

Emil and Fanny Yondorf

An Attempt at a joined Biography

By Eric G. Yondorf



Emil and Fanny in the USA, 1941
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

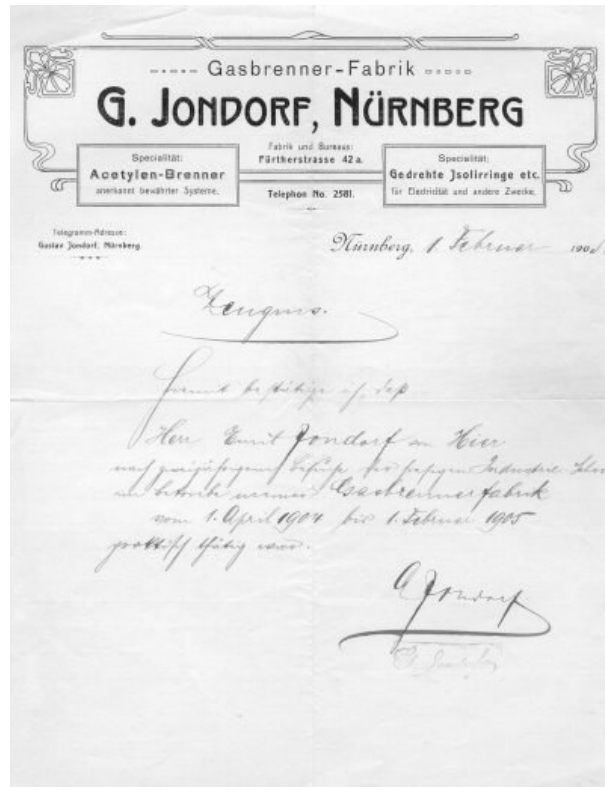
Emil's Parents

Emil Jondorf was born in Nuremberg, Germany on December 15, 1884, the second son of Gustav (Dietenhofen 1852 - Nuremberg 1912) and Pauline Lehmann (Markt Erlbach 1860 - New York 1944). Emil had an older brother, Stephan (Nuremberg 1881 - 1930) and a younger brother, Fritz (Nuremberg 1896 - New York 1984). Gustav was a successful businessman who had settled in Nuremberg in 1880 and started a hop trading business in August of that year, according to the local Commercial Registry. In June of 1885, Gustav registered his partnership in the *Acetylene Gas Burner Factory Adam Weber & Cie.*, an enterprise “employing 6 craftsmen” according to the record. Acetylene burners were an important component at that time of lamps for miners and bicyclists.. On September 30, 1890 Gustav founded the firm of *G. Jondorf*, his own business for manufacturing and distributing acetylene burners, located, according to the Commercial Registry, on Fürtherstraße 42a.

Youth and Education

Emil grew up in a comfortable middle class environment where quite a few cousins were close at hand. He and some of the cousins got their early education at the ‘Institut Gombrich’, a well reputed private school whose founder / director was Moritz Gombrich, Pauline’s brother-in-law. The next step in his education was attendance at the local ‘Industrie Schule’, a technical high school. After this came an internship at his father’s factory which he finished in February 1905.

At the age of nineteen, Emil contracted a serious inflammation / infection in his left knee which could not be easily cured; eventually the doctors decided to remove the knee cap. The result was a permanently stiff leg, somewhat shorter than before, which necessitated custom-made footwear as long as he lived. It is to Emil's credit that he overcame this handicap quickly and resumed a very active life as soon as possible. He was mechanically very talented, and it seemed to Gustav that Emil was well suited to taking over the technical direction of the family enterprise. To this end, Emil was sent to engineering school in Mittweida, Saxony, for several semesters.



Gustav Jondorf's certificate of Emil's traineeship in the company, 1905
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)



Emil (second from right) with fellow students and friends in Mittweida, 1907
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

It is almost certain that he worked at *G. Jondorf* for a time before spending about a year in 1910/1911 traveling in the United States with a view to expanding his technical knowledge by touring industrial enterprises, visiting relatives in the Chicago area, and improving his command of English. His father's deteriorating health forced him to return home earlier than he had intended.

