



Luise David: How We Survived. Chronicles of Our Family

We take particular pride in the realization of the following feature story. Mrs. Luise David is a dear friend of ours. We had the pleasure to read a few chapters from her book described below before its publication. In our opinion she has created an extraordinarily knowledgeable and well written piece of autobiographic literature which deserves to be read. For these reasons we are delighted to present the chapter about Mrs. Luise David's native town of Fuerth and a brief autobiography.

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The author, Mrs. Luise David

(photo: private)

A Brief Biography of Luise David, née Dreyfuss

I was born in 1915 to Dr. Albert Dreyfuss and Franziska (Fraenzi), nee Gruenbaum in Fuerth (Bavaria), nine months after my father had been on furlough from the Western Front in February. I attended good schools and quit before getting "Abitur" because I did not want to say "Heil Hitler" - and also knew, that, as a Jew, I could no longer attend German universities.

I prepared for working on a Kibbutz in what was then Palestine by going to Wolfratshausen Housekeeping School near Munich. My brother had left Germany in 1933 to go to Palestine via Basel, where he finished medical school to become a physician.

In 1935 I changed goals. I took a job as "Praktikantin" (a bit more 'hands on' than as apprentice) in the Jewish Orphanage for Girls in Hamburg, a requirement before entering the "Kindergarten Seminar" to become a teacher of tots. That year I met my future husband and got engaged. We married in September 1936.

Rising anti-Semitism had long ago begun to govern our lives in Nuremberg and Fuerth. While life in Hamburg was not as threatening, the 'Jew laws' had to gradually be observed there too. Fully aware that we would have to leave, but with no connections where to and how, we planned on having a child first. Our son arrived 6/30/1937, probably the last Jewish baby born in the famous Jewish Hospital in Hamburg. We planned to emigrate to America during his first year. I left with my baby boy in July 1938 on advise of a gentile "Beamter", a bureaucrat, who told me not to wait for September that year, as we had thought. It was the only way we could transfer money, the prerequisite for a "Self-Affidavit". It was a little known way to get out of what would soon have been a doomed existence. My husband left to join me in October 1938.

It was a struggle, a complete change of language, status, climate, habits, taking many years to become Americans. My husband had to learn the language and a very strenuous trade before he could get work in a post-depression New York City. I stayed home with our young child doing piece work,

making hand-sewn gloves. Thanks to excellent schooling I had no problem with the language. Once our boy was old enough to attend school, I could work in town and make a bit more money; between my husband's salary and mine we soon managed quite nicely, though frugally. We added a daughter to the family in 1944. My husband finally opened a shop to fix car bodies. It was very tough work. He died much too young in 1960.

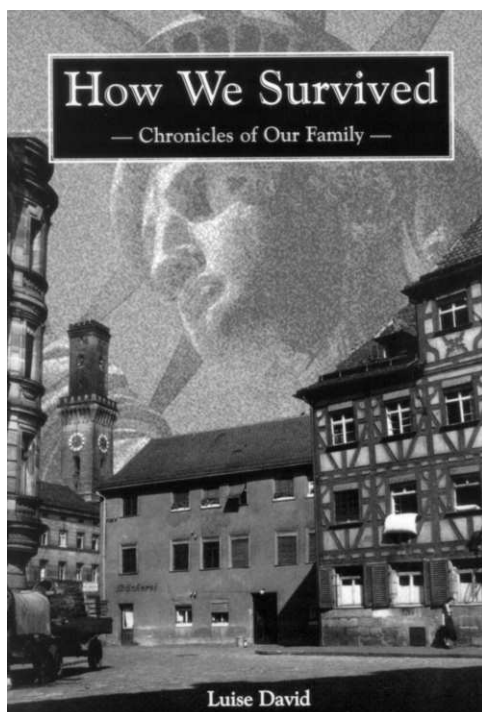
I graduated to office work from 1955 on. When I retired at seventy years, I fulfilled a lifelong wish to write about the histories of my and my husband's ancestors and tell the stories of our growing up, our emigration and settling in New York, chronicling the many families' lives. It took fourteen years since its inception, but I have just finished writing that book:

"How We Survived. Chronicles of Our Family"

and am at this time looking to publish it. Hopefully it will be soon.

Luise David, March 2001

In 2003 *"How We Survived. Chronicles of Our Family"* was published by the author herself. The book contains 593 + X pages and many illustrations.



FUERTH

We lived on the second floor, or first Étage, of a large apartment house in Schwabacherstrasse 65. Our apartment occupied the whole floor of the building at the corner of a small side street, named Lessingstrasse (after the famous writer of the enlightenment era). The ground floor of the building housed a few stores, with a bakery directly under our bedrooms. Entering the house one came through the hallway to the stairwell. This hallway ran underneath our music-room. Our parents' bedroom was next to the music-room. This bedroom had what was called an "Erker" (a bay window), which consisted of two windows with glass side panels that formed a kind of alcove with just enough space for a bench. Our two maids loved to kneel on it, lean out the open window, and watch the comings and goings of the townspeople. The vista was enhanced by an angled outside mirror, called "Spion" (spy); it meant we could "espy" anybody who rang the doorbell downstairs.

