

MY STORY

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
CHRISTA HOVEN

My Story

An Autobiography

Christa Hoven

I am dedicating this book to my children, my grandchildren, great-grandchildren and all the next generations to come. I am your mother, your Oma, your grandmother, your great grandmother and so on. Your sibling, your cousin, your aunt, great aunt, and your friend.

Wow - I am all of that! You have all contributed to my journey in some way. Thank you for being there for me and for making my life interesting, exciting, and definitely never boring! I especially want my five children to know that “I love you all... equally.” Really!

It has been very rewarding for me to go over my history, reliving these moments in my journey through life; learning more about myself in this introspective process. I would recommend this for everyone who has reached an age where reminiscing can be enlightening and can bring great joy.

A very special mention goes to my son Brian, who helped me with all the computer, layout, text, and photo work - all the scanning of snapshots (over 800!), fixing them and sizing them to fit! And to top it all, he had to put up with all the changes I constantly decided on. Without Brian, there would be no book, period.

Thank you Brian, you can relax now. I won't bug you anymore, at least not about the book! Much love, Mom

“YUCK !#*! There is a huge dung heap of horse and cow manure right outside the kitchen window???

And there are big fat flies buzzing back and forth from the kitchen to the heap? Grandma, I am going to puke!!!!”

That was the reaction from my grandchildren when they first heard some of my childhood history from me. But wait, let me go back some years to where my story starts, as I remember it.

This is *my story*.

My Story

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CHAPTER 1

APPENSEE



My drawing of Appensee.



Appensee (rear view of drawing on previous page).



Grandfather's home (far left) and Grandmother's home (far right).

Both my grandparents on my mother's side came from the same quaint little farm village in Germany called Appensee. If you want to find Appensee on the map, look for the river "Jagst" and the closest bigger city nearby called Crailsheim. Appensee is south from there between Jagstheim and Stimfach. The village is nestled on fairly flat terrain. I will try to describe the landscape to you as it was then when I was just a little girl. Imagine this - 12 or so farm houses clustered together along both sides of only 2 dirt and gravel roads in the village. Acres and acres of flat farmlands all around the village as far as the eyes can see. In the distance a mountain range stretches across the horizon and at the bottom runs the river "Jagst." Just a mile or so away from the river but closer to the village are train tracks, running parallel to the mountain range, following along the river, all the way to Crailsheim and beyond.

In the fields around the village you can see cows grazing and farmers working their acres, with teams of horses or oxen powering their plows. Perhaps you can also spot a lonely shepherd up the mountainside where he is tending and herding his flock of sheep together with one or two sheepdogs. This shepherd is hired by the village farmers to take care of all their sheep. Every now and then you can hear the train in the distance chugging peacefully by, the engineer blowing his

whistle at every station.

In the village one can see chickens and roosters just wandering all over the place, scratching here and there for food. One can also spot geese. They are usually not too friendly and can chase you and try and peck at you. (I was very afraid of geese and often tried to outrun them). There are also many cats, kittens and dogs all just laying and walking around loose for the most part, but staying pretty close to their master's homestead, the "Bauernhof" (Farmers' House). In front of some farmhouses are rustic benches where the farmers sit in the evenings and rest their weary bones after a hard day's work. Also one can see many flowerpots at the front doors and boxes of flowers in window sills. Flower and vegetable gardens by the side of the buildings, apple, pear and cherry trees, and berry bushes full of fruits all around... just so quaint and peaceful. If I could only travel back in time, I would love to experience that serene and stressless life once more. Of course that stressless life I remember had to do with the fact that I was only 5 and 6 years old while living there, and at that young age what is there to worry about?

In Germany, the farm houses are mostly nestled, or clustered together, thus so many small villages. The acres that each farmer owns are located all around the perimeters of the village, some closer, some further away. Each farmer, of course, knows which piece of acre or acres belong to him, exactly where his property starts and ends. So, each farmer and his family go to their respective fields and work those places, either plowing, or seeding, or harvesting. In my grandfather's youth and even still when my mother, brother, sister and I lived there during WW2, they were working with horses and oxen pulling the huge wheeled wooden wagons hitched to their teams.