Throughout his life, Emil was an enthusiastic and talented amateur photographer. His American journey was documented with a great number of excellent, post card sized photographs all lost as a result of emigration and World War II. In his younger years Emil was close to the "Wandervögel" movement, young people who enjoyed hiking through the countryside singing folk songs, and exploring nature. He had a rather good singing voice and could strum the lute quite well. Being technically inclined, Emil developed an early interest in motor cars. While he did not have the means to buy one as yet, he could afford to join an automobile club and enjoy its activities. Beyond that, he did like to travel.

Joining the Management of G. Jondorf

When Gustav died in 1912 of "nicotine poisoning" (he had been a chain smoker), older brother Stephan took over the commercial direction of the business, and Emil took charge of all things technical. This included bringing to a successful conclusion the construction of a new factory building on Fürtherstraße 42a in 1913. This building survived World War II with relatively little damage, and was still standing as of this writing. *G. Jondorf* had a very loyal veteran staff, which made for a smooth generational transition. It was a time when more and more people used bicycles, and the market for acetylene burners, at home and abroad, was constantly expanding.

Although the nature of the market needs changed during World War I, the need for burners continued. The firm also branched out into manufacturing electric plugs and sockets from the same ceramic material used in making the burners. To distribute these new items, a sister-firm, *Elektronoris*, was founded.



Building of G. Jondorf factory, erected in 1913 (picture approx. 1937)

(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

Because of his stiff leg, Emil was not considered fit for army service. But his younger brother Fritz had volunteered for the army in 1915. As a result of meningitis contracted during military training, Fritz totally lost his hearing. After a disability discharge, Fritz spent almost two years in rehabilitation which included training in lip reading. By 1918, Fritz was able to join the family firm where his specialties became bookkeeping and foreign correspondence. Now Emil could take over some of the outside sales tasks which had been primarily performed by Stephan. At the end of the war, it was important to reestablish business contacts with countries that had been cut off by the conflict.



Emil (in the back to the right) and staff in the office of G. Jondorf, 1918
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

Emil's wartime relationship with a young lady in nearby Erlangen resulted in the 1916 birth of twins, a boy named Willi and a girl named Inge. This event was never discussed before the subsequent children who eventually did hear some relevant whispers. It does seem that Emil faithfully paid the requisite child support. As a result of a recent e-mail inquiry, the writer of these lines has been in cordial contact with Willi's granddaughter Astrid Weber, a university student in Berlin.



Emil (center) and workers of G. Jondorf, 1920
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

Marriage and Family

In 1919, Fritz introduced Fanny Rosenzweig, a former dancing school partner of his, to his brother Emil. Fanny (Nuremberg 1897 - Chicago 1975) and Emil married in August of that year and settled in at the Rosenzweigs' large flat on Marienplatz. The post-war housing shortage was such that an apartment of one's own was a vain dream. In this setting, Walter Jondorf (Nuremberg 1920 - Washington, DC 1980) and Erich (Nuremberg 1922) were born. A third son, Herbert (1926) died after only a week because of a birth defect. It is interesting to note that Emil was in England on business when Erich was born. A rare gift brought back from that trip were a couple of grapefruit – an unseen delicacy in Germany at that time. This treat almost cost Erich his young life when Walter decided to share the wealth by throwing a grapefruit into the crib!



Fanny Rosenzweig, 1919
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

Shortly thereafter, Emil acquired a Victoria motorcycle with side car with which to take his young family on modest outings. In 1926, the Emil Jondorfs moved into a flat of their own on Veillodterstraße 33 across from the Tucher Brewery. This location had the involuntary benefit of free oompah music from the Tucher beer garden on warm summer nights. At about the same time, the motorcycle was replaced by an unassuming, four seated Brenabor roadster which in turn was succeeded by a Mercedes sedan a few years later. The boys were sent to public elementary school for four years, and after that to the Realgymnasium (a somewhat classical high school) up the street from the old Laufer Schlagturm, a clocktower dating to the end of the 14th century.

Business Travels and Family Outings

In 1930, Stephan Jondorf died unexpectedly at the age of 49 of congestive heart failure. This meant that Emil had to expand his sales travel and marketing efforts. He was good at it and derived satisfaction from seeing many parts of Europe. To be prepared for frequent travel, he had the children's maid sew fitted linen cases to hold his socks, his underwear, his shirts and

collars and such. These were kept in a bedroom drawer ready to be packed on short notice. Emil's packed suitcase looked like a neat traveling salesman's sample case.



