

A TORN FABRIC

My Twentieth Century European Family



Robert Felix Breuer



No 51 B. Octob

Liebster Hans!

Brief 80 v 11/9. erst gestern, also wider erster Reihe möchte ich das so brunnend geworden fort Transporte dahin ab, wenn ich auch er kommen wird, es heisst aber, dass dies in Du selbst schreibst, wie überfüllt der spani, das waren gewisse in der Mehrzahl Leute, d Warum verhasst Du Dich eigentlich so mäleh getragen pr Faroon cca 700 \$ also 1400 \$ für ich die Hälfte durch Transfer beschaffen, d m, was Dir durch Storno bei der Exportline frag bekommt man nach Ausreise aus Cuba loco e Beträge für den Aufenthalt dort und die f finanziell scheint mir die Sache durchführba Gründe dagegen, Heute können wir nicht viel s wir nach Shanghai wollten. Die Route, wie trotzdem u A auch Ludwig und Flora diese ub sich erst vorgestern entschlossen haben. To thrieben, nichts unternehmen, können auch ni macht, aber gemacht wird es in vielen Allen leren Fällen immer alles herausgebracht hast i, wenn Du nicht einen uns nicht klaren Grün i man so weit, hat bereits die Pässe nach Be s Visum bekommen wird. Dabei ermahnet Du uns hoffnungsfreudig zu sein!

il Deines Briefes werde ich nächstens beant us Animo, da mir fort das Schicksal von Maye y Glücks oder seiner Schwester gehen, übrige twort und besondere Beuigkeit habe ich ni ir dieser Tage, ich habe ihnen Euere Bericht la warten fort auf Nachricht von ihren Sohn. ste von dich mit kürzerer Bekleidauer an. Mir

Einer Papa

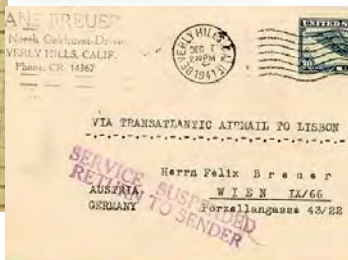


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For Noah and Julia

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Preface



A TORN FABRIC

The first half of the twentieth century in Europe was a tumultuous period of ethnic strife, nationalist ferment, ruinous wars, and the genocidal Holocaust that proved calamitous to millions of families caught up in those harrowing times. My own family was buffeted about by all those forces. Much has been written about the history and impact that era had on individuals, families and the world at large. This is a chronicle of the way history affected my own family in particular. While my parents fled, many other family members, including my paternal grandparents, couldn't. As my parents' first generation American-born son, I have long felt compelled to tell not just their story but the stories of other family members and the textile business that sustained them in central Europe. This is my attempt to stitch together some pieces of a torn fabric.

Working with remnants I collected and stories I recall, I tried to re-weave a tapestry of my twentieth century European family's story, one with many fragments already gone forever. Here is what I heard from my father on the infrequent occasions when he spoke about his traumatic past and from my mother, a skilled storyteller, who might have shared so much more. Here is what I discovered in attempting to answer questions I never asked. This is what I found so fascinating about the stories of people I actually knew, as well as those of people I never met or even heard of before. It is my way of introducing a close group of both accomplished and ordinary people—my twentieth century European relatives, an extended and largely lost family.

I hope this story will prove interesting to my relatives, as well as future generations of Breuers, to good friends who have been curious about this project from the beginning, those who helped me find fragments of this story and other people who are simply interested in the era and topics I cover.

My work was inspired by and based upon three primary sources. First, an extensive set of poignant letters that my grandfather Felix Breuer wrote to his son, my father Hans, over a three year period immediately following my parents' fleeing Vienna in 1938. Second, a fact filled audio-tape recorded by my father at his Los Angeles home in 1982. Third, a treasure trove of materials from my family's Bohemia-based textile business that I discovered in the Czech Republic in 2014.

I gathered documents, combed through family photos and memorabilia, had my grandfather Felix's letters translated from German so that I could understand their significance, and listened closely to my father's recorded reminiscence. I visited places where my family lived, worked and died, and searched archives of materials held abroad. As I found one fragment, new questions emerged and new discoveries demanded yet more investigation.

My effort to tell this story was largely motivated by my son Noah, who wanted to understand it and encouraged me to pursue this project. As rewarding as the endeavor became, it was also so daunting and painful that I put it off for over twenty-five years. Were it not for Noah's persistent urging over time, I doubt that I would ever have undertaken this project at all, let alone seen it through to completion.

I was also driven by the realization that it would soon become extremely difficult, if not impossible, for anyone else to make sense of the pictures and documents I had collected and the places I had visited to witness first-hand where their stories took place, all of which encompasses a family history—lives fully lived and lives brutally cut short. These remnants will inevitably fall ever further into complete darkness and the lost ones surely will vanish once and for all. This is my attempt to prevent that otherwise inevitable slide into total obscurity of people who deserve to be remembered. I hope this telling is worthy of their memory.

*Robert Felix Breuer
Berkeley, California
October 2018*

KEPT IN A CABINET

As a child, on hot Los Angeles summer days, I used to play on the living room floor of our house on Martel Avenue. Occupying nearly one full wall was a very large piece of my parents' Viennese furniture, a sort of bureau, with a row of large doors above, and a second set below. Bored, or just curious, on occasion I opened its various cabinet drawers and doors to see what lay within. Stored inside were all manner of family stuff, including silverware and gilded china. Behind the bottom middle-most door lay a small trove of memorabilia, photos both loose and in albums, some old documents, and most mysteriously, a collection of well over one hundred and fifty letters. With the exception of some handwriting, primarily the letters were typewritten, mostly with their text extending from a page's very top to its bottom, and fully crammed right up to its side edges. They were rather fragile things, the ink sitting on thin feather weight onion-skin paper. They were neatly kept in a ragged blue box with a loose string wrapped around it. Inside the box, the letters were stacked in a rather methodical way, nearly all stored in their original envelopes, each one numbered in order, by both writer and recipient, Felix to Hans, father to son. All were in German.

Practically every letter in the box of correspondence was from my paternal grandfather, Felix Breuer. His wife Marie also wrote. The letters arrived weekly for three years, from November 1938 until November 1941, when mail abruptly stopped. These, along with the photos, were remnants of my Central European family, people I never met, from the years before my birth. Soon after the writing of them, history swept Felix and Marie away, along with nearly all of my remaining European relatives. These letters that I could not read told a story. Their discovery and the eventual disclosure of their contents, are the foundation of this project.

Despite growing up in a German-speaking household, I understood only some words and phrases of the language, and certainly reading it was entirely beyond me. Still, I developed a feel for it by hearing it spoken every day. I could make it out in context, much as any kid would growing up in any immigrant household. Far more profoundly, I absorbed a feel for my Viennese roots, for the food, for the cultural patina of it all. We ate Viennese apple strudel on our Viennese tableware, sat on Viennese furniture and slept under Viennese eiderdowns. The parental circle of friends was solidly Viennese and, to a degree, they acted in the old ways when they got together. My Vienna-born brother Steve (b. July 14, 1936), whose very early first language was German, grew up as a young boy during the time the malignant Nazi regime reached its apogee. As a refugee himself, in a family having fled Hitler, Steve was self-consciously aware of the alien resonance of the German language's sound on the American ear. He insisted that only English be spoken to him at home, and soon that was applied to me as well. Regretfully, I never studied German at school, although my parents continued speaking it with one another and among their fellow exile community. Overhearing the language was how I was exposed to German. And in so many unconscious ways, I gradually came to know my Central European roots.

My encounter with the well-kept store of old letters, faithfully written every week by my grandfather Felix to my father Hans intrigued me, yet for decades they remained entirely impenetrable. It became clear to me what they were from their salutations and dates. And, although I went to the chest several times during my adolescent and college years, I do not believe that I ever once asked Dad about them. So, the letters remained a curious mystery. It was only upon Dad's death in January, 1990, that I again visited the cabinet of stored items, as my new stepmother Julie, Dad's recent second wife, was left with all the remaining household contents. With her permission I took out

a sampling of the letters, some photos and left the rest for my brother to sort through. In a few years immediately following, with the aid of a translator, the substance of those incomprehensible letters was revealed. They proved to be at once both ponderous and staggering.

Rich in minutiae, Felix and his wife Marie portrayed with their writings a difficult daily life, in a guardedly opinionated style—despite Nazi censorship restrictions. The letters were filled with news, were a bit gossipy as always befits the Viennese, and nearly all loaded with angst. Each one is filled with family updates and reports on the conditions of friends, along with descriptions of the rapidly unraveling circumstances of their life. The letters finally made Felix Breuer, the *opa* (grandpa) I'd never met, real for me. Felix, whose name I proudly carry, along with his second wife Marie, were murdered at *Auschwitz-Birkenau* just twenty days after my birth. As I came to learn later, they were sent to their deaths on the very last transport dispatched from *Terezin* to *Auschwitz-Birkenau* on October 28, 1944. ♦



Marie and Felix Breuer, Vienna, January 1930

SPEAKING THEIR NAMES

In April of 1993, I attended a *Yom HaShoah* service at our Congregation Beth El in Berkeley. The Holocaust Remembrance Day, begun in Israel in 1953, later became a regular practice in American Jewish congregations. I attended as a personal matter of duty, but on that one evening I felt more absorbed, struck in particular by what transpired toward the end of the service. Upon standing for a silent memorial prayer, the cantor suggested that if so moved, people could speak aloud the names of any Holocaust victims they knew. I stood silently, but nonetheless stunned by the rudimentary notion of speaking these names aloud, an amazingly powerful moment.

I returned home having bought *Yahrzeit* memorial candles. I asked my wife Fredi and son Noah to join me. Together, we lit them all, set up along the mantle of our Mosswood fireplace. They lit up the room, burning over the next twenty-four hours.

As we lit each candle we read a name aloud from the list that I had at the time. Just a piece of paper with a list— itself a key piece of data I had assembled from the family bureau's trove of somewhat inscrutable information—a register of what I knew of the family names of our lost ones. My father had submitted these family names to the International Tracing Service of the International Red Cross in the 1970s, hoping to find out more information about them, but he got very little back. Still, I had my list. These were all Breuer family relatives, individuals, beginning with his father and stepmother, his cousins and their own families. All people whom my Dad had known, grown up with and loved. All gone. Several names I had heard of, others he had barely ever spoken about. The idea of speaking these names aloud at temple, or better yet at home, carried with it permission and encouragement for me. It moved me as nothing had previously. This recitation was a profoundly simple notion, made poignant by Dad's recent death.

Something new became clear after the name recitation experience. I became driven to find out more and I acted on that feeling, quickly making preparations for a solo trip to Europe just weeks later. In May, 1993, at the end of my teaching term at the college where I worked, I took off on a short but meaningful pilgrimage to central Europe, seeking a means of contact with my lost family. I started in Prague with an old family friend, Trude Ernstova, whom we'd met repeatedly before, and who even visited us once in Berkeley. Trude was a truly heroic survivor of her youthful years of slave labor in six different concentration camps. She was one of six survivors, from an original cohort of a thousand young women. She was marched out of *Auschwitz* by the retreating Germans. Trude was able to speak of it with clarity, but also with reluctance. I told her that on this visit to Prague, I intended to travel to see *Terezín*, and that later I also planned to go to *Auschwitz*. Trude urged me to avoid the camps entirely, saying, "they cannot be the same, they are empty and they do not smell." I left *Terezín* for a later visit, but stuck with the *Auschwitz* plan. On my next stop, in Vienna, I visited my parents' grave in the *Zentralfriedhof*, Vienna's Central Cemetery, one of many return visits I've made there since; we had interred Dad in the place barely three years earlier. From Vienna, I took a train to Krakow in Poland. The next day, on June 29, 1993, I went to *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, seeking out the vanished family souls who entered that horrible place fifty years earlier. I had taken my list of names along with me, tucked in a pocket. Also I brought along an adapted verse, a memorial poem often read in synagogues.

That evening I sat down and wrote about the experience:

Today I went there, to the last place, where they were murdered a half century ago. I wanted to connect with them somehow, the relatives whom I should have known and grown up among, to speak their names and to breathe their air.

It rained lightly this morning as it had all last night, yet the sun was working its way through the clouds. No tours for me, I wanted to go alone. Near the Krakow central station I hired a taxi. As I had studied the posted bus schedules, looking for *Oswiecim* (Polish for the German name Auschwitz), an eager cab driver approached me asking, “You go to Auschwitz today?” We left, driving in silence for an hour, about seventy kilometers along the great Vistula river, through a benign Polish landscape of rolling fields, past an occasional monastery, through plain small villages with women at markets, children at windows, coal mines and petrochemical plants, passing milk vans and tractors. On seeing the sign marking the town of *Oswiecim*, I said the *Sh'ma* prayer internally. Through the little town and up the road a bit more, to ‘the museum’ where the driver would park and wait. I passed on the exhibits, walked by the movie ‘kino’ where a 20-minute film of the Russian camp liberation is shown repeatedly, past the tours forming in their language groupings, and through that gateway, *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work Sets You Free), entering a place I’d never been, but still I knew. I walked the visitor route, the cold compound of brick buildings, the old Austrian army barracks converted easily into a double barb-wire electrified enclosure, a place of horror, a foreboding prelude to what came next, my visit to *Birkenau* (also known as *Auschwitz II*), the infamous extermination camp.

The taxi drove me there, a short trip down the road adjacent to the train tracks, to the sprawling, menacing Birkenau camp. There, the rail line boldly penetrates a looming brick gateway watch tower building, coming directly to an end well inside the vast compound. It’s a stunning encounter. I entered and walked all around in a curious almost numb stupor, alone, amazed at being there.

It was placid there today, dripping and overcast, brooding, haunted and empty. I began to look for them, certain that their souls remained. Somehow I could inhale their presence here, on a day of fresh air, filtered through many thousands of rains like the one this morning. And so, I came to their final place of torment, where they were left, and to the very spot where remains were piled, covered long ago by thick layers of sodden grasses that grew in vast sunken hollows of earth adjacent to the blown up crematorium’s shell. At that spot I pulled up some wild flowers from the bog.

I brought these thoughts written on a scrap of paper, and standing there alone, I spoke aloud:

In the rising of the sun, I remember grandfather Felix Breuer who died here.

And in the blowing of the breezes, I remember grandmother Marie Breuer, who died here too.

In the falling leaves, I remember great aunt and uncle Ida Breuer and Adolf Hacker who died here.

In the chill of winter, I remember great aunt Ritscha Breuer who died here, and in the colder days I remember Rictscha's children Kate and Lutz and Marta and Eugen, and their own children, cousins Hanni and Tommy and Kurt and Eva who died here.

In the budding of the trees, I remember great aunt Grete Breuer who died here, along with her own children, Karl and Ilse Breuer, and especially ... in the warmth of the day, I remember their child, cousin Gitty Breuer who died here.

In the star-filled nights, I remember more cousins, Pal, and his children Mancsi, Jozsi and Katu, who died here.

Then, in the soft hour at dawn I awake remembering all of the many family members whose names I no longer have, who died here.

I come to carry you with me, away from this place. I am Robert Felix Breuer. And, in every single day, as on this one summer day here, I will remember each of you.





Felix Breuer
Marie Breuer



Adolf Hacker
Ida Breuer Hacker



Karl Breuer
Ilsa Breuer
Gita “Gitty” Breuer
Margareta “Greta” Breuer



Ritscha Breuer Kohn
Louis “Lutz” Gelber
Katerina “Käte” Kohn Gelber
Jana “Hanni” Gelber
Tomas Gelber



Eugen Würzburg
Marta Kohn Würzburg
Kurt Würzburg
Eva Würzburg



Paul Schwarz
Manci Schwarz
Joszi Schwarz
Kato “Käte” Schwarz

OPENED LETTERS AND FAMILY PHOTOS

I arranged to have the Felix letters translated in 1994 with a Berkeley based-translator, a native German, Frieda Dilloo. Working together, we selected letters worthy of full translation and I asked Frieda to summarize others. I soon realized that these translated letters would need to be compiled within a context, not simply added in a box. That's when I began to visualize this project. At first it was an uncomplicated idea about only the letters themselves. Those letters were important to understand and preserve. Just how to share them took far longer to figure out. At the time, on reading the translations and knowing that they may one day be shared with our children, my brother Steve set out these introductory words:

There were always some photographs. One of the dignified, well-dressed couple promenading in Carlsbad, she with a pretty, gentle face, he more serious, proud and severe. We knew his face, his stiffly posed picture in World War I army uniform, and from a few formal family portraits, always severe.

Those were our images of the grandparents we never knew, our father's father and stepmother, Felix and Marie Breuer. Added to those visual fragments was the picture of our father as a teenager, standing attentively at the side of his own lovely, yet obviously ill mother who died when he was seventeen.

There were no stories from our father, just photographs, carefully pasted into albums ... Pictures without commentary ... a protracted sad silence about those pictured and family members who perished in the Holocaust.

Mother was more willing to share the terrors in the early days of Nazi rule in Vienna. Her tales included the humiliations faced by our bourgeois and prosperous family— arrests, polishing Gestapo boots, scrubbing floors in the post office. Enough troubles to convince our grandfather Felix to encourage his children to leave for America with the two year old Stephan, the family hope.

How insulting for Felix, the former Austrian soldier, to be called out as a Jew. He had no particular affinity for the faith ... Still, possibly due to his wife Olga Kohn, their only son, Hans, went to Jewish studies during the time set aside for religion by the public school, but he was never a bar mitzvah. At the time of Hans' marriage to Olga Haar, Felix had refused to attend the synagogue wedding. The Haar in-laws, of Polish and Galician origin, felt differently, but Breuers were assimilated Viennese, firmly part of a Czech and German-speaking culture.

We left in a hurried but well ordered way. The details of that immigration story we knew. My memories begin with the sudden appearance in Los Angeles of the Haar grandparents, who shared the apartment, indeed my very room. After that, silence. No one else magically appeared out of the smoke and fog of Europe.

We knew our father's passion for correspondence. With surviving friends scattered in their flight from Hitler, from Shanghai to Buenos Aires, in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, he wrote each of them

often. We heard few details of what had happened to our Breuer grandparents. Our questions largely were unasked and unanswered; they had perished, gassed most likely.

We grew up in the midst of a European refugee community. We had only a few relatives, but lots of friends who became extended family. Uncle and aunt Ehrlich and the Haar grandparents were no more informative for us children. The sad past was something not talked about, and this didn't disturb us as growing kids. But it was there and today we know that this pattern was not unique to our family. Today we understand the enormous loss, the concept of survivor guilt.

Beginning in the later sixties, our parents travelled to Europe regularly. They made certain stops: in Paris to see the only surviving Breuer cousin, Charles Hacker; or in Switzerland, to visit the widow of uncle Karl Kohn, the lone concentration camp family survivor. To Prague, to visit lifelong friend Manya Kunzova and her sister-in-law Trude Ernstova. And to Vienna, of course, to see a handful of boyhood chums, and often to Feldkirch, too. Our parents always returned from these trips exhilarated. They ended with a fitful trip when mother's Alzheimer illness got so severe, we had to institutionalize her shortly after their return.

In March, 1990, Robert wrote to me, "Steffibubbi! I'm enclosing what I'm sure you'll find to be a most meaningful original document — a letter from our grandfather to you ..." I was amazed and delighted by that half page filled with love, with humor, with self-deprecation, with hopes and plans and pride, although I was never "Steffibubbi" before. For the first time we "heard" the tones of our grandfather Felix, the patriarch as he really was.

Happily, Robert had found Frieda Gordon Dilloo in Berkeley to translate. With sensitivity and remarkable identification with the authors, Frieda ended a half century of silence ... In the letters, we learned the story ... revealed in the most careful terms, fully aware of the Nazi censor, whose stamp was on nearly every sheet. This compactness intensifies the emotion. The personalities of our grandparents emerge, recognizable, lovable — lost. We relive empathetically, the agony of our father receiving these letters, helpless to save his own parents. We thank him for having saved them for us ... as so many years later, they bring Felix and Marie out of the photographs, out of the ashes, and back to life for us.

—Steve Breuer, 1994



MY FAMILY'S EARLY TIMES

In late November, 1981, at the suggestion of my wife Frederica, my father sat down with a cassette tape recorder in order to record an abbreviated oral family history. Our son Noah had been born in August. About a month later, my mother Olly was institutionalized in Santa Monica with Alzheimer's. In the wake of those events and with Dad feeling adrift, this seemed a good time for him to tell the story of our family's earlier times in Europe. As I rediscovered it years later, Dad's ninety-minute taped reminiscence provided me with another foundation for this project — a valuable primary source.

I listened to the tape around the time Dad recorded it but I didn't do so again for nearly twenty-five years. It tells a factual story that became a big part of what I recount here. More specifically, it helped me create a context for the exchange of intense letters Dad once carried on with his own father, Felix.

Over the years Dad and I never talked about the letters. In recent years, however, my son Noah, knowing that I had the tape somewhere, asked me for a copy. Noah remembers his "Opa" fondly from his first eight years, during which time they had a close, loving relationship. Still, it took me a long time to get around to retrieving the tape and listening to it once again, but when I did, things started to flow. Just hearing Dad's voice again in 2015 telling our family's remarkable story, was sufficient for me to start working on this project.

Much of what follows is the story as Dad recalled it. For historical accuracy, I refer to my father as Hans, his given name until he changed it to John in America. Here is how Hans begins his taped recollections: *"I want to put down some information on our family history which might prove of some interest to one of my grandchildren. My grandfather, named Carl Breuer, was born c. 1840 somewhere in Hungary" and he died in Sept. 1907, just a few months after I was born. Therefore we never met.*" Dad's own father, my grandfather Felix Breuer, was born February 4, 1871, in *Liberec*, Bohemia. He was murdered three weeks after my own birth in October 1944, so we also never met.

A brother of Carl Breuer's, my great uncle Alexander Breuer, perished, along with several hundred others, in an historic accident, the Ringtheater fire of December 8, 1888 in Vienna. That famous and catastrophic fire resulted in the universal passing of a law that required all theaters to have iron safety curtains to divide the stage from the audience in the auditorium.

An important surname in our family lineage is Schnabel. My great-grandfather Carl Breuer married Paulina Schnabel — born in 1848 — who was quite young when they wed. They went on to have six children, including my grandfather Felix who was the third eldest, born in 1871. Two of his sisters died early in life.

My research indicates that the Schnabel part of my family can be traced back to the 18th century. The wealthy Schnabels were involved in all sorts of manufacturing, including a large sugar mill and a number of textile enterprises. A brother of Dad's grandmother Pauline, named Isodor J. Schnabel (b. 1842), became a world-renowned ophthalmologist. Born in the family home region in Bohemia, Czechoslovakia, Isodor Schnabel became a medical professor at universities in Innsbruck, Graz, Prague and Vienna, where he died in 1908. The medical condition of optic atrophy, known as 'Schnabel Atrophy' and also 'Schnabel Cavernous Degeneration' bears his name.

Franz Schnabel and the Gottlieb Schnabel textile mill and related businesses

Franz (Frantisek in Czech) Gottlieb Schnabel—who, in the USA, became Frank Stephens—was born in Vienna on June 26, 1900, seven years prior to the birth of my father Hans, who was Franz' first cousin. The two cousins remained close throughout childhood, with the older Franz becoming a sort of life-long advisor for my Dad. Franz Schnabel was to play a pivotal role in 1938, helping my parents and brother escape Nazi domination.

My father's maternal grandmother was Pauline (Schnabel) Breuer, a sister of Gottlieb Schnabel, who therefore was Dad's uncle. The Breuer and Schnabel families were both in the textile trade. Before the Second World War, Gottlieb Schnabel owned and managed a firm called Schnabel & Co., Wien and Neupakaer Baumwoll-Spinnerei & Weberei Gottlieb Schnabel, in Vienna, a cotton spinning & weaving enterprise.

Gottlieb's son Franz married Edna (Ritter) Schnabel who was born March 31, 1898. They lived at 26 Hohe Warte, in Vienna. They also had a residence near their textile mill in Nová Paka, in the northern Bohemia part of Czechoslovakia, a town very near the Breuer factory and family homes in Dvůr Králové (ger. Königinhof). Franz and Edna Schnabel had a son, George, who was born on February 28, 1930 in Vienna. George was six years older than my brother Steve, and in the years that I lived at home in Los Angeles, both Franz and George Schnabel visited us several times.

Franz Schnabel's father, the industrialist named Gottlieb Schnabel (b. 1854), facilitated the mechanization of textile industrial facilities, contributing to the late nineteenth century's Bohemia-based textile industry breakthroughs. He established a cotton weaving mill in a leased factory building at Nová Paka, CZ in 1882. By the following year, he was operating fifty looms there, expanded in 1884 to 180 looms. The factory also did hand-weaving around warp yarns. In 1887, Gottlieb Schnabel expanded further, buying the factory building and adding yet another 120 looms. In 1892, a more modern low-rise building was erected wherein Schnabel employed 600 workers, increasing the town population as workers settled into housing nearby. Schnabel factory enterprises included worker production in the small town of Miletín. He also maintained a spinning plant, Cichorius & Co. located in Chrastava, CZ, a town in northern Bohemia—just 6 miles from the regional capital of Liberec, where my grandfather Felix Breuer was born. In 1923, Franz, working with his father Gottlieb, managed to acquire a large equity share in GA Fröhlichs weaving, velvet and printing factory AG at Varnsdorf, situated at the northern Czech border with Germany. Schnabel sat on the Fröhlichs board until the firm was taken over in 1927 by VELVET Group.

—source: Austrian Biographical Encyclopedia and Austrian Academy of Sciences

Carl Breuer was my great grandfather. He started the textile plant, *Carl Breuer und Söhne* (Carl Breuer & Sons) in 1902, located in Czech Bohemia, originally producing hand-loomed weaving without machines, as well as dying and printing cotton fabrics which were cut into table cloths, scarves and other products. Their goods were sold mainly throughout the Austria-Hungary provinces. That business sustained my family through most of the time I cover in this narrative. Upon Carl's death, in 1907, his two sons Felix and Ernst took over the Breuer factory. Carl was also survived by two sisters who married and had their own families — Ida who married Adolf Hacker and Ritscha who married Karl Kohn.

Felix married Olga Kohn (a first cousin of Karl Kohn) in May 1904 and nine months later they had a girl who soon died in infancy. Their second and only surviving child, was my father, Hans Breuer, born on May 19, 1907. My grandmother Olga was the daughter of a well-to-do merchant, Moritz Kohn in *Trutnov* (*Trautenau* in German), located in the *Hradec Králové* region of Bohemia, Czechoslovakia, part of what became known as the *Sudetenland*.

Trutnov's origins go back to the 12th century under Kings Wenceslaus I and II of Bohemia, when German settlers were given the right to establish a town. For centuries, *Trutnov's* economy relied on farming but it began to be industrialized during the 19th century along with much of that part of northern Bohemia. In 1823, Johannes Faltis constructed a linen manufacturing plant and a cotton weaving mill. The *Sudetenland* possessed huge chemical works and mines, as well as textile, china, and glass factories. By mid-century, Jews were allowed to enter these businesses. Textiles had become an important part of Bohemia's economy, enhancing the industrial influence and wealth of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Beginning in that era, my family entered the textile industry, and they succeeded in the business extending well into the twentieth century.



My great-great grandparents, Franz and Rosina Schnabel. Their daughter Pauline married Carl Breuer.

Beet sugar refinery established by Franz Schnabel in 1858 at Nový Bydžov, CZ.

Hans' maternal grandfather was Moritz Kohn. Moritz was what Dad described as, *"a pillar of the community and he was also the synagogue president in Trautenau"* (Trutnov.) The Kohns, parents of Dad's mother — my grandmother Olga Kohn Breuer — moved to Prague after Moritz's retirement where c. 1913 Moritz died. Moritz's wife Gabrielle, my Dad's maternal grandmother, lived until 1928, surviving the death of two of her own children, Rudolf, a dentist, and Dad's mother Olga, both of whom died within five months of one another in 1925.

All of Dad's business side of the family — the Schnabels, the Kohns and the Breuers — worked in textiles, weaving, dying and fabric printing. Textiles became the family business decades before my father took up the trade himself as a young man. The textile industry was centered in north central Bohemia, particularly in those parts of the largely German-speaking *Sudetenland*. Our Czech and German speaking Breuer family lived at the edge of the *Sudetenland*, settling in an area technically just outside its demarcation. Still, persistent issues of the area's language-based conflicts had a profound effect on life there. In the following chapters I explain just how those disputes came to play a part in the ultimate end of the Bohemia-based Breuers' factory enterprise and ultimately, the ending of their lives. ♦



1873 World Exposition in Vienna

In 1873, just two years after my great grandfather Carl Breuer's son Felix, my grandfather, was born, a huge world's fair, the Weltausstellung 1873 Wien (World Exposition 1873 Vienna) was staged in the Austro-Hungarian imperial capital of Vienna. Its motto was Kultur und Erziehung (Culture and Education) and, typical of the great world's fairs of that period, it was primarily a place to show off national industrial might. Nearly 26,000 exhibitors were housed in a wide array of buildings specially erected for the exposition, including the Rotunde (Rotunda), a large circular building in the great park of Prater, on the island of the city's second district. The Vienna Exhibition featured the industry of Austria-Hungary's contingent of nations, and other participating countries in dedicated pavilions. For the first time, Japan was represented. In addition to the Industrial Pavilion, the centerpiece of the venue, other exhibition pavilions were built with individual themes, such as machinery and agriculture. Pavilions were located in an expansive park and the forests encompassing the park, resulting in a magnificent setting.

The exposition yielded significant and lasting results, such as the realization of the necessity of international patent rules. Textiles were prominent at the Exhibition, reflecting the mid-nineteen century industrial revolution. An article published in the July 4, 1873 edition of New York's Engineering magazine, described the importance of the textile industry at the exposition: "Never at any previous Universal Exhibition was the vast importance of textile industry so well shown as it is at the great gathering from all nations being held in Vienna. In our modern state of civilization, coal, iron, and textile fibers may be said to be most important. ... Textile industry is divided into almost numberless branches — a fact distinctly shown at Vienna — raw materials, the spinning and the weaving, and closely connected with it the dyeing, cloth printing and finishing. ... The printing of cloth and cotton is related to the dyeing and finishing. The invention of the sewing machine has facilitated, in a wonderful manner, the working up of the finished materials." Of all the nations exhibiting textiles, Austria-Hungary had the largest presence, followed by Germany, France, England, Switzerland, and Italy and on down the list of participating nations with textile industries. It was in this period that my Breuer family and their Kohn and Schnabel relatives began their textile enterprises.



BOHEMIA: ETHNICITY & IDENTITY

My family was living in Bohemia in the early to mid-nineteenth century during a time of rising national, political and cultural movements, rapid industrialization and an uncertain dawning of tolerance for the region's mix of ethnicities. Jewish businessmen, such as those in my family, began to enjoy the protection of full citizenship and expanding prosperity. During the Industrial Revolution, Bohemia was transformed from an agrarian region into a society that included industrial workers, a rising middle class and a growing intelligentsia. Throughout Bohemia's history, these diverse inhabitants struggled to be independent from what they saw as foreign rule from Vienna, and to enjoy the benefits of cultural, religious and linguistic freedom.

In 1848, Jews were granted equal rights under the first Austrian constitution. No longer compelled to live in ghettos, from 1850 on, Jews were allowed to own property and land. By the mid-19th century, Czech desire for national emancipation was supported by the successful industrialization of the Bohemia region which made it the most developed area in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. However, efforts at autonomy were vigorously opposed by the German-speaking Bohemians who feared losing their privileged position under the Austrian Empire. Vienna attempted to settle ethnic tensions by promulgating the Constitution of 1867 which declared the equality of all Austro-Hungarian peoples including the Jewish population. This wasn't enough for nationalist revolutionaries all over Central Europe. Like others, Czech nationalists still wanted to govern themselves from Prague and be independent of the Vienna-based monarchy. Tensions continued between Czech and German speakers as they created separate cultural, educational, political and economic institutions which isolated them further from one another and created an atmosphere of bigotry.

By the time my father, Hans Breuer, was born in 1907 these cultural conflicts had become highly pronounced. Prague was divided into Czech or German speaking neighborhoods. Prague still tolerated a mix of ethnicities including its large historically important Jewish population which now numbered 29,000. Jews, too, were divided on the language issue. In 1900, most Jews in Bohemia spoke German, while a 55% majority of the Jewish population in Prague declared Czech as its primary language in order to assimilate better into Czech culture. Dad was proud of the fact that all of his family were bilingual — fluent in both Czech and German.

With Prague as its capital, Bohemia has been the most important region of the Czech nation since the 6th century. The Kingdom of Bohemia existed in some form beginning in the 12th century — largely under the Holy Roman Empire until 1806, then the Habsburg Austrian Empire, and subsequently the Austro-Hungarian Empire which lasted from 1867 until 1918. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Prague had one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe. Under the Holy Roman Empire, Bohemia was an autonomous kingdom ruled by hereditary kings. In the mid-13th century, after the Mongol invasions, and at the invitation of the king, Germans began immigrating to Bohemia settling along the northern, western and southern borders, later called the Sudetenland. Also, in the 13th century the king granted Jews religious freedom, protection from violence, and autonomy in administering their own quarter of Prague. The city became a center for Jewish intellectual and religious life, with its influence waxing and waning depending on the political climate.

Known as one of the most liberal countries in the Christian world, Bohemia enjoyed religious freedom from 1436-1620. In 1526 Bohemia was ruled from Catholic Vienna by the Habsburg monarchs. By 1618 the oppression of the Bohemian Protestants led to the Thirty Years War and resulted in a Protestant king and the gradual integration of Bohemia into the multi-national Habsburg Empire as one of the three principal areas — along with the Archduchy of Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary. Bohemia's primary language was Czech but in 1620 the Habsburgs quashed the Bohemian autonomy movement, continued to centralize their control from Vienna, and began 'Germanization' whereby German became the official state language used in government, schools, literature and administrative procedures.

Starting in the 18th century and continuing into the 19th, the Czech National Revival Movement sought to revive the Czech language, culture and national identity. By 1848 the revival movement sought political emancipation from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the reconstitution of the Bohemian Kingdom.

The Austro-Hungarian empire was a multi-ethnic one. In its waning decades it was in some ways a noble if failed attempt to subsume nationalistic, ethnic and religious passions into a larger nation-state—the empire—that allowed all ethnicities to flourish equally. Supporters of this idea held that individual nation-states could not possibly ever be created in a region of Europe where one village or even one household was largely Czech and the next one was German and the next Jewish, Ruthenian, Hungarian, or Polish. Or Croatian, Serbian, or Albanian? Multi-ethnicity had become an organizing principle of the modernizing imperial Habsburg rule, seeming like practical common sense to those holding power in Vienna. But achieving it was not that simple.

The problem was that all ethnicities were not equal, not legally until it was too late, and certainly not ever in the minds of its many of its citizens. There had for centuries been a clear if somewhat changing pecking order. At the top stood the Austrians and Germans, the group that had originally ruled the whole roost. Yet rampant Hungarian nationalism could not tolerate this. By the year 1867, Hungarians carved out a place in the empire for themselves as equal to the German speakers' culture. The old Holy Roman Empire of the Habsburgs became the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but the Hungarians behaved even worse toward their own ethnic minorities than the Germans had toward them.

By the time World War I—The Great War—broke out in 1914, the severely challenged empire was a boiling cauldron of competing nationalisms, each determined to achieve its own national sovereignty. For the larger ethnic groups, powerful passions were moving many people to feel ever more ethnically exclusive.

Many felt that a Hungarian state, for example, should consist exclusively of Hungarians, to the exclusion of minority Poles or Romanians within their borders. The notion was that minorities could be moved to the adjacent state of their own ethnicity, or homogeneous areas of such minorities might even be traded to nearby states in exchange for areas of people of the same ethnicity.

For Jews the problem was that they were a minority everywhere, happier in the multi-ethnic state than the existing Austrian Empire was, but reconciled to the idea that they would also remain loyal Czechs, Slovaks, Austrians, Hungarians, etc. if the empire dissolved into its component parts. The anti-Semites among their neighbors certainly didn't see it that way. To them Jews didn't fit in anywhere. There were plenty of listeners when the most extreme nationalists in every country started expounding the idea that Jews were responsible for all that was wrong with the modern world. More than ever before, nationalism opened a door to the scapegoating of Jews and served as an opportunity to explain all failures.

And perhaps the most seething nationalism of all, German nationalism, wounded by its defeat at the end of the Great War (WW I) and by the punitive treaty of Versailles that brought the war to a close, looked to salvage its wounded pride. Germany was poised to explode in the twenties and thirties and to exploit what turned out to be virulent, even murderous anti-Semitism. It's not that everyone was anti-Semitic, far from it. But, the most dynamic



A separate Sudeten black/red/black flag was favored by residents, and at times was forbidden to be flown by the Czech government.

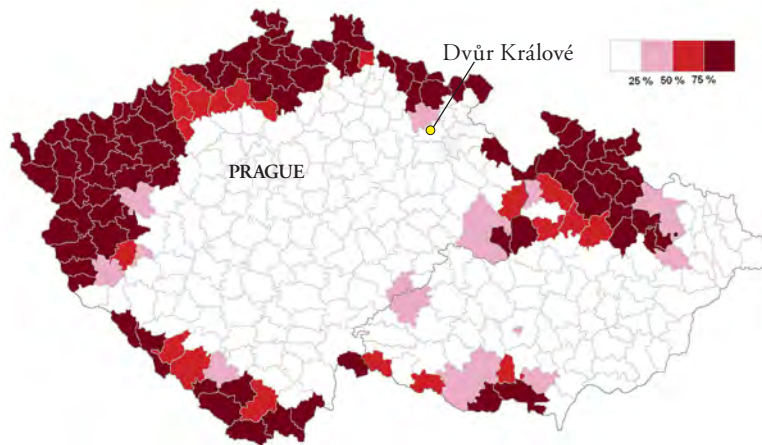
and ruthless form of nationalism attracted enough of these people to come into power in 1930s Germany. Nazism became a violent, mobilizing beacon for Germans who had lost everything in the war and the hyper-inflation of the previous decade.



After WWI, the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 dissolved the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This left German-speaking Austria as a small rump state or remnant of the once far larger entity, and it created a series of new nations including Czechoslovakia. German-speaking Bohemian residents were no longer connected with German-speaking Austria, and now they saw themselves still more as the ethnic minority. Most of those German-speakers lived in the *Sudetenland* territories adjacent to Germany where they represented 90% of the population. In 1921, the population of multi-ethnic Czechoslovakia consisted of 6.6 million Czechs, 3.2 million Germans, 2 million Slovaks, 0.7 million Hungarians, 500,000 Ruthenians, and 300,000 Jews. Not all ethnic Germans lived in isolated and well-defined areas; Czechs and Germans mixed in many places and at least partial knowledge of the second language was quite common.

Such was the experience for my father's bilingual Czech and German-speaking family in their hometown situated on the so-called *Sudetenland* border, known in German as *Königinhof* and in Czech as *Dvůr Králové*. Their mostly Czech-speaking town had a small Jewish community numbering about three hundred people out of some ten thousand residents.

Between the two world wars Czechoslovakia prided itself on being a successful democratic, highly industrialized and creative nation if not a completely unified one. The grievances of the Czech/German ethnic division were skillfully exploited by the Nazis once they took power in Germany. In 1938, following the Munich Agreement, Hitler annexed the historically German-speaking Bohemia border regions of the *Sudetenland*. This incorporation left the rest of Czechoslovakia feeling powerless to resist subsequent occupation. In 1939 Germany forced the rest of Bohemia and Moravia into a so-called 'Protectorate,' an occupation governance. For my family and the rest of the country's Jewish population, the German occupation held life-altering implications. Within a few years, the Nazis displaced or murdered the region's Jews, including my entire family. ◆



Map of Czechoslovakia in 1935

The German population living in Czechoslovakian territories are indicated in color by percentages. These were mainly contiguous areas along the Czech border, primarily with Germany. My family's town, Dvůr Králové, was located in north central Bohemia, immediately at the Sudeten border.

Sudetenland Germans: Dvůr Králové/Königinhof had a split Czech/German population, surrounded by Sudeten Germans. Sudeten nationalists, particularly the emergent Nazis, expanded their activities during the Depression years. So, when Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, the Czechoslovak government moved to suppress the Sudeten Nazi Party from local government positions. Sudeten Germans were not pleased, and their displeasure was only encouraged by the neighboring German Third Reich regime. A "Sudeten German Home Front," claiming loyalty to Czechoslovakia became a political party in 1935, and in May elections they carried over 60% of the Sudeten German vote. A powerful international German political force emerged. Its leadership maintained secret contacts with Nazi Germany, mimicked its methods, slogans and appearance. They got aid from Berlin and were inspired by the Führer's ideas. Loyalties in the Sudetenland were clear. By 1937, there were few who opposed Hitler's goal for an enlarged German state. Once Austria was annexed into the Third Reich on March 13, 1938, mass support among Czechoslovak Germans for similar treatment grew.

By late March Hitler made unacceptable demands upon the Czechoslovak government in Prague, while the Sudeten German Party openly sought full Sudetenland autonomy through protests and violence. As the politics led to a rapidly worsening security situation, open clashes took place with the aid of smuggled weapons from Germany. The regular Czech army was called in to pacify the Sudeten area, and Germany made wild claims of Czech atrocities inflicted on German ethnics. The Nazi threat was unmistakable, and by May 20, the Czech army mobilized along its border with Germany. "Sudetendeutsche Freikorps"—German SS-trained paramilitary groups— took over some Sudeten border areas, killing Czech policemen and even kidnapping over 2,000 Czech citizens, taking them across to Germany. Knowing what had come of Austria—conjoined with the Third Reich in the Anschluss—much of Europe rightly feared the worst. European leaders wanted to avoid another Great War with Germany. In August 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sought to appease Hitler, seeking a Sudetenland settlement between the Czech and German governments. In the climate of the time to some watching from abroad it seemed only natural that Germans in all lands might desire to consolidate within a "greater Reich." With the late September 1938 "Munich Agreement," Britain and France forced the Czechoslovak government to cede its Sudetenland to Germany. Bohemia and Moravia (the current Czech Republic) lost nearly 40% of its territory, made up of 3.25 -million Germans and a quarter-million Czechs. It was the second step of Hitler enlarging his German Reich. As the Czech territories became part of a German "protectorate," Chamberlain mistakenly declared, "Peace for our time." The die was cast. Only a few months later, the rest of Bohemia and also Moravia were taken by Hitler and declared to be a German "protectorate."

Dvur Králové seal on town hall.



◆ 6 ◆

DVUR KRÁLOVÉ (KÖNIGINHOF)

I first visited the Czech family home town of *Dvůr Králové nad Labem*—or *Königinhof an der Elbe*, its German name—in July of 2006. My father Hans rarely talked about the town, so integral to his early European life. More telling, he never returned there, although beginning in 1968 he repeatedly visited Prague, not too far away. Dad's memories of the place were too painful to overcome any curiosity he may have had; the loss remained too great. I'd wanted to visit *Dvůr Králové*, located far to the north of Bohemia along the Elbe river, ever since I learned about the role it played in my family's history. Now I had the opportunity to actually go there. So, for a few hours on that sunny July day accompanied by Fredi, Noah, and our young Czech-speaking friend, Peter Ruzicovi, we headed east from Prague. I drove through a rolling countryside ablaze with yellow mustard fields toward the town that at one time had been home to so many of the Breuer family. I brought along a typed list of parcel numbers of some family properties that I found among Dad's papers. Hoping to connect with some of these places, I thought the sheet might be a sort of guide. Among the included entries were:

“Parcel No. 271/1 Building land, dwelling house and factory building / Parcel No. 271/ 7 Building land; textile printing plant / Parcel No. 3882 Garden behind home ...”

We drove into the town's attractive central square, lined with commercial and civic buildings in Czech Baroque style, typical of the sort found in towns all around Bohemia and Moravia. We parked, looked around for a while, and eventually went into the town hall centrally located on the square. Like so many buildings in Europe, the *Dvůr Králové* town hall probably had not changed much over the passing decades. Fortunately, the modernized offices inside had a computerized data base of properties. So with Peter translating, and the assistance of a cooperative clerk, we got a few directions and a map to locate the parcels. Only a few blocks from the town square, the old Breuer factory building still stood, in very poor condition. Despite that, it now held flats, a furniture company and some small shops. We were also able to locate two family homes nearby, each in a shabby state of repair and now lived in by multiple families. Still, as far as I was concerned, finding these buildings made our visit a great success. Being in the town, seeing the actual place, was satisfying, and made the visit worthwhile.

Among the old family photos in our living room cabinet, I had seen a few shots of these same places. Some showed various Breuers with extended family members gathered together. Usually the photos included my father along with his own father, Felix. One picture in particular shows the family seated happily in a pleasant backyard setting. We briefly visited such a backyard, behind the stately family house at 545 *Sladkovského*. My imagination was ignited, as I could easily visualize them all sitting right there, talking over coffee and sweets. It felt a bit mystical. Beyond taking some pictures of the town square, the remaining Breuer factory building and two family homes, I just enjoyed the feeling of being there. Beyond that, I found out very little else that day. We never found an important third home on the list, a curiosity not resolved until my next visit, a full eight years later.

Still, that first excursion was exciting and entirely worth the time and effort. It was a vivid, if fragmentary, experience in the Bohemia hometown of my lost family. I left *Dvůr Králové* on that beautiful mid-summer day, animated by the accomplishment of making at least an initial connection with it. Better yet, I did so in the company of Fredi and Noah, It felt wonderful, quite unlike anything else I had experienced.

Over the months and years that followed my first visit, it became clear to me that there was likely more fertile ground to explore in *Dvůr Králové*, a research opportunity worthy of a return visit. I wanted to discover more about my Czech family and tell their story. However, I realized that finding out more would require better preparation and far more time. A few more years passed, but finally, having done more research from afar, I was ready. I arranged to make my second visit in May 2014. Keeping expectations low, I thought that if I could merely uncover more names, find some places or any additional bits of information, my second visit would be worthwhile. As it turned out, the second visit proved to be highly productive; I uncovered more than I imagined possible.



Above: The central square as it looks today remains nearly unchanged from the time of my family's life in the town.

Right above: Dvůr Králové central square c.1920. The town hall is the centermost grand building with pilasters. *Note:* Located adjacent to the town hall, immediately to the right in this picture, is a storefront with the sign *Karel Kohn*. This was a business owned by textile merchant Karel (Carl) Kohn, my father's uncle.

Right: In a 1923 aerial view, the Carl Breuer & Sons factory location is indicated with a yellow circle. It was only a few blocks off the town square, the most central of the many textile factories then operating in and around Dvůr Králové.

Below: 2017 Google Earth with old Breuer factory indicated by yellow circle.



To lay the groundwork for further exploration, I made e-mail contact with an archivist named Julie Jensovská at the Jewish Museum of Prague. I supplied her with a list of family names and my limited address list. Ms. Jensovská was responsive to my inquiries. She expanded on my scant information, and helped me locate a local English-speaking researcher living in the vicinity of *Dvůr Králové*. I asked about finding a guide and translator who might also be a researcher. I wanted someone to conduct preliminary archival research and thereby prepare the way for what I hoped to be a more productive second visit. Julie called around, eventually contacting the university located near *Dvůr Králové*. The person she found was a young Moravian man named Zbynek Sturz, a PhD student, who came highly recommended by the head of the history department at the University of *Hradec Králové*, a regional campus of Prague's famous Charles University. (Charles University, founded in 1348, is the oldest and largest university in the Czech Republic. It was the first university established in Central Europe and takes its name from its founder, King Charles IV, King of Bohemia). *Hradec Králové* is a relatively large city, the regional center of the northern part of Bohemia where my family had lived for decades, some for generations, in various towns including *Dvůr Králové* (or *Köninginhof*, as my Dad usually referred to it, its German name).

I planned the 2014 trip around spending a few days re-visiting *Dvůr Králové* and doing hands on research in the Prague archives. Early one morning in mid-May, my wife Frederica left Prague by train for a few days visiting good friends in Vienna. Meanwhile, I boarded a local morning train to *Hradec Králové* to begin my second visit to northern Bohemia and, in particular, to once again see *Dvůr Králové*. Along the way my heart was pounding as I imagined my father and his family having taken similar trips long ago, traveling along the same tracks through the beautiful countryside.



Zbynek Sturz and I had never met before so we arranged to meet at the *Hradec Králové* station. When I arrived, there he was, standing on the platform waiting for me. Tall and earnest, he spoke English well, and best of all, came prepared, having done the preliminary research that I requested. We chatted briefly and, without ceremony, he handed me a four-page report of information that he had gathered, and proposed that we spend the day visiting local archives. One of the places he had located was just a half-hour away so we got in his car and headed for the town of *Ceské Skalici*, home of the *UPM Muzeum Textilu*, the Czech textile museum, part of the far larger Czech Museum of Applied Arts in Prague. In our earlier e-mail exchange, Zbynek wrote that the museum's permanent displays included a small area specifically about the Carl Breuer und Söhne factory.

On arrival, we were met by the textile curator/archivist who took us to see the Breuer items on display. It was thrilling to see these things - textile samples, printing blocks, a production ledger, working factory pictures and a yellow 'Jude' star of David with accompanying text explaining, among other historical facts, the Breuer owners' fate. I took pictures through the glass case. As we were about to go downstairs to leave, the curator indicated that she had more for us to see, and led us upstairs to the library. There, neatly arrayed on a large library table, she had set out the complete Breuer archive. It was a carefully preserved treasure trove of business documents, building plans, sample books and all manner of detailed factory ephemera. I was amazed! Here was more than I or any family member ever knew still existed. It was a stunning discovery.



Afterwards Zbynek and I drove another twenty minutes to nearby *Dvůr Králové*. He had prepared well for the visit. We began by revisiting places I had seen on my prior trip six years earlier. We walked all around the factory buildings, still in very poor shape, and I inspected the town square with a keener eye than before. One family home in particular, the house at *Sladkovského 545*, the home of my Kohn and Würzburg family relatives, was undergoing a marvelous renovation. Recently bought by a local law firm, it was being prepared as living

Above: Landscape outside of town.

Left: Zbynek Sturz, our researcher/translator, examines archival photographs at the Dvur Králové town museum.

quarters and the offices for one of the firm's principals. The exposed-timber romantic-revival style character of the house had particularly lovely details which were being carefully restored. The garden was being replanted. The full painstaking renovation was almost done and it looked terrific. With my interest in historic preservation, and having previously seen the grim shape of the place, I could not have been more pleased.

Zbynek had also located the Karl Breuer family house that I previously tried to find in 2006. This was the home of Dad's close and beloved cousin, Karl Breuer, his wife Ilse and their daughter Gitty, who lived there along with Karl's mother, Grete, the widow of my great uncle Ernst Breuer. In somewhat decrepit shape, it anchored a long block of large, first-rate homes which had once belonged to the owners of many of the town's textile mills. Several of these places were actively being restored to their original grandeur. I found out why I had missed that house on my previous trip: The name of the street had been changed from *Nádražní 1259* — when the Breuers still lived there — to *28 Října 1259*, commemorating the October 28, 1918 date of Czechoslovakia's independence.

We also had a productive and revealing visit to the *Dvůr Králové* town archives located in the Municipal Museum, just down the hill from the Kohn/Würzburg house on *Sladkovského*. With the help of two archive staff members, Zbynek and I discovered a number of photographs, including many of the Breuer and related family houses in their early twentieth century elegance. As *Dvůr Králové* was a center of the textile industry, the town archives had plenty of documents and photographs of its factories. Among them, I found pictures of the Carl Breuer & Sons factory, including several taken in the 1960s during its *Tiba* incarnation under communist rule. Thanks to a long-serving local mail carrier who was an avid photographer, there was also a collection of pictures of the town's residential buildings now held in the *Dvůr Králové* Municipal Museum archive.

The preparations for my May, 2014 visit had paid off. Those few days in May, 2014 yielded some of the most consequential resources that I uncovered for this project. To say I was excited by what I found is an understatement. When I said goodbye to Zbynek Sturz, my local guide/translator/research assistant, he expressed great pleasure in meeting me. It was “an honor.” The textile museum archivist and curator had told me the same thing. Zbynek also told me that he'd never met a Jew before. How could this be true, in this place where Jews had once played a prominent role. But, of course, it was true—made so by the Holocaust. It nevertheless astounded me. What were his expectations? The fact that Zbynek treated me so warmly, that we had such a productive time together was really all the answer I needed. I was grateful for that and remain convinced that our working together was meaningful for both of us. ♦



“Etwas einmal!” — “So it was once!”

Those wistful words written by my father Hans on the back of one of these photographs express memory of a once familiar place. He kept these shots in a small envelope with his handwritten notation. They include the Breuer factory in the snow, and main office entry.



Riegrova 352, was once a significant residence, an elegant family home prominently situated on a full block of its own, located near the town square. It was the home of the Gelber family, Louis [Lutz] and Käte, daughter of Ritscha Breuer Kohn, along with their children, Jana [Hanni] and Tomáš. Other Breuer family relatives, the Würzburg family, Eugen and Marta, and their children, Kurt and Eva, lived there as well. Pal Schwarz, son of Rosa Breuer Gero, and his wife Ella, along with their three children, Manci, Jozsi and Katu [Kate] Schwarz may also have lived at this house. It was only a short two-block walk from the Carl Breuer & Sons factory.

Above left: An early twentieth century color postcard of the Riegrova building. At the time, it had a fence enclosed side garden.

Left: Images of the building from the 1950s.

Upper right: The Riegrova house as it is today, plain and characterless. The black and white photo, directly above, taken in 1967 by a town postman, shows the house in the Communist era, "modernized", stripped of its ornaments, and cut up into many smaller workers flats.



Sladkovského 545, up the hill from the town square, was the Kohn family home. Uncle Karl Kohn and his wife, Ritcha Breuer Kohn, lived in the large handsome house, with its garden which was a popular family gathering spot. Here, the Kohns raised their children Käte, Marta, and Ada. And when two of the daughters married, all the Gelber and Würzburg grandchildren, Jana and Thomas, Kurt and Eva, came to play in the yard.

Left: A photo from the town archives of the house in its early twentieth-century days.

Below: The house, and details, as Fredi, Noah and I first saw it in 2006.

Bottom right: A complete restoration began c.2012.





Sladkovského 545: The Kohn house in various stages of recent restoration work, seen by me in 2014 and by Noah and Julia in 2016.



My father Hans lived with family in both of these spacious homes at various times in his younger working years. Hans was particularly close to his first cousin Karl Breuer, whose house is the one shown below.

28 Října 1259 —formerly Nádražní 1259. The street name was changed to 28 Října commemorating the date of Czechoslovakia's independence, Oct. 28, 1918. This was the home of Karl Breuer, his wife Ilsa, and their child Gitty. Karl's mother, Ritcha Breuer, widow of Ernst Breuer, also lived with them.

Right: The Breuer house, just after the war, was still in good condition, black & white photo, upper right, but was neglected along with most other properties in the post-war Communist era.

It anchors a full block of very elegant homes, in a neighborhood once housing most of the town's well-off textile factory owners. Several are currently being renovated to their past glory. The house was built by Ernst Breuer who, along with his brother Felix, were Carl Breuer's two sons, founder of the Carl Breuer & Sons textile business, nearby.





Marie and Felix Breuer, taking a stroll in Karlovy Vary (Karlovy Vary), an elegant Czech spa town that they visited frequently for vacations from Vienna.

A 1939 postcard from my Breuer grandparents Marie and Felix, sent to my parents Hans and Oilly in Los Angeles. It was most likely one of their last visits with the Bohemia-based family in Dvur Králové.



CARL BREUER & SÖHNE (CB&S)



On July 10, 1897, Carl Breuer, my great grandfather, and his two sons, Felix, my grandfather, and Ernst, my granduncle, placed an ad in Vienna's commercial newspaper of record, *Amtsblatt*, announcing the formation of *Carl Breuer & Söhne*, their new trading company in the city's first district, distributing woven fabric. They weren't starting from scratch because Carl had already worked for Stern and Company, another woven fabric business in Vienna. What's more, his wife's family, the Schnabels, had a long history in the textile industry. The families' experience and connections with textile manufacturing in the neighboring Czech lands contributed greatly to the new company's early success.

Textiles became an integral part of the Czech Bohemian economy as early as the 16th century, with the processing of cotton and jute, and the formation of cloth weaving and dyeing guilds. By the early 19th century, dyers in the town of *Dvůr Králové*, were printing on fabric. The town gradually became well known in the industry for that expertise. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Austrian territories became industrialized. In the Bohemia-based textile industry, fabrics that had been produced for years by traditional handloom weaving were now made by new mechanical looms and spinning machines, mostly imported from Great Britain. As a result, costs went down and production went up.

As a substantial and diversified textile industry emerged, newly-empowered Jewish businessmen were among the first in the Austrian Empire to realize that those technological innovations would make the industry far more efficient, productive and profitable.

Soon purpose-built factories began to operate, powered at first by water, then steam and eventually electricity. They comprised the modern Bohemia textile industry that dominated sales within the Austrian Empire and even abroad when opportunities for increased international trade became evident and possible.

Carl Breuer's new textile fabrication/printing business was just such an enterprise. No longer trading in other factories' products, the Breuer firm established its own factory in 1902 in a Bohemian town called *Bílá Třemesná* (ger: *Weiss Třemeschna*) near *Trutov* (ger: *Trautenau*) where his Schnabel in-laws had a large textile enterprise.

Five years later, in 1907, business sales had expanded so that Carl Breuer & Sons (*CB&S*) decided to enlarge production capacity. They sought a building permit for a textile block print and dye-house in the nearby town of *Dvůr Králové nad Labem* (ger: *Königinhof an der Elbe*) which itself had expanded rapidly until there were fifteen textile mills operating there. Once he obtained his permit, Carl Breuer and his sons Ernst and Felix purchased lots from Gabriel Hasse in the *Dolní předměstí* (Lower suburb) near the center of town where an old smaller factory already existed.

The Breuer company immediately began remodeling the older buildings and expanding capacity with the construction of new facilities. Their newly established factory was registered under the lengthy German name *Carl Breuer und Söhne, Baumwollwaren-Weberei, Färberei und Druckerei Königinhof a/E*. In Czech that was *Karel Breuer a Synové, Textilní tiskárna, braverna a úpravna Dvůr Králové n/Laben* or translated to English: Carl Breuer and Sons, plain cotton goods weaving mill, fabricating and printing Königinhof on the Elbe. Throughout this document I refer to the business concisely as *CB&S*, as it was usually labeled for brevity and branding.

The two sons of the *Carl Breuer and Sons* business were Ernst (cz: Arnost) and Felix. Carl and his wife Pauline had six children, including three girls and another son Emanuel who died before the business was established.

On September 1, 1907, Carl Breuer passed away. His widow Pauline survived him for over twenty more years, living in *Königinhof*. Ernst and brother Felix were left to run the business. Only months earlier in that same year, on May 19, 1907, Felix and his wife Olga's only child, my own father Hans, was born in Vienna. And a year after that, in 1908, Ernst and his wife Grete had their own only child, a son whom they named Karl after Carl Breuer the elder, the father of Ernst and Felix.

The Breuer brothers Ernst and Felix took distinct roles in their shared business. Felix oversaw most company sales and represented the *CB&S* business in Vienna, while Ernst ran the factory at *Königinhof* in Bohemia. Theirs was a company with dozens of employees, the payroll rising and falling with business cycles. An international enterprise such as theirs, with customers and suppliers inside the Empire and beyond, required representation in the Austrian capital, largely Felix's domain. The two brothers kept in daily contact by mail and telephone, visiting each other frequently either in Vienna or at *Königinhof*. Felix often brought Hans along on visits to the Czech operation, providing them both the opportunity to maintain contact with the large, Bohemia-based branch of the family. These visits expanded the scope of Hans' Vienna-based youth. So the young cousins, Hans and Karl Breuer, were able to get together regularly despite living at a distance. Similar in ages, the two cousins grew ever closer. In later years, the devastating loss of his cousin Karl, and Karl's entire family, along with all the extended family, became a great tragedy for Hans to endure.

My own parents, in naming my brother Steve and me, gave us the middle names Ernst and Felix respectively. In so doing, they were memorializing our granduncle and grandfather, the earlier Breuer brothers, who had helped their own father—Carl Breuer—establish the family textile business in *Königinhof*. The significance of our middle names became more poignant when we were old enough to realize that our namesakes had each died within weeks of our own births, Steve's in 1936, and mine in 1944.

Königinhof or *Dvůr Králové* was primarily a Czech-speaking town next to a mainly German-speaking population, located slightly south of what the Germans called the *Sudetenland*. The entire Bohemia-based Breuer family spoke both languages. My grandfather Felix, his wife Olga, and their son Hans, living in Vienna, of course spoke German. Hans heard and learned to speak Czech as a child and as a young man while visiting, living, and working with the Czech Breuers in *Dvůr Králové*. Although Dad claimed never to have mastered Czech writing or grammar, I know that he always enjoyed speaking the language. I recall how much he loved encountering a Czech speaker in America, such as on his many visits with us to a Czech restaurant in Berkeley, where he could eat authentic Czech food and converse with the owners. Dad almost glowed there when he spoke in the language of his Bohemia family homeland. But that Czech glow also cast unwanted shadows. The fate of the family factory, of the town and the Breuer family, were things Dad could never talk about.





Purchase contract, 1907 of former factory property from Gabriel Hasse, signed by Ernst Breuer and Felix Breuer. The multi-page document includes detailed written descriptions and drawings of the property being sold by Hasse to the Breuers.

Plans for factory expansion including elevation of a smoke stack [below]



TEXTILE PRINTING
Carl Breuer & Söhne
 Königshof A./E.
 Products:
 printed Artificial Silk Dressings
 printed Artificial Silk Fashion
 printed Cotton Tablecloths
 printed Cotton Headscarfs





1910 postcard view of factory in right foreground near center of town. [top above]

Rear view of factory yard and buildings

Former Carl Breuer & Söhne factory street view in Dvůr Králové in decrepit state, 2014.

Advertisement for a textile trade show in Dvůr Králové, 1936. The town had fifteen textile factories.



The First World War changed nearly everything in the old Austrian Empire. After the war ended in 1918 new smaller countries were carved from the former empire, becoming the mainly independent states of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia. Far-flung business enterprises such as *CB&S* were forced to split apart among the new smaller countries. The newly emerged state entities imposed all sorts of customs, tariffs and other restrictions. Residents of the new, smaller countries who had all been ‘Austro-Hungarians’, now had to choose and declare a domicile of record. For our family that meant choosing between Austria and Czechoslovakia. The Bohemia Breuers, who had been living in *Königinhof* where the factory still stood, now found themselves living in the newly independent state of Czechoslovakia, where they chose to remain as Czech citizens. Felix Breuer and others of his family, who had been living in Vienna, chose to stay there, becoming citizens of the newly-separate state of Austria.

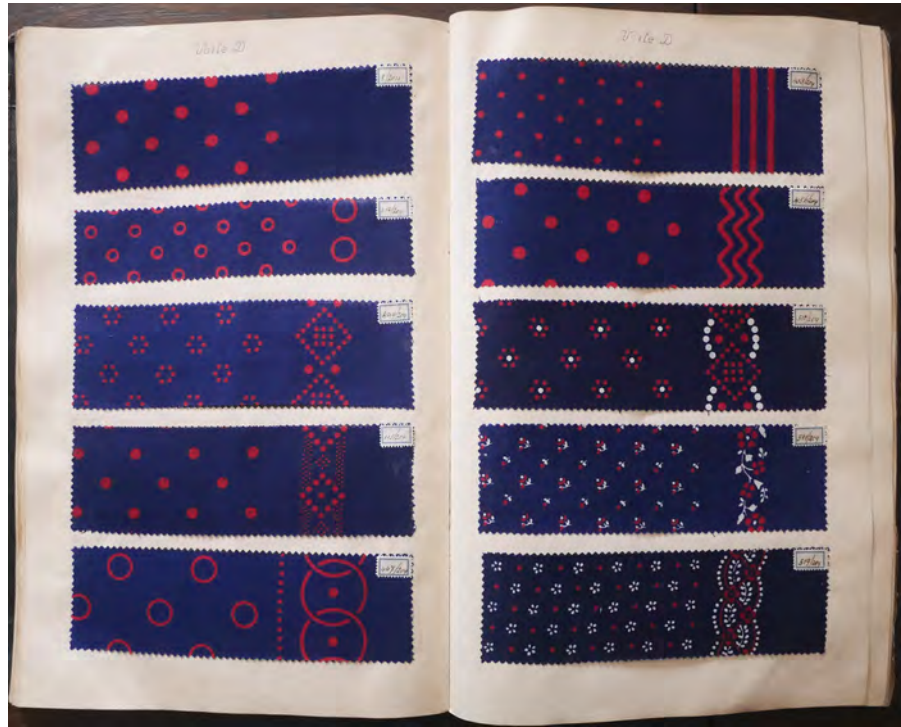
It became legally impractical for *CB&S* to maintain a Vienna office separate from its Bohemia factory. Consequently Ernst Breuer and Felix Breuer, the two owner-brothers, came to an entirely “amicable parting of the ways,” as my father described it. Although both had been equal partners in the family business, they entered into an agreement whereby Ernst would buy Felix’s interest in the company over time so that eventually Ernst would become the sole owner.

Also, with the end of World War I, Ernst Breuer, in compliance with the separation of Austria from Czechoslovakia and in accordance with the laws promulgated by a proud new Czech dominated government, *Carl Breuer und Söhne* now included the company’s Czech name of *Karel Breuer a Synové*. Ernst Breuer appointed his only son Karl (cz. *Karel*) named after the elder Carl Breuer, and Karl’s wife, Markéta, known to family as Ilsa or Ilse, as his own successors.

The increasingly successful factory business supported an affluent life for the extended Breuer family in *Königinhof*. The family maintained spacious, comfortable homes and a circle of good friends. They were a part of the town’s small Jewish community and members of its synagogue, where cousin Carl Kohn served as part-time temple administrator. The Breuer company’s pool of employees grew. In the 1920s, *CB&S* variously employed between thirty and sixty workers, along with four to seven plant managers, of both Czech and German nationalities. At that point, approximately a third of the *Dvůr Králové nad Labem* population was German-identified, families who had lived in Bohemia for generations, even centuries.

The *CB&S* factory specialized mainly in the production of custom-made ties, ladies pinafore dresses, scarves, napkins, tablecloths, aprons, and bedspreads. The business also owned a store in Croatia’s capital city, Zagreb. *CB&S* products were exported to Yugoslavia, Rumania, Sweden and England. The Breuer business even managed to thrive during the Depression years. After the death of his father Ernst in 1936, twenty-eight-year-old Karl Breuer took over and ably ran the factory as a flourishing enterprise. By the late 1930s, the young and gregarious Karl and Ilsa Breuer became the new center of the Bohemia family, owners of a very productive business within a thriving industry. Textile production accounted for 360,000 jobs by 1935 and it continued to dominate northern Bohemia through the entire first half of the twentieth century. *Carl Breuer & Söhne* company records indicate that in 1939 the factory printed about 660,000 meters (772,000 yards) of fabrics. ♦

CARL BREUER & SÖHNE (CB&S)



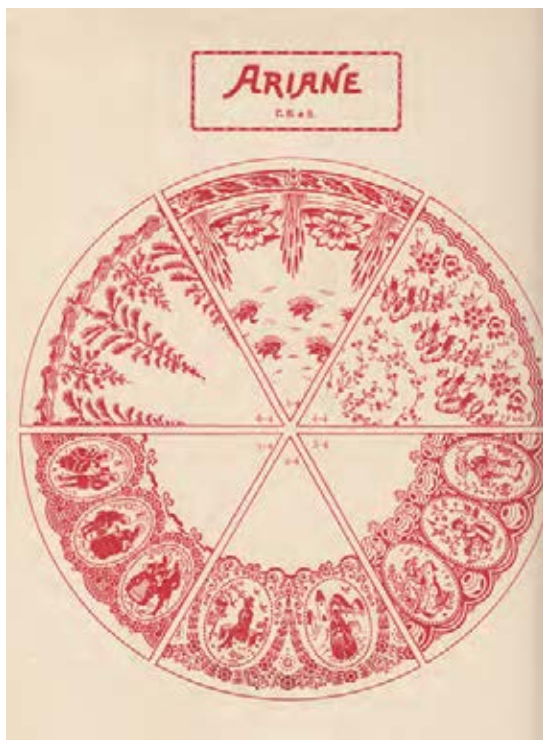
Fabric samples part of the Carl Breuer & Sons archival collection at the Czech Textile Museum in Česká Skalice discovered by Robert Breuer in May 2014. These samples range from the decade 1910-1920.



Robert examining printed fabric samples in the Breuer collection archive at the Czech Textile Museum

Sample sales board for printed CB&S (Carl Breuer & Sons) neck tie line. The "King Cravates" name is a pun based on the Czech Králové, meaning king as in the town name, Dvur Králové.[right]





CB&S product lines allowed company sales representatives to offer customers printed combinations of color, size, and pattern over a wide range of sample designs. Yearly style collections were introduced, inspiring customer choice in adapting variations to their own merchandise. Product lines carried evocative names such as those shown here: Ariane, Aurora, Lucerna, Tatra, Kosmos, Alice, Ida, and Salome.



LIFE IN VIENNA AND BEYOND

My father Hans Breuer was born on May 19, 1907 and raised by his parents, Felix and Olga at *Sechsschimmelgasse* 8-6 in a large and gracious flat in Vienna's 9th district, an area best known for doctors and students at the University of Vienna. The *Jugendstil*-designed apartment building where Dad grew up was decorated with six white horses, for which the street itself is named. A large sgraffito mural of six white horses on a red field adorns the outside of the building. The horses are also seen at the front entrance in a circular design of an etched glass window over the main door. The building was partially destroyed in WWII by Allied bombs but it was rebuilt along with its decorative elements. Nearby in this culturally-rich neighborhood is the *Volksoper*, the public opera which was built in 1898 as the *Kaiser-Jubilaume-Stadttheater*, the Kaiser's Jubilee Civic Theater. My father described his early years in this way:

We lived a comfortable life near the center of Vienna. We had a maid and I even had a governess. I entered elementary school the year before the First World War started. The war years were rough! We never suffered from hunger or any privations. However, it was at times difficult to get enough food, to get enough heating material. We couldn't turn on the gas lights. We had kerosene lamps. We had all kinds of makeshift heating facilities. It was not easy but we survived. We didn't get sick and somehow or another, as I think back, it worked out. People were drafted into the army left and right and even my father at age 45 was not spared. In 1916 he (Felix) himself was drafted. During basic training he came down with pneumonia. He was reclassified and put into an office job which consisted of reading through Czech soldiers' mail (as an army censor). Already at that time there was unrest in the ranks, as Czechs were trying to form their new country, and he was to spot letters with treasonable subjects. Although he was not a language expert, his Czech skills allowed him to survive in service until the war ended.

At the war's end in 1918, Vienna was in bad shape, devastated by food shortages leaving many people hungry. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had collapsed and the elegant old capital reflected it. The postwar years were bleak for just about everyone. Hans' most lasting memory, beside seeing long food and soup kitchen lines, was the begging of his classmates in school for bites of his own daily brown bag lunches. This informed his life-long disgust at the waste of food here in our country. He often shared that memory and feeling with me.

Felix resumed his postwar business representing Carl Breuer & Sons at his Vienna office. However, as new international textile markets opened in the 1920s, Felix, using his Austrian and Czech connections, took on new clients as he curtailed his CB&S representation. This change of focus was driven largely by the amicable buyout agreement he had reached with his brother Ernst who would eventually become the sole owner of the Breuer factory in Czechoslovakia.

Building upon his considerable ties in the textile industry, Felix became a sought after *Händler*, a dealer in the textile trade. He made a good income representing various important textile manufacturers, including Austria's largest textile manufacturing company, *Ganahl*. He also maintained foreign clients in France and worked with a large company in Manchester, England. To a limited extent, Felix still looked after the family-owned company's interests in Vienna, but his main source of income increasingly came from representing *Ganahl*, the large and well established textile mill located in the western most part of Austria. Felix soon became the face of *Ganahl* in Vienna.



Felix Breuer, January 1916

The Viennese silk processing industry was reborn after the devastation of the First World War. Silk products had become fashionable again in foreign markets so Viennese manufacturers of silk cloth and necktie goods got back into the business. As a result, foreign textile buyers flocked to Vienna which once again became a major center for fashion and style. According to an article in the February 7, 1920 Textile World Journal, published in New York City, "Vienna would buy silk yarn in Italy and ship it to Czechoslovakia where the weaving and dyeing is done. Then the goods would be reshipped to Vienna where the finishing is being done. After which, part of the Czechoslovakian silk production would be reshipped to Czechoslovakia for home consumption. The Government of Czechoslovakia would not permit silk yarn to be shipped into their country unless the finished product would enter the world markets as Czech made goods and thus assist in stabilizing the Czechoslovakian currency."

The *Ganahl* company still exists to this day, having expanded into various other manufacturing areas beyond textiles. It began in 1790, when Johann Ganahl began making cotton goods and dyed yarn for weavers in *Feldkirch*, a town in Austria's *Voralberg* region near Switzerland. *Ganahl's* cotton spinning mill and bleaching business

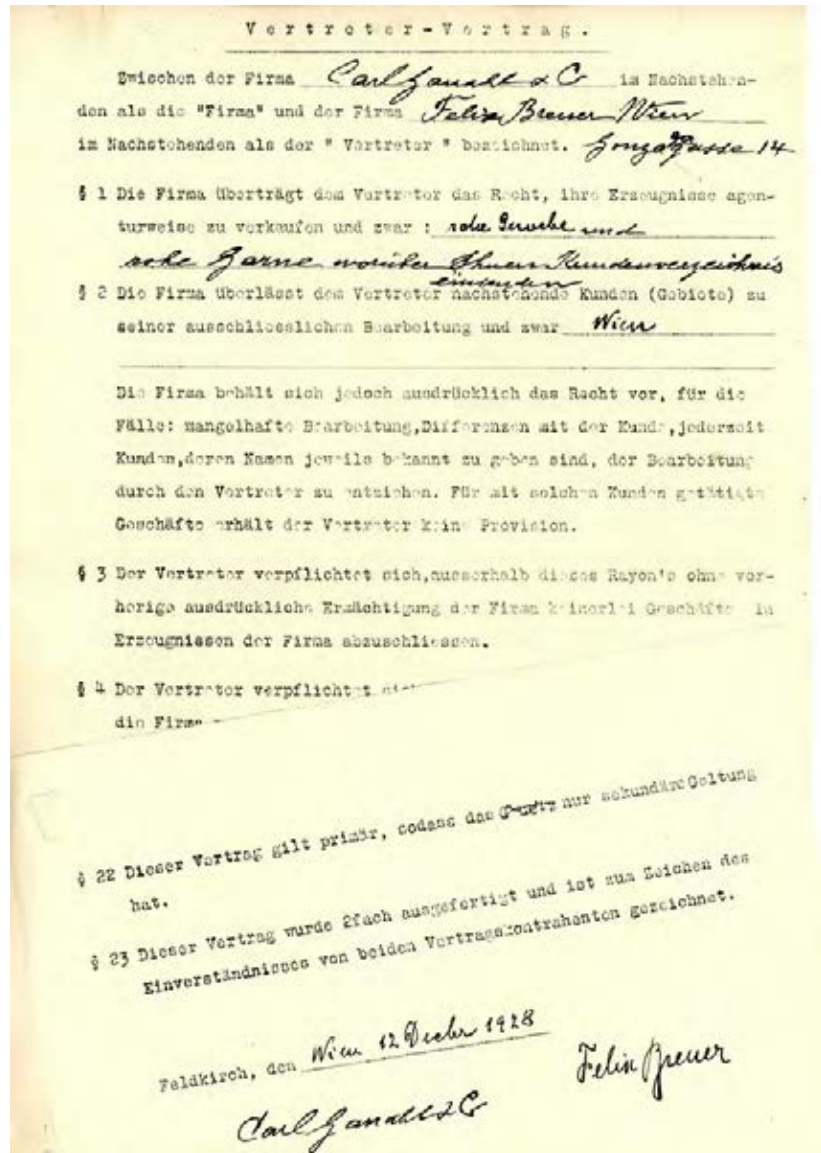
increased significantly in 1833 as his company ran the first mechanical weaving machinery in the Austrian monarchy. With mechanization they expanded into ribbon weaving and textile printing. Of course, textile printing was also the speciality of the Breuer family's CB&S factory. Felix knew the entire scope of the business well. His textile trade office was at *Gonzagagasse 14*, in Vienna's first district, a section of the city renowned for its textile industry showrooms. *Ganahl's* Vienna offices and showroom were a short stroll away, just around the corner at *Heinrichsgasse 4*.

Felix Breuer was decidedly Viennese. He raised my father Hans in the formal ways of the city that helped delineate their lives, with formal greetings and courtly manners, attending opera, dancing the waltz, and consuming a delicious array of Viennese cuisine. As Hans came into his own, he increasingly enjoyed almost all aspects of the great city's culture and became ever more proud of his Viennese roots. At the same time, my father and his parents took pleasure in maintaining their ongoing close connections with the extended Bohemia-based family. Still, for Felix Breuer's family, Vienna was always their home.



Top: Felix's office was on Gonzagagasse, street shown in 2002

Bottom: Ganahl offices at Heinrichsgasse



Right: Agency agreement between Felix Breuer and Carl Ganahl, signed in Vienna on December 12, 1928. It details the terms under which Felix became the agent for Ganahl & Company.

My grandfather Felix was a creature of habit. He often traveled to the office on foot from his home at *Sechsschimmelgasse* 8-6 in Vienna's 9th district, enjoying a brisk half-hour walk into the adjacent 1st district. His regular walking route reinforced a Viennese sense of place. Following a two km path, Felix walked down *Liechtensteinstrasse*, which runs alongside the Liechtenstein Garden Palace, past *Berggasse* 19, the office of Dr. Sigmund Freud, heading toward the *Schottenring* portion of the great *Ringstrasse*, which defines Vienna's *Innerer Stadt*. Taking a turn to the left onto *Schottenring*, he would pass the massive *Wiener Börse* (Vienna Stock Exchange), and finally turn right onto *Gonzagagasse* and his spacious office at #14. And, as a Viennese gentleman, Felix had a favorite coffee house nearby. Taking his morning coffee in the textile district included reading the city's many newspapers and nurturing friendly business contacts.

