and I would never have made it to heaven.

My prayer now is for my family and for all of you who have not planned for eternity. We all have trials in this life time. Many

of us have been able to conquer crises. We in America don't have to depend on anyone else to survive. We become very self sufficient. However, to get to heaven after our life on earth is over, we need to become very dependent on Jesus Christ. By inviting Him into your heart to live, you too will go to heaven. Jesus said that he has gone to prepare a place for us to live along side of him.

I PRAY THAT MY STORY HAS STIRRED YOUR HEART SO THAT PERHAPS YOU WOULD CONSIDER DOING THINGS THAT HAVE ETERNAL VALUE; AND IF YOU HAVEN"T ALREADY ACCEPTED JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR, THAT YOU WOULD CONSIDER DOING SO.

Over

E P I L O G U E

There are many memories in a person's lifetime so it is fascinating to record them for families to read: where their fathers, mothers and grandparents had come from at one time, plus the hardships and pleasures in life they had experienced.

Has my "PERSONAL LIFE STORY" interested you? I tried to put vitality, humor and tenderness in my writing to hold your attention. I was often confronted with the worst that a difficult life had to offer but attempted to make the best of it. I do look back with enjoyment on my childhood and teen up years. I will never forget them.

I loved my family very much and the country I left behind but I am also proud to be a citizen of the

"GREATEST COUNTRY ON EARTH".

May it ever be the land of freedom and opportunities.

As I said in the FOREWORD of my book, many of the experiences of my life in Germany were put out of my mind once I came to America. Homesickness got the best of me the first year. Slowly I became contend and adjusted and loved my new country. Fortunately your Dad was a doting and caring husband and father in raising you wonderful children.

I liked living in a small rural community and never missed the big city. I was glad, after I learned more about America, that we settled in Iowa. We lived for 37 years in Slater, Iowa. In spite of Tornadoes, floods and severe winters, it has been a privilege living here.