On vacation in Switzerland, 1925

(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

Being a much absent father, however, did not benefit Emil's relationship with his sons, especially since his expectations for their school performance and gentlemanly demeanor were often much higher than their achievements. He was an impatient man and rather easy to anger who did not relate well to children, whether his own or other people's.

On the positive side, the whole family enjoyed frequent Sunday outings into the hinterland of Nuremberg, and vacation trips to various parts of southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland. An important feature of many an outing was an "arrow" throwing game which Emil had invented to help keep everyone in good physical shape. The arrows were made of 3/8 inch wooden dowels, perhaps three feet long, equipped with a small stabilizing fin on one end, and sporting a conical metal acetylene burner socket at the tip. The arrows were thrown like javelins over grassy ground, and whoever achieved the greatest distance with an implanted arrow was the winner. Walter 'outdistanced' the rest of the family without fail.

The Political Situation in Nuremberg before and after 1933

If the German Jews after 1933 were living in a shrinking circle of rights and opportunities, the Jews of Nuremberg seemed to be living in an ever-tightening noose. As the 'City of Party Congresses' governed by Gauleiter (regional leader) Julius Streicher, Nuremberg had early on become a citadel of Nazi anti-Semitism. Not only was the city festooned in swastika flags and nationalistic banners at the slightest patriotic occasion, but Streicher's Jew baiting newspaper "Der Stürmer" was widely displayed in glass cases on prominent street corners. Walter and Erich had to pass one of these on their daily walk to school. There they could learn 'the truth'

about Jewish ritual murders throughout the ages, Jewish Bolshevik conspiracies all over the world, and Jewish sexual depravity – to name but a few. It must be said in all fairness that, in the midst of all these incendiary trappings, the Jondorf boys experienced very little active anti-Semitism in their high school, and that necessary contacts with public offices were transacted in a correct atmosphere, albeit watched over by the indispensable Fuehrer (leader) portraits, and bracketed by curt “Heil Hitler” salutations. One learned to live with – and largely ignore – the frequent sound of hobnailed boots on cobbled streets as National Socialist formations marched by singing, *alto voce*, of their undying loyalty to Fuehrer and Fatherland and their everlasting hatred of International Jewry.



Masked party at Rosenzweigs, February 1929. Top row left to right: Heinz Dessauer, Walter Jondorf, Rolf Dessauer, Heiner Rosenthal, Fritz Bickart, Mathilde Rosenzweig, Bottom row left to right: unknown, Rudi Jondorf, Erich Heilbronn, Erich Jondorf. Fritz Bickart and Erich Heilbronn fell as GIs in WW2.

(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

In this atmosphere it was only natural that many Nuremberg Jews took the occasion of the annual Nazi Party Congresses to leave the city for greener pastures. And so it happened that in September 1935 the Emil Jondorfs spent a few restful days in Marienbad, a pleasant health resort just over the Czech border, only to learn from press and radio of the promulgation of the infamous “Nuremberg Laws” which proved to be the beginning of the end of a Jewish presence in Germany.

Religion

The Emil Jondorfs and their immediate relations were patriotic Germans of Jewish faith. Religion did not govern the daily rhythms of their life, but the support of Jewish charitable institutions was very much part of family culture. They did belong to the liberal branch of the congregation and attended high holiday services at the magnificent Main Synagogue on Spitalplatz where, in due time, Walter and Erich celebrated their Bar Mitzvahs. The services at the Main Synagogue in those days were led by a rabbi assisted by a professional cantor, the liturgy being embellished by a trained choir with organ accompaniment. Although the music of the synagogue often had Jewish traditional roots, the execution could not deny some debt to German or French romantic music of the 19th century. Walter and Erich experienced an occasional Passover Seder or a visit to the Succah at the Jewish Old Age Home on Johannisstraße at the invitation of Rabbi Heilbronn. Their basic religious instruction was provided

at their public school by a teacher from the Jewish congregation as part of the regular curriculum. Friday evening family dinners involving members of the Jondorf, Rosenzweig or Guckenheimer families were a Jewish tradition regularly observed until the events of November 1938 (Night of the Broken Glass) made such gatherings seem inadvisable.