Felix's personal life revolved around his small Vienna family and the many other relatives living separately in Czechoslovakia. The eldest of six siblings, Felix had twin sisters named Ida and Ritcha. Ida lived nearby in Vienna with her husband Adolf Hacker and their son Charles, Hans' only local cousin. The two cousins developed a strong bond and got together often. Charles later moved to Paris where he survived WWII in the French resistance. He and my father kept in touch with each other on a regular basis for years thereafter.

The other twin, Ritcha, was married to Carl Kohn who had his own textile sales business in *Dvůr Králové* and was a pillar of the town's Jewish community. They lived there with their three daughters, part of the extended Bohemia-based family. Young Hans, an only child, was pleased to have so many cousins, especially his favorite, Karl Breuer, the son of his Uncle Ernst. The Vienna Breuers stayed in touch with their Bohemia family in a variety of ways, including annual summertime visits.

Living among the Czech relatives was the family's matriarch, Carl Breuer's widow Pauline or Paulina, the mother of Felix, Ernst and their siblings. Dad reported that his grandmother's mid-February birthday was celebrated in grand style. I first saw pictures of the stately, older Pauline Breuer when I was a child, rummaging through family photos that Dad kept in a cardboard box. To me she seemed like an aloof creature from a bygone era which undoubtedly reflected the fact that she was born in 1848. Among the cache of family letters written in German that my father kept in a cabinet at home was a very old one written by Pauline Breuer to her grandson Hans, age



Hans Breuer, age 3, February 1911; age 7, December 1914

Robert Breuer, visits Breuers' Vienna home, Sechsschimmelgasse house, 2002

thirteen at the time. It is dated September 9, 1920 and served as a thank you letter for a gift of candy that Hans had sent her from Vienna. In her letter, Pauline tells Hans about her illness and chats about others in the family living around her in Bohemia, including his cousins. In a cheery, grandmotherly tone, she tells the boy that his gift was too extravagant, pointing out the hard post-war times and the costs of medicine and heating:

September 9, 1920.

My dear Hans!

That you are a fine gentleman, I've known for a long time; but with this your attentiveness is going much too far, though. I'm still taking my medicine and never before thought of the idea to eat candies as a "chaser", but I do have to admit that before it had tasted very bad. Today I took the last one out of the box; tomorrow a refill has to be gotten, but I think it'll be the last one; if the pain hasn't gotten better by then, the stuff isn't worth anything, and it costs a heap of money! So my dear Hans, I thank you very, very much for your thoughtfulness, whether I'll do just as you say, I don't know yet. Please ask your parents, however, not to spend money for things like that, since there are enough expenses of this sort. ...

I'm glad to hear that you are well. Too bad that your rash is bothering you. How come it didn't when you were here? I hope it will be gone by the time you get my letter.

Yesterday the family of your uncle Ernst Breuer came by. I served them Jause [a high tea or snack] as I hadn't seen them except separately for a while. Your cousin Karl is probably at school, or maybe he will go off in a few days. Marta has come home, although she's going to school too, of course. You can't imagine how cold it is here; people are heating the office; yet as nice as a warm room might be, I can't afford such a luxury. How is your cousin Carli [Hacker] in Vienna? Tell him that he should write to his grandma too some time. But on his own accord, Mama shouldn't have to sit with him and make him do it. I don't have so much to say, I haven't had a chance to get out here a lot lately, since the weather is bad for my illness. Some time, when you have nothing better to do, please write a few lines again to your ...

— Loving Grandma

Hans' mother Olga died when he was just eighteen, a loss he felt deeply. Even though she had been sick during much of my father's teenage years, he remembered her as being "a very beautiful woman and an expert pianist." I saw clear evidence of her illness in a few photographs that Dad kept near his desk. Olga Breuer died on March 21, 1925 after many years of a profound but never fully-diagnosed illness. Its exact nature only became evident during an autopsy that her husband Felix insisted upon. Apparently, all along she had been suffering from a severe, lingering and deteriorative liver disease.

Hans' grandmother, Pauline Breuer died in 1932 at the age of eighty-four. Dad said, "*I always envied my father the fact that he, unlike me, was able to have a mother until he reached the ripe age of sixty-one years.*"

Dad's Uncle Ernst Breuer, the brother and business partner of Felix, was the most beloved member of the Bohemia-based family. As Hans' favorite uncle, he was a much adored character, described by my father as having been, "a man of wine, women and song." Ernst cut a far different figure from his trim, more austere-appearing older brother Felix. Ernst had a large-frame body, a big manicured beard, and an always-ready smile. He enjoyed making regular visits to Vienna for business and to see his brother Felix and his family, enjoying all of the big city's delights. Ernst died suddenly of natural causes in May 1936, just months before the July birth of my brother Steve who, as a result, was named Stephan Ernst Breuer. Ernst's son Karl, namesake of his grandfather Carl Breuer, was left to take over the ownership and running of the Carl Breuer & Sons factory.

— ◆ —

Burial in the Vienna Central Cemetery

Upon his wife Olga's death, Felix Breuer purchased a small funerary wall crypt in the non-denominational "crematoria" section of Vienna's Central Cemetery where their cremated ashes were to be interred. The intention was that Felix would one day also be interred within that same crypt space, eventually to be joined by the remains of Hans and his wife, all in due time. In discussing this on his 1981 tape recording, Dad audibly choked up, saying, "God only knows where my father's ashes are. But as far as I'm concerned, when our time comes, it is our wish and intention to be cremated, and our ashes to be placed in this particular vault, so that at least part of the family shall be together in perpetuity." In this audio, Dad went on to apologize for this tape recorded method of announcing his intentions. My parents seriously considered choosing that particular place, in the Vienna cemetery, particularly in light of having lived nearly their entire adult lives in Los Angeles. For my father, a soulful man, Vienna and the long ago loss of his parents still pulled on his heart. It was my parents' decision to be buried in Vienna, one they made together. And so, that is what came to pass.

My own mother Olga (Olly) joined Dad's mother Olga, being interred there after her death on June 8, 1985. In that way, my mother was brought "home to Vienna" from Los Angeles by my father accompanied by my aunt Gia, Olly's beloved sister.

Similarly, after Dad's January 14, 1990 death, I made arrangements for his cremated remains to be put to rest, along with those of the two Olga Breuers, in that wall crypt per Dad's wish, "in perpetuity." We lovingly interred my father's urn in a simple ceremony in late June 1990, attended by a couple of Hans' old Vienna friends and by his second wife, Julie Ray Breuer, along with my brother Steve and his wife Nadine, my wife Fredi, our son Noah and me. I was especially touched that Noah, nearing nine years of age, could attend the funeral rites for his Opa, one of the two grandparents (along with Fredi's mother Margot Buel), whom he'd come to know well in his early Berkeley childhood.

At that point, I also wanted to memorialize my grandfather Felix and his second wife Marie whose remains were lost long ago among the mass mounds of human ashes at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and for whom no funerary stone existed. So, in 1990, I arranged for an entirely new stone to be carved for the crypt cover. In addition to engraving Dad's name, I ordered an additional inscription at the bottom, noting the names of Felix and Marie Breuer and the fact of their deaths at Auschwitz, "in Auschwitz gestorben." Whenever we are at the cemetery, a place we have repeatedly visited when in Vienna, we look upon the small crypt stone and quietly remember and reflect on their lives.



Hans and his mother Olga Breuer c.1923

Olga died two years after this picture was taken, when Hans was 18 years old.



Robert at Breuer gravesite in Vienna Central Cemetery, 2013.



New gravestone indicates Dad's mother Olga's cremated remains, interred in 1925. My own mother, Olga (Olly), added in 1985, and my father Hans (John H. Breuer) added in 1990.

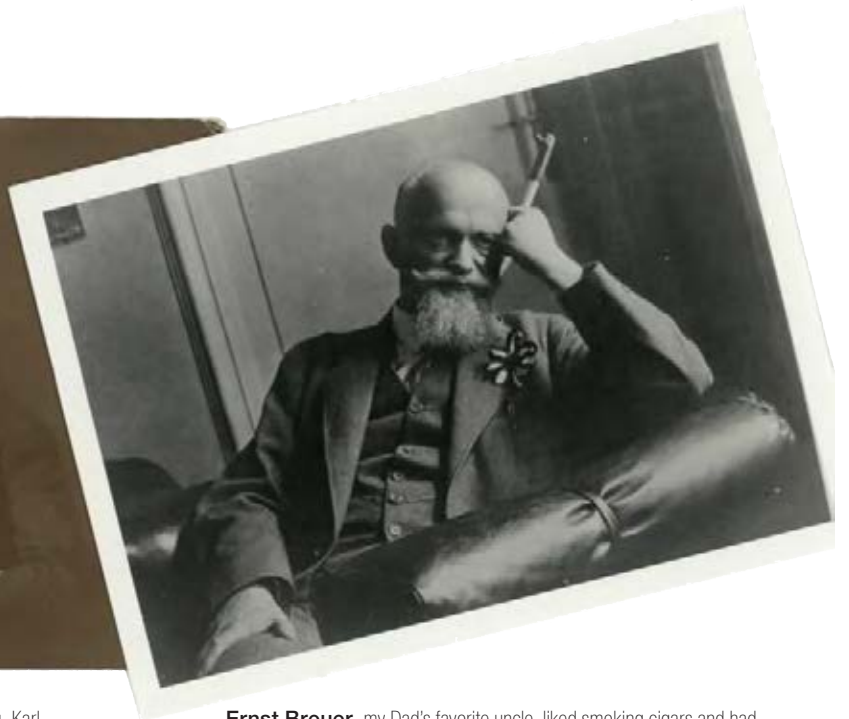


Breuer Grandmothers

Dad's grandmother, Pauline (Schnabel) Breuer at left, widowed wife of Carl Breuer.
At right, my own grandmother — Hans' mother — Olga (Kohn) Breuer, who died when my dad was 18.



My father with his closest cousins— left, Charles Hacker, age 16; standing, Karl Breuer age 17; and seated at right with book, Hans Breuer, age 18 at Königinhof, July 1925. Charles survived the war in Paris. Karl was killed along with his mother, wife and child at Auschwitz. Hans, wife Oilly, and son Steve escaped to America.



Ernst Breuer, my Dad's favorite uncle, liked smoking cigars and had a big personality. He died before the war, leaving the Carl Breuer & Sons factory operations to his son Karl.



Ganahl Textile company associates and good friends, Felix Breuer, left, with Herr Hanusch at Bad Gastein in the Austrian alps, July, 1936. Hanusch later took a substantial risk by storing Breuer family household items in the company warehouse at Feldkirch during the Nazi era. He arranged to have them shipped to our home in Los Angeles in the late 1940s.

Above: Young Hans Breuer, age 7 in Vienna, and age 15 in Prague



L-R: Felix and Marie Breuer, June 1932, Paulina Breuer, September 20, 1929, Felix Breuer, June 1937



Breuer family gathering in Vienna, 1928, L to R: My grandfather Felix, my father Hans (age 21) with his Aunt Grete Breuer, Aunt Ida (Breuer) Hacker, Uncle Ernst Breuer, grandmother Pauline Breuer. Pauline was the mother of Felix, Ida and Ernst, the widow of Carl Breuer.

Learning the textile trade

I recall that every time I sat down with my father at a restaurant with tablecloths, he would lift a corner to inspect it, holding the material between his thumb and forefinger, carefully assessing its quality. In his youth, Hans was trained thoroughly in all aspects of the textile trade.

In June 1925, at age eighteen, Hans graduated from *realschule*, a technical high school with more emphasis on mathematics, science and modern languages than the classics and humanities oriented *gymnasium*. *Realschule* prepared students for university, engineering, medical and technical schools. At his father's urging, Hans did not attend university after *realschule* and instead went directly into a one-year textile trade school. The family business was growing and in the European tradition, Felix intended to bring his son into it. A year after his textile training, Dad explained that he "... volunteered in various textile mills in and around Vienna and soon thereafter went to work as an employee at one of the many family related factories in the small town of Nová Paka in Bohemia, Czechoslovakia (30 km west of the town of Dvůr Králové where the Breuer family and factory were). I worked there at a spinning and weaving mill owned by Gottlieb Schnabel, who was the youngest brother of my grandmother Paulina Breuer."

Earlier, at the start of the century, Gottlieb Schnabel, being a well established Czech industrialist, had helped his brother-in-law Carl Breuer, along with Felix and Ernst, set up the Carl Breuer & Sons factory. Gottlieb Schnabel's own son Franz helped run the Schnabel family's substantial textile mill. Franz Schnabel became a generous mentor to Hans who was only six years younger. Dad described his apprenticeship and working experience at the Schnabel textile business in Bohemia, "... for the next three years, working at different jobs and learning everything about the business from the ground up in all phases: spinning, weaving, printing, manufacturing, selling, what-have-you."

Having learned both French and English while attending *realschule*, Hans proved his value to the company as he was able to read and answer business letters from abroad. The Schnabel textile firm was a growing, internationally connected enterprise.

Years earlier, the Schnabel textile company had opened a very successful textile sales branch for its products in New York City. This had attracted Hans to the Schnabel business in the first place because he had imagined that one day he would visit America. After some years learning the family business, an opportunity struck.

In 1929, at age twenty-two, as Dad reported it in his recorded account, he was summarily informed by Franz Schnabel, "You're a young man and you should see the world. I'm going to send you to New York to work at our branch there, which we call the "Saint George Textile Corporation." A decade later, as things were to turn out, it was Franz Schnabel who would arrange for the ultimate survival of our remnant Viennese family moving to America. Shortly thereafter Franz Schnabel saved himself and came to the U.S., where he changed his name to Frank Stevens. He lived long enough to visit us in Los Angeles on several occasions during my childhood and I clearly remember him as a gregarious larger-than-life character.



Left: Hans, age 20, working at the Schnabel textile company c1927



Right: Hans, age 22, departing Hamburg harbor for job in New York City, August 28, 1929

International textile business / New York City and return

Young Hans accepted the opportunity for work in America with great enthusiasm. He arrived in New York at the start of September 1929, and eagerly began his twelve-dollar-a-week job, a wage which didn't really matter because *"I had a pre-paid return ticket in my pocket, in addition to some spending money. I didn't starve. I lived in a room on Lexington Avenue, corner 87th Street. I paid eight dollars a month. I went to work every morning, stopped by the automat at the corner, I had myself a cup of coffee for five cents, a cinnamon roll for another nickel and I took the subway for the third nickel. And life was beautiful. In the evening I went to evening school to learn English as my use of the language was not so great largely due to the fact that at the office there were a bunch of Czech employees who constantly spoke Czech amongst themselves ... I was proud as a peacock to be in the United States."*

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

S. S. "THURINGIA" Passengers sailing from HAMBURG, AUGUST 28th, 1929.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
														Country	City or town
1	BECK	Walter	22	m	single	German	yes	German	German	Hamburg	Hamburg	U.S.	7/18/29	Germany	Hamburg
2	HOHR	Carl	44	m	single	Austria	no	Austria	Austria	Wien	Wien	Austria	8/19/29	Austria	Wien
3	BREUER	Hans	22	m	single	Austria	no	Austria	Austria	Wien	Wien	Austria	8/19/29	Austria	Wien
4	BREUER	Ellen	45	f	wife	Germany	no	Germany	Germany	Offenbach	Offenbach	Germany	8/6/29	Germany	Offenbach
5	SCHMIDT	Karl	38	m	single	Austria	no	Austria	Austria	Kassel	Kassel	Austria	8/12/29	Austria	Kassel
6	SCHMIDT	Hubert	32	m	single	Austria	no	Austria	Austria	Offenbach	Offenbach	Austria	8/12/29	Austria	Offenbach
7	WOLFGANG	Wolfgang	24	m	single	Germany	no	Germany	Germany	Dresden	Dresden	Germany	8/14/29	Germany	Dresden

Passenger manifest for US arrival of the Hamburg-America Line's SS Thuringia, indicates Hans Breuer of Wien, Austria, 22-year old clerk.

Hans fondly recalled his good times living in Manhattan as a young man at the age of twenty-two. He was youthful and independent, earned some money, enjoyed his freedom and was stimulated by an abiding interest in everything he saw. For entertainment, he told us about his occasional visits to a 'speak-easy' for a drink, as that was during the Prohibition era. He also arranged many visits to shipboard departure parties featuring free food on the various ocean liners berthed at Chelsea Piers. Simply put, Hans was living it up. But it wasn't to last. Only two months after his arrival, the U.S. stock market crash of October 29, 1929 took a severe toll on all American firms, including the Saint George Textile Corporation whose business declined precipitously. All too soon, Hans was out of a job.

Despite the general hard times, Hans continued to find employment here and there. He even managed to increase his income to \$18 a week. An old school friend from Vienna, Stephen Lobel, got him a job with a travel agency on 5th Avenue which my Dad, who was always interested in world travel, greatly enjoyed. It was the perfect fit for his enthusiasm. I still think that Dad was meant to be a travel agent and would have been happiest doing that.

Nonetheless, Hans continued to hear regularly from his father Felix, whose business in Europe somehow was still flourishing. The Atlantic separation of father and son was simply no longer acceptable to Felix who sent off repeated cables urging Hans to return home. After a year abroad, with the expiration of his U.S. work visa, despite filing to extend his stay, Hans finally was compelled to board a German ship and return to Europe. Loving travel, he relished every minute of the return journey. As the ship was arriving at the dock in Le Havre in France, Hans sent a telegram to his father Felix, *"Europa hat mich zurück,"* Europe has me back. I loved hearing that little bit of the story. So in turn, I wrote the same words, *"Europe has me back,"* on a postcard, sending it to Dad each time I visited the Continent. Dad described his 1930 return to the continent in his taped recollections, recalling his excursions there. He went first to Paris for a week's visit, toured Holland and Germany and finally returned home to Vienna, *"where fate kept me for the ensuing seven years."* Felix Breuer had plenty of work to be done at his Vienna office and was very pleased to finally have his son join him. ♣

The 'Brothers' Georg and Hans

My grandfather Felix Breuer married two women, Olga and Marie. Olga was the mother of their only child, Hans. After Olga's death in 1925, Felix married Marie, who brought into the marriage her own only child named Georg Soyka.

Marie was Olga's beloved first cousin. Her husband died while he was serving as a young soldier with the Austrian army during the First World War—on the Italian front in the Slovenian Alps campaign, where hundreds of thousands died on all sides, largely due to the use of poison gas weapons.

During Olga Breuer's terminal illness in the nineteen twenties, she openly contemplated a future beyond her own life for husband Felix and their then teenage son Hans. Olga requested that Felix should look after her widowed cousin Marie. Indeed, Olga went further by explicitly suggesting that after her death Felix might consider marrying Marie, which is exactly what he did in 1926. With that, Hans, at age nineteen, had a stepmother and a stepbrother enter into the household and his life.

Marie's son, Georg Soyka, was nearly six years younger than Hans. The new stepbrothers, each having been only children, were not pleased with their new relationship. As Dad recounted it, Marie rather openly favored Hans in the newly merged family, much to Georg's disappointment. In fact, George didn't live with the family for very long. During his school years, Georg boarded at a military academy, later attended a college in Czechoslovakia, and took his first job in Prague. Decades later, each having survived WWII, my father managed to reconnect with Georg who had become a successful paper manufacturing engineer in New York and then in Mexico City.



George Soyka, age 60, New York City

George Soyka and his wife Olive

Typical of my father's determination and sentiment, he managed to reconnect with his step-brother Georg Soyka, kept in touch and occasionally got together with him in Los Angeles during the 1960s. Georg had survived the war in London where he had Anglicized his name to George. At some point he had emigrated to New York City with a Czech wife. Since he was a trained paper manufacturing engineer, he was able to get a good job in the City with the large paper manufacturing company Kimberly-Clarke.

Eventually George Soyka divorced his first wife and later married an energetic, mature British woman named Olive. At the time of their marriage, this serious and impressive woman was the personal secretary to the prominent book publisher Bennet Cerf, founder and president of the publishing firm, Random House. Previously, in England, she had worked as private secretary to the post-war British Prime Minister Clement Attlee. Olive ran the prime minister's country retreat called Chequers.

In the mid 1960's, George Soyka appeared at my parents' apartment on a business trip to Los Angeles while I was still in college. I had never met him before and I'm not sure when Dad had seen him last, maybe not since three decades earlier in Europe. George was heartily welcomed by Hans who introduced him to the LA family as his long lost brother. George, being a considerable charmer, took my parents and me out on the town, sharing lots of stories. He assured me that I was to be his special nephew. Grandiosity became him and he was indeed an accomplished man.

A few years later, I visited George and Olive at their large home in Cuernavaca. They had set up an elegant life for themselves in Mexico where George ran Kimberly-Clarke's Latin American operations at a paper factory near Mexico City. Olive remained serious and formidable, yet she was gracious and seemed to enjoy playing 'aunt' as they hosted me at their impressive home in Cuernavaca at Christmas-time, 1968. The Soyka's modern villa, originally built by Mexico's secretary of the Navy, featured generous and dramatic spaces indoors and out, floor to ceiling bookshelves of Random House bestsellers, a separate rooftop guest apartment, beautiful sunken gardens, a pool and the support of an ample staff. They were living a luxurious life.

Sadly, in the spring of 1970, George Soyka died unexpectedly. My father was shocked to lose this distant connection to his lost Viennese family. During the Soykas' Mexican years, my parents visited them several times, as Mexico had become a country that my father especially loved. So, upon George's death, Dad quickly made arrangements to fly alone to Mexico to attend the funeral. A devout, practicing Catholic, Olive had arranged for George's funeral Mass and burial in Mexico. The evening after the funeral, Hans and Olive had an odd, surprising and permanent falling out. Dad quietly asked Olive how George's Catholic funeral comported with his Jewish ancestry and early upbringing. Olive became livid. She was angry that Hans could be so "confused" with history and truth. Olive insisted that George was not Jewish at all and never had been. As far as Olive knew, George had always been Catholic and would be buried and remembered as such. My father quickly understood, most likely George had hidden his Jewish roots from Olive. So he paid his proper respects and left without saying another word about the matter.

Several months later, Olive invited Fredi and me to spend part of our late December, 1970 Mexican honeymoon in Cuernavaca where she proved to be an even more generous host. She gave us the bougainvillea covered rooftop apartment, arranged for lovely poolside breakfasts, tours of Cuernavaca with visits to her friends' estates, took us to a mariachi Christmas Eve midnight Mass, and later met us in Mexico City for a lavish New Year's Eve party. Dad's earlier visit for George's funeral was never mentioned. After our December 1970 honeymoon visit, no one heard from Olive again.



Fredi and Robert with Olive Soyka on honeymoon visit in Cuernavaca, Mexico, December 1970



Hans Breuer age 23 and 24 in Prague and Köninghof





OLLY AND HANS

Hans Breuer distinctly remembered the night he met Olly Haar. It was an unforgettable experience for both of them. On the evening of January 17, 1931, a series of traditional fancy dress balls celebrating the new year took place in Vienna. From their home on *Sechsschimmelgasse*, the two handsome young stepbrothers, eighteen year old Georg Soyka and twenty-three year old Hans Breuer, each in full formal evening wear, set off for separate gala festivities. They looked stunning in their white ties and tails, a sight that delighted their parents, Felix and Marie, who beamed as their sons left for a fashionable evening of dancing. Elegance and style were highly valued. Even today, Vienna's traditional ball season of formal dance events continues to be a popular tradition deeply embedded in the Viennese soul.

Hans had been invited by two young women friends to accompany them, one on each arm, to a lavish costume ball taking place at a large Viennese concert hall. During the evening, he met a fellow he knew casually who insisted on introducing Hans to a strikingly beautiful young woman named Olly. Wearing a white powdered wig and dressed in an elaborate multi-layered eighteenth century green silk gown which matched the color of her eyes, she was as stunning as an Imperial Austrian princess. When they met, Hans was bowled over by her but ever the gentleman, after exchanging pleasantries, he excused himself to return to the two young women he was escorting. Weeks later he once again met the captivating Olly and as he succinctly put it, "*the rest is history.*"

—◆—



Olly Haar at costume ball on the evening she met Hans Breuer, January 17, 1931.

My mother Olga Marion Haar, known as Olly, was born on March 1, 1908 in Vienna to Heinrich Haar (1878-1958) and his wife Helene Raab Haar (1880-1951). My Haar grandparents, the only ones I ever knew, were my Oma and Opa. The Haars' other daughter, four years younger than Olly, was named Gisela or Gisl. I called her Gia, and she was to become my one and only very special aunt. From the beginning, the Haar sisters were very loving and close and remained that way throughout their lives. As young women and under great duress in 1938, the two sisters, Gia and Olly, along with their husbands, Fritz and Hans, escaped Nazi controlled Vienna, emigrating

Haar family lineage

Nearly all of this work focuses on the paternal or Breuer side of my family. This chapter introduces the maternal, or Haar side. There is a note of irony here, as I never knew many of the people I write about in this account, in particular, my Breuer grandparents, Felix and Marie who perished in the Holocaust. Instead, it was my Haar grandparents, Heinrich and Helene, whom I actually did know in childhood as my Opa and Oma, Henry and Helen. As I was researching this Breuer-centric work, some ancestral details about the Haars came to light leading back to my maternal great great grandfather Leib Haar, the patriarch of all the Haar descendants. Much of what I've come to know is thanks to Henry Sommer of Philadelphia, a third cousin, who has conducted exhaustive ancestral research on the origins of our shared Haar family.

Leib Haar was born in 1807 in Sêdziszó, a small town in southern Poland not far from Krakow. He and his wife emigrated to the US late in life, settling in New York City, where he died in 1904 and was buried in Staten Island's Silver Lake Cemetery.

Leib Haar and his wife Rifke's first child Aron was my great grandfather, born in 1848. Aron Haar and his wife Sara were the parents of my maternal grandfather, Nechemie Heinrich Haar, born on July 29, 1878, the fourth of nine children.

Opa Henry and Oma Helen Haar often cared for me at home when I was a young child while my parents were working. They were part of my life until Helen died in 1951 followed by Henry's death in 1958. By that time I was thirteen and a half and in junior high school so occasionally I would ride my bike over to the nearby Hollywood Cemetery to visit my grandparents' grave. I remember them fondly.

The situation changed when a Russian man by the name of Sam Kransler came to Vienna in search of a good orthodox Jewish wife. There he was introduced to Helene's older sister, Tina Haar. By 1905, he and Tina were married, and had moved to Los Angeles to make their home, which left the door open for the marriage of Helene Raab to Heinrich Haar. Three decades later, my mother's Aunt Tina, then an American citizen, played a critical role in my parents' emigration by providing them with U.S. immigration affidavits and a destination residence in Los Angeles.

My grandparents Helene and Heinrich Haar, immediately after their 1907 wedding in Vienna, moved to Paris, where Helene promptly became pregnant with my mother. Not wanting to give birth in Paris, she returned home to be near her mother in Vienna. Soon after the March 1, 1908 birth, the Haars returned to their life in Paris, the city that my mother always said she would have preferred to be her birthplace. Olly was bilingual from the start. She loved the French people and their language which she learned as a child while living in Paris. After some years there, the three Haars moved back to Vienna for a business opportunity, where in 1912, Olly's younger sister Gisl was born.

The two Haar girls grew up in a comfortable middle-class home. Olly was a good student, and as a teenager she qualified for a prestigious *Gymnasium*, a high school which emphasized languages, the humanities and classics. After graduation, Olly enrolled at the University of Vienna's teachers' college, where she became certified to teach English. Eager to return to France, she continued her language studies at the University of Dijon. In 1929, at the age of twenty-one, she earned a *Degré Supérieur* diploma in French which certified her as a professor of languages.

to America together, bringing along my then two year old brother Steve. Fully two years later, in the fall of 1940, my Opa and Oma Haar managed to escape Nazi peril via a torturous trans-Asian emigration route. They finally reunited with their daughters to form the nucleus of our small Los Angeles family.

My grandfather, born Nechemie Heinrich Haar, was the fourth of nine children of Aaron Haar (1848-1922) and his wife Sara (1848-1929), living in *Rzeszow*, Poland, two hours east of *Krakow*. My grandmother Helene was born into the Raab family who lived in small towns in *Galicja*, a province of the Austro-Hungarian empire, which is now part of Poland. The Raab family, including three sons and two daughters, Tina and Helene, moved to Vienna around 1900.

Helene Raab met Heinrich Haar in Vienna and a protracted courtship ensued. Their romance included many long distance love letters from Heinrich who worked abroad, first in London and then in Paris, where for years he had a job in the Parisian department store *Galeries Lafayette*. He repeatedly returned to Vienna with wedding proposals for Helene, but their engagement was delayed by the old Jewish custom of marital sequence, meaning Helene's older sister, Tina, needed to find a husband before the younger sister, Helene, could marry.



Heinrich Haar clothing store in Vienna



Heinrich Haar in London, and Helene Raab in Vienna at time of their courting.



Olly and her parents c. 1911



Haar women in Vienna, baby Gisl with mother Helene and little Olly, c. 1913



Haar sisters Gisl age four, Olly, age eight, July 29, 1916 with mother Helene pasted below.



Heinrich Haar in Austrian army uniform (note balloon corps badge) with daughters Gisl and Olly, and wife, Helene, c. 1916



Gisl, Helene and Olly Haar c.1920



Olly Haar, age 18, university student in Vienna, May 1926



Olly Haar, age 21, at Klosterneuburg, June 1929

Prüfungskommission für allgemeine Volks- und Bürgerschulen in Wien.

Zahl 23

Frühjahr Herbst 1926

Lehrbefähigungszeugnis.

geboren am 1. März 1905 zu Wien

vor der unterzeichneten Prüfungskommission der Prüfung aus der Englischen Sprache.

Aus den der Anmeldung beigefügten Belegen ergibt sich:

a) Zurückgelegte Studien und abgelegte Prüfungen: *Wien, 1926*

b) Ort und Dauer bereits geleisteter Schuldienste:

Auf Grund der Prüfungsergebnisse wird *Olly Haar* zum Lehramte für die *Englische* Sprache an allen Lehranstalten im Gebiete der Volksschule (Bürgerschulen, speziellen Lehrkursen, Fortbildungskursen, Sprachschulen und Lehrerbildungsanstalten) mit deutscher Unterrichtssprache als *befähigt* erklärt.

Wien, am 8. Dezember 1926.

Prüfungskommission für allgemeine Volks- und Bürgerschulen.

Certificate to teach English issued in Vienna, December 8, 1926, allowing Olga Haar to teach English in special schools, language schools and in teacher training schools.

UNIVERSITÉ DE DIJON

DIPLOME DE FRANÇAIS

DEGRÉ SUPÉRIEUR

La Faculté de l'Université de Dijon, Président d'honneur du Comité de patronage des Étudiants étrangers, et le Président du Comité académique ont honoré

Mademoiselle *Olly Haar*

née à *Wien* *Autriche* le 1^{er} Mars 1905

de lui avoir accordé le Diplôme de français, degré supérieur.

Dijon, le 9 Août 1929

LE DIRECTEUR DES COURS, LE RECTEUR DE L'UNIVERSITÉ, LE CHANCELIER DE LA FACULTÉ DES LETTRES, LE PRÉSIDENT

NOTA. — Il est délivré en outre un Certificat complémentaire indiquant les matières de l'examen et les notes obtenues.

French Diploma from University of Dijon issued to Miss Olly Haar, August 9, 1929

TRANSLATION

ANNEE 1932

MAIRIE DE VIENNE

République d'Autriche - Capitale VIENNE

Certificat d'habilitation

DAF 20001 12 015 0051010 004

Mme HAAR Olga

Profession ou occupation: Professeur de langues

Age: née le 1 Mars 1905 à Vienne

Etat: autrichienne

possède l'habilitation à Vienne et qu'elle est inscrite dans les registres

COMMUNES sous le numéro matricule M/112 - 220/7/2006

SIGNATURE MATRICULE DE LA VILLE DE VIENNE: Mme HAAR

Mairie de VI^e Arrondissement

commune commune

VIENNE, le 27 Aout 1932

Pour la Mairie

3 signatures illisibles.

Je certifie la traduction qui précède conforme au texte de l'original écrit en langue allemande.

Je soussigné, Maire de Vienne, certifie que la reproduction des

textes ci-dessus est conforme au texte des originaux.

Wien, le 6. Juin 1932

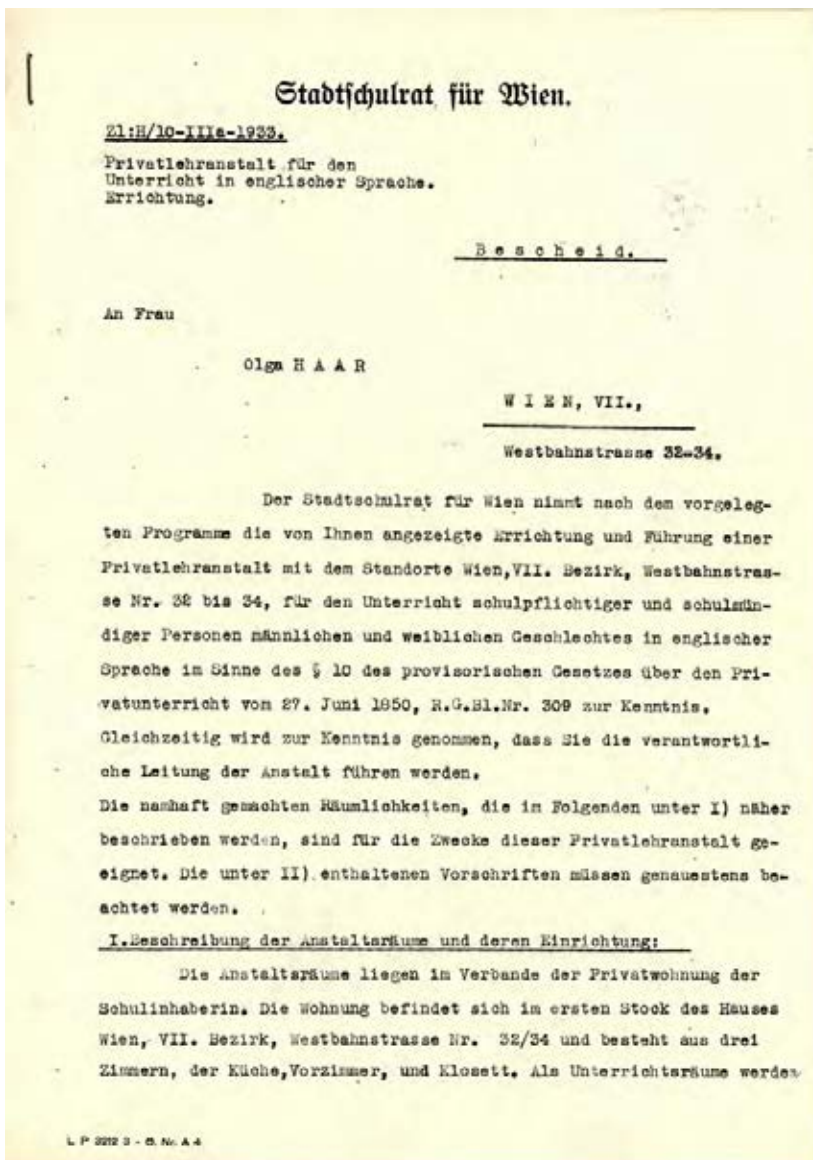
Professor of Languages This full official translation in French, dated June 6, 1931, indicates that Olga Haar is a professor of languages. It includes her birthdate, place of birth, and matriculation in May 1920, with proof attached of her citizenship.

For some time Olly taught both English and French in Vienna at a well established *Realschule* trade school where she served as its youngest teacher. She became such a good teacher and was so ambitious that she soon opened her own private language school in a building located at *Westbahnstrasse 32* in the 7th district, just around the corner from the Haars' house at *Kandlgasse 13*. Word spread quickly so the Olga Haar language school flourished as its enrollment steadily increased.

Olly was smart, stylish, a great conversationalist and a witty story teller. Hans wasn't alone in his attraction to Olly's beauty and remarkable qualities. She attracted many suitors and her adventurous spirit led to a notable romantic episode. Olly was involved with the son of a famous Viennese opera singer, and she actually became engaged to him. As it happened, in late June 1931, the couple set off on a trip to France during which Olly quickly realized that she'd made a big mistake. Hans, having heard of her plans with this fellow, whom he disdained as a braggart and womanizer, pursued them to Paris, accompanied on the adventure by his cousin Karl Breuer. Somehow Olly and Hans arranged to meet in the Luxembourg Gardens where she told him of her change of heart. Encouraged by Hans, she broke off the engagement, dismissed the roué and was rescued by the Breuer cousins. The threesome—Olly, Hans and Karl—joyously took off for the beach at Normandy before heading home. At that point the table was reset for Olly's and Hans' own successful and unwavering engagement.



Karl Breuer, Olly Haar and Hans Breuer Normandy, June 1931



Olly, age 27, in front of her school at Westbahnstrasse 32 with her whippet named Toby, 1935

Vienna City School Board

Three-page official letter to Olga Haar, dated March 10, 1933. It certifies that she is allowed to run a private school in Vienna which details the premises including number and description of three rooms within a private first floor flat of the house at Westbahnstrasse 32-34, Vienna 7. Explicitly describes each room with measurements, its access, its lighting, number of windows, indicates sufficient ventilation, including the location of an available toilet. Specifies that the school is to be used by boys and girls as well as males and females above the age of 14 years. All educational materials are to be kept in the rooms indicated.

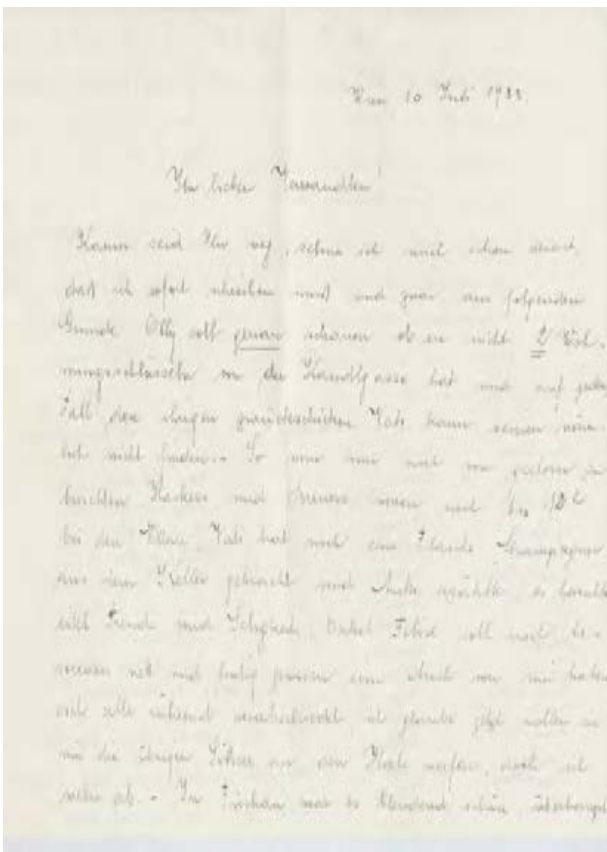
Hans' parents, Felix and Marie Breuer, became very fond of Olly Haar and were quite pleased once the couple announced their engagement. When they met Olly's parents, however, they had some reservations about her father, Heinrich Haar, who didn't seem refined enough. Whether it was class snobbery or a sense of superiority, the Breuer parents eventually overcame their reservations and befriended the Haars as both sets of parents gave the young couple their fullest blessings.

On July 9, 1933, Hans' and Olly's wedding was a festive celebration despite Felix's refusal to enter the synagogue for his son's wedding ceremony. Felix, a nonreligious Jew and assimilated, secular Austrian, stood quietly just outside the door. Otherwise, he was entirely overjoyed and supportive of the glowing young Breuer couple. After the ceremony, a large contingent of friends enjoyed themselves late into the evening, many gathering afterwards at the Haars' home to drop off wedding gifts. Forty-seven people who could not attend the wedding sent telegrams which the bride's sister, Gisl, wrote about in a detailed and glowing report she mailed to the newlyweds on the first day of their honeymoon.



Wedding Portraits Olly and Hans Breuer, July 9, 1933

OLLY AND HANS



Vienna, July 10, 1933

You dear Travelers!

You are on your way, and I am already hard-pressed to write immediately, for the two following reasons:

Olly should check to see if she doesn't have 2 house keys for Kandlgasse, and in any event, send one (a key) back. Dad can't find his. Secondly, I want to tell you what happened yesterday. The Hackers and the Breuers stayed until midnight at the parents' house. Dad still had another bottle of Champagne in the cellar and brought it out. Mom made nice toasts to friends for harmony and happiness. Uncle Felix was also especially nice and really very funny. When they left, they were poignant. I think they would now like to match me up with the remaining son (throw George around my throat), although I would hold them off.

Where you are going is especially beautiful and I hope you'll generally have sunny weather there or I hope that it will improve.

I returned home yesterday in the evening around 9:45 as a single child and noticed that the parents were not there because mother made an obligated stop. In the meantime, I

got the rest of the telegrams; I counted 46. Hans should know that opening them was hard work going on until 11:30 pm. At some point after midnight we were sleeping soundly and dead to the world. At 2:00 am, there was a loud ringing of the doorbell. The 47th telegram was being delivered! You can imagine how scared we were at that moment.

So that you know, here is a listing of who sent them: [Names are listed]

The wonderful wishes that they all sent are such that you can imagine, and I couldn't possibly forward them all to you. Hope everything will go well for you both and that you are happy and later will be able to take walks with me again. Please write to me often and with lots of details.

I send you kisses, *Your girl*

After their July 9th wedding day with all of its good cheer and celebration, Olly and Hans set out on a honeymoon trip which Hans had organized around his fondness for travel and ships. For the most part, they followed an old Austro-Hungarian Empire itinerary, sailing down the Danube, passing through Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia, then continuing by train through Romania to the seaside resort of Varna, Bulgaria on the Black Sea. After a brief stay there, Hans found another shipboard excursion, a cruise to Istanbul, which the newlyweds took before returning home.

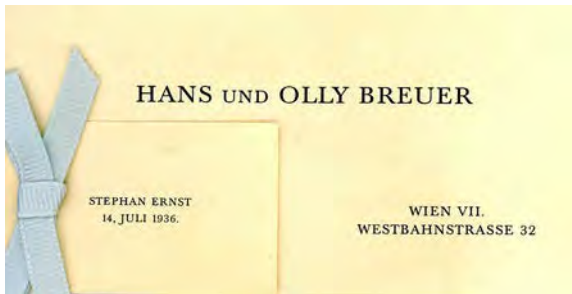
The Vienna family joyously welcomed them back. Olly resumed teaching French and English at her private school which was expanding to accommodate additional students. Hans continued working with his father Felix. The wedding events had provided a distraction from the unsettling political reality of those days. After all, Hitler had just come to power in Germany, Austria had its own tinpot dictator, Engelbert Dollfuss, and was about to break out into civil war, and the Great Depression was taking its toll on everyone. Still, despite the turbulent political times they lived in, early married life for the young Breuers was joyful.

In the summer of 1933, Hans and Olly moved into rooms in Olly's private language school at *Westbahnstrasse 32*, converting parts of it into an improvised household. Their apartment was nicely furnished with gifts from a wealthy uncle of Olly's mother, Helene Haar, who was a partner in the substantial Ehrlich sausage business. Much of that furniture later was shipped to our house in Los Angeles. Fredi and I moved several pieces of that same furniture into our Berkeley home where they provide European Art Deco era charm and familiar comfort to our life.

The year 1933 was significant for both Austria and for young Olly and Hans. It marked the beginning of their long married life together at the very time that Hitler was coming to power in Germany. This juxtaposition is difficult to imagine now, but young Olly and Hans managed to live a fairly normal life together even though they were fully aware of the palpable and foreboding circumstances that would eventually threaten their very existence.

In the menacing atmosphere of nineteen thirties Vienna, newlyweds Hans and Olly established a conventional lifestyle. The young Breuers extended their new family unit, first with a whippet dog that they named Toby. Then in July, 1936, they welcomed their first child, Stephan Ernst Breuer, enlarging and enlivening their Vienna household. They adapted the living room of their makeshift *Westbahnstrasse* 32 school and apartment for a baby room. As Dad told it,

On 14 July, 1936 there appeared Stephan Ernst, born at the Rudolfinerhaus hospital and we put all our enthusiasm into our new role of being parents. A year later, in the summer of 1937, we were able to rent part of a villa in a beautiful area of the Wienerwald [Vienna Woods] as our summer residence. The place was fifteen or twenty miles outside of Vienna, so I had to commute by bus, then train and then the streetcar to reach my office. The Haar parents shared a room in the villa and helped take care of the baby when Olly also had to go into town to attend to her students and their lessons in the city.



For the young Breuer family of three, that summer proved to be idyllic with plenty of outdoor room and access to a swimming pool. Many of their friends and other relatives made regular visits and life was good. They went back to living in Vienna full time at summer's end. At that point in 1937, Felix loaned Hans some money to buy a home for his family in the city. They were able to move into a famous apartment building at *Döblergasse* 2 in Vienna's 7th district, designed by the modern architect Otto Wagner, known for designing many of Vienna's most important public buildings and urban spaces. (His work includes the Austrian Postal Savings Bank, the Karlsplatz Station, the Kirche am Steinhof, and the Majolica House. Wagner was a founder of the Vienna Secession artistic group, along with Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser.) Hans and Olly Breuer took a third floor residence in the stylish apartment building. Reached by elevator, their spacious apartment featured one and a half bathrooms which was quite a luxury at the time. The little baby's room was beautifully decorated with animal print wallpaper on a blue-flowered background. They also had a maid's room for the resident housekeeper who cooked and took care of little Stephan. According to my father's description,

The beauty of our new living situation was not to last forever, as the dark clouds on the horizon became darker and darker still and ever more dangerous. The necessity for us to leave the country sooner or later became more and more obvious.



Steve in Vienna 1937



1933-1938 were alarming years in Austria. Economic production slumped nearly 40 percent, unemployment doubled, and politics turned more ideological, with some drawn toward Marxism while many other discontented workers were lured by fascist appeals. Paramilitary units were formed and by early 1934 political intrigue led to a brief but bloody Austrian Civil War. Postwar economic displacement allowed Hitler to realize his aggressive expansion plans. The Austrians began to foresee their own country's fate. Viennese Jews carefully monitored news of anti-Semitic incidents and attacks in Nazi Germany in their newspapers and heard daily reports on their radios. Increasingly they came to realize that the Hitler catastrophe might very well arrive to envelope them, too. For Austrians, the deteriorating conditions of the mid-thirties presaged an inevitable trajectory toward Hitler's so-called 'Anschluss,' the annexation of Austria into the German Reich on March 12, 1938.



Annexation Austrian-style

When the Nazis marched into Austria on March 12, 1938, hundreds of thousands of Austrians turned out to welcome them. But after the war, the country preferred to see itself as just another of Hitler's victims.

Suddenly, events began moving in fast-forward: It was 10 minutes to eight in the evening, March 11, 1938, when Austrian chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg took to the radio to address his people. He bade them farewell with portentous words: "God protect Austria."

The next day at 5:00 a.m., SS leader Heinrich Himmler landed with his staff at the Aspern Airport in Vienna. Shortly thereafter, the German army crossed the border into Austria. "Operation Otto," as the military element of the Austrian takeover was known, and the "reunification of Austria with the German Reich," as Hitler formulated it for a law decreed earlier that same day, was in full swing. A referendum on the topic of independence, planned by Schuschnigg for March 13, had prompted Hitler to take matters into his hands and push ahead quickly with the solution to the "Austria question."

On March 15, Hitler, who was born in Austria, declared the "entry of my homeland into the German Reich" from the balcony of the Hofburg Imperial Palace. On Heldenplatz, 250,000 people gathered to celebrate the occasion. Afterwards, a parade marched around the Ringstrasse, which circles the heart of Vienna. Not just the German Eighth Army took part in the parade, but also SA and SS units. Tanks and fighter planes rolled past as well -- a precisely staged performance for the cheering masses. One year later in Czechoslovakia, the scene would be different: The Germans marched into Prague's Wenceslas Square and were met by completely empty streets.

The Nazis moved ahead quickly with their decisive grab for power. An emphasis was placed on propaganda, with banners hung everywhere. In Vienna alone, 200,000 pictures of Hitler went up, augmented by slogans such as "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer" — "One people, one empire, one leader." In the subsequent referendum, 99.73 percent of the population voted for "reunification" with the German Reich. There was, of course, the immense pressure exerted by the military, but the result was also reflective of a country willing to join the Nazi movement.

In 1938, Austria possessed valuable reserves of gold and raw materials — much the opposite of the German economy, which was becoming increasingly depleted by preparations for war.

—by Marion Kraske, *Der Spiegel Online*

HISTORY TAKES ITS TOLL

Immediately upon the March 1938 Anschluss, local Viennese Nazis felt empowered to practice their anti-Semitic abuses. The owner of a butcher shop, located at the street level of my parents' new comfortable apartment, took just such advantage. Being an outspoken Nazi-sympathizer and brown shirt, the man turned on his Jewish customers including my parents. In their case, this butcher took his own even more direct action. One day he simply marched upstairs to their flat, confronted them at the door and demanded that they release the place to him, effectively evicting the young Breuer family as being undesirable and unworthy to live in such a pleasant situation. There was no legal recourse. The police backed the butcher up and some time thereafter my parents arranged to move out.

And so it went: throughout Vienna, with an immediate and ruthless assault upon the Jews, the Nazis quickly concocted a fiendish legal process. Promptly they changed laws, fired and replaced all remaining fair-minded judges along with denying legal practice to all Jewish lawyers. The occupying Germans, normally law and order hard liners, had simply changed the laws and the order. In fact disorder is what reigned. Hundreds of new racist laws took effect. Jewish doctors were, at first, allowed only to keep their Jewish patients, then none at all. Jewish professors and teachers were entirely purged from university and school faculties. Businesses shut down. Displacement soon affected my parents and my grandparents. Their lives were rapidly and forever being transformed.

As a mercantile broker, Felix represented Ganahl, a gentile-owned business, and therefore was able to hang on a bit longer. So my father and grandfather continued working, at least for a while. Still, the process was in full swing. For a few days, all schools were temporarily closed, their operating licenses annulled pending official review in order to reopen. Small private ones, such as my mother's language school, were forced to reapply

for operating certification. Olly received an official notice in a letter dated August 3, 1938 sent by the City School Board of Vienna “to all Private Educational Institutions and Courses in Vienna.” With this notice the authorities informed “all private educational institutions and courses in Vienna” that they were to immediately close “due to the circumstance it is necessary to review all private schools, so that from today on all certification is to be made invalid, and all schools must stop operation and then reapply to be reviewed before continuing business.” By this bureaucratic means, devised by the Nazis to separate out all Jewish-run schools, such businesses were never reviewed or permitted to reopen. It was just one more part of the process, and it instantly and permanently took away my mother’s professional livelihood. The rationale was bogus, but the intent was simple and effective. Authorities assured that no Jewish owned schools were re-licensed, and thus my mother was legally put out of her own business. It was done swiftly, by legal order, without any recourse.

For the Nazis, having perfected their process of disposing of Jewish livelihoods in Germany, the Austrian implementation was rapid. This diabolical procedure allowed for the wide and systematic expropriation of Jewish-owned assets. Real estate and apartments were seized, businesses closed down or forced to be sold at rock-bottom prices. This extended also to personal effects, such as furniture, jewelry and artworks. Profiteers moved quickly to expropriate the property of Vienna’s Jews. It was fast and furious. And for every Viennese Jew whose property was taken in this way, there was a non-Jew who benefited! When my grandparents, Felix and Marie, were forcibly moved from their comfortable flat, they sold off furniture for a pittance, sent some items to their gentile friend and colleague at Ganahl, and had to leave many other things behind.

Thus, practically overnight, Austria’s Jews were rousted from their professions and removed from nearly all forms of employment. Jewish children were expelled from public schools. Plunder was the order of the day, and Jews were being made to pay for their own persecution. The wealthier, more prominent Jews were naturally the richest target, but the Nazis devastated every level of Austrian Jewish life. They pillaged Jewish-owned businesses, imposed selective new taxes, demanded ransoms, and conducted legalized outright confiscations. By seizing Jewish assets, Germany could more easily afford to prepare for war.



City School Board of Vienna

This is the official notice closing Olly’s school, dated 3 August 1938 issued by the School Board for Vienna immediately closing my mother’s private language school at Westbahnstrasse No 32-34. Building entrance as it looks today is seen below.





Last Vienna home of Hans, Olly and Steve Breuer This Otto Wagner designed apartment block is located at the corner of Neustiftgasse and Döblergasse. The young family lost their beautiful apartment to a Nazi butcher whose shop was downstairs.

Anmeldung (Anmeldung)		Meldungsnachweis (Meldezettel) für Unterpargelen.		Deutliche Schrift mit Tinte! (Keine Kopieren!)	
Bezirk, Porsellan		Gasse Nr. 43, 2. Stiege, 2. Stock, Tür 22.			
3. d. NOV. 1938					
1. TX. Bezirk, Porsellan		Gasse Nr. 43, 2. Stiege, 2. Stock, Tür 22.		Ratskammer (Abmeldung):	
2. Vor- und Nachname: Felix Breuer					
3. Beruf: Handelsvertreter					
4. Geburtsort, -bezirk und -land: Reichenberg, Böhmen, Deutschland				18. ausgezogen am	
5. Staatsbürgerschaft: deutsch				nach (Ort, Bezirk, Gasse Nr.)	
6. Wien, am 29. November 1938					
(Bei männlichen Personen) Unterschrift des Hausbesitzers (Meldereizers): Dr. O. BASKALUK Wien, Oppolzer		Unterschrift des Wohnungseizers: Felix Breuer			

Declaration Certificate for change of residence registration

Officially indicates the November 29, 1938 forced move of Felix Breuer residence to a shared flat at Porsellangasse 43, 2nd floor, door 22.

Looting opportunists

Nazi-loving Austrians were the first to systematically loot all Jewish property in Vienna, from day one, even before the government had set the rules of such confiscation. Authors Walzer and Templ, in their book, sarcastically titled, "Unser Wien" (Our Vienna), describe what they term "The Topography of Robbery" in which they list businesses, addresses and former and current owners.

Most of the Kinos (cinemas), and half of the pharmacies were Aryanized, along with 136 of Vienna's tobacco shops. On it went. Another example: The Bristol and Imperial Hotels, two of Vienna's proudest, owned prewar by a Jew, Samuel Schallinger, who died in the Theresienstadt (Terezin) concentration camp near Prague. [Recently I met the grandson of Eduard Steiner, another Viennese Jew, who had owned the landmark Prater Ferris wheel, and who, like my own grandparents, was murdered at Auschwitz.] Looting went on as Vienna was in the "process" of being made more Aryan. The famous Majolica House, designed by Otto Wagner, is still on many Vienna tour agendas these days. It too was seized from a Jew named Wilhelm Frankl after the Nazis declared him mad. As I explained above, my parents also lived in, and were thrown out of their Otto Wagner-designed apartment, without anyone even bothering to call them mad!

Of the substantial new personal fortunes that resulted among Viennese gentiles, many have been successively passed on to second and third generations, to this day. The so-called Aryanization process of Jewish property in Vienna, where some 200,000 Jews once lived, forever changed the fabric of the city's professional and cultural life. Vienna was fundamentally changed and things never again were the same. All Jewish doctors had stopped working and their offices were turned over to others or simply shut, despite a resulting crisis in the shortage of medical care. In the process, all Jews, both those who managed to leave and those who were later enslaved and murdered, workers or wealthy, were robbed of their assets and so made to pay for their own dissolution. The fact is that lacking a Jewish professional class, Vienna remains relatively Judenfrei today.



Kept along with the letters, photographs and documents held deep inside the cabinet at our Los Angeles home, my father saved copies of two Vienna newspapers, *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* and *Die Stunde*, reporting Austria's fall to National Socialism with its amalgamation into Germany. The dissolution of my parents' homeland launched a profound chain of far-reaching changes in their lives over many years to follow. ♦

"Radical Change in Austria."

Headline in Vienna newspaper, NEUES WIENER TAGBLAT, on Saturday, March 12, 1938 announcing momentous news of the "Anschluss" —German annexation of Austria.



"National Socialist Government in Austria"

Headline in Vienna newspaper, DIE STUNDE, on Sunday, March 13, 1938, announcing the details of restructuring the government under German annexation.

HISTORY TAKES ITS TOLL

Die Stadt ohne Juden (City without Jews)

Long before the Anschluss, a dream long held by fascist Austrian anti-Semites was the ridding of Jewish influence in Vienna. In 1922, Austrian writer Hugo Bettauer wrote a satirical book in which he envisaged a Vienna without Jews. It was an imaginative flight of fancy inspired by the utterly improbable notion that a city might expel its entire Jewish population. The book was quite a publishing success, precisely because of the seemingly absurd premise upon which the story was based.

In *Die Stadt ohne Juden*, an executive order decrees that all Jews must leave Austria by the end of the year. As the last of the trains carry the hapless Jews over the country's borders, the Aryans in a Judenrein (Jew free) Vienna celebrate. Food prices drop and it's now very much easier to find a desirable apartment. The Nazi party no longer has anyone to rail against and becomes an irrelevance.

But slowly the Viennese begin to see a downside to the new order. The city relied considerably on Jewish doctors and lawyers, so slowly the queues in the hospitals and law courts get longer. The city's opera house depended largely on Jewish patronage; audiences dwindle and before long there is no more opera. A similar fate befalls theaters and libraries. Publishers and bookshops lay off staff.

In time, it dawns on the Viennese that life is becoming incredibly dull. Their city has lost its color and cultural diversity. Businesses are moving away. But, above all, there is the crushing boredom of a homogeneous society which has lost the very group upon which the blame for all ills might be pinned. Eventually, the Jews are invited back into Austria again.

Although Hugo Bettauer's plot seemed fanciful in the extreme, it provoked wide debate in Austria. It revealed the raw anti-Semitism which lay just below the surface of the First Austrian Republic. A film was made out of the book. It ends as the city population realize that a city without Jews is ultimately a city without soul.—Nicky Gardner and Susanne Kries; hiddenEUROPE magazine, February 2017



THE IMPERATIVE OF GETTING OUT

In 1938, all members of my family experienced Nazi subjugation—beginning with those in Vienna in March, and reaching the Bohemia-based family in Czechoslovakia by October. Even before Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and the resulting full outbreak of World War II, the Nazi yoke was upon them. Getting away became crucial, although actually doing so proved very difficult.

In March of 1938, as we have seen, Germany took over Austria. Within six months of this Anschluss, at least 45,000 of the approximately 215,000 Austrian Jews attempted to emigrate. However, most foreign nations, gripped during the Depression with serious economic problems of their own and infected with varying degrees of anti-Semitism, resisted taking in many refugees from Nazi territory.

Then on November 10, 1938, the very day that my parents managed to get their US visas in Prague, *Kristallnacht* erupted. This horrific pogrom marked the point at which brutal anti-Semitism began its transformation into the murderous Holocaust that consumed European Jewry. To flee successfully, already a hard task, now became a terrifying challenge. Austrian Jews after *Kristallnacht* spoke of nothing else, desperately seeking whatever means and avenues of exit that seemed possible.

My family experienced all of it, the successful departures, the failed attempts to get out, the despair, and the deaths. A few managed to escape, but the majority of my relatives became trapped and were dragged into the voracious maw of history.

What has come to be called the Holocaust took place in the broader context of World War II, and the final death toll was huge. For European Jews it was a disaster of historic proportions. Six million Jews, forty percent of all the Jews in the world, perished. Among them, twenty-one individuals were members of my family. This chapter details the story of how the Holocaust began to unfold for them.

With a second twentieth-century European war fully launched on September 1, 1939, the rapid fall of entire countries to Nazi domination was staggering to comprehend. Over the next year, Germany and its allies conquered huge portions of the continent. With each advance, the Germans changed the laws, installed puppet state officials, required Jews to wear identifying armbands and confiscated their property, stripped people of their professions and livelihoods, stole their belongings, confiscated their homes, and humiliated them in every possible way.

Nazis soon began to gather up Jews, who as individuals and as a people were designated criminal enemies of the state. Authorities established ghettos in occupied cities, and soon began deportations to forced-labor camps. Then, as they conquered territory, the Nazis systematically destroyed all Jewish communities. They eventually went to extreme lengths to corner and capture Jewish citizens, often drawing on local civilian and police support. *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units) followed the invading German army. Beyond mass displacement, enslavement, and forced labor, they carried out mass shootings, employed gas, and attempted by all means to rid the continent of every single Jew. They nearly succeeded. It took over seventy years until 2015 for the world's Jewish population to rebuild to pre-war levels. In the case of my family, entire branches were murdered, leaving no descendants at all.

Kristallnacht—The Night of Broken Glass

On November 7, 1938, in response to the assassination of a German embassy official in Paris by a Polish Jew, the Germans unleashed a long-planned vengeance on Jews of the Reich, including those living in annexed Austria and the areas of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia now suddenly occupied by German troops. On November 9-10, 1938, the chaos broke loose. Mob violence against Jews and their property and places of worship was organized or condoned in violent anti-Jewish pogroms now known as Kristallnacht, literally “Night of Crystal” or “Night of Broken Glass.” Far more than glass was broken, as hundreds of synagogues burned, 7,000 Jewish businesses were trashed and looted along with the Jewish schools, cemeteries, homes and hospitals. The Nazi government called it a spontaneous demonstration, but of course they allowed, promoted, and even organized the focused riots and havoc. Thousands of Jewish males were arrested and incarcerated, most obtaining release in the next months on condition of their immediate emigration from German lands. The message that all Jews needed to get out was as crystal clear as the broken glass.

But how to get out? Even though the Nazi regime wanted to rid itself of all Jews, they made it nearly impossible to escape. At that point departure was allowed only after a so-called ‘25 percent flight tax’ on all money and goods to be taken along or shipped ahead. Beyond paying the taxes, leaving soon meant more “process” by humiliation, harassment, and impoverishment through the extraction of as much money as possible. Documents proving that taxes and debts had been fully paid and that police records were cleared had to be procured. Investigations had to take place, stamps affixed. A family that applied for exit visas faced investigation and had to appear at hearings to determine their eligibility to get the proper papers. Papers! Approval by one authority required clearance by another, particularly by the police. Thousands applied for the papers one needed in order to file the next set. Time limits were set, and if missed, the “process” began again with new rules. Lines for filing papers were long, often forming the night before an appointment. Perhaps, if some paper hurdles could be avoided, departing empty-handed might have been best. But nobody knew for sure.

To leave, an emigrant needed to prepare a complete list of personal property, exactly detailing each item to be sent or taken, and that list had to be approved in some office where an appraisal of items’ worth might also be demanded, and a determination made that you were indeed its owner and had permission to take it out. A percentage was paid at the appraiser’s office, where, of course, one needed an appointment first, and all offices were extremely busy. Shipping things out of the country demanded similar appointments with moving companies and official supervision to ensure that you didn’t smuggle things out not shown on your list. The supervisor, of course, needed to be paid. By the time emigration was finally approved, most Jews had little money left and upon departure, they were allowed to take only 10 German marks in cash with them.

With her language school now closed, Olly’s life was miserable. For our family and all of Vienna’s Jews, simple day-to-day existence had become dangerous. As Dad explained it:

Life at home was no safe matter either. Olly was picked up and taken to an old post office to scrub the floors there, as this building was being converted to a Nazi party headquarters. While there, she found a rather more stupid than compassionate guard, one to whom she told about her leaving a small child at home while her husband was working for an Aryan company. So he let her go. We knew we could not take chances for repeat performances of that sort.

The message was clear, and with an eye on their young son, and the encouragement of their parents, they worked on a way to leave. Dad recalled, “*Being without proper US Visa affidavits, we looked into the possibility of going elsewhere.*” My parents considered following relatives who had gone to the Dominican Republic, the small Caribbean island destination for Kurt and Lilli Schnitzer—Lilli Ehrlich Schnitzer was the sister of my uncle Fritz Ehrlich. The Schnitzer’s family owned a soap factory in Santo Domingo, dating back to the early 1920s. Lilli and husband Kurt, a physician, had gotten out and sailed to Dominica, where they lived at first in a primitive house with dirt floors and where their son, George, was born. Kurt, not only a physician, but also a good artist and an avid photographer, had some photographs shown in the capital and somehow they were noticed by government officials. He was offered the position of personal court photographer to the cruel Dominican dictator Raphael Trujillo. That proved very fortunate for them and kept them going financially until they were able to move on to the United States after the war. In the postwar years, I grew up hearing stories about the Schnitzer family’s Caribbean island existence.

Another possible destination my parents considered was the other side of the island of Dominica, the country of Haiti. Dad recalled their dealing with that particular challenge:

In order to facilitate entry into such Latin American countries, it was considered advantageous not to be of the Jewish faith. We were referred to a sympathetic parish priest, Father Ludwig, in a little town along the Danube near Klosterneuberg, who felt it his duty to save Jewish lives by converting them to Catholicism. So, we went there, and after some introductory remarks by Ludwig, we were officially baptized into the Catholic church, and we still have the papers to prove it.

As it turned out, this “baptism,” a mere paper device, proved to be of no help to Jews in defending themselves under the Nazi regime. Authorities rejected any recent conversion certification. In my family’s case the baptism ended up playing no role in their eventual escape. Still, the mere fact that it had even transpired always struck my mother as somewhat shameful, so much so that she forbade my father from bringing it up. She feared that my brother Steve’s executive job at Wilshire Boulevard Temple could have become imperiled. Steve, however, became quite fond of the story, and he wrote an essay on the subject of discovering his “conversion.” Here is a portion of what he wrote:

In looking over family papers, I came across a letter referring to my “conversion.” Curious, I asked my Dad what that meant. Self-consciously, my father first shared with me the fact that I had been baptized a Catholic as a two year old child in Austria.

The priest who performed the baptism and certified the ceremony understood that ours was not a religious conversion, but an issue of survival. My father added that while we were fortunate to survive, the priest himself perished at the hands of the Nazis in a concentration camp as a punishment for his actions.

Threatened, frightened, humiliated, and uncertain, my family had learned the fragility of identification, the potential penalties of wrong papers and labels.

Years later, as an adult, I met a young priest teaching at the Vatican. I shared the story of our baptism by a brave priest with him, much to his interest. He suggested a visit to the parish church where I was baptized. There I might find the records of that event and more about Father Ludwig.

It was this idea that eventually brought me to the Danube ferry. I was in the company of two friends from Klosterneuberg, a lovely town near Vienna, whose name derives from the huge monastery overlooking the Danube. The ferry took us to Korneuberg, a town just across the river. My friends were intrigued by my story and I needed their help with spoken German.

From information on my baptismal certificate, we identified the church, St. Agyd. My friend approached an older priest just leaving the confessional and told him the purpose of our visit: We sought information about someone named Dr. Ludwig who baptized Jews during the Nazi period in order to save them, and who in turn died for his efforts. Did he know of Dr. Ludwig? Were there records we might see, she asked.

The priest introduced himself as Dr. Jochlinger, senior parish priest of St. Agyd. He told us that he not only knew of Dr. Ludwig, but of his wartime activities. Moreover, Father Jochlinger had known him personally! In fact, Dr. Ludwig had not been killed, but had lived until 1958!

We were taken aback at the news. As a young priest, Father Jochlinger had known Ludwig as a teacher at the abbey in Klosterneuberg. He was delighted with our interest and our reaction, and continued with a series of stories, personal impressions and memories of the man.

He recalled that Dr. Ludwig had ties with the artistic community of Vienna, which included many Jews. In fact, his niece was the famous singing actress Krista Ludwig. Jochlinger described Ludwig as “politically naïve,” belittling efforts to which we gave a more noble interpretation. In fact, he said, Dr. Ludwig participated in more than three hundred such “emergency baptisms.” The description of this activity was more bemused than laudatory.

I asked if there were written records we might see. Certainly, he replied and led us from the church into the neighboring parish house. He led us into what appeared to be a dining room. Against the wall was a large cupboard. He opened the door to reveal a number of leather-bound ledger-sized books. These proved to be the registers of weddings, births and baptisms dating back over two hundred years.

We identified volume XXII, based on information from my own baptismal certificate. After leafing through pages to find the correct date, we found it. There we were, spread across two large pages.

Dr. Ludwig was listed first, as officiator, Alois Holzer, a layman, as “sponsor.” There followed my father’s name with his birth date and address at birth. My paternal grandfather was identified on the facing page, listed as “of the Mosaic confession” - a Jew. My father’s mother, listed with her maiden name, was similarly identified. These were the grandparents who were later killed in Auschwitz.

On the next line, my mother and her family were identified, with names, addresses, and of “mosaic persuasion”, as well. These were the grandparents who, in 1940, made a dramatic escape journey through Russia and Japan, to finally join us in Los Angeles.

Then there was my name, written as the others in a bold European cursive. My parents having been baptized first, on my line I was listed as having two Roman Catholic parents.

The pages before and after our names included dozens of baptisms performed by Dr. Ludwig, many witnessed by Alois Holzer, all of members of the “mosaic confession.”

Leafing ahead, I found an additional surprise. The aunt and uncle with whom we fled had been similarly baptized, five days later. As had my uncle’s sister and brother-in-law, who had found refuge in Santo Domingo. All had eventually come to California, to raise families and prosper.

Finally, he told us about Dr. Ludwig’s fate. We were baptized in August, 1938. That September, the Gestapo called in Alois Holzer and other individuals whose names appeared in our church records. Concerned about the crackdown and his potential arrest, Dr. Ludwig was recalled from St. Agyd and assigned to the abbey at Klosterneuberg. There, he taught church history, remaining not only throughout the war years, but until his death in 1958.

Dr. Jochlinger was gracious and modest. “It was my pleasure,” he said. “After all, you are the only ones who have ever asked!” The only ones! Apparently, neither the Church, nor any beneficiaries had as yet come forth to credit Dr. Ludwig for his efforts.”

—Steve Breuer



Baptismal Certificate issued for “conversion” of Hans Breuer on August 16, 1938, at Korneuburg, Austria signed by the priest, V.O. Ludwig. Similar certificates exist for each family member.

The first to leave Germany and Austria in haste had been able to save their clothes, their baggage, their household goods, and many of them even brought some money out ... First the Jews had been forbidden to work in their professions, to go to the theatre, the cinema, museums, and academics had been banned from visiting the libraries. They had stayed on out of either apathy or a sense of loyalty, timidity or pride. They would rather, they thought, be humiliated at home than lower themselves to the status of beggars abroad. Then they had been deprived of their domestic servants; radios and telephones had been removed from their homes, then those homes themselves had been confiscated, and they had been forced to wear the Star of David, so that everyone would avoid them in the street like lepers and they would be recognized as outcasts, to be avoided and abused. —Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, 1942

Hans and Felix’s business in Vienna remained temporarily insulated from the ongoing purging of Jewish businesses in 1938, due to the fact that they mainly represented the Feldkirch-based textile company, *Ganahl*, a large non-Jewish textile manufacturing concern. For ten years, beginning in 1928, the business that my grandfather Felix had representing Ganahl kept him busy and well-compensated in Vienna.

The Ganahl mills were run by the Hanusch family in Feldkirch, a beautiful town in the *Voralberg* region, the far westernmost part of Austria. For the Breuers, the supportive role of the Hanusch family in *Feldkirch* was one of trust and worthy of note. The Hanusch family even took possession of and hid some of the Breuer family’s personal belongings. Under Nazi-ruled Austria, this sort of thing was a highly illegal and dangerous act. In later years, beginning in the mid-sixties, my parents, Hans and Olly, were able to visit repeatedly with Waltraud and Werner Hanusch, who were enthusiastic in maintaining the familial connection. For some non-Jews, such as Werner Hanusch, the war experience had not been easy. Upon his coming of military age, Werner Hanusch was drafted into the German army, rather late in the war. As an active duty soldier, he saw gruesome battle, and was actually captured by the Americans, and kept for some many months in a very unpleasant prisoner of war camp in upper Austria. Werner, somewhat younger than my father, was the only person who ever met four generations of Breuer men, beginning with Felix—the colleague of his own father whom he had seen regularly through their pre-war business connection. Then he came to know my father Hans, and far later in his life, my brother Steve, myself, our wives and finally, in 1996, my teenage son Noah. Werner was proud of knowing us all, and he shared some powerful memories with me. When Fredi and I last visited Waltraud and Werner in *Feldkirch* in 2003, Werner choked up and cried as he told me the following agonizing story.

At some point, perhaps in 1940, Werner's father, the older Herr Hanusch, possibly with the help of the Ganahl family, being a wealthy and well-connected merchant, had utilized some connections he'd made with the Nazi SS, through which he managed a dangerously illegal arrangement to save my grandparents. The plan was to have Felix and Marie Breuer taken safely out of the country, driven from Vienna across the relatively close border into Hungary. Bribes had been paid and as a result official papers were prepared. An exact time and date were set with Felix and Marie appearing at the appointed moment at the front of their apartment building, carrying a single suitcase each. It was at high-risk, of course. By then, the Breuers had been forced to move in with several other families, still living in the Ninth district, but now at *Porzellangasse 43/22 (2nd floor)*. At the appointed hour, a uniformed SS officer with driver pulled up in a staff car, as had been arranged, to escort and transport them out of the country. But, it ended there abruptly. As it turned out, only the exit papers for Felix had been prepared, and none existed for Marie. Apologies were expressed, as at the very least, it was a terrible misunderstanding, or else it was simply a sadly bungled arrangement. Exasperated, Felix told the officer that he couldn't possibly agree to leave the country without his wife, and the entire scheme ended. Another escape avenue had closed.



Escape! Easy to say. Not so easy to accomplish. Over the years, I have been repeatedly asked by friends and colleagues—far too casually for my own taste—why it was that my family and so many other Jews didn't try to escape earlier from the Nazi brutality that emerged prior to the full-blown war, let alone later on. What annoys me is the implication that they somehow did not try. Of course they did, and in fact a great many succeeded. Let's look at some facts about escape.

Before the *Anschluss*, Viennese and Czech Jews like those in my family were well aware of the news that had been coming out of Germany since the Nazis had come to power there in 1933. In fact, many Jews who had fled Germany had moved to Vienna. Vienna! There they could be safe! Or so they thought. The first choice for those fleeing was always another nearby European country. Why shouldn't it be? Why abandon your European culture, your Jewish culture available to some degree in every city of Europe to an entirely unknowable fate in some remote place on earth? Haiti and Cuba and Santo Domingo and Mexico and even America must have seemed obscure and very far away.

And who could imagine that the whirlwind that was Hitler would actually gather more and more force with every year instead of starting to subside? Surely this couldn't go on for much longer. Even the governments of powerful nations like England and France couldn't grasp that Hitler's appetite would actually be insatiable. Who could imagine that not only would you end up being unsafe if you fled to Vienna, but that those who fled even to Budapest or Prague or Warsaw would be safe only for a few months or a year longer than those who didn't flee at all? Felix and Marie, for example, had they made it to Hungary as they almost did, would have gained nothing if they hadn't then fled Europe altogether. What had seemed a realistic plan to them would have turned out to be just another way station on the unimaginable route to *Auschwitz*.

Fleeing Europe altogether on long, expensive routes was hard to visualize, let alone to plan and carry out. It was not easily arranged and eventually became entirely impossible. Some managed it, but it was beyond the capabilities of many. Further, though Felix and Marie had watched from the nearby safety of Vienna as Jews somewhat gradually lost their rights in Germany, they probably could not conceive of the speed with which the position of Jews would be destroyed once Hitler was actually in Austria, then the *Sudetenland*, then the rest of Czechoslovakia, and then the rest of Europe.

Moreover, they wanted to remain optimistic. Hope, integral to the human condition, keeps us going. Far too many, in retrospect, miscalculated. To some degree this was the case with my family. But please, be sympathetic with them. The realities they faced were far from obvious at the time. They were well positioned, well educated, well established in business, had given prior service in the military, maintained contacts with friends and other family abroad; they knew how things worked. And yet, from today's view, it can seem naive. Much as they were credulous, so were entire nations both nearby and far away. The extent of Hitler's plans were not plainly laid out. Powerful countries were in economic stress and tired from their debilitating Great War experience just a few short years ago. Too many would not believe that Germany was again the threat it was becoming.

Among Viennese Jewish families, only a few had arranged in time to transfer funds or belongings abroad. Viennese Jews who hadn't fully absorbed their dismal destiny for what it was, my grandfather Felix among them, were swiftly trapped by the immediate implementation of anti-Semitic laws, stunned by ravenously opportunistic neighbors and ensnared by a confiscatory state. Among those who did make it out as the noose was quickly tightened, a great majority arrived in foreign lands destitute. It was neither a pretty nor appealing prospect.

Prior to and during the full spread of World War II throughout Europe, many Jews sought to escape from countries falling under Nazi control. Even at the start, between 1933 and 1939, more than 90,000 German and Austrian Jews successfully fled to neighboring countries—France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland. Often they miscalculated, as my grandparents Felix and Marie would have done if they had succeeded in an escape to Hungary. After the Austrian *Anschluss*, followed the next year by the takeover of Czechoslovakia, escape became far more difficult. Nazi Germany technically permitted emigration from the Reich territories until November 1941. There were few countries willing to accept Jewish refugees. Wartime conditions severely hindered those trying to escape. By 1941-1942, with the beginning of systematic shooting of Jews in the Soviet Union and the deportation of European Jews to extermination camps, escape literally became a matter of life and death. Routes of escape were progressively sealed, remaining doors closed, and desperation prevailed. In the weekly letters between my parents and Breuer grandparents escape was always the foremost topic.

There was little or no help available to the beleaguered Jews like my family, who were left ensnared in Vienna and in Bohemia. With just a few notable exceptions, help came randomly, either from some long-time gentile neighbor or a close family friend. Even with my parents' own successful escape, helping those left behind proved next to impossible. Mainly, there was nowhere to turn. Even non-Jews who were not sympathetic with the Nazi regime were terrified. Terror was how the system worked. Jews who fell under spreading Nazi Reich rule, starting with Austrians and Czechs, experienced a calculated furious assault which compromised any alternatives for their packing up and getting out. There were miscalculations, and a mistaken hope for more time, as the vice grip closed quickly and ominously. Fortunately, my grandfather Felix encouraged the quick departure of my parents and my brother, but he didn't move with sufficient dispatch on his and Marie's own behalf. By the end of 1938 they still hadn't applied for the American quota, although my Haar grandparents had.