The street we lived on was a long thoroughfare leading to the village of Schwabach. A tram passed by, and electric trolley cars with overhead lines and long poles leading up to cables above clanked past our house every ten minutes. We were used to the trolley and traffic noise going day and night. Our street sloped gently down to an "Unterfuehrung", an underpass beneath a railroad bridge, where trains chugged across overhead. Important routes crossed in our town going from north to south and from east to west.



Fuerth's city hall with its picturesque tower

(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Coming from Berlin or Hamburg, even from as far away as Oslo, Norway, trains traveled on to Munich and further south to Italy and back. The West/East train was the Paris-Prague Express which passed through daily, stopped briefly in Fuerth, and roared on over the bridge coming and going. Fuerth, an important hub, was in those days a small town of approximately 70,000 inhabitants. It had begun as a settlement at the confluence of two rivers, the Rednitz and the Pegnitz; the two become one, the Regnitz, which continues flowing north past Erlangen to Bamberg, where it meets up with the Main River.

From our windows we peered into the dark chasm of the "Unterfuehrung" and beyond, where the street emerged into daylight. Lined with houses, Schwabacherstrasse went on to the inner city and beyond. Nazi parades came from town, marched into the sunlight out of the shadowy underpass, and goose-stepped past our home. We were 'privileged' to witness these spectacles firsthand and hear the jeering anti-Semitic marching slogans, such as: "Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt" (when Jewish blood will drip from knives). Soon we learned to draw the curtains and ignore the view but it was harder to shut out the hateful sounds.

Across from our house there was a "Bierstube" (beer hall), attracting patrons until late into the evening. Fights often broke out there. Most of the time the argument was settled quickly, everybody went home, and the noise stopped. But some nights the scene turned ugly: Someone would pull a knife, and a few minutes later the noisy bunch was at our stoop ringing the doctor's bell, clamoring to have wounds treated.

Mother taught us to first ask if the police had been called. At no time did we let drunks in the house. If a policeman was present, Father would go downstairs with satchel and flashlight to check out the situation. If the police had not been notified, Father called them. The people had to wait downstairs

until a uniformed man arrived. If more than first aid was needed, the policeman and the injured person were allowed upstairs while Father dressed the wounds in his office. But many a time the man had to be rushed to the hospital for surgery. Father would come along to give his report. He left once the patient was admitted.

In later times we were especially grateful that Mother was always cautious about buzzing people in. More than once was she able to prevent Father from being lured out at night under some pretext to be beaten up by Nazi hoodlums.

Our apartment had a long corridor and a short one, following the "L" shape of the corner building, the short side of the "L" contained the professional rooms for Father's medical practice and a small, spare chamber at the end that became my brother's bedroom once he turned thirteen. Until then Fritz and I shared a bedroom. Narrow, with barely enough space to turn around in, Fritz's room served him well as a retreat. Opposite Father's office, next to my brother's bedroom, was a small bathroom with a toilet and wash basin for Fritz and the patients.

Entering the apartment from the staircase one found oneself in front of the waiting room with Father's office to the right. A longer corridor led around the corner to the left. During office hours a heavy corded rope separated the professional from the living quarters. Our private quarters began on the other side of said rope with a large living/dining room that had three big windows. A large table with thick legs stood in the middle, covered by a heavy brocade cloth woven through with silver and gold threads and edged in gold braid. When setting the table, the maids would fold this cloth ceremoniously, and spread out a white tablecloth. At mealtime Father sat at the head of the table, carved the meat, and served most of the food. Mother sat at his side and helped him serve. She summoned the maid with a bell to bring the next course or clear the table.

A large credenza (sideboard) of dark wood in Biedermeier style housed dishes, silverware, and table linens. One of Grandmother Pina's tatted heavy lace runners covered part of its surface. A few good pieces of crystal were displayed in another, narrower credenza, together with large ornamental silver baskets and fancy and exotic knickknacks friends, relatives or grateful patients had brought as gifts. A tiled stove was built into the inner wall of the room. One grate opened into the living room, from which it was fed and stoked. The grate on the opposite side heated the waiting room. In fall and winter it was opened before the patients came and closed after they left.

Father's office hours were from twelve noon to one o'clock and from six to seven p.m. on weekdays. We had to whisper during those hours. Bending down, you could look through the flames into the waiting room. I can still hear the discussions at the dinner table about the price of "Anthrazit" (a kind of coal), how expensive it was to heat three rooms (the salon included) with this one stove. It was a lot cheaper, however, than having a stove in all three rooms.