The early Years of the Nazi Regime

Business travel and family vacations were sometimes successfully combined, occasionally using the family car which by then had become a very roadworthy Adler sedan. A highlight vacation was a rail journey to the Belgian coast near Ostende in 1934, Walter and Erich's first look at the sea, and first taste of fresh steamed shrimp! During long conversations, Emil's Belgian sales representative strongly counseled him even then to take his family out of Germany because of the growing threat of Nazi anti-Jewish policies and the increasing likelihood of war. Emil was certainly willing, but Fanny was not, pleading that she could not possibly leave her aging parents behind in Germany. In the early days of the Nazi regime, probably during the summer of 1933, Emil had been taken into "protective custody" one hot morning, right from his office, wearing his business attire, and trucked with a number of fellow unfortunates to a stone littered vacant area just outside the city. There they were ordered by the guarding storm troopers to clear the field with their bare hands and pile the stones neatly at the edge of the site, their labors accompanied by constant taunts to the effect that the new regime would teach the Jewish pigs how to work with their hands. At the end of the day, the victims were marched to the nearest streetcar stop and allowed to go home, dirty, disheveled and with blistered hands. This experience had a strong impact on Emil, and convinced him that there could be no long term future for his family in Germany. With their upbringing firmly rooted in German culture and traditions, the Jondorfs did not seriously consider emigration to Palestine as some friends and acquaintances were doing.



On an outing in Bamberg, 1935. From left to right: Erich, Louise Wettengel, Andre Hollebeq (Brussels), the Adler car, Fanny, Emil.

(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

Preparing for Emigration

Business was actually quite good for *G. Jondorf* and *Elektronoris* in the mid thirties. *Elektronoris* had morphed into a distributor of miniature light bulbs largely manufactured in small subsidiary factories in the hills of Thuringia. Since many of the products were exported and bringing foreign currency into German coffers, Emil was allowed to hold on to his passport and continue his sales travels. Nevertheless, he insisted on sending Walter to a boarding school in Lausanne, Switzerland in the Fall of 1935 to learn French and be out of potential harm's way. At the same time, he and Fritz began to put out feelers concerning the sale of the firms. He also started to contact his American relatives in hopes of obtaining affidavits (financial guarantees) which would make possible the emigration of his sons as soon as practicable. The sales negotiations, primarily with an old business acquaintance and competitor, made very little progress because of unreasonable price offers by the other party, while the American immigration quota system delayed any hope of early departure. It was a situation likely to put the most sweet tempered person into a bitter frame of mind. But Emil persisted. In the spring of 1937, the German Ceramic Society offered a study trip to the United States, and Emil signed on. In Chicago he managed to convince two of his cousins to tentatively agree to taking in Walter and Erich if they could obtain their immigration papers. Walter's quota number was called early in the summer of 1937, and he was able to leave Nuremberg for Glencoe, a Chicago suburb, in September. There he was to stay with a very kind, widowed Yondorf cousin for four years.

Because of the worsening situation in Germany, Fritz had also begun to explore emigration possibilities. His goal was New York where his wife Paula had a number of relatives. It must be mentioned here that despite very different personalities and an age difference of twelve years, Emil and Fritz had a very close, mutually supportive relationship throughout the years. This was to make the vicissitudes of emigration and, later on, the trials of post-war restitution claims more bearable for both. It was also beneficial for their families.

The year 1938 arrived, and talks concerning the transfer of the family firms to an "Aryan" owner dragged on. In the meantime, the business had to be carried on as successfully as possible. This led to a combined sales and sightseeing trip with wife and son to Vienna only two weeks after the annexation of Austria. While enjoying the beauty and the elegance of Vienna, the three Jondorfs made the jarring discovery that the Austrians were even more anti-Semitic than the Germans.



Fanny and Erich in Vienna, 1938
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

The Night of the Broken Glass and Emigration

At the end of the school year in April, Erich was taken out of high school and put into an apprenticeship position in the machine shop of *G. Jondorf* until such time as his American immigration quota number should be called up. On November 9 occurred the “Reichskristallnacht” (Night of the Broken Glass), and on the following day all Jews were banned from the Jondorf enterprises by the German Labor Front which took charge of the property. They allowed Emil limited access for the purpose of an orderly handover to the very person with whom the Jondorf brothers had been in negotiation for so long. The sales price imposed by the Labor Front was a fraction of the market value.