What seems so obvious to us now was far murkier then, particularly for older Viennese like my Breuer grandparents. After all, in their late sixties, they had already lived through very turbulent years of change earlier in the century and managed to survive. Determined optimism worked before. It has been said, if optimism results in serial diagnostic underestimation of a serious problem, it is no virtue: at best, it badly prolongs the ailment; at worst it is fatal. Even psychoanalyst Dr. Sigmund Freud had to be convinced and pushed to get out of Vienna while he still could, protesting, "*but this is my station.*" Freud lived just blocks away from my Breuer grandparents. Felix Breuer, the World War I veteran, the business representative of a large gentile-owned company, the man with family connections in Bohemia, found himself bogged down and boxed in. I cannot find it in my heart to blame him. With

so much to lose at home, this sanguine attitude, for a time, may have seemed to make some sense. Ultimately, he paid the most severe price.

Still, Felix would not take a chance with the fate of his only son Hans, his beloved daughter-in-law Olly, and his grandson Stephen. The older Breuers insisted that the young Breuer family—my father, age thirty-one, my mother, age thirty—had to leave promptly. They did so, and thereby survived.

While escape was still possible, the majority of Vienna's large Jewish population actually did manage to get away, saving their lives to the extent possible under the staggering circumstances. By late 1938, my parents, Hans and Olly with my brother, two-year-old Steve, accompanied by my uncle Fritz Ehrlich and aunt Gia, were among those fortunate enough to be able to arrange a successful way out.



Felix Breuer, in his late sixties, was resistant to change, unsure if even worse times lay ahead in Austria. Early attempts by Hans to bring his parents to America were initially rebuffed by Felix, who resisted becoming a burden to his struggling children. In early 1939, Felix and Marie expressly wrote to Hans and Olly, struggling but newly free in Los Angeles, that they couldn't impose themselves upon their children. Very soon, however, as conditions in Vienna rapidly deteriorated and the elder Breuers grew desperate, Felix and Marie became highly motivated to leave. Unfortunately, as their weekly exchange of letters reveals, Dad's frantic efforts to save his parents while escape was still possible were repeatedly frustrated until it was too late to do anything. Felix lost the business and his livelihood, the family home taken from them along with much of their belongings, and finally, whatever remained of their financial assets were stripped away.

In Vienna, life-long friends shared ideas about possible ways to escape as well as how they might survive if and when they actually got out. Some of those ideas are in the letters sent between the older and younger Breuers. Conditions were changing rapidly in Vienna, as were the destinations being considered, so plans were repeatedly scrapped or modified and new ones explored. As late as November 1941 with hope still alive, it was taking time for Felix and Hans, thousands of miles apart—with censors and unreliable mail service disrupting the flow of letters—to pursue alternatives. Documents had to be obtained, renewed and cleared through the appropriate authorities. Reservations and advance payment for Felix and Marie's shipboard placement was required. There was the challenge of where Hans should apply limited resources and unfortunately time was running out.

For six long years they endured an odyssey of dispossession and captivity. The fates of Felix and Hans, father and son, their wives and family, couldn't have been more different from one another. While the younger Breuers made it safely all the way to southern California and a new beginning in their American lives, Felix and Marie endured a torturous nightmare of deprivation.



The pogrom called Kristallnacht (November 9 and 10, 1938) hit the Czech borderlands just when my parents were busy securing their U.S. visas in Prague. Mere weeks before, the Czech Sudetenland area, immediately adjacent to Dvůr Králové, had become part of Germany under the Munich Agreement of September 30, 1938. Many Sudeten Germans were hurrying to join the Nazi Party or the newly-created SA units, and longed for “revenge” against Jews and Czechs. Even before 9 November, formerly-significant Jewish communities in the border regions were already being torn apart: of the approximately 28,000 Jews who had lived in the area before the Munich agreement, at least 12,000 had left. By November, the synagogues in many places were already closed, and the Jewish communities there were no longer functioning. Sudetendeutscher Freicorps or youth organizations, were in large part behind the violence against Czechs, Jews and the political opponents of Nazism. Most Sudeten Germans merely watched the synagogues being set on fire and the arrests. Approximately 35 synagogues in the border regions were burned down or otherwise damaged. The violence and expulsions reduced the Jewish community in the border areas to a mere fragment of what it had been. —Reference: holocaust.cz

The Vienna and Dvůr Králové-based Breuer families kept in close contact throughout this worrisome period. As first cousins, only children, and just one year apart in age, Hans and Karl, who now ran the *CB&S* factory, were kindred spirits. As children they shared summers and holidays together. As young men in the 1920's they lived together developing a deep friendship while apprenticing in the textile printing business begun by their fathers, Ernst and Felix, and grandfather Carl Breuer. Within a year of one another, the cousins each married vibrant women. The two young couples shared many interests, aspirations and concerns. Karl and his wife Ilsa in *Dvůr Králové* maintained a mutual affection with Hans and Olly, corresponding and visiting regularly. The young Vienna Breuers welcomed the birth of a baby boy, Stephan, in July 1936, and soon thereafter the Bohemia-based Karl and Ilsa Breuer welcomed their own child, a girl named Gita, whom they called Gitty, born in April 1937.

In the fall of 1938 the cousins' comfortable parallel lives came to an end. After Germany annexed Austria and the ominous Nazi menace was realized, Hans and Olly made plans to leave for America. Before emigrating they returned once more to *Dvůr Králové* where the two families lived together for a final two month reunion. Hans was deeply concerned about Karl's family's safety, especially if Czechoslovakia fell to Hitler. Immediately before his departure from Bohemia, Hans called Karl and Ilsa who were away on a brief business trip to Paris. While it was still possible, Hans strongly urged them to consider staying in Paris. He pleaded with them to allow him to take their little daughter Gitty to America where they would all reunite later. Karl dismissed the idea. Perhaps he thought, “How can I walk away from my business, my factory, my position in the community? Hans, in working with your father, you have developed highly portable skills, and you have already been to America and worked there. My situation is not so portable. And isn't *Dvůr Králové* outside the *Sudetenland* [just barely] and therefore safe from Hitler? He says he has no further territorial claims in Europe now that all Germans are united into one nation. We will be safe.”

He and Ilsa returned home to Gitty and each family confronted an entirely different destiny, one a new life in America, the other six years of suffering followed by their death in *Auschwitz*. ♦



Cousins Karl and Hans Breuer

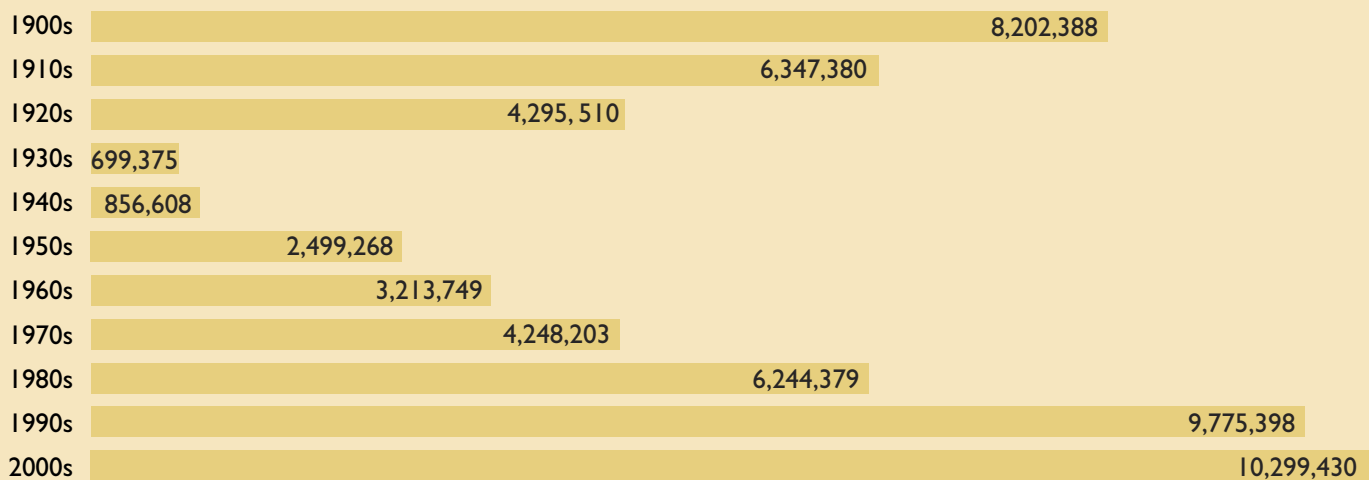
The United States had no designated refugee policy during the Nazi period. It only had an immigration policy. Those escaping Nazi persecution had to navigate a deliberate and slow immigration process. Strict quotas limited the number of people who could immigrate each year.

After Germany annexed Austria in March 1938 and particularly after the Kristallnacht pogroms of November 9-10, 1938, nations in western Europe and the Americas feared an influx of refugees. About 85,000 Jewish refugees (out of approximately 120,000 Jewish emigrants) reached the United States between March 1938 and September 1939, but this level of immigration was far below the number seeking refuge here in this country. In late 1938, 125,000 applicants lined up outside US consulates in Austria hoping to obtain 27,000 visas under the existing immigration quota. By June 1939, the number of applicants had increased to over 300,000. Most visa applicants were unsuccessful.

Many who sought a safe haven from persecution during the 1930s and 1940s found their efforts thwarted by the United States' restrictive immigration quotas and the complicated, demanding requirements for obtaining visas. Public opinion in the United States did not favor increased immigration, resulting in little political pressure to change immigration policies. These policies prioritized economic concerns and national security.—US Holocaust Memorial Museum

100 years of immigration to the US

Persons obtaining lawful permanent resident status, 1900-2009



Source: 2015 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security

The 1930's were the extreme low point for US immigration. This greatly effected the fate of European Jews seeking refuge, and helps explain the formidable challenges facing my family.

DEPARTURE AND EMIGRATION

By mid-1938, my parents and my aunt Gisl and uncle Fritz turned all their attention to promptly leaving Austria, using their family connection through my father's close cousin, Franz Schnabel, in Prague. Schnabel had always been loyal, reliable and outspoken in helping Hans, and in this case he would not disappoint. Destination choices for everyone were limited. The option of getting to the United States was their top choice, but the prospect of making that happen was daunting. It worked in their favor that both Hans and Olly spoke English, and that Hans had the earlier experience of working in the US. Moreover, Olly's aunt, her mother's older sister, Tina, had been living in Los Angeles for over thirty years and their youngest brother, Herman Raab, lived in New York City. These relatives were American citizens. Dad recalled, "*We were hoping that they could help us with the affidavits.*" An American family affidavit of support needed to be submitted to the US Embassy, along with a visa petition, a declaration of the proposed immigrant sponsorship, and assurance that the newly arrived would not become a public financial burden.

The process of getting into the US, however, had become especially restrictive and quite undependable. The constraints of the American quota system, begun in 1924, were strictly adhered to. US quotas were set according to an applicant's birth country and those quotas set for Austria and other parts of central Europe were far from generous. By law the most numerous quotas were for the Irish, the English and the Germans, all of whom had established political clout in the US. Moreover, because of the depression, the 1930s saw the lowest allowance of US immigration visas issued. Being a desperate European Jewish family was certainly of no help, and in fact, it often worked against applicants.



Emigrants: Aunt Gisl and Uncle Fritz Ehrlich standing behind Olly, Steve and Hans Breuer, Vienna 1937. The family of five were to travel together to America in late November 1938.

As Dad explained in his taped recollection, "*The Eastern European quotas were pitifully small, like the Czech quota for my parents and the Polish quota for the Haar parents.*" Despite meeting all the deadlines, Dad said that the required affidavit documents, "*as supplied by the American relatives over there were pitifully insufficient, so I started to look for additional people willing to supply us with additional affidavits.*"

Among the problems they faced were US requirements to include the potential sponsor's income tax returns, which proved hard to come by. My mother's and aunt's family connections certainly played a role as the young Breuers and Ehrlichs sought to emigrate. However, in the end, plain old-fashioned bribery and insider connections cultivated by Dad's cousin Franz Schnabel proved to be decisive in getting their visas.

Franz Schnabel was the boss of the *Gottlieb-Schnabel Textile Works* in *Nova Paka*, Bohemia in Czechoslovakia. As a young man, Dad had worked closely with him in the 1920s, and it was this cousin who had sent him to America in 1929. Franz, or Frank Stephens as I later came to know him in the US, really loved Dad and was a courageous and energetic mover on all fronts. Czechs, at that point in the early autumn of 1938, were still, if only momentarily, free of the Nazi tyranny. Having defense treaties in place with France, Russia (the Soviet Union) and Great Britain, the Czechs felt relatively secure. It was a feeling soon made brutally irrelevant by the Munich conference. The rapidly

deteriorating circumstances alarmed Franz, who considered it unacceptably dangerous for the young Breuers to remain in Vienna any longer. Dad recalled the events:

One day Franz called me from Nova Paka issuing the following order: Tomorrow morning you go to the Czechoslovak consulate in Vienna, and ask for Mr. So-and-so, and he will issue visas for you and for your family [which included Fritz and Gisl Ehrlich] to come to Czechoslovakia, thereby putting all of you out of reach of the Nazis in Austria. So we started packing suitcases. I went to the Czech consulate the next morning, we received proper papers and got our exit visas, and on the 6th of September, 1938 we left Vienna on the night train to Prague. We had to pledge never again to return, which was a requirement for receiving an exit visa from the Nazis. Needless to say the good-byes from our parents were heartbreaking, and I'd rather not think or talk about it any more. It was a goodbye forever.

As their Vienna departure was so hurried, they packed only a few suitcases, leaving all other furnishings and possessions behind to be attended to by their parents, surely an upsetting task and a blunt reminder of the realities they faced. Fortunately the regulations at the time and their means still allowed the older Breuers to get the belongings loaded up, and then to ship everything to Los Angeles. According to Dad, describing the new governmental regime:

... still at that time allowed for prepayment of the movement of both persons and their personal belongings after obtaining the necessary permits. Not long thereafter, these 'lenient' provisions were suspended, and thereafter you were only permitted to take with you one suitcase and ten German Reichmarks. (Equivalent to just \$10 US at the time)

Quickly, efficiently, and even legally, the young Breuers and Ehrlichs were managing their escape. The next all-important step was to get an entry visa to the United States. This task was made considerably more difficult, and the success of their escape was put in great jeopardy by the momentous events taking place in Munich concerning Czechoslovakia's future. The spread of Hitler's "Lebensraum" (living space)—his favorite term for German territorial expansion—appeared to be following them from Austria into Czechoslovakia. Dad continued to describe how it went once they got there:

Little cousins at Königinhof

L. Steffl (Steve) with Gitty Breuer, daughter of Karl and Ilsa Breuer in family backyard in Königinhof, CZ, Oct. 1938.

R. Last studio picture of Steffl taken in Vienna, before departure, fall 1938



So we arrived in Prague on the morning of September 7, 1938 and were picked up by my step-brother Georg Soyka, who lived in Prague and worked at his uncle's paper factory. After just one day staying in Prague, we were picked up by my cousin Karl Breuer who took us off to Königinhof (Dvůr Králové), where the Czech branch of our family all lived. We considered it quite safe, and we enjoyed a peaceful life with them for a while, but this lasted only a few short weeks. On October 1, 1938, the infamous Munich conference took place. It was agreed that the Germans would be allowed to take over the German-speaking border areas (the Sudetenland) and the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin, was so pleased with his accomplishment, that on arriving home, he declared 'peace for our time'... Our town of Königinhof (Dvůr Králové) was Czech speaking, and surrounded by German speaking areas. Sure enough, the area was turned over to the Germans and we were once again in the midst of German military contingents and storm troops. I went repeatedly into Prague to check on the progress of our visa applications, but nothing happened. Here again appeared Franz Schnabel as our savior. Using every means at his disposal over a two month period, Schnabel worked with us on getting our U.S. visas. Franz Schnabel was married to an American born wife and he maintained a personal relationship with the United States consul in Prague.

He invited this Consul named Ingle to his estate, where he went hunting and fishing with him and constantly greased his palm. So Franz made arrangements and he ordered me back to Prague on the 10th of November, the day after the first night of Kristalnacht, and the burning of all Jewish synagogues and businesses, and many Jews being incarcerated. In Prague, we bypassed many people in a long line at the consulate in the American Embassy, and we went straight inside to the inner consulate offices. A quick review was done of our visa applications and no mention was made that our papers might be somehow insufficient; so well were Consul Ingle's palms greased. Sure enough our passports were stamped with proper visas and we left Prague the next week, on November 19th. Franz Schnabel had his own visa already prepared and he kept it in his pocket at all times, such that once the whole country fell into Hitler's control on March 15, 1939, Franz left the very same day for the U.S., leaving behind his American wife and son to follow him soon thereafter.

Once in America, Franz Schnabel changed his name to Frank Stevens. And, as an interesting side note, the US consul Ingle's corruption was later discovered, and after being dismissed by the State Department, he got a job as the sheriff in a small Kentucky county. During the war years, he continued to try to put the touch on Frank Stevens, but that was to no further avail. I met Frank Stephens several times during my childhood when he would come to visit us in Los Angeles. Here was the man who had mentored my father, facilitated my immediate family's emigration, and literally saved their lives. When I met him, he displayed a buoyant spirit, and my parents seemed to melt with happiness in his company. ♦



US Embassy in Prague

For days on end, lines at the American Embassy office extended way down the street as anxious people waited to enter in order to process visa applications. It was particularly true when, on November 10, 1938, the day of Kristallnacht, my parents were walked to the front of the line accompanied by cousin Franz Schnabel, and entered directly into the consulate office. —Photos by RB, 2014



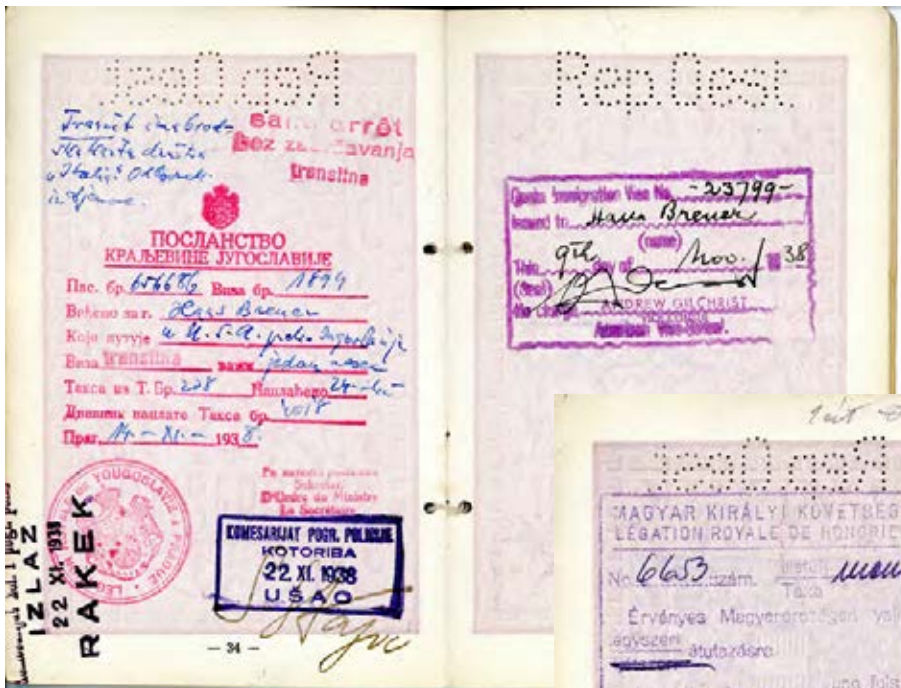
Hans Breuer's passport pages including exit permits and stamps

Page 27: Nazi "administrative levy for departure to the USA and all states in Europe", 6 Aug 1938

Page 31: Passport photo of Hans Breuer

Pages 34 and 35: Exit and transit visas. US Quota Immigration Visa seal issued "This 9th day of Nov. 1938" and signed by Andrew Gilchrist, Vice Consul at Prague.

Pages 36 and 37: Exit visa from Prague and transit visa through Bratislava and Budapest enroute to Italy.





Hans and Oily's passports and US green cards

Here are both of my parents' Austrian (*Republik Österreich*) passports. These, along with the US issued Immigrant ID or green cards, were kept together within their passport wallet in our cabinet at home.

On page 2 of my mother's passport is the Nazi stamp for permitting exit with the addition of my brother Stephan Ernst written at the bottom.

Umzugsgut des Auswanderers: <u>Hans Breuer, Wien VII, Döblergasse 2</u>					
		Name	letzte inl. Anschrift)		
Lfd. Nr.	Stück	Gegenstände Art	Zeitpunkt der Anschaffung	Wert d.n. 1.1.1938 erworben. Gegenstände.	Bemerkungen
1	1	runder Tisch			
2	2	Fauteuils			
3	2	Sessel			
4	1	Stehlampe			
5	1	Bücherregal			
6	1	Sekretärkasten			
7	1	Serviertischchen			
8	2	Schlafsofas			
9	1	Wäschekommode			
10	1	Schuhkasten			
11	1	Toiletetischchen mit Glasplatte			
12	1	Kleiderkasten			
13	2	Fauteuils			
14	1	runder Tisch			
15	1	Hocker			
16	1	Deckenlampe mit Glasplatte			
17	3	Spiegel			
18	1	Kinderbett mit Matratze			
19	6	Teppiche 260 x 140, 140 x 95 2 à 135 x 95, 170 x 118, 300 x 300			laut Schätzungsprotokoll
20	100	div. Bände Bücher, hievon 20 Bände Brockhaus Lexikon			
21	1	Zimmeruhr			
22	9	Bilder (3 Oel, 7 Reprod. bez. Drucke)			
23	100	Glasservice (grosse un. kl. Gläser, Wein- Bier, Likörgläser, Krüge, Flaschen)			
24	80	Porzellanservice (je 18 Suppen-Fleisch-Dessertteller Kaffeschalen, Untertassen, je 6 Mokkaschalen und Untertassen, div. Schüsseln und Kannen)			
25	142	div. Silberbesteck (je 12 gr. kl. Messer, gr. kl. Gabeln, gr. kl. Löffel, 18 Dessertbesteck, Mokka- Löffel, Vorleger, Salatbesteck, Tortenheber)			laut separater Wertaufstellung
26	4	Jourservice			
27	4	Glasvasen			
28	5	Keks- und Zuckerdosen			
29	2	silberne Obstschüsseln			
30	1	silberner Aufwarter			
31	2	silberne Leuchter			
32	2	kleine Bronzenippes			
33	8	div. Nippsgegenstände			
34	1	beleuchtbare Karminfigur			
35	1	Keramikleuchter			
36	4	Bonbonsteller			
37	5	Teile Toilettegarnitur			
38	4	Keramikfruchtschalen			
39	8	Divanpöster			
40	24	Leintücher			
8		div. Schachtel mit Haussp...			
1		Schachtel mit Haussp...			
2		Gummiwärmflaschen			
1		Küchenuhr			

List of Personal Effects of the Emigrant Hans Breuer

Part of a five page detailed document listing 179 line items and quantity of all household belongings; submitted for freight company, and exit customs authorities. Examples: 100 books, incl. 20 vols. encyclopedia, 142 pieces of silver, 5 cookie tins, 1 clock, 2 day beds, etc. etc.—and 2 hot water bottles. Also all clothes are listed, along with many doilies, 3 ostrich feathers, one teddy bear and 38 diapers.



EXIT ROUTES

Originally the young Breuers and Ehrlichs booked passage on an Italian freighter which carried limited passengers sailing out of Trieste. That ship was destined for Los Angeles via the Panama Canal. However, the timing wasn't right due to earlier visa delays. Necessity made booking on the next available sailing imperative, and despite a lower ticket cost, it proved to be a big upgrade—to one of the greatest Italian luxury liners, the *SS Conte di Savoia*, sailing the Atlantic route to New York. Fare for this upgraded passage became possible with money saved from not booking the far longer passage to Los Angeles. All onboard amenities were prepaid and any remaining funds had to be returned to the travel company in Vienna. Nazi rules made sure that Jews took out as little money as possible. Dad described the route to Italy:


So in spite of the fact that we were booked into tourist class, we travelled in style, and purposely spent as much as possible to avoid losing whatever was left being sent back. We three [Hans, Olga and Steve] departed Prague by train, while Fritz and Gisl Ehrlich flew from Prague via Zurich.

To the Breuers, flying seemed a bit daring, so they avoided the flight with the excuse that little Steffl might be upset. Rather, they took a more lengthy and circuitous route. Dad continued:

First we went by train to Bratislava, the Slovakian capital of Czechoslovakia. There we boarded a Danube boat coming from Vienna. This Austrian boat now flew the Nazi German Swastika flag, and was therefore part of the country we had pledged never again to enter. But we took the chance anyway, sailing on down to Budapest, from where we again took a train through Slovenia, Yugoslavia to Trieste and then on to Genoa where we met up again with the Ehrlichs. I must report that, thanks once again to Franz Schnabel, we were able to make this trip in style, as he provided contacts for us in Budapest and in Trieste, where he had also arranged for money to be picked up, enabling us to travel in real style and not like poor immigrants. In Budapest, for instance, we were put up in a luxury hotel, and there we outfitted Steve in a sailor suit and shoes which were admired throughout the journey and upon our arrival in the US. Olly also bought some nice things for herself.

Safely on board as the impressive ship set sail, the relief felt by the Breuers and Ehrlichs must have been considerable. Self-conscious as Dad was about their good fortune, his ability to enjoy the voyage and his memory of it stood in profound contrast to the challenges ahead and still more so to the family conditions they had left behind. I remember that Dad always took pleasure in describing the voyage:

Once on board the liner Conte di Savoia, the two sisters went almost daily to the hair dresser between bouts of sea-sickness, and together they bought things in the boutique, all charged against the funds that were held on account. After a week we finally arrived in New York City on December 4th, 1938. We were met at the dock by uncle Herman Raab, the youngest brother of Helen Haar, who had been living in New York for the previous twenty-five years.


N° 17431 *

Grand Hôtel de Gènes & des Princes
 GENOVA

TELEFONO 45-500 45-501 VIA BALBI, 90 Camera N. 27/28
 S. Fam. Breuer

Mese	193		
Autobus		16-	
Appartamento			
Passione <u>Dinner</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>190-</u>	
Bagno			
Caffè e latte			
Tè, Caffè, Cioc. Latte	<u>9-</u>		
Uova			
Pasticceria			
Colazione			
Pranzo			
Alla carta	<u>6</u>	<u>10-</u>	<u>6-</u>
Vini		<u>5</u>	
Spumante			
Acqua minerale		<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Birra	<u>6-</u>		
Liquori			
Biancheria			
Diversi			
Domestici } Camera			
} Pensione			
Totale del giorno	<u>121</u>	<u>310</u>	<u>27-</u>
A riportare	<u>121</u>	<u>331</u>	<u>358</u>
Totale Generale			<u>358-</u>

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Genova, li 25/11/1938

IL CASSIERE

SCHWEIZERISCHER BANKVEREIN
SOCIÉTÉ DE BANQUE SUISSE
ZÜRICH

Zürich, 26. November 1938. PR

Herrn Stephan E. Loebli,
108, West 78 Street,
New York City

Chargé

Wir übermachen Ihnen beiliegend
Nous vous remettons ci-joint

im Auftrage: //////////

und für Rechnung: Herrrn Hans Breuer
et pour compte de:

\$ 100.- per Check auf New York

und erweisen Sie um gefl. Empfangsanzeige durch Rücksendung beiliegender Bescheinigung oder mittels Postkarte.
donc veuillez nous accuser réception moyennant le formulaire inclos ou bien par carte postale.

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Schweizerischer Bankverein
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Breuer family lodging bill at Hotel Princess, Genoa, rooms 27/28 prior to ship embarkation

Swiss bank check for \$100 made to Hans Breuer, by good friend Stephan Loebli, arrangement for cash on arrival at NYC.



EXIT ROUTES





Sailors included little Steve onboard the ship. The outfit was a big hit. At the ship's first stop at Naples, Steve pointed at a plume of smoke arising from the Mt. Vesuvius volcano and remarked, "Look, a choo-choo train is on top of that big mountain - Vesuvius later erupted in 1944.

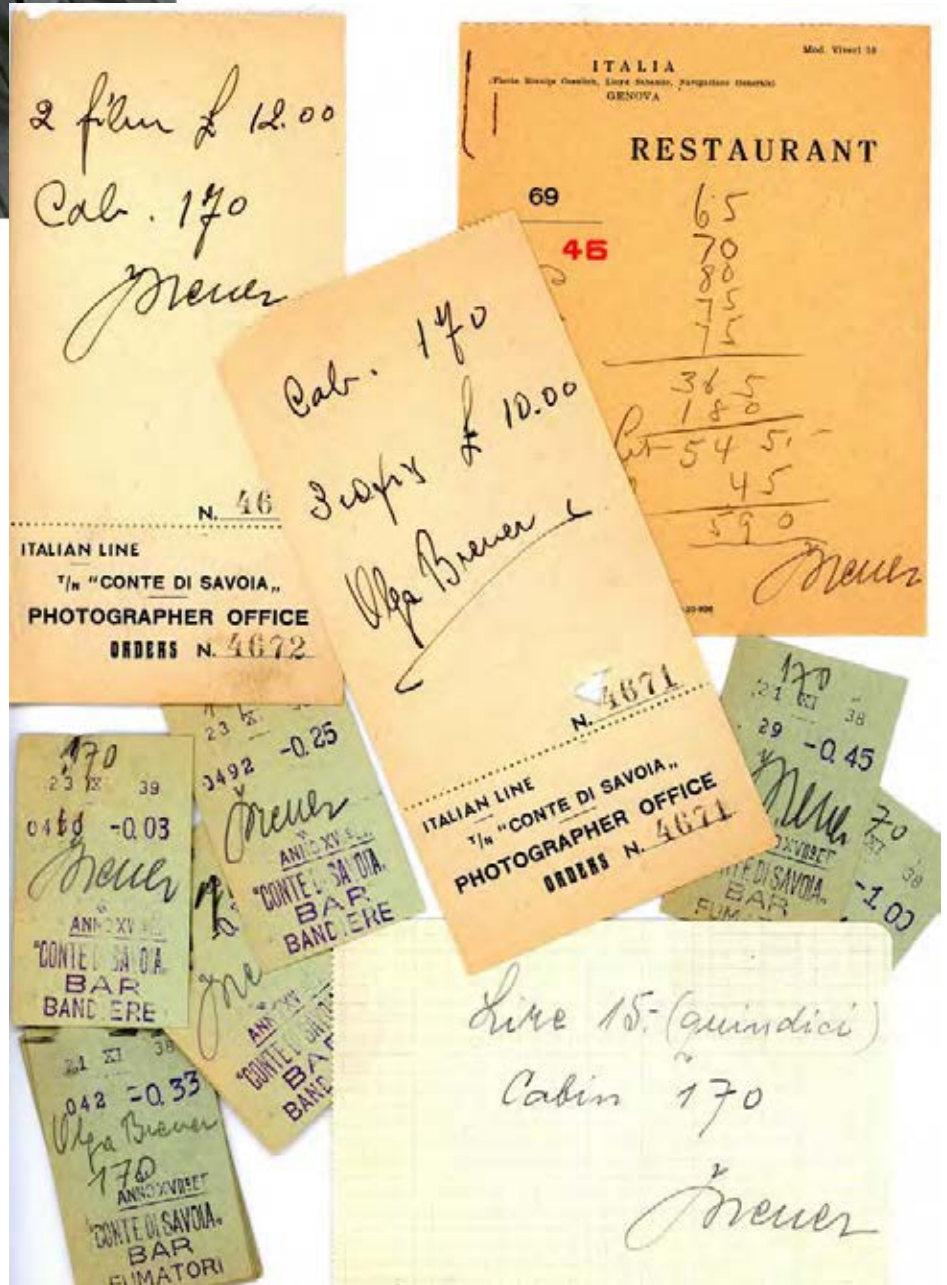
On board account tabs for Conte di Savoia restaurant, bar, film, etc., each signed by Hans or Oly

Departure from Genoa



Voyage to safety, a memorable journey

For my father any shipboard travel was a delight. Hans had crossed the Atlantic twice before as a younger man when, in his early twenties, he had gone to work in NYC before eventually sailing back to Europe. But ten years later, in November 1938, traveling with his wife, young son, and in-laws, this was by far the more meaningful voyage. That he and his loved ones would savor it may seem ironic given everything they left behind but the young Breuers and Ehrlichs made the most of their journey and good fortune. Growing up, I heard quite a bit about the trip. Souvenirs from the ship, like tickets, menus, brochures and posters, were among the liveliest treasures of the collection kept in the cabinet at home.





Postcard of S.S. Conte di Savoia at sea



Italian Line tourist class ticket contract for November 25, 1938 sailing on the vessel Conte di Savoia, Genoa to New York, in cabin 170 for Mr. Hans Breuer, Mrs. Olga Breuer and child Stephan Breuer

Shipboard Orchestra

Postcard of the arrival of Conte di Savoia in harbor at New York City



The Italian Line SS Conte Di Savoia was built in Italy in 1932 at Trieste, a shipyard famous for building some of the most beautiful ocean liners afloat. She left on her maiden voyage to New York in November of that year, six years before my family's voyage. The ship moved through the water at a very impressive top speed of 27.3 knots. It was the first of the Italian Line fleet to have gyroscopic stabilizers to reduce the ship's rolling during transatlantic crossings, supposedly calming the trip for a capacity of 2.200 passengers. Nonetheless, the Haar sisters, my mother and aunt, complained of being sea-sick much of the journey.

Each class on board had its own promenades, verandas, and lounges. One of her eleven decks featured a 900 ft.-long floor to ceiling, glass enclosed promenade, two large saltwater pools — one indoor and one outdoor — a gymnasium, four dining rooms, a variety of intimate lounges and bars, a shooting gallery, a winter garden and a garage for 30 automobiles. Among the people of note who traveled on her were Cary Grant and Barbara Hutton, Gloria Swanson, Crown Prince Umberto of Italy, Queen Victoria Eugenia of Spain, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and the Prince of Savoy.

The route she traveled was called the "Sunny Southern Route." In the 1930s, the Italian Line's service and cuisine were considered to be the finest on the Atlantic. There was a heavy emphasis on the Conte Di Savoia's abundance of outdoor deck space, cabana and pool areas. Her crew had the reputation of always being warm and personable. Passengers took strolls along the glass enclosed promenade on their way to dinner in one of the four dining rooms. They dressed up for dinner and danced in the lounges to a ship orchestra.

Reality was altered as world worries were to be left behind. Nevertheless, in time, the war caught up with the ship. The Conte Di Savoia continued her Atlantic service crossing until the spring of 1940. On her final sailing to New York, the Italian Line announced her service would be suspended due to the oncoming war with plans to resume service in September of the same year when the war was expected to draw to an end. Of course, that didn't happen. On September 11, 1943, only eleven years after her launching, the Nazis ordered that the Conte Di Savoia be set afire to prevent it from escaping or falling into Allied hands. She burnt out completely and sank.



Arrival in Los Angeles in late December, 1938. My parents with Steve (in his Tyrolean outfit).

The young refugee family unit of five —my parents, brother, uncle and aunt — safely arrived in America: Hans, age 31, Olly 30, Steve 2, Fritz and Gisl both 26.

Shortly thereafter, the Ehrlichs left New York City for work upstate in Schenectady, where my uncle Fritz found employment using his skills as a sausage maker, and my aunt Gisl worked sewing baseballs in a factory. The Breuers, in Dad's words, "*soon left for Los Angeles via Chicago, arriving in sunny California on the 22nd of December.*"

The Ehrlichs found life in upstate New York dreary, in part because they hated their first long, cold winter there. They were tempted by the glowing reports of the weather and life in Southern California, and most of all the sisters missed one another terribly. So Gisl and Fritz Ehrlich packed up what they had and arranged to move out to join the Breuers in Los Angeles in May 1939. It was a good decision for everyone. With all the worries about those back in Europe, having the two Haar sisters reunited was a great joy and comfort for both the newly relocated Breuer and Ehrlich families. They soon moved in together in a well-located, yet affordable fourplex in Beverly Hills, with the Ehrlichs living upstairs and the Breuers living downstairs. The sisters, my mother and aunt, kept in daily contact for the remainder of their lives. They were the foundation of my family life in Los Angeles.



Meanwhile in Vienna, the remaining elder Haars and Breuers lived in uncertain and unsettled situations. The fates of each of my two sets of grandparents took entirely different turns. One set was able to leave, the other remain trapped in Austria. Each couple applied under different U.S. quotas based on country of birth. At the time, the Czech quota was over-enrolled compared to the Polish one. As Dad recounted:

Only the Haar parents were lucky enough to follow us to Los Angeles in August, 1940. They had registered for the Polish quota relatively early and the affidavits from their American Haar relatives and the required documents, fortified by the filing of our own rather feeble papers enabled them to leave.

The exit route via Italy was closed to them, as the Italians had joined Germany in the war in June, 1940, so the Haars were forced to take a far more circuitous route. First, they made their way up to Berlin; from there continued east into Russia, traveling the width of that vast country via the exceedingly long Siberian railroad, over 6,000 miles to Vladivostok, Russia; then by ship to Yokohama, Japan. From there they were able to book passage on a trans-Pacific Japanese ship, the *Hikawa Maru*, leaving Yokohama for Vancouver and Seattle, arriving in North America, and disembarking in Seattle on September 23, 1940. Finally, the Haars boarded a train and came directly south down the coast to Los Angeles. In my brother Steve's memory, "they seemed to emerge out of a mist at Union Station in LA. And over the coming years I expected our Breuer grandparents to emerge that way as well."

With the success of their elaborate exit route behind them, Helen and Henry Haar, the only grandparents I came to know in childhood, became part of the early lives of my generation — my brother Steve, cousins Bill and Shirley, and myself. They were our Opa and Oma and, along with the Ehrlichs and the Schnitzers, helped establish the core of our family in Southern California.

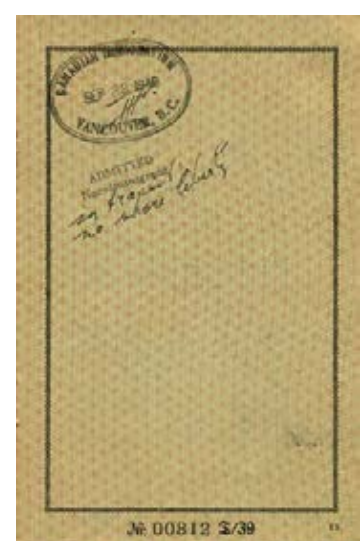
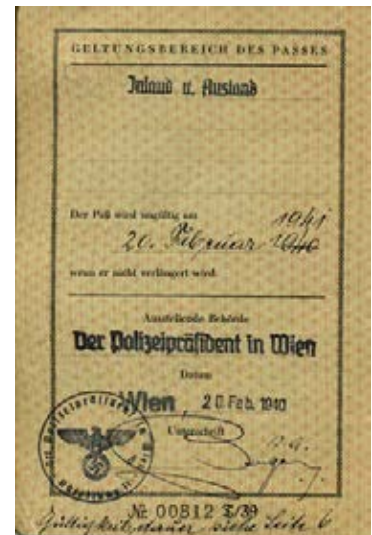


Trans-Siberian—the longest railway in the world

During World War II, the Trans-Siberian Railway played an important role in the supply of the powers fighting in Europe. It was also the longest land route across Europe and Asia that my Haar grandparents, Heinrich and Helen, took.

For the first two years of the war the USSR was a neutral power. While Germany's merchant shipping was interdicted by the Western allies, the Trans-Siberian Railway, along with its Trans-Manchurian branch, served as the essential link between Germany and Japan. At this time, a number of Jews and anti-Nazis used the Trans-Siberian Railway to escape Europe, including my Haar grandparents. Several thousand Jewish refugees were able to make this trip, usually obtaining Japanese transit visas issued by the Japanese consul, Chiune Sugihara, in Kaunas, Lithuania. Typically, they would travel east from Moscow on the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok. From there they travelled south to Yokohama in Japan, where they would board a ship crossing the Pacific, bound for North America.





German issued passport of Heinrich Haar

My grandfather's passport, newly issued for their emigration to the US, helps trace the route.

- Page 1 Note the large red letter J and the mandatory added middle name Israel (both indicating Haar as a Jew).
- Pages 2-3 With photograph, personal information, issue date February 20, 1940 and Nazi official's stamp.
- Page 4 Signed by Nazi authority, in this case the Vienna police.
- Page 6 Handwritten authorization, signed and stamped by The Police President in Vienna.
- Page 7 At top is an endorsement form dated May 17, 1940, over-stamped INVALID. At bottom is another stamp reading, "Handed over travel allowance with 10 RM" (10 reichmarks and equivalents of 3 dollars or 21.5 Lire). Notice regarding currency for May 24 1940 from the Creditanstalt bank cashier.
- Pages 8-9 Various border entry, transit visas and stamps for taxes paid, including on right page a Manchoukuo transit visa valid for ten days from (handwritten) July 30, 1940 and Manchukuo Legation-Germany stamp. (Manchukuo means "State of Manchuria" and was a puppet state in Northeast China and Inner Mongolia)
- Page 10 At top, another endorsement, dated August 3, 1940, from the Vienna police with, at bottom, another stamp for 10 RM travel allowance, dated August 8, 1940 from the Creditanstalt bank. These stamps on top of more stamps reflect bureaucratic approvals required.
- Page 11 Soviet Union (CCCP) transit visa, dated August 16, 1940
- Page 13 Canadian Immigration stamp, dated September 22, 1940 at Vancouver BC, with note "Admitted Non-Immigrant/in transit, no shore liberty (handwritten)"

Hikawa Maru, the Japanese ship that carried my Oma and Opa Haar to safety in 1940, still exists. The ship has quite a history. The liner ran a scheduled route between Yokohama, Vancouver and Seattle when she carried my grandparents to the US. At that time she had a reputation for service that combined splendid food and beautiful art deco interiors.

In 1940-41, before Japan's entry to the Second World War, hundreds of Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution, mainly from Germany and Lithuania, fled to Canada and the USA via Japan, and many of them sailed on Hikawa Maru.

In July 1941 the USA and other countries retaliated against Japan's invasion of French Indochina by ordering the seizure of Japanese assets. However, the USA gave assurances that the liners would not be seized so Hikawa Maru continued regular service to US ports. In October 1941 Hikawa Maru became the last of the Japanese NYK Line ships to visit a US port before the Second World War broke out. On her final crossing, she brought US refugees to Seattle, and on her return voyage she repatriated 400 Japanese nationals. Once the US war began, she was converted to a hospital ship, and when Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, Hikawa Maru was one of only two large Japanese passenger ships to have survived the war. Her sister ships had been converted to submarine depot ships and were attacked and sunk in 1943 and '44.

As the USA occupied Japan in September 1945, Hikawa Maru was requisitioned to repatriate thousands of Japanese soldiers and civilians from the Pacific Islands, Korea, the Dutch East Indies and China until August 1946.

In 1953 the NYK Line refitted Hikawa Maru as an ocean liner again, and the ship returned to her pre-war Yokohama-Seattle route. She remained on that route until NYK decommissioned her in December 1960. In 1961, Hikawa Maru was permanently berthed at Yokohama as a floating museum, hotel and restaurant. In December 2006 her museum was closed and the vessel's future was in doubt. However, NYK Line underwrote her restoration in August 2007. She reopened to the public at Yamashita Park in April 2008 and can be visited there to this day.



Hikawa Maru at sea; as it looked in 1940, refitted as a hospital ship in WWII; and as it looks today, a museum/restaurant/hotel docked at Yokohama. Insert: Hikawa Maru wheelhouse.



Grandparents Henry and Helen Haar, my Oma and Opa as I remember them, pictured in Los Angeles, 1945

LOS ANGELES: STARTING OVER

Settling in Los Angeles, it is impossible to know just how deeply my parents were racked with fear and survivors' guilt. Receiving weekly letters from Vienna, they closely followed the unsettling news of the unfolding European catastrophe from their new American refuge. In my experience, Dad always covered up an abiding depression. Steve and I often found him, head laid firmly into arms, leaning up against the old five-foot-tall refrigerator in our Martel Avenue kitchen. The sadness was deep inside. On Dad's last Christmas-time visit with us here in Berkeley, just three weeks before he died in January, 1990, I inquired about it, simply asking if he'd ever sought therapy for depression in all these postwar years. Uncharacteristically, he snapped back at me, *"I had too many worries, and was far too busy to be depressed."* I think that Dad never completely escaped his demons, but with the opportunity for starting over, Los Angeles provided our immigrant family comfort and sanctuary.

After their brief stay in New York City, and a cross-country train trip, Hans and Olly, with little Stephan, finally arrived in Los Angeles at the end of December, 1938. Dad described, *"We spent the first five weeks in the home of the Kranzlers (Tina being Oma Haar's oldest sister) in Boyle Heights, then the center of the Jewish population in Los Angeles."* The Kranzlers, along with Helen Haar's younger brother Herman Haar in New York, had provided affidavits for the immigrant relatives. Dad described their arrival: *"These five weeks were not exactly the happiest ones. Life in the Kranzler household was regimented along strict orthodox lines, like we were not allowed to switch on or off lights during the sabbath or to answer the phone, and so on. Some of the Kranzler children tried to get away from all these religious rules and regulations."* For the newly arrived young and modern Breuers — Hans raised in an assimilated Viennese household, and both being rather urbane and sophisticated — moving into what they considered a "primitive shtetl-like" household was shocking. Dad recalled, *"We made frantic efforts to break away from these surroundings."* As they had arrived without funds, finding work was the primary imperative. Dad explained how they found employment:

I contacted a fellow whom I knew faintly when we were both kids and who now worked in some capacity at MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) Studios. He got us in touch with some movie-industry ladies who had just started a group to help immigrants. They were very compassionate, and upon hearing that Olly had been a language teacher, they organized play group classes for some of their children to be taught in French.

As we still lived in Boyle Heights, having to commute far across the city to Beverly Hills by public transportation would have taken hours, so they usually arranged to send one of their butlers out as drivers to pick up Olly and to bring her back again. One of the ladies was the actress Carmel Myers, in whose household Franz and Magda Bauer (Viennese who arrived later and became close family friends) worked as maid and butler after their own arrival." Like all immigrants, one found work where one could. But the combination of mother's language teaching skills with help from Carmel Meyers was an auspicious start. —See career of Carmel Myers: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmel_Myers

Dad continued describing the move to their own very-well-located apartment:

At the same time, these ladies looked for a possibility to relocate us in Beverly Hills or nearby. They soon found us a one bedroom apartment at 359 Oakhurst Drive in Beverly Hills, so that, in January, 1939, we moved into our own place where we could use our own furniture, which meanwhile had arrived in

a van. It was a four-plex house with a nice backyard that gave Steve the opportunity to have his own playground far away from the fire escapes of the brownstone buildings in the Bronx or Brooklyn which I had dreaded when we arrived in New York. This situation convinced me that I was right in choosing California as our destination, although my own chances for a job would have been much better in New York.

Hans was frustrated by not quickly finding work, yet Olly made some money, and she ...

was busy with her lessons, not exactly every day, but three or four days a week. And since living costs were rather low at that time, we managed to live on the few dollars she earned. Our rent of \$32.50 was paid the first month by the group of ladies I mentioned before, and from then on it was on us. We took the baby buggy, put Steve in there and walked to the nearest market, at that time on Doheny Drive and Wilshire Blvd. Our purchases never amounted to more than \$2 or \$3 and, it might sound unbelievable, but we could live on that budget at least for two or three days. And, if memory serves, we did not spend more than ten or twelve dollars for food in a week.

While Olly was gone, I kept myself busy cleaning house, taking care of and playing with Steve. On the days she was home, I followed up on some job leads in order to finally become a breadwinner myself. I tried a few things and I am happy now that I forgot what they were as all proved more or less impossible for one reason or another.

While my parents were busy finding ways to manage their new Southern California lives, they were consumed daily by the fate of those they had left behind. The news, both in the papers and in the arriving mail, was harrowing. Dad described a bit of the ongoing trauma as he worried and tried to find ways to be helpful to his family stuck in the ever-worsening circumstances of Central Europe.

At the same time, the news from our parents in Vienna and all of the other relatives became more and more discouraging. After Hitler took over Czechoslovakia in March of 1939, as I mentioned before, things started to become progressively more dangerous, culminating in the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939.

Any light of hope was dimming fast. Back in Bohemia, as the situation worsened for the family, Dad's cousin Franz Schnabel exercised his American visa, which he had always kept tucked away in his pocket. He acted immediately upon the March 15, 1939 total fall of Czechoslovakia to the Germans, leaving promptly for America. Dad's devoted cousin Franz Schnabel changed his name to Frank Stevens, and the two cousins remained closely in touch throughout their American years.

Ten years later, in 1949, Frank Stevens, who Dad just called "Schnabel", made the first of many trips to California. So, at age five, I not only met him, but joined him, on a sort of command performance trip that only a man of his boundless spirit could direct. After visiting us in LA, and leaving Dad to attend to his work at Columbia Pictures, Frank rented a car, into which he swept up my mother, brother and myself, and we four drove up the coast to San Francisco. I remember some aspects of that trip, like arriving late one night in the San Francisco financial district, wondering at the blinking red stop lights. Most of all, I recall our return to Los Angeles. Frank sent us off to fly home on a Western Airlines DC3, my first time on an airplane, and probably the first for my mother and brother Steve, as well. We arrived at Burbank airport where we were eagerly greeted by Dad in the company of my Oma Helen Haar. Frank Stevens later became the main salesman for the business of his second wife, a clothing

manufacturer, and in that capacity he visited us repeatedly into the 1960s. These meetings were always a jolly reunion for the cousins. My mother seemed to love it, too.

In his audio recorded recollection, Dad explained more of the early American months:

I should mention that Fritz and Gisel Ehrlich (my aunt and uncle), were not happy with their lives in the harsh climate of upstate New York at the time. They were increasingly tempted by our raving written reviews sent to them regarding a nice life in sunny California. They finally succumbed to the temptation, and they came out to join us in May of 1939, and lived close by to us ever after. Fritz, came to make a good living applying his skills, hard work and experience in the sausage business.

I have long thought that the situation of my mother teaching French language was really perfect for her. It is what she trained for and what she loved. Mother always was reading at least two books at home, often one in French. A Larousse French-English dictionary was always at hand. She would have been well-advised to resume work as a language teacher. She could have made a reasonable professional living, doing what she knew best, either in public school or a college, or further developing her private clientele. She had the education and the skills, was outgoing and well-liked. I think she would have been far happier teaching, instead of doing the hard work that she actually did. At least in the early days, she was able to successfully teach French as she had in her own private language school in Vienna.

As Dad described, my mother “had access to some of the most famous of the movie people in Beverly Hills, where she always told a sob story about her poor husband who kept house because he couldn’t find a job here.” That happened with the comedy actor, Groucho Marx, whose daughter was tutored by Mother. Upon hearing of Dad’s job plight, Marx connected him to a job at Columbia Pictures. My brother Steve remembers it differently, with the key contact being Edgar Bergen. In either case, as Mother was a tutor to the daughters of both these famous stars, the referral was somehow made. Dad explained finding new work: “It so happened that Mrs. Doris Silberberg, the former secretary of the then president of Columbia Studios, Harry Cohn, came with a proposal for me. It was to run a hot dog stand which they had just installed in the lot,” of the main studio located at Gower and Sunset in Hollywood.

KING COHN: The Life and Times of Hollywood Mogul Harry Cohn, a book by author Bob Thomas acknowledges that Cohn wasn’t an involved Jew, nor much interested in the Holocaust. The exception was his willingness to allow one refugee couple (my parents) to open a lunch stand on his Columbia Studios lot.

I was not too happy about the idea, but was told that once being inside the studio, many opportunities would present themselves and studio jobs were well paying. Therefore, I had every reason to hope it would be true, so I went on to try this. And so, on July 5, 1939, I put on a white jacket and started to sell hot dogs (ten cents) and fruit drinks (five cents) ...

With lots of hard work, usually six days a week, Dad began to make a living.

... My establishment was at first just a little wagon with a built in steamer in one side and a small ice box on the other side. The iceman came every morning to drop a block of ice into that contraption which I then filled up with as many bottles of the fruit drink as it would hold. There was a black man — Harry Cohn’s former chauffeur in fact — who pushed his food wagon around the lot, while mine was stationary, and he sold coffee, Coca-Cola, and cigarettes. My particular hot dogs, more like European sausages, were a novelty for the people working on the Columbia lot, and that helped give my business a boost.

The story, as I heard it, is that this other fellow, the former chauffeur, was very unhappy with the competition. He used his connection to Harry Cohn's studio administration to have Dad's wagon banned from selling certain key items, like Coke or 7-Up and other popular soft drinks, hamburgers and more conventional hot dogs. Dad could not use a grill. This only led my father to becoming more inventive in selling an ever more delicious food inventory attractive to his studio clientele. He had connections to Daisy Fresh, a small fruit juice company owned by a fellow Austrian immigrant. So, he began to sell fruit juices of all kinds, a big hit with the Hollywood health fanatics. Since Dad was not allowed to operate a grill or hot plate, he determined to find a substitute for popular hamburgers, which were banned from the Breuer lunch stand. The alternative turned out to be meatballs! Each night mother worked with my grandmother, Oma Helen Haar, mixing and making meatballs. These were partially cooked and then placed into tall brown ceramic pots that looked like inverted Lincoln top hats. Each morning, my dad carried the pots from home to the studio in a cloth "grip" type suitcase. At the stand, each ceramic pot fit into the steam table to heat and keep the meatballs, which were served on special rolls. They were a hit—being far more exotic and tasty for the studio customers.

Dad successfully circumvented the restrictions on what he was allowed to sell. His original wagon soon evolved and became a little building. "The stand," as he called it, was a sort of lean-to affair adjacent to Stage 12, and just across from all the film cutters. It was an excellent location since everyone on the lot had to pass by. Growing up, I spent many hours playing at his feet in "the stand" and later, as I grew older, I'd wander through the huge sound stages and all around the lot watching movies being made, milling with the workers who brought movies into being. As long as I kept still and quiet, they'd let me watch while they filmed. The Hollywood studio was hard work for Dad, but fun for a kid.



Rita Hayworth and Gene Kelly starred together in Columbia's biggest wartime film, *Cover Girl*, shot entirely at Columbia early in 1944. The studio's war time film production was booming.

One day in my wanderings on the lot, I recall looking up at a gold window with a striped green and white awning. I walked up the stairs to the third floor, opening on to the door of a single apartment, which I found unlocked. I went in and found the entire place was crisply decorated in similar green and white striped furniture, popular in that era. I found out that it was the apartment of Rita Hayworth, perhaps Columbia's biggest star. It was built for her by studio head Harry Cohn, who had that window installed because she preferred to read her scripts by ambient light. The apartment had a rooftop deck, which I read much later was provided so that Rita could sunbathe in the nude. Unfortunately, I cannot personally attest to the last bit. The studio once used a posed 8" x 10" studio publicity shot, showing Rita together with my mother. Taken in 1944, both women are radiant and lovely, and both are pregnant, Rita with her daughter by Orson Welles, Rebecca, and my mother with me. A studio photographer had taken this day-in-the-life publicity photo of two women as Rita got some lunch from Olly at the stand. At the time, Columbia was shooting the musical, *Cover Girl* starring Rita.

Dad continued his describing their work life.

As time went on, we installed two electric pots, one containing heated beans which we sold along with tamales out of the steamer, and the other pot was filled with soup made by Olly at home, changing the type offered every day. And so it went on and on and on, and the

promised opportunity to land another sort of studio job never did present itself. The job I had accepted as a filler in 1939 ended fully twenty-two years later in 1961. At the start, Olly still had some of her language classes and she finally persuaded me to let her help me in the studio while Steve was being cared for by a baby sitter. Needless to say, we did not have a car then, so we commuted to the studio by Pacific Electric red car at five-cents a ride. I took driving lessons in my spare time, and I passed the driver test. And in August of 1939 I bought a 1929 Chevy coupe, a two-seater for \$100. I had to pick up the car far across town and then drive it all by myself back to Beverly Hills, no easy enterprise for me back then.

Mother worked hard day and night. In the evening at home, she cooked for us while also preparing food for the next day's studio customers. I recall that every weeknight there was a roast cooking in the oven. It disappeared in the morning along with the other items headed for the studio. All through my youth, both parents worked long days. Even though they were tired, they remained gregarious and managed to develop an active social life, primarily in the company of other Austrian refugee friends. And, while working at the studio, they came to know many interesting and talented people who became good friends. Once I began to drive, I picked up one or another parent from work in the family car. Dad bought his tired old movie cars from the annual Columbia company sale. My first car, a 1951 grey Studebaker coupe, was the exception, bought, for \$200, from a fellow Viennese refugee couple, who made the highly unusual decision to move back to Vienna! My parents' life at the studio continued throughout my youth.

Dad recalled that mother, while still, *“giving classes in the movie colony, had the opportunity to meet a lot of famous on screen movie people. Some even invited Steve to their homes for big kids' birthday parties or other events. Groucho Marx, for instance, gave us our first radio when he heard that we had none and couldn't listen to his program; what a shame.”* Steve recalls a similar story regarding his own first radio, which was a gift from Frances Bergen, and featured a miniature Charlie McCarthy, the famous actor-ventriloquist Edgar Bergen's dummy, sitting on top of it.

While there was very little organizational support for newly-arrived Central European refugees in Los Angeles, an exception was the Quakers' American Friends Service Committee. One particular evening in 1940, my parents took little four-year-old Steve along to attend a dinner and evening of entertainment by and for Jewish refugees in Pasadena. Entertainment consisted of a talent show performed by the refugees themselves, and it included a public singing debut for Steve. Wearing his genuine Austrian lederhosen, Steve sang the words in German to the Johann Strauss waltz tune, *Wien Wien, nur Du Allein (Vienna, Vienna, only You Alone)*. He was accompanied on the piano by a somewhat older Jewish immigrant child from Berlin named André Previn. Previn of course carried on his musical career to great acclaim, while Steve took another route.

My parents' focus on getting a foothold in their new home, working hard to earn a living, studying for their American citizenship, and supporting a family took nearly all their energy. Yet there remained the looming ever-present anguish regarding what could be done for their own parents and other family who had not succeeded in escaping an ever-worsening situation back home in Austria and Czechoslovakia. While it was a hopeful time for Hans and Olly, it was also a time of great despair. An abiding serious worry about family left behind in Europe's ongoing trauma prevailed. Dad recalled:

Concern for our loved ones grew heavier and more so with every day. Our frustration in this hopelessness greatly aggravated us, given the situation of our own good fortune. The Haar parents, contrary to the Breuers who were waiting for Hitler to disappear, signed up for quota numbers and had affidavits from their American relatives in Los Angeles and New York, amplified by then pitiful and relatively insignificant ones from myself and Fritz. Finally, the Haars obtained their US visas and got ready to

leave by ship from Italy. However, just at that time, Italy joined the war as part of the 'Axis' on the side of Hitler and this exit possibility was closed.

As described earlier in Chapter 13, the only exit route available to my grandparents, Helen and Henry Haar, was the trans-Siberian, trans-Pacific route.

There remained only one way out: Olly's parents, Helen and Henry Haar, were able to arrange for travel to Berlin, and from there onward to Moscow, from where they boarded the Trans-Siberian railroad all the way to Mongolia, and finally to Yokohama in Japan. There they encountered our dear friends George and Frieda Loeff, whom they had met in Vienna when my own parents were forced into combined living with the senior Loeffs. From Japan, they were loaded onto a Japanese steamship which made its way across the Pacific, landing in Seattle, and then finally onward south by train to Los Angeles, arriving in September 1940."

Back in Vienna, Felix and Marie Breuer languished in ever more crowded and uncomfortable circumstances in a single apartment along with their friends, the Loeffs, and other families unknown to them. Dad learned the details from Felix's disturbing and heartfelt weekly letters reprinted in the following three chapters. As the letters made clear, both Hans here in the US and Felix stuck back in Vienna desperately looked for different ways out. The older Vienna Breuers had put off visa applications just a bit too long, but having sent the children safely off to Los Angeles, they considered their next move, as Dad described:

Meanwhile, my poor father saw the handwriting on the wall and finally signed up for what, at that time, was the oversubscribed number on the US Czech quota ... for Felix and my stepmother Marie. Unfortunately too late. A possibility presented itself to come to America by way of Cuba, leaving from a neutral country port like Portugal. This procedure involved raising an enormous amount of money. In the end, they went the way of so many other hundreds of thousands of Jews, including all of my Czech family, save one. First they were transported to Theresienstadt (Terezín) where three of them perished; and those who survived there were later loaded up and sent off to the extermination camp at Auschwitz.

The story of these lost ones is central to this project and the entire family saga. My parents always carried the painful memory of lost family. Also, I've come to realize how the tragedy continued playing a significant psychic role in our lives. The family loss remains with me; it affects my perspective on life's fragility and my keen awareness of the arbitrary application of authority.

In those years, in the face of overwhelming official impediments, Dad tried desperately to find a way to save his parents. He sought proper visas, filed papers and borrowed money he couldn't afford, arranging for tickets out, never to be used. Getting into the United States had become extremely difficult. In fact it is a national shame how restrictive our government was. The US quotas set by the Immigration Act of 1924 were based on the 1890 census, allowing two percent of individuals of each nationality then residing in the US. The German annual quota, relatively large at 26,000, allowed for many Germans who had come here around the end of the nineteenth century. Those German quotas were rarely filled in the late 1930s. It was the Depression and there was a reluctance to allow admission for penniless Jewish refugees who were feared as a further drag on the treasury and the few available jobs. Even after *Kristallnacht* and its aftermath, little changed in American public opinion on the topic of an increased quota. Roosevelt was preoccupied with the impending war, despite prodding from American Jewish groups. His anti-Semitic State Department opposed opening up to the ever more desperate European Jewry. Given all of this, the three Breuers, my parents and brother, had been very fortunate indeed.



The brutal realities of their European family stood in ironic contrast to the fantasy world spun by the Hollywood film industry where my parents worked. Along with their attempts to help their stranded family, the daily practicalities of a new American situation demanded attention.

Life had to go on in spite of all the bad news we had. In 1942 we moved into another close-by two bedroom apartment. We lived downstairs and the Ehrlichs upstairs, thereby we accommodated the Haars parents, one with us below and one with the Ehrlichs above. We paid the horrendous rent of \$42.50 each. Fritz worked in a sausage factory at night and I tried to enlarge our menu at Columbia.

After a few years, what do you know—Olly was pregnant again, and Robert Felix joined us on October 8, 1944. Grandma Helen Haar, experienced taking care of 3-year-old Billy Ehrlich, took over as baby nurse and sitter for the boys, thereby enabling Olly to start helping me again at the studio.

The years of World War II created a boom in the movie business. Films were made to support troop and home front morale which the government considered a necessity. This boom provided opportunities for Dad to expand at Columbia toward the final war years. He opened a breakfast and lunch operation at Columbia's second Hollywood studio site and one at the Columbia Ranch. With all of this going on, and a newly-born second child (me!) to support, my parents had to work still harder. They hired more help as their operations spread.

Many of the earliest Columbia westerns were made on the 40-acre ranch located on Hollywood Way in Burbank. Columbia's ranch served as the studio's back lot through the active production years when my parents ran their third food service concession there. It was the place where outdoor scenery was available, without the bother and expense of "going on location." The ranch included a grassy park and fountain, an Old West street, a lake and facades of city buildings, townhouses and Columbia's special effects water tank with its blank changeable sky screen background adjacent to a lake, which could also become a river or an ocean. Dad remembered expanding his Columbia work:



Above: The main Columbia lot on Gower St. in Hollywood, my playground on visits to the studio.

Right: The *Lady From Shanghai*, shot at Columbia in 1946 was a film noir directed by Orson Welles, who co-starred in it with Rita, his wife at the time.



Columbia Pictures Studio built its 17-acre Hollywood main production studio in 1921 in the heart of "Gower Gulch," near the corner of Gower Street and Sunset Boulevard. Columbia Pictures was founded in 1920 by Harry & Jack Cohn. For 50 years on this studio lot they produced a mixture of B-movies (e.g., Three Stooges movies) and classic feature films.

During the twenty-two years that my parents worked there, some Columbia movie gems were released including: "All the King's Men" (1949); "Born Yesterday" (1950); "From Here to Eternity" (1953); "On The Waterfront" (1954); "The Caine Mutiny" (1954); "Picnic" (1955); "Bridge on the River Kwai" (1957); "Pal Joey" (1957); "Bell, Book & Candle" (1958); and "Elmer Gantry" (1960). The stars of those films included Marlon Brando, Jimmy Stewart, Judy Holiday, William Holden, Peter O'Toole, Omar Sharif, Henry Fonda, Sidney Poitier, Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Burt Lancaster, Gene Kelly, Rita Hayworth, Kim Novak, Jack Lemmon and Clark Gable, who made "It Happened One Night", co-starring Claudette Colbert at Columbia — the hit movie that made Gable a star. Among the classic films Frank Capra directed at Columbia, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" was shot in 1939, the year Dad opened "the stand" and began working on the lot.

In January, 1945, Columbia expanded, opening up a branch studio further east on Sunset Blvd, and I was given the opportunity to operate a lunch concession on the lot there at a somewhat larger capacity, now also serving breakfast and short orders cooked up at lunch, along with coffee, drinks, cigarettes, candy and ice cream, among other things. I lined up an employee-partner to run this place for me and I commuted between the two places, sometimes up to sixteen hours a day, seven days a week. However, as I was a bit younger back then, I somehow found all the necessary stamina. Also, on occasion, when filming was fully booked, we got one or two female helpers to wait on customers.

At its height, Dad actually managed to run all three separate food operations for Columbia, two located in Hollywood, and one at the studio ranch in Burbank. Running all three turned out not to be all that profitable, and at some point around 1950, the two satellite studio locations had to be closed, while my folks kept the main studio “stand” going.

Occasionally Hans even left the studio lot to serve movie crews on location, making cowboy movies or “Westerns.” On a studio location trip to Arizona, near the border town of Nogales, Dad was invited to join some of the crew who headed across the border into Mexico one night. That uneventful evening later led to his surveillance and being written up by the FBI as a possible Nazi spy! That this could transpire for a Jewish refugee was a measure of wartime wariness gone slightly wild, and it turned out to be a case of mistaken identity. It seems that Dad, in trying to save his parents, had been in touch with a German-speaking woman, a go-between who lived in New York. She had, perhaps, too many connections, and one was another person named Hans Breuer who in fact may well have actually been a spy, and was at least being followed by US agents. Bizarre, but true. After some questioning at FBI headquarters in downtown LA, all was made straight. The years at Columbia Pictures kept us going. They finally came to an end with the emergent dominance of television. With that, as Dad described it, *“the movie industry started into a steep decline, business on the lot was drying up, and we closed up shop there in 1961.”*

Fortunately, by the end of the Columbia years, my father found rather more profitable work, appropriate to his textile experience, albeit as a salesman. Through some old textile industry contacts within the Austrian refugee community, he was introduced to a small San Francisco textile fabricating company called F. Powers which made items for the linen supply trade, mainly towels, sheets, napkins and table cloths. Dad became their Southern California representative, a job that kept him employed over his remaining working years.



On top of their strenuous work life during the early Los Angeles years, my parents endured a dreadful daily burden of alarming European wartime news made ever more ominous by reading the fraught family letters arriving weekly from Vienna. Those poignant letters, preserved by my father for decades thereafter, were the ones I found inside a living room cabinet at home. Revealing complex feelings and conditions of the time, the letters are central to this narrative and are brought to light in the following three chapters. ◆

LETTERS FROM FELIX BEGIN

The regular flow of letters sent from Felix Breuer in Vienna began immediately upon the younger Breuers' departure from the city in the first week of September, 1938. After tear-filled good-bye embraces with their Breuer and Haar parents, Hans, Olly and two-year-old Steve had left Vienna on the overnight train and arrived in Prague on September 7, 1938. The next day they moved in with the Bohemia family in *Dvůr Králové* where they remained over the subsequent two months awaiting their exit visas. They finally left Europe for good in late November, at the very time that the Nazi occupation of the *Sudetenland* presaged the takeover of all Czechoslovakia. Immediately after leaving Vienna, Hans began an intense long-distance communication with his parents, as they shared detailed emigration plans and kept up with family developments. In his first letter to Hans after the young Breuers' departure, Felix sent this letter, dated September 9, 1938, writing of his anxiety about the forwarding of documents, suitcases, and boxed belongings to the ship embarkation point at Genoa. A briefcase, likely with cash inside, was also sent ahead to be picked up in Trieste along the young Breuers' train route to Italy. Felix explains changes in travel arrangements, including abandoned air tickets [*they had decided against flying*], and several financial and insurance arrangements as well. This is how the letter exchange begins:

September 9, 1938

Dear Hans,

I started my letter earlier, before I had even read yours, which arrived just this morning and was read to me by phone. You can imagine my mood, I am seeing all of the possible complications in front of me.

I have spoken with Spiegel last evening, and then this morning he told me it may be possible to expedite the files later today, and of that he will inform me in the evening.

The briefcase has been dispatched to Trieste. I am keeping the keys or should I send them?

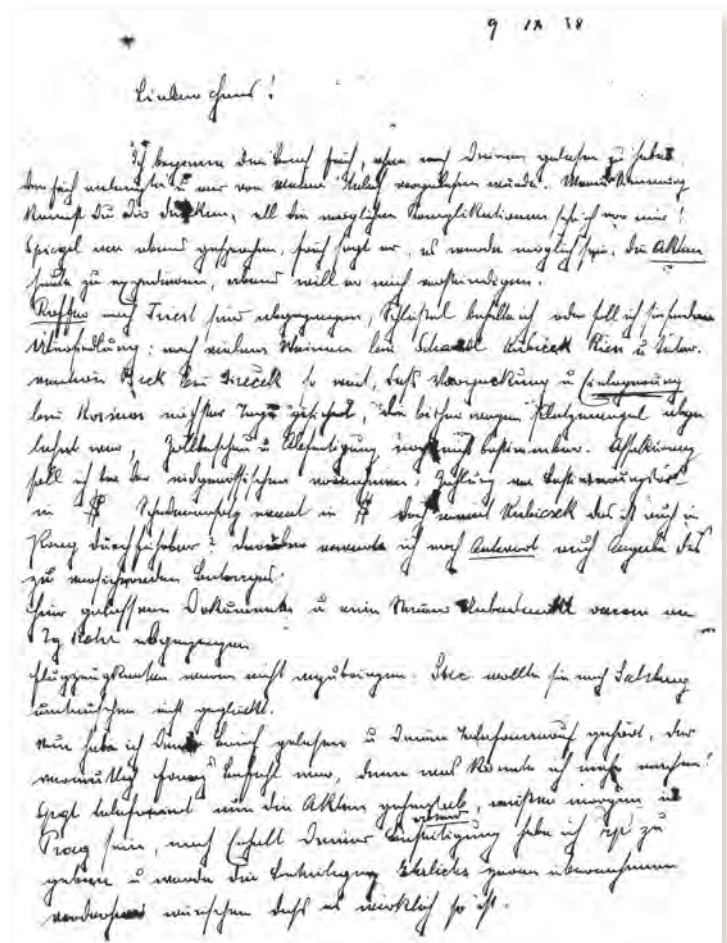
[Various people are indicated as being involved] at a stage of packing and storage by Kosmos [transportation company] assured for the next days, but which was then denied due to shortage of space, custom examination and a dispatch date not determinable.

I should arrange for insurance with the federal Swiss insurance, payment at the destination point is to be in US \$, however Kubicsek thinks this may still be feasible even in war time. For this I expect reply after declaration of the insurance amount. Abandoned property documents and a tax declaration of no objection were sent on to Rohr.

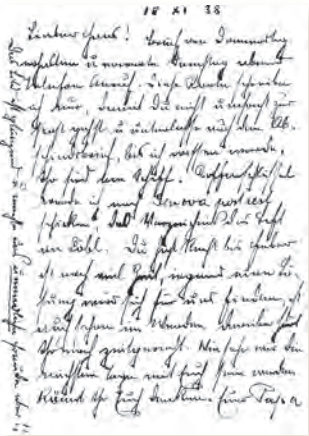
Airplane tickets could not be sold, Stec wanted to change them for Salzburg, but that was not successful.

Now that I have read your letter and have heard your telephone call, which was probably Franzl's [Franz Schnabel] command, I only wonder what could I do more to help you?

Spiegel called, now the files are delivered, and so they should be in Prague tomorrow. After receipt of your confirmation I will continue and I will take on the financial participation of the Ehrlichs gladly, I only wish that it can be a reality ...



In the autumn months of 1938 spent waiting in *Dvůr Králové* and preparing to leave for America, the young Breuers had the support of the Bohemian family. During that time, Hans maintained nearly daily contact with his parents in Vienna. Felix carefully tracked the expected train route to Genoa, writing this card to Hans for post office pick up *en route* in Budapest. It is among the very last written from the old family residence at *Sechsschimmelgasse 8* in Vienna.



November 18, 1938—Postcard

Dear Hans,

Your letter from Thursday received and I am awaiting the Tuesday evening telephone call.

This card I am only writing now so that you are not going to the post for nothing and I am omitting the farewell letter, until I know you are on the ship.

Keys for the luggage I will send to Genova post rest, the list to Löbl.

You are correct, until February it is enough time, for any solution that will be found for us, something is being worked on, and you will be informed about this in time. How much we will be with you the next days you can certainly imagine, your *papa*

The picture you sent is marvelous and it pleased us tremendously.

The following letter was sent to Trieste, where Hans, Olly and Steve planned to stop overnight while traveling by train from Prague, via Budapest, heading into Italy on their way to the ship at Genoa. Packages and a small amount of additional funds were sent for them to pick up at their Trieste hotel.

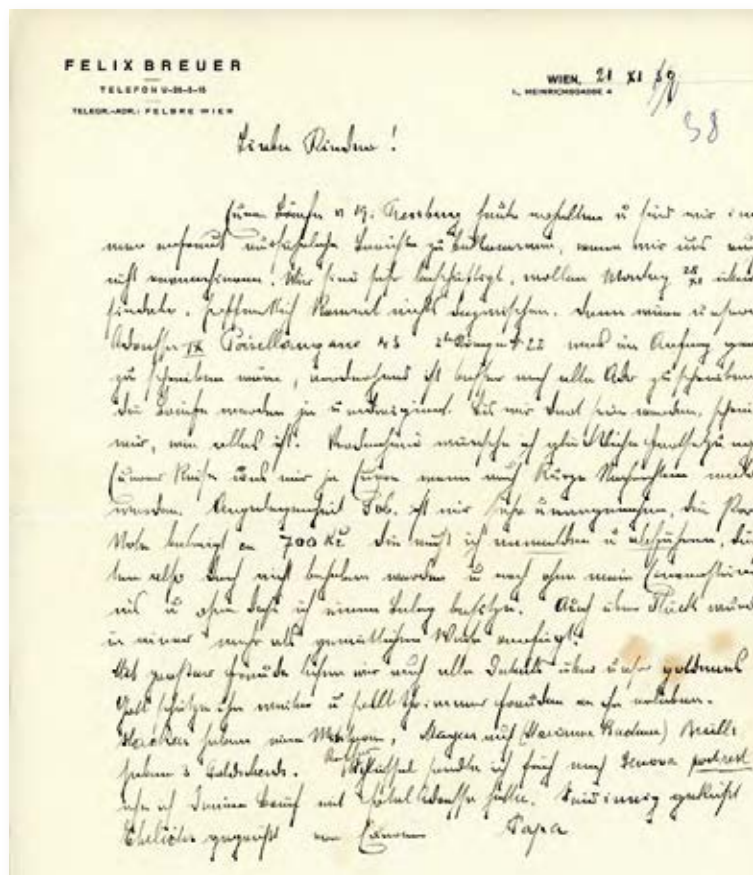
November 21, 1938

Dear Children!

Your letter from the 19th was received today, and as always we are pleased to have the detailed information, although we are not commenting on them in detail. We are very busy here just now, as we must move out on Monday the 28th. Our new address is to be: IX, Porzellangasse 43, 2nd Stairway, Door number 22, which you should write down exactly, although perhaps it may be better to use the old address just now in the beginning as the letters will be transferred. Until we arrive there, please still write to tell us how everything is. I wish for a happy continuation of your journey, about which your messages, even if they are short messages, will tell me. The Fob matter [?] is very uncomfortable for me, the provision note is approximately 700 Kc [Czech currency], but this I have to register and properly discharge, obviously [funds] cannot be withdrawn without my approval and my getting a confirmation. Also, as to the above, the Glück situation [?] was disposed of in a more than comfortable way. We are reading with great pleasure your details about our golden Steffl, God should

protect him and you should always have pleasure with him. The Hackers now also have a tenant, as does Magnus too (Marianne Rudner), and the Brülls have 3 Gold Checks[?] to contend with.

I have sent the luggage key today in the morning to Genova c/o post-restante, before I had received your letter with the Hotel address. I know you will still get it. Meanwhile, be dearest kissed and honestly well greeted from your *papa*



Felix Breuer Letterhead

This handwritten letter is on business letterhead, showing Felix Breuer's office telephone number and address on Heinrichsgasse 4 in Vienna's first district which by this time was likely closed by the Nazi civic authorities. As a child, I recall noticing with curiosity his telegram address: FELBRE WIEN.

The letters from Felix and Marie carried reports with both mundane details and serious concerns. I don't know if Dad often reread these painful letters, but he kept them all. Felix wrote the following letter, just as the young Breuers were embarking on the ship at Genoa. The gravity of the situation comes through in this letter, as it begins, "So now it seems to get serious" In the second paragraph of this November 25, 1938 letter, Felix again reports that he and Marie were being forcibly relocated, thrust out of their long standing comfortable home on *Sechshimmelgasse*, where Hans had grown up. Felix and Marie were sent away to another flat on *Porzellangasse*, nearby in Vienna's ninth district. Thus, the older Breuers were compelled to sell most of their household belongings, pushed into lesser quarters to live together among others. In their case, the relocation moved them into shared quarters with close friends, the Loeffs, but as Felix laments, it was a space also shared with the families of strangers.

