



The Lauer Family in Germany and the USA

by Inge David, nee Lauer

Nuremberg and Amberg

My father, Julius Lauer was born on 1st January 1893, the younger of 2 children. His sister Paula was 2 years older. The family - father Daniel Lauer and mother Louise, nee Lehmann, lived in Nuremberg where my father was born.

I know very little about his schooling except that my father studied the classics and was particularly interested in Egyptology. I remember his telling me that on an exam he answered only 2 questions but in such detail that he received an excellent grade. Why he did not pursue this field I do not know. Perhaps it had something to do with the outbreak of World War I.

In 1914 he enlisted in the German army. He became a pilot attaining the rank of *Fliegerleutnant*. Despite being involved in several crashes, he continued flying until the end of the war. He was one of very few survivors of his group.



Julius Lauer as a pilot in World War I
(photo: private)

Toward the end of the war my father was stationed in Amberg (Upper Palatinate) where he met my mother Martha (better known as *Martel*) Stein, the youngest of the 6 children of Abraham and Sophie Stein, nee Levi. Grandfather was the owner of *Stein & Co.* - a dry goods business (and to this day I still have some fabric from his stock).

My parents were married in 1920 - twice, the first time at a civil ceremony in February in order to qualify for an apartment which, because of a dire shortage, would be available only to married couples. The second ceremony - a proper Jewish wedding - was held on the 25th of May (a special day in the Jewish calendar called *Lag b'Omer* which falls between Passover and Shevuoth when weddings are permitted). The rabbi who performed the ceremony was my father's army chaplain.

My parents made their home in Nuremberg after they were married; my brother Hans-Heinz (later, in the U.S. to be called Harry) was born on 18th September 1921; I came along almost 8 years later on 10th July 1929.

My brother went to school first to the *Reformrealgymnasium* high school in Nuremberg where, because of his terrible handwriting, he had a lot of trouble with his teacher. My brother suffered from dysgraphia - an inability to write properly. This problem was not understood at that time and when his teacher said, *Ich betrachte das als eine persönliche Beleidigung* (I consider this to be a personal insult). He was taken out of that school; with the advent of Nazism and anti-Semitism, he was sent first to a Jewish boarding school in Germany and later to a different one in Lausanne, Switzerland where he managed quite well and also began to learn English.

I do not know how or when my father, together with his non-Jewish partner, Georg Brehm, opened the printing *Buchdruckerei Lauer & Brehm* but it is the only place of work of which I know. I do know that for a time my mother worked with my father as his secretary and, from 1937 until our departure from Nuremberg in August 1938, my brother also worked there. Rosel Sahlman, who died a few years ago in California, also was a secretary at *Lauer & Brehm* for a number of years.

The firm printed among others the newsletter of the Jewish congregations in Nuremberg and Fürth, the *Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* (of which Herbert Kolb reminded me) as well as the report cards for the Jewish school in Obere Kanalstraße which I attended.

One year my father took one of these report cards and filled it in himself. He said the school sent it home because of all the terrible grades which he, himself, had filled in. It was supposed to be funny but I failed to see the humor in this exercise.

Thankfully, my grades were never really bad. I remember that *Schönschreiben* (penmanship) was a very important subject (my brother's downfall) which today is not even considered, as all writing is done by computer.

Emigration

It is 1937 and my father sees the writing on the wall. Despite being a loyal, well integrated German Jewish citizen who, from 1914 to 1918 served his Kaiser to the best of his ability, he felt it was no longer safe for us to remain in Germany. Therefore, in March 1938 he traveled to the United States to meet distant relatives living in Baltimore, Maryland, in the hope of obtaining from them affidavits for our family to immigrate to the USA.

America was very reluctant to accept new immigrants and made it quite difficult for people to enter the country. My father, however, was lucky and was able to receive assurance from our relatives enabling us (father, mother, my brother and myself) to leave Nuremberg in August 1938.

We traveled first to Amsterdam to visit my mother's older sister and her husband for a short time. It was the last time the sisters saw one another as both she and her husband perished in Auschwitz in 1944.

In the USA

We arrived in New York City on 13th September 1938, just 5 days before my brother's 17th birthday which we celebrated with a can of pineapple which had been given to us as a gift.

We spent 3 weeks in New York City - my parents and brother stayed at the shelter of the National Council of Jewish Women. Children were not allowed there so I was *farmed out* to stay with friends who had come to the U.S. a year before us. This was rather a frightening experience for a 9 year old who had no idea where she was.

While in New York we went to a synagogue for the High Holidays where we heard Rabbi Prince (I believe that's who it was) *thunder* about what he felt was about to happen to the Jews in Europe. And, he was absolutely correct. It was a most disquieting sermon which many people did not believe. They felt he was surely exaggerating; but, in fact, it became even worse than what he predicted.

Beginning of October we arrived in Baltimore where we were met by the relatives from whom my father had obtained the affidavits. My father's mother and his sister Paula arrived in December of the same year.

Now - the two most important tasks were: to learn English and to look for a job. My father and brother walked (ca. 1 hour each way) to a downtown public school to attend evening English classes several times a week while, during the day they walked the length and breadth of the city streets looking for work.

The results of the depression could still be felt in 1938 and there were few jobs available for immigrants with a very limited knowledge of English. For roughly half a year my father knocked on doors, followed up suggestions, went on interviews, willing to accept most anything in order to support his family. At one time he managed to get a temporary job in a printing place where he earned \$12.00 a week. For quite a while he had the use of a truck from which he sold cypress garden furniture - door to door - in the more affluent neighborhoods.