At dusk on a wintry day, before the lights went on in the living room, I loved to sit in front of the stove watching sparks fly from the grate, listening to the hiss of fresh coals falling into the fire; then I could let my imagination run wild with the dancing flames. I recall this scene with an eerie feeling whenever seeing the opera "L'Enfant et Les Sortilèges" by Ravel, in which a naughty boy is lured through the flickering flames of a fireplace into another world. When his mother calls, he returns to reality from his dreamed adventure.

The dining room changed back into a living room after the table was cleared. Here we sat and talked, or read.

Mother did the bookkeeping monthly at the big table, which included checking outstanding bills due from private patients. But the bulk of her work was checking people's records for the "Krankenkasse", the social health insurance that covered every working person since Graf Otto von Bismarck had instituted it in the 1870ties. My brother and I often listened with half an ear to conversations about who owed Father money. Our ears pricked up, though, when we realized that some of the wealthiest patients were the most delinquent in paying. Sometimes we overheard curious facts as Father was the official doctor for our municipal opera as well as for the local whorehouse. When very young I did not understand why my brother often snickered as he eavesdropped. He understood the Latin words used in the patients' medical records, like 'abort' as diagnoses, which Mother read aloud.

Fritz gleefully enlightened me soon enough.

Many a good meal was served at that table and many a good story told. On winter Sundays we frequently had roast goose for midday dinner. After the soup, the cook brought in the goose on a big oval platter. The maid followed with a deep round dish of potato dumplings, a specialty of Bavaria and certainly one of cook's best creations. Mother served the dumplings, while cook and maid waited at her side. Father cut the bird in half with heavy poultry shears. Cook took the other half back to the pantry for Monday's meal - but not until Father had asked the customary question: "Did you turn the dumplings with your left hand?" Upon the reply "Of course!" Father would turn to Mother and proclaim triumphantly, "You see, that's the secret, that is why these are the best potato dumplings in all of Bavaria!" Geese were a lot larger in our part of Germany than the few I saw in New York markets in mid-winter during our early years in New York. Available from October through March, roast goose was common fare during my childhood. Pot roast or veal was served on holidays, but never geese or fowl.

Tasting other people's food later, I realized Mother was not such a great cook after all. But it was not her fault; necessary ingredients were not always available for what she wanted to serve. Father did not encourage new recipes to be tried; he was too conservative for that. Mother planned meals and put finishing touches on them after cook had done the preparatory work. I helped with peeling potatoes, cleaning vegetables, and later washing or drying dishes. Like all German, especially Bavarian cooking in those days, our fare contained too many starchy dishes and not enough salads and vegetables. Heavy, sweet desserts topped it off. If mealtime was not a great culinary experience, it was a social event instead, enjoyed by all.

Our after meal drink was tea, less expensive than coffee although not cheap; both had to be imported. Coffee used in Germany was mixed with chicory then and served with cake on Sunday afternoon while having a "Kaffeeklatsch". Some bakeshops in town specialized in tortes and other fancy baked goods, like "petit-fours" or rich pastry with lots of cream; such a shop was called a "Konditorei". Other bakeries, like the one on the ground floor of our house, produced bread, rolls, and simple cakes. Mother's specialties were wonderful yeast cakes, large fresh-fruit squares, and "Gugelhupf" a tall coffee-cake-ring. If we were thirsty during the meal we could ask for water. Then Father would inevitably quote one of his favorite poems:

*"Sauft Wasser wie das liebe Vieh
Und meint, es ist Krambambouli."*

This poem dates back to 1815 in Germany, where a book of verse was published with famous sayings; this one is from C.F. Wedekind (1709-1777):

*"Drink water like the cattle dear
and think it is Krambambouli."*

"Krambambouli" stems from "Studentensprache," students' lingo, implying stronger spirits. Later, when I was married, it was like "déjà-vu" when I heard my husband cite the same funny verse, which reminded me of my childhood.

Father considered himself quite knowledgeable about booze but he was really quite naive. At times he had a glass of beer with friends to be sociable. At rare festive moments he drank a glass of wine. He needed to show he had grown up in wine country. He would raise the goblet to the light, examine it carefully, then sip like a restaurant patron sampling wine the sommelier had poured. Then he would exclaim, "Ah, blumig und mild!" It sounded important and knowledgeable to us when we were children, but actually means very little, merely that the wine has a pleasant bouquet and is mild. We caught on much later that he was pulling everybody's leg, making fun of the time he had been initiated by fellow students into the mystique of drinking alcohol.