While Emil and Fanny’s flat had remained untouched by the events of the previous night, Fritz’s had been ransacked by storm troopers (SA), and he slightly injured when, totally deaf, he did not respond fast enough to some shouted command. At the same time, Emil’s father-in-law, Ludwig Rosenzweig, the President of the Jewish Congregation, had been taken into ‘protective custody’.

In the misery and confusion of November 10, 1938, his car seemed to Emil to offer the best chance of escaping the imminent danger in Nuremberg, and a potential midnight visit by the SA. Nothing was known at this time concerning happenings in other cities, but the danger of sudden arrests locally was known. Emil suggested that he and Erich drive to Munich to hole up with cousins there, while Fanny would stay with her mother to await her father’s return from prison. Erich and Fanny vetoed this scheme assuming that Jews could be stopped and arrested at Autobahn checkpoints as likely as not and that all should stay at the Rosenzweig flat which had already been raided. This proved to be a wise choice since any number of Jews were apprehended at highway checkpoints. Fortunately, Ludwig Rosenzweig returned home after a couple of days in jail. Unfortunately, Jews were no longer permitted to keep automobiles.



The last family picture in Germany, 1938. From left to right: Fritz, Paula, Helen, Emil and Fanny Jondorf
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

These events reinforced Emil's desire to move the family out of Germany. Erich's quota number finally did come up later in November, and by the middle of December he was able to embark at Bremerhaven for the United States. By the time Emil and Fanny, and other members of the family, had seen their way clear to apply for American immigration papers, the quota numbers were sky high, pushing their emigration hopes into a more distant future. The same was true of Fred and Paula, and their mother Pauline. In the summer of 1939, Fritz and Paula were able to send their children, Rudi (14) and Gertrude (8), to England by Kindertransport.

As the war clouds gathered over Europe, the Jondorf families began to prepare for their departure, choosing only those household goods and personal belongings deemed most essential. They carefully packed a container and sent it to Hamburg for transshipment to America. They went through infinite paperwork to obtain the necessary German clearances – and waited for their quota number to be called. Because of the danger of war, applications for temporary residence permits were made to several countries.

At long last, British papers were obtained, final fees paid, and the two Jondorf couples plus mother Pauline and sister-in-law Helen left Germany for Britain via Holland, two at a time, between August 27 and early September 1939.

In Britain

Wilhelm Jondorf, a first cousin of Emil and Fritz, had established a greeting card company in Cardiff, Wales, a short time earlier, and so the wandering Jondorfs, settled in Penarth, a Cardiff suburb, to await the arrival of their American quota number. Foster homes with local families were found for Fritz and Paula's children in Penarth as well. It was a peaceful time for the elder Jondorfs, devoted to honing their English since no occupational activity was allowed. Finally, in April 1940 their quota number came up. Tickets were secured on the Cunard liner "Scythia" for an Atlantic crossing in convoy from Liverpool via Halifax to New York in May. Meanwhile, Walter and Eric waited with bated breath in Chicago lest submarine action interfere with their 12 day journey across the ocean. All went well. Fritz, Paula, Rudi, Gertrude, Pauline and Helene took up residence in New York. After a few days of rest in New York, Emil and Fanny proceeded to Chicago.

Arrival in the U.S. and Growing Roots in Chicago

A small, furnished apartment was soon found in the pleasant Belmont Harbor neighborhood, and the process of growing new roots began for Emil and Fanny Yondorf. Walter had meanwhile finished high school, and found employment in the dry-cleaning machinery business of a distant relative. Eric (Erich became Eric and Jondorf became Yondorf in the USA), after graduating from high school, had begun studying electrical engineering at Northwestern University at Emil's insistent long-distance urging. Eric had found a temporary home with the Warren Lehman family in Glencoe; Warren was the son of Pauline's older brother. Emil immediately started looking for employment in the engineering field. This proved not as easy as he had hoped since not only was his English a bit rusty, and his age advanced (57) but he was a German national at a time when the U.S. was rapidly veering towards active participation in the war. And so it happened that during the summer of 1940, Emil, the new immigrant, and Eric, the student, were assembling fluorescent lamps at minimum wage in the same workshop.