My brother finally found a job in a pajama factory where he worked for quite a while. Meanwhile my father and brother continued going to English classes and they became completely fluent.

My mother also went to English classes during the afternoon hours in a school closer to home while she took care of us and our home. She did not go to work but took in boarders to add to the family income.

Both my parents and my brother became completely fluent to the point where they were able with ease to read English language newspapers and books, listened to English radio programs and movies and could write very efficiently. Only English was the language spoken at home.

My English was non-existent but, although I was already 9 years old, I was placed in first grade (very humiliating) where I learned to speak English very quickly; after about half a year I was completely fluent and quickly worked myself up to the next grades so that I was the same age as all the others by the time I graduated from high school.

The outbreak of World War II created many new jobs - men and women enlisted in the military and those who were not drafted found jobs in war related industries (e.g. *Rosie the Riveter*). My father also found a job in a company that outfitted life rafts with survival packages of food and water. He worked there until the end of the war.

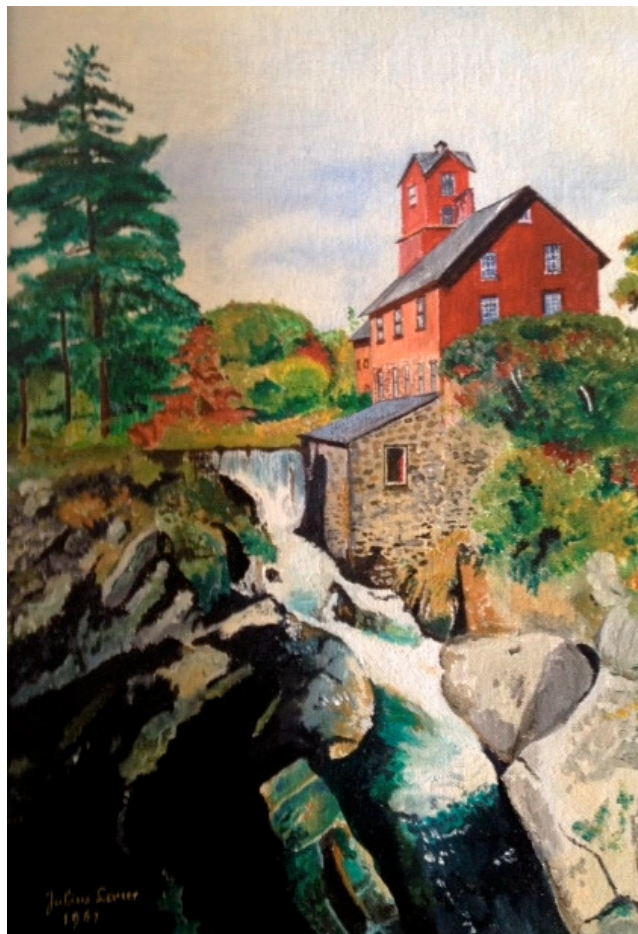
My brother meanwhile went to school to get a high school diploma and then, while working, went to college at night to earn first a Bachelor's degree. He then continued to put himself through law school becoming a tax accountant at which he worked until his retirement.

After the war my father went to work for himself doing something entirely different. He had always been good at working with his hands and he turned those hands to something he had never done before, you might say he reinvented himself. My father opened *Lauer Metal Shop*

manufacturing brass plates for doctors and other professionals; he made personalized ashtrays and desk pads, often as gifts; his biggest business was with synagogues and other Jewish as well as non-Jewish organizations producing all manner of large bronze wall plaques such as very large *Yahrzeit* tablets to which could be affixed smaller plaques with the names of deceased or names of donors, etc.

He worked first in his own shop in a downtown Baltimore area and later, when we moved out of the inner city, he worked from a basement workshop in our own home. He continued this until his retirement in the 1960s.

My father was also very artistic; he was a gifted painter and his works can be seen in my home and in the homes of my children.



One of Julius Lauer's paintings
(photo: private)

Mother and Dad were outstanding grandparents and I was lucky to have them as the very best baby sitters. When my children were small we lived in the same house together, each in our own apartment but the children lived downstairs with their *Oma* and *Opa* just as much as upstairs in their own apartment. The whole house was theirs - lucky children.

My parents enjoyed traveling and after Dad's retirement they took trips to Hawaii, to Mexico, to Israel, as well as to many places of interest in the USA.

Both my parents were excellent swimmers - my father had been on a swim team in Germany as well as a lifeguard and a swimming teacher (he taught both my brother and me) and for many years he and I volunteered at a Baltimore Center for Handicapped Children and Adults teaching them how to swim.

My father died, very suddenly, in July 1973, at the age of 80 ½; he had been perfectly healthy, having swum half a mile the day before. He did not have even one day of illness. My mother was not as lucky as Dad; she was ill for a full year with cancer and died in June 1982 at the age of 85 ½.



Martel and Julius Lauer in the USA
(photo: private)

My parents' life in Nuremberg had been a comfortable one. It required a big adjustment when we came to the U.S. and they went through a rough beginning; but they were survivors and made the very best of a hard time with patience and even humor.

Life became much easier after the war and they were able to live a good and happy life. I must say I am very proud of the way they managed to give us all a very good life.

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