Our music room, next to the living room, was referred to ceremoniously as "Der Salon". My parents' bedroom was to the right of the salon. Next was my room. At the end of the hallway was a pantry. Another chamber next to it served as spare room or the maid's room. It contained only one bed, but amenities for both servants. Cook slept on the sofa in the patients' waiting room. One year we thought that cook had a rash. But we soon learned that a patient had brought in bed bugs. The room

was fumigated. Cook was miraculously cured.

Opposite my room was the large kitchen from which one walked out to a balcony facing the backyard and the "Hinterhaeuser" (old mews-like buildings attached to front buildings). Next to the kitchen was the tiled bathroom with cold running water in the sink, a large bathtub, and a toilet with an overhead water tank.

We were one of the first families who bought a gas appliance to heat the water in the bathroom. While already a modern convenience, gas was not yet commonly used. No one in our house knew of the dangerous fumes gas stoves give off if not properly lit, or the possibility of combustion. Once, when I was quite young, I was waiting for Alice to give me a bath. To heat the room, the tub had to be filled with hot water. Mother must have opened the gas valve too early; when she struck the match, there was an explosion. She fell down. I screamed in terror for help. I had seen the flames shoot out. Thank goodness, it turned out to be more of a scare than anything else. The maids came running, and Mother opened her eyes soon after and came back to life. She had only bruised herself, not broken any bones. All was well again. Later I noticed that her eyebrows and hairline were singed off, and there was a burned smell too. After a few months hair and eyebrows grew back. From then on Mother was more careful.



The building of the adult education center in Schwabacherstrasse, named after its Jewish founder and benefactor "Berolzheimianum"

(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Father was a thrifty man. Coal and gas were not squandered in our household. The gas stove was lit once a week to heat the bathroom and provide warm water for everyone's weekly bath. During the remainder of the week we sponge-bathed with cold water. I loathed to strip for this ordeal: to wash with icy water in a freezing cold room. There was no way of faking, I found out, as Mother inspected us. She easily noted if we had not washed below the neckline, which meant we had kept our nightshirts on. In a turnabout I became quite adept checking my schoolmates out without them noticing. I was amazed to see that not everybody was as devoted to cleanliness as my family. My nose told me so too.

Speaking of cleanliness, I recall the time Fritz was sent to a "Kinderheim" (a summer place like a sleep-away camp). He returned sporting a dark gray ring around his neck. Mother made him soak in a tub. After soaping and scrubbing he turned pink. He was never again sent away during summer.

A dark, Mediterranean type, I bloomed and tanned in the summer sun and suffered dreadfully from winter's cold. My toes remained frostbitten throughout the winter, and my circulation was always poor. Father made me wear tall boots to strengthen weak ankles, though tight laces impeded the circulation even more. Mother was instructed to give me hot and cold foot baths on winter evenings, called "Wechselbad" ("Wechsel" means change). My feet were dipped alternately into two "Schuesseln" (bowls), one with cold and one with hot water. It never really helped. I stopped suffering only when I moved to Hamburg in 1935 and had daily hot baths and the comfort of central heating. Some

wealthy people in Fuerth had already installed modern conveniences such as centrally controlled heating. But Father refused to modernize the household, as he staunchly believed in Spartan virtues.

Father was not stingy, just cautious. Having lived through hard times, he had seen his parents work diligently in their store to achieve a better standard of living. They had given him a good education, which must have cost dearly in proportion to their income. After establishing a doctor's practice in Fuerth in 1906, Father began to save, putting money aside for his old age, following his parents' example. As was the custom, he looked for a wife with a good dowry when he was ready to get married. Franziska had brought him a small fortune in 1908. In 1920, when Alice became Albert's second wife, she came with the same substantial dowry: 100,000 Reichsmark.

But a terrible inflation hit Germany in the twenties. Father and Alice lost everything. They were not the only ones; all of Germany went through this frightful experience. Father was afraid of losing his savings from then on. This fear increased as he got older. While growing up, I observed a similar attitude in many other German Jews. Though much younger than my father, my husband was affected the same way. He had lived through that dreaded inflation during adolescence, when he had just earned his first pocket money. Proud to have savings in a bank, he watched them dwindle, their value disappearing before his eyes. I only understood the influence of these events later, when trying to rationalize Father's reasons for what seemed to us exaggerated thrift. I overheard many an argument about Mother's extravagance. I watched Mother quietly accept Father's refusals to give her money for extras. Father would deliver sermons extolling thrift, giving reasons why he deemed certain purchases unnecessary luxuries. At the end of such lectures, Mother would appear to acquiesce. Father was a typical German head of the house, who dictatorially stated his wishes, allowing no input from anyone where money was concerned. He didn't think women capable of managing important matters.