The Emil Yondorfs in the USA, 1940

(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

Not too much later, Emil found employment as a draftsman in various firms that were not war production oriented. And Fanny contributed her part to the meager family income by occasionally caring for neighborhood children, or seasonally working on a candy packing assembly line. But for the first time in her life, Fanny had to run a household without domestic servants! A more spacious apartment was found in 1941, allowing Walter and Eric to return to the parental household where everyone did help a bit with the chores. This did not always work out smoothly since Emil still lived according to the old world motto that ‘father (and husband) always knows best’. Emil was soon able to buy a second hand car, a necessity in a spread-out city like Chicago; and his stiff leg was most grateful for the now available automatic transmissions. The car also enabled the Yondorfs to flee the big city occasionally and to explore the Midwestern countryside. Moreover, several friends and relatives lived in the suburbs.

In 1943, Walter was drafted into the army. He eventually participated in the North African and Italian campaigns while assigned to an intelligence gathering unit just behind the front lines, a cause of considerable worry for his parents. Eric finished his engineering studies at the end of 1943, and volunteered for the Army Signal Corps in the spring of 1944. He completed a number of field telephone courses stateside, and then was assigned as a German interpreter to Wright Patterson Field. Both sons were discharged by the spring of 1946. Emil and Fanny learned at about this time, that the container of household furnishings stored in Hamburg had been totally destroyed in one of the Allied air raids. But one could live quite comfortably in an apartment filled largely with second-hand furniture.

Fanny’s parents had been able to leave Germany for Switzerland in the summer of 1940. Her father, Ludwig, had died in Glarus at the age of 82 in 1943. Her mother, Mathilde, continued to live in Glarus until the end of the war. Emil and Fanny then invited her to come to Chicago and live with them. Mathilde arrived in March of 1946 and lived harmoniously with the Yondorfs until her death in March of 1951. Her presence, and wise handling of her son-in-law had eased life considerably for Fanny.

The Relationship of Fanny and Emil

A word should be added here about the Fanny-Emil relationship. Although the daughter of a leading local family, Fanny's aims in life seemed simple: finish high school, spend time with her friends, and eventually get married. She got out of school just about the time World War I started. Her older brother Fritz, a law student at the University of Heidelberg, volunteered for the army almost immediately. Her war years were spent rolling bandages, knitting socks for the front, and helping out at a children's day care center. Vacations were often spent with out-of-town relatives. In April 1918, her brother was killed at the western front, an irreplaceable loss to the family. As food supplies grew shorter and shorter toward the end of the war, Fanny and friends would often comb the countryside around Nuremberg for eggs, butter and other comestibles no longer available in the shops. On one such successful occasion, Fanny, carrying her finds in a backpack, sunk dead tired onto the wooden bench of the suburban train and demolished every last egg as she contentedly leaned back. She was a quietly likable person, quite willing to be number two on a team. Self confidence was not her strong suit. Yet she had a number of faithful friends throughout her life.

Emil, by contrast, was a bit the man of the world, good looking, well traveled, college trained, gregarious, and rarely at a loss for an opinion which he was always ready to purvey. It is not surprising, in retrospect, that in stressful circumstances Fanny felt overwhelmed by Emil's assertiveness and sudden temper outbursts.

Walter and Eric Make their own Way

Soon after his return from service, Walter announced his intention of marrying Anne Lowald (born 1923) who with her parents had come to Chicago from Berlin via Sweden, the USSR and Japan five years previously. Emil and Fanny had met the Lowalds at the recommendation of a cousin in Seattle who had hosted them during their transit from Japan. The families became good friends, and Walter and Anne were obviously very attracted to each other.

Walter had resumed his job at the dry cleaning machinery company and was taking some business related night courses at Northwestern University. Emil liked the Lowalds well enough, but was convinced that a 25 year old earning a minimal income had no business marrying a young lady without any monetary resources. Fortunately, Emil was a minority of one, and everyone else in the two families encouraged the match. In June 1946 Walter and Anne had a garden wedding at the home of his foster mother in Glencoe. Over time, they produced three delightful children and lived happily until Walter's premature death of cancer in 1980. Emil enjoyed the wedding festivities as much as anyone and was very happy when presented with his first granddaughter in 1949.

In the meantime, Eric had accepted a job with the Martin Aircraft Company in Baltimore, since he had always had an interest in aircraft and aviation. The move gave him a chance to get away from his somewhat abrasive relationship with Emil. Eric remained in Baltimore until 1950, working eventually at Westinghouse Electric Company, but failing to be very comfortable as an electrical engineer. He decided to return to college in Chicago to study architecture and city planning under the G.I. Bill of Rights. Emil vehemently disapproved. Not much later, Walter, too, decided to switch careers, and began studies toward a doctorate in Political Science. Emil was not at all happy.