November 25, 1938

Dearest Children!

So now it seems to get serious; I've received Hans' letters Budapest and Trieste 21st and 22nd, and I don't know yet where I will have to address this letter, since now the project going to Los Angeles by boat has re-emerged. After all that's happened, your letter from Trieste was a relief! The beautiful weather, and Steffl's being on best behavior making your trip wonderful—just keep it up! That something would happen with the luggage [*literally "come out about the luggage"*], I always was worried about; I hope that's taken care of now. Of course we always read Hans' travel descriptions with great enjoyment, as [*we have*] in the past, especially since they are full of tales about our darling little boy. By now you will be able to report who it was who took care of you so well in Trieste; in particular I am expecting a report soon about how the Glück's acted numberwise [*? perhaps in regard to financial assistance*]. On this subject a letter to Richard will also be sent to Kranzler's.

So we got two rooms with view in Porzellangasse 43, 2nd floor, Nr.22 with the Löff's. In addition a pantry where we put the gas stove, i.e. our kitchen; use of the bathroom and entrance hall, and a separate closet [*most likely denoting "toilet"*]. We will be moving Monday (we hope) with Kosmos [*moving company?*]. L.'s had to immediately take someone in who was leaving an apartment, therefore our rush. By the way, our [*old*] flat will be occupied in the near future, so we had to let go of our improvement/investments. The landlord is not well-disposed toward me, therefore this quick solution seems best. We sold the dining room furniture to a new family in the house, and gave away masses of stuff, including to Frau Vinkler! So we hope we will soon have gotten used to our very much reduced household.

The Nazi-coerced consolidation forced Jewish families into shared living quarters. It was an integral part of a system of humiliation and sanctioned property theft. Jewish families were thereby obliged to sell off most of their furnishings at give-away prices, leaving many things behind, all part of an imposed larcenous process. In the forthcoming years of enduring the indignity of life in crowded circumstances throughout the city, all of Vienna's Jews were finally moved again, gathered into ghetto-ized quarters in Vienna's teeming second district, before being deported to their ultimate fates in the camps.

Nazi Exclusionary Laws

The new Nazi mandates quickly took effect, drastically changing and constricting the circumstances of Felix and Marie. Hundreds of laws were instituted to identify, penalize and exclude Jews from normal life:

In 1938, Law #174 forced all Jewish men to use the middle name Israel, and women were assigned the middle name Sarah. Law #195 prohibited Jews from walking about in public, and Law #197 prohibited the use of driver's licenses by Jews. Law #234 directed landlords that they could no longer rent to Jews. Law #242 dealt with the education of Jewish children and prohibited them from attending school. This forced the closure of my mother, Olly's, language school. Only Jewish schools were temporarily permitted to educate Jewish children. Jews were of course also eliminated from all colleges and universities. Later, Law #392 closed all Jewish schools, so that Jewish children received no education whatever.

Law #279 decreed that all Jewish-owned businesses had to be "sold" to a non-Jew for the cheapest 'throw-away' price. The money, however, was not turned over to the Jewish seller, but handed to the state, i.e. the Nazi bosses, constituting outright theft.

Law #329 ordered all Jews to wear a distinctive sign on their clothes—a yellow Star of David—which also had to be attached to the front door of homes where Jews were still living. Jews were also forcibly divorced from non-Jewish spouses and excluded from hospitals and other medical facilities. Vienna's loss of Jewish doctors severely crippled the medical profession.

These and numerous other laws, over four hundred in fact, dealt with every aspect of life, and made it impossible for a Jew to avoid doing something that was not against a law. Thus, it became quite easy for a Jew to be accused of criminality.

Also sent on November 25, 1938

Today we received your card from Genova; nothing more to add to the above letter. I can believe that you have a horror of a move such as ours, considering the size of our household; there is so much to dissolve. When I think back on how you gave everything to your mother-in-law, except what you could pack, my comment "apres nous le déluge" was appropriate. But now that you are in such a good mood, I will discharge myself of this remark. Today a new regulation appeared; unfortunately I did not know that I should have reported the amounts given to you; so now I'll have to pay fees on these as well.

Anxious to stay connected, Felix sent this telegram on the same day, November 25, 1938, to the young Breuers, at their point of embarkation in Genoa. It read simply:



HANS BREUER HOTEL PRINCES GENOVA

= (HANS

= LETTERS RECEIVED NO MAIL ADDRESS = KISSES =

Felix soon got Hans' letter from the previous days, and in the manner used throughout their exchange, he acknowledges it, noting his frame of mind:

November 27, 1938

Today came the letter from Genoa dated November 24/25; The moment that I have awaited for months, has arrived. You are going to swim [sail off] and will be lost to me forever. Dearest children, be well. I am much too excited/upset to write much. Your letters are a great pleasure; please remain the same for me as you have always been; [unclear] what I have become. Kiss the child. Be embraced by your deeply saddened and at the same time extremely happy. —*Vatex*

Following is a translator's summary of a letter sent to Olly and Hans when they were already on board *SS Conte Di Savoia* bound for New York. There are some updates, and reference to additional funds provided through various contacts, to supplement the meager 10 DM per person legally allowed to be taken out:

December 2, 1938 (Translator's summary of letter)

Felix indicates that he has received a first travel report since Genoa; it acknowledges that Hans and family are on their way to New York. The forced move to the apartment in Porzellangasse has happened. They have applied at the [American?] consulate for visas. They say that one week later, the Mandler's [close family friends] got a number 1000 or higher; so many people are applying. Also, there are some cryptic comments about money, a payment of 500 Marks per month from Arnold G. [Always aware of censors] Felix asks that greetings go to Herr Löbl [in New York] for all that he has done for Hans and family.

Now and then, Hans received postcards, with short added entries from friends and relatives visiting with his parents back in Vienna. In typical form, each added some basic greeting, as in this snippet from an early card sent to the newly arrived Los Angeles Breuers.

January 19, 1939, Postcard

Handwritten and hard to read bits by five different people: 2nd entry by "Papa" [Felix], and third entry written in English: "Informed from your mother that you are well arrived and I hope you will get soon a good job. Yours sincerely ... [name unclear]"

For some reason I have not found many of the letters from 1939. I did find one charming light-hearted holiday postcard, dated December 2, 1939. On the card, various relatives sent embraces to little “Steffi” in Southern California, who was already gone from Europe for a full year. The card features an image of the character *Krampus*, a devil with horns who, in Alpine folklore, is a companion to St. Nicholas. *Krampus* takes naughty children away. The card sends *Krampus*’ greetings, with a handwritten note at the top, “kisses, your Hans”, as if Hans is the *Krampus* who took the child so far away! On the back are a few hand written messages:

My dearest Steffi! We are sitting together and are speaking about you. I am greeting and embracing you, *Opa Breuer*

Dearest Steffi! I am sending you and your parents, and uncle and aunt Ehrlich hearty greetings. For you also kisses, *Uncle Adolf*

My dear sweet boy, I am thinking very very much of you and your parents and I am sending you all a lot of kisses, good bye, *Aunt Ida*

Our Golden treasure, ...How much we want to be with you I cannot explain. Many many kisses, from *Oma*

To the family, Steve was their little *Steffi*, a barely two-and-a-half year-old boy when the young Breuers successfully fled Europe. My grandparents deeply felt the loss of their grandson and from the beginning, Opa Felix and Oma Marie tried to keep contact with him through the mail. Uncle Adolf Hacker and Aunt Ida Breuer Hacker often wanted to be remembered, too.



Letters from Felix were filled with detailed updates of great interest to Hans, similar to the one below. Felix has a lot of news to share about various family members and, in particular, shares news regarding the Bohemia-based family’s circumstances. By this point, the Nazi takeover of Czech Bohemia and Moravia was complete and its effects were felt. Despite the capitulation of Austria and Czechoslovakia, outright war has so far been avoided. Felix concludes, as he often did, by expressing his satisfaction with Hans’ new Southern California situation:

25 April 1939

Dearest Hans!

Letter from 13 and 24 is received, also the printed matter you sent. Let it go, but thanks a lot for this. Do not worry so much, we here are of a contrary opinion, and everyone thinks that there will be no war, that somehow they will find agreement. With regard to the affidavit you are providing, it is not clear to me that this can be valid without any additional documentation. The information alone cannot be considered sufficient without any accompanying tax or income information, or whatever else. We notified them first on 14 October 1938, but since then we did not receive any confirmation. For that time I was under Czech birth. Afterwards the confirmations were established and after my second registration, which I did after you requested it in November [seeking a German U.S. quota number] I got the confirmation that we are registered as on 23/IX 3, that is 8 on the German waiting list under the number 3054/55. This is sent for your information. Of course I will let you know any further information I receive from the Embassy and also write to Gibson, as that was done the first time too – although he did not inform you of it accordingly.

Georg [Soyka, the son of Marie] wrote again from there after two weeks, but we are not able to get any information about his job, income, flat, etc. and also to Maresie he has not written anything more. You cannot do anything about this. [Georg wrote:] “I could not wish myself any better and I will be keeping the job. I think that I am in the finest company of America, I am pleased with the work, as never before, and my bosses are very satisfied” This is the most important part taken from his letter.

Carl Hacker [in Paris] is working very much on the immigration of his parents. He also is afraid of the situation here and desires that they will be coming out soon. For me the financial situation remains unclear, but I am afraid to raise this. I am afraid of everything, this fear did not get less after your emigration, rather to the contrary.



Karl Breuer gave two executives [of the Breuer factory] the power of procuration [action as attorney] to "R. and S.", which I assume means Reh and Septs, the first one could also be Redisch, I do not know, with that one he had a bad experiences, but just who this is I do not know. This was written to me by [cousin] Carl Kohn.

Grete's brother has now a small flat in Köninginshof and he is very happy about this, especially since his sister has been behaving so badly against them. Grete is writing very unhappily that she is not needed any longer in the company office. The kids are making big trouble for the Kohns, and now the Gelbers want to leave alone, and arrange to leave the children with the grandparents, this is something that Ritscha does not want to commit to. On the contrary, the Prague son-in-law does not want to let the kids go and he instead prefers to place them with his own relatives. Carl [Kohn] has not negotiated with the Assec [possibly a newly installed Nazi firm] and he is delaying this on purpose to be able stay in business and be able to work.

Good news meanwhile from Adlers, as they hope to get out soon. The Prague Company will be given over to a familiar [gentile] Chemist to lead it, so it will not be liquidated, and the old Lady should be staying still for some time at home and then plans to follow. Maresie is planning to go with her mother to Hamburg today and then go onto the ship on the 30th.

Thermometer here is Fahrenheit 95=35 C, though we would be satisfied here with something lower. How will it be there [in Los Angeles for you] in the summer?

This Mrs. Cummings seems to be a golden person, odd that people there are so much better than we can expect here. Your description about trips and other things receive our greatest interest, even though I have not written much of anything about this.

Also, as for ourselves, the current perspective at the American consulate is very unfavorable, as they are now speaking about years, so this is bad and we only can hope that it will not be true. I am sending you mine and Mama's dearest kisses *papa*

LETTERS FROM FELIX BEGIN

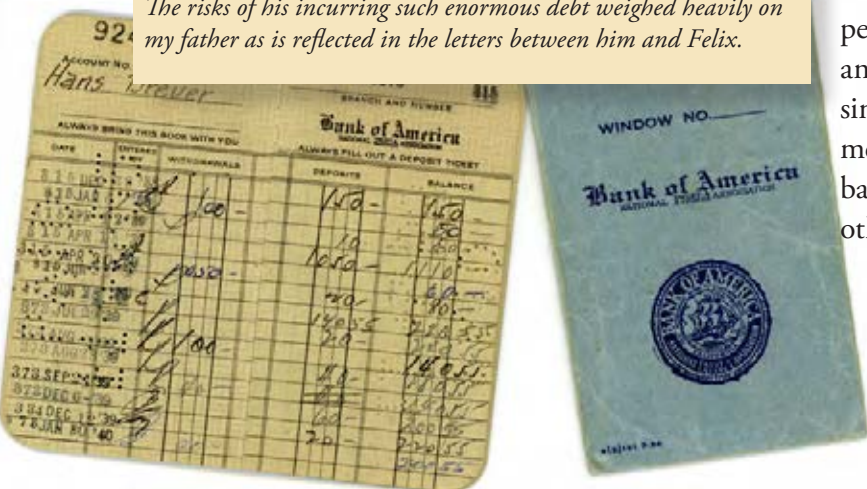
Hans Breuer's bank account passbook

Financially, Hans and Olly were living on very little money. Hans opened a Bank of America account on Dec. 30, 1938, just days after their arrival in LA, with \$150 on deposit. His deposits and withdrawals were small amounts, and on April 12, 1939 the balance was just \$60.

A noteworthy exception is recorded on April 18, 1939 when \$1,050 was deposited, and that amount was withdrawn two days later on April 20, 1939—a major loan taken by Hans to buy ship passage and handle related emigration expenses for his parents. The risks of his incurring such enormous debt weighed heavily on my father as is reflected in the letters between him and Felix.

The letters from Felix to Hans continued to arrive in Los Angeles on a regular basis, sent from Vienna often just days apart. Felix used a numbering system at the top, in addition to the date, for each letter sent. He restarted the numbering yearly, which at times makes the sequence confusing. Hans also numbered his letters, allowing specific reference in the exchange of responses.

Most of the letters from the year 1940 carry a newsy tone, even a bit gossipy, with reports about contacts with various family members and friends, details of how other people are attempting to make arrangements to emigrate and how these might play out for the Breuers making similar arrangements, and various related costs and the means for payment. My father Hans wrote weekly letters back to his parents while maintaining mail contact with other relatives and friends, as well.



Below is a sampling of letters from the spring and summer of 1940. The letter of April 3, 1940 shows the breadth of content being shared by Felix with Hans, as well as my grandfather's attempt at maintaining a sense of humor or irony, a Breuer family trait. Felix worried about his son's health and the burdens being placed on him. Some oblique references were used to avoid the censors.

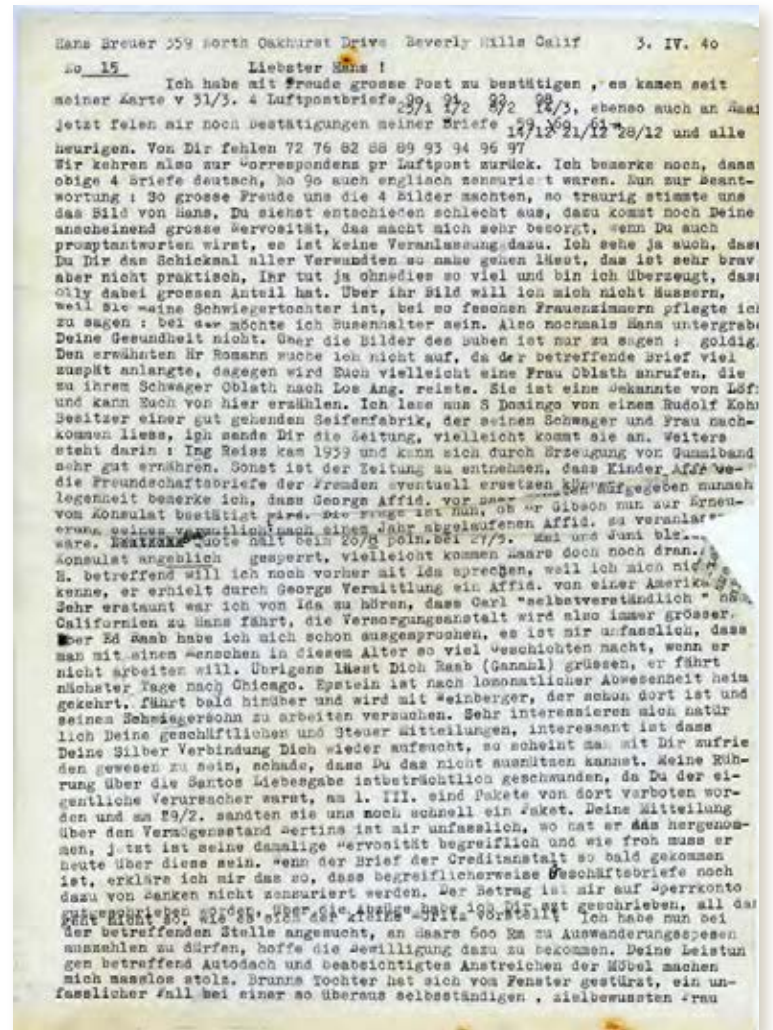
April 3, 1940 — Letter # 15

Dearest Hans!

I am most happy to be able to acknowledge the receipt of lots of mail since my card dated 3/31: Airmail letters Nos. 90 - 98 (Jan. 25 - March 14), Haar's received them also. Still missing is acknowledgement of my letters Nos. 59, 60, 61 (Dec 14, Dec. 21, Dec. 28) and all those from this year. So we are returning to corresponding via air mail. By the way, the above four letters were censored in German, No. 90 was censored in English as well. Now let's turn to the content of your letters: As happy as we were about the four pictures, as sad did we feel about Hans' demeanor: you look positively wretched, and in addition your great nervousness; we are quite worried about you! although no doubt you'll answer right away that there is no need to worry. Yes, I know you are taking the fate of all your relatives to heart a great deal, which is good of you but not very practical; you all are doing so much already, and I'm sure that Olly has a big part in it too. I won't comment on her picture because she is my daughter-in-law. About such good-looking ladies I used to say: I'd like to be her "bust holder." Please, Hans, to repeat: don't undermine your health. The pictures of the little guy are darling.

I won't look up Herr Romann since the letter in question arrived much too late. On the other hand, you may receive a call from a Mrs. Oblath who traveled to her brother-in-law in L.A. She is an acquaintance of the Löff's and can tell you about how things are here. I read about a Rudolf Kohl in Santo Domingo, owner of a prosperous soap factory, who had his wife and brother-in-law come after him. The newsletter reports furthermore that Inge Reisz arrived 1939, and is making a good living producing elastic bands. *[The following section is about quotas & other immigration news]* ... In May and June the Consulate is supposed to be closed. Perhaps Haar's will still get a turn anyway. ... In regard to Hacker, first want to talk with Ida. With George's help he was able to get an affidavit from an American woman. I was most surprised to hear from Ida that Carl "naturally" is going to California, to Hans: your care and shelter institution is getting larger all the time! I already spoke my mind about Ed Raab; it's inconceivable to me to make such a fuss about a person his age if he doesn't want to work. By the way, Raab at Ganahl says hello, he is going to Chicago in a few days. Epstein has returned home after an absence of 10 months; he will soon go over there and wants to try to work with Weinberger and his son-in-law who is there already.

Naturally, I am very interested in your remarks about tax and business matters; quite interesting that your Silber connection is re-emerging; obviously they were happy with you; too bad that you can't reap the benefits. Whereas initially I was quite moved by Santos' gift, the feeling diminished significantly when I realized that it happened on your initiative. Starting March 1st packages from there are prohibited, they quickly sent one on Feb 2. Your remarks about Bertin's assets are most surprising to me; where did he get it, now I can understand his anxiety at the time, but now he must be very glad about it. The fact that the letter from the credit bureau came so quickly I attribute to the assumption that business letters and especially those from banks are not censored. The amount was credited to a blocked account; I wrote you about the charges a while ago; all that doesn't quite happen like you might imagine! I applied at the appropriate place to withdraw 600 Reichsmark for Haar's emigration costs; I hope they will allow it. Your achievements regarding car roof and painting the furniture make me very proud. Brunn's daughter jumped out of the window; such suicide is shocking; she was such an independent and goal-oriented



woman.

I am expecting your news as to whether you wrote to Fräulein Stein and what her answer was. I am numbering my letters to Poldi, as I do yours; she is getting letter No. 13 today, so not as many as you. We received your good wishes for our anniversary, many thanks, it could have been better in other circumstances. Regarding your Arizona project, we will understand it fully when the letter about it has arrived. I wish you luck and success; you sure are taking on a lot of hard work and effort, may they be crowned with success. Considering how much work you have, I ask you to write us every 10-14 days from now on instead of every week. Hugs and kisses, Your *Papa*



On occasion, a short separate note was included for little Steffl [*my brother Steve*], at this point a four-year-old child. Sweet in tone, some were written out in English, a language skill maintained by Marie. This one was included with the April 3, 1940 letter:

Dear Steffl! We got two pictures of you which made us very happy. So, you already drove a car all by yourself in Santa Monica, you learned it faster than your Papi; and the other picture shows us that you can read already; that's great! Thank you for your letter; we are putting lots of money into our piggy-bank, and when

it's full we'll come to you. Before that your grandparents Haar will join you, and you will have lots of fun with them but you mustn't forget us, because we love you lots too. Many many kisses, *Oma and Opa Breuer*

In his 1940 letter #20 of April 29, Felix praises Hans for his hard work and determination to help his Vienna parents escape their plight and follow the younger Breuers to America. Also, Felix reports on the progress of an exit plan for Olly's parents, the Haars, and on what he knows of the Breuer family in Bohemia. He obliquely refers to problematic correspondence with Franz Schnabel regarding exploring some possible exit arrangements:

April 29, 1940 —Letter # 20

My dear children!

Received letter Nr. 2 dated the 8th of this month, and Olly's dated the 10th; still missing are No. 96, 97, and 1. We read your very interesting reports with mixed feelings; on the one hand we are full of admiration for your achievements, on the other we worry how you'll be able to achieve these goals. I hope that Hans will be able to take the strain of the unaccustomed climate, [*referring to Hans having gone to Arizona with a Columbia film crew*] and that Olly will be able to stand it. Of course, we eagerly await news and are most grateful that in spite of your busy schedule you still find the time to write your parents. I imagine you wouldn't have undertaken such a challenging task for yourself alone but that you did it in consideration of others, how good of you! You already know about Haar's appointment date at the consulate, and I'm sure you're most relieved; it's a big step forward and some relief from the misery of endless waiting. Now comes the problem of getting tickets.

Via Posins we hear about the family in Prague which used to own a millinery store; very decent people. The Karl Breuers visited Prague with their child; everyone was enthusiastic what a smart, well-developed child she is. How come Fritz Ehrlich has gotten so thin that he can wear Haar's underwear? There must be a reason to this. A while ago, I visited Al Lustig; since he missed the trip to England he is now looking for a different transit place. She complains a lot as though she were the only one who has to bear the current fate; but it's easier for them since they are foreigners. I wrote to Franz Schnabel by means of copy; I know the content of my letter was not very clear, that's OK. Perhaps you could write to the Stein's after you get my next letter. Yesterday on Mayer's anniversary; they found out that they have to give up their flat; of course, great sadness. Olly should be receiving a belt soon, I hope it'll get there. Kisses. *Papa*

Felix occasionally included copies of letters he had received to share with Hans and Olly, such as this one, dated April 16, from his cousin, Elsa Schnabel Santos, a sister of Franz, who had by then apparently successfully arrived in Bolivia. Elsa and her husband Vasco dos Santos were wealthy and continued living in Bolivia for years until the early 1970s. They visited us in Los Angeles at least once that I recall, and remained a loyal if distant bit of family:

Dear Felix, my Dear Cousin:

Yesterday I got your beautiful red leather belt, and I'm wearing it today. Dear Cousin, I love it so much and I'm touched by your kindness—many thanks. Felix, thanks too for your letter of March 13. Our next shipments won't come from here, but there must be a possibility from somewhere to send something. I did something silly again and had to have an operation in the meantime—a life and death matter—I've been home for two days only and am a little shaky but I hope it'll be healed soon. I am not too pessimistic about P.; we are trying a number of things, and hope something will work out. Everybody there is doing reasonably well, business is good. We get lots of news from Frank [Franz Schnabel]. When he reports about his successes, I must say I hope he is talking about his future ones: real dollars are made only by my effective little sister-in-law who manages to send \$100 every month to her parents. But I'm sure that Frank, too, since he has lots of good ideas and is hard-working, will earn something soon. Greetings, your *Ebe*

An example of the complexity of the elder Breuers planning their escape is seen in this addendum to letter #20 of April 29, 1940, wherein Felix tries to explain his communication problems with Franz Schnabel, who had become Frank Stevens in America, and who had successfully set himself up in New York City. Schnabel, as Dad always referred to his cousin, was always reliable and supportive, helping to pay expenses and open doors for the family. Felix said:

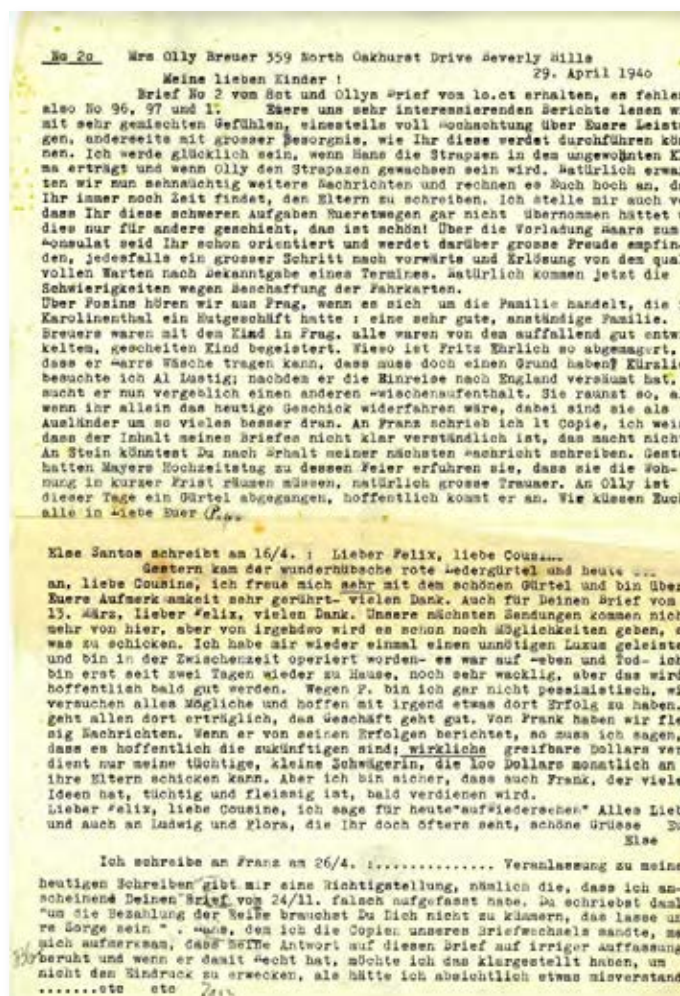
I wrote to Franz on April 26: "... the reason for my letter today is a clarification concerning your letter from Nov 24, which I apparently misunderstood. You wrote at the time "don't worry about payment for the journey, let this be our concern." I sent Hans a copy of our correspondence, and he informs me that my understanding of this letter is based on a misconception, and if he is right, I want to clarify the matter in order not to give the impression that my misunderstanding was intentional. ... etc etc"

Felix included a copy of that November 24, 1939 letter from Franz Schnabel. Note that Schnabel (Stevens) was instrumental in securing the younger Breuers' and Ehrlichs' emigration from Vienna and Prague, and soon thereafter his own. Here the indefatigable Schnabel turned his spirited attention, cleverness and capability to helping prepare an exit plan for Felix and Marie.

November 24, '39, received March 9, '40:

I've received your letter dated Nov. 4th and want to tell you this about ticket for ship passage: Italian boats will take you. The local Italo Line office will cable a ticket to the Vienna Italo office, as soon as you tell me your emigration visa number which you can do only after you have the visa in your hands. Don't worry about payment for the journey, please let this be our concern. I've already written to Hans in this regard, and told him he should immediately contact his congressman who then could (and should) put pressure on the US ambassador in Vienna. By spring at the latest you'll be with Hans, I'm sure. Whether you will then still want to travel, that's a different question.

I'm doing great, feel like a fish in water, my business is splendid. In addition I'm starting a small weaving factory for table cloths (6 looms for table cloths, 6 for napkins), either with Hans Beck or with Ernst Spielmann. Small but beautiful. I'm also planning to start a small cotton business with Paul Perutz, for exporting to Japan. So you see I'm no slouch. When you come here, I will certainly receive you most hospitably. I'll pick you up from the boat with an honor guard of virgins. You'll live and eat with me, and of course be supplied with dollars, so that you'll have no trouble to travel on to Bev. Hills. Please write soon —*F*



In a letter of May 19, Hans' 33rd birthday, Felix shares family news and refers again to his problems dealing with the US Consulate, and to their low placement in the US quota for Czech-born applicants, contrasting it with the luck of the Haars who qualified under the Polish quota and were just about to embark. While attempting to be somehow upbeat, he shared the increasingly degraded state of their lives:

No 22 Hans Breuer 359 North Oakhurst Drive Beverly Hills Cal
 19. Mai 1940
 Liebste Kinder !
 Heute ist Hans sein Geburtstag, wir denken viel an Euch und an Euer hoffentliches Beisammensein, nachmittags bei der Familienjause werden Euch vielleicht die Ohren klingen. Auch trauriger Muttertag ist! Brief no 31 (31/3) über Bleier ist am 10ten angekommen, den ich in erster Reihe beantwortete. Du willst wissen, welche Wege für das Konsulat event. gebraucht werden, ich sende separat ein Verzeichnis, wie Ihr es erst erhalten habet, hebe das auf, damit man eventuell mit sich telegrafisch nur auf die einzelnen Punkte beziehen kann, mehr kann ich nicht sagen. Vorderrhand steht die tschech Quote weiter beim 20/3 und wird erst im Juli fortgesetzt werden, also für uns unabsehbar, ausser es geschieht auch ein Wunder, wie bei der poln. Quote. Von Vera Dübecke haben wir vor einigen Monaten, so wie Ida ein Paket Butter bekommen, wir dachten ursprünglich, dass dies auf Kohns Veranlassung geschah, was aber nicht der Fall war, sondern sie wurden selbst bescheert, also für uns eine kolossale Aufmerksamkeit. Jetzt müssen wir traurig der Absenderin gedenken, wie an so viele andere! Martas Bemerkung, dass ihr von Richards Vater Grüsse übermittelt wurden ist eine Dreh. Ich sandte Kätes Kindern und dann den ihren eine Kleinigkeit als Revanche für Kohns Aufmerksamkeit, K. hat sich glatt bedankt, M. hat es scheinbar nicht gepasst, mir einen (gar nicht erwarteten) Dank abzusenden, so dreht sie das so, als ob es von Dir käme. Die Kultusgemeinde hat derzeit gar keine Devisen, ist überfüllt für uns belanglos, solange wir nicht irgend eine Aussicht haben, dran zu kommen. Deine geschäftlichen Mitteilungen lesen wir, wie immer gerne, hier würdest Du keinen Eiskasten brauchen, denn abgesehen von 3-4 warmen Tagen ist konstant kaltes und Regenwetter, so dass man noch fort heizen könnte. Ollys beruhigende Mitteilungen nach betreffend haben mich gefreut, besten Dank dafür. Was Du über Steffl schreibst, ist fabelhaft, wenn die Kindergärtnerin so spricht, so hat es gewisse gute Begründung. Gott erhalte Euch das prachttvolle Kind gesund. Bisher ist bei Haars alles glänzend gegangen, jetzt kommen die Tage voll Aufregung, ob nämlich die Abreise möglich sein wird, wenn dieser Brief ankommt, werdet ihr schon wissen, ob sie sich einschiffen konnten. Ollys Telegramm zeigt auch Eure diesbezügliche Besorgnis, hoffen wir das Beste, das ist das Einzige, das man tun kann. Mayers sind überiedelt, sie wohnen XIX Dollingerasse 10/5, begrüsst sie mit einer Karte im neuen Heim ohne Nelly und Hund zu vergessen, es waren schreckliche Aufregungen, Ludwig hat die Nerven vollständig verloren und die 2 Weiber haben nichts geleistet. Einmal, als ich dort war sollte ein Hr Winter kommen, um den Verkauf von Möbeln durchzuführen, er kam und es war Euer Freund aus der Hinterbrühl, der sich mit derlei Geschäften befasst. Bei Gelegenheit bemerke ich, dass Eure damalige Hausfrau die Mama in der Markthalle nicht mehr grüsst, gut was? Am 11. et sandte ich mit gewöhnl Post einige Briefe Georg Brüll Else Ritacha, ferner separat einen Zeitungsausschnitt als Drucksache. Wir erwarten mit Ungeduld Eure weiteren Nachrichten und senden Euch viele Küsse.
 Euer Papa

May 19, 1940 - Letter # 22

Dearest Children,

Today is Hans' birthday; we are thinking of you and hope that you are together. In the afternoon, at a family kaffeeklatsch here, your ears will be burning! Oh, it's a sad Mother's Day too! I am responding primarily to letter No. ? [March 31] about Bleier, which arrived on the 10th of this month. You want to know which papers the Consulate is requiring. I'm enclosing a list ... keep it for future reference. At this point the Czech quota is still at 20/3 [March 20] and will not be continued before July, so it is out of reach for us, unless a miracle happens as did with the Polish quota. A few months ago Vera Dübecke sent us a package of butter and to Ida too; at first we thought she'd done it on Kohn's request but it turns out it had been part of a gift to them; most attentive of them. Now we have to remember the sender in sadness! Marta's comment that Richard's father had sent his regards is a trick. I sent a little present to Käte's kids and then also to hers as a return favor to Kohn. Kohn gave his thanks straightforwardly but Marta seems to not have wanted to thank me (which I didn't expect); and so she is twisting it as if it had

come from you.

The Kultusgemeinde [Jewish Community Organization] has no foreign currency at this time which doesn't really matter to us anyway as long as we have no chance to get our turn. Your reports about business we read with interest as always. Here you would not need an ice-box; except for 3-4 warm days we have had cold, rainy weather constantly, so one keeps on heating. Olly has calmed me down with her remarks about Hans, many thanks. What you write about Steffl is wonderful; I'm sure the kindergarten [or nursery school] teacher has good reasons for her comments. God may keep your marvellous child well and healthy.

Up to now everything went extremely well for the Haar's. Now the big excitement whether they will be able to depart; ... when you get this letter you will know already whether they were able to embark. Olly's telegram speaks to her anxiety in this regard; ... let's hope for the best, that's all one can do anyway. Mayer's have moved; they live at 19 Dollingerstrasse 10, fifth floor. Please send them a card to their new home without forgetting Nelly and the dog. It was a tremendous stress; Ludwig lost his composure completely and the two silly women didn't do a thing. One time when I was over there, a Mr. Winter came to arrange for the sale of furniture; it was your friend from Hinterbrühl, he is doing this kind of business now. I've noticed that your former landlady doesn't greet Mama anymore when she meets her in the market; great, isn't it! ... Greetings,

Papa

In this translator's summary, Felix shows his interest in Hans' work life, while sharing shockingly bad news on the quota:

May 27, 1940 – Letter #23 [Translator's summary]

[Sent to Hans Breuer, Tucson, Arizona, Santa Rita Hotel, on location with Columbia film crew].

Haar's were not able to leave after all; but not to lose hope and patience.— Reference to Gisl's illness.— Hoping that Hans will get a special stamp from Tucson, Felix is still trying to collect stamps.— Loved the pictures from Santa Monica, all three in swim suits. The Jüdische Zeitung brings the first authentic news about quotas: the Czech quota is only 2700 per year; "we have No. 8730, by the end of July No. 5000 will be expedited, so there are about 3700 left between this number and ours, which is more than one year's quota! So nothing doing with dancing together on my next birthday, as Olga has been promising, nor with another activity she's been promising me (fine daughter-in-law!)” He provides a number of addresses of people. Reports that he has begun taking an English language course, so that at least he'll be able to tell "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" apart when conversing in the US. A big present with nicely packaged gifts arrived from "our former Director", a great joy [from his former colleague Hanusch at Ganahl who is not Jewish].



At this point Marie often added to the content by writing at the bottom, in a tone filled with heart, practicality, some determined measure of hope with her ideas for how to make a living once they would arrive in California:

June 13, 1940 – Letter # 25

My dear Hans, You cannot imagine what joy, what relief your letter has meant for me! I am very grateful to you and feel a great deal of trust in you, and the same for Olly – because she is of the same mind as you, I know. You are truly good and loyal people, and this makes me less afraid of our uncertain future. Nevertheless I will always have the aim to avoid being a financial burden on you – never say “never” though – and we will try to earn the greater part of our living expenses ourselves. I learned from Georg that it is totally impossible for immigrants to get a licence for making liqueurs; but perhaps one could find an American who'd join a partnership, after all making liqueurs is what I'd be best at. Regarding the idea of a bakery, perhaps one could do mixed tea cakes in addition to doing private parties. – In respect to our luggage, well, we have lots of time still to get all that together; if the military operations are over by then, and peace has come, it should be possible to pay for the passage in marks and to take all our things along. If only both would happen! – We hear that the Kultusgemeinde is still trying to get everyone who has a visa expedited somehow or other; maybe they'll succeed. Greetings,
Mama



A partial update from Felix:

June 21 1940 – Letter # 26 [Translator's summary]

Extensive greetings to Hans and Olly's wedding anniversary. Sorry that they won't be together for it. Haar's still waiting, nervous, Henry Haar works in the garden to distract himself. No news from the Königinhof family; except that "the situation will become even more critical now." Georg and Maresi report about big complications he has had with his teeth; all of them had to be pulled and now there is a huge infection, the pain is horrible.

LETTERS FROM FELIX BEGIN

No 26
 Liechte Kinder !
 21. Juni 1940

Briefe lo v 2. et am 18. et erhalten, damit bestätigt in mein Brief 27, während 21 bisher nicht bestätigt wurde.

Der Zweck meines heutigen Briefes ist, Euch von Hochzeitstag zu beglückwünschen ich habe zu meiner grossen Befriedigung, wie treu und fest ihr zusammenhalt und an einander hängt, das ist wohl das Wichtigste in eurer Ehe und dass Euer Fleiss und Mühseligkeit von Erfolg begleitet sein mögen, wünsche ich Euch herzlich, ebenso möget ihr an einander und an Eueren Fabelhaften neben immer nur Freude erleben, dann kann man auch die unabweislichen Sorgen leichter tragen. Nach dem letzten Brief scheint es mir wohl besser zu sein, dass ihr Eueren Hochzeitstag zusammen verleben werdet. Hoffentlich trägt das Missergebnis der Trennung zur Belebung der Stimmung bei. Euerer Hoffnung, die Klara schon dort zu haben, hat sich also nicht erfüllt, ihre Stimmung ist begreiflicher Weise nicht brillant der Vater hilft sich mit "Arbeitsarbeiten" noch leichter darüber hinweg. Es tauchen aber fortwährend Projekte auf, die eine Ausreise ermöglichen sollen und hoffentlich es sich hier in Wien allein um eine so grosse Menge handelt, wird vielleicht doch noch ein Weg gefunden werden. Über unsere Ausreise nur zu correspondieren, hat natürlich derzeit nicht den geringsten Zweck, trotzdem nehme ich Euer Versprechen, uns bis und wenn es dazu kommt, beisitz stehen, mit Befriedigung und Dank zur Kenntnis. Meine Fragen wegen der Kgl. Afr., wovon sie leben etc kann ich nicht beantworten, die Situation wird jetzt erst kritisch werden. Georg bzw. Maria berichtet über die grossen Complicationen, die Kgl. mit dem Hosen hat, nicht nur, dass sie alle gemessen werden müssen, ist alles schwer verarztet und verursacht unstillbare Schmerzen, eine weitere Wundheilung, die wir sofort verlangten, wird wohl erst in dort Ueblicher Zeit erfolgen. Auch Ernst Mandler wurde operiert und Blaudard auf einmal, er war 5 Wochen nicht in Verfassung, hat aber für die Zeit Verhalt bekommen, ein Leiden, das er etwas leichter. Die Operation war unsonst, nur die Spitalkosten mussten bezahlt werden. Der Vater hat uns den ausführlichen Brief mit Befriedigung vorgelesen, um zu zeigen, dass auch sein Sohn schreibt. Paula fragt ausführlich nach dem und sendet viele Grüsse, "Frage verlangte etwas "als von ihr" und da er weiss, dass sie es nicht hat, kann man sich seine Not vorstellen. Hoffentlich wäre gar keine Möglichkeit ihm etwas zu schicken und die Sorgen bei "eckere" kannst du dir vorstellen. Vom Sommer haben wir bis auf wenige heisse Tage noch nicht viel gemerkt, daher wir auch Spaziergänge hinaus unterlassen. Wegen Bleier werde ich demnach schreiben. Wir sind gesund, hoffen das Gleiche von Euch und schliesse ich mit nochmaligen vielen Wünschen.

Beimet auch von mir die allerherzlichsten Glückwünsche zu Euerem Hochzeitstag entgegen! Sicherlich werdet ihr alle Drei glücklich sein, man wieder vereint sein zu können und ich kann mir vorstellen, mit welcher Freude Hans wieder sein Heim gemessen wird. Hoffentlich mögt ihr gute Gesundheit in derartigen Studio weiter zu, so dass Euch zur Zufriedenheit wirklich nichts fehlen wird. Soeben verliessen wir die Haar-Klarn, um, wie täglich, nur 2.0. zu pilgern. Es wird angelehnt fest daran gearbeitet, den mehr als tausend Personen, die hier bereits auf die Ausreise warten, eine Möglichkeit zu schaffen, hinführen zu können, und es ist sehr zu wünschen, dass dies gelingen möge. Bleibet weiter gesund und seid recht innig gegrüsst.

von Hans

Felix, in this July 1, 1940 letter, relays news regarding the difficulties of an eastern exit route out for the Haar parents, contact with former employer, and his own health issues. Importantly, Marie was visiting family in Prague and at *Königinhof* in Bohemia, and dreams are shared for the future:

July 1, 1940 - Letter # 27
 Dearest Children!

I acknowledge receipt of letter 11 dated June 9 which I received on June 23, and hope that Hans has spent two weekends at home already. Not much news about the Haar parents; there is a lot of talk but nothing is concrete right now. The project Siberia gets batted around the most; it would be via Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Manchuria and Japan, and from there by boat to San Francisco [actually Seattle]. The trip overland by rail takes about 18 days, crossing the ocean 14 days. At this point there is no exact information about this possibility, and no one knows anybody who has taken this route but supposedly arrangements are happening

The American shipping line is promising soon-to-happen possibilities of passage from a European harbor; perhaps one could investigate from over there whether the shipping line is in the least interested to create such an opportunity which thousands of people are yearning for.

anyway. The American shipping line is promising soon-to-happen possibilities of passage from a European harbor; perhaps one could investigate from over there whether the shipping line is in the least interested to create such an opportunity which thousands of people are yearning for. The visa is valid for four months after the date of issue until departing from a European harbor. One should think that under these circumstances a cheaper solution, or rather an extension should be possible. As far as we are concerned I'd rather not say anything except to respond to Hans' letter on this point: if wait-numbers were distributed at other places in addition to Vienna, it will make our situation worse. Let's hope for a miracle!

Your additional economic survival plans sound quite interesting but unfortunately stymied because of your in-laws not being able to leave. In any case I'd like to mention that if you are thinking of taking on sales jobs you should contact Bleier and ask him to give you the Brand account [or position]; no correspondence with me is necessary. In answer to your question whether Hanusch [at Ganahl Co. in Feldkirch] was attentive because his bosses wanted it, I have to say no; I figured the same but it's not the case, and when I recently inquired with Ganahl, his lack of interest was quite noticeable. I received no further payments after the final commission was paid out. We can't complain about the heat here, except for a few days it hasn't been hot at all. ... And in regard to the "Mehlspeisen" [sweet dishes], Mama would love to pamper you with them, and I'm sure she'd do it to your satisfaction; perhaps it'll happen one day! It certainly is a good idea to compare your fate with that of others and thus to be more satisfied. Teeth are sure a big problem in this family; Olly has just had to fuss with a wisdom tooth, same for Mama, in the lower jaw, where no injection was able to take hold. I already mentioned Georg's dilemma in the last letter; so far no further news from him. Now here's the big news! Mama has left for Prague today; based on the family doctor's certificate concerning her mother's state of health she got permission to travel into the Protectorate from the 1st - 7th. It is not yet certain whether she'll stop in Königinhof on the way back, it depends on the connections. The joy of seeing everyone again will be hampered by the inevitable good-byes. In any

27
 1. Juli 1940
 Hans Breuer 359 Beverly Hills Calif
 Liechte Kinder !

Ich bestätige Brief 11 v 9/6. erhalten am 23/6 und hoffe, dass Hans nun schon 2 Weekende zu Hause verbracht hat zu Euerer grossen Freude. Im Busch steht: 1. 2. 3 im Sauseschritt läuft die Welt etc, das ist heute mehr als je zutreffend und die drei Monate sind rasend rasch vorübergegangen und ich wünsche, die Bilanz wäre für Euch befriedigend. Über die Ausreise der Schwiegereltern lässt sich momentan gar nichts sagen, es wird viel gesprochen, aber momentan alles nur ohne feste Unterlage; an meisten wird das Projekt über Sibirien ventilirt, das wäre über Letland, Litauen, Russland nach Sachschiko Japan von dort per Schiff nach St Francisco, die Bahnfahrt etwa 18 Tage, Schifffahrt 14 Tage. Bisher bestehen aber keine bestimmten Angaben über die Möglichkeit und hat man noch nicht gehört, dass Leute wirklich an gefahren sind, angeblich sind die Vorbereitungen im Zuge. Die amerik Schiff Gesellschaft vertritt auf vielleicht bald einsetzende Möglichkeiten einer normalen Fahrt von einem europäischen Hafen und müsste man vielleicht drüber etwas darüber erfahren können, ob die Gesellschaft überhaupt Interesse hat, eine Möglichkeit herbeizuführen, die von vielen Hunderten hier ersehnt wird, vielleicht von Tausenden. Das Virus gilt vier Monate von Tag der Ausstellung bis zur Einschiffung in einen europ Hafen, man muss doch aber annehmen, dass es sich in diesen vielen Fällen, wo es sich um force majeure handelt, eine billige Regelung, bzw Verlingerung erlauben werden wird. Das uns anbelangt, so wollen wir darüber vorderhand lieber nicht correspondieren, nur das eine möchte ich auf Hansens Brief antworten: wenn die Hartnäckern nicht nur in Wien, sondern auch anderswärts angegeben wurden, so verschlechtert das nur unsere Situation, aber viel leicht geschieht ein Wunder! Eueren weiteren Existenzprogramme sind für uns sehr interessant und leider Gottes durch die unmögliche Abreise der Sohn. Eltern recht gestört, jedenfalls möchte ich erwähnen, da Du Dich mit der Absicht trügst, Vertretungen zu übernehmen, so wende dich jedenfalls an Bleier, er möge dir die Vertretung Bränd übertragen, was keine Correspondenz mit mir nötig macht. Deine Frage, ob Han. auf Veranlassung seiner Chefs aufmerksam war, verneine ich, dieselbe Vermutung hatte ich auch, aber es ist nicht der Fall und habe ich auch bei meiner kürzlichen Rückprache mit G. seine Interessiertheit konstatierten können. Irgendwelche Zahlungen habe ich nach Endabrechnung der Provision nicht mehr erhalten. Über die Hüten haben wir uns hier nicht zu beklagen, von paar heissen Tagen abgesehen, wussten wir noch nichts von Hitze, da hätten ihr also noch kurzen Gerichten etwas abzugeben gehabt, indes sind wir so glücklich. Und was die vermissten Mehlspeisen anbelangt, so möchte ich Euch gerne damit versorgen und gewiss zu Eurer Zufriedenheit, vielleicht kommt es einmal dazu! Jedemfalls ist es sehr vernünftig, Euer Schicksal immer wieder mit dem anderer zu vergleichen und dadurch zufriedener zu sein. In Wien wird also in der Familie genug geleistet, jetzt hat Olly wieder mit einem Weisheitszahn zu tun gehabt und das gleiche kann einen solchen in untern Kiefer, wo keine Injektion halten wollte, wegen weorg habe ich ja in letzten Brief geschrieben, eine weitere Nachricht ist von ihm bisher nicht gekommen. So, nun hört und staunet: Mama fuhr heute nach Prag, sie beantragte Grund eines ärztlichen Zeugnisses über den Gesundheitszustand ihrer Mutter die Bewilligung von 1. - 7. et ins Protektorat zu fahren, ob sie über Kglf zurück wird, ist noch nicht bestimmt, hängt von den Verbindungen ab, die Freude des Wiedersehens mit allen wird durch die Abschiede sehr beeinträchtigt werden. Jedemfalls werden Euch die Ohren oft zu klagen haben! Poldi hat sich nicht zu beklagen, seit dem von ihr erwähnt "Briefe" habe ich ihr einmal geschrieben. Stieffle wird erregt jedermanns Bewunderung, wird oft als Jackie Coogan bezeichnet, auch uns macht es weiter viel Vergnügen, man kann sich nicht satt sehen, auch was Du sonst über ihn schreibt, ist ungemein erfreulich, ich lernte kürzlich: "he was born with a silver-spoon in his mouth" das soll auf ihn zutreffen.

case, your ears will burn a lot! Poldi has nothing to complain about; I've written twice to her since her letter from April. Steffl's picture causes great admiration every time; he is often called "Jackie Coogan"; and we continue to enjoy it, can't see enough of it; and everything else you write about him is so encouraging; it makes me think of an expression I learnt recently: "he was born with a silver-spoon in his mouth," that's him.

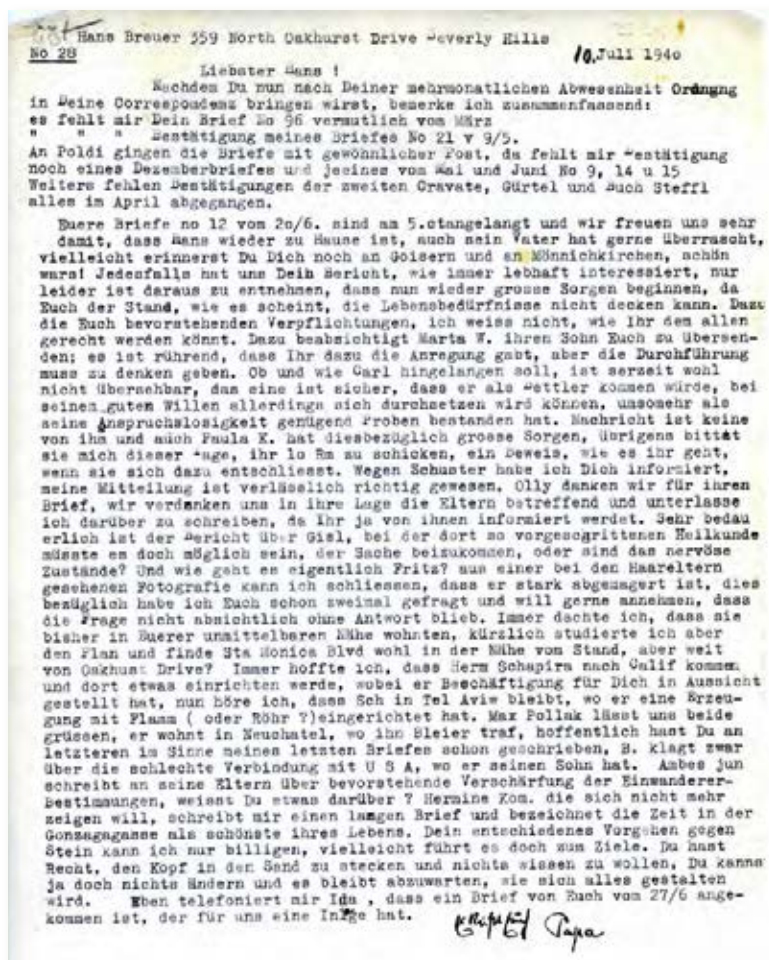
On July 10, Felix shares some sentimental memories, his worry for Hans and Olly's life, and his concerns about the possibility of some Bohemian relatives coming to live with the Breuers in Southern California.

July 10, 1940 — Letter # 28

Dearest Hans!

[Felix lists letters received, those missing No. 96 dated in March, etc; and no confirmation of the previously sent presents of a tie, belt and book for Steffl]

We are happy that Hans is back home again; as his father also had a knack for surprises; maybe you remember how things went with us that time in Gaisern and Mönlichkirchen, wasn't that wonderful! Anyway, we were very interested in your report, only it is too bad that it sounds as if big worries are beginning again, since it appears that the Columbia studio kiosk cannot cover your living expenses. Add to that your additional responsibilities; I don't know how you'll be able to handle it all. And Marta is planning to send you her son; it is good of you to have suggested this but please consider the consequences. At this point it's impossible to predict whether and how Carl will manage to get there; for sure he'll arrive a beggar but he has good intentions and will be able to make it, given how he has proven his ability to take deprivation. No news from him which makes Paula K. quite worried; incidentally, she asked me recently to send her 10 reichsmark which is an indication of how she is doing. I notified you in regard to Schuster, I was right about that. ... [Thanks Olly for her letter] Too bad about Gisl; one should think it should be possible to get this matter taken care of with health-care being so progressive there; or are there psychological causes? And how is Fritz doing? Judging from a photo I saw at the Haar's he has lost a lot of weight; I've asked two times about it already and hope that there isn't a reason for your lack of an answer. I've thought all along that they live near your house but after studying a map recently I realized that St. Monica Blvd seems to be near the beach but apparently far from you on Oakhurst Drive? I was hoping that Herm Schapira would end up in California and start something there where you could find an opportunity but now I hear that he is staying in Tel Aviv where he has started a production [not explained] with Flamm (or Röhr). Max Pollack sends greetings to both of us, he lives in Neufchatel where Bleier met him, I hope you wrote to him already as I suggested in my last letter. B. complains about the bad connection with the USA where his son is. Ambes junior wrote to his parents about a tightening of the immigration regulations; do you know anything about that? Hermine Kom, who doesn't want to go out or be seen anymore, wrote me a long letter; she said the time in Gonzagasse was the best of her life. I'm completely in support of your determined steps against Stein, let's hope you will see results. You are right about sticking your head in the sand and not wanting to know anything, since you can't change anything anyway and one can only wait and see how things will turn out. Just got a call from Ida that she got a letter from you dated June 27, and that it has something for us in it. Kisses, *Papa*



Marie, just back from her brief trip to Bohemia, adds an opinionated report on all the relatives and several friends there. It must have been of very great interest for Hans to get the following news:

July 10, 1940

Dearest Children!

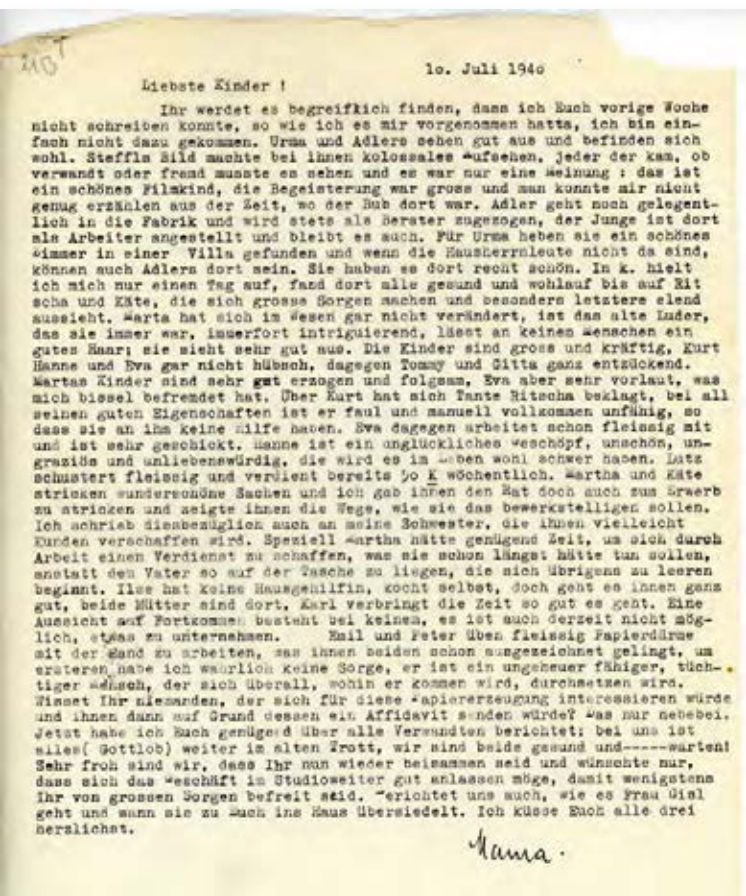
You'll understand that I didn't write last week, as I had intended to, I just didn't find the time. Urma and the Adlers looked good and are well. Steffl's picture was a big hit with everyone; family and non-relatives alike were of the same opinion: he's like a child movie star. ... Adler is still going to the factory once in a while and is always being consulted; the boy has a job there as a worker, and will be able to keep it. They found a nice room in a villa for Urma, and when the landlord's family isn't there, the Adlers can stay there too. It's a very pleasant situation for them.

I only spent only one day in Königinhof]; everyone there seems to be well and in good spirits except for Ritscha and Käte who are very worried, the latter looks quite poorly. Marta's personality has not changed at all; she is the same old meanie she always was, constantly scheming, always criticizing everybody. The children are big and strong; Kurt, Hanne and Eva are not at all pretty, whereas Tommy and Gitta are delightful. Marta's kids are very well bred and obedient but Eva is quite cheeky which took me aback a little. Aunt Ritscha complained about Kurt; in spite of all his good qualities he is apparently completely useless as far as manual work is concerned, and of no help to her. Eva on the other hand is quite handy and is quite a bit of help already. Hanne is a poor unfortunate thing, rather ugly, clumsy and without charm; she'll have a hard time in life. Lutz is busy cobbling, he's able to make 50 K per week already. Marta

and Käte are knitting beautiful stuff, and I suggested to them that they should do it commercially and gave them some tips on how to go about it. I wrote to my sister about it; she might be able to find customers for them. Marta in particular would have enough time for such an enterprise, which she should have done a long time ago instead of living off of her father's coffers which incidentally are beginning to see the bottom. Ilse has no maid, she has to cook herself but they are doing fine, both mothers are there. There is no chance of getting away for any of them, and at this time there is nothing one can do about that. — — — Emil and Peter are busy turning paper cord and they've gotten quite good at it. I'm not at all worried about the former; he is a very competent person who will have no problem getting ahead wherever he'll end up. Don't you know someone who would be interested in such a paper product venture and who would send them an *[American]* affidavit based on that? Just a thought.

Now I've told you enough about all the relatives. Everything is going its regular way here with us (thank God), we are both healthy and ———waiting! We are very happy that you are all together again and we hope that the business in the studio will continue to develop so that at least you'll be free of worries. Please let us know how Frau Gisl is doing and when she will move in with you. Greetings, *Mama*

The letters from Vienna of mid-1940 continued in much this same way, with Felix and Marie always sharing news about specific individuals, at times tinged with bits of judgmental gossip; always revealing their frustration with the tedious waiting game regarding the availability of US quotas, along with providing reports on those friends who were obtaining low quota numbers and successfully getting out. In an attempt at a lighter tone, Felix often comments on the weather and other mundane topics. He unfailingly expressed his genuine concern for the young Breuers' in their new Los Angeles life — a tone might lapse into a rare bit of teasing, which he regretted, as expressed in his July 19, 1940 letter:



LETTERS FROM FELIX BEGIN

July 19, '40 —Letter # 29

... I am mad at myself for having made a joking remark about you being in debt, which caused you to be irritated at me, and now I have to accept your preaching; neither of us has any intention to hurt each others' feelings. Of course I am happy to hear that you're not in arrears.

... [Regarding the Haars] ... I just heard that she (Helen Haar) will be the one to go to Berlin [to pick up US visas]; I think that's a good idea, because she is the more competent one, that happens in other families too. Since several groups have left now, one should be able to learn useful information from them once they are in America.

... Papa

P.S.: Is it legal to send medications? I'd like to have some Cuticura Ointment again, if possible.; but it is not urgent.

The flow of regular correspondence between Felix and Hans, father and son, help us to understand their circumstance at the time. Even though I have only the letters received by Hans, it is evident how attentively they kept in contact with one another. Beyond their crisis, I recognize something familiar in this: how later, my father kept track of me in our own shared lifetime, and to some extent I must admit, how I keep abreast of things with my own son, Noah.

As Hans maintained the correspondence, he also kept in touch with other friends and family, those who had successfully emigrated, and those who longed to still get away. In this way, Hans got reports on the condition of other family, too. This letter of September 2, 1940 came from Hans' aunt and uncle in Vienna, Ida Breuer Hacker and her husband Adolf Hacker, who were the closest relatives of Felix' generation. Ida was one of Felix's sisters, and the mother of one of my father's closest cousins, Charles, who by this time had moved to Paris. News of many other friends' movements and their prospects abroad were relayed by the Hackers, as well a hint at the stressful conditions in Vienna. Ida wonders if the Vienna family are still remembered at all by little Steve. It is especially sad reading this, realizing the Hackers' ultimate fate:

Vienna, September 2, 1940

Dearest Olly, Dearest Hans!

Thank you so much for your so nice letter from July 30. Since then, the nice picture of Steffl arrived, which now is placed in a frame in our living cabinet and I speak a lot with the picture. I thank you a lot for it, as it gives me a big pleasure. From Carl we received, on August 28, a ten-days-old message 2-3 weeks before we had a similar message where a picture was attached which obviously was taken in the City and he is looking great. In his last received letter he was complaining a lot, that he did not receive any response to his repeated letters to you. Have you got the correct address for him?

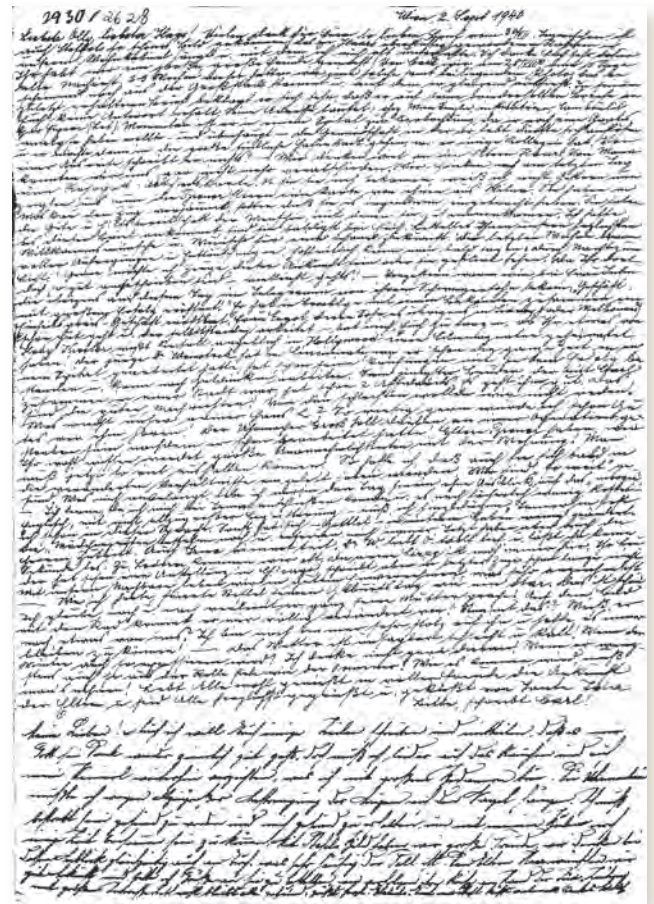
In the moment Charles is in a Paris hospital for medical observation, because he wanted to get a medical surveillance for free. The community living situation where he is staying seems to have been dissolved and he wants to go to the big southern harbor city, Marseilles, where he has a couple of colleagues. He is not writing anything about emigration! We are thinking a lot of the Haar parents as others are also leaving. We also could not say good bye to Mona. We wrote on the last day to a town in the Ruhr area with a good bye card. Not sure if they received it in time. Yesterday the Breuer parents showed us a card from them sent from Vilna. They had missed the train in Moscow, so now we are hoping that they are able to catch up. They seem to have the kindness and cooperation of the people whom they will be joining in America. I hope that when this letter arrives they will soon be with you. Please relay to Haars our best welcome wishes and sincerest wishes for their having a nice future there with you.

The last weeks were full of excitements as well as many disappointments. Hopefully we can soon see through the night into the light. I would gladly like to be a witness of the Haars arrival or somehow to see them filmed. As you are in their good books (somehow connected in Hollywood), perhaps it will work. The day before yesterday we were with Frau Jahn, and incidentally she received on that day a telegram from her NYC



Sütterlinschrift

Among the difficulties in this project was dealing with German letters handwritten in a form known as Sütterlinschrift (Sütterlin script) such as this one from the Hackers. The word Sütterlin nowadays is often used to refer to all varieties of old German handwriting, that almost entirely disappeared after the war. In this project, I had the occasional added translation help of our good friend in Vienna, Susi Schoeber. Finding capable translators for such documents was most challenging, and in the case of some unreadable Sütterlin letters, Susi sent them off to a German translation service in Bremen.



son-in-law: he has opened a business there with great success! He has opened it in Brooklyn together with a friend, a sort of one price for everything type of business. Mrs. Engel, whose son by the way is doing fine in Sydney (or Melbourne?) is working independently, — he requests me to ask you, if you have heard anything at all from a Hedy Kissler (?). She is reported to have married a film agent in Hollywood. Meanwhile, the young Dr. Weinstock has passed his exams in Cincinnati, where he was working the whole time recently in a hospital, with great success and he can now work at his own discretion. His youngest brother who was with our Carl together in a French city, has already secured two US Affidavits, which is good for his prospects. He is doing well. These are the good news! We don't want to speak about the bad news. What is our poor Hans L doing? I would love so much to hear something good from him. The clockmaker Groß died over there in a surgical intervention, after he had already found work. Your parents Breuer, as you may know, have big troubles with the flat. You have to be able to swallow such a lot nowadays and still carry on. So I hope, that also they will adjust to their altered life in the changed situation soon. We are "in so far as" or "so-so" healthy. With regard to myself, I can only live each day without looking out for the "tomorrow." I am learning more English, as I still connect with Irma and it is ridiculously cheap, but not with big enthusiasm — as I have to confess. At least I am reading in the foreign language. Otherwise — thanks god — our life has not changed all that much. Our regular "girl's afternoon tea snacks" (Mädchenjause) still exist and as always are enjoyed by me. Nowadays men are also admitted. In these, also, Irma participates. Dr. W. loves our Adolf deeply and does not let him go unattended for a second. [Adolf Hacker seems to have been ill.]

We go to see Lederer often, poor Lizzy is still here. Her brother has found a job in Chicago, but lately it seems that he is not writing any longer. We are living in good understanding with our neighbors here, which makes it very comfortable. — As I have heard Steffel is celebrating his birthday like a star, this must be nice. I think little by little that he must be forgetting his mother tongue! On the picture with the bicycle he seems to me to be totally changed! Is this true? Does he know anything at all about us? I am still so proud of him and hope I could always remain connected! — The weather is unbelievably bad and cold here! If the winter also turns out to be as bad, I do not want to think about it now. It may feel as bad as the summer! But, however it may come we have to take it. Good bye to you all, enjoy a life full of happiness, the arrival of the Haar parents, and be all cordially greeted and kissed often by Aunt Ida
Please be sure to write Carl!

My dears! I also want to write you some lines to inform you that thanks god my health is pretty fine again. Unfortunately, I have to resign from smoking and my daily glass of wine, those are things that I am doing with big regrets. The clock-making I had to stop due to the big stress for my eyes. I have to try to get healthy and stay healthy to be together with my beloved ones. We take a big pleasure with Steffl's picture, and by looking at it we also keep always thinking of you, Hans and Olly, something that is happening very often. We send best wishes for a good arrival to the parents Haar and I ask you to relate to them a warmest greetings, as we are following their long journey using the local Jewish newspaper with big interest. Good bye, stay well, dearest greetings for Steffl. You are kissed often by Uncle Adolf

In letter exchanges from mid-1940, the separated Breuer families were grappling with an unlucky, daunting reality. Trying to maintain their close relationship, father and son now found themselves isolated by events far beyond their control — separated by an ocean and two continents, their lives transformed into an unfamiliar remote existence, facing a dubious destiny, and the mounting prospect of their never being reunited again. ♦

LETTERS FROM FELIX BEGIN

LETTERS OF ANXIETY AND ENDURANCE

By mid-1941, Felix and Marie's nerves and health had deteriorated. Their earlier letters to Hans and Olly, once filled with love, guarded optimism and possibility, now turned grim and severe. As time passed the chances of their survival seemed far fewer. Desperation was setting in as Hans explored various approaches and schemes. He became deeply anxious for his parents' fate. Both Hans and Felix continued to also write to family and other contacts, tracking the exit routes taken by friends. Avenues of progress and hope were repeatedly blocked, yet father and son concentrated on fashioning a workable escape plan. Frustration was met with endurance and focused aspiration. In the months of early May into early August 1941, the full arc of Felix and Marie's feelings flow through these frequent letters.

May 4, 1941

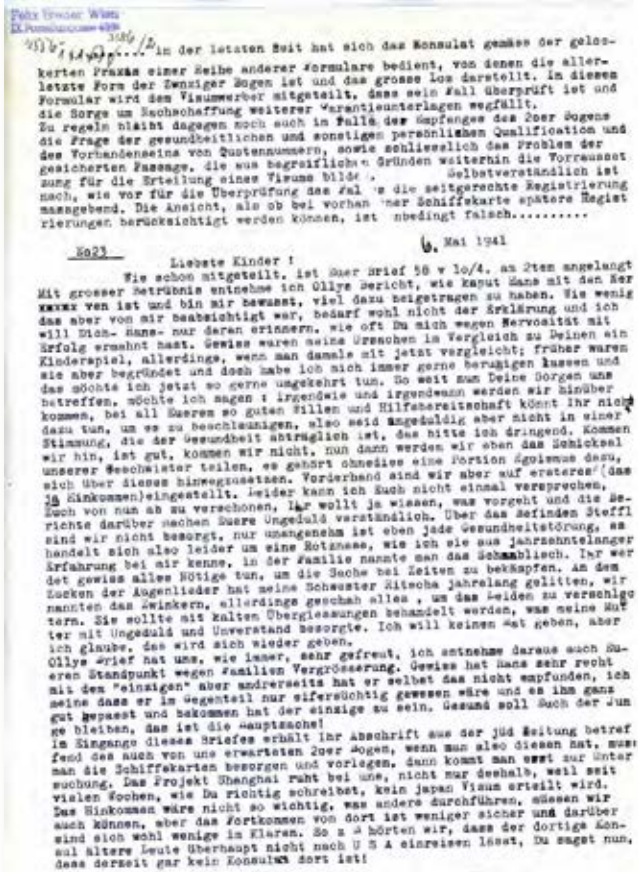
Dearest Children,

... recently the Consulate has utilized some different forms in accordance with the *[currently]* more relaxed procedures, of which the most important is the "Form 20", which is like winning the lottery. This official letter informs the applicant that his case has been processed and that further attempts at acquiring guaranty documents have become unnecessary.

It is still necessary, after receiving Form 20, however, to fulfill health and other personal qualifications. Furthermore, the question of quota numbers remains, as does finally the problem of a guaranteed passage, which understandably is still a necessary prerequisite for receiving a visa. It is still essential to register within the time limit. ... Some people are of the opinion that if one is in possession of a ship passage, a belated registration might be possible, but this is absolutely not the case ...

Persistent anxiety became so palpable and ever changing governmental procedures so trying, that the mental health of everybody involved was deeply affected. Felix shared news, concern, and advice.





time being, however, we are focused on the former: yes, getting there. Unfortunately I can't even promise to spare you from now on. After all, you do want to know what is going on, and the reports make your impatience understandable.

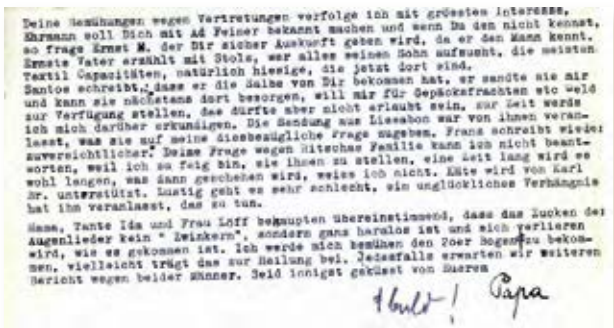
We are not too concerned about Steffi's health, but any bodily malfunction is unpleasant. So it's the snot-nose syndrome, I've had years of experience with it, it's called "Schnabelisch" within the family. You'll no doubt do everything called for to take care of it in a timely fashion. My sister Ritscha also suffered from a twitching of the eye lids for years; we called it blinking. Unfortunately everything that was done just made things worse. She was supposed to be treated with cold splash downs which my mother handled very poorly. I don't want to give advice but I think this will subside again on its own.

Olly's letter was a joy as always, and I am deducing your attitudes about family size from it. Hans is certainly quite right about "an only child" but he himself did not experience problems that way, on the contrary, I think that he would only have been very jealous, and it was just fine for him to be the only one. The boy shall remain healthy, that's the main thing!

At the beginning of this letter you are receiving a copy of Form 20 — taken from the Jüdische Zeitung newspaper — which we are waiting for. Once one has that then one has to get the tickets for the boat and present them, only then one is asked in for the medical exam. The Japan project is on ice for now, since, as you stated correctly, no Japanese visas have been issued for weeks. Getting there that's not so important, what others are able to do we can do too, but how to proceed from there is not at all clear and few understand this.

For example we heard that the American consul there doesn't let any older people emigrate to the USA; and now you say there isn't a consul there at all.

I am following your pursuits of sales positions with the greatest interest. Have Ehrmann introduce you to Ad Feiner, and if you don't know him, then ask your good friend Ernst Mandler, he'll give you information because he knows him. Ernst's father reports proudly that all kinds of people contact his son, mostly local textile specialists who are over there now.



Santos writes that he “got the medical cream sent by you, he sent it to me and will be able to get it there in the future. He wants to make funds available for me for freight costs etc. but I don’t think that’s permitted, I’ll look into the matter soon. The shipment from Lisbon was arranged by them which they admitted upon my asking them. Franz Schnabel’s letters sound more confident again. Your question regarding Ritscha’s family I can’t answer because I’m too much of a coward to ask them that, I suppose the bad condition will be enough for a while, what’ll happen then I don’t know. Käte is being supported by Karl Breuer. Lutz is in a bad situation; it was an unlucky fate which caused him to do that [not elaborated].

Mama, Tante Ida and Frau Löff all agree that twitching of the eye lids is not “blinking” and that it is quite harmless and will go away as it came. I will try to obtain the “Form 20”, maybe that will help in the healing. In any case we are awaiting further reports in regard to the two men. Kisses, *Papa*

In a letter the next day hope suddenly revived. This letter and accompanying telegram announced a far brighter outlook. Here Felix writes in a discernibly more hopeful state of mind, continued through the forthcoming months of summer, 1941:

May 7, 1941—Letter # 24

Dear Children,

This is how the famous “Form 20” looks which is now in our possession!

“Felix and Maria Breuer Cz 87229/30

Your case has been examined and can be further processed as soon as you will fulfill the travel requirements. Resulting from the travel restrictions currently in effect, visas are issued only to such visa applicants as are qualified to undertake the journey to the United States.

Persons who are able to undertake the journey should make precise travel plans and present the extensive appropriate documentation. Such documentation should consist of properly signed letters or receipts of a shipping company or its agency, which contain confirmation of bookings for you on a specific ship at a specific date or which at the least contain the guaranty by a travel bureau that places have been reserved for you during the four-months period during which your visas are still valid.

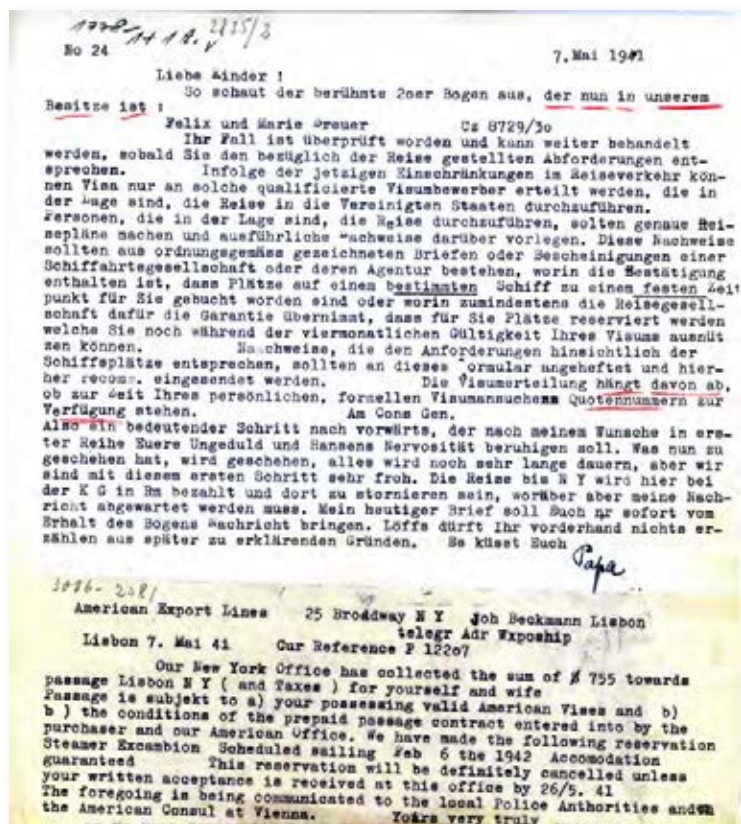
Proofs which fulfill the requirements concerning bookings are to be attached to this form and sent to this address by certified mail.

The granting of visas is dependent on whether at the time of your personal, formal visa application quota numbers are available.

American Consulate General”

Felix adds,

This is an important step forward which I hope will most of all calm both of your impatience and Hans’ nervousness. What has to happen now will happen, everything will take a long time but we are very happy about this first step. The way how it’s done is that a payment for the trip to NY is made here at the Kultusgemeinde in Reichsmark and will then be transferred from there I suppose, but wait for more info on that from me. My letter today is just giving you the news about receiving the form. Please don’t mention anything about it to the Löffs, reasons to be explained later. Kisses, *Papa*.