Appreciating Mother's opinions in many other situations, Father asked for and took her advice. Discussing his patients' psychological problems with her, he valued her insight into what made people tick. A family doctor was advisor, marriage counselor, and psychologist, if not psychiatrist, in those days. Because of his ability to advise and treat the whole family of a patient, Dr. Dreyfuss was the beloved family physician of about half the town. Few people were aware how much Mother was part of his deserving that reputation.

Our phone number was easy to remember: #14/14. Often emergency calls were received during the night from families who thought their patient was too ill to wait until morning. Shrewdly, Mother devised a plan to screen calls. She always answered the phone at night, claiming the doctor was not at home but could be reached. One night a man called. Mother asked for particulars. The man said, "My wife is in pain and has a fever" Mother said, "Just a minute." Covering the mouth piece, she asked Father what to do next. Father instructed her to ask how high the fever and where the pain was. The man replied. Repeating "Just a minute," Mother reported back to Father. He again gave instructions. She told the worried listener, "Put on a cold compress, give your wife aspirin with lots of hot tea every couple of hours, and call the doctor in the morning." "Frau Doctor," replied the man, "does that man in your bed know what he is talking about? Is he a doctor too?"

Due to Father's fine reputation he became the family doctor for all the Stettauers as well as distant relatives, even if some of them were not on speaking terms with one another. Mother was the supreme diplomat, keeping peace with everyone; she listened to all grievances. Never taking sides, she remained the arbiter at all times. She did not succeed every time in peace-making but often took the edge off some squabbles that might have turned into deeper rifts. The elderly aunts, in fact, were quick to think they had been slighted and were easily offended. Once, when ordering an oversized sofa made to specification for the music room, Mother supposedly asked the interior decorator, "Can you make the sofa large enough so that five aunts can sit there with enough room between them, if they aren't speaking to each other?"

During a severe flu epidemic Father decided to rent a bicycle for sick calls. Imagine a well dressed man wearing a gray jacket, fashionable knickers, vest and bow-tie, riding a bicycle!

Father's patients lived in every part of town, on both sides of the rivers, from the older town to the

newest developed outer suburbs, some even in Nuremberg. He rode his cycle everywhere until the day one wheel got stuck in the tram tracks and he took a hard fall. Badly bruised, but no bones broken, he was laid up for a few days. He had to call on a colleague to help out and take care of his patients. It was the end of the bicycle. A few other doctors in town already owned motor cars, but Father deemed that ostentatious.

There were no height restrictions on buildings in those days; elevators, called lifts, had only recently been invented. Father's patients lived in all kinds of homes, ranging from two- to five-story apartment houses, or in Villas. I knew of nobody who lived in a house with elevators in Fuerth. Father climbed stairs all day long. His hobby? Walking, hiking, and mountain-climbing! He belonged to a walking club of four or five friends who met every Saturday afternoon in spring, summer, and fall. Their usual destination was an outdoor garden of a small suburban restaurant, where they sat and talked over cups of coffee, then walked back. It was a "gemuetlich" lifestyle: hard work first, followed by leisure in the company of friends.

Father was extremely vain. His suits were always in the latest fashion with matching vests. A gold chain from one vest pocket to the other held a watch and fob. The watch, fat and round, was pulled from its pocket to check the time or a patient's pulse. Father later wore a "lavallière", a special piece of jewelry given to him by Mother; it hung from the vest pocket on the end of the chain and consisted of a piece of black onyx with his initial, 'A', mounted in a sparkling diamond emblem. His shirts sported starched collars, his doctor's coats were spanking white. Dr. Dreyfuss traditionally wore bow ties, knotted by his wife. Everyone in town knew when Mother was away or ill whenever he was seen in a "four-in-one," the only way he knew to knot a tie. For Saturday afternoon walks he changed to sports jacket with knickerbockers. The tailor came to our home to measure him for his suits, then for fittings. Father owned formal wear for festive evenings.

Father once played a prank on Mother. Mother was very vain. Keeping her beautiful hands soft by applying layers of Vaseline every night, she would slip on a pair of old cotton gloves before going to sleep. One morning Mother found Father, having returned from a night call, sound asleep next to her wearing his silk top hat and white silk opera scarf. Later they laughed all day about it. How he loved to retell that story!

On rare occasions Father would reminisce and tell anecdotes from his youth or some of his war time experiences; he had served during World War 1 as doctor as well as dentist, like all drafted or enlisted physicians. One story never failed to amaze me. Father was near Verdun at the time. French soldiers threw bottles with messages to the German side, offering to stop shooting during the Jewish High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), and asking the Germans to acknowledge they would do the same. Sure enough, bottles were thrown back with messages inserted, promising to abide by the same rules. It seemed even stranger to me that both sides kept their promise!

