



Wilhelm Jondorf, Nuremberg

(7.12.1890 in Nuremberg - 17.2.1957 in London)

by

Helmut Jondorf



(Photo: Eric Yondorf)

My father was a reasonably successful businessman, who published greeting cards all of his own design. These were distributed throughout Germany, there was a 'loyal' staff of approximately 50 people. My father was a self taught artist, writer of poetry, and quite a proficient entertainer on the flute, and as a singer-composer, very active in the "Phoenix" Jewish social club in Nuremberg.

My mother (Irmgard Bauer), who came from Wiesbaden, died at the early age of 32, of cancer, in 1937. Prior to her death, my parents had made plans to emigrate to England, and had taken English lessons in preparation for this momentous upheaval. In 1938, one night before "Kristallnacht", my father and his two young sons left Nuremberg for England, via Holland. He had great difficulty obtaining the necessary release papers from Germany, being sent from one department (German "Amt") to another in an effort to keep him there for the events of "Kristallnacht". His business [Kunstverlag Wilhelm Jondorf, Kohlenhofstraße 12/16] had to

be sold, and was bought by one of the staff for the princely sum of 500 Reichsmark (as an aside, it was gratifying after the war to find that the RAF had totally demolished the factory leaving a nice pile of rubble!). All furniture and belongings from our home were plundered and never reached England. Fate decreed that the person who guaranteed our visa had secured permission for my father to start a new business in South Wales, at that time an area very much down on its luck, and it was in Treforest that “Cardiff Cards” saw the light of day. The transformation from writing sentimental verses for greeting cards in English rather than German seemed to be quite easily overcome by this very versatile entrepreneur.

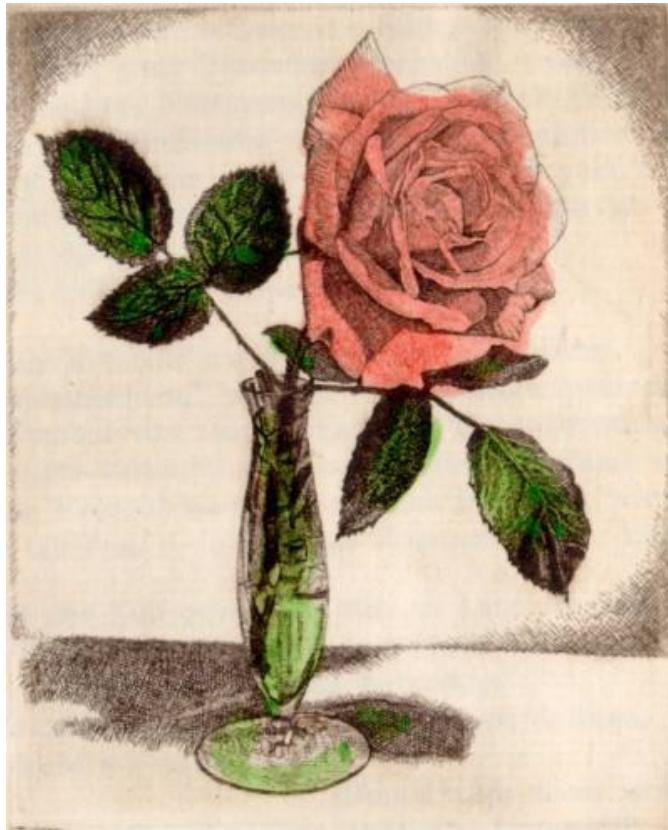
My father's sister and her husband also managed to get to South Wales, and we all set up home together in Penarth, renting an apartment from a very gracious Quaker lady, a retired schoolteacher who made a great effort to help refugees from Germany.

Then came the war, and we were immediately classified as “enemy aliens”. We were forced to move away from the coast, and went to a small market town called Abergavenny. The adults in our family were all interned in the Isle of Man, which left two young boys living in a boarding school. My father got early release from Onchan, Isle of Man, and gratefully accepted the headmaster's invitation to stay at the school until he could find a suitable home. The people we came in contact with gave us such encouragement and help, that I will be forever grateful that he chose Great Britain for our new home.



An ex libris designed by Wilhelm Jondorf showing the imperial castle and the old town of Nuremberg
(Photo: Eric Yondorf)

In 1945, just after the end of the war (which we spent in Abergavenny throughout) my father remarried, and the family moved to London. Throughout all this time, my father's hobby and passion was his painting, always in watercolour, and my home is now adorned by many of his works. He died at the early age of 67, in 1957 leaving behind many hundreds of admirers of his wit, his art, and his renowned social charm. I have many poems, in English as well as in German, written to commemorate a friend's wedding here, a birthday there, or just a celebration of one sort or another.



A coloured engraving by Wilhelm Jondorf
(Photo: Eric Yondorf)

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