Postwar: Emil and Fanny's Final Years

Like many other refugees from Nazi Germany now working in relatively lowly positions, Emil was hoping that the end of the war would bring a chance for regaining confiscated wealth and property. It was not until the late forties that the newly established Federal Republic of Germany and its component states had passed legislation assuring restitution where documentation for valid claims could be submitted. From this point on, it became Emil's burning desire to seek justice where justice was due. In this endeavor, he was once again ably assisted by his brother Fred (Fritz Jondorf became Fred Yondorf in the USA) in New York. They had fortunately been able to take with them documentary evidence testifying to much of the confiscation that had taken place. The remaining years of Emil's life were primarily devoted to unending correspondence with German bureaucrats, lawyers, and financial institutions in pursuit of the family's restitution claims. With the death of Mathilde, who also had claims pending, the work load increased. All the while, Emil continued his drafting job, so that restitution work filled his evenings and weekends. Fanny contributed her part by typing many letters, and copying ancillary documents. The pressure of this period was relieved a couple of times by enjoyable family vacations in upper New York State with Fred and Paula.

At about the time of Mathilde's passing, Fanny developed serious clinical depression, probably related to menopausal changes. This led to a fumbling attempt at suicide, and an emergency trip to a mental hospital where Fanny eventually received electric shock treatments before being released. Emil's reaction to this event was one of total incomprehension. He could not admit to himself that a member of his family might be in need of psychiatric help! Not surprisingly, Fanny had several more episodes of depression and hospitalization. But newer medical treatments eliminated the need for electric shock.

When Emil and Fanny had become "empty nesters" they rented out an extra bedroom. Shortly after the death of Mathilde, the room was taken by Hilde Herzberg, a somewhat older lady, originally from Berlin who had survived the Holocaust in an Amsterdam attic. Hilde was a resolute, lifelong working woman who was then employed in the offices of the Chicago Hilton Hotel. She was immediately drawn to Fanny and knew how to handle Emil in all his moods, backing up Fanny when needed. Although she moved into her own apartment eventually, Hilde remained Fanny's close and supportive friend until Fanny died in 1975. Between 1976 and her own death in 1983, Hilde was a loving and generous foster-grandmother to Eric's young children.

Emil had enjoyed relatively good health all his life until he experienced some shortness of breath at the age of sixty nine. A slight heart problem was diagnosed, and the onset of diabetes. Just as the restitution efforts were beginning to show positive results, Emil suffered serious circulation problems in his right leg, his good leg. The leg had to be amputated, and Emil spent the remaining few months of his life in a nursing home where his heart gave up on June 22, 1955. It was sad that a man of such dogged drive and essentially good intentions had to succumb at the cusp of victory. Fred took over the struggle for restitution which was finally concluded with reasonable success almost ten years later. One of the important outcomes of these efforts was that Fanny was assured of a German old age pension which, combined with her small social security payments, allowed her to live in reasonable comfort for the rest of her life. Walter and Eric's career changes were, in the end, somewhat subsidized by restitution payments, and both enjoyed successful careers in their chosen fields.

While the remaining twenty years of Fanny's life were marred by occasional bouts with depression, she adjusted well to her widowhood. With the encouragement of Hilde and Eric, she joined beginners groups in pottery and weaving, and was quite proud of some of her results.

She still enjoyed vacations now and then with Fred and Paula in upper New York State, and visits with Walter's family, first in Massachusetts and later in the Washington, DC area. A highlight in 1957 was a driving tour with Eric through parts of Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Britain and France to mark her 60th birthday. Visits with several 'long lost' cousins were included. Finally there was the wedding of son Eric to Lisa Blair (born 1945) in April 1971. All three traveled to the Adirondacks that fall to celebrate Fred Yondorf's 75th birthday. Fanny's last years were spent, rather contentedly, at the Selfhelp Home of Chicago, an excellent senior care facility founded by Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. She died there on January 23, 1975 as the result of a massive stroke.

Chicago, in October 2003



The author in front of former G. Jondorf factory, 2003
(Photo: Eric G. Yondorf)

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