Father loved most of all to tell about his beloved horse "Liesl". This must have been his favorite among names - he called Alice later by that name too. Father held officer rank as physician (probably equal to captain) and that entitled him to be on horseback accompanying the horse-drawn hospital wagon in the rear of the marching "bataillon." "Lazarett" was the German name for the makeshift military Hospital. He treated the sick, pulled teeth (dentists were in the regular army), bandaged wounds. The more serious cases were picked up from his "Lazarett" and brought to the nearest hospital behind the front.

One of the old pictures in my album depicts Father sitting in full uniform on his horse. One day Father had to turn his beloved Liesl over to a general, whose horse had been shot dead under him in battle. In exchange Father got another general's horse. This splendid animal would respond to martial music when the troops marched by running to the front of the "batallion" to lead it - a most uncomfortable situation for Father. Even the hardest pull on the reigns could not stop the galloping steed. It was off and running the minute it heard marching music! Finally Father begged to get his Liesl back and his wish was granted: Liesl was returned, the gentle mare which followed his command and was happy to stay in back.

One day, after a long march, the soldiers were left with no water in their canteens. Terribly thirsty,

they were far away from fresh water. They pulled up turnips from a field, scraped them off and ate greedily to quench their thirst. Everybody in the regiment came down with violent diarrhea and cramps, later diagnosed as dysentery. Men with severe cases, like Father, were sent back behind the frontlines. As the war went on, Father suffered relapses and had to be hospitalized a few more times. After the war Father had to maintain a special diet, partly due to this episode of dysentery. But he had also become slightly diabetic. Whenever Mother, Fritz, and I ate sweet desserts, Father could only have stewed fruit. Watching Father steal little tidbits of forbidden dessert from Mother's plate while she was busy talking, we made a joke of catching him at it. He often managed to get more of her portion than she did. Fully aware it was bad for him, he gleefully kept on stealing. A phrase was coined: "Food from other people's plates tastes better!"

I drove people crazy by being the slowest, most methodical diner at the table. Father insisted, however, that it was the proper way. He praised the example I set. Everybody would watch warily but fascinated when I picked chicken bones apart, severing them surgically at the joints with knife and fork. I can still dissect bones that way but have since learned to eat much faster and pick up chicken bones with my fingers. Later my children cracked jokes about it. But there was good reason to change from eating slowly to quickly, as told later-on.-

After dinner we drifted into the music-room, our salon, a magical place. Standing somewhat off-center, the grand piano was the star attraction, dominating the room in gleaming black, the name "Bluethner" inscribed in gold letters on its front. Two windows, framed prettily by deep blue drapes, served as backdrop to a cozy nook formed by two dark blue, velvet-covered chairs and a small oriental table with a hammered brass tray top. The wallpaper was dark blue too with small gold emblems. A multi-colored Persian rug covered the floor. Gilded sconces above the blue velvet sofa lit the room; a "Luester" (chandelier) hung from the ceiling. Here we relaxed during long cold winter evenings. Listening to Fritz playing the piano, at times accompanying Mother, who would sing or play the violin, we succumbed to the spell of the room. Closed drapes and soft lights contributed to a delicious feeling of intimacy.

For a few years I took piano lessons from the same teacher as Fritz, Fraeulein Brochier, a hunchback. She was probably a good pianist, but truly a dreadful pedagogue, always cross with me for not being as gifted as my brother. She would rap me across the knuckles whenever I struck a wrong note; it hurt, but I never dared tell my parents. I hated her. Listening to my own piano playing, compared to Fritz', was hateful too. I had begun tennis lessons at the same time. When I developed painful tendonitis in my right arm, Father gave me a choice of either dropping tennis or piano lessons. I gladly gave up the piano and settled comfortably into the role of a good listener. We had just gotten our first radio anyhow, where lots of fine music programs were broadcast. Beautiful music gave us strength and soon a respite from having to listen to daily continuous onslaughts of hateful propaganda against Jews. -

The kitchen held a special fascination for me from early on. I ate breakfast and lunch in it with our "Fraeulein" (governess) when very small. Later, as a schoolgirl, I spent time watching cook prepare meals whenever I came home before Mother.

It was here that I heard "Bubbameises" (grandmother's or old wives' tales), which have become deeply ingrained. Some habits, picked up at the time, have become an integral part of my subconscious, saving string (cook told me I would never get a husband if I cut a knot or did not save string). Standing up when peeling potatoes or vegetables (I don't even remember what kind of curse one incurred by sitting down). Not to mention the dire consequences of throwing out leftovers. This wisdom came mostly from folklore reinforced by the morals that fairy tales preach (subliminally). Habits formed then, while listening spellbound to cook proclaiming absolutes with utter conviction in the kitchen, have traveled through life with me. I have tried to shake off some of them, but find myself doing things the old way instinctively. I still have to remind myself that it is healthier to sit down than stand up while performing tedious chores.