The previous May 7, 1941 letter featured specific exit plans and the future. At the bottom Felix had typed a copy of an important telegram, also dated 7 May '41, from the American Export Lines acknowledging its collection of \$755 towards a Lisbon-NY passage for Felix and Marie, scheduled to sail from Lisbon on February 6, 1942, along with requirements for the Vienna Breuers possessing valid American Visas:

American Export Lines 25 Broadway NY Joh Beckmann Lisbon telegr Adr Expoship
Lisbon 7. Mai 4 Our Reference P 12207

Our New York Office has collected the sum of \$755 towards passage Lisbon NY (and taxes) for yourself and wife. Passage is subject to a) your possessing valid American Visas and b) the conditions of the prepaid passage contract entered into by the purchaser and our American Office. We have made the following reservation:

Steamer Excambion Scheduled sailing Feb 6, 1942 Accommodation guaranteed. This reservation will be definitely cancelled unless your written acceptance is received at this office by May 26, '41. The foregoing is being communicated to the local Police Authorities and the American Consul at Vienna.
Yours very truly

By his May 13, 1941 letter, Felix was energized, full of anticipation and rather cheerful at having an actual exit prospect, and was getting on with their plans. It remains unclear exactly how tickets were being arranged.

May 13, 1941—Letter # 25

Dearest Hans!

Received 59 dated April 17 on the 9th, with English censor mark. As far as our case is concerned, I am reporting that we applied at the foreign currency office for a release of the necessary amount for ship passages; this matter will no doubt take a while. Then we'll try to arrange for tickets through the Kultusgemeinde, i.e. some kind of confirmation, which then will allow us to request to be processed at the Consulate; this is all going to take a long time still, let's just hope that not too much will happen in the meanwhile. The good-credit certification and passport applications are already in process.

We're happy to hear that business might pick up soon at the Studio; I can't imagine how you can at the same time think of undertaking other projects, anyway I hope to hear good — and honest! — reports about your health. You should feel much relieved now about us; especially since the "Form 20" is useful in other ways too. I feel sorry for the poor little guy; nose examinations are very unpleasant even for adults, treatment even more so; how is he dealing with all that? I hope better than his father. ... We always hear the boy's clever sayings with great interest, and I'm always comparing with you: for example that time with the telephone call! You were about 8-years-old and your Tante Ritcha called from Königshof], you were alone at home, she



asked "what's new" and you answered her: "Auntie, I'm sorry but I haven't read the paper yet today"; your answer made a big splash. And re the first day of school, I'm reminded how I had to take my two sisters at that time, and how the teacher allowed me to stay in the classroom because they were bawling so much; I was 13 then.

Why are you so mad at Ernst Mandler? Because he's calling in an old debt? You'd probably do the same, I think he always was a good friend to you. I just feel sorry for the old folks, to have gotten such a daughter-in-law! In spite of that, their greatest worry in their household liquidation is that their son is going to lose his inheritance which often makes them do the wrong thing. We're not hearing anything from the Brülls, a bad sign, we're quite worried about it, because it's possible to wire from there. Breitner's went to NY to their relatives, so they're not going to California after all, the brothers never were very close, which is probably Heinrich's fault. The ship is supposed to have arrived there on April 28. You probably won't need Ewald D's address for the time being, but note it down anyway.

LETTERS OF ANXIETY AND ENDURANCE

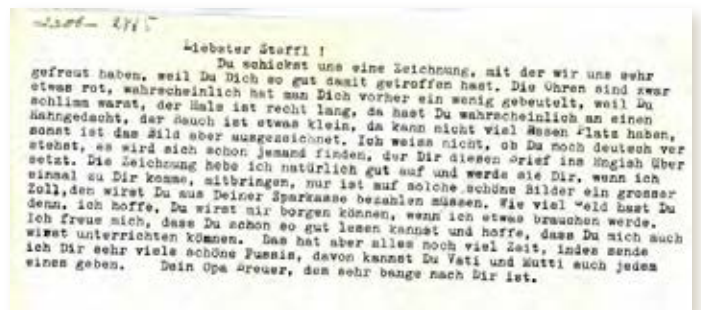
[Here, Felix added detailed reports on the fate of various friends.] Mama is without help now, which is not possible to find nowadays, quite aside from the fact that this is not possible to arrange now on account of the internal circumstances here. [A possible interpretation of this cryptic remark may be a rare reference to the political situation: i.e. it isn't possible for them to hire domestic help]

Löff's efforts are very nice but impractical. I imagine he wasn't able to get tickets via Russia, as he wrote in his letter; his father has written him twice already that he should confer with you in these matters. His brother's fate in Riga does not make his parents happy either. The weather is bad not only where you are, it seems to be international; we had a few nice days in March, but April and May have been cold and we have to keep on heating which luckily we are still able to do. Otherwise we are all healthy, and I hope to hear the same from you soon. Greetings, *papa*

Despite worrisome news above, Felix enclosed a buoyant note for grandson Steffi:

Dearest Steffi!

You sent us a drawing that we liked a lot because it looks exactly like you! To be sure, the ears are a little red — maybe someone pulled you a little by the ears because you were naughty — and the neck is pretty long — you probably were thinking of a rooster — and the tummy is teeny — not much room for food in there — otherwise the picture is terrific. I don't know if you still understand German; if not, there'll surely be someone to translate this into English. I'll certainly keep this drawing, and when I come to visit, I'll bring it with me; the only problem is that such pretty pictures require a high tariff to be paid; you'll have to pay that from your piggy-bank. How much money do you have? I hope that I'll be able to borrow some money from you when I'm in trouble. I'm happy to hear that you're so good at reading already, and hope you'll be able to teach me something. But that's going to take a while yet; meanwhile I'll send you lots of kisses, enough to give one each to Vati and Mutti. Your Opa Breuer, who misses you a lot.



With actual date, visas and tickets, a long awaited processing breakthrough for Felix and Marie's emigration plans now took center stage, beginning with this letter of May 19, 1941, which was Hans' thirty-fourth birthday. Risk and financial pressures on Hans were enormous and Felix focuses on the details while trying to calm the anxiety of his son:



May 19, 1941—Letter #26 [excerpted]

... We received a communication from the Export Line (see copy attached). We are not going to book this very late date, since there is a chance of a much earlier date through the Kultusgemeinde. [The Jewish community agency through which all procedures were arranged, entirely under Nazi supervision] The E.L. would have been our preference, because it is supposed to have bigger and better ships than the Portuguese ones, but that's not to be a concern for us now. I will let you know how I shall respond to the E.L.'s letter. This is the situation now: I've applied at the Foreign Exchange Office for a release of the appropriate amount in marks; it is then transferable to the Kultusgemeinde, and as soon as spaces are available, we will get a confirmation which then we will have to present to the Consulate. The trip from Berlin to NY is then paid for, including layover costs in Lisbon. Czech [quota] numbers are not expected before July, therefore we are not supposed to apply at the Consulate before then; the very few numbers which are dribbling in now and then are applied to very old cases. The price includes \$10 per person deck-fee [tip?], and in addition, one is able to buy \$4 cash with each passport. I'll

let you know about the cancellation at the Export Line; I'm still waiting for a response concerning my inquiry regarding cancellation fees. I want to stress again that I sent a telegram to them that we need a fixed date booking; and if Hapag [the German shipping line] didn't say that in their telegram, it's not my fault; anyway a booking for February of 1942 is worthless to us and does not correspond with our order. So, I think I've covered it all sufficiently, and Hans' questions should be answered now; I'll keep you informed about further developments. Your anxiety in this matter should cool down for now.

As to answering your letters which give us joy: Mandlers registered on 11/25/38 under the German quota; there hasn't been anything past the 11/10 date for a long time; they won't get their turn before the new quota-year, since there were so many applications between the 10th and the 25th. Furthermore, the couple has not decided yet whether they should or shouldn't go, it seems they fear their daughter-in-law — and not without cause, and also the entire process here is very problematical. In regard to care packages I will say again that I'll let you know. We are happy to hear the news about Hans new job at the Columbia studio; as Olly says, this seems the easiest way to make a living. So how did you arrange for Steffl's school, I mean his getting picked up? The in-laws want to move out, what a surprise; are we to read between the lines here? Is Father Haar bringing in any money, and does she [Helen Haar] produce anything for your [studio] kiosk? ... Frau Ehrlich is supposed to be close to a departure after all, she'll be able to tell you herself how the process is unfolding ... Lustig is writing very sad letters ... I forgot to mention that Georg's new affidavit has arrived. ... Ritscha is worried about her apartment. ...

Hope rises, as Felix sought to settle arrangements for their leaving as soon as possible:



May 26, 1941—Letter # 27 [Partial translation]

... Your opinion concerning the Export Line is shared by Franz Schnabel; he writes that his sons are supposed to come [to join him in NY] in July if by that time traveling is still possible. Josef Schönfeld, brother of Otto, has arrived at his place; I don't know him at all. Franz writes that he is assistant sales rep for yarns; I hope he won't have to undergo the same experiences his other salesmen did under him. [refers to Frank Stevens' new textile business in NY]

I'm very sorry Steffl has to have this operation, even if it is nothing major it still is unpleasant and costly; I don't suppose there is much point in interfering, considering our distance. ... How come the boy is so wild; he's certainly not taking after his father in that, and I don't really know what his mother was like; anyway I'm sure it won't matter in the long run. I mourn your hat, if only I could bring you one! It's interesting what you tell us about Karl's boss; so far his promises have not materialized. [apparent ref to Karl Breuer's new subordinate employee status at the now Nazi run Breuer&Sohne factory.] ... To have to sell watchbands and ready-made clothes, I can well understand that that's not an easy thing for you. If only you'd get some lucky breaks, you certainly are not lacking in a hard-working attitude. If you won't have time for correspondence, at least I'd be able to help you with secretarial stuff; I've been practicing shorthand for a while now, using one of your schoolbooks. [ref to Hans trying new jobs as a salesman and hopes of Felix to be of

help once he arrives in LA] By the way, my question where you find the time for correspondence was in regard to your letters to us which are remarkably detailed. ... The Klempners, friends of the Löff's, are leaving today unless something unforeseen happens at the last moment which is common now. ... And the Epsteins too are supposed to be gone by this week, which will be the end of that long story; (I'll give him your address which he'll need possibly). ... Work continues at the Consulate, but no new quotas are expected before July. I repeat, one must present ship booking tickets before a hearing is scheduled. [ref to a hearing is part of the labyrinth of required Nazi exit procedures] But booking on the E.L. for February '42 precludes scheduling of a hearing on account of the lateness of the date. ... So, in the best of circumstances — it'll take four months. And I repeat, we're doing everything we can. Papa



June 3, 1941—Letter # 28

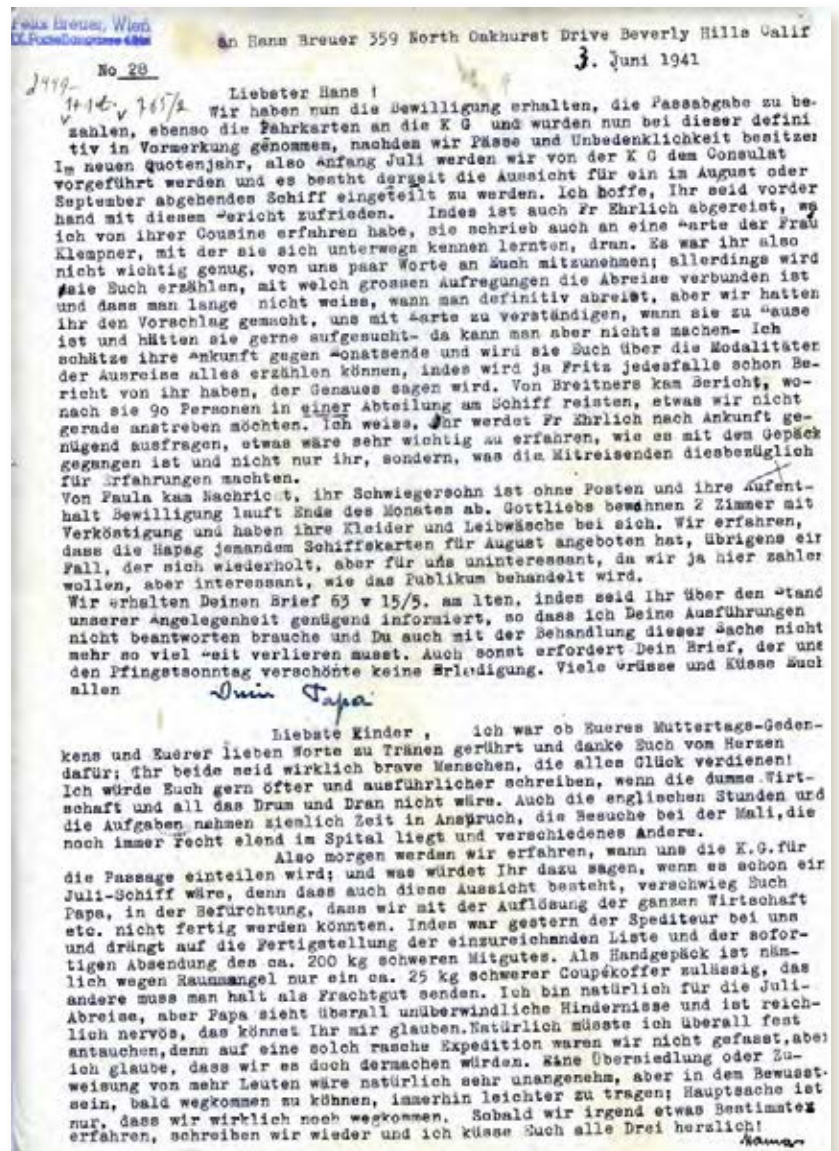
We now have received the permit to pay for the passport delivery, as well as the tickets at the Kultusgemeinde; and now that we have our passports and other papers, we are definitely on its list. The Kultusgemeinde will present us to the Consulate in the new quota year which starts in July, and there is a chance that we will be given a passage on a boat leaving August or September. I hope that for the time being you are satisfied with my report.

[Felix then reports that Frau Ehrlich was able to leave; complaining that she didn't stop beforehand to pick up a message to Hans. Someone reported that 90 people were in one compartment on a ship " which is not our intention to do." He asks Hans to find out from Fr. Ehrlich how luggage was handled.]

Second part of letter sent by Marie:

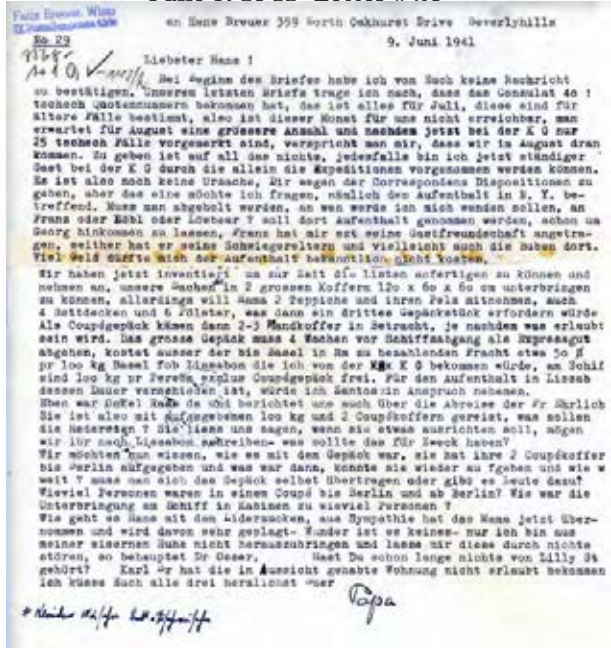
Dear Children, I was moved to tears by your Mother's Day thoughts and dear words; many thanks. You are really dear and good people who deserve all the luck possible. I would love to write you more frequently, if it wasn't for all that stupid business [planning, household, or economy] and all its rigmarole. [a veiled comment on the political situation]. My English and homework also take time, as does visiting with Mali, who still is quite sick in the hospital, and several other matters.

So tomorrow we will find out when the Kultusgemeinde will place us for a booking; and what's your reaction when I tell you that a July ship is also possible? Papa didn't tell you that there is a chance of that, fearing that we wouldn't be able to manage taking care of the household etc., nevertheless, the freight company people were here yesterday, and they are pushing for completion of the list and immediate sending of the 200 kg of moving goods. Because of a lack of room, one is allowed to take along only one suitcase of approximately 25 kg; the rest has to go as freight. Naturally, I am for leaving in July, but Papa sees big obstacles everywhere, and is very nervous, let me tell you. I'd have to work really hard, of course, because we were not planning on such a quick expedition, but I think we'd be able to manage. Having to move or having even more people assigned to the apartment would be very unpleasant; but it is easier to take in the knowledge that we'll be leaving soon. The main thing is that we still get away. As soon as we know anything certain we'll write again. *Mama*



Obstacles in their planning kept arising. A major problem was the meager US emigration quota for all Europeans. This was exacerbated for Felix and Marie since they had to apply under the severely restricted Czech quota. Nonetheless, Felix concentrated on specific plans for how to pay for the costs of travel through Lisbon, anticipating their arrival at NYC. He considered exactly what they were allowed to bring along. Felix and Marie share their determination in this letter.

June 9, 1941—Letter # 29



To add to my last letter, the Consulate received 40! Czech quota numbers for July; those are all to go to older cases, therefore that month is not achievable for us; a larger number is expected for August, and since only 25 Czech cases are registered at the k.g. right now, I'm being promised that we'll get a turn in August. You can't rely on anything, but in any case, I'm permanent visitor at the k.g which is the only means to take these expeditions. So there is no reason to give you instructions concerning your correspondence; but I have a question regarding New York. Is it necessary to be picked up by someone, and whom should I contact, Franz or Löbl or Löwbeer? Should I plan to stay there a while, at least to meet Georg; Franz has offered me his hospitality but meanwhile he has his in-laws and maybe the boys are there too. Obviously, I'm not able to spend much money on that stay.

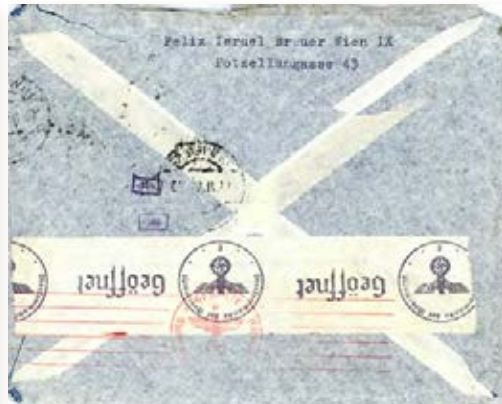
[... They discuss planning what luggage to take; 3 large suitcases to be sent as freight and two carry-on suitcases.] Mama wants to take two rugs and her fur coat. For the layover in Lisbon I would call on Santos. Mama has a twitch in her eye-lid now too; but I'm unflappable, and nothing can get me worked up. *Papa*

A new delay arose as the Consulate notified the *Kultusgemeinde* not to send people with Czech quota numbers, only those with German quota numbers, as there were ship passage places available only for Germans. Still with great interest Felix kept up with Hans' news in Los Angeles—his new car and changed name. My father changed his name from Hans Breuer to John Brewer to create a new American identity, and had stationary printed. Dad soon returned to using the Breuer spelling as he once explained it to me, anticipating that at war's end he might be more easily located by any family survivors.

June 13, '41—Letter # 30 [Translator summary]

[Felix offers congratulations regarding Hans' new car; and the new business cards. Name change mentioned. Good to hear that business is good and that Hans and Olly have been able to save a little money. Felix writes:]

LETTERS OF ANXIETY AND ENDURANCE



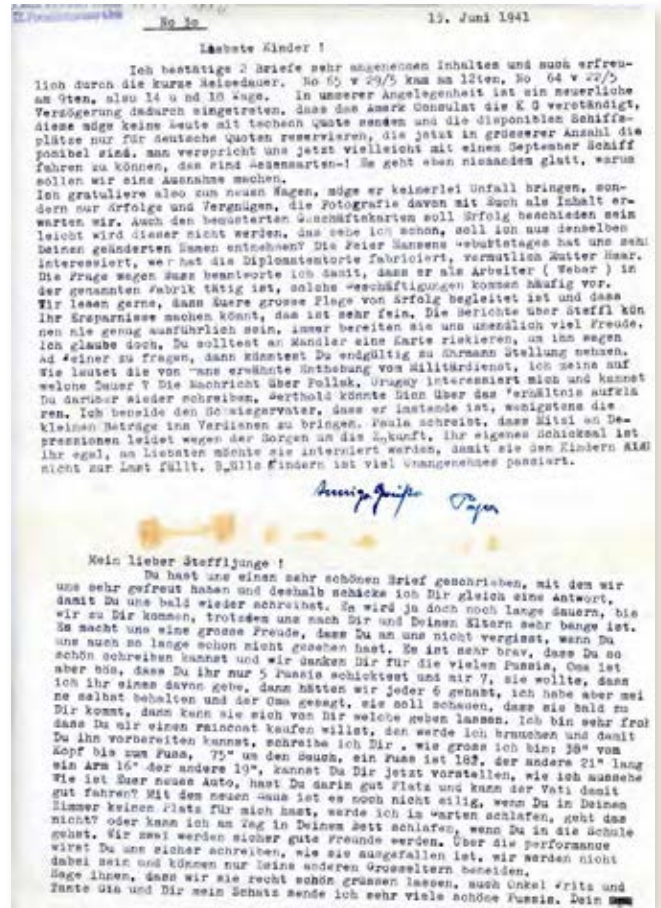
Felix Israel Breuer
 Note name in return address— under Nazi rule, every Jewish male was compelled to use the name "Israel" as his middle name. And every Jewish woman had to use "Sarah" as her middle name. This began under Law #174 of the 1938 Nazi Exclusionary Laws. Prior to that time, use of middle names was relatively uncommon, and neither Felix nor Hans had a given middle name.

"I envy your father-in-law [Haar] on his ability to bring in a little money. Paula writes that Mitzi is suffering from depression worrying about the future. She doesn't care about her own fate; she'd prefer to go to an internment camp herself, not to become a burden on her children. Brüll's kids have had many unpleasant experiences." *Papa*

Felix added a note for Steve, now nearly 5 years old, showing outgoing optimism for his grandson.

Dearest Steffi Boy,

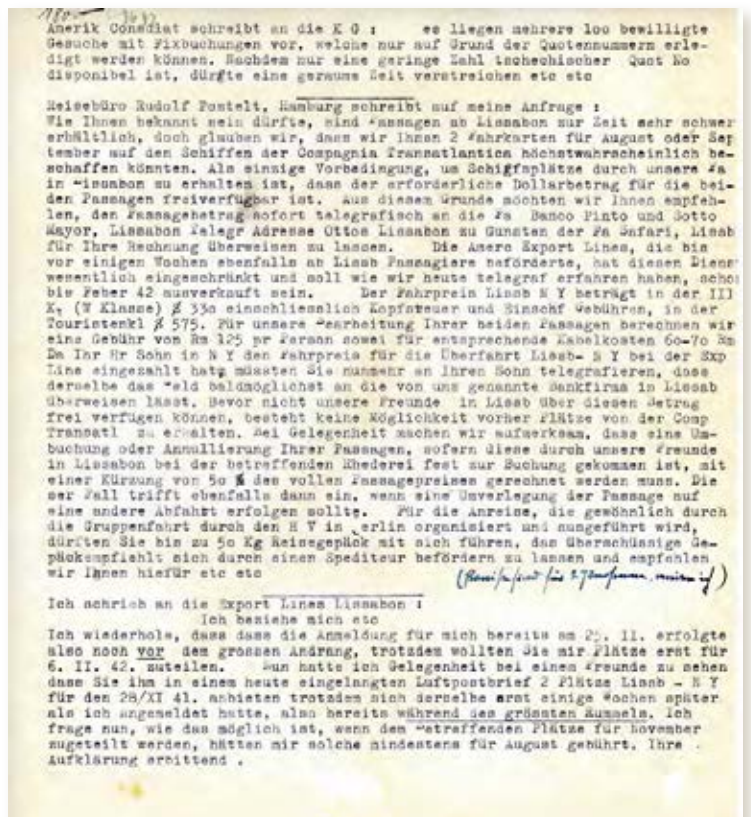
You've written us a very nice letter, which we were very happy about, and so we're answering you right away, so that you'll write us back soon again. We miss you and your parents a whole lot but I guess it'll take a long time still before we get to join you. ... Thanks for the many kisses, but Oma is upset because you sent her just five of them when I got seven kisses! She asked me to give her one of mine, then we both would have six but I kept all of mine and told her she should hurry up and get over there to see you, then she could get them from you herself. I'm very glad that you want to buy me a raincoat, I'll need that. So that you have an idea of my size: 38" from head to toe; 75" all round my tummy; one foot is 18" long, the other one 21"; one arm is 16", the other one 19" — now you know what I look like. How's the new car; do you have plenty of room in it, and does Vati drive well? there is no hurry about a new house; if you don't have room in your room, I'll sleep in the garden, OK? Or I'll sleep in your bed during the day, while you are in school. The two of us will be best of friends, I'm sure. Let us know how the performance will turn out, wish we could be there like your [other] grandparents. Greetings to everyone and many kisses, *Opa*



In the following letter, Felix included copies of 3 documents sent from the US Consulate to the *Kultusgemeinde* from a Hamburg Travel agency concerning passage and pricing—\$330 - \$575, Lisbon to NY; and 50% penalty for changes and cancellations—and he shared his annoyed response sent to the Export Line office in Lisbon:

June 20, 1941—Letter # 31

"I repeat that my application was dated 2/25, i.e. before the big rush, nevertheless you are offering me seats for a date as late as 2/6/42! I had the occasion to see your air-mail letter, arrived today, to a friend of mine offering him two seats Lisbon-NY for the 28th of November '41, in spite of the fact that he applied several weeks after me, during the greatest rush. My question is, if he got seats for November, I should have been issued such for August. Expecting your explanation in the matter." Felix Breuer

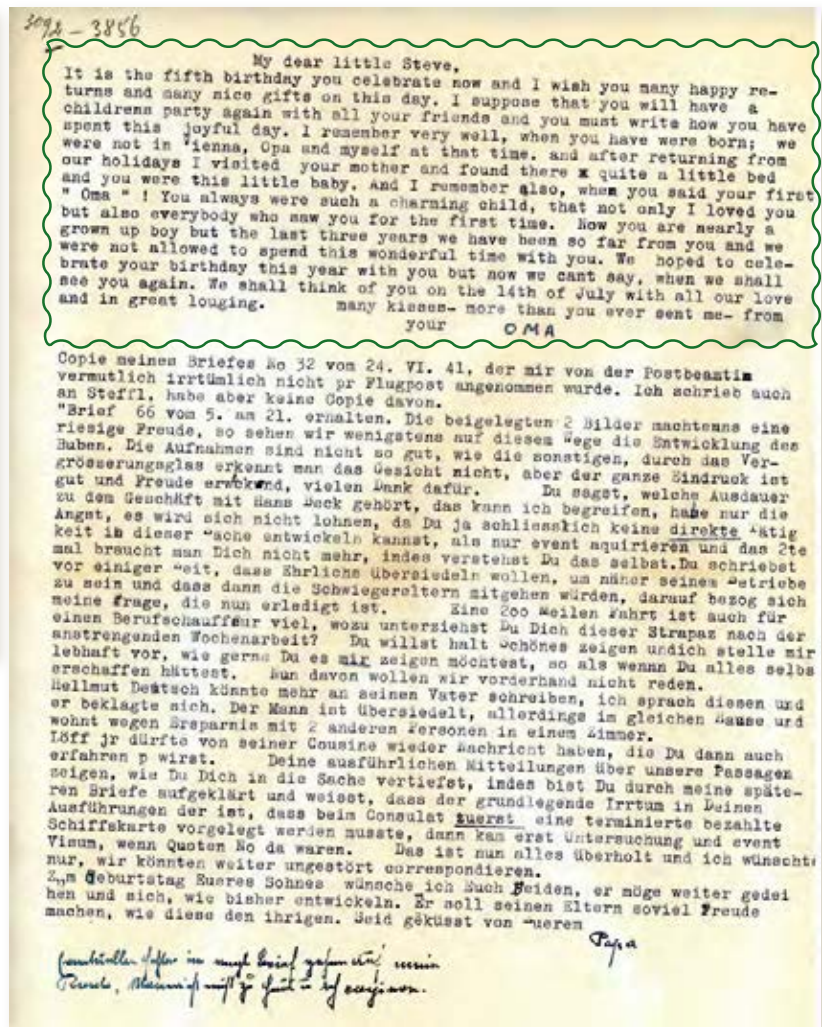
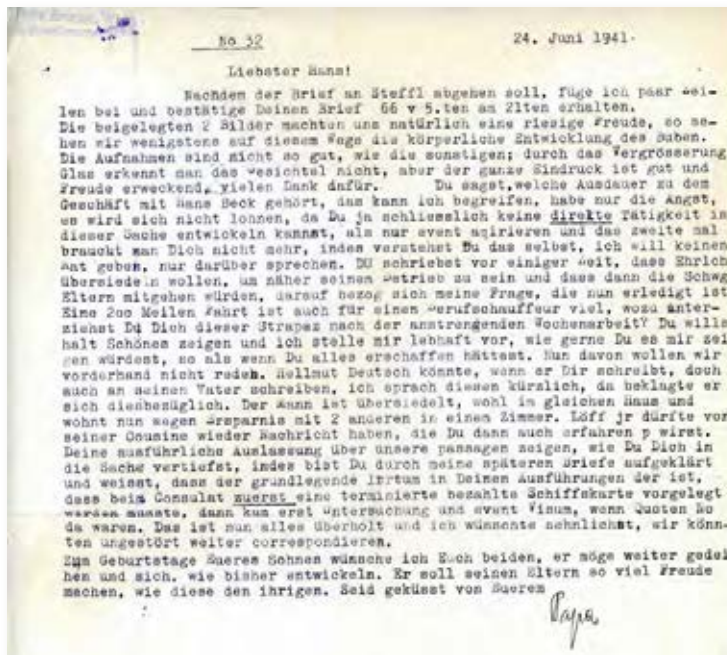


The June 24 letter shown below on the right, included a section by Oma Marie Breuer to Steve, written in remarkably fluent, idiomatic English. Felix shows concerns regarding Hans' business and other developments in Los Angeles. After that he addresses with frustration, mishandled ship ticketing and visa processes, and Hans' possible part in the misunderstanding of the complex process.

June 24, 1941—Letter # 32

... Driving 200 miles, that's a lot even for a professional chauffeur, how come you want to undertake such a strenuous trip after a week's hard work? You want to show us beautiful California sites, I guess, and I'm imaging intensely how you'd want to show me everything, as if you had created it all yourself. But let's not talk about that now. ...

... your basic mistake concerning our passage is that one must first submit a dated, paid-for ship ticket at the Consulate, then and only then was there an examination and maybe a visa, if they had quota numbers. But all that is irrelevant now. *Papa*



By the end of June, 1941, ever-changing emigration hopes again turned very dark for the “Lisbon project” and likewise, in general, for any workable exit arrangements for Felix and Marie. Felix says that this made his further discussion of their emigration “superfluous.” With hope fading once again, the remainder of this letter attempts to keep up with Hans, Olly and little Steve, thereby maintaining a lifeline to a distant unattainable freedom. On top of that, Felix shared some dismal news of the Bohemia family, including Karl Breuer losing his home.

June 30, 1941—Letter # 33

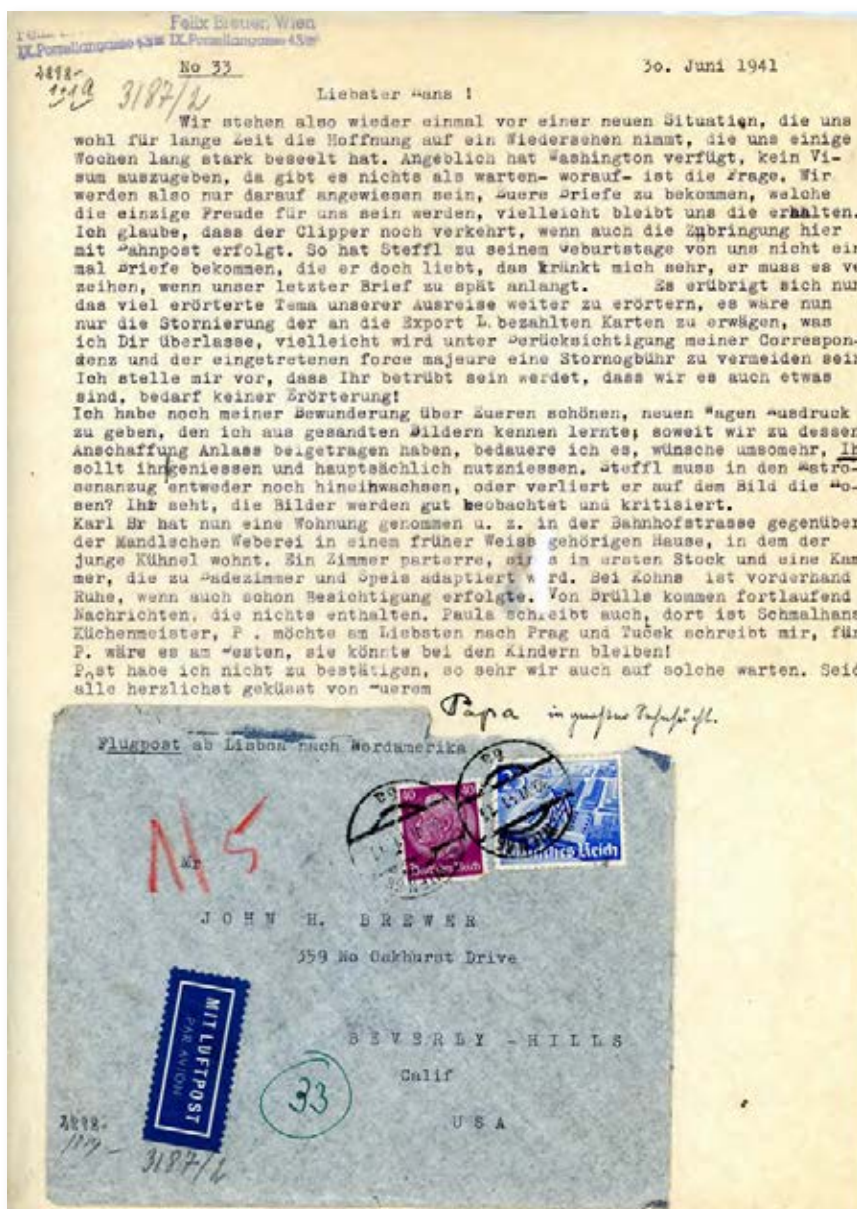
So we are faced with a new situation now which will probably wipe out all the hope for a reunion that did animate us for a period of several weeks. Apparently, Washington has given the directive not to issue any visas; all one can do now is wait – wait for what, though, that’s the question. Your letters are the only joy left for us; hopefully this will remain possible. I think the Clipper [airplane] is still going, even though the mail is being transported from here to there via rails. That’s why Steffl didn’t even get our [birthday] letters which he likes so much; we are very upset about that, he must forgive us.

It is superfluous to discuss the subject of our emigration any further; only cancellation of the tickets at the Export Line is left to consider, I’m leaving that up to you. Because of my correspondence in this regard and considering the force majeure situation, I suppose the cancellation fee will be waved. I imagine, you are sad about the situation; we are, that goes without saying.

I want to express my admiration for your beautiful new car ... as far as we contributed to its acquisition, I’m sorry; main thing is you will enjoy and make use of it. Steffl has a ways to grow into his sailor suit, or is he losing his pants in those pictures? You see, they are being thoroughly scrutinized by us here.

Karl Breuer has taken an apartment in the Bahnhofstrasse in a house opposite Mandler’s weaving mill in a building which previously belonged to Weiss, and in which the young Kühnel lives now. One room on the ground floor, one on the second floor, and a small room which is being adapted as bathroom and pantry. The Kohns are being left in peace at least for now, even though an official inspection did happen already. Brülls are writing constantly without saying much. Paula writes that their cupboards are nearly always bare; that she wants to be in Prague, and Tucek writes that it would be best for her if she could be with her kids.

There is no further mail from you for me to acknowledge, even though we are expecting it eagerly.



Subjected to Nazi censorship and inferior mail services available to Jews, maintaining a reliable mail connection was a constant worry for the Vienna family.



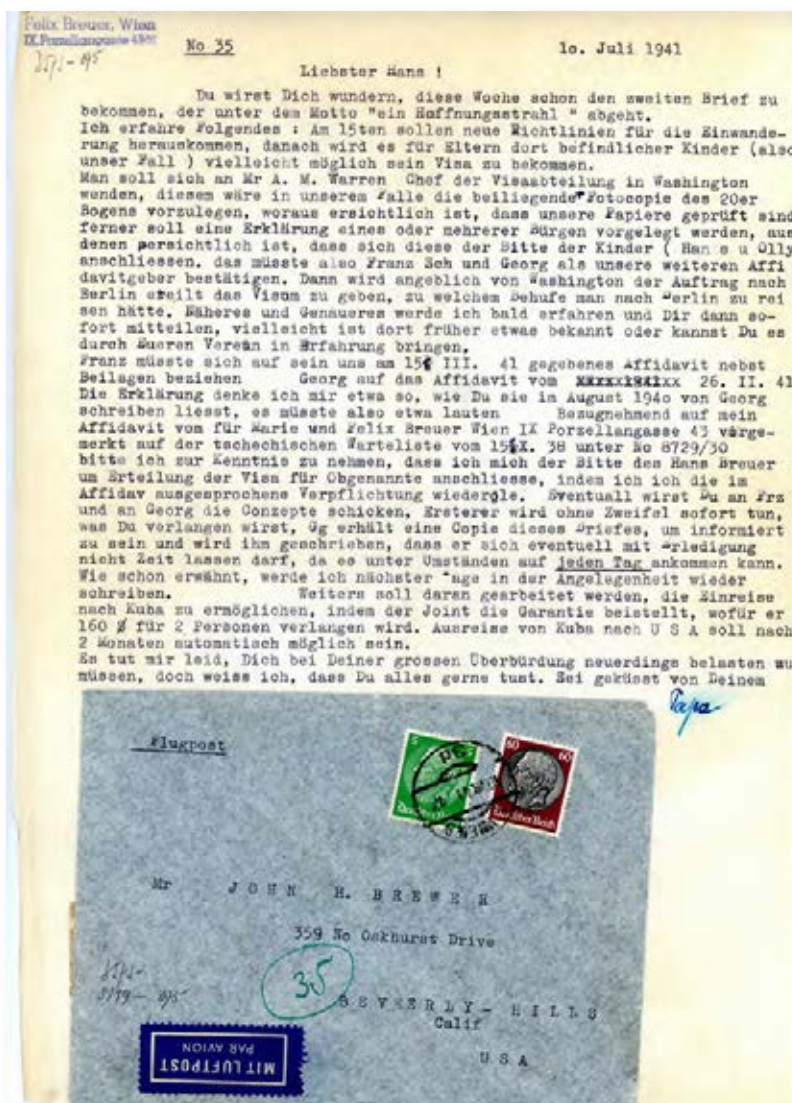
July 7, 41—Letter # 34 [Translator summary]

Felix acknowledges Hans' letter; expressing relief that mail is still getting through: clearly, anxiety had been increasing about that as well. Nothing much happening about plans. Felix writes, "I was very happy about Bleier's letter; they are loyal people and I've always known that the brothers [Bleier] were worthy of my admiration and appreciation. You don't often find people like that." Felix wants to know whether Epstein has contacted Hans, as he had promised before leaving.

In the churning of local events and the constant rumors, Felix picks up on a new "ray of hope":

July 10, 1941—Letter # 35 [Translator summary]

"A ray of hope" is seen. Rumors are going around of new regulations whereby the parents of children in the US are supposed to be able to get visas. Affidavits are required from the children and from additional people: that would be Franz Schnabel, and Georg Soyka; since they already submitted affidavits earlier; these would have to be re-affirmations of their guarantees. Felix suggests a formulation. He stresses urgency; apologizes for causing additional stress and bother to Hans and all concerned.



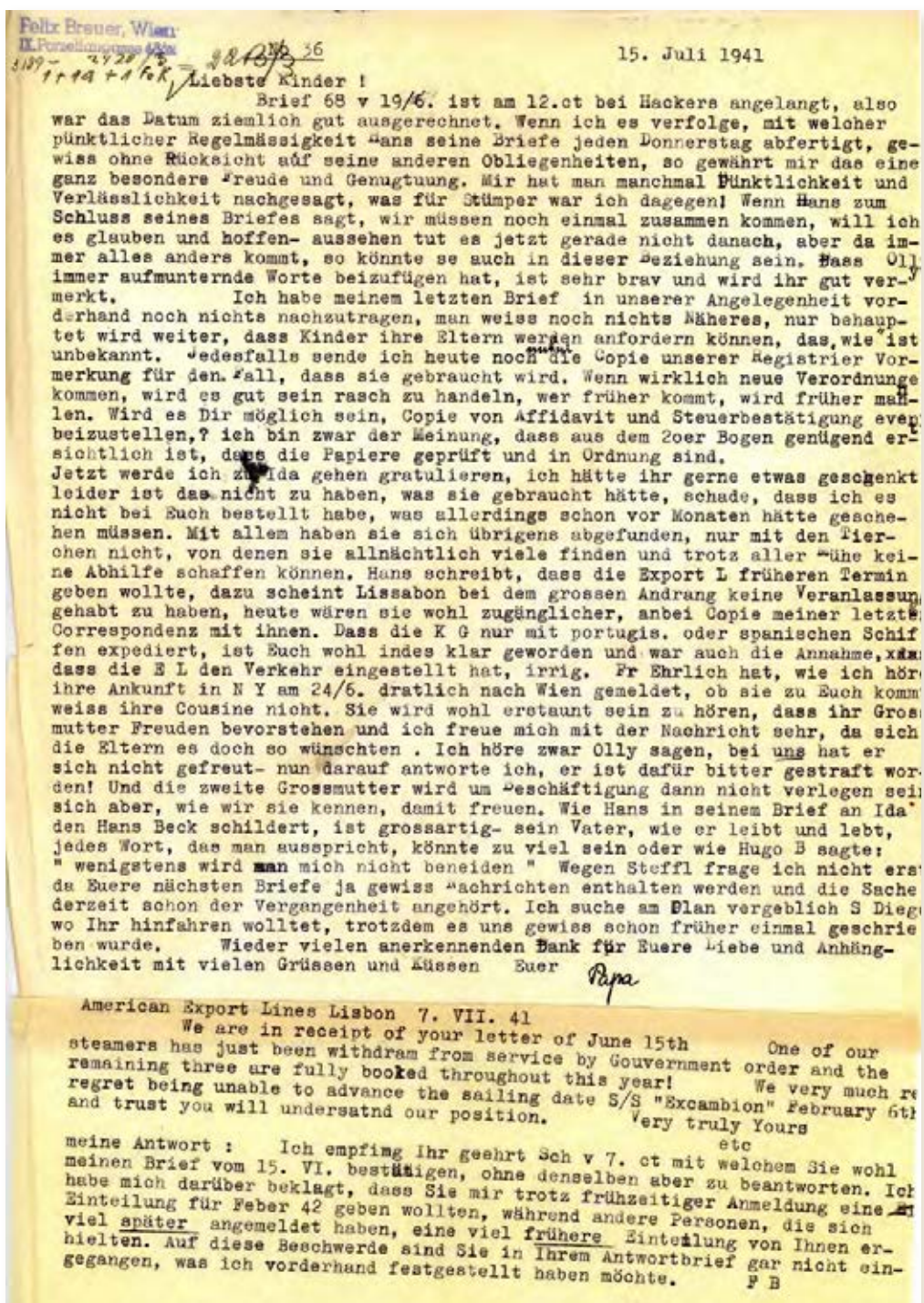
In this letter Felix praises Hans for his important weekly letters; clearly, he thrives on getting all the updates. Felix shows exasperation with Export Line's sailing cancellation, especially with the company's response in English, to his letter of the previous month. He includes a copy of their July 7 telegram, as well as the response letter Felix sent in return to the company. He was clearly perplexed and annoyed by the state of all this. References are made to his sister Ida and husband, the Hackers, who were the closest relatives remaining in Vienna.

July 15, 1941—Letter # 36

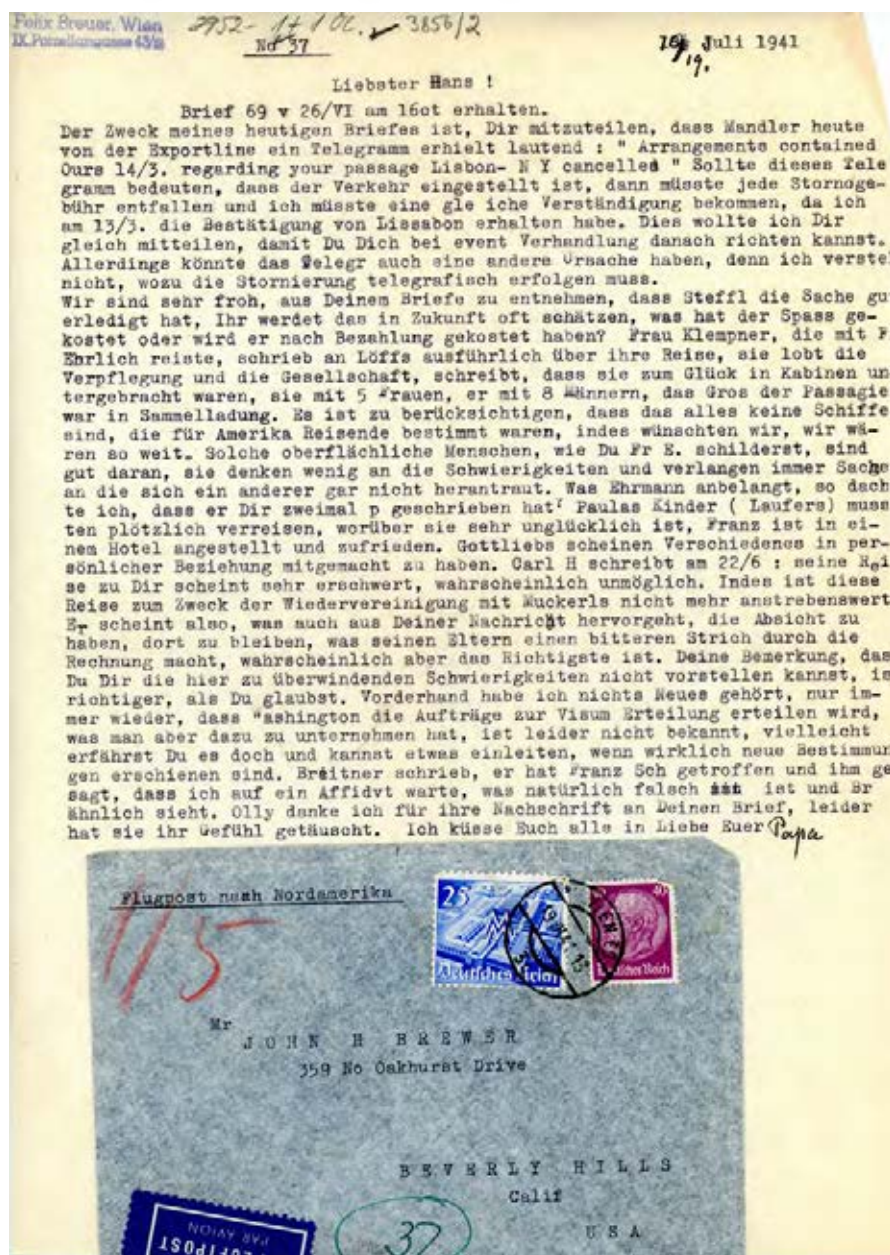
Dearest Children,

Letter no. 68 dated 6/19 arrived here at the Hackers on the 12th, it follows that the date was calculated well. When I think about how Hans writes his letters every Thursday with great punctuality, I am quite impressed, especially considering all his other obligations. It gives me great joy and satisfaction. People thought of me as punctual and responsible — but no comparison with Hans! ... *[Felix adds more details about need for visas, affidavits]*

I'm going to visit Ida *[sister of Felix in Vienna]* very soon to wish her happy birthday. Wish I could have given her a present, but what she needs is not available, too bad that I didn't order it from you but that would have had to be done months ago. They've adjusted to everything, except for the critters *[bed bugs]*; they have them every night, and just can't get rid of them.



The Export Line continued to prove ever more constrained and unreliable as it canceled sailing for the Mandlers, close family friends; Felix expressed his profound consternation.



July 19, 1941—Letter # 37

The purpose of my letter today is to tell you that Mandler received the following telegram today from the Export Line: 'Arrangement contained Ours March 14 regarding your passage Lisbon-NY canceled'. If this means that all passages have been stopped, then the cancellation fees should not apply, and I should be getting a similar notification, since I received my confirmation on the 13th of March. I just wanted to inform you of this, in case it is relevant for your negotiations. On the other hand, there might be another reason for this telegram, because I don't understand why they had to do the cancellation by telegram.

We're happy to hear that Steffl has gotten over the thing [the operation for polyps] quite well. How much did you have to pay for it?

Felix relays reports from others, including the senior Mrs. Ehrlich regarding their own shipboard experiences and adjustments in new countries. He clearly longs to be among those leaving, and he alludes to the daily difficulties of their situation and his continued frustration with still more rules, with hopes that Hans might get clarification:

Frau Klempner, who was traveling with Frau Ehrlich, wrote at length about the trip to the Löffs. She has good things to say about the food

and the organization; she says that they were fortunate to have been put in cabins, she with 5 women, he with 8 men; most of the [other] passengers were in mass quarters. One has to be aware that none of these ships were intended for trips to America; anyway, we wish that we ourselves were at the point of facing this situation. [More news on others' emigration experiences are included] ... Franz Schnabel is working in a hotel and quite content. Gottliebs seem to have undergone a lot of personal problems. Carl Hacker writes from Paris on 6/22: that his visit to you has become difficult if not impossible. On the other hand, this trip is no longer desirable ... Apparently — and you are indicating the same — he seems to want to stay there, which is a bitter disappointment for his parents here, and yet it's probably the right decision. Your remark that you can hardly imagine the difficulties we have to undergo here, is more to the point than you would believe. At this moment, I've not heard anything new, just the same rumor that Washington will give directives about visa issuance; but nothing is known about what one is supposed to do about it; maybe you'll find out what the new rules are and can start something. Breitner writes he ran into Franz Sch. and told him that I'm waiting for an affidavit, that's wrong of course. Thanks to Olly for her postscript; unfortunately her premonition did not come true [that they will finally be arriving in August.] Papa

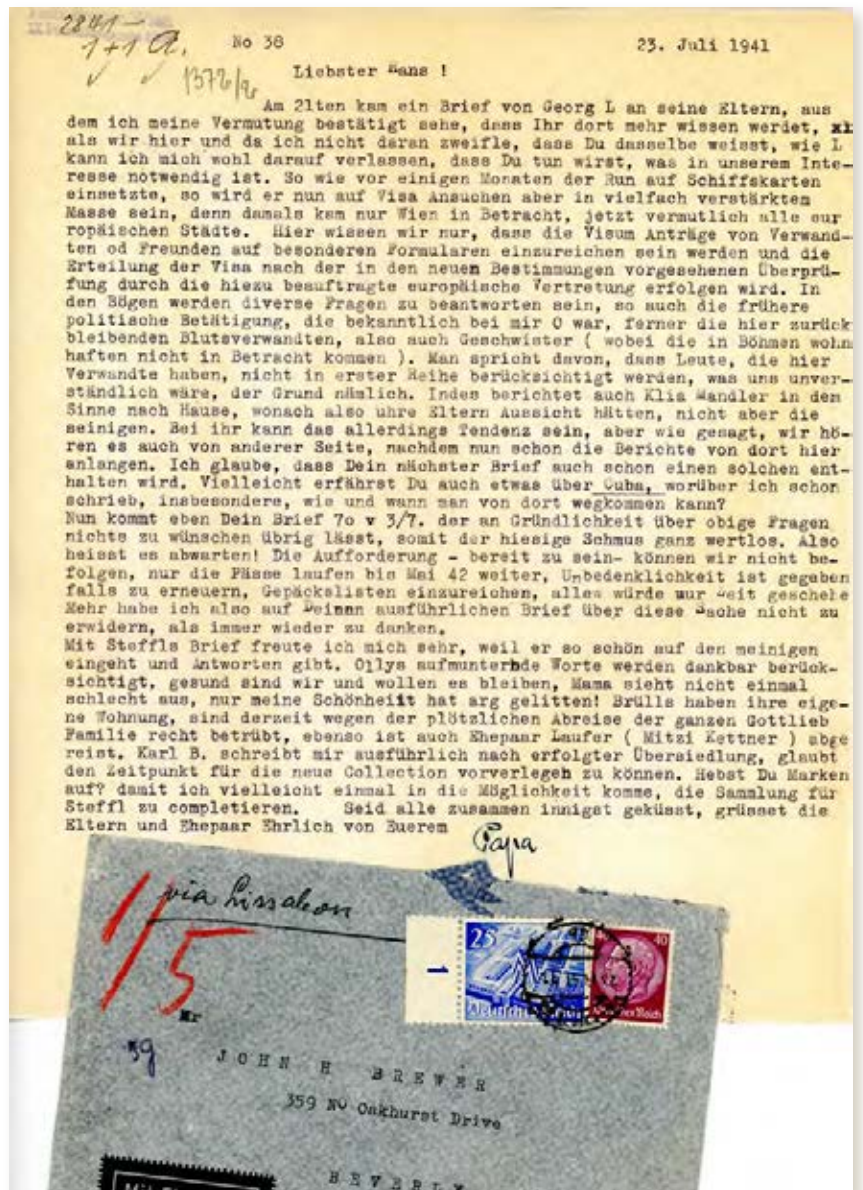
Reliance on Hans to take care of arrangements greatly increased over time. Felix related the competition from ever more visa applicants, the confusion of conflicting reports, and his questions about getting into and out of Cuba if that route was to become possible. Mounting anxiety is evident, even as he compliments Hans' thoroughness.

July 23, 1941—Letter # 38

On the 21st a letter arrived from Georg Loeff. to his parents which corroborates my opinion that more information is available at your end than is to us; and since no doubt you know as much as L., I'm quite sure I can rely on your taking care of whatever is necessary. Just as a few months ago there was a big run on ship passages, there'll be an even greater run on visas now, since at that time only Vienna was relevant whereas now all European cities are a possibility. All we know over here is that visa applications must be submitted on special forms by relatives or friends, and that a European representative agency will scrutinize the applications according to new regulations. The forms pose various questions, including previous political activities, which as is well known was zilch in my case. Furthermore regarding blood relatives remaining here, including siblings (which does not apply to those living in Bohemia). It is being said that people who have close relatives here are not being given primary consideration; this I don't understand, what could be the reason. This is being reported as well by Clara Mandler, meaning that her parents have a chance whereas he does not. This might be bias on her part, but we do hear it from other sides as well, since reports from over there are coming in already. I imagine your next letter will also report about this matter. Maybe you've found out something about Cuba, too, how and when one can get away from there?

Meanwhile your letter ... has arrived, and it leaves nothing to be desired in regard to thoroughness on these questions, so all the local shmooze is pointless. So all one can do is wait! Your suggestion that we ought to be ready to go at any time is not possible: only the passports are valid till May '42; the "good standing paper" may have to be renewed, as does submitting the list of belongings, all this would have to be done at the time. I've got nothing to add to this matter now, only to thank you, as always.

I was very happy to get Steffl's letter; he responds so nicely to what I wrote in mine. Olly's encouraging words are gratefully accepted; we're healthy and intend to stay so. Mama doesn't look too bad but my looks are not what they once were! Brülls have their own apartment now; they're very sad because of the sudden departure of the entire Gottlieb family; the Laufer couple (Mitzi Kettner) are gone as well. Karl Breuer wrote extensively after his successful move; he thinks he can move up the date of the new collection [of merchandise?]. Do you save stamps? Maybe one day I'll have a chance to add to Steffl's collection. Greetings *Papa*



The following two letters exemplify the increasingly complex and shifting rules and interpretations, the confusion of direction on how to proceed in the face of it all, the pressures posed by intricate changing policy questions, and very complicated money requirements for exit processes.



July 26, 1941—Letter # 39

We've found out the new immigration policy today – which information may not be entirely authentic either – but one of its sentences is enough to shatter all our hope: “Persons who have any relatives remaining in Europe cannot receive immigration permits.”

Why this sentence is not placed at the beginning of the regulations but appears almost at the end is inexplicable; thus immigration is being rigorously throttled and has become unattainable for us.

[He asks Hans to turn all his efforts toward the Cuba project now. Mentions the Export Line cancellation again; says he hasn't heard from them but other people have.] “I want to mention that at this time a money transfer for emigration is probably still possible, which is very important for us.”

I just found out that the formulation of the sentence mentioned above is not ‘Europe’ but ‘in several European countries’”. If these countries do not include Bohemia, which is what I was told at the Kultusgemeinde, then there is only one relative in my case, none for Mama; that would mean we'd have a little better of a chance. ...*Papa*

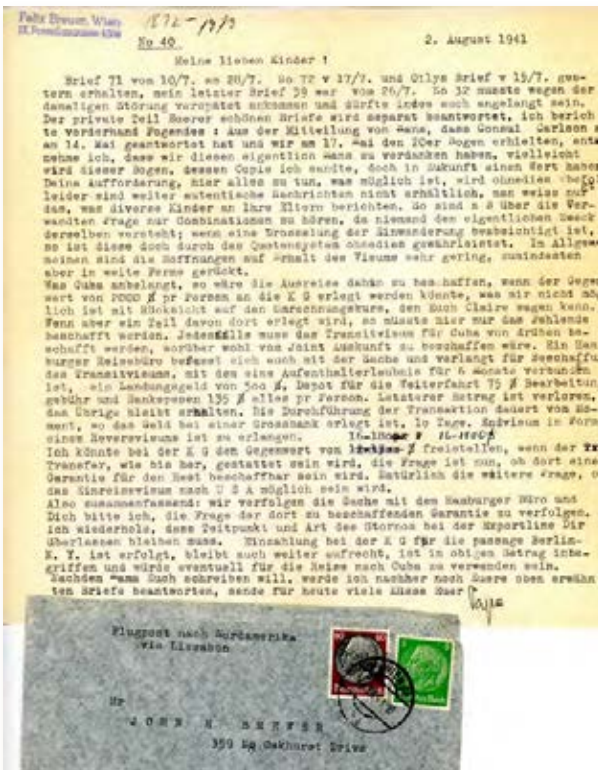
August 2, 1941—Letter # 40

... Hans has written that Consul Carlson responded to him on May 14; since we received ‘Form 20’ on May 17th, I am assuming it's thanks to your efforts that we got this form; maybe it'll do some good in the future after all. ...

Concerning Cuba: In order to make that possible, one has to deposit the equivalent of \$2000 per person with the Kultusgemeinde, which I am not able to do, considering the exchange rate, which Claire can explain to you. If, however, a part of it is taken care of over there, then we would only have to make up the rest here. In any case, the transit visas have to be handled at your end; information about that would have to be obtained from the Joint [*possibly name for a Cuban governmental institution; it appears several times*]. There is a travel bureau in Hamburg which also deals with arrangements for transit visas including a 6 months residency permit. They are asking a \$500 landing fee, deposit of \$75 toward the transit, and \$135 bank and handling fees, all per person. The latter amount is non-refundable, the former one gets back. The transaction takes 10 days from the moment the money has been deposited with a major bank. An end visa can be obtained in the form of a reverse visa. [*?*] I might be able to make the equivalent of \$16-1800 available at the Kultusgemeinde, if the transfer is permitted as it has been so far. Then there is still the further question, of course, whether the immigration visa to the States is even possible.

In conclusion: we are keeping an eye on developments with the Hamburg bureau, and I'm asking you to find out about

the necessary guaranties. I repeat, timing and manner of the cancellation with the Export Line have to be handled at your end. We have made the payment at the Kultusgemeinde for the passage Berlin/NY, and it is included in the above mentioned amount and could possibly be applied to the trip to Cuba if that becomes the plan. Greetings, *Papa*



LETTERS OF ANXIETY AND ENDURANCE

Marie's role in the letter writing had a notably less process-oriented tone than that of Felix. She tended to offer a more descriptive chronicle of the state of their lives in the face of ever growing uncertainty and fear. This can be clearly seen here as Marie writes to her daughter-in-law, Olly, who also adopts a rather more upbeat tone. Still, in the harsh reality they faced, Felix and Marie's pessimism reflected feelings of hopeless entrapment, profoundly indicated here:

August 2, 1941

You are wonderful, dear Olly, always hitting the nail on the head. I can't tell you how much we have appreciated your sweet letter, and your efforts to cheer us up did have great success. Our mood barometer has been quite low for several weeks already, but we've never been quite as worried and discouraged. But the two of you have given us some encouragement again with your dear words; and I'm convinced that you're doing everything you can to get us out of here. How much we envied Frau Claire Ehrlich when we heard that she was able to leave after all. And how happy us two nature buffs would be if for once we could just wander around freely in God's beautiful nature, especially in such beautiful surroundings as yours ...

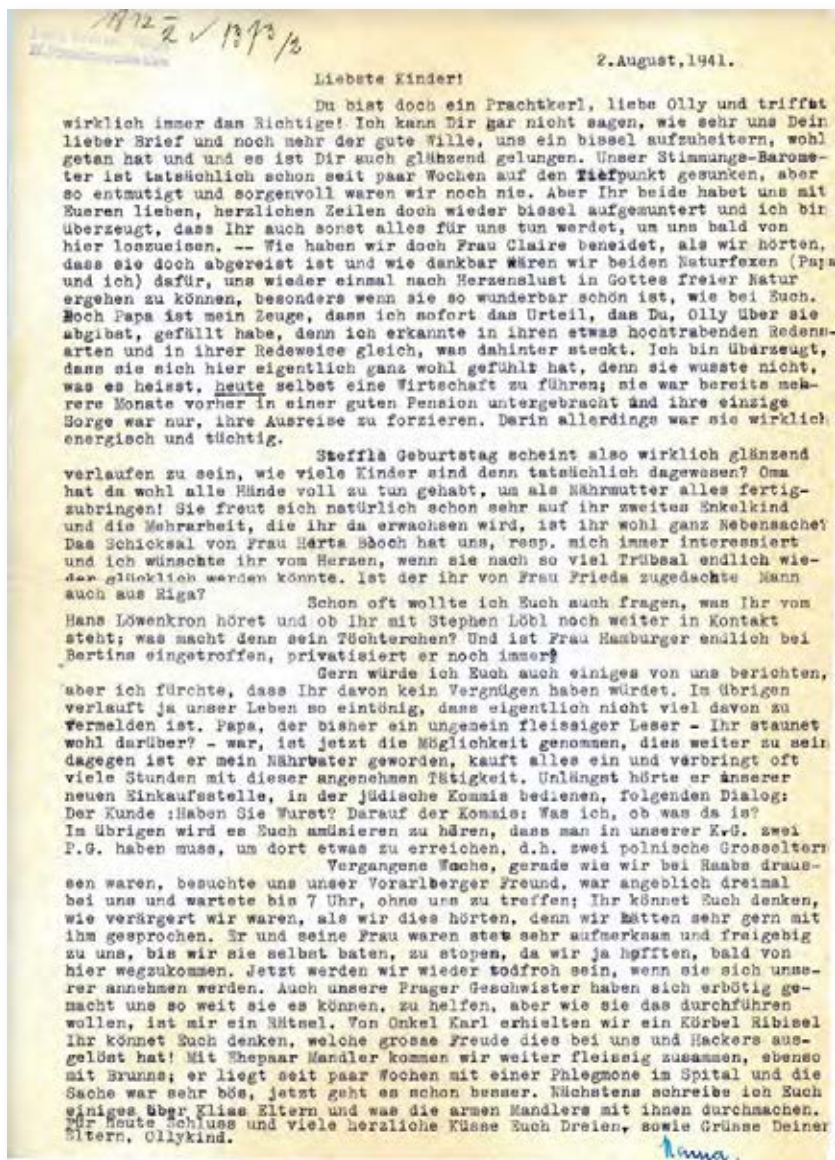
Sounds like Steffl's birthday was really a nice affair; how many children were there? I bet Oma Haar had her hands full to get everyone fed. No doubt she is really looking forward to her second grandchild [*Bill Ehrlich*] and won't mind the additional work? Frau Herta Bloch's fate has always been of interest to me, and I wish with all my heart that she could be happy again.

I've been meaning to ask you, have you heard from Hans Löwenkron and whether you're still in contact with Stephen Löbl: how's his little daughter doing? And has Frau Hamburger finally arrived at the Bertins; is he still living on private income?

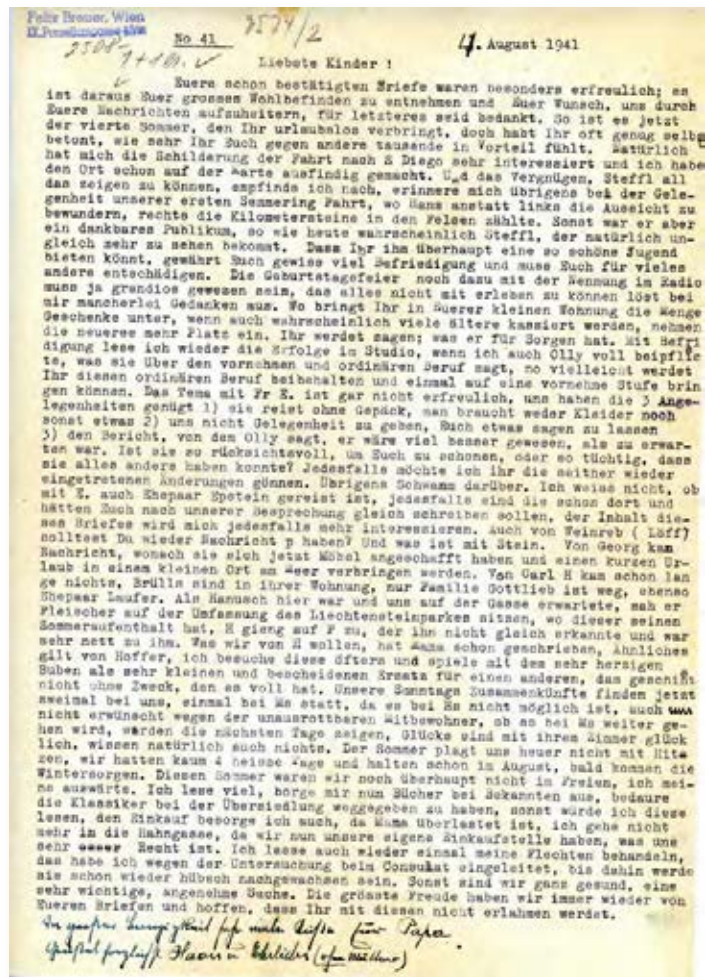
I would love to report news about us but I'm afraid they wouldn't be very pleasant. Anyway, our life is so monotonous now, not much to tell.

Papa, who has been such a non-stop reader recently — are you surprised? — has now lost this possibility. But he has become my provider, goes shopping for everything often spending hours with this pleasant activity. The other day he overheard the following exchange in our new market, which is staffed by Jewish clerks: Customer: Do you have sausage? Clerk: How should I know? Furthermore you'll be interested to hear that in our Kultusgemeinde one needs two P.G. in order to get anywhere, i.e. two Polish grandparents.

Last week, while we were visiting with the Raabs, our friend from Vorarlberg [*Herr Hanusch*] came to see us; apparently he stopped by here three times and waited till 7 o'clock without finding us home; you can imagine how annoyed we were; we would have loved to talk to him. He and his wife have always been very attentive and generous to us until we asked them to stop, since we were hoping to be leaving soon. Now we'd be most relieved if they took us on again. Our family in Prague also offered their assistance, but I can't imagine how they'd be able to. Onkel Karl Kohn sent us a basket of fresh currants; you can imagine how ecstatic we here along with the Hackers were about that! We're still meeting regularly with the Mandlers; same with the Brunns. He's been in the hospital for several weeks now with a severe infection; it was quite serious but he is better now. Soon I'll write about Klia's parents, and all the trouble the Mandlers had to suffer on account of them! Greetings *Mama*



With palpable longing, Felix pondered the details of his children's new California lives. Felix kept careful track of any particulars that he could gather from all contacts, family and friends, as seen here:



August 4, 1941—Letter # 41

... So now this is the fourth summer you're spending without a vacation; but you've said yourself how much you consider yourself fortunate compared to thousands of other people. Naturally I was very interested in your description of your trip to San Diego; I found the place on my map. ... This reminds me of our first trip to Semmering, when Hans counted the kilometer markers in the rocks on our right instead of admiring the view on our left. For the most part though, he was a good audience, as I imagine Steffl is now; he gets to see a lot more, though. I imagine you are very glad that you are able to offer him a happy childhood; this must bring you a lot of satisfaction, and it probably makes up for some other things. The birthday party, with having his name mentioned on the radio, and all must have been something. Not to be able to be there makes me wonder and think. How can you store all those presents in your small apartment; I suppose a lot of the older ones have been discarded, but nevertheless. I can hear you saying: the things he's worrying about! I'm happy to hear about your success at the Studio; I completely agree with what Oly is saying about high and low status jobs; maybe you'll stay in this somewhat vulgar line of work, but eventually you might turn it into something more prestigious.

The subject of Frau Ehrlich is not at all pleasant. [In frustration he criticizes the behavior of Claire Ehrlich for, among other things, not sufficiently relaying information or accurately reporting on conditions of the Breuers in

Vienna:] "... she didn't give us a chance to send you a message and her report which according to Oly was much better than should have been expected. Is she being so considerate that she doesn't want to tell you, or so efficient that everything was so much different for her? In any case, I rather wish she would experience the changes that have happened here in the meanwhile! But never mind.

[Felix asks whether they perhaps have accurate news of other émigrés: Epsteins, Weinreb, and Stein. Georg Soyka wrote that:] "they have bought furniture and went for a vacation at the sea." No news has come from Carl Hacker for a long time, . . .] When Hanusch was here waiting for us, he saw Fleischer sitting in the Liechtensteinpark . . . So he went up to him and was very nice to him. Mama has explained already what we want from him [Hanusch]. Similar situation with Hoffer; I visit them sometimes and play with their darling grandchild; that's a small compensation for another one, and that is my purpose and intent. Our Sunday gatherings are happening two times at our place, once at Ms. [Mandlers?], since it is not possible to do this any longer at the Hackers, and we wouldn't like it there on account of the unavoidable house mates. Whether we'll be able to still go to the Mandlers any longer, we'll find out in the next few days. Glücks are happy with their small room, and they don't know anything either [about emigration?].

We haven't suffered from any heat waves this summer; we barely had four hot days, and it's August already. Soon enough the winter cold worries will begin. This summer we haven't been on any excursion at all. I'm reading a lot, borrowing books from acquaintances. I'm sorry I gave away the classics when we moved, otherwise I'd have read those too. I'm doing the shopping, since Mama has too much to do. Since we have our own shopping facility now, I'm no longer going to the Hahngasse, which is just fine with us. I've started to have my eczema treated again, started doing that because of the health examination required at the Consulate; but it likely will have grown back by then. Otherwise we are healthy and feeling well, that's what's most important. Greetings, *papa*

In his letter of August 14, 1941, Felix wrote with admiration for Hans and Olly's long, difficult working weeks, and he envisions himself being of help once he is able to join them in Los Angeles. He kept up with local forced changes in the housing of friends and with the adjustments and various new circumstances of acquaintances both in Vienna and abroad. Here, he encouraged further exploration of an exit route to Cuba, and attaches a disturbing State Department communication regarding U.S. visas:

Nr. 42, August 14, 1941

Dearest Hans!

This time there was a longer pause, because I had wanted to await your message due to a shortage of my having some new material to tell, and now your letter 73 from the 24 July came as usual to our big pleasure. Again, we could extract from this letter how hardworking you are, because the numbers that you mention indicate the difficult working performance which is connected to bringing e.g. 1450 bottles into the workplace and everything which is connected to this – oh dear how I could be helping you, and this could be done without my knowing the English language. Also I could extract from the documentation the profit, which was not known to me before. So, I easily understood, that both of you, after such a hard work week, are enjoying a taste of recreation at the sea every Saturday afternoon. I am bearing in mind, that now your working break starts and I wish you would enjoy it fully.

Concurrent with your letter a very detailed and interesting letter from my friend Epstein arrived in which I am missing the message, if he also wrote to you, it would be very interesting for me to have his address.; Eduard E. c/o ??, he has three rich sisters, so he will not suffer misery over there, but he is afraid that he will not make any income, because he is too old and cannot master the language, with regard to this your message is very interesting for me.

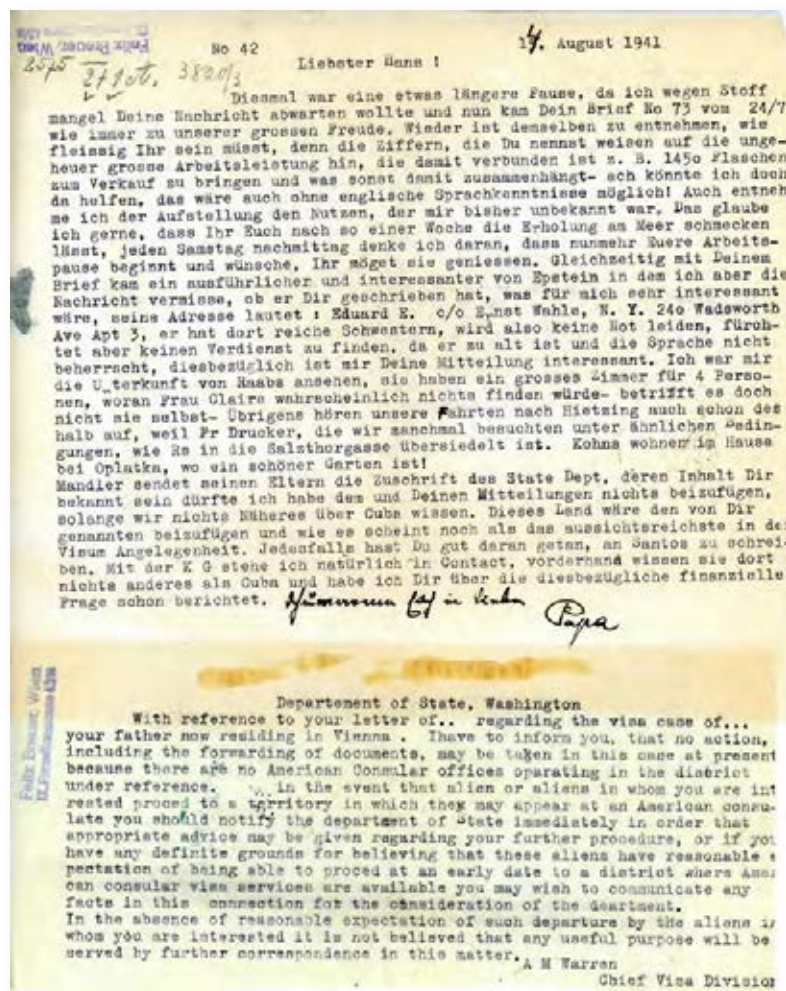
By the way our trips to Hietzing will stop now, because Mrs. Drucker, whom we sometimes visited there moved under similar conditions as the Raabs to the Salzthorgasse. Meanwhile, now the Kohns are living in the house of Oplatka, where there is a nice garden!

Mandler sent his parents here in Vienna the letter from the State Department, the content may be known to you. I cannot add anything to this and your messages as long as we do not know anything more particular from Cuba. This country should be added to the countries you mentioned and how it seems it may be the most promising with regard to Visa matters. Anyway you did a good job to write to Santos in South America. Of course I am in contact with the Kultusgemeinde, for the time being they do not know anything else except Cuba and I have reported the financial question already to you. Embracing you with love *Papa*

Attached to the above August 14 letter (*in English*), Felix copied wording of a notice to Ernst Mandler, Hans' friend in New York, about the visa prospects for his own parents similarly still stuck in Vienna. The Department of State in Washington gives very discouraging news. Of course this would affect the Breuers as well. The fact that the US no longer maintained consular offices in Vienna was possibly due to the fact that Vienna had ceased being the capital, and most official government business now had to be completed in Berlin.

Department of State, Washington

With reference to your letter of ... regarding the visa case of ... your father now residing in Vienna. I have to inform you, that no action, including the forwarding of documents, may be taken in this case at present



because there are no American Consular offices operating in the district under reference. In the event that alien or aliens in whom you are interested proceed to a territory in which they may appear at an American consulate you should notify the Department of State immediately in order that appropriate advice may be given regarding your further procedure, or if you have definite grounds for believing that these aliens have reasonable expectation of being able to proceed at any early date to a district where American consular visa services are available you may wish to communicate any facts in this connection for the consideration of the Department. In the absence of reasonable expectation of such departure by the aliens in whom you are interested it is not believed that any useful purpose will be served by further correspondence in this matter.

—A M Warren, Chief Visa Division

The volatile and unpredictable situation continued to be reported in the letters from Vienna, continuing to be sent for a few more months into autumn of 1941. As events took turns for the worse, the letter exchange headed toward its end. This trans-Atlantic correspondence between the elder and younger Breuers continued its intense pace. Their letters arrived in the same way, but more often, with distressing postal delays. Anxiously they tried to keep up with one another, while each of the anxious correspondents grappled with ever-more daunting procedural setbacks, and, all the while, everyone grasped a deepening recognition of the fateful mesh in which Felix, Marie and the remaining European family found themselves ensnared. ♦

LETTERS AND HOPES END

Continuing through most of 1941 letters from Europe continued to regularly arrive in Los Angeles. But, as the year 1941 drew to an end, suddenly the letter exchange ceased. Ultimately, US and German declarations of hostilities cut off all communication. The final letters became even more highly focused on the remaining possible escape arrangements. Letters from each side continued, each numbered by the sender, in what Felix calls, “the usual manner.” Toward the end, most of the letters that arrived from Vienna were being written by Marie herself or else they were dictated to her by Felix, who was ill. Hans’ own letters, in turn, also numbered in sequence for tracking purposes, were occasionally missed or not received in the order sent; many took a long time to arrive and several apparently never were received at all, to the confusion and frustration of everyone. For three years the letters served as a life line for the family, and as the year 1941 was ending, all communication came to a sudden agonizing halt. In mid 1942, the remaining family were shipped off to the concentration camp at *Terezín* in Czechoslovakia, on train transports from both Vienna and Bohemia, the total lack of information left Hans wretchedly unhappy and depressed. Hans and Olly’s life with a young child in Los Angeles was determinedly forward looking, yet it was profoundly affected by deteriorated European events, especially the plight of the Breuer family that were left behind.