The spacious kitchen was a big enough to contain a stove, a large table, and several cupboards. Over the sink was a shelf on which two dishwashing bowls stood. When doing the dishes, we filled one

with hot soapy water, the other with hot rinsing water. Every drop of water had to be heated in large kettles on the stove. The old wood-burning stove, used for many years, seemed to work according to its own strange moods. It was in use for many different tasks, for cooking on its top burners, for baking inside the "Roehre" (oven), for heating the room, for ironing. One time I recall Mother crying after having baked a cake: It was burned on top while still runny in the middle. Father called it her "Feuerwehr Kuchen," her fire department cake. Finally Mother got sick and tired of this old, temperamental piece of equipment and bought a gas stove. We had to suffer for a while with some under- or overdone meals, until Mother and cook learned the right timing for the newfangled appliance.

A door opened from the kitchen to a small balcony. It was just big enough for two to stand or sit. Fritz and I loved watching people in their backyards from this vantage point. Being a corner house, ours had only a very small yard. The buildings next to ours, facing the Lessingstrasse, had larger yards. Some neighbors had gardens; others kept tables and chairs in their backyard and ate summer meals al fresco. The most interesting backyard belonged to the convent in the Lessingstrasse. It was intriguing because pigs were kept there. Every spring we watched the cutest little piglets arrive and being cared for as if they were babies. First they were held and bottle fed. Later, grown big and squirmy, the pigs took slop from troughs. Preventing them from fighting over food, the nuns saw to it that each one got its fill. We watched the animals grow up, get fat, and stink up the whole neighborhood.

When eating cherries, Fritz and I loved to spit the pits towards the pigs. When one of them was hit, it squealed loudly, more out of surprise than from pain. We called this a score. As soon as she caught us at it, Mother stopped our fun. The pigs disappeared mysteriously in fall. I understood why only as I got older: The nuns butchered them, then cooked, smoked, and preserved the meat for fall and winter, filling their pantry with sausages, hams, and such. In spring a new crop of piglets appeared, and the same routine began all over again.

Our wash was done on Mondays in a large basement below, in a laundry room with a stove, over which turned the drum-like washing apparatus; it also contained long wooden tables, and outsize tubs. The previously soap-soaked white wash was 'boiled' in these gigantic drums, then underwent hand scrubbing with sharp soap and hard brushes on the tables and was rinsed in the same drums. I helped wring the smaller pieces out while our two maids handled big pieces. Dark colored things were done in cool water and kept in separate baskets. By and by many baskets full were carried down to the end of Johannisstrasse and across the Dambacherstrasse - where the meadow ended at the Rednitz. Large pieces were spread out there and blanched by letting them dry in the sun. We watered them a few times during drying as if they were spring flowers. Smaller pieces were hung on lines provided. We shared meadow and lines with many families from the neighborhood.

There was a lovely smell of wind and sun when we brought the dry linens home. In inclement weather we would hastily pack our stuff and either retreat to a nearby house entrance to wait out the storm or rush the baskets home to dry indoors. When all was dry, the wash was dampened and rolled up for Tuesday's ironing or 'mangling' of straight pieces, a pressing through heated rollers.

Ironing took place in the kitchen. From early on I had watched in awe how heavy irons were packed with glowing coal carefully, not to get black coal dust on the clothes, and used by the maids until they had cooled off. They were then replaced by other irons that had been packed with hot coal in the meantime.

Later-on the gas stove provided a cleaner and simpler way of heating the much lighter flatirons.

Rarely around for the whole wash-day procedure from beginning to end, I was probably more of a bother than help with my never-ending questions about everything. On these Monday-wash-days Mother put up hot food in the "Kochkiste," a sort of stockpot. The food simmered in this heavily insulated box all day. Pea or lentil soup with sausages, sauerkraut with meat, or a rice dish were wash-day fare. -

Our daily lives were governed by routine. Father saw patients, Mother shopped for the household and met friends in the afternoon. The maids kept the household running. Fritz and I went to school five and a half days a week. Sundays we spent together. It was also maids' day off. Our parents led an

active social life entertaining friends and being invited in return, mostly on weekends or holidays. When Mother expected guests, the whole house was turned upside down. She cooked and prepared for days before, making the most delicious little hors d'oeuvres arranged on fancy platters.

Many Jewish middle and upper class women applied this same fancy cooking skill to make a living after they emigrated to other countries. They became cooks in upscale homes or did catering of fancy foods for parties and banquets. One of my Mother's cousins worked together with Mrs. Paula Kissinger, mother of Heinz, later Henry, in the catering field, where they not only prepared the food, baked the cookies and cakes, but brought it to the party. Then they donned black uniforms with little white lace-edged aprons and served the assembled guests.-

Our parents stepped out a great deal evenings. Doctors were expected to keep up a certain social life. Both Father and Mother were good mixers. They belonged to a Jewish social club called "Phoenix" and a bowling league. They went to theatres, concerts, operas, and later, movies. But Father was often called away on emergencies. When in a theatre, he would tell the usher beforehand where he would sit, adding, "You can always find me in the dark - my bald head shines." When patients called, they surely found him. The only uninterrupted time the family spent together was during vacations or Sunday afternoon walks in the countryside.

After Fritz left for the university, Mother dismissed one of the maids. Cook became the factotum for all jobs. But the Nazis passed a law in 1935 based on the premise that all Jewish men were sex fiends who would seduce housemaids or any available female. Sexual contact between Aryans and Jews had long been called "Rassenschande" (the shame of miscegenation). Decent German working women could no longer be maids in Jewish households unless they were past forty-five years of age. So Mother and cook had to part. They said a tearful good-bye. From that day on Mother had help from a cleaning woman, an older person, who came once a week.

In any case, the Jewish social scene was to totally change from 1933 on. Jewish people could no longer go out at night without fear. Movie houses, theatres, and restaurants posted signs: "Juden verboten!" Young people left, emigrating if possible or fleeing over the border illegally, even going into hiding. If caught, they were taken into "Schutzhaft", so-called protective custody, and many of them would disappear forever. Years later, we heard the truth, that they were shot while 'fleeing.' Fate split families apart.

A few wealthy Jewish merchants had connections overseas through the export trade; during the early stages of the Nazi regime they could move to other countries with family and possessions intact. But doctors, lawyers, judges, academicians, average Jewish people, such as employees, artisans, shop owners, or Jews living in villages, had no such opportunities. There were some exceptions, though: People eminent in academic fields received papers through foreign universities with permits to teach or do research there; some famous writers and scientists were invited to the United States and Palestine early-on, sometimes through Eleanor Roosevelt's intervention; others came that way to other European universities into countries that were eventually overrun by the Nazis too. But this way of getting out was only possible during the early years of Nazi rule.

A remaining older Jewish generation coined what was to become a prophetic phrase:

"Children turn into letters, grandchildren into pictures".

It was the beginning of the end of an era.

Epilogue: A late revelation

In winter 1973 my brother Fritz, now Dean of medical faculty at Tel Aviv University, fell ill and had to be operated at Ichilov Hospital for stomach ulcers. It was discovered during the operation that a good part of Fritz's stomach needed to be removed. Once home from the hospital and recuperating nicely, he phoned me on New Year's day, a holiday he knew our mother would spend with me in my apartment. He first conveyed his family's good wishes for the New Year, then told a story he knew would be of great interest to us.

While home recovering, he had gotten a phone call from one of his former teachers at the Fuerth Gymnasium who now lived in New York; this man had heard that my brother had been very ill and was recuperating from a serious operation. The purpose of this call, to cheer my brother up, was certainly accomplished. This is what Mr. Louis Kissinger told my brother: "Did you know, that your father was the physician who helped bring Heinz into the world"? Neither Fritz nor we had known it. It would have been only one of many Fuerther babies delivered during my father's professional life and therefore not especially notable in those days. But nobody could imagine that Heinz would become Henry once his parents had fled to New York or that Henry would one day become a famous Secretary of State and world-renown scholar in his and our adopted country.

Once we got off the phone, mother and I discussed the circumstances of that birth. My father had not been "Hausarzt" (family physician) to the Kissinger family. They were orthodox Jews - we were reformed. In Fuerth that meant that we lived in separate worlds at that time. We surmised that the Kissinger family must have been patients of one of the orthodox Jewish doctors, who was either ill or on vacation when Heinz's mother was ready to give birth. It was the only explanation for father to be called. We were certainly glad to hear this fact and even happier that Louis Kissinger had been so thoughtful to tell this to my brother.

It is very satisfactory for me that I did inform him about the special connection of his family with the Secretary of State. I am sure, he was pleased that I gave him notice of this fact. I still remember you well as my pupil in my early pedagogic career.

*Accept best wishes and kind regards,
also from my wife
Sincerely yours,
Louis Kissinger*

From Louis Kissinger's letter of condolence

(photo: private)

A few weeks later, my poor brother, who had been doing so well until New Year's day, got a case of hiccups that would not stop; he ruptured his not yet healed sutures and had to be operated again to clean up internal bleedings. As told earlier, he died from septicemia on February 22, 1974.

Years later my sister-in-law Adina gave me the original letter of condolence mother had received (and turned over to her) from Louis Kissinger dated May 12 that year, in which he referred to "the special connection of the Dreyfuss family to the Secretary of State of the United States".

Henry Kissinger's portrait hangs in a gallery honoring all Nobel Laureates of German Jewish descent at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. This famous institute is dedicated to preserve the history and culture of German Jewry. On my recent visit I noticed that it stated on the identifying name plate that Henry was born in 1923.