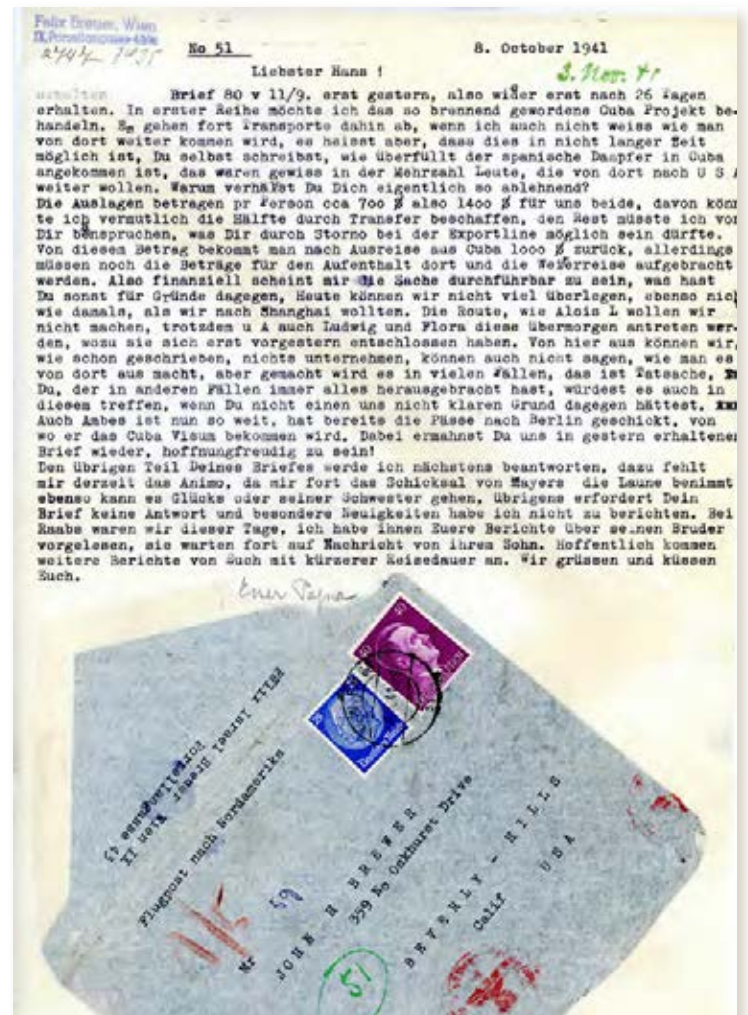
Among the last letters is #51, dated October 8, 1941, exactly three years before my own birth. Here, poignant survival issues for the family can be grasped. There are slightly obscured references (Nazi censors read all mail) related to the increasingly dubious exit route via Cuba. Presumably, they had become aware of the infamous ill-fated journey of over nine hundred Jewish emigrant refuge seekers. In that case, German Jews on the liner *MS St. Louis*, were denied entry to Cuba and likewise turned away at United States ports. Beginning in 1939, attempted emigration routes via neutral Spain or Portugal seemed to be the best, if unreliable, options. This, in fact, was the exit route that Hans was contemplating and working on for his parents, as he grappled with its costs and the uncertainty of success:

October 8, 1941—Letter # 51

Dearest Hans!

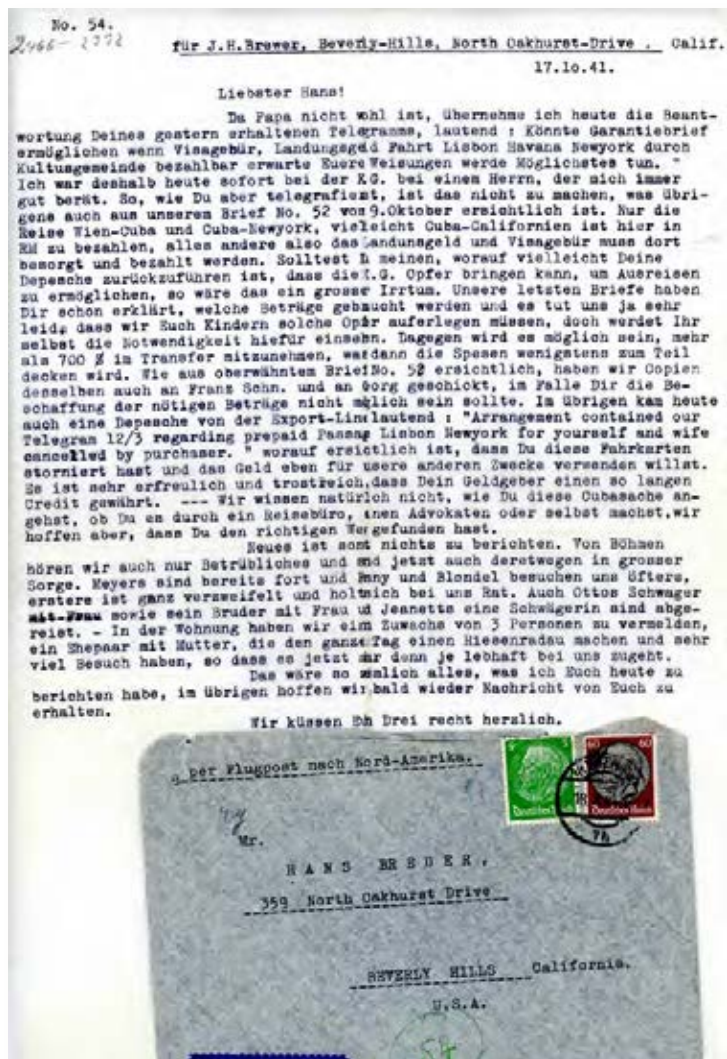
Received letter 80 dated Sept. 9th yesterday, again after fully 26 days! First of all, I want to discuss the extremely urgent Cuba project. Transports to that destination are leaving, though I don’t know how one can continue on from there. But people are saying that it is possible after not too long a time. You yourself write how overcrowded the Spanish ocean liner was when it arrived in Cuba, surely most of them were people who wanted to travel on to USA? Why are you so reluctant?

The costs are \$700 per person, that is \$1400 for the two of us; half of that I could probably cover myself by means of transfer [of funds?], the rest I would have to receive from you, which should be possible through “Storno” [a financial expression not clear to me: reversal; cancellation.] at the Export Line. At the time of exiting Cuba, \$1000 of this amount is refunded, however a certain sum is deducted for the cost of staying there and transit costs. Financially speaking it all seems



doable, so what is it that you have against it? These days we can't ponder too long, the same might result as when we wanted to leave for Shanghai. We don't want to go the route that Alois L chose, even though Ludwig and Flora are embarking on it the day after tomorrow, which they decided to do the day before yesterday only. From here we can't do anything more, and we don't know how it is done from over there but done it is in many cases, and that is a fact. We greet and kiss, your *Papa*

The urgency for emigration arrangements is palpable in these letters. Other family members and friends were enlisted in the exit scheme arrangements. Bad news regarding the Bohemia branch family and friends was shared in this letter of October 17, 1941.



No. 54, October 17, 1941

Dearest Hans!

Since Papa is not well, I will take responsibility for answering your telegram which we received yesterday, with the following content: "Could make guaranty-letter possible if visa-fees, disembarkment fees for passage Lisbon-Havana-New York are payable through the "Kultusgemeinde" [*Jewish Community Organization*]. Expecting your directions will do everything possible." I immediately went to the K.G. today to talk to a gentleman who always gives me good advice. But it is not possible in the way you indicate in your telegram, which by the way we have clarified already in our letter Nr. 52, dated October 9th. Payment in Reichsmark from here is only possible for the passage Vienna-Cuba and Cuba-New York, and perhaps for the trip New York-California; everything else, e.g. landing and visa fees have to be arranged from over there. In case it is your opinion that the "Kultusgemeinde" should be able to bring sacrifices for our emigration, then you are sadly mistaken. We have already explained in our previous letters what the amounts required are, and we are indeed very sorry to burden our children with such sacrifices, but I'm sure you recognize the necessity for this. On the other hand, it seems possible to take more than \$700 along on the transfer [*not sure if that means simply "trip" or denotes something more specific*] which should cover the costs at least partially. As indicated in the above mentioned letter Nr. 52, we sent copies of same to Franz Schnabel. and Georg [*Soyka*], in case you are not able to get the entire necessary amounts together.

Furthermore, we received a cable today from the Export Line: "Arrangement contained our Telegram 12/3 regarding prepaid passage Lisbon New York for yourself and wife cancelled by purchaser", which indicates that you have "storniert" [*rescinded*] the tickets, and will be applying the money for our other purpose. It is comforting to know that your creditor is allowing you such a long time. — — — Of course we don't know how you are approaching this matter, whether with a travel bureau or through a lawyer or on your own; in any case we hope that you have found the best way.

Nothing new to report otherwise. We only get unpleasant news from the relatives in Bohemia, and now we are extremely worried about them as well. Meyers are gone already, and Fanny and Blondel visit us frequently; the former is quite desperate, and asks us for advice. Otto's brother-in-law as well as his brother with wife have left as well, so has Jeanettes's sister-in-law. There are three more people in the flat now, a married couple with mother; they make a lot of noise all day long and have lots of visitors, so that it is livelier than ever around us now.

That's everything for today; hoping to get news from you soon, With love and kisses for the three of you, [*Unsigned, from Marie*]

LETTERS AND HOPES END

In the midst of all this anxious uncertainty, Felix fell ill and had to undergo prostate surgery. The clouded destiny of friends and family, along with her experience of living in a crowded flat along with strangers became nearly unbearable for Marie.

October 23, 1941

Dearest children, to Papa's letter I just would like to add that the prostate operation took place on Monday, and that the patient is feeling fairly well today, four days afterwards, and that the doctors are satisfied with the healing process. Of course, the thing will take longer than usual with other operations because the post-operative treatments have to be continued for a rather long time, and we don't expect Papa to come home in less than three weeks. I am glad that at least we have fuel for another three weeks or so, so that when he comes home, he will have a warm room. — Today only we received your first letter dated September 25th, one month late, and its content has meanwhile been updated by your telegram. Many thanks to "Burschi" [the little guy, referring to Steve] for his darling letter in English, which I did understand; I will reply, in English also, as soon as I have a little time. But now, my dear children, I do have to tell you how heavy my heart is. The Orliks have followed Alos Lustig, and Ludwig and Flora, and my poor dear old Mommy is all alone there now. So far I only got one letter from her, and it sounded so desperate and miserable. Since the Orlik's emigration, all I can think of is of those dear four good people, and I am really sick of everything now. I don't even have a little corner left to myself where I can have a good cry, because the Löff's are over here all the time now, since they only have one room left. (Keep that between us, please) We are altogether 11 people in the flat now, a little too much for my shattered nerves.

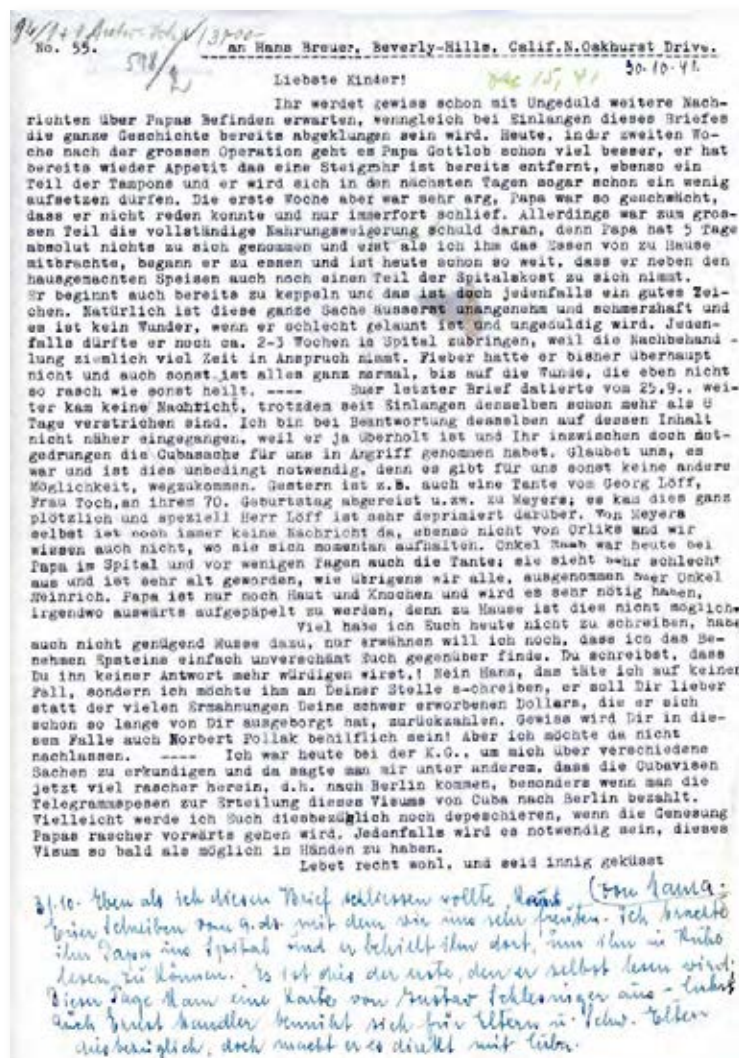
Enough for today; I am not able to think or talk about anything else. Be well and Love, Your *Mama*

Felix is in bad condition and his anxious questions about "the Cuba project" persist:

October 30, 1941—Letter # 55

Dearest Children!

I am sure you are impatiently expecting more news about Papa's health, even though the event should be almost over by the time you get this letter. Today, in the second week after the operation, Papa is doing much better already, thank God. He has some appetite again, and one tube has been removed already, and part of the bandaging as well, and in the next couple of days he will be allowed to sit up a little already. The first week was really hard; Papa was so weakened he couldn't even talk, and he was sleeping all the time. The main reason for this was the fact that he refused to eat anything for the first five days; only when I started to bring food from home did he begin to eat something. Now he is at the point where he is eating some of the hospital food in addition to the home-cooked food. He is also starting to kvetch which is a good sign. Naturally, this is a very unpleasant and painful matter, and it comes as no surprise that he is in a bad mood and impatient. In any case, he will have to stay another 2-3 weeks because the post-operative treatment takes a long time. He hasn't had any fever, and everything else is quite normal too, except for the wound which takes longer than usual to heal. — Your last letter is dated 9/25, no news after that, even though more than 8 days have passed already since then. I did not respond directly to its content since it is passé now, and since you have begun to grapple with the Cuba-project by necessity. Believe us, this is absolutely necessary, because there is no other way for us to get away. As an example, yesterday an aunt of Herr Löff's by the name of Frau Toch left on her 70th



birthday; she is going to join the Meyers. This happened very suddenly and Herr Löff is quite depressed about it. We still have no news from the Meyers themselves, neither from the Orliks, and we don't know their current whereabouts. Uncle Raab visited Papa in the hospital today, as did Aunt a few days ago. She doesn't look well and has aged, as have we all, except for your Uncle Heinrich. Papa is skin and bones, and he will have to be fattened up somewhere on the outside; since at home that is possible no longer.

I don't have much to tell you today, don't have the time [for peace of mind] for it either. But I do want to mention that I find it disgusting how the Epsteins are acting toward you. You write that you don't think he is worthy of your response. No, Hans, I wouldn't do that at all; in your case I should like to write him that instead of all his admonishments he should pay you back your hard-earned dollars which he borrowed from you such a long time ago. Surely Norbert Pollak can help you with that! But I don't want to let this go. — — I went to the "Kultusgemeinde" [official Jewish Community organization] today, and was told among other things that the Cuba visas are coming in much faster now, i.e. to Berlin, especially if one pays for the telegram costs for this visa from Cuba to Berlin. I'll probably send you a telegram about that if Papa's healing process speeds up. In any case it is essential to have this visa in hand as soon as possible. Live well and intimately kissed, Love, *Mama*

Letter #56 sent in late October, 1941, expresses an extreme exasperation by Felix with the emigration process and also with Hans. Recuperation was slow and exit plans weren't progressing. Marie explained that transports out of Vienna to concentration camps had begun and that she and Felix were compelled to register for them. All of this was extremely ominous and alarming! The requested document regarding a Cuban visa would, she hoped, protect them from being assigned to the early transports out. However, as we know now, ten months later, in August 1942, Felix and Marie were themselves sent off to *Terezín*.

LETTERS AND HOPES END



November 11, 1941—Letter # 56

Dearest Hans!

We received your dear letter dated Oct. 19, Nr. 86; whereas Nr. 85 has not arrived as of yet. The following comments are directed specifically to this letter; they were dictated to me by Papa in the hospital: "How many letters were not answered in the usual way, in part because of my operation which is more extensive than expected, but even before that I wasn't in the mood anymore to answer letters in the manner I used to. The thoughts which one was harboring lately prevented one from being able to express oneself fully! It is peculiar that all our comments regarding Cuba have been ignored or denied; after all you must realize there is a reason why I want to go traveling around in the world. But it seems as if all the Cuba-matters weren't even read, not to speak of being responded to. Instead there were questions about whether we had enough fuel for the winter, etc. Even in the above-mentioned letter you still comment that you hope this telegram will serve to calm down everybody. Perhaps Meyers' and Orliks' leaving was able to change your mind in the right direction."

So much for Papa. As you can imagine, he has had a lot of time for thinking lately, and all his experiences have made him quite bitter. I only hope that our additional

letters have made you understand the reasons for our pressuring you in regard to the Cuba-Visa. You should have received a telegram today, sent via Vasco in Bolivia, concerning this same matter; it contains our actual response to your letter dated the 19th of this month. We hope that we will finally have these visas in our hands soon. Even if Papa should not be able yet to start on the big journey, we nevertheless have to put our name down with the "Kultusgemeinde" for a transport, and most of all we need a document for our protection to avoid the transports.

Unfortunately, the recuperation is not proceeding as well as we and the doctors had hoped; I plan to go to a private appointment with the head of the clinic on Monday to find out the reason for this. The doctors try to tell us that everything is quite normal and that in this operation there are individual differences, but in our impatient state of mind, it's going much too slowly. — This and everything else that has happened to us is tearing at our nerves and I'm suffering from bad insomnia. During the day I have a lot to do, since I go to visit Papa at 1 PM and stay til 6 o'clock. I cook most of his food and bring him coffee and juice everyday, and I have to wash laundry in between, since he needs a clean nightgown every other day. Uncle Raab is coming to visit him again today, also Otto and Uncle Adolf, and there are always lots of other visitors. He is always glad, however, when everybody has left again, because everything and everybody make him quite nervous.

There is still no new news from our dear Bohemia relatives, and my poor mother is quite desperate. Believe me, thinking of her makes me rather despondent sometimes.

It has gotten late; I have to stop making a racket typing; the people to the left and right of us want to go to sleep. Kisses from *Mama*.

The following, Marie's letter of November 17, 1941 was not received in California until January 23, 1942. Given the state of war, it is striking that it arrived at all. The wait must have been torturous for Hans. Worse yet, this proved to be the very last letter ever received from the elder Breuers. In it, Marie reviews specifics as to arrangements and payments made for a Vienna departure to Cuba. The urgency and fright is palpable. This last letter, filled with practicalities and personal news from Marie, brims with desperation and anxious unanswered questions including her conjecture on the possibility that their letter exchange might soon end.

November 17, 1941—Letter # 57

Dear Hans!

Just when I sat down to write you your dear letter came dated Oct. 16th, Nr. 85; which makes it one week later than Nr. 86, dated the 19th. We have to deduce from this just received letter that unfortunately you weren't informed nor counseled well in regard to Cuba. Based on experience we now know that the cost per person which is irretrievable is not more than \$250, at the most \$300. In one week 180 people from here have left, the majority to Cuba, and almost all of them have informed the Kultusgemeinde in respect to the experiences of their US relatives. Hence they are very well informed. The [name of the] travel bureau which Santos wired you, was given to Papa at the Kultusgemeinde, and the telegram was sent on Papa's initiative. Papa wants me to repeat everything we have told you in regard to Cuba, so I shall do this: The guaranty-fee is \$1000 (everything is per person) and is available from a bank over there for a fee of \$100. The landing fee consists of \$500 and has to be arranged from your side; however, we have found out recently that it is paid out in installments over there [?]. The fees for the visas are estimated to be \$150; after everything else has been taken care of, the visas





are then directed from Havana to the Cuban embassy in Berlin, from where they are taken over by the Kultusgemeinde. They also arrange the visa for Spain. The costs for the trip Vienna-Cuba have already been deposited at the Kultusgemeinde; an additional payment is probably necessary which we will take care of. Perhaps it is possible to arrange for the costs to the USA as well; we were promised a transfer which would cover these costs as well. By the way, Ernst Mandler is working on the same project for both sets of parents; however, he is doing it with Cuba directly, as far as we are informed.

I imagine it is clear to you by now why this matter is so pressing and anxiety causing: we hope the visas won't come too late. At this point, Papa is still in the hospital and depressed that the recovery process is going so slowly. His digestive system is not working well either, as a result he can't eat very much, and he is becoming quite weak. There are daily visitors; today for example Uncle Raab, Mandler, Eisler, Aunt Ida and Frau Irma Hacker; but he doesn't get cheered up by these visits; everyone is anxious and fearful.

Vasco Santos acted according to our instructions, and thus had no cause to write you with an explanation. We just received a letter from him today in which he tells us that according to our wishes he has sent another telegram to you. He informs us further that Edna Schnabel will get an American passport for herself and the children in order to get over there. She has to pick it up in Berlin, however, and there will be travel-obstacles; he hopes, however, that she will overcome them and be able to reach the ship for which she has the tickets already. Santos also sent us 6 pieces of fine soap, a most welcome present for us.

Last week the Ganahl Director visited us; he was shocked to hear that Papa is in the hospital, and when he found out why I am not heating our place he immediately declared his intention to help. I don't believe he will be able to, however. — Finally, an anxious question: how will the change in the neutrality-laws affect our correspondence? To use Hamlet's phrase, that will determine our "to be or not to be." We have not received recent news from anywhere. Urma writes desperate letters [from Bohemia].

I have nothing else to report; as soon as I find out something important or receive a letter from you, I'll write again. A thousand hearty kisses for the three of you, *Mama*

Among the last communications from family in Europe was a unique final letter that arrived in Los Angeles in November, 1941. It was the last poignant voice coming from the *Dvůr Králové* family, written and sent by Ilsa Zalud Breuer, the wife of Hans' dearest cousin Karl. Of all the letters, this one may be the most deeply sad, and it no doubt was crushing for my father to read, and to reread over time. In it, Ilsa bravely reaches out and sends Hans and Olly news from the family in Bohemia. It is a handwritten letter in which Ilsa, the mother of little Gita and wife of Karl Breuer, shares news and reports on their situation. Karl's own mother Grete, the widow of Ernst Breuer, lived with them in *Dvůr Králové*. This ultimate communication with Hans sent from his Czech family, conveys in a heartrending tone, certain regrets. This concerned Hans and Olly's late 1938 attempt to bring Gita Breuer, Ilsa and Karl's four-year-old daughter, along with my parents and Steve at the time they fled from *Dvůr Králové* and Prague in November 1938. Steve and Gita were nearly the same age. Before leaving, Hans had contacted Ilse and Karl Breuer, who were in Paris on a business trip at the time. My father pleaded with them not to return to Czechoslovakia and also to allow their daughter Gita, who had remained behind with a nanny in *Dvůr Králové*, to be taken along to America by my parents. Karl was firmly against the idea. It proved to be the wrong choice. This is a tragic story that I recall having heard from my parents.

Here is a full translation of Ilsa Breuer's last handwritten letter to Hans and Olly in Los Angeles, dated November 24, 1941. After a significant delay and after having been opened and examined by an American censor, the letter finally arrived on January 10, 1942, as noted on the envelope by my father in green ink.



November 24, 1941

“Dear Ones,

We were very happy to hear from you personally after such a long time. Unfortunately, news from you is very rare these days but for us it is a most welcome breath of fresh air and we are happy that you're doing so well. We especially enjoyed the descriptions of your vacation and found that very interesting.

We can't even imagine such a life any longer and are happy that it does still exist and that it's possible for you. Karl often blames himself (too late, unfortunately) for not having listened to your and my prodding; our lives would be much easier now. My aunt also seems to have given up any hope that we will see each other ever again, and for me that was the last hope left. [German: “*der einzige rettende Strohalm*” = literally “*the last straw for rescue*” - an expression meaning “*the only hope.*” It is not clear whether she meant the chance for rescue or in a psychological sense.] Now all one can do is adjust to everything, give thanks to God for every day and be glad for one's health. What would I give for the chance to once again be able to schmooze with you as much as the heart desires, something I always loved to do with you two. It's been three years since we said good-by, and I remember everything as if it were just two weeks ago.

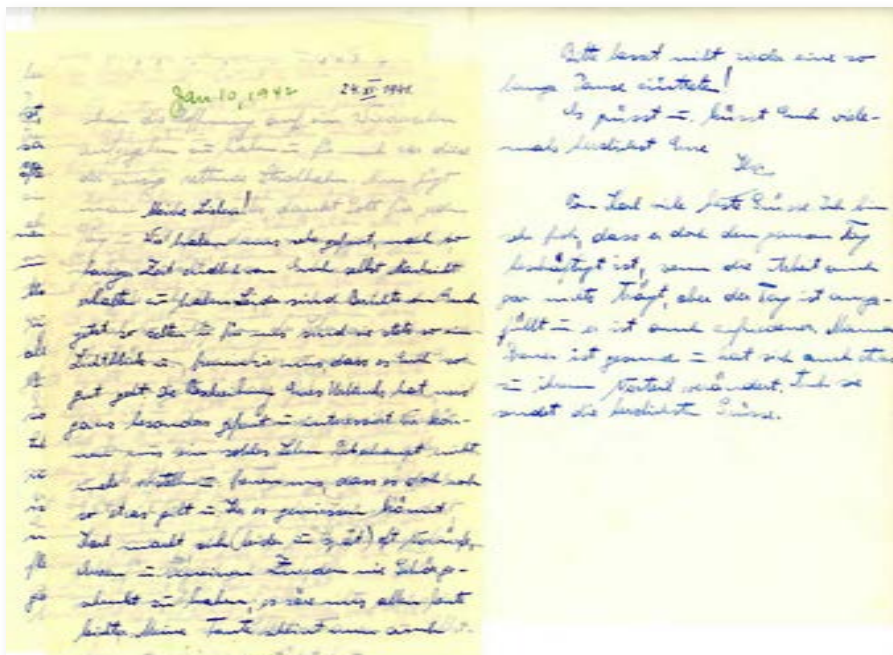
So much has happened in the meantime, things one never could have imagined, but I tell myself that it has not harmed me, that it all just has strengthened my self-confidence and self-awareness. We ourselves always try to maintain a good state of mind, as much as possible. We often spend time with our mutual friends and relatives. The Kohns also became quickly adjusted to their new apartment and things have become routine.

My thoughts are often with you during this month and I'm wondering how Gisl's pregnancy is doing, and I hope that everything went smoothly and quickly. Boy or girl!? Please tell me everything. I regret very much that Gita is so alone and would like to have managed to provide [her with] a little sister or brother. She has a lot of playmates; almost every day she and Tommy spend time together, he lives close to us now. Käte is very industrious though unfortunately quite nervous. Lutz works hard the whole day but is quite skillful.

Many thanks for the delightful pictures of Steffl. He really seems to be a delightful child who brings you much joy. How wonderful that he has the chance to grow up in such a country!

Gita is a dear little brat, sometimes she is a bit disobedient but she is our only ray of sunshine. She is quite affected by the well-known problems and cannot comprehend much of it; just the same as for us. It is a pity that a child has to think about such matters today. Just be glad that Steffl was able to forget all that! Gita speaks only Czech though she understands everything said to her in German.

The news about my brother Franz [Zalud] is all excellent, thank God. I've already told you how well he did with his studies and graduation. Now he has a very good job in a large firm plus he teaches every night at the



Now all one can do is adjust to everything, give thanks to God for every day and be glad for one's health. What would I give for the chance to once again be able to schmooze with you as much as the heart desires, something I always loved to do with you two. It's been three years since we said good-by, and I remember everything as if it were just two weeks ago.

university. He is a competent man and it is only due to the circumstances of the times that he has *[not]* been *[better]* able to fully develop his abilities and knowledge.

Unfortunately my mother is not with us. Last year, in September, she went to Prague and then was unable to return; we have not seen each other for over a year. You can imagine how hard this separation has been for us. One is so near and yet so far.

I think I've told you everything now. There is so much to talk about but one cannot put it all down onto paper. Enjoy the beautiful life and be happy and content! Your worries about us are only bad for your health, and they cannot help us.

Greetings also from Karl. I'm glad that he is busy all day even if the work doesn't bring much. This way his days are full and he is more content. Mama Breuer is in good health; she also has changed in a positive way. She also sends her greetings.

Please don't let so much time pass again! Many greetings and kisses, From Ilsa

It was the end of the letters and of Hans' contact with his European relatives and homeland.



World events, irrevocably, changed everything. On December 8, 1941, one day after the Pearl Harbor attack, the United States declared war on Japan, and in turn Germany declared war on the United States. On December 11, 1941, Congress overwhelmingly approved the US declaration of war on Germany and it was immediately signed by President Roosevelt. And with that, any chance for a further exchange of family mail was stopped. Wartime winds and the cruel whims of fortune swept away remaining hope.

JOINT RESOLUTION DECLARING THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY AND THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES AND MAKING PROVISIONS TO PROSECUTE THE SAME

WHEREAS THE GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY HAS FORMALLY DECLARED WAR AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, THAT THE STATE OF WAR BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY WHICH HAS THUS BEEN THRUST UPON THE UNITED STATES IS HEREBY FORMALLY DECLARED; AND THE PRESIDENT IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED AND DIRECTED TO EMPLOY THE ENTIRE NAVAL AND MILITARY FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE RESOURCES OF THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY ON WAR AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY; AND, TO BRING THE CONFLICT TO A SUCCESSFUL TERMINATION, ALL OF THE RESOURCES OF THE COUNTRY ARE HEREBY PLEDGED BY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

The precarious letter exchanges ended abruptly. On the morning of December 7, 1941 Japan launched its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the same day in Beverly Hills, my father mailed off another letter to his parents, his last. Due to the pending hostilities and outbreak of war, Hans' December 7th letter was returned, as was his previous letter of November 30. You can read them both below.

December 1941 marked the end of three long years of letter traffic. Hundreds of the letters crossed the Atlantic, exchanged between Felix and Hans, but now all communication ceased. Since Hans' final two letters were returned to him, they are the only two that I have of the hundreds sent from Hans' to his parents. So, these two letters, **#92 and #93**, are the only ones in which we can read Hans' own words from the exchange. In these two letters, never to be read by my grandparents in Vienna, one realizes his pronounced distress at the profound gravity of the circumstances:

Hans Breuer to Felix Breuer, [Envelope stamped "Return to Sender. Service Suspended"]

November 30, 1941—Letter # 92

My Dearest Parents!

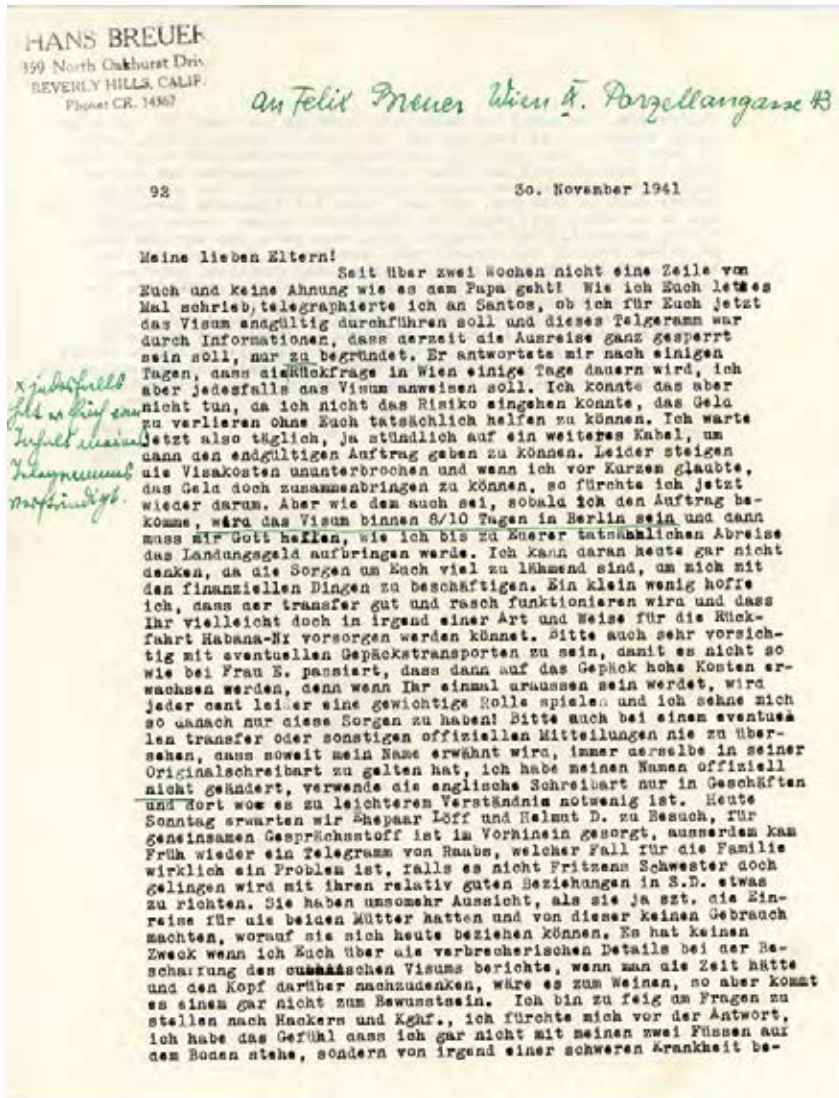
No news from you for over two weeks already, and no idea how Papa is doing. As I wrote you in my last letter, I've telegraphed Santos whether I am supposed to follow through with the visas at this point. There was good reason for this telegram, since there are rumors that for the time being all emigration has been stopped completely. He answered me after a few days with information that it would take several days to find out about that in Vienna, and that I should initiate the visas anyway. I couldn't do that, however, because I didn't want to take the risk to lose the money without having been able to actually help you. So I am waiting daily, hourly, for another cable which will give me the go-ahead. The visa-costs are increasing all the time, and whereas I believed a while ago that I had the money together, now I'm beginning to worry again. Be that as it may, as soon as I get the directive, I'll get the visas to Berlin within 8-10 days, and then with God's help, I'll be able to get the landing-fees together by the time you actually will leave. I can't even think about that now, since my worrying about you is so paralyzing that I can't focus on the financial matters. I have a glimmer of hope that your transfer will function unproblematically, and that you will be able to somehow make arrangements for the trip Havana-New York. Please be very careful with luggage so that you don't get into the same situation as Frau E. who had to face high freight fees. Once you are "outside", you'll unfortunately have to pay attention to every cent — but those are the least of my worries! Please be careful when dealing with official transfer matters to spell my name in its original way; I have not changed my name officially, and am using the English form only in shops and for easier communication. Today, Sunday, we are expecting the Löffs and Helmut D. for a visit; there will be no lack of things to talk about. This morning we got another telegram from the Raabs, which case is really a problem for the family unless it is possible for Fritz's sister to manage to arrange something, she has good connections in Santo Domingo. They have a chance because they had the immigration permit for both mothers in the past but didn't make use of it, which they can make reference to today. There is no point in telling you about all the criminal details in arranging for the Cuba-visas; if one had the time to think about it, it would make one weep, but under these circumstances one isn't even conscious of things like that. I am not brave enough to ask about Hackers and Königshof. I am afraid of the answer



I'd get; I have the feeling that my feet are not even on the ground anymore, as if I were afflicted by some serious disease. But it is Papa who is so very ill, and I don't even know how he is doing and whether he has a chance to get well again? — What shall I write about us. You know that we are doing fine, everything else is not important. The little Ehrlich boy [Bill] is home already; the mother is doing well, but the dad is slightly crazy, as before him no one has ever managed such a miracle. Steffl is behaving quietly and with restraint toward his new cousin; his initial joy that it is a boy with whom he can roughhouse has given way to the disappointment that it will take a few days before this is a possibility, and that the present condition is rather uninteresting for his purposes.

I close every letter in the hope that I'll be able to make its content obsolete with a telegram and maybe this hope is a tiny bit justified with this letter. If only you'll stay healthy until then, and if only I'd get a bit of news from you!

Hugs and kisses, Your *Hans*



fallen bin. Und dabei ist mein Papa wirklich so krank und ich weiss nicht einmal wie es ihm geht und ob er die Möglichkeit hat, gesund zu werden? Was soll ich Euch von uns schreiben, Ihr wisst doch, dass es uns gut geht und alles andere ist Nebensache. Der kleine Ehrlichbub ist schon zu Hause, verhältnismässig brav und seiner Mutter geht es auch gut, nur sein Vater ist irgendwie übergeschnappt, was kein Wunder ist, denn vor ihm hat noch keiner dieses Wunder fertig gebracht. Steffl benimmt sich sehr ruhig und zurückhaltend zu seinem Cousin, die erste Freude dass es ein Bub ist, mit dem er raufen noch ein paar Tage dauern wird und der derzeitige Zustand für seine Ansprüche recht uninteressant ist. Jeden Brief schliesse ich mit der Hoffnung, den Inhalt desselben durch ein Telegramm überholen zu können und vielleicht ist diese Hoffnung nur ein kleines bisschen bei diesem Briefe berechtigt. Wenn Ihr nur gesund bleiben würdet bis dahin und ich wenigstens eine kurze Nachricht von Euch bekäme! Ich küsse Euch ~~vielmals~~
Euer,
Hans

LETTERS AND HOPES END

The second and very last letter ever sent by Hans to his parents, posted December 7, 1941, was dispatched on what President Roosevelt described, “a date which will live in infamy,” referring to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. The beginning of America’s active role in the war halted all mail to Axis powers. With these two returned letters, all remaining hope of rescue was finally gone. December 7 marked a calamity for the Breuer family, once and for ever cut off from one another.

Hans Breuer to Felix Breuer

[Envelope stamped “Return to Sender. Service Suspended”, also returned undelivered]

December 7, 1941—Letter # 93

My Dearest Parents!

For over three weeks I have not received any news from you, and it is two weeks already since I telegraphed Santos, and I still haven’t received a final response. I had no other way but to send you a telegram at noon the day before yesterday: “Cable whether emigration possible for urgent arrange Cuba visa” If that gave you cause for worry again I nevertheless had no choice, because the days and weeks are passing and we are not getting any further. The visa-costs are rising all the time, and I have to start the roulette game now, as quickly as possible. There is no authentic information available if the emigration stop that was reported to us 2 weeks ago has been lifted or whether it is tied to an age limit. Therefore it is being advised to check every case per telegram before initiating the visa process. Two weeks ago I thought I would get a quicker response through Santos, which turned out a mistake, so I tried it myself again. I hope you will see from this how eagerly I am waiting for a response, and I hope you won’t blame me that I should have initiated the visa sooner; with the little bit of sense I’ve got left I was sure that I mustn’t do that until I’m sure that you would be able to use the visas. The visas and connected expenses are so risky for me that I cannot and must not take that risk unless I am sure that there is at least a chance that you can use them. I hope I’ll be able to explain all that to you one day, and won’t be judged poorly for it. Georg tried very hard to dig up some money but was unsuccessful; he explained it all to me, and I understand it, even though it has made it all very difficult for me. I have an amount at my disposal with him [*credit?*] which I will make use of only when I need it for the landing fees. According to the most recent information, the visas are still attainable within a few days after payment of the various “premiums”; such things can change by the hour, therefore my eagerness for a telegram. I can’t even think about how you are doing, whether Papa has been able to get better, and whether you have had the spirit to live through these weeks full of suffering. I am still full of hope that somehow we will manage it, and that the new year will bring us together, and reward us for all our pain and worries; any other holiday wishes would be profane this year. I would love to have written to Königinhof, but I don’t know any new addresses, and I don’t think that these days letters without street addresses would arrive. Please tell them that we think of them , even if we are not writing! All these years we always knew what was happening but the last few weeks we are almost completely in the dark, mainly due to the complete absence of any mail. Naturally I am not sure whether you are getting my letters either, which is not important, since you know that we are doing well. All this time I wrote every week, only once I made an interruption, when I switched from writing on Thursdays to Sundays, which is what I continued to do. It is much more important now to get news from you; and it is only a small consolation that others are not receiving mail either. Everything else is OK, and totally unimportant. I embrace you, [signed] *Hans*.





NAZI CONFISCATION OF CB&S

Dramatic changes came swiftly in late September 1938, when Germany annexed the Czech Sudetenland. The Nazis incorporated Austria into the German Reich in March 1938 and the German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia in the autumn of that same year. But, in March of 1939, only six months later, the German army marched into what was left of Czechoslovakia. The Czech-speaking areas now became the “Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.” *Dvůr Králové*, which stood in Czechoslovakia on the very edge of the already-seized *Sudetenland* was suddenly in Nazi hands. The Czech Breuers and extended family were now trapped, their homes and factory, even their lives, completely at the mercy of the Nazis.

As German-occupied areas became “Aryanized”, the quality of life for non-German speaking Czechs, and for Czech Jews in particular, deteriorated very quickly. Most harmful initially was a methodical campaign, including new laws and regulations, to deprive Jews of their livelihoods. As a Jew, it didn't matter what your previous community standing was or what connections you had. Everyone suffered the same fate. In fact, being well established virtually guaranteed that the Nazis would confiscate your property. That's what happened to my family's business.

Aryanization

Aryanization (ger: Arisierung) is a term coined during Nazism referring to the forced expulsion of so-called “non-Aryans,” mainly Jews, from business life in Nazi Germany and the territories it controlled. It entailed the transfer of Jewish property into “Aryan” hands in order to “de-Jew the economy.”

—Wikipedia

One can imagine how earth-shattering and terrifying this Aryanization campaign must have seemed not only to my family but to the other Jews living in the mainly Czech town of *Königinhof*, which in that period entirely dropped its Czech name, *Dvůr Králové*. The fate of *Königinhof*'s small Jewish community, including every member of my own family living there, exemplifies how historic enmity can build up over a long period into a thundering crescendo, and finally, with rapid and turbulent movement, fully takes its toll. Our Bohemia-based Breuer family was swept up into this whirlwind.

All Czech Jews became targets of a systematic Nazi ethnic cleansing campaign which included seizing their businesses, homes, possessions, and eventually their very lives. As the Nazi regime sought to completely 'aryanize' or 'de-Jew' the economy, one of its highest priorities became the transfer of Jewish property into Aryan hands. Since the Nazis had already refined their Aryanization process in Germany and Austria, they were able to pursue it even more quickly and efficiently in the Czech lands.

Carl Breuer & Sons fell into Nazi hands in a typically German, methodical way that spanned fifteen months, from September 1939 to January 1941. While smaller Jewish businesses were seized outright under German control, larger enterprises, such as *CB&S*, were taken over in a more complicated, two-step process. First, a temporary, Nazi-installed trustee was put in place to oversee the business until a Nazi approved buyer could be found. Then a forced sale to that buyer would be arranged. A temporary trustee assured that the business was no longer under Jewish control but might let the former owner continue to work there to keep things operating smoothly during the transition. Meanwhile, new German buyers were sought and selected under the cover of an implacable legal process. Finally, having located a vetted buyer, a compulsory transfer or forced sale contract was drawn up, signed and filed with the authorities in Prague. Invariably, the new Nazi approved owners would pay a mere fraction of the enterprise's actual value.

The commandeering of my family's business was supported by a new set of laws that provided the framework to transfer ownership of all Jewish businesses to new Nazi-installed overseers, even if they knew little about the enterprises they were taking over. In late September of 1939, papers were signed installing a Nazi trustee to oversee *Carl Breuer & Söhne*, the first step that would later lead to a forced sale of the *CB&S* business. A German sequestrator or Trustee (ger: *Treuhänder*) was installed to supervise the *CB&S* factory business and operations. The *CB&S* property, its production resources, goods and effects were effectively confiscated and management of all company employees was officially turned over to the trustee, a man named Franz Reeh.

During the transition period, the Breuer factory name remained in place, the employees continued to do their jobs as usual, and Karl Breuer was kept on as factory supervisor to make sure that production continued smoothly. Archival company records indicate that in 1940 the company employed seventy-five workers and eleven managers, including Karl Breuer. Still, this seizure took the business out of Breuer family hands forever.

In January 1941, after a fearful fifteen month period of personal pressures, new regulations and ruling decrees, a forced sale of *Carl Breuer & Söhne* was completed to what were called arisators—people who were politically trustworthy, ethnic Germans. Two Bohemian-born Germans, Hermann Kramer and Alfred Effenberger, became the new owners, took over the factory, and changed the name to *Kramer und Effenberger, Färberei und Appretur, Königinhof a/E*. Each step of the seizure and sale process was accomplished according to the newly established legal code and all the paperwork was executed and filed correctly under the *Reichsprotector's* order regarding Jewish property, Nr. VII/3 b 6067/39. The factory with all its assets sold for a tiny fraction of its true value. The property value set under the “purchase contract” was 4,450,000 CZK, a huge sum of money in pre-war Czechoslovakia. Little of that money ever was seen by Karl Breuer or family.

Throughout the war the factory continued to print decorated cotton, silk, faille, and synthetic silk fabrics. The new owners kept the factory operating at full capacity by harnessing all of its essential operating equipment, including twelve printing-tables for stencil printing and its lithographic workshop. In March 1941, Karl Breuer was finally denied any association with the company, managerial or otherwise.

CB&S factory condition at the time of “purchase” by new Nazi selected factory owners was reported as follows:

- *The company is connected to the official town water system but not to the sewer/drain system.*
- *Company consumption of factory drinking water 7000 hektolitres*
- *Company needs drinking water or living and fabrication buildings in case the well is not working.*
- *Company does not use industrial water from the Elbe river.*
- *Drainage water has correct clearance to the Mühlgraben (ditch)*
- *Company has three artesian wells, 1,130 meters deep with 1 liter per second flow*
- *Factory machines are run by electricity and the company has 2 steam generators.*
- *Yearly electricity consumption is approximately 38000 kilowatts*
- *One 30 meter high chimney is on the factory site,*
- *There is no on site incineration for the factory*
- *Company does not depend solely on using electricity*
- *Use of cellars is unnecessary. In fact there are no cellars on site.*
- *Distance to the train station is not critical to factory's operation.*
- *The company's future space needs will not be effected by street alteration as long as its request for acquisition of the neighbor property 2613 is allowed for expansion.*
- *1000 tons of coal per year are used by the company.*
- *Company buildings and equipment are all in perfect working condition.*
- *The company has no plans for any sort of future demolition.*

Soon, in addition to their normal product line, the factory began filling government contracts to print Nazi wartime textile materials, including military uniform components. Most astoundingly, late in 1941, some months after Karl Breuer was removed, the former *CB&S* plant was assigned an order to produce innumerable Stars of David with the word *Jude* printed onto yellow cloth bolts. These iconic yellow patches, that Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe were forced to wear for identification, were symbols assuring their intimidation, humiliation and in most cases, their eventual captivity and murder. It is an ironically tragic fact that the *CB&S* factory, fully under Nazi control, was among those textile-printing companies producing these star badges.

The *Carl Breuer & Sons* factory itself, without any remaining Breuers, continued production throughout the Nazi era, continuing into the post-war years once the Germans were routed. Even after the war, over a tumultuous and confusing few years in the newly restored democratic Czechoslovakia, some original *CB&S* workers, particularly the Czech shop foreman and the company bookkeeper, Jan Seps, remained as loyal as they could be to the Breuers. In postwar attempts by my family to reclaim the business, the longtime bookkeeper gave sworn testimony that the Breuers rightfully owned the enterprise. This is explained later in Chapter 22—*CB&S Factory after World War II*.

— ◆ —



The Jewish badge as used in Austria, Germany, Alsace, Bohemia and Moravia.

Judenstern: The yellow Jewish Star of David badge

The “Judenstern,” literally “Jews’ star” in German, was a yellow cloth patch that all Jews in Nazi controlled regimes were ordered to buy and sew onto the front left side of the breast and the back of their outer garments, in order to mark them in public as Jewish. The badge was the Star of David with the word Jude (German for Jew) inscribed in faux Hebrew letters. Similar printed signs were ordered posted on all Jewish owned or occupied property — homes, stores, businesses, etc. Official announcements proclaimed, “severe punishment is in store for Jews who do not wear the yellow badge on back and front.”

This Nazi policy was one of the tactics used to isolate Jews from the rest of the population. It enabled Nazi-controlled regimes to identify, intimidate, humiliate, concentrate, control, and ultimately murder the Jews of Europe. Initially, the Judenstern policy began in 1939 with local decrees in Poland after the German invasion. On September 19, 1941 following the recommendation of Reinhard Heydrich, one of the main architects of the Holocaust, all Jews over the age of six were required to wear the badge in the territory of the Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Gradually the yellow star was mandated in other German-occupied areas where local words for Jews were used: “Juif” in French; “Jood” in Dutch; and “Jode” in Danish.

Postsparkassen-Konto Nr. 25.285
Konto bei der Böhm. Unionbank Filiale Königinhof a/E.
TELEFON Nr. 75.



TELEGRAMM-ADRESSE:
BREUER DVÜR KRÁLOVÉ n/L.

DRUCKFABRIK

SPECIALITÄTEN:
KOPFTÜCHER UND TISCH-
TÜCHER AUS BAUMWOLLE
MODETÜCHER U. KLEIDER-
STOFFE AUS KUNSTSEIDE.

CARL BREUER & SÖHNE, KÖNIGINHOF a/E.

KÖNIGINHOF a. L.
DVÜR KRÁLOVÉ n. L.

~~KÖNIGINHOF a. L.~~
Č. S. R.

27./9.

193 9

An das

Gendarmeriekommando,

Königinhof a/E.

Die laut Erlass des Reichsprotectors in Böhmen und Mähren vom 21. September 1939 über das Unternehmen der Firma Carl Breuer & Söhne in Königinhof a/E. eingesetzte treuhändische Verwaltung zusammen mit der deutschen Gefolgschaft dieses Betriebes ersucht um Freigabe des von dem jüdischen Eigentümer Karl Breuer abgelieferten

Rundfunk Empfangapparates .

Der Empfänger wird für wichtige Gemeinschafts-Rundfunkempfänge und Betriebsappelle im Sinne der Weisungen des Dienstausweises der DAF Kreisleitung Prag Nro 2/39 vom 5. September 1939 verwendet werden .

Für die deutsche Gefolgschaft:

Horn Adolf

Carl Breuer & Söhne.

Der Treuhänder:

F. Reeh

Wirtshauswirt:



Wirtshauswirt:
Horn Adolf
27./9. 1939.

Letter sent to Gendarmerie command (country police) dated September 27, 1939, informing them that the Carl Breuer & Söhne property was taken over by a German sequestrator named Franz Reeh, and that the company is now a non-Jewish operation. It is signed by F. Reeh

The final paragraph explains that, "this letter informs the community of important changes in company records and operation, complying with the instructions for establishing a new identity"

Karl Breuer was kept on in the position of factory foreman to run operations until a final forced sale was arranged in 1941



The forced sale of the Breuer factory was completed in early 1941. A multi-page sales agreement specifies the new Sudeten German owners who paid a tiny fraction for the factory and its contents. Karl Breuer signed the last page of the document, along with the new owners, Kramer and Effenberger. The final printed entry (9) on the last page reads: "The legal force of the present Treaty takes its form with the permission of the Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia's regulation over the Jewish fortunes as of 21/6/1939."

All Jewish property was seized in a similar way, with each Jewish business compelled to sell into new German Sudeten ownership. Soon thereafter all remaining homes and personal property of these business owners were also "legally" seized, and business owners themselves, along with their families were sent off to camps. This was done under a "legal" process with completed paperwork filed, all under the Nazi "protectorate" regime.

Carl Breuer & Sons company letterhead in Czech language, overprinted in red with names of newly installed Nazi owners, Kramer & Effenberger



Economic confiscation, exploitation and tributes

By 1940, with Hitler's domination of Europe spreading, Berlin required enormous amounts of money and resources to finance and implement its ongoing war effort. That spurred the pervasive economic exploitation of newly occupied territory which took various forms, including confiscation of property and forced payment of tributes. So, along with the plundering of Jewish businesses, former owners who were kept in place to keep things running had to make occasional donations or contributions to feed Berlin's huge wartime resource requirements. A price was paid by each enterprise, including the Breuer company which added a way for the Nazi regime to survive until even that would not be enough.

German troops had immediate needs for all sorts of products available in the conquered regions, such as food, shoes, uniforms, vehicle parts, and metal that could be turned into weapons and ammunition. Anticipating a major confrontation with the West that would result in the cutting off of their overseas supplies, the Nazis confiscated local production resources from countries like Austria, the Czech lands and the Balkans. Taking possession of Jewish businesses was accompanied by taking advantage of their former Jewish owners who paid from their own pockets. So, the Breuer family, along with other Jews, were forced to support the Reich's war effort that would paradoxically lead to their own demise.



Tributes to the Reich made by the Carl Breuer Factory

L: A commemorative certificate acknowledges the donation of 1,000 Reich Marks to help provide the German army with winter supplies and equipment. The "contribution" was considerable: \$400, approximately \$7,000 in today's value.

R: A certificate bearing the signature of Hermann Göring, General field marshal, with "thanks in the name of the Führer" (Hitler). It acknowledges the Breuer firm's contribution to help the Nazis collect metal which, as the illustrations show, will be turned into weapons for German forces, "on the occasion of the Führer's birthday in the war year 1940."

	Beamte	Arbeiter	Lehrlinge	Verheiratete	Ledige
Im Gründungsjahr ¹⁹¹⁷		<i>Einigkeit</i>			
1920	4	29	—	21	12
1925	6	59	—	37	28
1930	6	50	—	31	25
1935	7	37	—	38	6
1940	11	75	—	65	21
Anfang 1942	9	66	—	61	14

Falls Statistiken, graphische Darstellungen, Beschreibungen oder Pläne jeder Art vorhanden sind, bitte beilegen! Unikats oder Originalbelege werden retourniert!

A 1942 accounting of numbers of CB&S factory employees submitted to Nazi authorities

shows employment levels over the years, and specifying officers, workers and their marital status:

- in 1920 there were 4 officers and 29 workers, 21 of whom were married and 12 single
- in 1925 there were 6 officers and 59 workers, 37 of whom were married and 28 single
- in 1930 there were 6 officers and 50 workers, 31 of whom were married and 25 single
- in 1935 there were 7 officers and 37 workers, 38 of whom were married and 6 single
- in 1940 there were 11 officers and 75 workers, 65 of whom were married and 21 single
- in 1942 there were 9 officers and 66 workers, 61 of whom were married and 14 single

TEREZÍN: A MEAGER LIFE

While my parents were building their new lives in Los Angeles, the lives of the family left in Vienna—my grandparents Felix and Marie, and Felix’s sister Ida and her husband Adolf Hacker—went from bad to worse to appalling. From 1938 to 1942 the city’s remaining Jews were repeatedly pushed out of their homes into smaller shared apartments and later transferred to a temporary ghetto in preparation for deportation to concentration camps.

By late 1938, just as Hans and family were setting sail from Genoa, Felix and Marie Breuer were forced to move from their spacious apartment to another flat, living doubled up and then tripled up with other families, keeping little of their own furniture and belongings. This became the new normal and as much as they tried to adapt, their remaining four years in Vienna took a great personal toll on my grandparents. Marie Breuer referred to her emotional state in an October 23, 1941 letter to Hans and Olly, concluding:

... But now, my dear children, I do have to tell you how heavy my heart is. ... So far I only received one letter from my old Mommy, and it sounded so desperate and miserable ... and I am really sick of everything now. I don’t even have a little corner left to myself where I can have a good cry, because the Löeffs are over here all the time now, since they only have one room left. ... We have altogether 11 people in the flat now, a little too much for my shattered nerves. Enough for today; I am not able to think or talk about anything else.
Be well and Love —*Your Mama*



Last known pictures of my Breuer grandparents
taken in Vienna for passport and visa use, December 1939

Dad kept this picture of his father in a little oval frame on his desk. It’s the face I best knew of my Opa Breuer who I never met.

The Nazi government assumed complete control of the city’s *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*, the Jewish community offices, which had long played an organizational role for Vienna’s Jews. By late 1939, the *Kultusgemeinde* was forced to take on new responsibilities. It kept precise lists on the whereabouts of all the city’s Jewish residents and processed nearly all of the required forms, whether they were for emigration or later for deportation to the camps. Viennese Jews were trapped in their own city. It was even dangerous for them to move about in public. Outside their flat, my grandparents, along with all the city’s Jews, were further humiliated, forbidden to sit in public places, restricted to certain times to be out on the streets, and identified by the compulsory yellow Jewish star of David patch on their coats. Not wearing the star led to arrest.

In 1941, compounding his constricted life and many humiliations, Felix was hospitalized for prostate surgery. After a lengthy hospitalization, he was forced to recover in the crowded apartment at *Porzellangasse 43/22* also

in the 9th district, living among strangers. In the dreadful summer of 1942, Felix's sister Ida and her husband Adolf Hacker were similarly forced to move successively to three different addresses, each a more restrictive accommodation than the one before. Increasingly, the requirements of daily survival consumed my remaining Viennese family, while escape options seemed to arise suddenly and again quickly fade, finally closing entirely. Their letters, seen in Chapters 15-17, make painfully clear how frantic they became with efforts to arrange papers and tickets to somewhere—anywhere! Their confinement and psychic torture still haunts my imagination.

The Nazi leadership seized Jewish property as it forced most of the city's Jewish residents into densely populated "Jewish houses" while banishing others from the city altogether. All of Vienna's Jews were rounded up and restricted to a ghetto within the Second District, commonly known as *Leopoldstadt*, where they were housed in cramped quarters under close supervision. *Leopoldstadt*, traditionally Vienna's Jewish District, had not been where my family lived; their home was in Vienna's more cosmopolitan Ninth District. Historically, the Second was a destination for immigrants from the old Austro-Hungarian provinces, many of its residents were Jewish and so it had gained the derisive nickname 'Mazzeinsel' or 'Matzo Island'. Between the world wars, *Leopoldstadt* was home to forty-percent of the city's Jews with important synagogues and Jewish schools established there. It was geographically isolated, an island sitting between the Danube and the Danube canal, a natural place to establish a ghetto. As part of the Nazi plan, every Viennese Jew became a temporary resident of the second district ghetto before being deported to a concentration camp. Eventually, the Breuers and Hackers were also moved there.

Following *Kristallnacht*, thousands of Austrian Jewish men had been rounded up and immediately sent off to the concentration camp at *Dachau* near Munich, released only if they agreed to leave the country forever. Within a year, by October 1939, forced expulsions from Vienna slowly began to build with deportations to concentration camps such as *Buchenwald* in Germany and others in Poland, Belorussia, Lithuania and Latvia. By 1941 the Nazis were organizing regular transport trains with thousands of Jews loaded onto crowded trains to be sent to unknown destinations and fates. In time, very few Jews remained, mostly those married to non-Jews. They, too, were eventually deported.

World events now began to close in ever tighter for the Jews of Europe, including, of course, my family. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, brought the US into the war. Germany's declaration of war on the US the next day terminated any hope for further communication between Hans and Felix. The Nazi leadership met at the infamous Wannsee Conference the very next month to plan the "final solution to the Jewish problem."

Their agreed-upon solution was straightforward—round up all the Jews of Europe and kill them. Mass deportation plans were drawn up and implemented, huge gas chambers and crematoriums were constructed and quickly added to existing camps, as still more camps were built.

By June 1942, the Reich Security Main Office started mass deportations of certain German and Austrian Jews to a former Austro-Hungarian military garrison town known as *Terezín* in Czech or *Theresienstadt* in German. Elderly and those Jews of special status were sent to this so-called ghetto camp located north of Prague. It was during this summer that my family was finally expelled from Vienna and shipped to *Terezín*. First Ida and Adolf Hacker, were sent away on transport IV/3 on July 10,

On October 2, 1941, the regional Nazi Party leader (Gauleiter) of Vienna, Reichsleiter Baldur von Schirach, asked Hitler to approve the mass expulsion of Jews from "his" city. On December 3, 1941 the Reich Chancellery (Reichskanzlei) relayed Hitler's instructions for a hastily expedited expulsion of 60,000 Viennese Jews, "due to the city's alleged housing shortage." It was the rationale of the moment.

The Central Office for Jewish Emigration (Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung), headed by SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Alois Brunner, was responsible for conducting the deportation of Jews from Vienna. Orders were sent out to potential deportees indicating when they were to report at an assembly point. At the same time the local Jewish community (Kultusgemeinde) instructed the deportees on what they were allowed to take: baggage and personal effects not in excess of 50 kilograms, and not more than 100 Reichsmarks (about \$100 US) on his/her person.

1942. They were the Breuer's closest Vienna relatives, as Ida Breuer Hacker was one of Felix's sisters and Hans' aunt. The Hacker's son, Charles, a first cousin of my father, was in Paris at this time where he lived under an assumed name creating counterfeit passports for the French underground resistance.

The expulsions, termed "relocations" by the Nazis, accelerated on February 1, 1942. Dr. Karl Ebner of the Vienna Gestapo informed Jewish community leader, Dr. Löwenherz that 10,000 Jews were to be deported from the city forthwith. According to instructions issued by the SS-run Central Office for Jewish Emigration, a train bearing 1,000 Jews would leave every week between February 15 and the end of May from the Aspangbahnhof station in the Third District.

Several days prior to each transport, the Jewish community Kultusgemeinde received a communiqué from the SS Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna, listing the specific people chosen for deportation. The task of notifying the Jews of the date of the transport was the responsibility of the Jewish community. The community was instructed to ensure that the deportees arrived on time at the Jewish-owned school building on Castellezgasse 35 in the 2nd District, just blocks from the Nordwestbahnhof train station, conveniently close to the station. The Jews were taken in open trucks from the school building to the railway station, loaded ten people to a compartment onto a train transport. Additionally, the Jewish community was responsible for providing the deportees with bare essentials including some food for their journey, and their stay on the school premises. At the school, representatives of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna forced the deportees to sign a document confirming that they were leaving of their own free will and were handing over their property to the state. This was all implemented as part of the "legal process." —Source: International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem

Felix and Marie Breuer were next. On August 20, 1942, along with other Viennese deportees, they reported to the assembly site at the Jewish school on *Kleine Sperlgasse 2* in the Second District ghetto, where they had been moved. They were deported to *Terezín* on transport IV/8 in a train labeled 'Da 504. The Roman numeral IV refers to Vienna and the number 8 indicates that this was the eighth transport from Vienna to arrive at *Terezín*. Traveling overnight, the long train arrived in *Terezín* at 7:19 am on August 21, 1942.

Occupants of this particular transport belonged to various groups, including those who had earned military decorations and citations during the First World War, several people of international renown, and Jews who had formerly been married to non-Jewish spouses. The majority of the 1,000 Jews on this transport, however, were simply old, which is why it was referred to as an *Alterstransport* (old-age transport.) Eight hundred and six deportees were older than 61, with an average age of 69. Felix was seventy-one years old at the time and his wife Marie was fifty-eight. Both managed to survive at *Terezín* for over two more years, a particularly long time.

Two teenage girls, Lucie Steinhagen and Susan Ziemer-Brender, who managed to survive the war were on the very same August 20th transport that took my Breuer grandparents to *Terezín* in the summer of 1942. The two women's oral testimony was recorded many years later by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute established by film director Steven Spielberg in 1994.

Susan Ziemer-Brender reported that *"First they came to pick up my grandmother, aunt, and then the entire family. I was just thirteen. Everyone was to be interned at Terezín. All our belongings were taken in Vienna, as was our dog. I remember getting off the train and holding onto mother's hidden jewelry in the linings of our coats."* She went on to say that the Nazi soldiers stopped them on the walk to the camp, cut open the linings, specifically looking for and finding these jewelry items, which they stole. She recalls being crammed into an armory, packed up in the attic. *"The place was filled with humans."* —USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

Lucie Steinhagen describes being rounded up and put *"onto the transport, number IV/8, from Vienna to Terezín along with my grandparents."* The one thousand people transported were apparently loaded

alphabetically. She recalls that her “transport group were collected together at a certain school the day before, where we then spent the night. Each person could carry one suitcase.” Upon arrival at the station nearest to Terezín, she describes “walking there for a few kilometers and then entering through the high brick wall of the old military garrison. We were seated there on a floor for further processing. By lists or individual names, people were brought to one of the armories, which had been closed for years. The building was so crowded that I along with my parents were housed on the roof, as were many elderly people, all of us sleeping on planks.”



With the completion of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, my Bohemia-based family swiftly found themselves trapped. Their entire country was declared a German “Protectorate” of the Reich. As I explained earlier in Chapter 18, the Breuer factory had been seized and put under a German trustee, and for two years Karl Breuer was allowed to continue running the *Carl Breuer & Söhne* operation. Finally, In March 1941, after a long period of ever changing rules, onerous taxes, arbitrary directives and other forms of pressure and intimidation, Karl Breuer was forced to sell his factory to German-speaking Sudeten Czechs, but, he was kept on for a while as the foreman. At some point in 1942, Karl was dismissed entirely from his company. Thereafter, he and the rest of the family were captives in their own homes, fully realizing their precarious predicament yet wondering what their exact fate would be.

The Czech family faced deportation just months after my Viennese relatives were sent to Terezín—Karl Breuer and his family, Carl Kohn and his wife, Ritscha, and their daughters, Marta and Käte, with their families. By the end of 1942, they were finally rounded up and deported along with all the other Jewish citizens of *Dvůr Králové*.

Forced to abandon their large and comfortable homes on December 17, 1942, my Bohemia family was taken by train first to *Hradec Králové* along with all the remaining Jews of *Dvůr Králové*. Kept in family groupings, they were transferred from the assembly site to the main *Hradec Králové* train station and put onto an assigned transport. Each Czech transport again had a unique designation, usually consisting of two letters, such as “Ch” followed by a # for

each person. Nearly all of my Czech family was sent off to the *Terezín* ghetto aboard one particular transport labeled ‘Ch,’ each person listed in numerical order. On the afternoon of December 17, 1942, the transport Ch departed *Hradec Králové* station for the *Terezín* ghetto. It consisted of 650 Jews. According to archival records, some of the deportees were residents from *Hradec Králové*, and others came from towns and villages in the vicinity, including that of my own family’s *Dvůr Králové*. Karl Breuer, age thirty-eight, listed on the *Terezín* bound transport manifest as deportee #Ch 55, accompanied his wife Ilse, just three days past her twenty-eighth birthday, and their five year old daughter, Gitty. Karl’s mother Margareta (Grete) Pollak Breuer, age 57, listed as number

The process of gathering together Czech Jews and transporting them off to ghetto and work camps began on October 10, 1941. On that date, the newly appointed Reichsprotektor, Reinhard Heydrich summoned several SS officers, among them Adolf Eichmann, to a meeting in the Czech capital Prague. Heydrich, who was also chief of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office), revealed a plan to deport 5,000 Jews from the so called “Czech Protectorate” to various locations in Eastern Europe. As part of the plan, they set out to expel the remaining Jews of the Protectorate to an assembly camp in Bohemia. The designated place was a former Austro-Hungarian fortress, Theresienstadt (Cz. Terezín), a garrison town built in the 18th century, located about 60 kilometers north of Prague. It was chosen to serve as the place for concentrating the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia, although smaller contingents of Jews from other countries were also sent there. Mass deportations of Jews from Prague and other large Czech cities began in late November 1941. In provincial cities and towns, including Dvůr Králové, the registration of Jews began in January 1942.

On February 19, 1942, a month after the Nazis’ Wannsee Conference which planned the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question”, SS Colonel Adolf Eichmann launched a vast system of deportations. Eichmann, as chief of Department IV B 4 (Jewish Affairs) summoned representatives of the Jewish religious congregations of Prague, along with those of Vienna and Berlin, to brief them on the forthcoming mass “relocations” from within the “Greater Reich” to “the East”, primarily Poland, or in the case of the Czechs, mainly to Theresienstadt. Train transports destined for the camps were arranged.

#Ch 59, had lived with them in the house on *Nádražní* 1259 on a block of elegant spacious homes built by *Dvůr Králové* textile factory owners.

Ritscha Breuer Kohn, a sister of Felix Breuer, along with her husband Carl Kohn were the oldest family members deported from *Dvůr Králové* on that day. Ritscha, listed as #Ch 93, was sixty-eight and her husband Carl Kohn, listed as #Ch 92, was sixty-six years old. The Kohns had lived in a large, stately home, set on a small hill gently rising from the *Dvůr Králové* town square at *Sladkovského* 545. It featured a lovely garden, among other amenities. [The family homes are pictured in Chapter 6.] Theirs was a multi-generation family household where the extended Kohn family lived with their daughter Marta Kohn Würzburg and her family. Marta, age 36, and her sister Käte Kohn Gelber, age 38, with their entire families, were sent off on the same December 17, 1942 transport to *Terezín*.

The Würzburg family included Marta Kohn Würzburg (#Ch 94) and husband Eugen, their two children, twelve-year-old Eva (#Ch 95) and her fourteen-year-old brother, Kurt (#Ch 96). The Gelbers, who lived at



A child's jacket worn at Terezín

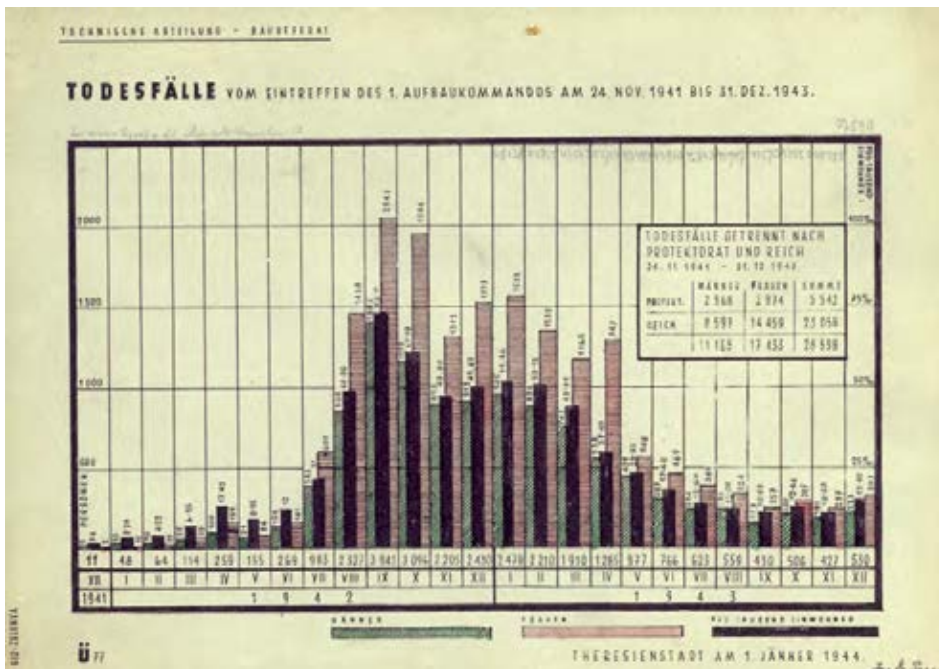
Riegerova 352, included Käte Kohn Gelber (#Ch 113), her husband Louis, known as Lutz, age 41, (#Ch 112) and their two young children, Tommy, age seven (#Ch 115) and his older sister Hanni, age twelve (#Ch 114).

Even before this, Marta's husband Eugen (*Evzen* in Czech) Würzburg, whose business kept him in Prague, had been shipped to *Terezín* on Transport X with an individual number of X-598 on February 12, 1942, only one month after the "final solution" had been agreed upon at the Wannsee Conference. Less than a month later on March 3, 1942, he was shipped from *Terezín* to the medium sized extermination camp at *Izbica* in Poland. His transport # to *Izbica* was Aa-905. Though many killings took place in *Izbica* prior to November, the greatest number of murders occurred on November 2, 1942, when virtually the entire ghetto was finally liquidated. If Eugen survived in *Izbica* until then, it is highly unlikely that he survived that mass killing. I can only assume that he was dead by November 2, 1942. Thus he was actually the first family member to be sent to any camp and the first to die.

When all of my Czech relatives arrived at the *Terezín* ghetto camp, a fortress town originally built for only five- to seven- thousand soldiers, it had a population eight times that size. The number of people who were held and processed through *Terezín* during the deportations is staggering. Four-hundred-and-seventy transports arrived at the *Terezín* ghetto from November 1941 until April 3, 1945. In all, they brought 139,654 people to the ghetto fortress. Of those, 33,419 died there, mainly from disease outbreaks, typhus above all, directly related to overcrowding and contaminated water. Just after my grandparents' arrival the previous month, *Terezín's* population reached its height during the month of September 1942, with a recorded population that month of 53,264. The bar graph chart (following page) shows the monthly rates of death, peaking at 3,941 during September, 1942.



A travel pass issued to Eugene Würzburg for commercial purposes in Prague during the years prior to his deportation. Eugene's wife, Marta, seen here with her husband, Eugene, was one Carl Kohn's daughters. All the Würzburgs, along with their children, Eva and Kurt, were killed in the camps.



Todesfälle vom Eintreffen (Deaths of arrivals) is a chart prepared by the ghetto's Jewish administration at the direction of the Nazi SS, shows camp deaths between November 1941 and December 1943, peaking in September 1942.

During their captivity at *Terezín*, the remaining Vienna- and Bohemia-based family members must have tried to make the best of an atrocious situation. Supporting one another with sheer resolve, families such as mine stayed together, determined to survive the *Terezín* ghetto's horrid conditions. A tenacious bond helped them persevere. Three of my family members did not survive these conditions, while the others continued to live a terribly limited life until they met their fate elsewhere.

Terezín functioned as a reception and transit camp, a way station to extermination camps. Most of its population was transient. Of all the Jews sent to *Terezín*, approximately 33,000 or nearly one in four, died there while 88,000 were deported onwards to *Auschwitz-Birkenau* or other labor and death camps. Czech Jews made up the majority population. Michael Berenbaum in his book, *The World Must Know*, explains that Jews arriving at *Terezín* were unaware of what was in store for them. Some were even swindled into paying for the privilege of going there, even asking for rooms with a southern exposure! They were soon left without illusions. Conditions were harsh. Food was scarce. *Terezín* became the home and death place of some of the most prominent Jewish Czech, Austrian, and German artists, writers, scientists, jurists, diplomats, musicians, and professors. The presence of so many secularized Western Jews from Europe's great cities gave rise to a rich cultural life in spite of the horribly crowded and unsanitary conditions they were forced to endure. They tried to make the best of an entirely dismal existence.



Normal life took on an altered form in the captivity of Terezín. Just finding enough food and keeping in good health became paramount. Beyond the basic needs of nourishment and health, daily inmate reality demanded some form of diversion. Creative prisoners found diversions from all the misery in opportunities to entertain and educate one another through a range of humanizing activities. A surviving inmate, Norbert Troller, recalled, *"We were grateful for the flight into music and art which let us forget, even for a few moments, that we had only a short time to live. My fellow ghetto inmates hungered for music, cabaret, lectures, and theater, and all performances, good or bad, played to crowded audiences."* Musical performances were held regularly by inmate musicians who had managed to bring along and keep their instruments. Plays were performed.

On top of the artistic activity and performances at *Terezín*, lectures on a wide variety of topics were organized and well attended. In the introduction to the book, *University Over The Abyss*, Yehudi Bauer wrote:

“Theresienstadt prisoners were mainly professional people from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, Holland and Denmark, many of them a part of the European cultural elite. ... the cliched image of a ‘pitiful Jew’, crushed by a ‘demonic force’, didn’t hold in *Terezín*. Despite miserable conditions and numerous deaths from starvation and diseases, the prisoners never gave in. In this surrealistic world on the edge of life and death, exhausted by hunger and severe conditions, they stubbornly clung to their cultural values—books, art, music, intellectual debate, humor and irony.

... In addition to that, hundreds of professionals and academics gave thousands of lectures on all imaginable cultural and scientific subjects. In the documents that survived the war, many of them explain the main motivation for this work—first, to prepare and educate the youth for the post-war life; and second—to revive their own professional self-esteem and replace the misery of physical existence with the richness of spiritual life.

Lectures were delivered in scattered wretched attics and cellars, however cold or hot the weather, the lectures took the shape of full courses in history, philosophy, art, literature, medicine, science, Judaism and other fields. They attracted tens of thousands of young people and adults, hungry and exhausted after their day’s work—the triumph of human dignity and integrity in the face of death.

Inmates had to report to the Nazis on all cultural activities that took place in the camp. Ironically, the reports that survived proved a precious source to recover data for the lectures—including their titles, time and locations.

Some of the speakers were well-known before the war in their own right, for example, Dr. Leo Baeck, Chief Rabbi of Germany. Others survived the Holocaust and found wider recognition afterwards, like psychologist Viktor Frankl. But the majority perished. Their careers stopped short, together with their lives; they were simply forgotten.”

Through concentrating the members of the Jewish intelligencia in one camp, the SS inadvertently created the circumstances for a wealth of cultural activities to take place. A multitude of actors, playwrights, dancers, musicians, visual artists, composers, writers, and scholars were imprisoned at Terezín. Committed to finding meaning in their confinement, to developing creative ways to resist the Nazi regime, and to fulfilling a great hunger for culture in a place where there was not even enough bread to eat, the artists at Terezín literally created works of art in order to survive. After long days of work and weak from hunger, Terezín artist inmates, both professionals and amateurs, rehearsed and performed.
— “Terezín/Theresienstadt.” *Holocaust Education and Archive Research Team*

—*Elena Makarova, Sergei Makarov & Victor Kuperman. University Over The Abyss. The story behind 520 lecturers and 2,430 lectures in KZ Theresienstadt 1942-1944 Verba publications, 2nd. ed. 2004*

My cousin, Karl Breuer, was one of these 520 known lecturers at *Terezín*. Only in his thirties, he was a family leader who sought ways to help break the restrictive experience, finding something to look forward to. Karl was among other *Terezín* inmates who made attempts to imitate a normal life, to animate it, thereby providing some measure of hope. A trained engineer, he was also an entrepreneur. Lecturing on a forward-looking, optimistic topic, he spoke about his vision of what life would be like after the war. He foresaw a future oriented toward efficient labor and a more productive use of time, including a reduction of working hours. In the postwar future, he said that he wanted to open a factory producing semi-prepared and frozen food, which was a novelty at the time. And, to think that he spoke about advanced food technologies in a place of rampant malnutrition, where the meager supply of food was of such dismal quality! Discovering Karl’s participation expanded my sense of the type of person he was, someone determined to introduce a bit of positive, forward looking spirit into the daily misery of his life, perhaps a vision of his own future should the camp and its inmates be liberated.

The display of cultural life suited the image that the Nazis wanted to portray at *Terezín*. They claimed to have established the fortress ghetto to resettle Jews from the ‘Czech Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia’ and, in particular, to house many deportees who were elderly, famous or privileged persons. However, from the start, they planned to gradually transfer the inmate population to more concealed extermination camps being built in the East, primarily in Poland. Creating the illusion of a “model” ghetto settlement for concerned world Jewry was a Nazi goal, but *Terezín* was a mere facade. The *Terezín* ghetto served as a show camp for Nazi propaganda purposes, presented to the world as a benign model of its entire concentration camp system.

In late June 1943, representatives of the German Red Cross and the Reich Foreign Ministry announced that they were considering granting permission for a formal visit to *Terezín* by a small delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. After delaying all they could, the Germans systematically began a famous deception.

The Nazi authorities realized that huge overcrowding within a fortress town built to house five thousand would not look good to outside inspectors. Nor would it allow implementation of their staged “beautification program,” described below. Further, there was a need to avert the risk of another typhus epidemic, the ghetto’s primary cause of deaths.

Beginning in mid-1943, the Nazis began a focused project of *Stadtverschönerung* (civic beautification) which lasted for seven months. These months served as a period of preparation during which *Terezín* was cleaned up, painted and in general, made ready for a fictional presentation to the International Red Cross, and to the world. The Nazis wanted to display a rather lively place, a sort of retirement ghetto for Jewish resettlement.

The Nazi *Stadtverschönerung* program for the benefit of the *Terezín* visiting Red Cross delegation included faked living situations and theatrical performances. By the spring of 1944, the Gestapo screened the Jews of *Terezín*, classifying them according to social prominence. They reassigned some 150 to 200 prominent individuals to single rooms, shared by couples, allowing some chosen husbands and wives to live by themselves. After the changes and sprucing up, and after many postponements, a closely managed, one day visit by three Swiss Red Cross “inspectors” finally took place on June 23, 1944. The report they issued papered over the appalling conditions that really existed at *Terezín*.



My Austrian and Czech family’s experience there was typical of *Terezín*’s ill-fated captives. The relatively rich cultural and intellectual life of *Terezín* and the phony Red Cross inspection aside, daily existence was actually very harsh. Three of my family members, Louis Gelber, Ida Hacker, and Ritscha Kohn, died at *Terezín*, presumably from typhoid fever. The records show that Louis (Lutz) was the first to die at *Terezín*, on April 18, 1943, at age forty-two, followed by each of Felix’s twin sisters, first Ida Hacker from Vienna at age fifty-one, on July 5, 1943. And then Ritscha Kohn from *Dvůr Králové*, who died the following year, on March 31, 1944. By then, however, almost all the remaining *Dvůr Králové* extended Breuer family had been transported to *Auschwitz-Birkenau*. ◆



Prisoners arriving at Auschwitz-Birkenau

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU: A CERTAIN DEATH

The members of the extended Breuer family remaining in Austria and Czechoslovakia experienced four years of growing hardship, first with the loss of their rights as citizens, then of their livelihoods, their homes, their businesses, and their places of worship. Forced out from homes of comfort and security, they were deported to the grim existence of *Terezín*. They had been robbed of their roles as self-sufficient citizens and community leaders, and recast as community pariahs. At *Terezín*, three family members were to lose their lives to malnutrition and disease. As the Nazi plan for killing Jews took on a more focused and intense character in 1942, nearly all the rest of them destined to lose their lives in unambiguous acts of murder as well.

Starting in January 1942 freight trains filled with inmates regularly departed *Terezín* for the East. In fact, from January 1942 through October 1944 the Nazis sent sixty-three transports carrying 86,934 prisoners from *Terezín* to various labor and death camps. These destinations included concentration camps at *Riga*, *Lublin*, *Varsava*, *Izbica*, *Zamosc*, *Sobibor*, *Minsk*, *Maly Trostinec*, *Treblinka*, *Bergen Belsen* and infamously, the sprawling complex known as *Auschwitz-Birkenau* near *Krakow* in southern Poland.

From the records kept by the Nazi Germans, I know that most of my Czech relatives were transported from *Terezín* to *Auschwitz-Birkenau* on December 15, 1943 one year almost to the day after they had been forced to leave *Dvůr Králové* and sent off to *Terezín*. Three first cousins of my father Hans and their families were loaded onto the transport listed as ‘Dr’, each given individual numbers and recorded using the Czech version of their names—including the womens’ suffix adding “—ova.” The first of the three was cousin Karl, listed as Karel Breuer, deportee number Dr-238. His wife, Ilsa Zalud Breuerova, was number Dr-236. Their little daughter, Gita, was number Dr-235. Karl’s mother Grete Pollack Breuerova had previously been sent to *Auschwitz* on transport D1 on September 6, 1943, and had been listed as deportee number D1-203. Other family members on the December 15 transport were my father’s first cousin Katerina (Käte) Kohn Gelberova (or Gelber)—her husband Louis had already died at *Terezín*—and her children Jana, age 13, and Tomas, age 8; along with my father’s first cousin Marta Kohn Würzburgova, and her two young children, Eva, age 12, and Kurt, age 14.

— ◆ —

On my visit to *Auschwitz-Birkenau* in June of 1993, I noticed on the official printed map the indication of a certain block of barracks in the *Birkenau* (*Auschwitz II*) extermination camp complex. A specific area within the sprawling compound was labelled ‘BIIb’ block. This section looked the same as the other barracks; yet its purpose at one time was quite different. On the map, section BIIb was indicated as:

FAMILY CAMP FOR CZECH JEWS FROM THERESIENDSTADT

It seemed odd to me, and yet I found no printed explanation. I walked to section BIIb and entered one of the few intact wooden barracks. Could this really be the place where the Breuers, Gelbers, and Würzburgs had been imprisoned for some months prior to their death? Inspecting the empty stacked beds running down each side of the shabby building, I took some photographs, looked around, stood there in silence and wondered. Years later, in

researching this project, crosschecking transport numbers and dates, and reading more on the subject, I realized that my initial conjecture was probably right. My Czech family had most likely slept on some of the very same crude wooden bunks I saw, and walked on those same floor boards. What was the meaning of this “family camp?” It is a complicated story, another planned deception.

In mid-1943, in addition to preparing for the anticipated Red Cross visit to the *Terezín* ghetto, the SS began to fear that allowing only one inspection might not be sufficient in their effort to contradict the world’s increasing awareness of the Nazis’ “final solution.” The authorities in Berlin envisioned that a second visit to a camp in the East, in particular to *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, might be demanded. So, Berlin’s central Nazi SS camp command undertook another entirely separate and odd deception, this one to be situated at the *Birkenau (Auschwitz II)* death camp. Similar to the *Terezín* deception, the attempt was to show *Birkenau* as more of a forced labor camp, a somewhat more benign fate awaiting the hundreds of thousands of Jews deported to the East. In this case, the SS instituted a plan to set up a “Theresienstadt Family Camp” within the sprawl of *Birkenau* specifically as a place for Jews sent from *Terezín*.

Beginning on September 8, 1943, groups of prisoners arriving from *Terezín* were to be housed in the family camp with certain “privileges” not given to the mass of Jews arriving at *Auschwitz-Birkenau* from other places in Europe. Though men and women were separated, children were kept with their mothers. Heads were not shaved. Inmates could keep their luggage and wear civilian clothes. For a while, some residents of the family camp worked on jobs such as completing the construction of the camp itself and sewing machine gun belts for the German army. But famine and backbreaking work meant that people in the family camp still experienced high mortality rates. Eventually, most of those who survived during the few months that the camp was in existence, were sent to the gas chambers exactly as the rest of the *Auschwitz* prisoners.

In an act of psychic cruelty—on top of the whole deception of *Terezín* and setting up of the family camp at *Birkenau*—just before they were murdered, prisoners in the family camp were ordered to write post-dated postcards to their relatives still back in *Terezín* assuring them that they were alive and doing well. Felix and Marie Breuer, who would arrive at *Auschwitz-Birkenau* at the end of October, 1944, may well have earlier received such postcards from their Czech relatives at *Birkenau*. The Nazis may have intended to calm the remaining *Terezín* prisoners, but it is hard to imagine that these postcards had that effect. It was done in preparation for the forthcoming visit of the Commission of the Red Cross. The goal was to establish the false notion that inmates’ parents, children or siblings at *Birkenau* were being kept there under good circumstances and, above all, to prove that the Czech family camp prisoners were still alive.

A large group of family camp prisoners were killed on March 8, 1944. Then after July 10-12, 1944, 7,000 people living in the family camp were killed in gas chambers over the course of two nights, and the buildings in section BIIB ceased to be used as a “family camp.” In all, 18,000 people lived in the family camp during its existence, and only 1,294 survived, though how they did so is unclear. I don’t know the dates for the death of each Czech family member sent to *Auschwitz*, only that none of them were among the few who survived *Auschwitz* and that all of them were likely murdered by July 12, 1944.

According to several eye-witness testimonies some prisoners sang in the gas chambers before being murdered as a symbol of defiance. Some sang the Czechoslovak national anthem or *Hatikva* (the Jewish national anthem), while others had sung the communist *International*. Most significantly, this particular extermination stands historically as the single largest mass murder of Czechoslovak citizens during the Second World War.

—Sources for the previous section include: *Terezín Family Camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau*. Melantrich: Prague 1994; Miroslav Kárný, 2011, based on personal experience, interviews and research, and in particular *Das Theresienstädter Familienlager in Birkenau*

Before considering the fate of my Breuer grandparents, described later, there were five other extended family deaths during the Holocaust—one at *Auschwitz* and the other four at a time and place beyond the scope of my research. Adolf Hacker, Felix's brother-in-law, was sent to *Auschwitz* from *Terezín* on transport 'Dz', May 15, 1944, and given his age, 73, was probably murdered immediately. His individual transport number was Dz-1396. His wife, Ida, Felix's sister, had already died at *Terezín*. Four other family members are known to have perished in the camps. They were: Paul Schwarz, who was married to Ella, the daughter of Felix's sister Rosa—Ella herself is believed to have passed away before the Holocaust; and their children Manczi Schwarz, Joszi Schwarz, and Kato (Käte) Schwarz.



A spurious International Red Cross "inspection" at Auschwitz

After the infamous June 1944 Terezín camp visit by three Red Cross delegates, the Nazi SS chief, Heinrich Himmler, architect of the Holocaust, who built the extermination camp system, scheduled an even smaller Red Cross delegation, only one man, who was to do the followup visit, this time to Auschwitz-Birkenau. A single brief visit took place later in 1944 by a Swiss International Red Cross delegate named Maurice Rossel who, the previous June, had been part of the three-man visiting delegation to Terezín. On September 29, Rossel visited the headquarters of the Auschwitz camp but never even saw the separate nearby Birkenau site nor its so-called "family camp." The SS had considered it unnecessary to interrupt the operations of the gas chambers at Birkenau. The lone Red Cross visitor reported seeing nothing alarming.

The 1997 epic film Shoah produced by Claude Lanzmann includes his 1979 interview with Maurice Rossel, the Swiss International Red Cross delegate who had visited both Terezín and Auschwitz. The central task of the inspectors had been to visit camps to enforce the observance of the Geneva Convention and the delivery of aid packages. Admitting he had been a naive twenty-five-year-old at the time, Rossel, claimed that he was just lazy. In the film, Rossel acknowledges that he and his two colleagues gave Terezín a clean bill of health and would probably do so again today. On his later second camp visit, when he was given a tightly controlled tour of Auschwitz, he says that he did not realize it was a death camp despite the sullen, haunted looks he received from the inmates.

—A full high-quality film interview with Rossel, is part of the Steven Spielberg Film Archive (Story RG-60.4915, Film ID: 2891)



Birkenau (Auschwitz II) seen in photos taken by me on my June 1993 visit. Birkenau camp "death gate" entrance with railroad tracks ending at platform inside where selections were done.



Wooden Bilb block barracks within the so-called "family camp" and the destroyed remains of Crematory III.



The Sonderkommando Revolt and crematory destruction

*Only a small remnant of those entering Auschwitz-Birkenau survived. Perhaps the most dismal way for a Birkenau inmate to postpone an inevitable death was to be appointed to the position of "Sonderkommando." Michael Berenbaum, in his *The World Must Know* for the US Holocaust Museum, explained that those known as Sonderkommando had jobs servicing the crematoria. The Jewish inmates who made up the Sonderkommando were given better food while they did their gruesome work. But they, too, were expendable and when exhausted were also sent to the gas chambers, and then replaced by newer inmates.*

*One day before my birth on October 8, 1944, far away in Los Angeles, an audacious historic act of resistance took place inside the Birkenau death camp, known as *The Sonderkommando Prisoner Revolt*. Michael Berenbaum explained:*

On October 7, 1944, the Sonderkommando, the corps of prisoners assigned to empty the gas chambers and stoke the ovens, blew up one of Birkenau's four crematoria. An elaborate underground network had been set up to smuggle dynamite to the Sonderkommando. The explosion was followed by the mass escape of six hundred prisoners. Those accused of supplying the dynamite were hung in the presence of the remaining inmates.

The destruction of Crematorium IV, planned over many months, began with slave laborers at a nearby munitions factory where women took small amounts of gunpowder wrapped in cloth, hidden on their bodies, and smuggled it across a chain of inmates. This ultimate act, by prisoners who knew that they too would soon be killed, was preceded by an open rebellion of 250 prisoners who died fighting the guards. It marked the beginning of the end of the camp's killing machinery, although it did not stop the crematoria functioning soon enough. My grandparents were among the gas chambers' last victims just three weeks later.

As the German war machine collapsed in late 1944, the Nazis determinedly kept their extermination machine operating full throttle even though it distracted them from the faltering military campaign. At *Terezín*, a massive final clearing out of inmates took place. The very last nine transports filled with “deportee” prisoners were sent off from *Terezín* to *Auschwitz-Birkenau* in October 1944, Here is a list of those last nine transports:

transport Em / October 1 with 1550 deportees
transport En / October 4 with 1550 deportees
transport Eo / October 6 with 1550 deportees
transport Ep / October 9 with 1600 deportees
transport Eq / October 12 with 1500 deportees
transport Him / October 16 with 1500 deportees
transport It / October 19 with 1500 deportees
transport Et / October 23 with 1715 deportees
transport Ev / October 28 with 2038 deportees

Historian Alfred Gottwaldt stated that these later transports from *Terezín* to *Auschwitz-Birkenau* utilized two trains of 25-30 freight cars. Each went back and forth between the camps. People with certain privileges remained at *Terezín* until very late in 1944. On October 2, 1944, veterans of WWI and the spouses of non-Jews, categories that were previously protected from transports, were called to report to the Jewish administration of the ghetto. Following a short interview, the protection for most of them was revoked. Sometime later, known personages, the so-called “Prominent,” were also deprived of their protection and put on transports. Beginning October 16, members of the camp’s Jewish administration themselves began to be sent away en masse. According to historian H.G. Adler, the lists for the last two transports from *Terezín* were compiled personally by camp commander Karl Rahm and by Ernst Möhs of department IV B 4 of the RSHA who arrived from Berlin. These last departures were overseen by Hans Günther of the “Office for Settlement of the Jewish Question” in Prague. The final two transports included Jewish officials who were appointed department heads in *Terezín*.

Inmates assigned to the last ‘Ev’ transport were set to leave on October 28, 1944. Each inmate had been sent, hand delivered, his or her dreaded instructions in type-written form, issued by the Jewish Self Administration (*Judische Selbstverwaltung*). The brief form stated the date, October 26, 1944, and an exact time for assembly. It also provided specific details on how to prepare for the journey which, translated from the German, announced:

C o n v o c a t i o n

By this means we have to inform you that you have been put in the transport queue ... at the meeting point of Langestrasse 5.
Following receipt of this invitation, prepare your luggage immediately.
Luggage may be taken only as appropriate, so only personally portable hand luggage is allowed, including work clothes, linen, blankets, etc.
The luggage has to be brought by you in person into the quarantine lock. To avoid regulatory measures your punctuality is essential.

Anticipating their fate, frightened deportees awaited departure from *Terezín*. The destination of the transport was not announced but with all the rumors, prisoners may have understood that it was *Auschwitz*.

My grandparents Felix and Marie Breuer were processed with this last group of deportees on the 'Ev' transport list which included thirty people who had evaded a summons for the previous "Et" transport on October 23, and had been rounded up for this last deportation. On October 26, all the inmates destined for the last transport received the summons ordering them to report that night to the quarantine site ("Schleuse") at the so-called Hamburg Barracks in *Terezín*. Each person was allowed to bring one piece of luggage for the two-day stay at the Barracks and the subsequent journey to their unannounced destination and fate. The few remaining Jewish leaders were able to arrange for this last group of deportees to get additional provisions and supplies to supplement the meager provisions they were ordinarily allowed.

In fact, 'Ev' was the very last transport train to leave *Terezín* for *Auschwitz-Birkenau*. It was likely, the final transport sent to any Nazi killing camp. According to official camp records, 'Ev' departed *Theresienstadt* on October 28, 1944.

Alice Ehrmann, one of the inmates who remained at *Terezín* after transport Ev left, documented this last transport in her diary. She writes of transport 'Ev':

28.10.1944: Boarding. Notifications. The last leaders are going, the departments are entirely empty. Where a hundred people were previously, there are now three. All the kitchens are closed except for two. 2,038 people, in each cattle car 50 and more. Günther ordered to board shut the last small and pathetic windows with tin, so no atom of air or light can find its way to the people on the mounds of luggage; there is a bucket per 50 people.

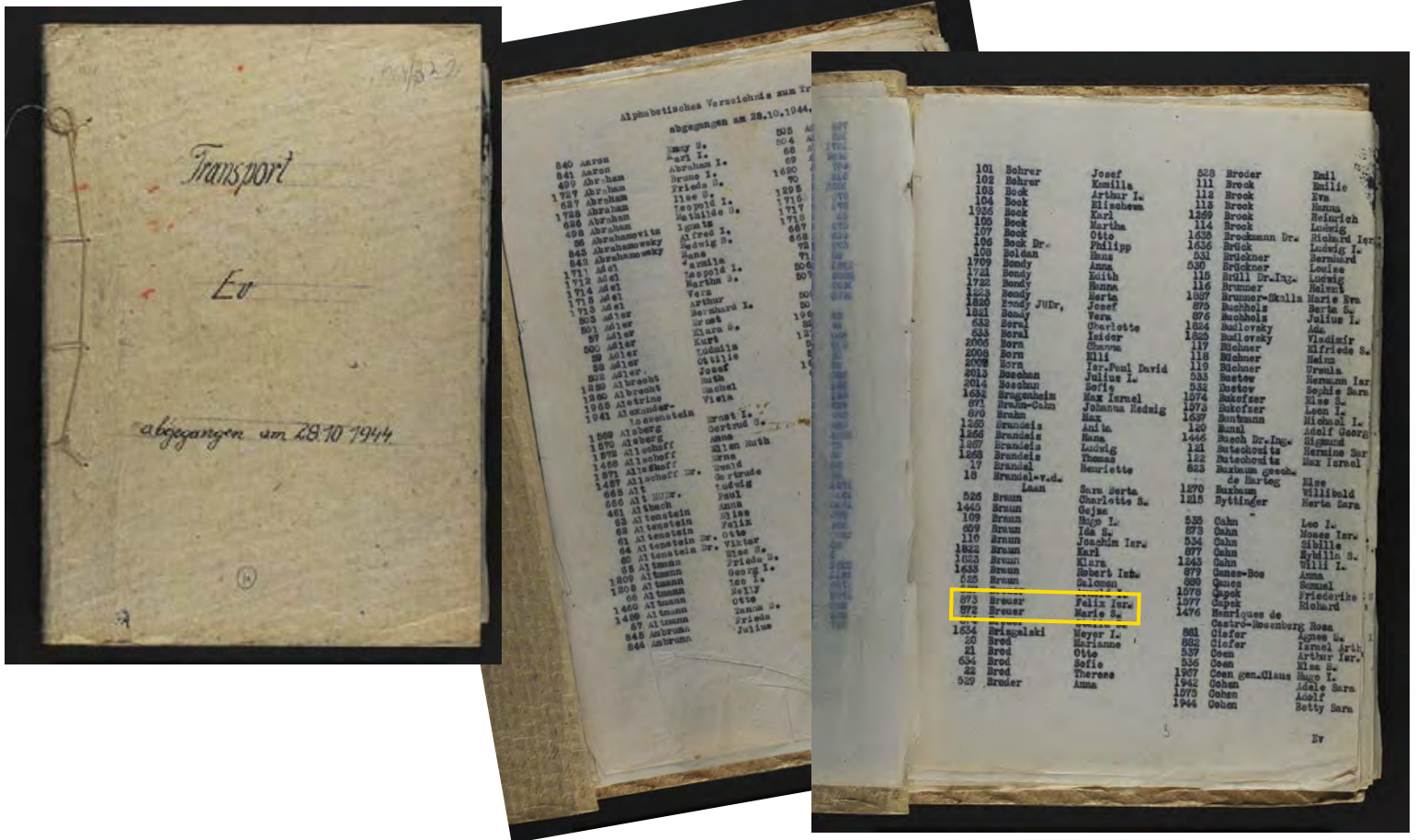
Ada Levy was one of the survivors of the final transport 'Ev' and told of the packed freight train's journey in her own post-war testimony:

On 28.10.1944, my husband and I were also thrown into a freight car that barely held the people within, and which was immediately sealed. ... After this journey of death ... we were unloaded during the night, not understanding where we were, and were quietly received by the SS holding batons. Men and women were immediately separated. ... Then the rough command was heard: women marched forward in pairs, and in the bright illumination of the floodlight there stood an SS man who sorted us by pointing his finger: right-left-right-left. We, who were sorted to the left, were then forced to march in the night on the country road. On the way, the trucks crammed with our comrades passed us by. We would have gladly traded places with them as we could hardly stand on our legs from pain and exhaustion, without knowing that those standing on the trucks were being driven to their death. No one has seen or heard from them again.

Along with the others, Marie and Felix Breuer were loaded on board 'Ev', listed as deportees #Ev 872 and #Ev 873. They endured a two-day trip to *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, arriving there on October 30. Upon arrival, there was an accelerated *selektion* process, and nearly all the deportees were dispatched to their deaths. Out of the 2,038 people on this last transport, only 171 are known to have survived the remaining six months until the war's end, and the camp's ultimate liberation.

The definitive record of daily occurrences at Auschwitz-Birkenau includes this entry dated October 30, 1944: "2038 Jews from the Theresienstadt ghetto were admitted. Of these, 949 men and boys and 1089 women and girls. After the selection, 217 men were taken into the stockades as prisoners with the numbers B-13756 to B-13970. 132 women were accommodated in the transit camp [to be sent on the neighboring work camps]. The remaining 1689 humans were killed in the gas chambers."

—Danuta Czech, *Kalendrium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1939-1945*



The original typed list of Nazi passenger manifest for transport Ev that I located in 2013 at the Yad Vashem archives in Jerusalem. The cover reads:

Transport
Ev
gone off on 28.10.1944.

Felix and Marie Breuer are listed on page 3 along with their numbers 873 and 872.

In my 2013 visit to Israel, I located the original 'Ev' transport list at the *Yad Vashem* archive in Jerusalem. This experience only heightened the heartbreak I felt and still feel at the fact that my grandparents were on that very last transport. It still haunts me that Felix and Marie, having lived through so much, and having endured for so long, met this final fate. It remains perplexing just how they ever managed to live for two full years and two months at *Terezin*. Did Felix manage to take on an important job, perhaps doing clerical work in the *Judische Selbstverwaltung*? Much as I have tried, I have found nothing more on the subject.

Assuming that Felix and Marie survived the grueling two-day transport, they were certainly murdered almost immediately after they got off the train at the end of the tracks just inside *Birkenau* on October 30, 1944. My Viennese grandparents ultimately met the same destiny as their *Dvůr Králové* relatives who had been killed there earlier in the year. Felix and Marie came very close to surviving the Holocaust; within a few days of their tragic deaths, the mass slaughter finally stopped.

All of the gas chambers at *Auschwitz-Birkenau* ceased full operations on November 2, 1944. Some inmates already being held in the camp were killed in the remaining gas chamber number II. The last thirteen victims were all women, gassed or shot in crematorium II on November 25, 1944. Knowing that Soviet forces were rapidly approaching, the SS chief Heinrich Himmler issued orders for the immediate destruction of the remaining *Auschwitz-Birkenau* gas chambers and crematoria. In this attempt to destroy the evidence of mass killings, guards forced the remaining camp prisoners to dismantle and dynamite the structures.

Crematory IV had been destroyed earlier by the heroic inmates during the Sonderkommando revolt of October 7, 1944. On January 20, 1945, Crematory II at *Auschwitz-Birkenau* was destroyed by the Nazi SS using explosives, along with crematory III, just seven days before the notorious death camp was liberated by the Soviet troops. Finally, Crematory V was blown up by the SS on January 26, 1945, as the Soviets rapidly approached.

—Sources for this section: International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem <http://db.yadvashem.org/deportation/transportDetails.html?language=en&itemId=5092072> and the Czech web site: holocaust.cz



In Los Angeles, far removed from the abysmal circumstances of his imprisoned family, Hans Breuer suffered, grieving the likely loss of his cousins, uncles and aunts along with his own parents' captivity and demise. My father's inner burden was the crystal clear memories that he held of an intact family. His comfortable homeland of Vienna and Bohemia disappeared with their deaths. Although he never described it to me, Dad could easily recall the last time he saw everyone there in the Fall of 1938, when his Czech family hosted the young Vienna Breuers during a brief refuge from the Nazi scourge that had overtaken Austria. A loving family, a familiar place, a scene of final embraces as everyone confronted the fraught times that lay ahead.

As curious as I've become to better know each member of my distant lost family—the Breuers, the Gelbers, the Kohns, the Hackers, the Würzburgs—it remains inconceivable and impossible to visualize their deportations. Repeatedly, over the years, in seeing such moments depicted on film and described in literature, I still question if those depictions are accurate if applied to my ill-fated family. I am left to envisage the moment that they were torn from their homes. How must they have felt, gathered together, leaving everything familiar behind, trying to cope with such anxiety? What was their demeanor? How might they have carried themselves through it all? How had they preserved a measure of hope in the face of such pain? I want to know more of what I can never actually know, even as I shudder as I try to imagine that time.

The great Holocaust scholar and chronicler, Eli Weisel, who died in mid-2016, witnessed similar deportation scenes with his own eyes, describing his own experience at age sixteen, when, along with his Hungarian family, he was forced onto one of the last Nazi transports in 1944. "*One by one, they passed in front of me,*" Weisel wrote in his book, *Night*, "*... teachers, friends, others, all those I had been afraid of, all those I could have laughed at, all those I had lived with over the years. They went by, fallen, dragging their packs, dragging their lives, deserting their homes, the years of their childhood, cringing like beaten dogs.*" That is not how I imagine my own family, my people, departing Vienna or the *Dvůr Králové* hometown. I rather prefer to picture them all walking together at a strong gait, keeping close and buoying one another's spirit. I wish it. I fear it.



Survival among concentration camp inmates was a matter of determination and hope tempered by chance. Through all the deprivation and degradation of the camps, a prisoner's survival depended on not being chosen in the deadly selections, remaining relatively healthy, hopeful and fortunate. Only one among all my relatives who were held at *Terezín* managed to survive there until a uniquely fortunate liberation in early 1945. That single survivor was Carl Kohn. ◆



Carl Kohn, Locarno, Switzerland,
December 1951

SURVIVORS

Trains continued carrying inmates from *Terezín* to *Auschwitz* through most of 1944. In just the month of October, setting a furious pace, the Nazi SS sent 18,402 prisoners, including Felix and Marie Breuer, from *Terezín* to their certain death at *Auschwitz*. By the end of October twenty-one of the twenty-two family members who had been shipped to concentration camps were dead. But Carl Kohn was still alive.

Carl Kohn, my father's uncle, and Felix's brother-in-law, was one of 11,077 Jews who remained captive at *Terezín*. His wife, Ritscha Breuer Kohn, had died of typhoid fever in *Terezín* in March of 1944, and both of his daughters, all of his grandchildren, and both of his sons-in-law had died at *Auschwitz* or other camps. But whether by random circumstance, sheer luck, and determination, in early 1945 he was still alive and still imprisoned at *Terezín* when a convoluted Nazi scheme for cash helped to make him the sole family member in the camps to survive the war. His is a remarkable story, one that unfolded just before the close of the camps and the end of the war.

As the nearly vanquished Germans were retreating on all fronts, the highest Nazi leadership began to look for a deal. One was struck with Jewish organizations working in Switzerland. They deposited \$1.25 million, an astonishing amount of money at the time, into Swiss bank accounts held by Nazi leaders in exchange for the release of Jewish prisoners. Carl Kohn was one of those prisoners. He was one of a contingent of 1,210 *Terezín* inmates released and placed onto a train bound for Switzerland on February 5, 1945, an entirely unique liberation transport labelled 'Ew' by the Nazi authorities. With the help of the Jewish Museum archive in Prague, I found the transport record that listed Carl Kohn as prisoner #Ew-714.

Operation Musy

On February 5, 1945, SS chief Heinrich Himmler allowed a transport of 1,210 Jews, most of them from the Netherlands, to leave from Theresienstadt to freedom in neutral Switzerland. It is known as Operation Musy. Jean-Marie Musy, a pro-Nazi former Swiss president, and acquaintance of Himmler, arranged the transport.

The arrangement resulted from negotiations between Musy and Himmler, supported by the Relief and Rescue Committee, partly based in the US, which began in Spring 1944 to negotiate with the SS to exchange people for military hardware and trucks. It was referred to as "Blood for Goods." Fearing his own fate with regard to Germany's imminent defeat in the war, Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler negotiated. Himmler's demand, in exchange for releasing the Jews, also included an end to anti-Nazi propaganda and that he be portrayed as a humanitarian.

Transport 'Ew' carrying over 1,200 liberated Jewish prisoners from Theresienstadt reached the Swiss town of Kreuzlingen on February 7, 1945. These fortunate Jewish inmates had been carefully selected to include persons of good health and favorable appearance.

—US Holocaust Museum Encyclopedia, and Jack Fischel, Historical Dictionary of the Holocaust

Sekretariat
Frk/Bro.

Theresienstadt, 3.2.1945

Rundschreiben Nr. 200

Betrifft: Transport in die Schweiz .

Am Montag den 5.2.1945 wird von Theresienstadt ein Transport nach der Schweiz abgefertigt.

Personen, welche eine Einladung in das Gemeinschaftshaus Westg.3 zur Ueberprüfung ihrer Eignung für die Einteilung in diesen Transport erhalten, haben sich sofort nach Erhalt dieser Verständigung unter mitnahme sämtlicher Personaldokumente in das Gemeinschaftshaus zu begeben.

Personen, welche nicht an den Transport teilzunehmen wünschen, haben sich gleichfalls in das Gemeinschaftshaus zu begeben und die Verzichtserklärung dort zu unterfertigen.

Minderjährige Kinder, deren Eltern in Theresienstadt verbleiben, können an dem Transport auch allein teilnehmen. In diesem Fall ist von den Eltern eine diesbezügliche Erklärung im Gemeinschaftshaus Westg.3 zu unterfertigen.

Kranke bzw. nicht gefährige Personen, welche aus diesem Grunde das Gemeinschaftshaus nicht aufsuchen können sind sofort nach Erhalt der Vorladung unter Abgabe derselben bei der Gebäudeleitung, Hauptstr.2/110 zu melden.

Die endgültige Einteilung in den Transport erfolgt durch die Dienststelle Morgen. Sonntag den 4.2.1945 nach einer Besichtigung der für den Transport vorgesehenen Personen. Diejenigen Personen, welche für die Besichtigung in Betracht kommen, erhalten nach der Ueberprüfung im Gemeinschaftshaus Westg.3 eine diesbezügliche Mitteilung.

Es wird nochmals darauf hingewiesen, dass sämtliche Personen, welche eine Vorladung erhalten, noch heute Nacht im Gemeinschaftshaus unter mitnahme sämtlicher Personaldokumente erscheinen bzw. der Gebäudeleitung als krank (nicht gefährig) gemeldet werden müssen.

Sekretariat
m.p. Prochnik

This is the original document ordering ("inviting") certain Terezin inmates to the Feb 5, 1945 transport to Switzerland. It is translated below.

Central Secretariat Theresienstadt, 3.2.1945

Circular No. 200

Subject: Transport to Switzerland

On Monday of 5.2.1945 Theresienstadt there will be a transport to Switzerland.

Persons who are invited shall gather at the community house Westg. 3 to verify their suitability for the classification onto this transport, and shall be transferred to the Community House immediately upon receipt of this agreement, with all personal documents being taken to go to the community center. Persons who do not wish to participate in the transport must also go to the community center and sign the waiver there. Minors whose parents remain in Theresienstadt can also participate in the transport on their own. In this case, parents will have to clarify the matter by signing a declaration to that effect.

Sick or incapacitated persons who cannot visit the community house for this reason are immediately after receipt of the subpoena to report to the building management, Hauptstr. 2/110.

The final division into the transport will take place at the office in the morning Sunday the 4.2.1945 after a survey of the persons intended for the transport. Those persons, who are appropriately intended for the transport and who are considered for the survey, will receive after the inspection in the community center a related message ...

ÚSTŘEDNÍ KARTOTÉKA - TRANSPORTY.	
č. z. 65088	
Kohn Carl	
datum narození 10.1.1876	
Adresa před: Dvůr Králové, Radkovičkova Pr.	
1. transport	2. transport
číslo: 187 20 1942	číslo: J. 2. 1945
Ch	EW 714
	do: Svijarsko

Record of transports found at the Jewish Museum in Prague for Karel (Carl) Kohn indicates his registration number, his date of birth and Dvur Králové home address, as well as #1 transport 'Ch' from home to Terezin in December 1942, and #2 transport 'Ew' to freedom in Switzerland in February 1945.

FIRST JEWISH CONVOY REACHES SWISS HAVEN

By Telephone to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

BERNE, Switzerland, Feb. 7—A convoy of 1,200 Jewish refugees from the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Austria arrived at Kreuzlingen today following negotiations by Jean Marie Musy, former Swiss Federal Councilor, with Heinrich Himmler.

M. Musy, it was revealed in an official statement tonight, represented the executive council of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States.

An official statement by the Swiss health authorities who met the convoy this morning said the condition of most of the 1,200 was "excellent," though a few cases required hospital treatment, which was immediately arranged.

The convoy, which is en route to reception centers abroad, was routed to the St. Gall refugee camp for medical inspection and quarantine. Other convoys of approximately the same number are expected weekly for five or six weeks.

New York Times article, Feb.7, 1945, reporting the successful arrival in Switzerland of a Theresienstadt concentration camp liberation transport. Contrary to a stated promise of other convoys still to come, no further transports were ever permitted to leave, as Adolph Hitler angrily put an end to any such further arrangements.

SURVIVORS

After losing his entire family in the camps, when the war ended Carl Kohn began to put his life back together again. One of the first and most meaningful things he did was marry a Jewish nurse whom he had met in the camps. Her name was Gertrude (Gertie) Elsner. They made a new home and lived for nearly a decade at Locarno, on the shore of Lago Maggiore in the Italian-Swiss canton of Ticino, a beautifully situated town at the foot of the Alps. Carl died of natural causes at Locarno on April 4, 1956.

After the war, Charlie Hacker, Carl Kohn's nephew, along with his French wife, Giselle, often visited Uncle Carl and Gertie in Locarno, Switzerland. I have pictures taken by Charlie of the two couples together at the lakeside. I also knew about the regular correspondence that my father, Hans, and his cousin, Charlie Hacker, had with their Uncle Carl, until his death in 1954. I wonder what Carl might have told them about the experiences of their recently lost family members. If he had shared any of those stories, I regret never having heard them.

Eventually, in my younger years, I got to know both Gertie Kohn and Charlie Hacker. I first met Gertie, a gregarious and voluble woman during her extended visit with us in Los Angeles in the late nineteen-fifties when I was about twelve. I clearly recall that 1956 visit when we picked Gertie up in downtown Los Angeles at Union Station. My father was extremely pleased to see her, as she was a living link to the relatives he had lost in the decade before. I remember that she talked a lot and that my mother complained to my father about it. But Dad loved talking to Gertie and hearing her stories about life with his Uncle Carl. Gertie was a spirited, energetic, optimistic woman. As a young man, I visited her in Europe and twice stayed with her for several days at her comfortable apartment on a hill in Locarno overlooking the lake, first in the summer of 1969 and then again, accompanied by my wife Fredi, on our first European trip together in 1973. Gertie was a welcoming and gracious hostess, and treated us well, including taking us on walks and to her favorite lakeside restaurant where we had long, leisurely conversations. While we did talk of the war, it was in fairly generalized terms. I didn't ask about my relatives whom she might have met through Carl while at *Terezín*, and I only recall her briefly talking about the illness and ultimate deaths suffered by the rest of his entire immediate family in the camps.



Charlie Hacker, my father's sole surviving first cousin, grew up in Vienna, living near Hans and his parents. Ida and her brother Felix were the closest of siblings. Their sons, the first cousins, Hans and Charlie, both only children, were devoted to one another, starting with their shared youth in Vienna and continuing at a distance throughout the post war years. They had survived in different ways, both leaving Vienna by the fall of 1938. Charlie escaped to France several months after the *Anschluss* and lived first in Lyon, later settling in Paris. During the war he joined the French resistance underground where he put his artistic talents to use forging essential documents, including passports. After the war, he made a modest living as a graphic designer and illustrator.



The Kohns and Hackers in Locarno, Switzerland c. 1954

Top: Uncle Carl and his second wife Gertie Elsner Kohn in the Locarno living room

Bottom: Charles Hacker, Gertie Kohn, Carl Kohn, Giselle Hacker



Charles Hacker's small graphic design brochure showing a variety of his work, c.1964.



Charles Hacker, my father's cousin.

L: Age 25 in Vienna, November 22, 1934.

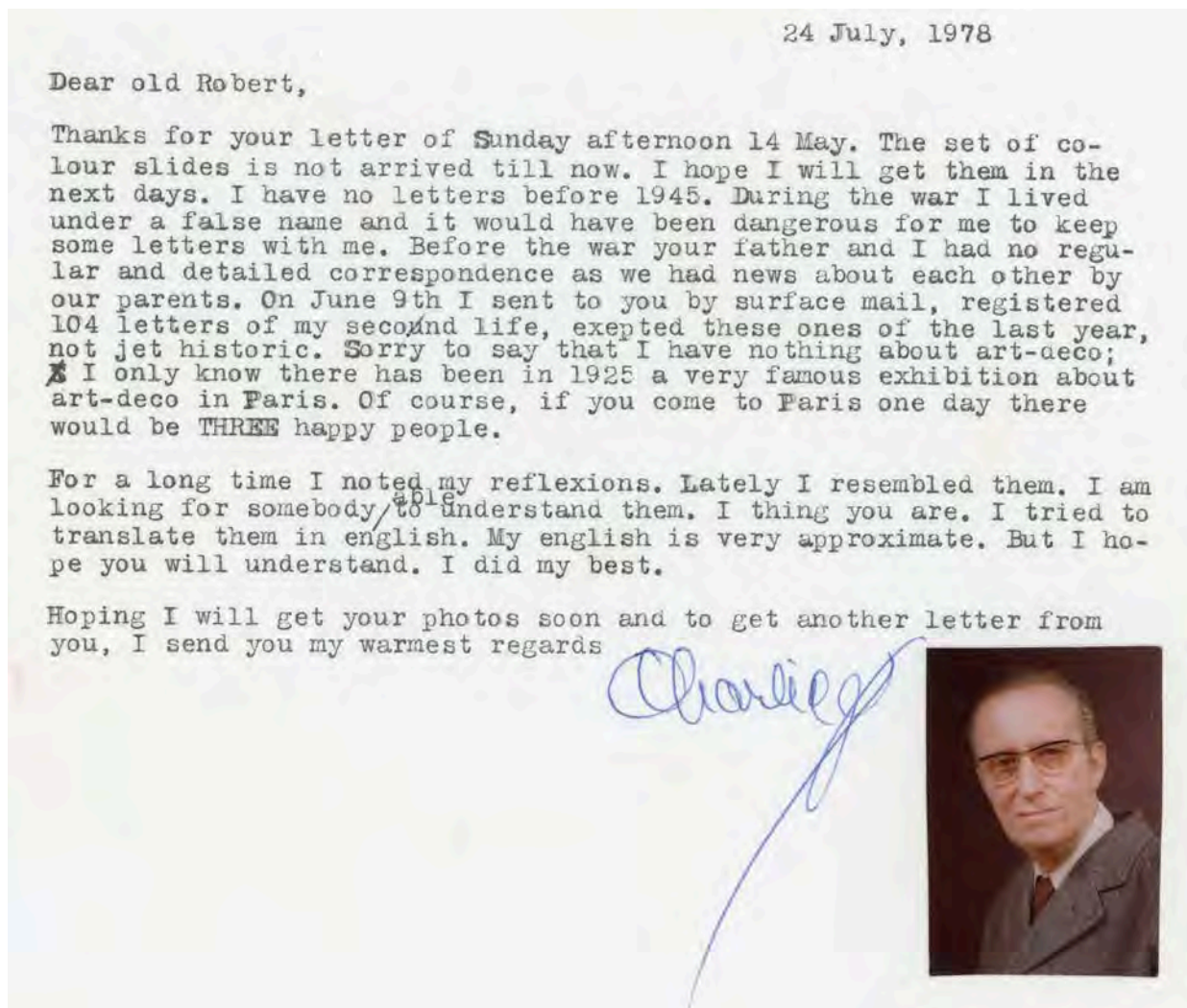
R: Age 31 in France, November 4, 1940.

Charles' mother Ida Breuer Hacker was a sister of Felix Breuer. The two families lived close to one another in Vienna. After the Anschluss, Charles left Austria during the summer of 1938, going to France. He joined the French army, but after the Nazi takeover he faded into the French underground, where he used his art skills, and became an expert document forger working with the resistance. After the war Charles and my father Hans began a decades long correspondence. I first met him in Paris in the summer of 1964.

Cousin Charlie's letters

I visited with Charlie in Paris on my first European trip in 1964. He and Giselle, his lovely French wife, were as curious about me, the distant American nineteen-year-old son of his cousin, as I was about them, the Parisian relatives. Among an odd assortment of collections that I saw in Charlie's little graphic design studio office—he was a fan of American rock and roll, with orderly stacks of tape recordings, some of which he played for me—were two portfolios of letters labeled JHB. I asked him if those might be from my father (John H. Breuer, his American name). Yes, indeed, and Charlie eagerly showed them to me. He had kept all of Dad's letters from 1945 onward, written almost entirely in English with some occasional German or French note added from my mother to Giselle. In fact, Dad and his cousin Charlie continued their letter exchange until 1978. Along with most of his letters, Dad generously enclosed a small gift of cash contributing a little to keep the rather poor Paris cousins going. Dad noted this in his letters.

Fredi and I met Charlie and Giselle again in Paris during the summer of 1973 which was toward the end of their lives. During his remaining years, Charlie and I carried on an occasional correspondence. Now and again we mailed one another photographs. He shared his ideas and I told him of my interest in French Art Deco. In mid-1978, at my request, Charlie sent me all of the JHB letters he had kept up to that point, the nearly monthly reports from my father, his first cousin. Dad's letters to Charlie from the early postwar days reveal how Hans and Olly had urged Charlie and Giselle to immigrate to America and join them in Los Angeles, even promising to help them find housing and jobs working at the studio. But it all eventually fell apart as the full complexity of such a move along with Giselle's recurrent long illnesses were just too much. After that, Dad's letters become more of a history of my own immediate family's life in Los Angeles. As such, these reports from my father, fortunately written in English, are a valuable record of my LA youth. As for Charlie, I was charmed by his eccentricity, his Parisian life and his being Dad's sole surviving European relative.



Typed note sent to me by my father's Cousin Charlie. This was part of the "JHB" letter trove I received in July, 1978. In this note Charlie refers to his personal philosophical treatise entitled, *Intelligence: Capacité Inventive et Analytique Esprit Critique* (Intelligence: Inventive capacity and Analytical Critical spirit), running some six pages in length. Charlie was an interesting fellow.

Close Austrian friends of our family in Los Angeles experienced their own challenging escape episodes. During the war years, the American public was widely opposed to the entry of Jewish immigrants even if denying their entry meant consigning them to certain death in Europe. In fact, immigration rates during the critical years 1935-45 were among the lowest in our country's history. Meanwhile, other countries, particularly those in Latin America, adopted similar restraints on refuge seekers attempting to flee the grip of the German Third Reich. Although a solution to the refugee problem was discussed at the pre-war Evian Conference in 1938, only the Dominican Republic was willing to approve large-scale immigration. That, of course, was far from enough. Fritz Ehrlich's sister Lilly and her husband Kurt Schnitzer did manage to find asylum on that island where they lived for years before joining the family in California. Kurt, who had been a physician in Vienna, became known in Dominica for his photography, and he actually became palace and personal photographer for Rafael Trujillo, the country's infamous dictator. The Schnitzer family finally were admitted to the US on May 22, 1944. Kurt resumed his medical practice after some retraining in California and the Schnitzer family became an integral part of my Southern California childhood.

The Evian Conference and prejudice against Jewish immigration

In the summer of 1938, delegates from thirty-two countries met at the French resort of Evian. President Franklin D. Roosevelt chose not to send a high-level official, such as the secretary of state, to Evian. Instead, Myron C. Taylor, a businessman and close friend of Roosevelt's, represented the United States. Delegate after delegate at the meeting rose to express sympathy for the refugees, but most countries, including the United States, offered excuses for not letting in more. Responding to Evian, the German government was able to state with great pleasure how "astounding" it was that foreign countries criticized Germany for their treatment of the Jews, but none of them wanted to open the doors to them when "the opportunity offered."

Even efforts by some Americans to rescue Jewish children failed. For example, the Wagner-Rogers bill, an effort to admit 20,000 endangered Jewish refugee children, was not supported by the Senate in 1939 and 1940. Widespread racial prejudices among Americans, including anti-Semitic attitudes held by the US State Department officials, played a part in the failure to admit more refugees.

—Source: US Holocaust Museum online encyclopedia

Some of the men in my parents' circle of friends, rounded up and held in the camps early on, got out in the weeks after the Nazis' *Kristallnacht* rampage. They were released from internment at Dachau after promising to permanently leave their homeland within a week. Among them was Gus Gans, the father of my lifelong friend, Fred Gans. Gus, along with his two brothers, Rudy and Victor Gans, took a circuitous route to their salvation. They travelled by ship through the Suez Canal, and eventually reached Shanghai where they lived until they arranged ways to reunite with their wives in the US. I was fascinated knowing the Gans brothers and hearing their story.

Another early inmate at Dachau was Frank (Franz) Bauer, father of my friend, Bob Bauer. He too was released from Dachau, along with his brothers, Martin and Max, also on the condition that they immediately abandon their Vienna homes and permanently leave Austria. Frank and his wife Magda made their way to Finland. They were able to get a one year Finnish visa, and while in Helsinki worked on their next step. The Bauers did weeks of research and wrote endless letters to anyone in America named Bauer, whose addresses they found listed in various US phone directories held in the Helsinki library. Finally, they managed to connect with a small Jewish group of American women in Pasadena who were trying to rescue stranded European Jews and bring them to Southern California. That's where my parents met the Bauers and how our two families became close permanent friends.

The story of Frank Bauer and his brothers and, similarly, of Gus Gans and his brothers being interred after *Kristallnacht* at the *Dachau* concentration camp, was known to me when I was young. Yet, quite oddly, Frank and Gus themselves had never shared their imprisonment experiences with one another over the many years in Los Angeles, where they knew one another through my parents. They often met on social occasions at our home. However, wartime tales of survival were rarely shared among the refugee community. In fact, it wasn't until the

memorial gathering for my father at Steve's house in January 1990, that their sons, my friends Bob Bauer and Fred Gans, discovered their fathers' similar *Dachau* stories. Wanting to find out more details, the sons discussed it with their dads as we all were together, and only then, for the first time, did the two old survivors talk about their shared 1938 captivity experiences. They even came to realize that they'd been held in adjacent *Dachau* camp barracks!

My mother Olly's dearest, lifelong Viennese friend was Dr. Josef (Joszi) Heller, a psychiatrist, who in my childhood was our ever available, literally on-call, family doctor. "Call Joszi," my mother would say when one of us got sick. For us, Dr. Heller and his wife Minnie were the closest of family friends. During his last visit with us, at our Mosswood Road home in Berkeley, just before his death in the late 1990s, Joszi and I sat in the living room and talked at length. We discussed a variety of topics, including the many wartime paths European Jews took to escape the Holocaust. In that regard, he shared several memories that I had rarely heard from him or any other family friends during my childhood. Among the experiences he shared was his having seen Adolf Hitler twice in person, once in Vienna during the triumphal "*Anschluss*" parade in March 1938, and the second time a year later during a brief, unexpected encounter in Munich.

After 1938, with Austria fully incorporated into the greater German Reich, certain important documents and records couldn't be obtained in Vienna since it was no longer the capital city. In many cases they had been transferred to government archives in the German capital, Berlin. In order to get out of Austria, Joszi Heller had to present a particular document, perhaps to prove he had been a practicing physician. So he booked a flight from Vienna to Berlin on a Ford Trimotor, which was to make a twenty-minute scheduled mid-flight stop at the Munich airfield. Upon landing, the plane's pilot came out of the cockpit and announced to all Berlin-bound passengers that there would be a short delay and that they all needed to remain seated. He explained that the *Führer's* plane was to arrive in only a few moments, and therefore no other aircraft could move, let alone take off. Indeed, the official plane soon arrived, with a swastika painted on its tail. Hitler himself emerged just outside the window of Joszi's seat. The very man responsible not only for the Hellers' forced exit from their homeland but the entire Holocaust that would eventually slaughter millions of Jews, walked on the tarmac only a few feet away from Joszi. It was a rather frightening and unforgettable moment.

After the war the Breuers in Los Angeles maintained several close family friendships in Prague, and over the years we all repeatedly visited them. One friend, Trude Ernstova, a smart, caring, soulful and affectionate person had an astounding wartime survival story. As a young married woman Trude was first sent to *Terezín* and later to *Auschwitz* and several of the adjoining labor camps. She was part of a cohort of a thousand Jewish women from Prague. By the end of the war Trude was among the very few who survived. How did she do it?

Her survival, as she explained it to me, was a combination of luck and relatively good health. When the women first entered *Auschwitz* they were ordered to line up and count off, and every fifth woman was murdered. The others were sent off to neighboring work camps. Near war's end, in January 1945, with Soviet troops approaching, the remaining group of Prague women were forced to march toward Germany in order to escape the approaching Red Army. Most could not make it. Finally, abandoned by their Nazi SS guards who feared capture, just four women remained alive. Trude eventually returned to Prague where, in the Communist era she was assigned a tiny one room apartment where she once cooked a goose for us in her kitchen/bathroom. The other three women emigrated to North America, but kept in contact through their remaining years. In the late 1970's, Trude visited us in Berkeley. On her return flight to Prague, she stopped to visit two of the other surviving women friends in Toronto.

Here's one story that almost came to a tragic end before the actual escape journey began. George and Frieda Loeff, also close family friends, were trying to leave Vienna as conditions for remaining Jews became ever more intolerable. As Frieda told me many years later near the end of her life, their efforts to emigrate dragged on for

over two years, well into 1940. In addition to the obstacles all Jews had to overcome, George and Frieda had one additional problem—George was Jewish and Frieda wasn't. Under the Nazis' racist anti-miscegenation laws, that type of union was *verboten*. A Jewish man like George was expected to divorce his gentile wife, something George was reluctant to do even though it made the task of getting their necessary emigration documents that much harder. Holding out as long as he could and floundering in desperation as the screws were tightening, George Loeff seriously considered taking his own life, not an entirely uncommon 'way out' for many Viennese Jews. His wife Frieda, however, never gave up trying to secure the proper exit visas. Somehow, her efforts finally paid off, enabling them to travel to Berlin where they joined my maternal grandparents, the Haars, and began the long journey via the trans-Siberian and cross-Pacific route to Seattle. They arrived in Los Angeles in late September, 1940, where my parents introduced them to the Austrian refugee community that had been growing steadily larger as conditions for European Jews grew worse. I wish I had heard many more of these stories from all of those people. Certainly, each of them had an amazing escape and survival story to tell.



Our LA family and friends were part of the diaspora of scattered European Jewish refugees that covered the globe. From the start of their correspondence, my grandfather Felix in Vienna and my father Hans in Los Angeles shared news of other family and friends who were spreading out around the world in places as remote as Bolivia, Argentina, Mexico and the Dominican Republic in Latin America, Shanghai in China, and even down under in Australia. Their circle of dispersed Viennese refugees became contacts for them, providing possible information about avenues of escape for those still trapped in Europe. They regularly exchanged letters and ideas, and for some, even arranged for modest transfers of funds. Many of these refugees settled permanently in those remote places, and my father kept in contact with them throughout my childhood. I remember seeing their letters with exotic postage stamps arrive at our home, which intrigued me.

Despite all the difficulties and obstacles to which they were subjected in Nazi occupied lands, most of those left behind made determined attempts at escape. Where possible, some engaged in armed resistance. There were ghetto and concentration camp revolts, as well as prolonged partisan actions, meant to harass and degrade the Nazis. The famous Warsaw Ghetto revolt went on for five weeks beginning on April 19, 1943, but most people today don't know much about the many lesser fights and revolts that took place. Fortunate escapees were able to survive under the most horrendous conditions. Some Jews got help from brave gentile neighbors and loyal old friends. The mother of my friend, Mark Hudes, somehow survived in a space between two walls for over a year in a German family's house. I shudder thinking of her surviving such an appalling circumstance.

Yet, such stories shouldn't surprise us. After all, everyone wants to survive. It is a most powerful basic instinct. Throughout the awful years of Nazi occupation, nearly everyone initially tried to get by, and then to get out. The successful escape of my parents, Hans and Olly, along with Steve, and my Uncle Fritz and Aunt Gia, made them the fortunate ones—the ones with resources, the beneficiaries of good planning, good timing and good luck.

Each person among our European family and friends in the Los Angeles refugee group, all the people I knew and loved, had their own survival stories. Only some of those tales were shared, while most were kept in silence. Millions had perished, yet many others managed to survive the war. While many stories have been told in books and movies, giving us a picture of their struggles, the individuals whom I knew shared their own stories sparingly with me. That is understandable. With all of them now long gone, those of us who are left only have these second-hand faded perceptions, our own attempts at touching a bit of their times and their challenged passages. ◆



TIBATEX: Communist-era consolidated textile factories

CB&S FACTORY AFTER WORLD WAR II

After Nazi Germany's defeat, post-war Czechoslovakia went through significant changes. The country's 3,500,000 ethnic German citizens were forcibly expelled, contributing to a steep decline in the population of the former *Sudetenland* areas of Bohemia. Many floundering Czech businesses struggled to survive. *Dvůr Králové* (no longer called *Königinhof*) was by no means exempt from those trends. In fact, after the war the town lost nearly half of its population and many of its businesses. Retributive expulsions of the ethnic Germans, a lack of skilled labor and the eradication of *Dvůr Králové's* Jewish population, left the town's material recovery in serious doubt.

By mid-1945 Bohemia was a shambles not only because of population loss and business failures but also because of mounting property ownership disputes, involving claims and counter-claims that overwhelmed the newly re-established democratic Czechoslovak regime as it worked to rearrange and regain control of war-torn territory.

The precarious status and dubious prospects of many Czech companies hampered industrial revival. This was especially true for businesses that had been deprived of their pre-war owners. Even though none of the Breuers who had started and run the family business was left to run it again, the original name, Carl Breuer & Sons, was promptly reinstated. Production came to a halt for about a month in April of 1945 because there wasn't sufficient skilled labor, but once that problem was resolved, production resumed on May 12. That wasn't enough to assure the *CB&S* factory's survival but as production resumed, its prospects improved even though its ownership was left uncertain.

With the expulsion of the Germans in 1945, Czechoslovakia lost over one-fifth of its population. Yet approximately 165,000 ethnic Germans escaped deportation and remained scattered along the country's western border in the former Sudetenland. Those relatively few Germans who were not expelled after World War II were not permitted to hold Czechoslovak citizenship until 1953. Germans represented a declining proportion of the overall Czech population into the mid-1970s. Younger Germans were gradually assimilated into Czech society or emigrated elsewhere to countries in the West.

The company was without direction or leadership. While town officials sought new management, temporary supervision of the factory was assigned to its long-time bookkeeper and chief clerk, Jan Seps. In a formal deposition submitted by Mr. Seps to authorities trying to ascertain legitimate proprietorship, he acknowledged the rightful Breuer family ownership of the business, without knowing of any surviving Breuers left to reclaim it.

There were, however, a couple of family survivors who had proprietary interests in the factory's fate. In America, my father Hans Breuer actively searched for information about his lost family and at some point he also made inquiries about the status of the Breuer factory. To do that, he hired a Czech attorney, Dr. Frantisek Sobotka, to investigate the possibility of filing a claim on the property. As a result, Hans became aware of another distant family claimant with whom he began corresponding. That man was Frantisek (ger: Franz) Herbert Zalud, the brother-in-law of my father's cousin Karl Breuer, the last family operational controlling owner of *CB&S*. Karl Breuer, along with his wife Ilsa, their daughter Gitty, and his mother, Grete Breuer were murdered in the camps, as were other members of the family. Ilsa Zalud Breuer was the slain older sister of Frantisek Herbert Zalud. My research revealed how F. H. Zalud survived the war and what he did afterward to reclaim factory ownership as a family survivor.

Early in the war years, Franz Zalud went into exile. He sought refuge among armed forces of the allied powers who needed people familiar with the lands being liberated to facilitate their post-war occupation. Undoubtedly

that's how Franz Zalud managed to join the U.S. Army as a private in the 4th armored division, famously known as "Patton's Vanguard." He worked his way up the enlisted ranks, probably because no one could question his antipathy to the Germans, his familiarity with the territory the division was liberating, and his ability to speak both of the local languages. General Patton's Third Army spearheaded the liberation and temporary occupation of the western parts of Czechoslovakia, among other places, entering Bohemian territory on May 6, 1945.

The Allies' liberation of Czechoslovakia came from two sides, with the Russians moving in from the east, and the Americans coming in from the west to defeat the remaining German forces. While the Allies and the Russians cooperated on defeating the Germans, they were also competing with each other to control the newly-occupied areas of central Europe. Realizing their imminent defeat, Nazi troops based in Czechoslovakia were in retreat, surrendering en masse during the war's waning days. As that happened, the German Reich's dominion over central Europe was reduced to large swatches of Czechoslovakia and Austria. Thus the first nations conquered by the Nazis were among the last territories to be liberated. In his history of the war, *The Guns at Last Light*, author Rick Atkinson wrote:

Patton crossed the Czech border and each day ticked off fifteen or twenty miles ... On April 23, the entire Third Army reported fewer than fifty casualties while capturing nine thousand German soldiers. Among Anglo-American armies, Patton's Third was now the farthest east. Czech villages hoisted pretty archways over approach roads, with flower garlands and signs proclaiming, 'Welcome Americans'; identical arches on the far side of town proclaimed, 'Welcome Russians'. The British had urged that the Third Army capture Prague, because, as Churchill cabled Truman, such a prize, 'might make the whole difference to the postwar situation in Czechoslovakia'... Stalin had heeded American requests to halt on the Elbe, and thus the supreme commander [Eisenhower] affirmed his earlier commitment to stop along a line between Pilsen and Carlsbad in Bohemia.

In Czechoslovakia, such geopolitical positioning set the stage for the postwar era, especially the "Cold War" which was to come. That geopolitical positioning affected nearly every remaining business in liberated Bohemia including the Carl Breuer & Sons factory whose name had been restored, even as its ownership status remained in doubt. So once again the front lines of twentieth-century European history continued to run through my family and their former Czech hometown.

Judging from the letter below, Franz H. Zalud must have contacted Mr. Jan Seps, the former bookkeeper and temporary CB&S operating manager, some time in August of 1945, as part of his effort to assume control of the factory. After Seps responded, Zalud sent him this brief letter on August 31, 1945, translated from its Czech wording:

*Military Engineer F.H. Zalud
Staff-Sergeant
Headquarters of Tank Corps, 4th squad
Pilsen*

Dear Mr. Seps,

Thank you for your letter of August 25. I regret that I couldn't arrive to Dvůr Králové yet this week, because of redeployment here. I will arrive next Thursday.

I hope you have obtained coal ... I also heard about the temporary stopping of small companies and I think that more detailed information might be available at the Printer Department of the Ministry of Industry.

I heartily greet you and stay in perfect regard,

(signed) F.H. Zalud

Just 26 years of age at the time, Franz Zalud left US Army service and went directly to *Dvůr Králové*. Once there, in just a few weeks time, he obtained provisional authority to run the factory. In fact, as the notice below states, on October 22, 1945, he officially replaced Jan Seps as the factory's national administrator because he was the acknowledged brother-in-law of Karl Breuer, the last owner of the company at the time of the 1939 Nazi seizure. For the time being, Zalud was assigned to supervise factory production and to hold full managerial responsibility. The notice arrived at *CB&S*, typed in Czech merely on a half sheet, which read:

October 22, 1945 / Tax Collector's Office, Dvůr Králové n. Labem
Subject: The change of national administrator

We announce to you, that since this day, the National Committee has assigned to the national administrator of the company: Mr. Frant. Herbert Zalud /brother-in-law of former company owner Mr. Karel Breuer.

All the tax issues belonging to the assigned one. At the same time, the former administrator Mr. Jan Seps, the bookkeeping clerk, obtains authority to act for him [F. Zalud] in the manner of tax issues.

In a curious twist of fate and determination, Franz Zalud, having himself survived the war, set his eye on taking complete possession of *CB&S*. He asserted himself as the only rightful and legal heir to Karl and his wife Ilsa Zalud Breuer. I cannot determine if Zalud had ever held any pre-war position within *CB&S*, but I doubt it. Simply put, having survived his sister and so many other members of the family, Zalud's timely reappearance in *Dvůr Králové* supported his claim for the entire Carl Breuer & Sons factory business.

Having replaced Jan Seps, Franz Zalud filed his claim to reconstitute the property based on being the returned relative of his murdered sister and his brother-in-law Karl Breuer. Pushing beyond his new managerial status, Zalud asserted rightful factory ownership, engaging Czech government bureaucrats in a years-long process contesting the ambiguous property rules. He asked that the entire Breuer enterprise be assigned permanently to him, supported by various documents submitted along with sworn affidavits that I discovered among archival material. Indeed, the aforementioned bookkeeper and chief clerk, Jan Seps, whose long-time employment with *CB&S* dated back to the pre-war era, confirmed the legitimacy of the Zalud claim. Mr. Seps formally stipulated that "the company had been operating in a Czech, not German, atmosphere," and furthermore that "Karel Breuer had declared his Czechoslovak citizenship in the era of the republic before 1938." Seps also pointed out in his affidavit, "the pressures put upon Karel Breuer to sell his factory and the fact that he even only obtained a fragment of the negotiated price" at the conclusion of the forced Nazi transaction. As bookkeeper at the time, Jan Seps was in possession of key documents and therefore was in a position to know.

In spite of Zalud's persistent and extensive legal maneuvers, his claim was ultimately denied. With a none-too-clear logic, authorities ruled that Carl Breuer und Söhne had been a Nazi confiscate, and as such, its post-Nazi era ownership status remained unclear. Nevertheless, Franz Zalud was allowed to continue his operational role with the company, as its "national administrator" while he appealed the denial of his claim.

Abroad and very far removed in Los Angeles, my father Hans was not at all pleased with what he found out about Franz Zalud's attempt to gain control of the factory in *Dvůr Králové*. Dad hoped to submit his own claim, and to share whatever proceeds might result with his surviving cousin, Charles Hacker, in Paris. Hans kept his cousin Charles and their uncle Carl Kohn in Switzerland (see previous Chapter 21) apprised of the factory situation as far as my father understood it. Among the cousins' regular post-war correspondence, Hans included this information in a letter dated October 31, 1946:

Dear Charlie!

...It might interest you to hear that I have again received a letter from Herbert Zalud, telling me that the factory has been confiscated by the government as German property and that he is trying now to have this decision annulled. He tells me that I am entitled for legal claims and he intends to inform me when such claims may be submitted. In the meantime, he has doubts whether my claims will be accepted due to my former Austrian citizenship. I answered that before taking any legal steps, I am awaiting his further instructions, however that I will have to make claims in your name also ... but I think it is worth keeping informed about the proceedings...

—Hans

My father also considered the fees for any legal action; he hoped they might be paid on contingency. Hans mentioned that in this letter dated February 18, 1947, informing his cousin Charles about having serious misgivings regarding the reliability of Franz Herbert Zalud:

Dear Charlie!

... You may have received a letter from [the attorney] Dr. Sobotka. As you know, I have had for quite some time exchanged correspondence with Herbert Zalud about the Factory, and I always maintained a waiting attitude which has been encouraged by Z. Now of course Dr. Sobotka informs me that Zalud brought witnesses to court who testified that Karl Breuer died before Ilsa [his wife] which makes Z himself the heir. Some other deposed witnesses submitted that before their deportation, Karl made Ilse and Herbert Z his heirs. I am very mad at Z. as he has been lying to me right through all of this all the time. I do not see much prospect of success on our part in taking legal actions now under these circumstances. I still feel that we should let Dr. Sobotka try whether he can do anything legal against Zalud. I suppose he [Sobotka] has sent you a general power of attorney and I suggest that you sign and return same to him legalized by the Czech Consulate [in Paris]. But tell him in your letter that you will only be able to pay for his efforts if they will meet with success. I am also writing today to Uncle Carl explaining for him the whole situation and maybe he can become a witness in this case ... —Hans

Information and advice remained scarce. A few weeks later in another letter to his cousin Charlie, dated March 5, 1947, Hans wrote:

Dear Charlie!

... As to the CB&S matter, I have not had any further news yet and also have not heard back from uncle Carl as to whether he can provide some clarification on the case. I don't think that under the prevailing circumstances there is much hope ... —Hans

CB&S recorded annual sales in 1947 of over thirteen million CZK. How that value might now be understood or converted to US dollars was soon to become entirely beside the point.

On February 18, 1948, just ten days before the Czech Communist party's coup, Hans saw the futility of a claim, writing to his cousin Charles once more:

Dear Charlie!

... A few days ago I had a letter from Dr. Sobotka telling me that at the present time there is nothing that can be done about it [the claim]. We have to wait until the factory will be reinstated to private ownership, as for the time being it is still under national management and the claim for restitution into private ownership is pending. Between you and me, as things are in the CSR, I am afraid wit warden alt Juden warden eh wit da was erleben! [we will become old Jews before this experience changes] —Hans

Zalud never told authorities about Hans Breuer's existence in the U.S., let alone having corresponded with him. Hans never actually filed his own claim. My father's interest in the factory was left unaddressed largely because history once again intervened in Czechoslovakia rendering all property claims moot. By mid-1948, under the new Czech Communist regime, any property claims sank farther into an uncertain status, as state confiscation and centralization began. Regardless of the merit of his dubious ownership claims, Franz Herbert Zalud was the last person with a family tie to actually run the Carl Breuer and Sons textile factory in *Dvůr Králové*.

The drastic national turn of events finally put an end to his private ownership battle. Still, the new government pursued Zalud to pay a "millionaire's tax." The Communist bureaucracy of 1948 generated a conclusive decision letter issued by the *Dvůr Králové* Tax Collector's Office, that read:

to your file number 364 - 48 from February 27 this year, relating to extension of time to admission of Extraordinary Unrepeated Tax and Extraordinary Tax from Oversize Property Gain

We could not hand over your admission because of an absolutely new situation that has come. {Reference here is made to the Communists' so called "Victorious February" takeover} Your company is no longer a debatable confiscate, but now an entire one as a part of the national corporation TIBATEX. The confiscates do not make returns to above-mentioned taxes.

National administration over the company, effective March 1 this year results in total incorporation of it into the national corporation,

Textilní tiskárny, úpravny a barvírny

Mr. Frant. H. Zalud, who was national administrator of the factory until March 1, has been called out and remains only as an administrator of original owners' inheritance before the Aryanization, here referring to the deceased Breuers. This individual (Zalud) has for some months been away on business in U.S.A. by order of Czechoslovak Kovoprumysl n.p. {metal working industry} in Prague.

We suppose, that Mr. Zalud will make the return for the not yet delivered inheritance, if the Fund of National Restoration (FNR) or another institution admits him a compensation for the factory. The extended term of this action cannot yet be determined and it will be necessary to wait until the FNR's decision.

We kindly beg you to take note of our report.

An unanticipated caller turned up at our Los Angeles house on Martel Avenue during the first week of June, 1948, when I was just three-and-a-half years old. My father wrote about this in a letter to his cousin Charlie Hacker dated June 8, 1948. Hans tells how a totally unexpected visitor had arrived:

We had a very interesting and surprising visitor here last week ... Herbert Zalud! You can just about imagine how surprised we were when he called us and told us that he was just in L.A. for one day and that he wanted to come to see us. So he spent half of the night with us and it was certainly interesting. He is an engineer with Ceska Moravská Kolben, and he along with two others were here on a business and study trip through the USA. This week he is already returning to Europe and goes to England where his wife is with her parents to await the birth of a child. Then they all will return to Prag and in the fall the same three men will go on a similar trip to Russia. After having seen both countries, he wants to decide where to settle, either in USA or in USSR. As far as Königinhof is concerned he told me that the factory has now, of course, been finally nationalized and that at some time the owners (?) will receive state bonds in payments. Until then it remains to be cleared up who the owners are. He could have continued a job as manager there, but prefers to stick to his more lucrative and expansive job in Prag. He knew many details about the last days of the family in Königinhof partly from diaries that were kept by Ilse for the last few years and partly from reports of other people. The time was too short to go into many details, therefore many questions remained unasked, many unanswered ... —Hans

I would love to know more about what my parents learned that night with Franz Zalud in Los Angeles. I have been unable to determine any further details on the post-war life of the somewhat mysterious Franz Herbert Zalud or his own family. However, in my research, I came across a picture of his tombstone. In it we see that F. H. Zalud died on October 14, 1993, age 74. He is buried in a cemetery in upper Bohemia, where he made arrangements to be interred along with his father Leopold (d.1931). Zalud ordered a gravestone inscribed with his formal name, Dr. Ing. Frantisek Herbert Zalud, and above that, he had engraved the names of his own murdered relatives: his mother Marta, his brother-in-law Karel Breuer, his sister Ilsa Breuer, and his niece Gita Breuer.

— ♦ —



As the communist regime in Czechoslovakia consolidated its grip on the country, it began to implement its core philosophy, especially the confiscation of private property across the country. All business operations of over twenty-five employees were “collectivized.” In the state control process, smaller enterprises were merged with like companies into far larger ones for supposed efficiency. The fate of Carl Breuer & Sons was sorted out in just that way. Its factory, along with fourteen other textile factories located in the *Dvůr Králové* region, was taken over by the national government and merged into a single administrative unit.

In May, 1948, *CB&S* was taken into national corporation status and melded into a collective enterprise—*Textilní tiskárny, úpravny a barevny, Dvůr Králové and Labem n.p.* By means of a governmentally imposed consolidation process, once and for all, on July 12, 1949, the former Breuer factory was no more, as the factory was fused into the nationalized *TIBATEX* plant operation. After September 1, 1949, the *CB&S* factory ceased production. Its plant premises and structures were converted into head offices for *TIBA*, as it was then being called, with some buildings turned into worker flats.

Throughout the early *TIBA* years various improvements and modernizations were introduced, including some technological innovations along with the addition of updated production machinery in its fifteen constituent factories. These changes increased production output, while its market changed significantly as the Czech textile industry now served an exclusively Soviet block customer base. Over time the inevitable burden of communist mismanagement and the drift of the textile industry to countries in Asia, resulted in the closing of many Czech textile plants. Still, *TIBA* continued operating for many years beyond the Communist era, and into the early current century. Eventually, as production fell, economic losses proved unsustainable and *TIBA* became insolvent. What remained of *TIBA*'s textile printing operation was bought in 2005 by *La Linea*, a privately owned Czech company, and the *TIBA* corporation was finally adjudged as bankrupt on February 9, 2007.

The *La Linea* factory still operates today near the old Breuer factory location in *Dvůr Králové*, a descendent of the *CB&S* factory—it actively continues the business there of a textile printing, dyeing and finishing mill. The current company, founded in 1993, is a direct successor of *TIBA*. In 2005 it acquired technology from the Swiss printing mill *Heberlein AG*. *La Linea* products include high-quality brushed flannel fabric, smooth cotton sateen, along with printed cotton and linen fabrics.

The rise of a Communist Czechoslovakia

In the early post-war period, Czechs looked favorably on the Soviet Russians, who had helped liberate them. The country's multi-party democracy was quickly restored. By 1946, Communists were well-represented in the Czechoslovak government. In 1947 Czechoslovakia wanted to obtain Marshall Aid from the USA, but the USSR intervened to prevent that from happening and the Czech Communist Party reacted ruthlessly. Democratic government ministers were soon fed up with the Communists' manipulation and lies as well as their abuse of the police and security forces. To defend their fragile post-war democracy, they demanded that the Communist Party cease its provocations and manipulative political attacks. But the Communists would not give in.

By February, 1948, the highly focused Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (cz: Kommunistická strana Československa--KSC) took complete control of the political system, and the government became entirely Communist. Over a relatively short time they installed the same system of bureaucratic centralization that prevailed in Stalin's Soviet Union. Private ownership of the means of production entirely disappeared. The KSC maintained brutal control of the country for the next forty-one years. It was not until the last weeks of 1989 that legitimate Czechoslovakian democracy would begin again.

The KSC became more than a political party; it became the only party. And once in power, communists gathered up, aggregated and thereby profoundly altered nearly everything. Private homes could no longer be held by their owners. Once again, within a half century of turbulence, the character of Czech daily life entirely changed.

As a satellite state of the Soviet Union, the Czech Communist government patterned its planned economy after the USSR. At first, the Czechs concentrated on rapidly developing heavy industry, and they collectivized agriculture along with centralizing lighter industry. The new ways of doing business were ubiquitous by 1960 when the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic declared the victory of “socialism” even though the new economy greatly stagnated as the Czech population found big and small ways to protest against KSC bureaucratic control and ideological conformity. In 1965 the KSC responded to calls for reform, permitting more regional and local control. Centralized power prevailed again as the Prague-based Communist regime remained a slavish imitator of political, cultural, and economic trends emanating from Moscow.



Former CB&S factory became TIBA headquarters during the Communist era.

L: Factory buildings in 1950's

R: Decorated for 1960 Communist Party's "12th-Year Victory of Socialism" celebration

The reality that this *Dvůr Králové* textile printing business has persisted surprised me, much as the fact that Carl Breuer's original factory buildings still stand, albeit dilapidated, and are now used for various other purposes including making and selling furniture. Somehow, these discoveries made my visits a bit eerie. In explaining these details, I conclude my account of *CB&S'* star-crossed history.

Caught up in turbulent times, the textile printing business built by Carl Breuer and sons Ernst and Felix began production during the waning years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and ...

- it survived the disruptive impacts of the First World War and the establishment of a free and independent Czechoslovakia;
- it thrived and grew in the years between the two great Twentieth Century wars in the time of a Czechoslovak democratic state;
- it brutally fell into the murderous hands of its Nazi confiscators and was appropriated by the forced sale to Kramer and Effenberger;
- it entered a chaotic three year period of post WW II liberation and the uncertainty of property ownership claims;
- it fell once again, into a collectivized Communist national administration, reformed as part of the state-owned TIBA textile business;
- it managed to remain in production after the Czech's 1989 "velvet revolution" and a newly re-established free, democratic Czechoslovak state that split with Slovakia in 1993;
- its existence along with the TIBA textile company collapsed in 2007;
- its successor company La Linea (laline.cz) remains today in the business of printing fabrics in Dvůr Králové nad Labem.

Looking back to my first *Dvůr Králové* visit in mid July, 2006 with my wife Fredi and our son Noah, I had simply meant to take a look at the town itself. I essentially intended to breathe some air there and take in the place of my ancestors, a ghostly, lost family. I tracked down the few known last addresses that I had, locating some of the homes and the factory. Starting in the late 1960s, we American Breuers repeatedly visited Prague. Fredi and I first visited there ourselves in 1973 and witnessed with dismay the conditions under Communism. My father Hans visited Prague nearly every other year in the last decades of his life. But in all that time, nobody had ever returned to the family town, to *Dvůr Králové*. Dad hadn't chosen to go back on his repeated visits to Prague, despite its location a few hours drive away, no doubt finding it a painful prospect. I now wish that Dad had gone to *Dvůr Králové* at some point, and I certainly would have wanted to share that experience with him. It is likely that much of what I later discovered remained unknown to my father.

Over a tumultuous hundred year period of dramatic changes in Czech history, through spasmodic societal upheaval and my ancestor's annihilation, one town, particularly a few remaining structures, stood witness and beckoned me. My discovery of that place and those buildings, along with remnants of the lives that animated them, enthralled me in spite of the immense tragedy that befell my family and so many others. For me, it became a place of awakening, unearthing, and connecting, suffused with an intimate, haunting sorrow. I hope that you who have followed me on this quest can identify with that place and those feelings. ♦

I've crossed some kind of invisible line. I feel as if I've come to a place I never thought I'd have to come to. And I don't know how I got here. It's a strange place. It's a place where a little harmless dreaming and then some sleepy, early-morning talk has led me into considerations of death and annihilation.

—Raymond Carver, *Where I'm Calling From: New and Selected Stories*



A VIENNESE CULTURE IN EXILE

I am the first American-born Breuer, nonetheless I grew up among the Viennese. In Los Angeles, my parents, along with my aunt and uncle, and almost all of their friends in that generation formed a circle of expatriate refugees who regularly socialized at our home and the homes of one another. They were a chatty interesting bunch, and their culture played a large part in my life. All around me as a boy, it greatly informed and defined my childhood. My parents and their circle were rather young then, they all worked hard in their new country, and importantly, they shared a very strong cultural link. I heard it in the way they would greet one another, in their shared stories which gave voice to their enthusiasms, as well as their worries. They kept track of post-war Austrian politics, and here in the U.S., most of them became liberal Democrats. Only occasionally did they look back in their conversations, back to Wien, back mainly to their youth there, recalling a place or maybe some good old days. Talk of the darker more immediate past was not a common topic, too unpleasant, to say the least. While they became Americans, they replicated and enjoyed many aspects of a Viennese milieu.

Another child of my age, and like me, born of Viennese refugees in Los Angeles, named Ruth Wolman, recalled in her book, *Crossing Over*, “*that the refugees fleeing Hitler’s Reich during the 1930s were unlike any previous immigrant group ... middle and upper class, highly educated, cultured, and cosmopolitan ... the skills and talents of these people, intended for expression in their homeland were diverted to the United States.*” Some of the professionals in this circle, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and businessmen, found similar work and security. For others, financial vulnerability hung on longer. For them, replicating the comfortable lifestyle from back home, was not easy, as was the case in our house. Money was always tight. Nevertheless, my hard working parents were very social and found ways to enjoy their life.

Being from Vienna, the capital of ‘*Gemütlichkeit*’ (*neighborly warmth and friendliness*), it remained a big part of my parents’ behavior, part of their nature. Dad often used the term ‘*küss die hand*’ (*I kiss your hand*) when greeting a German-speaking woman friend, and I seem to remember some actual hand kissing now and then. Well, maybe. He loved the notion, at least, and I suppose so did the ladies. While a dyed-in-the-wool realist, Dad seemed to enjoy playing a schmalzy role. Charming and a great greeter, I often heard Dad use the term, ‘*servus*’ — as in “*at your service*” — an all-purpose Viennese salutation. My father had the bearing of a courtly gentleman who never lost his essential attachment to the era of *fin de siècle* Viennese ceremonial life that hung on through his childhood years.

My parents set up a European-style household, featuring furniture brought over from Vienna, of European thirties moderne style, mostly their wedding gifts. I grew up with that furniture, and we still use a good many pieces of it in our own Berkeley home. Dad once recounted how several Los Angeles couples, family friends who, like he and my mother, had also married in 1933. That complex, fearsome year, was also a year of love. They had survived to realize a far happier future far away from Austria.

The old culture kept its pull. Dad maintained his affection for the waltz; when given a chance, he loved to dance. My parents and their friends attended the opera and the symphony. Dad’s mother Olga had been an accomplished pianist and she had taught him to play piano. I never knew this, nor the fact that he played at all. Not until one day in 1966, when at age twenty-one, I entered into the living room of my uncle and aunt’s house on Detroit St. The Ehrlichs had an upright *Bösendorfer* piano, a big black one, and there sat my father on the piano bench, playing.

Amazing! I don't think that I ever saw that happen again. It gave him a chance to explain to me how he'd come to play piano so many years before at the side of his mother in Vienna.

During my childhood, my tiny extended family lived in a tight community, within blocks of one another in our Los Angeles neighborhood. The Ehrlichs who had emigrated together with my folks, were always connected by the two Haar sisters, my mother Olly and my aunt Gia, who remained inseparable. They spoke daily by phone, lived nearby, first in the Ehrlich/Breuer upstairs/downstairs Beverly Hills duplex, and later in houses close by, we Breuers on Martel Ave. and the Ehrlichs, just six blocks away on Detroit St. My Haar grandparents, who had at first lived with their daughters' families in the Beverly Hills duplex, moved to an apartment equidistant between them, on Alta Vista St. Some older Ehrlich relatives lived close by, too. The exception was Fritz's sister, Lilli Schnitzer, whose family lived way out in Santa Ana in Orange County. We frequently made that long drive through the orange groves for visits. The Ehrlichs, along with my parents' close friends, exposed me to a Viennese aura and culture.

Viennese roots ran deep. My parents and their circle drank strong coffee, preferably with *'schlagobers'* (fresh whipped cream), and I still like it that way. They had attitude. They gossiped, as Viennese universally had over the thousand years of the Empire, which was set in an imperial capital, full of one-upsmanship and intrigue. To some degree, they could make note of a social pecking order, a vestigial behavior from old Vienna life adjacent to a princely royal arena.

They quickly assimilated. The LA-based circle of friends were proud of their new American status, and certainly pleased with their safe haven, having recently survived such unbelievable ghastliness. They easily took to US-born neighbors who in turn took well to them. One such couple, Dick and Janice Eisendrath, were brought into the Viennese circle by my parents and I recall how they were always referred to as 'the Americans', as in, "let's be sure to invite the Americans." Dick and Janice were a jolly couple and greatly enjoyed being a part of it all. ,

"Wien, Wien, nur du allein" (Vienna, Vienna, only you alone)

The opening refrain from a popular tune written in 1913 called Wien, du Stadt meiner Träume (Vienna, City of My Dreams). I can still clearly hear my father's voice singing this tune with the wistful lyrics of its refrain:

*Wien, Wien, nur du allein
Sollst stets die Stadt meiner Träume sein
Dort, wo die alten Häuser stehn,
Dort, wo die lieblichen Mäedchen gehn
Wien, Wien, nur du allein
Sollst stets die Stadt meiner Träume sein
Dort, wo ich glücklich und selig bin,
Ist Wien, ist Wien, mein Wien!*

...

*Vienna, Vienna, only you alone
Will stay the city of my dreams.
There, where the old houses stand,
There where the pretty girls go walking!
Vienna, Vienna, only you
Will stay the city of my dreams!
There where I am happy and blessed
it's Vienna, it's Vienna, my Vienna!*

My father Hans maintained his connection with Vienna, somewhere in a small nostalgic corner of his being, where he kept a purer version of Vienna, temporarily cleansed of Nazis and set aside for reminiscence. Despite his living as a practical realist, one condemned to a life-long suffering of past pains, Dad was also a romantic, retaining a psychic link to the place of his birth, his home and his more carefree early days. Maybe it was a saving grace, allowing him to look right through the cruel reality which had arisen in a city that had humiliated, robbed and exiled him, and destroyed his remaining family. Of course, the stark historic reality was never absent—on occasion it momentarily abated, in ways that Dad allowed himself some unalloyed fondness for his lost Vienna. We, his children and grandchildren, with our repeated visits to the stately city, continue to enjoy a familiarity with its culture. To some degree, we, too, take part in a self-deceit, thinking that it is our home. After all, no family exists there, just a few good loving friends we have made. We take it all in. We picture the past, and we enjoy the present. And on each return, we visit my parents' grave at Vienna's central cemetery. And there, in private moments, we wonder what might have been.

Typically the Viennese love dogs, even more than children. Yet only a few actually had them at home — I mean dogs, but also, I mean children. Kids were a bit of a rarity among these survivors; many had sworn off ever becoming parents back in Vienna, at a time when their future looked entirely bleak. It just seemed irresponsible. So in Los Angeles, young Steve and I, were a valued commodity, almost a curiosity, to be engaged in conversation, perhaps for an insight into American youth culture. Maybe not, but I enjoyed the attention. I liked hanging around the table for ‘*jause*’, the traditional Austrian afternoon snack or tea, a fairly regular Sunday event at home. Occasionally, I was briefly lent out to a childless family friend — a kid for a day — to attend the circus, take a beach excursion, or just to enjoy a light little schmooze, along with, of course, all the Viennese sweets I could eat.

Beyond the obvious ‘*Wiener apfelstrudel*’ and ‘*Linzer torte*,’ I recall plenty of other desserts that I enjoyed. In my making the rounds, the sweets remain memorable, as certain friends made their specialties. Another source for pastries was the Czech-born Viktor Benes’ bakery on Santa Monica Blvd. In someone’s home, I loved coming upon a platter piled high with ‘*hasselnuss kipferl*’ (*hazelnut crescent cookies*) or the similar nut free ‘*vanillenkiperl*’. Somewhere else, with any luck, I could gobble down a nice tall piece of ‘*gugelhupf*’ (*bundt coffee cake with raisins*) or ‘*mohnstrudel*’ (*poppy seed strudel*), or better yet some freshly boiled, still warm ‘*marillendnödel*’ (*poached apricot dumplings*). And perhaps best of all, was the ever wonderful ‘*palatschinken*’ (*apricot jam crepes*), over which Steve and I always fought — I usually lost, as he always carried more weight!

At our house and in the homes of Viennese friends we ate as if to the manner born. Viennese cuisine is a legacy, the beneficiary of the Austrian Empire. It is familiar to many people from Central Europe. In the second half of the 19th century, cookbooks started to include Bohemian, Hungarian, Italian, Jewish, Polish and Southern Slavic features in Viennese cuisine. For me growing up, I could taste some of it every day. We ate a regular Austrian side dish, one that also served as a main meal, called ‘*schinkenfleckerl*’, made with flat noodles and mixed in diced tiny chunks of ham. Onto dark breads we would spread gobs of ‘*liptauer*’, a paprika spiced cheese spread that I have always loved. Mother was a master of making soups, served cold in the hot LA summer, chilled purees, creamed or as clear consommés, with warmer fare in winter months. Soup was rarely an appetizer for us. In our house soup itself could be the main dish, an entirely filling meal, for example, ‘*kalarábéleves*’ (*chicken-kohlrabi*). My mother made a great variety of soups. She served lentil soup a lot, in several forms. Olly was famous for her mushroom soup, often made from the shipments of dried mushrooms which regularly arrived by mail in wonderfully exotic looking small crumpled burlap bags, filled with mushrooms, hand picked and sent by friends in Prague. She made spinach soup too, which appeared regularly on our table, again eaten either hot or cold. Beyond soups, we ate potatoes, prepared in various ways, but most often chilled as a delicious ‘*kartoffelsalat*’ (*potato salad*), with sliced scallions mixed in a dressing of vinegar, oil and some spices.

To some extent, we ate what most American kids in the neighborhood never heard of. I recall having cold rhubarb puree served as we sat under our large patio gazebo, draped with a sprawling purple flowered bougainvillea in the garden. The rhubarb was usually a blender drink or sometimes served as a refreshing cold soup. Not every kid ate that at home! And there was a family friend named Tibor Metzner, who was a chocolate candy maker. At home, our chocolate was always of the dark kind, as was the hearty bread for sandwiches, almost always served open-faced with butter beneath, and fresh thin cut vegetables on top. As my Aunt Gia and the Ehrlich family lived right across from Melrose Avenue School, I had ready access to her loving family and also to her delicious Viennese cooking. It was a second home to me.

We consumed plenty of meat, a Central European staple. There was ‘*Wiener schnitzel*’ (*breaded veal cutlet*) of course, after all, were we not Wieners? — By the way, sausages were never called wieners, but rather frankfurters. — We loved occasionally eating a Hungarian inspired goulash with big chunks of beef or lamb, often served over

potatoes or ‘*spätzle*’ (*doughy noodles*). My uncle Fritz, a top-notch butcher, was a great source for the very best cuts of meat. In his business, he made the finest, fullest variety of German style sausages in Los Angeles. Fritz Ehrlich came from a long line of very successful sausage makers. So, we always had plenty of tasty sausage and all sorts of sliced meats, readily available, easy to order from Uncle Fritz.

As for drinking, well, I can only report that except for beer and occasionally some wine with a meal, I rarely saw my folks, or my uncle and aunt, or practically any of those in their circle drink spirits. In fact, I cannot recall ever seeing anyone intoxicated. When given an alcoholic gift, the fancy bottles were put up high on a top shelf where they mainly gathered dust. Was this because we were Jews, or Austrians? I still don’t really know.

Mother always packed sandwiches for my school lunch, but never peanut butter and jelly on white bread like the other kids ate. No, instead, mine were always on rye bread with butter. A meat sandwich never had mayonnaise, it had butter. And, because my parents sold little milk containers at the studio, I brought my own to school; my milk got sort of warm instead of the cold milk other kids got from the school. But, it was never a case of ‘poor me,’ rather, it was just a bit different. I suppose most things at our house were just a bit different, a bit European. At school, I was certainly like the other kids, but not exactly. My parents and their circle had accents, something I couldn’t hear unless it was rarely pointed out to me. While I recall these differences, actually none of them much mattered.

I met my two earliest oldest friends, Bob Bauer and Fred Gans, around age two, through our parents, also Austrian refugees. The Bauer and Gans family connections were a constant, and to this day, in our seventies, we often share amusing details, memories of our living with émigré parents. As I mentioned, many people in our parents’ circle had avoided having children at all. They had all been through so much, and to some degree in their world view, it seemed just too worrisome a place for kids. Mother, however, firmly believed that, “there’s always room for a child,” and I’m glad for that! We were raised simply as American kids. Nobody ever dressed us in *lederhosen*, nor spoke German to us. As I see it, growing up among these Central Europeans only made our life at home richer and more interesting. We had a feel for Europe, but had no doubt about our good life here. And, for all of us, the postwar time in Southern California was indeed good, even if it was haunted by ghosts from the past. As a child I gave those ghosts little thought. I was cheerful and I was comfortable.

For my parents, as for all of our family, life from the mid-nineteen forties onward progressively improved. America was a safe haven, much as it has been for so many other refugees. Life, despite its challenges, had become normal. And, I dare say, it was an enriched household in which to grow up.

My boyhood was largely spent with the four of us living in a single family house at 848 North Martel Avenue in the Hollywood area. The house was likely built in the late 1920s. We moved there in 1946—the price was \$14,000. We sold it in 1961 for \$28,000, during my junior year of high school. Our neighborhood was mainly made up of neat free standing houses, along with a few typical Hollywood style “garden courts”, but without the garden, just two mirrored rows of studio apartments lined up along a median strip of grass. One of these was the neighboring building to the north of our house. Those little apartments were populated with an odd assortment of people whom I mainly avoided, although once or twice I entered into one of the darkly shaded apartments, and it was creepy. Next door to us on the south side lived a friendly older couple, the Hermans, in their custom made home, constructed by Mr. Sam Herman himself who had been a professional builder. The stucco house built in a refined Spanish revival nineteen-thirties style had generous rooms, and was memorable, in part, because it had the first dishwasher and garbage disposal I ever saw. The Herman’s garden and ours shared a simple wire fence, so the entire spread of our adjoining parallel and well-planted, flower-filled yards made for a most pleasant environment.

Around the corner was the well equipped Poinsettia city park where I went for pre-school care. Later I walked the six blocks or so to Melrose Elementary School, across from which was the house at 752 N. Detroit St. where my Ehrlich uncle Fritz, aunt Gia and my only cousins Bill and Shirley lived. "Meet me at the corner" meant I'd meet Fred Gans at the corner of Poinsettia and Melrose. After riding our bikes around the neighborhood, we would go to the park to check out a handball, or play a game of caroms, or just watch people playing tennis. Once we buried a dead bird there with a solemn ceremony. All sorts of interesting folks lived within a block of my house, including a teenage guy who had a reptile vivarium in the garage where I happily learned to hold his snakes and lizards. And just around the corner lived my school friends, the brothers Ricky and Randy Levin, whose father was employed full time as a clown for the Barnum and Bailey circus. Mr. Levin regularly rode his unicycle around our block while juggling a bunch of colorful balls, and practiced on his big trampoline in front of their little house on Willoughby St. There were constant car crashes at the stop-sign less intersection of Willoughby and Martel, and Dad loved to run up there after any loud bang-up to watch the emergency response. Better yet, he loved it if fire trucks were involved. So did I.

Our house was a typical LA white clapboard, approximately 1400 sq. ft., perched just above the street on a small grassy rise and set toward the front of a rather deep lot. The house had seven basic rooms, including a decent sized living room, an adjoining separate dining room, and two bedrooms, one for my parents and the other for my big brother Steve. His room was entirely out of bounds for me, and Steve never let me enter it for more than the count of three. In 1960 when he married Gail and moved out, it finally became my room for the final year that we lived there. Until then, my bedroom was the most peculiar room in the house. Designed more as a breakfast-room-cum-bedroom, it had three doors, one that led into the adjacent kitchen, one to the living room and another into the tiny square bathroom that all four of us shared. Our family dinners were eaten in my room, on a classic fifties-style red vinyl topped kitchen table, with chrome legs and four matching chairs. If I played with toy soldiers or was building something on the table, it all had to be cleared off before dinner, and was usually available again for play after breakfast. So, my room had regular family traffic. As for the dining room, well, it was reserved for special occasions. We only ate at the actual dining room table with invited company, a situation which was entirely the norm in those days in most households.

The kitchen lacked an electric refrigerator when we first lived there. At the time, we had a wooden icebox, a free standing, non-mechanical insulated cold container, commonly serving as a cold food storage box in most early-twentieth century kitchens. The icebox had a compartment to hold one large block of ice, delivered solid and fresh and replaced every few days by the iceman's truck from Union Ice Company up on Santa Monica Blvd. I loved seeing things delivered to the house. By 1950 we got our first refrigerator from Sears. The "fridge" stood about five feet high and had a curve shaped top, which proved to be the perfect place for Dad to station himself, facing it and leaning his arms over the top. As Steve and I clearly recall, our Dad would bury his head into his arms for rather long periods at a time, having found the perfect place to do his worrying.

Our early washing machine was an old-fashion tub design, with an integral hand-cranked wringer used to get most of the water out of each washed item. Often, my chore was to carry the heavy load of damp laundry to the mid-yard clothes lines and carefully hang each piece with wooden clips. Laundry dried fast in the Southern California sun, and I clearly recall the solid feel of sun-dried towels and sheets that were as hard as the L.A. water that had just washed them.

The very best part of our Martel house was its terrific, spacious back yard garden, a place for my parents and their friends to relax, for me to play, and for all of us to sprawl on the grass and dream. You entered the yard either by coming around the house up the driveway, or from within the house, walking through a narrow service porch, past our washing machine, and out through the back door. Directly behind the house was a large patio which was shaded



Left: My mother Olly flirts with uncle Fritz, with Steve in full Austrian regalia in front. [Snapshot at Santa Monica pier taken by my aunt Gia, January 1940]. • My grandfather, Opa Haar, stands with my brother Steve, holding cousin Billy. That's Opa as I remember him, and Steve and Bill remain unchanged as far as I can see. • My mother, Olly, in a typical pose and outfit for the time [June, 1950]. She's 42 years old.



Below: Little me, Steve and Billy on wooden horse in Martel backyard 1946. • Little me sitting at edge of backyard patio and lawn.



Above l to r: A group of fellow Viennese gathered in our living room on my Dad's 49th birthday, May 19, 1956. Rear standing: Hans, Olly, Frank Bauer, and Uncle Fritz Ehrlich. Middle: Minnie Heller, Magda Bauer, Aunt Gia Ehrlich, Celine Ansbach. Kneeling at front Hans Bright and one of "the Americans", Janice Eisendrath. • The Martel Ave. house at the time of its sale, June 1961, with our 1960 Chevy Bel Air parked in front. • My parents enjoying the patio at Martel house, July 1959; Hans age 52 and Olly age 51, a day after celebrating their twenty-sixth wedding anniversary.





Left: Steve, age 14 ¾, my mother Olly, age 42, and me, age 5½. (April 1950)

Above: Some pieces of my parents' 1930s Viennese wedding set of furniture, which we live with at our home in Berkeley. My mother used the tall secretary desk in her private Vienna language school. Dad's cigarette case. Like most Viennese, both of my parents smoked, finally giving the habit up when I was a teenager.

and covered entirely by a huge overhanging purple flowering bougainvillea that grew on a whitewashed wooden slat trellis enclosure. It was exotic, and lots of family socializing took place there at a table under the flowers, looking out on at a well kept lawn. The lawn was surrounded by several fruit trees including a guava, lemon, fig, banana, and at the far end of the yard a plum and huge avocado tree. The occasional visitor from the East was amazed, and insisted on trying to eat one of our less-than-edible bananas. Our fig, lemon and avocado trees were so prolific that we sent most visitors home with paper bags full of fruit. In the farthest back part of the yard I had a two-seat swing set, where my friend Bob Bauer and I often played at being Western Airlines co-pilots. Near the swings, my Opa Haar had a vegetable garden, one of two that he planted and carefully maintained. The other was at the Ehrlichs house on Detroit. Also way back next to the garage there was an incinerator. Those were the days when every household burned its own garbage right on site, that also being one of my boyhood jobs. Fun! Later, as a young teenager, I learned to drive the family car backwards. I started it up and steered it back out of the garage, along the driveway towards Martel. I pulled it up adjacent to the house for my parents to drive away. Later, I actually began driving forward as well!



My brother Steve's American dream house

The Second World War ended with most dreams shattered and some still alive. My parents had maintained the Germanic spelling of Breuer, rather than Brewer, in hopes that surviving relatives and friends could identify and contact them. Tragically, we were the only members of the Breuer family to have survived the Holocaust, as my father discovered to his horror and dismay.

Finding work in the burgeoning wartime film industry provided a modicum of prosperity for our family. We could now look forward to two American dreams: becoming American citizens and sharing the postwar goal of owning a house of our own. Both of those dreams were realized in 1946. As a minor, I became an American citizen when my mother became naturalized. And our parents found their dream house at 848 North Martel Avenue. Meanwhile, my aunt and uncle, the Ehrlichs, bought a newly constructed home of their own half a dozen blocks away on Detroit Street. And our Haar grandparents found a small apartment located mid-way between the Breuer and Ehrlich houses on N. Alta Vista St. These new family homes, were all north of Melrose Avenue, which, in the late 1940s was like a small town community. It featured groceries and a butcher shop, cobblers and tailors, a dime store and a corner drug store.

Some of our neighbors were residents of long standing, several of whom were in the movie industry. Across the street lived Mr. Moody, a highly regarded studio sound engineer, for example. It was a heterogeneous population, a mix of very middle class folks, and some of far less prosperity. Several of our parents' emigre circle lived nearby.

The saving grace of our little house was its huge well planted back yard. Exotic birds of paradise plants joined rose and camellia bushes. On the side of the house night-blooming jasmine filled the air with cloying fragrance. My bedroom had lots of floor space to play on. I had immeasurably more privacy and play space than my brother.

On Sunday afternoons, my parents often invited friends from their immigrant community for an afternoon tea. My mother prepared fancy canapés and some baked sweets, which were enjoyed along with lots of gossip around our dining room table. These events solidified the extended family in which my brother and I grew up. On Martel, we fulfilled the American Dream, putting down deep roots which anchored us through school and college. —Steve Breuer

The Austrian émigré community loved eating the cuisine of their homeland. Strong coffee and an accompanying cake were most often served “mit schlag”—whipped cream—at our home and those of our friends and family. Growing up, there were plenty of favorites I could count on, including my mother’s recipes for flourless walnut cake, potato salad and spinach. Fredi makes these a couple times each year, and if I am lucky, she also makes the other dishes, as well.

Walnut Torte or Walnut Cake (Walnuss Torte/Kuchen)

1 cup sugar
6 eggs separated
1/2 lb. walnuts or hazelnuts

Beat whites; beat yolks separately with sugar; grind nuts in nut grinder. Note: Food processors tend to cook the nuts, so we always use my mother’s old hand grinder. Alternately, gently fold in nuts and egg whites to yolk batter. Pour into buttered spring pan. Bake for 35 min to 45 min at 350°
Top with raspberry preserves, strawberries, whipped creme or chocolate creme
Alternatively, slice the cake horizontally in half into two layers; spread the bottom with raspberry preserves mixed with liquor or whipped cream.

Viennese Potato Salad (Kartoffelsalat)

2 lbs of potatoes for 6 people using small or long white potatoes and 2 sliced hard-boiled eggs, plus vinegar, green onions, sugar water, salt, pepper and oil to taste.

Boil and peel potatoes, keep hot and slice neatly as fast as possible. Add salt, pepper and olive oil until oil soaks in. Chop green onions. Add vinegar to sugar water. Add hard boiled eggs. Mix thoroughly, adding salt and pepper, and refrigerate overnight

Creamed Spinach (Cremespinat) serves 4

One box frozen spinach or 1½ lbs fresh.

Rinse and slow boil on medium heat. Drain well. Chop into small pieces.

Make white sauce using:

½ cup unsalted butter
2 tbs flour
1 cup non fat milk
Salt, pepper, nutmeg (dijon mustard optional)

Melt butter, add flour and stir well for one minute. Add milk and continue to stir. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Purée spinach and sauce.

My mother’s and Aunt Gia’s Liptauer Cheese (makes about 1 cup)

8 oz smooth farmer’s cheese or cottage cheese, put through a strainer at room temperature
3 tbs finely chopped onion
1 tbs anchovy paste or finely chopped anchovies
1 tbs finely chopped capers
½ tsp caraway seeds
½ tsp paprika

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir with a wooden spoon until thoroughly combined. Serve on rye or pumpernickel bread and garnish with fresh cut chives. This spread is quick and easy and takes about 10 minutes to prepare. Let rest about 1 hour before serving.

Viennese Veal Cutlets (Wiener Schnitzel)

6-8 thin veal cutlets (about 2½ to 3 lbs)
salt to taste
¼ cup flour
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup bread crumbs
1 cup oil
1 lemon, sliced

Lay cutlets out and lightly salt. Dip first in flour, then eggs, then in bread crumbs. Fry in deep hot fat until golden brown.

Drain on absorbent paper. Decorate with lemon slices.

Warm Red Cabbage (Rotkraut)

- 1 medium head red or blue cabbage, shredded
- 1 tbs olive oil
- 1/3 cup red wine
- 1/2 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and finely chopped
- 2 vegetable bouillon cubes
- 4 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 cup water
- Kosher Salt and Pepper

Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onions and sauté until translucent. Add red wine. Add half the shredded cabbage, half the apple, one bouillon cube, 2 tbs vinegar, 1/2 tsp sugar, 1/2 cup water, season with 1/2 tsp salt and 1/8 tsp pepper. Repeat the layer adding the other half of the ingredients in the same fashion.

Give a quick stir, cover and simmer for about 20-30 minutes or until the cabbage is soft.

At this point stir, taste for seasonings and adjust if a little more salt and pepper is needed.

Optional: Add applesauce and caraway seeds.

Magda Bauer's recipe for Guglhupf (Round Cake)

- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- Lemon rind
- Juice 1/2 lemon
- 1 tsp baking powder
- Raisins
- 1/2 lb. butter
- Vanilla
- A pinch of salt

Separate eggs, beat egg whites stiff and add part of sugar. Put into refrigerator. Beat butter and yolks, sugar, lemon rind, juice and vanilla etc. Add flour (folding in slowly) adding whites. Bake in a bundt pan at 325° for one hour and test if done.

Mella Gans' recipes for Pancakes (Palatschinken) makes 12 pancakes

- 5oz flour
- 8 oz milk or 4 oz cream and 4 oz milk
- 2 eggs
- 2 egg yolks
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp sugar
- Butter for frying; jam for filling; powdered sugar

Mix all ingredients into a thin batter. Heat a little butter in a frying pan. Pour enough butter into pan to cover the bottom thinly and evenly. Fry on both sides until golden brown. Grease the pan as before and continue until all batter is used. Keep cooked pancakes warm. Spread each pancake with jam, roll it up and serve hot, dusted with sugar.

Bread Dumplings (Semmelknoedel) and Mushroom Sauce

	Bread dumplings (Semmelknoedel)
	1 loaf white bread
	1/2 tsp onion chopped
	1/2 " parsley
	1/2 cup butter
	1 1/2 - 2 cups milk
	2 eggs
	salt
	2/3 cups flour
	Fry onions and parsley in butter, add bread. Mix milk, eggs and salt and pour over bread, blend in flour as much as needed. Form dumplings, cook gently in salted water for 10 minutes. (serves 5)
	serve with Mushroom sauce.
	<u>Mushroom sauce</u>
	1 tsp onion chopped
	1/2 " parsley chopped
	6 tablesp. butter
	1/2 lb. mushroom, sliced
	4 - 5 tablesp. flour
	1 cup soup stock or water
	1/2 cup of sour cream
	1 tsp. salt or to taste
	1/2 tsp. lemon juice
RECIPE FROM MELLA GANS	Fry onions and parsley in 2 tablespoons butter. Add mushrooms and cook 5 minutes, or until tender, stir in flour, add soup or water, blend well. Add sour cream and salt. combine with mushrooms and cook 15 minutes, add lemon juice.

Born in the United States, my own citizenship was automatic as I became an American citizen at birth, about six months before my immediate family were naturalized. My parents, Olga and Hans, filed these petitions for their Naturalization. Brother Steve was included on my mother's application form, and all became U.S. citizens. ♦

TRIPPLICATE (To be given to declarant) No. 91614
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DECLARATION OF INTENTION
 (Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, DISTRICT COURT
 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, LOS ANGELES, CALIF.
 I, OLGA BREUER, now residing at 302 No. Oakmont Drive, Los Angeles, Calif., do hereby declare on oath that my personal description is: Sex Female, color White, hair Light, eyes Gray, height 5 feet 4 inches, weight 115 pounds, visible distinctive marks None, race Hebrew, nationality German. I was born in Vienna, Austria (Germany) on March 3, 1906. I am married. The name of my wife or husband is Yona Breuer. We were married on July 9, 1933 at Vienna, Germany. I also on he was born at Vienna, Germany on July 10, 1907. My permanent residence in the United States is at New York City, N.Y. or permanent residence therein, and now resides at with me. I have one child, and the name, date and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children are as follows: Stephen Ernest, July 14, 1936, at Vienna, Germany. Resides with us.
 I have not heretofore made a declaration of intention; Number 6 at Los Angeles, Calif. my last foreign residence was Vienna, Germany. I emigrated to the United States of America from Vienna, Austria on April 29, 1933. My lawful entry for permanent residence in the United States was at New York City, N.Y. under the name of OLGA BREUER on the vessel SS "CORTE DI SAVOIA" on April 29, 1933. I will, before being admitted to citizenship, recognize forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly, by name, to the prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of which I may be at the time of admission a citizen or subject; I am not an anarchist, I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy, and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to reside permanently therein; and I certify that the photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of me: So help me God.
 Olga Breuer
 Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court, Los Angeles, Calif., this 29th day of April, 1933.
 I, Helen Haar, Clerk of said Court, do hereby certify that the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant for permanent residence on the date stated above, has been received by me. The photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.
 H. B. Stimminger, Clerk of said Court, Los Angeles, California.
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

ORIGINAL (To be retained by Clerk of Court) No. 116058
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION
 (Under General Provisions of the Nationality Act of 1906 (Public, No. 353, 70th Cong.))
 THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, LOS ANGELES, CALIF.
 I, OLGA BREUER, do hereby declare on oath that my personal description is: Sex Female, color White, hair Light, eyes Gray, height 5 feet 4 inches, weight 115 pounds, visible distinctive marks None, race Hebrew, nationality German. I was born in Vienna, Austria (Germany) on March 3, 1906. I am married. The name of my wife or husband is Yona Breuer. We were married on July 9, 1933 at Vienna, Germany. I also on he was born at Vienna, Germany on July 10, 1907. My permanent residence in the United States is at New York City, N.Y. or permanent residence therein, and now resides at with me. I have one child, and the name, date and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children are as follows: Stephen Ernest, July 14, 1936, at Vienna, Germany. Resides with us.
 I have not heretofore made a declaration of intention; Number 6 at Los Angeles, Calif. my last foreign residence was Vienna, Germany. I emigrated to the United States of America from Vienna, Austria on April 29, 1933. My lawful entry for permanent residence in the United States was at New York City, N.Y. under the name of OLGA BREUER on the vessel SS "CORTE DI SAVOIA" on April 29, 1933. I will, before being admitted to citizenship, recognize forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly, by name, to the prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of which I may be at the time of admission a citizen or subject; I am not an anarchist, I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy, and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to reside permanently therein; and I certify that the photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of me: So help me God.
 Olga Breuer
 Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court, Los Angeles, Calif., this 29th day of April, 1933.
 I, Helen Haar, Clerk of said Court, do hereby certify that the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant for permanent residence on the date stated above, has been received by me. The photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.
 H. B. Stimminger, Clerk of said Court, Los Angeles, California.
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

ORIGINAL (To be given to the person naturalized) No. 6736882
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATE
 (Under General Provisions of the Nationality Act of 1906 (Public, No. 353, 70th Cong.))
 I, Helen Haar, Clerk of said Court, do hereby certify that the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant for permanent residence on the date stated above, has been received by me. The photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.
 H. B. Stimminger, Clerk of said Court, Los Angeles, California.
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE



American Naturalization

Oma Helen Haar, my maternal grandmother, was a rock of the family. Here is her US Naturalization (citizenship) certificate. This is how I remember her, as seen in this 1950 picture. She died when I was six years old and her daughters, Olly and Gia, my mother and aunt, went into serious mourning.

A VIENNESE CULTURE IN EXILE

The Aufbau, a journal for German-speaking Jews around the globe.

My Dad subscribed to "The Aufbau" and in my childhood, the latest issue of the newspaper always could be found on our coffee table at home. Aufbau, was a lifeline of information and contacts among those who escaped the upheaval of their German-speaking homelands. A monthly periodical, founded in 1934 by the German-Jewish Club, it was later renamed the "New World Club," and continued being published in New York until April 2004. Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Stefan Zweig wrote for the publication. My father read every word. It was another connection with those who, having left another life behind, were figuring out their new one. The original purpose of the journal was as a monthly newsletter for the club, including information and helpful facts for Jewish refugees. From September 1, 1944 through September 27, 1946, the Aufbau printed numerous lists of Jewish Holocaust survivors located in Europe, as well as a few lists of victims. I know that for at least a year after the war, my father held onto his hope for making contact with some surviving relatives. It was not to be.





Destroyed Dvůr Králové synagogue

REMNANTS

The Dvůr Králové Jewish Community and the story of its rescued Torah Scrolls

During my 2014 visit to Prague I met with Julie Jensovská, a staff archivist I had been corresponding with at the excellent Prague Jewish Museum. While I was there, she discovered a most interesting monograph entitled *Thus We Remember*. This book was a project of Rabbi Norman Patz and his wife, Naomi. Their congregation, Temple Shalom of West Essex, New Jersey, had come into possession of a Torah scroll from the destroyed synagogue at *Dvůr Králové* in a 1975 distribution of Central European scrolls. Rabbi Patz became keenly interested in the destroyed community of Jews whose most precious possession now resided in his synagogue. He and Naomi wrote a sophisticated history of the Jewish *Dvůr Králové* community in 2005 and sent a copy to the Jewish museum in Prague. I was overjoyed to discover his book and enthralled to read it. Upon returning home to Berkeley, I called Rabbi Patz, who was astounded to hear from an actual living relative of the town's disappeared Jewish community. Before my phone call he had never been able to make such an American-based contact. The Patzs' work became another touchstone with my lost family, and the following is partially based on information contained in their book.

The Patz project was inspired by a surviving Torah scroll from the *Dvůr Králové* synagogue, a large domed building called the *Templ*. My father's uncle Carl Kohn, a textile merchant, had been the synagogue's part time administrator, and, until the war, managed the Jewish cemetery. The Nazis desecrated the *Templ*, leaving it severely damaged. Forgotten and neglected under the Communist regime, in 1966 it was torn down completely to allow for the widening of a roadway.

Jews, having lived in Bohemia and Moravia for more than a thousand years, developed a full culture and wide-spread population, centered in the capital, Prague. That all ended with the Nazi invasion of 1939. Historic congregations were closed down and their synagogues deserted and destroyed. By 1943, of the 117,551 Jews of Bohemia and Moravia (356,830 recorded in Czechoslovakia as a whole), some 26,000 had managed to emigrate. Today's Czech Republic population of ten and a half million is said to include not many more than 4,000 Jews. The Holocaust in Czechoslovakia claimed some 80,000 Jewish lives, and at least 350 synagogues were also lost within the Bohemia and Moravia regions that make up the current country. Three hundred of those buildings were left to decay, abandoned and many destroyed by the Communists who came to power soon after the war's end.

In March of 2015, Eva Weiss Nosková, the last known Jew in the town of *Dvůr Králové* died. Eva, born in 1936 and the daughter of a mixed marriage, had left for England as a very young child along with her parents. The Weiss family was one of the only pre-war Jewish residents of the town to resettle in *Dvůr Králové* after the Holocaust. The family managed to successfully reclaim its home, and Eva remained living there throughout her life, for the following seventy years. A few others of the town's Jewish survivors also returned, but soon left again, permanently. Those few returnees included a distant relative of ours named Frantisek (Franz) Zalud, the brother-in-law of my Dad's cousin Karl Breuer. Karl had run the Breuer factory until being sent to *Terezín*, but was murdered at *Birkenau* along with his entire family including his wife Ilsa Zalud Breuer. Franz Zalud, returning to *Dvůr Králové* immediately at the war's end, tried to reclaim the Breuer factory but failed and left thereafter.

Eva Nosková was a valued primary source for Patz in telling the story of the Jews of *Dvůr Králové*. She recalled

some of the town's Jewish community beginnings, describing how the synagogue was consecrated in 1891, and how the Jewish cemetery was built four years later. Among others, Jews had established themselves by building the first modern textile factories, and Eva recalled how the town had been referred to as the "Czech Manchester." Eva said that *Dvůr Králové* was widely known in Czechoslovakia and across Europe for its textile production.

Early in the twentieth century, the country's persistent and raging Czech/German cultural conflict came to divide the town's small Jewish community. The pre-war Jewish population of *Dvůr Králové* couldn't avoid these language and cultural identity conflicts, more fully described in Chapter 5. Some residents strongly identified as Czech, while others considered themselves ethnic Germans. My family thought of themselves as Czech and spoke both languages, Czech and German, at home and work. They expanded their businesses and led affluent lives, fitting in with their neighbors as much as possible. Yet, ethnicity and language identity remained great dividers that touched the small *Dvůr Králové* Jewish community.

In 1910, the registered Jewish community of 332 was 2.2% of the town population—small but substantial. The 1930 Czech census figures indicate only 180 Jews remained living in *Dvůr Králové*, about half the number that lived there twenty years earlier, at the time of the 1910 census. German was purposely taken out of the Jewish religious services, restricting the language used in the synagogue to only Czech and Hebrew. Understandably, many German speaking Jews felt unwelcome and most moved away to more solidly German-speaking areas of Bohemia's nearby *Sudetenland*. It was representative of the ethnicity split going on across the country at that time. Throughout the century's first three decades, the Carl Breuer & Sons factory expanded and operated at full production. My extended family, many of whom were long-time German speakers, remained well positioned in the town and its Jewish community. They chose to stay. But, as history does not stand still, the events of 1938-39 took their grievous toll. By 1942, not a single Jew remained in *Dvůr Králové*, nor in any of the region's many cities and towns. Many left early on, and those unable to escape, were sent off to a range of Nazi concentration camps including *Terezín*, *Auschwitz-Birkenau*, *Treblinka*, *Dachau*, *Buchenwald* and *Mauthausen*. During the post-war Communist era, Eva Nosková recalled how there was absolutely no interest in, nor recognition of, the town's Jewish heritage. The Jews were gone, the Templ lay in ruins and the Jewish cemetery was desecrated. By 1966, evidence of Jews having lived there vanished.



"On the whole, the Jews who moved into the town were a prosperous, upper middle class group. By 1862, they had formed a Jewish community organization. Led by a number of wealthy textile manufacturers ... they raised money and built the city's first and only synagogue, called the Templ, a non-orthodox liberal congregation, possibly resembling what we call Reform. The 1880 census lists 124 Jewish citizens, 1.8% of the population ...

The move to Czech nationalism that opened Dvůr Králové to Jews ironically undermined the community. In the politically tense and ethnically sensitive first decade of the 20th century, Jews throughout the country were torn between the German society they knew, and which many viewed as cultured, cosmopolitan and essentially friendly to Jews, and the rapidly developing Czech national culture.

In 1910, the decision was made, presumably after great debate within the community, to change the language of instruction in the synagogue school from German to Czech. This decision irreparably divided the community. By 1918, the religious school (operated since 1870) and most of the Jewish community's functions had been transferred to the nearby city of Trutnov-Trautenau, a few miles north, in the Sudetenland, along with the majority of the congregation's ritual objects."

—Source: *Thus We Remember* by Naomi and Rabbi Norman Patz



Above left: The Templ at Dvur Králové before the war. c.1937

Above: Interior of the sanctuary. c.1937

Left: The Templ at Dvur Králové in a state of destruction c.1960s, prior to its total demolition.

Below: "Greetings from Dvur Králové", an early twentieth-century postcard view of the town with its tall Templ dome at rear left of image. Along with some churches whose spires reached high into the sky, it was among the tallest buildings in the town.



ALTESTENHAT DER JUDEN IN PRAG				JIDOVSKA KADA STARŠICH V PRAGI			
KULTURABTEILUNG				KULTURNÍ ODBĚLNÍ			
An der Erde		Thorarolle		Zustandpunkt		Revidiert	
Menschen		Fergasent		01.088 L		1893	
Charakter der Schrift		Miniaturschrift		Inventar Nr.		Heute	
Illustrationen		---		19		---	
Länge und Höhe der Rolle		280		Erhaltungszustand		---	
Übertragungszeit und Zeit		um 1600		Finanz-Nr.		11.12.1943	
Schreibweise (Stich, Tinte, Feder)		in gärb., 4 Zellen, 4 Griffe		Kaufpreis		600.--	
Zusammenfassung von		Königinhof		Kauf Nr.		065 1/038	
Bezeichnet		---		Dr. W/Cz.		11./11.1943	

Left: Prague Jewish Museum catalog card for the Dvur Králové Torah scroll now held at West Essex, New Jersey's Temple Sholom. The card indicates the scroll being processed on November 11, 1943. Around that time nearly all of my Czech family, along with many others from the town, were murdered.

Right: Temple Sholom of New Jersey's small Torah scroll from the Dvur Králové Templ.

Middle: Robert with the the Dvur Králové scroll at Temple Sholom, March 2018.

Bottom: Czech Torah scrolls in storage prior to their international distribution by the Memorial Scrolls Trust, London.



How the Czech Torah Scrolls were saved

In 1942, the communities were instructed to send the contents of their synagogues to the Jewish Museum in Prague, and, with a few exceptions, the Torah Scrolls, gold and silver and ritual textiles were sent to Prague, along with thousands of books and even clocks and pianos. A group of members of Prague's Jewish community assembled and catalogued the religious treasures from the deserted communities and destroyed synagogues, storing them in the comparative safety of Prague or various empty synagogues and warehouses. The Nazis were persuaded to support the plan and more than 10,000 artifacts were brought to the Museum. Among them were about 1,800 holy Torah scrolls. Each one was meticulously recorded, labelled and entered on index cards by the Jewish Museum's staff, with a description of each scroll and the town it was from.

The collected Torah scrolls were transferred to the ruined synagogue at Michle, a part of greater Prague, where, in the nineteen-sixties, eleven hundred were acquired, by a Britain-based initiative, from the Czech Communists and sent to London. The fifty communities that managed to reestablish small Jewish congregations themselves in the Czech Republic were each provided with Torahs and other religious artifacts, although not necessarily from their own communities. This was significant as, under the Communists regime, much of remaining Jewish communal life was stifled once again, and some of the few Czech synagogues were closed.

During the post-war years a legend emerged that the Nazis had planned to create a 'museum to an extinct race' which explained their hoard of Judaica. This has little foundation in fact. We do know, however, that dozens of workers from Prague's Jewish community worked to bring the country's Jewish artifacts and holy possessions of all kinds to what had become the newly re-established Central Jewish Museum of Prague. There, workers labored under appalling conditions to preserve what little remained of the lost Jewish communities, previously at the mercy of vandals and plunderers. This Jewish initiative was directly responsible for the subsequent conservation of the Czech Torah scrolls. All of the Museum's curators were eventually transported to Terezin and Auschwitz. Only two survived. The Czech Jewish community after the war was far too depleted to be able to care for the collection. In February 1948, after less than 3 years of post-war Czechoslovakian freedom, the Communists took over the government, and the country was back under dictatorship. Prague's Jewish Museum, under government control, was then staffed mainly by non-Jewish curators, operating with an inadequate budget.

In 1964, Eric Estorick, a London-based, Jewish American art dealer sent a Hebrew scholar to Prague to examine the collected trove of scrolls. After the study was completed, Estorick and one of his clients purchased 1,564 Czech Torah scrolls from the financially strapped Communist government, packed them up and delivered them back into Jewish hands, namely those of Rabbi Harold Reinhart who gave the scrolls a home at London's Westminster Synagogue. By 1970, through meticulous administrative and restoration work, the Torah scrolls were offered for long term loan to synagogues and libraries around the world.

—Source: Memorial Scrolls Trust, London. www.memorialscrollstrust.org

The saved Torah Scrolls from Dvůr Králové made their way to America. In 1975, New Jersey's Temple Sholom in West Essex, led by its dynamic Rabbi Norman Patz, acquired one of the Holocaust Torah scrolls held by London's Westminster Synagogue at its Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust Museum. As all Torahs vary in scroll size, this one was relatively small, perfect to be held by young congregants during their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Rabbi Patz was conducting research on Bohemian Jews in his role as president of the Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews, working along with his wife Naomi, a writer and historian. They took an immediate deep interest in the newly obtained *Dvůr Králové* Torah scroll and they determined to find out more about the town it came from. On *Yom HaShoah*, the Holocaust memorial day, in May 2005, Temple Sholom published the Patz monograph as a memorial to the lost Jewish community of *Dvůr Králové*.



Rabbi Norman Patz shows Rabbi Robert the Dvur Králové scroll at Temple Sholom, March 2018..

Along with other interested synagogues, libraries and Jewish congregations that accepted the saved scrolls, Temple Sholom of West Essex, New Jersey also received its *Dvůr Králové* Torah scroll. This was the first of the four *Dvůr Králové* scrolls I came to know about. I learned that the second of the town's scrolls was held in the library of Claremont Colleges in California, the third in a congregation somewhere in Australia, and the fourth at Temple Emanuel in Newton, Massachusetts, where it is used frequently.

That congregation's long time president, Alan Edelstein, said he was thrilled to talk to me about their scroll. Mr. Edelstein in Newton, like Rabbi Patz in New Jersey, was excited to speak with a relative of the lost *Dvůr Králové* Jews. I talked with them both several times. At Temple Emanuel, Edelstein led a committee which created a Wall of Remembrance, listing all known names of the vanished *Dvůr Králové* Temple congregation. A March 19, 2009 article published in the Boston Globe covering the opening of the Temple's Wall of Remembrance begins with this reference to my lost cousin Gitty born in 1937, the daughter and only child of Karl and Ilsa Breuer:

"In a Czech town known as Dvůr Králové there was once a girl named Dorotea Fuchsova. She might have been a neighbor of young Peter Fuchs or Gita Breuer. Little is known about any of their lives. What is certain, however, is the site of their deaths: Auschwitz-Birkenau, at age 4 for Dorotea and at age 7 for Peter. Gita also perished there at age 6..."

—archive.boston.com/news/local/articles/2009/03/19/wall_of_remembrance/?page=full

Temple Emanuel's Wall of Remembrance includes not only the names of Gita along with her parents, Karl and Ilsa Breuer, but also many names of the rest of the extended Breuer family from *Dvůr Králové* who perished in the Holocaust. A congregant recites each name annually. I appreciate the care that the congregation takes of its *Dvůr Králové* Torah scroll, and I am touched by their ongoing memorial embrace of my family. ❖



Robert Breuer visiting a surviving Dvur Králové scroll on display, with adjacent wall of remembrance at Temple Emanuel in Newton, MA (July, 2017). Candles are lit several times yearly for each of the lost ones, including this one for Ilsa Breuer, the wife of my Dad's cousin Karl.



ADAPTATIONS

My son Noah, a fine arts printmaker, developed an avid interest in Carl Breuer and Sons textile printing products. In July 2016, Noah, along with his fiancée, Julia Lillie, an art historian, especially wanted to visit the archives of the Czech textile museum at *Česká Skalice* to more carefully examine and document the *CB&S* collection housed there. I connected them with Zbynek Sturz, the Czech researcher and interpreter who helped me in 2014. At Noah's request, Zbynek came equipped to make high quality scans of selected fabric samples. Julia and Noah described their July 2016 visit to The Czech Republic:

We took the train from Vienna to *Pardubice*, a town in the north-central Czech Republic and met our translator and guide, Zbynek Sturz. Together, we drove to *Dvůr Králové nad Labem*, where the Carl Breuer & Sons family factory was once based, also visiting the regional archive in *Zámorsk*, and the Czech Textile Museum at *Česká Skalice*.

At the *Zámorsk* archive we examined business-related documents from the Breuer company, including ledger books that recorded product orders from towns and cities throughout Central Europe. If one wanted to study the financial structure of the *CB&S* business, the prices of their various products, even the taxes they paid - the overall financial picture - this archive's documents would be the source. However, our interests at the time lay elsewhere, as we cared most about seeing the textile designs themselves. The Czech Textile Museum in *Česká Skalice* was our main focus.

On viewing the museum's permanent collection of textiles and printing equipment, including displays covering the full twentieth century, we saw the vitrine dedicated to the Breuer family business. Then we visited a large room with big library tables and were presented with six boxes of material, each of them clearly marked "Breuer." Opening the boxes, we looked over contents one by one, but it was soon clear that we needed to work faster and get an assessment of the whole cache, so we opened all of them to get a complete sense of things. Included were several books with swatches labeled with the purposes of the end product. The well preserved objects that we uncovered far surpassed our expectations. Zbynek helped us decipher some of the text on attached notes. We were taken by the quantity and diversity of Breuer materials stored there!

Noah was photographing and scanning as much as he could, and was able to get high resolution images of dozens of the textile samples, swatches, paper sheets with printed designs, promotional material, and the bound books with hand-drawn designs and plans. Some of the samples were large pieces of printed fabric several feet long, folded up; others were small clippings. We were surprised by the bright acidic colors of some of them, feeling modern in design including colors such as bright pink. There was no one particular style, and we were impressed with the eclectic nature of the designs including the period pieces, dating back to 1910, along with somewhat more contemporary designs. Touching them connected us to the family's work. It became immediately clear that these materials would provide endless inspiration for Noah's artwork and he began to picture the ways he might adapt these designs into his own work, expanding some of the motifs using his own working methods. Within weeks he began applying elements of the designs during an artist's residency at the University of Oregon. His Carl Breuer & Sons project was launched.



The museum of the textile industry in the Czech Republic at *Ceská Skalice* covers the history of textiles of all kinds throughout the Czech lands. The speciality of the museum is the attention that it gives to the design of printed cotton fabrics. The Breuer factory (CB&S) archive is held there. The museum is a branch of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

The scans of archival *CB&S* samples became the working reference points for adaptive artwork that Noah began creating. Several solo art exhibits of this extensive work have taken place around the country, featuring Noah's interpretations. One gallery exhibit in San Luis Obispo, entitled *Lucerna*, carried this introduction:

In *Lucerna*, Noah Breuer presents recent prints and textiles from his ongoing project exploring the visual legacy of Carl Breuer and Sons (*CB&S*), his Jewish family's former textile printing business in Bohemia. In 1942, the *CB&S* company was lost as a result of a forced sale to Nazi Party members, a few members of the Breuer family fled Europe, and those who remained were killed.

After accessing a cache of *CB&S* material housed at the Czech Textile Museum in *Česká Skalice* in 2016, Noah used the swatch books and printed textiles he found there as a nucleus of primary source material and embarked on a reclamation project. The prints and textiles in this show evince his formal interest in manipulating decorative motifs, his dedication to the craft of printmaking, and his long-standing inquiry into the rhetorics of communication through print media.

In the works on view, Noah layers different media, patterns and colors to reveal and conceal visual information, referring to his process of discovery with the source material. He explores *CB&S* swatches and samples of quotidian products from the 1910-30s through a range of tools and techniques, including UV-reactive fabric dyes, large CNC-carved woodblocks, screen-printing, sewing, and more. Sometimes hewing closely to the original designs, sometimes drifting dreamily from them, the works invite contemplation of the shifting meanings of objects over time.

The show's title, *Lucerna*, is the Czech word for "Lantern" and it also refers to a branded line of table linens that the *CB&S* factory produced between 1910 and 1935. Engaging with the small handful of objects that survive from a business that was operated for over fifty years by multiple generations of family members, Noah confronts his limited access to his family's history. The work of research can be likened to holding a lantern over a forgotten relic in a dark attic: a light with short range shows some details clearly, but it fades at the edges and can only allude to a complete form.

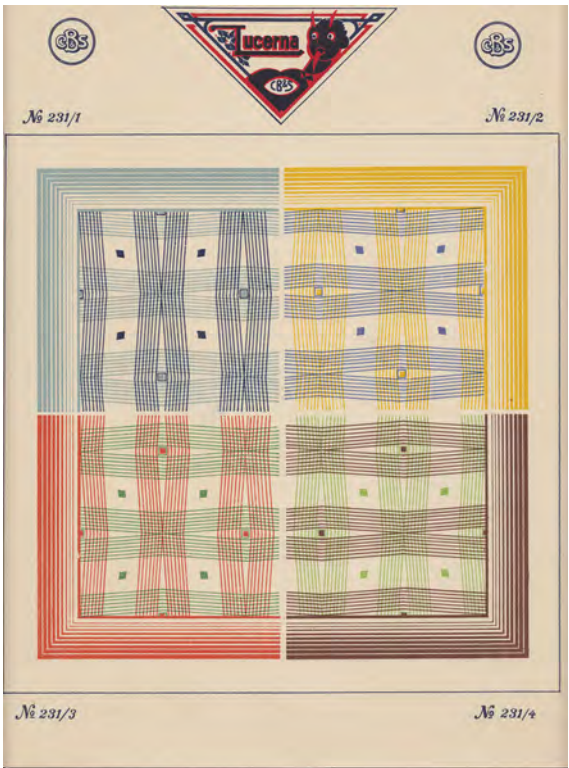


Noah examining archival CB&S textile samples at Czech Textile Museum, July 2016



Julia looks through CB&S textile sample books, at the Czech Textile Museum in *Česká Skalice*, July 2016





Above: Archival CB&S Lucerna fabric sample and colored sales card from the Czech Textile Museum archive in *Česká Skalice*, July 2016
Right: Noah's interpretative print titled *Lucerna Pool Summer*, screenprint on paper, 22 x 22 inches



Above: Gallery visitors at the *Lucerna* gallery exhibit in San Luis Obispo, February 2018





Right: *Tatra Tassels* windows exhibit, Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, 2018

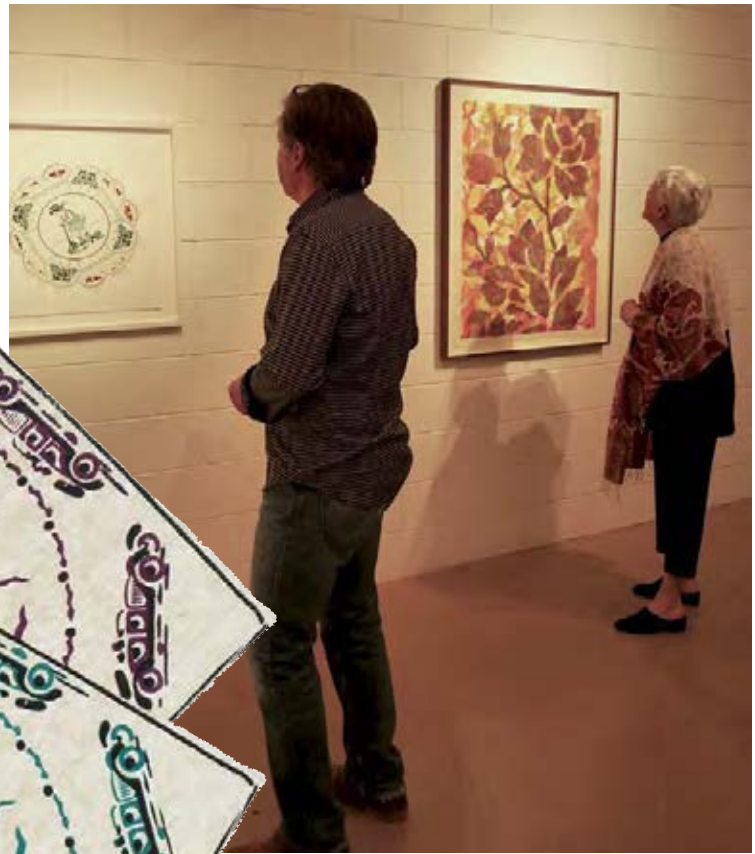
Opposite top:

Soccer Guys Summer, screenprint on paper, 22 x 22 inches
Pilot Hankie, screenprint on paper, 22 x 22 inches

Opposite bottom:

Scooter Girl, screenprint on paper, 22 x 22 inches

Below: *Sheriff Star Car*, screenprint on paper, 22 x 22 inches



Above: *Lucerna* exhibit visitors, February 2018



Noah's artwork enriches the history told in these pages. In reimagining *CB&S* fabric designs, he has reconnected with a lost family enterprise. His work is a gratifying complement to this project, helping illuminate the story. With his artwork, Noah also shares in his wife Julia's academic focus on Art and material culture. Their ceremonial wedding canopy or chuppah further linked them to our Central European family heritage. ♦

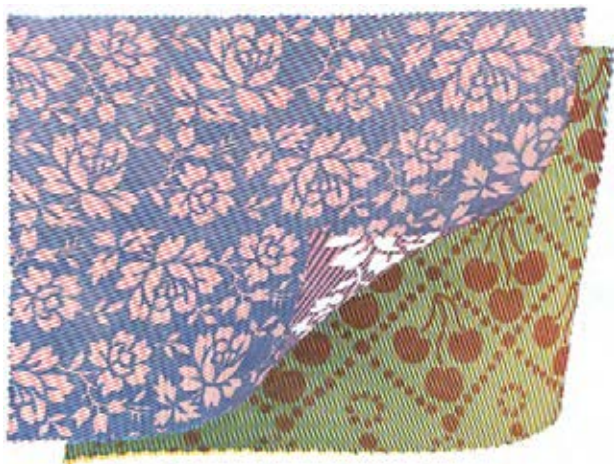


Top: *Tatra Tassels*, woodcut, screenprint and UV reactive dye on linen, 48 x 105 inches

Middle Left: *Chuppah*, woodcut and UV reactive dye on linen, 84 x 84 inches

Middle Right: *Chuppah made for Noah and Julia's wedding*, Little Compton, Rhode Island, July 29, 2017

Below: *Sample Swatches*, screenprint on paper, 12 x 15 inches



ADAPTATIONS



CB&S Swatch Book

Printed by Noah Breuer at University of Oregon, and published by *San Francisco Center for the Book* June 2018. The newly executed designs on each page were adapted from the CB&S patterns, which were originally printed for use on a wide variety of household textile products.



Bohemian Showroom installation at Space Gallery, Portland Maine, June 2018

ADAPTATIONS



Bohemian Showroom, alludes to the retail-style display that Noah created in the SPACE Gallery window. In the works on view, Noah sampled from CB&S swatches and designs from the 1910's-30's and resurrected them using cyanotype and other UV-reactive fabric dye processes. In creating a window display for this work, Noah imagines a modern branch of his family's company in Maine.

Postscript



LEGACY

What are we to make of this narrative? In describing how the turmoil of twentieth century historical events directly affected our family, I have tried to reveal who they actually were—capable, lively and determined people, well educated and creative people, who led productive lives. For generations the textile businesses they founded thrived, enabling them to enjoy prosperous lives enriched by deep family and community ties. Still, this remains an all too melancholy story. It's no wonder that my father Hans and his generation so rarely shared their painful memories.

Avoidance of these memories and associations is entirely reasonable, and I faced my own moments of sadness, dismay and genuine misgivings while piecing together key parts of this chronicle. Along the way, I became increasingly troubled by having to grapple with the inescapable theme of victimhood involving my own family, who, through no fault of their own, became victims of the most extreme forms of anti-Semitism. Writing about my relatives' deprivation, captivity and murder was certainly the most unpleasant part of this project which is why I shared all I could about their close family bonds, successful business achievements and personal lives.

In portraying this lively and productive family, I focused most on the two members I knew best, my own parents. Among the fortunate ones, Hans and Olly Breuer managed to restart their lives as energetic, hard working young adults in California, embracing life with gusto, along with a small family and many good friends, some of whom shared a similar past. Their legacy is the love of life and the opportunities we and our children have to pursue our dreams and aspirations which I hope future generations will also experience.

Unfortunately as I write this in the summer of 2018, ugly forces such as increased nationalism and hostility toward “the other” here and abroad are conspiring to limit opportunity, freedom and justice. So while I want to pass along my parents' optimism, we should remember that the people who committed such evil acts against our family and millions of others throughout Europe were among the most

sophisticated and enlightened societies in the world. Bearing our family history in mind, I have always detested the abuse of power. I believe that forgetting our history can indeed lead to reliving it. We must remain vigilant to maintain the values that safeguard human dignity and beware of the vilification of “others.” Ethnic slander is used by our current president to incite the electorate, along with his attacks on a free press and the justice system. It is all too familiar. No nation, including our own, is immune to the forces that have cast dark shadows over history.

Reflecting on our earlier European family, we may appreciate the ambitious, clever and complex people they surely were. The tragedy of harrowing circumstances was not their fault, nor should it turn into our burden. By learning about our forebears, we, who are enhanced by their legacy, honor a pledge to always remember them. And, while the darkness of the past is amply seen in these pages, our gaze ought to be directed toward the light of our future lives.

-RFB

Chronology



FAMILY AND HISTORIC EVENTS

1780 - 1899

- 1780..... *Herman Schnabel, my paternal great, great, great grandfather, is born.*
- 1785..... *Rosalia Herrmann, my paternal great, great, great grandmother, is born.*
- 1789..... The Enlightenment and French Revolution usher in a century of greater legal equality for Europe's Jews.
- 1807..... *Leib Haar, my maternal great, great grandfather, is born in Sedziszow, Poland.
Later marries Rifke Wohlfeld.*
- 1814..... *Franz Schnabel, my paternal great, great grandfather, is born to Herman and Rosalia.*
- 1817..... *Rosina Schick, my great, great grandmother on my father's side, is born.*
- 1835..... Flat spinning machines revolutionize Bohemia-based textile production.
- 1840..... *Carl Breuer, my great grandfather on my father's side, is born in northern Bohemia.*
- 1848..... *Pauline Schnabel, my paternal great grandmother, is born to Franz and Rosina in Bohemia.
Later marries Carl Breuer.*
- 1848..... Political revolutions throughout Europe give impetus to nationalist political and cultural movements within the multi-cultural Austrian Empire, especially so in Bohemia with the rise of a Czech Revival movement.
- 1848..... *Aaron Haar, my maternal great grandfather born in Rzeszow, Poland. Later marries Sara Birnfeld.*
- 1866..... *Carl Breuer marries Pauline Schnabel and enters the textile business.*
- 1867..... Austro-Hungarian Empire is proclaimed, but the hopes of Czechs and other nationalities within the empire for equal footing with German and Hungarian ethnicities are stifled.
- 1871..... *Felix Breuer, my paternal grandfather, is born on February 4 to Carl and Pauline in Liberec in northern Bohemia.*
- 1872..... *Ernst Breuer, my paternal grand uncle, is born to Carl and Pauline in northern Bohemia.*
- 1873..... Vienna's position as one of Europe's great cities solidified with hosting of Vienna World Exposition.
- 1878..... *Heinrich Haar, my maternal grandfather, is born July 29 in Rzeszow, Poland.*
- 1881..... *Helen (Chaje) Raab, my maternal grandmother, born April 12, in Bratkowice, Poland.
Later marries Heinrich Haar in Vienna.*
- 1880-1906..... Waves of Russian pogroms in Russia kill thousands, uprooting hundreds of thousands of Jews. During the same period, two million Jews emigrate to the United States from the Russian Empire.
- 1882..... *Gottlieb Schnabel, a brother of Pauline, establishes textile mills in and around Trutnov, Bohemia.*
- 1890s By this time, most western European governments give full citizenship and protection of the laws to Jews. However many anti-Semitic incidents occur including the Dreyfuss Affair in France and the popular election of the loudly anti-Semitic Karl Lueger as mayor of Vienna. This testifies to the limits of legal equality for Jews. Vienna nonetheless experiences a golden age of Jewish cultural, artistic, industrial/ economic and scientific achievement.
- 1892..... *Carl Breuer & Sons (CB&S) enters the textile business in Vienna.*
- 1899..... *CB&S begins printing textiles at a leased factory near Trutnov, Bohemia.*

1900-1909

- 1900..... *Franz Schnabel, Felix's first cousin, is born to Adele and Gottlieb Schnabel in Vienna.*
- 1902..... *CB&S establishes a wholly-owned factory in Bilá Třemesná, Bohemia.*
- 1902..... *Henry Haar and Helene Raab, my maternal grandparents, marry in Tarnow, Poland.*
- 1904..... *Felix Breuer and Olga Kohn, my paternal grandparents, marry in Vienna.*
- 1907..... *CB&S textile mill operations begin in enlarged factory at Königinhof/Dvůr Králové in Czech Bohemia.*
- 1907..... *Carl Breuer dies in Königinhof, leaving CB&S to sons Felix and Ernst Breuer.*
- 1907..... *Hans Breuer, my father, is born on May 19 to Olga and Felix Breuer in Vienna.*
- 1908..... *Olga (Olly) Haar, my mother, is born on March 1 to Helen and Henry Haar in Vienna.*
- 1908..... *Karl Breuer, Hans' closest cousin, is born to Grete and Ernst Breuer in Königinhof/Dvůr Králové.*

1910-1919

- 1914 The Great War (to become known as the First World War) breaks out in Europe.
- 1918 First World War ends with German and Austrian defeat. Austro-Hungarian Empire is dissolved and new individual nation-states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are created.
- 1919 *Felix Breuer begins the process of selling his half of CB&S textile factory business to brother Ernst.*

1920-1929

- 1925 *Felix Breuer's first wife, Hans' mother Olga, dies, and is buried in Vienna's Central Cemetery.*
- 1926 *Felix Breuer marries second wife, Marie Soyka, Olga's cousin, in Vienna.*
- 1926-1929 *Hans Breuer apprentices in all parts of the family textile business in northern Bohemia.*
- 1928-1938 *Felix Breuer exclusively represents Ganahl Textiles in Vienna.*
- 1929 Great Depression hits the U.S. and then Europe. 25% unemployed in Germany causing great unrest.
- 1929 *Hans Breuer sent by his cousin Franz Schnabel to work at a family company in New York City, but the market crash hits only two months after Hans' arrival in U.S. He returns to Vienna in 1930.*

1931

- January *Hans Breuer meets Olly Haar in Vienna.*
- Summer *Olly opens private language school in Vienna.*

1933

- 1933 Nazis come to power, establishing Third Reich. Adolf Hitler becomes German Chancellor.
- July 9 *Hans and Olly are married in Vienna.*

1934

- February Short Austrian Civil War erupts in working class districts of Vienna and elsewhere in Austria.
- Extensive anti-Jewish laws are promulgated and increasingly put into effect in Germany

1935

- September 15 The Nuremberg Race Laws are unanimously passed by the German Reichstag, forming the cornerstone of Nazi racial policy. They herald a new wave of far-reaching anti-Semitic legislation, bringing about immediate and concrete Jewish segregation rules.

1936

- May *Ernst Breuer dies of natural causes, leaving his only son, Karl, the third-generation to head CB&S.*
- July 14 *Stephan Ernst Breuer, my brother, is born to Olly and Hans Breuer in Vienna.*

1937

- November 5 Hitler reveals his long range expansion plans for taking neighboring lands to the Reich leadership, largely for purposes of plunder to support Germany's struggling economy with coal, foodstuffs and raw materials.

1938

- March 12 Austria annexed by Germany in the so-called "Anschluss" with widespread popular enthusiasm.
- April Anti-Jewish laws of Germany immediately implemented in Austria. All Austrian Jews must register assets and file complete property lists with the authorities. Jewish businesses and professions banned.
- August Decree issued requiring all Jews to adopt "Israel" or "Sarah" as middle name. This is only one of many dozens of laws meant to identify, isolate, intimidate and track the Jewish population.
- August 3 *Olly Breuer's private language school is shut down by a Nazi governmental edict.*
- September 6 *Hans Breuer, Olly, and Steve flee from Vienna to Prague, spending ten weeks with Dvůr Králové family.*
- September 27 Munich Agreement transfers German speaking areas of Czechoslovakia-the "Sudetenland"-to Nazi Germany against the will of the Czechoslovak government.
- October *Weekly letter exchange between Hans and Felix Breuer begins, continuing over the next three years.*
- November 9/10 Nazi-instigated "Kristalnacht" pogroms throughout Germany, Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia. In Vienna alone 40 synagogues are destroyed or damaged in one day's rampage.
- November 10 *Franz Schnabel, my father's cousin, helps the Hans Breuer family obtain US visas in Prague.*
- November 19 *Hans, Olly, and Steve depart Prague by train for Italy.*
- November 26 *Young Breuers and Ehrlichs sail from Genoa, Italy for U.S.A. on SS Conte di Savoia.*
- November 29 *Felix and Marie Breuer are forced out of their home by the Nazis and moved in with others.*

1939

- March 15..... Germany takes over the remainder of Czechoslovakia.
March 15..... Franz Schnabel finally uses his U.S. visa to flee Czechoslovakia.
August 23 Stalin-Hitler Pact stuns Europe. This removes the last obstacle to the beginning of a new war.
September 1 Germany's invasion of Poland starts World War II. Germany and Soviet Union divide up Poland.
September..... CB&S factory taken over by Nazi-appointed trustee, leading to forced sale of company.
..... Hans, Olly Breuer and Steve settle in Los Angeles, finding housing and employment.
..... Fritz and Gisl Ehrlich leave upstate New York, joining Breuers in Los Angeles, moving together into a duplex on Oakhurst in Beverly Hills.

1940

- April-May Norway, Denmark, France, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg fall to Germany after only two months of fighting, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia and Bulgaria are convinced to join the war on Germany's side. Greece and Yugoslavia are occupied by Germany and its ally Italy.
August..... Henry and Helen Haar flee Vienna, taking the trans-Siberian route to Vladivostok and then to Japan.
September..... My Haar grandparents continue their long journey, departing from Yokohama by ship for Seattle, and finally travel by train to Los Angeles, arriving September 23.

1941

- June 22 Germany invades the Soviet Union, taking it completely by surprise.
October 23..... Himmler orders the blocking of further Jewish emigration from Nazi-controlled parts of Europe.
November 24 Terezín ghetto concentration camp is established by Nazis for captivity of Czech Jews.
December 7..... Japan attacks the U.S. at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
..... Breuer letter exchanges are ended due to the state of war between Germany and the United States.
December 7..... Hans Breuer sends his last letter to his parents. His final two letters are later returned undelivered.
December 8..... U.S. declares war on Japan.
December 11..... Germany and Italy declare war on U.S. and U.S. reciprocates.

1942

- Farthest extent of Nazi Germany's wartime expansion within Europe and North Africa.
January 20 At Wannsee Conference near Berlin Nazi officials plan the "final solution to the Jewish question."
February 12..... Eugen Würzburg becomes the first family member deported to Terezín concentration camp.
February Tide of war begins to turn as Germans lose an army of 250,000 men in the decisive battle of Stalingrad.
March First gas chamber at Auschwitz/Birkenau becomes operational. Industrial-scale killing operations begin.
March 3..... Eugen Würzburg sent east from Terezín to Izbica and killed there, first family member to die in the Holocaust.
July 10..... Deportation of Adolf and Ida Breuer Hacker from Vienna to Terezín.
August 20..... Deportation of Felix and Marie Breuer from Vienna to Terezín.

1943

- December 17..... Deportation of Czech Breuer family with remaining Würzburg, Gelber, and Kohn families to Terezín.*
Spring Four huge gas chamber/crematoria complexes become fully operational at Birkenau (Auschwitz II).
April 18..... Louis Gelber dies of typhus at Terezín.
May 7..... Ida Breuer Hacker dies of typhus at Terezín.
Sept 6..... Grete Breuer becomes the first of nine family members to be sent east to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Terezín.
December 15..... Transport departs Terezín for Auschwitz-Birkenau with Karl, Ilsa, and Gita Breuer; Marta, Eva, and Kurt Würzburg; and Käte, Jana, and Thomas Gelber.

1944

- Spring..... Murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau of the Czech Breuer, Würzburg, and Gelber families.*
March 31..... Death at Terezín of Ritscha Breuer Kohn.
May 15..... Adolf Hacker transported to Auschwitz and killed.
June 6..... D-Day landing in France launches decisive allied invasion of Europe.
October 7 Auschwitz-Birkenau "Sonderkommando" Jews revolt, kill guards, and blow up crematorium.
October 8..... Robert Felix Breuer is born to Olly and Hans in Los Angeles, California.
October 28..... Felix and Marie Breuer sent on final Transport 'Ev' from Terezín to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
October 30..... Arrival and murder of Felix and Marie at Birkenau.
November Three remaining Birkenau gas killing chambers closed and partially destroyed by Nazis.

1945

- December..... Germany's last-ditch offensive of the war is launched in Luxembourg and Belgium—the “Battle of the Bulge.”
- January 17..... Final roll call of prisoners at Auschwitz, and camp abandoned by Germans in face of advancing Soviet army.
- January 26 Auschwitz-Birkenau camp liberated by Soviets. Other camps liberated from January through May.
- February 5..... *Carl Kohn is among 1,210 Jews released from Terezín to Switzerland, sole family survivor of the camps.*
- April 30..... With the inevitability of Germany's defeat, Hitler commits suicide in his Berlin bunker.
- May 8..... Allies accept unconditional German surrender: Victory in Europe Day.
- Summer With allied approval the new Czech government expels 3,500,000 ethnic Germans from the *Sudetenland*
- September *Franz Zalud returns to Dvůr Králové claiming ownership of the CB&S factory.*
..... For a brief time, my father officially changes his name from Hans Breuer to John H. Brewer. Worried that the new Brewer spelling would make it difficult for any family to locate him after the war, he changes it again to John H. Breuer. This is the name he uses throughout the rest of his life.

1946 AND BEYOND

- 1946..... *Hans, Olly, Steve, and Robert Breuer move to the house on Martel Avenue in Los Angeles.*
- 1946-48 *Hans Breuer retains legal representation exploring claims on CB&S business and property.*
- February 25..... As the “Cold War” between Soviets and the West deepens, the Communist Party takes over Czechoslovakia's government, abolishing private property and taking factories into state ownership.
- 1948-49 *Family claims denied as CB&S merges with other textile factories into a nationalized TIBEX corporation.*
- 1954..... *Carl Kohn dies in Locarno, Switzerland home several years after marrying second wife, Gertie Elsner.*
- 1955 WW II Allied powers agree to end their occupation of Austria and re-establish it as a sovereign nation state. It is forbidden by treaty from ever re-uniting with Germany.
- 1960..... *Steve Breuer marries his first wife, Gail Breitbart, in September in Los Angeles. Their children are Jared N. Breuer, born January 1966, and Rachel E. Breuer, born May 1968.*
- 1968..... "Prague Spring," a period of hope for democracy in Czechoslovakia, is crushed by Soviet Union.
- 1970..... *Frederica T. Buel and Robert F. Breuer are married on December 13 in Los Angeles.*
- 1975 Torah scrolls collected by Nazis during WWII from destroyed Czech Jewish communities (including Dvůr Králové) are bought and repaired by Westminster Synagogue in London. The scrolls are then distributed to synagogues and libraries worldwide.
- 1978..... *Charles Hacker, my father's cousin, dies in Paris, France*
- 1981 *Noah Buel Breuer is born on August 6 to Frederica and Robert Breuer in Oakland, California.*
- 1982..... *At the urging of my wife, Fredi, my father, John H. Breuer, tapes a recording of his life's recollections.*
- 1985..... *Olly Breuer, my mother, dies in June in Los Angeles, later interred in Vienna's Central Cemetery.*
- 1988..... *Steve Breuer marries his second wife, Nadine Bendit, in September, and John H. Breuer marries his second wife, Julie Ray, in November.*
- 1989 “Velvet Revolution” ends 41-year communist rule in Czechoslovakia in November-December.
- 1989-90..... Fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany
- 1990..... *John H. Breuer dies on January 14 in Los Angeles, later interred in Vienna's Central Cemetery.*
- 1992..... Due to nationalist tensions, Czechoslovakia peacefully dissolves into Czech Republic and Slovakia.
- 1993..... *In June, Robert travels to see the concentration camps at Terezín and Auschwitz-Birkenau.*
- 2005 What remains of the TIBA textile company is declared insolvent and in 2017 is bought by La Linea, which continues textile printing operations at Dvůr Králové.
- 2006 *Noah, Fredi and Robert Breuer make first brief visit to see Dvůr Králové in July.*
- 2014..... *Robert Breuer does research in Bohemia in May, uncovering CB&S textile archive held at Česká Skalice.*
- 2016..... *Noah Breuer and his fiancée Julia Lillie examine Bohemia archives in mid-July.*
- 2017..... *Noah Breuer marries Julia Lillie on July 29, at Little Compton, Rhode Island.*
- 2018..... *Noah's artwork series, inspired by CB&S designs, are exhibited in several U.S. galleries.*



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Most things are forgotten over time. Even the war itself, the life-and-death struggle people went through is now like something from the distant past. We're so caught up in our everyday lives that events of the past are no longer in orbit around our minds. There are just too many things we have to think about, too many new things we have to learn. But still, no matter how much time passes, no matter what takes place in the interim, there are some things we can never assign to oblivion, memories we can never rub away. They remain with us forever, like a touchstone.

—haruki murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*

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