Most of the families in Appensee were related one way or another (distant cousins?). Their livestock (horses, cows, pigs, etc) were kept in stalls right on the main floor of the main farmhouse. The 2nd and 3rd floors were for the families. Having the animals on the main floor accomplished two things. One, it kept their houses cozy warm in the cold months (what a smart and efficient heating device), and two, filled the houses with an "oh so delicious aroma"!

Each homestead had a huge never ending pile of manure from all the livestock piled right outside the house, as close as possible, so it didn't have to be carried so far when the stalls on the main floor were being cleaned out, which was a daily chore. Those very "rustic" piles of manure always had colonies of big fat flies swarming about. And in those days there were no screens in the windows and the windows were opened frequently to air the house out. I can't imagine why the "airing out," since the smell would always be there as long as the animals lived in the house. The Germans are very clean people, and it is ingrained in them to clean, clean, clean, and so one has to air out the house on a daily basis, whether it needs it or not. Well, when the windows were open, those flies, being very sociable, came in to visit us... especially in the kitchen where there were always lots of good foods about. There were no refrigerators then, so everything was sitting out on counters and tables. Some of the food was covered with dish towels. The flies, being no dummies, knew in no uncertain terms how to get under those towels. They were fast, faster than you or I, and they were so annoying.

We never got sick from the flies sitting on the dung heap and then sitting on our foods. I guess we were conditioned to it from the very start of our lives and thus were immune to many germs. In those days we were not so concerned about washing our hands all the time (we handled all sorts of stuff) except before dinner. We were just fine when we lived there during the war years. It's all a matter of getting integrated into a certain way of life. You want to get an idea of what it was like? Everyone should try living next to a dung heap once in their life, just for the unique experience. A one-time thrill. I hear it helps build character.

Most farmers also own dogs and kittens and rabbits. The rooster's cheery "kick-a-ri-ki" wakes everyone up every morning at the first hint of daylight. That is the most reliable alarm clock one can own.

Note: this has nothing to do with Appensee but have you noticed a rooster raised in Germany hollers "kick-a-ri-ki"? In contrast a rooster brought up in America says "cock-a-doodle-do".

Where did they learn what to say? There should be a book called "Roosters of the World: and who taught them how to crow?" Perhaps that could be my next book. Just think, a lot of travel to all the nations and a lot of listening to rooster calls and, of course, eating breakfasts with eggs. Just a thought. Back to my story...

We loved to go out to the chicken coops with a basket and gather all the eggs they had laid. Fresh eggs for breakfast... yummy! There were vegetable gardens close by the house and flower gardens and fruit trees. Living on the farm during WW2 was very fortunate for us. We had no hardship during the war as far as food was concerned. We had all the fruits, vegetables, meats from the butchering the farmers did themselves and fresh milk from the cows. We were very lucky. Yes, indeed! A lot of my peers did not have it that good.

Most every farm house also had a cold cellar close by. A cold cellar is built into the ground. It's dark and cool under the ground so that the farmers can keep food over the winter months without spoiling, such as potatoes, home canned carrots, fruits, smoked meats, cheeses, and homemade cider, etc. The cold cellar looks somewhat like the storm cellar in "The Wizard of Oz" when Auntie Em and family ran for shelter from the storm and quickly closed the big wooden doors behind them.

So to sum up my first chapter in this book, I hope I gave you all some insight into that little village called Appensee, where our forefathers were born, lived, played, worked and died. I was just a little girl of 5 - 6. Of course, you won't be able to have those exact same special feelings as I have... all the experiences that come from living there and among so many other things, sleeping just one floor above the livestock, often hearing "moos" and "brey-ey eys" and "oinks" and "meows" during the nights and in the early morning hearing the roosters waking us up with their "kick-a-ri-kis". And during the day perhaps one could take pleasure from picking a poppy from the field full of poppies and do as we did, take the flower petals and turn them upside down to make it look like a skirt and pretend it was a little girl. Or just lay in the grass lazying about,

listening to all the chatter and buzzing of creatures big and small, chewing on a tall blade of grass, brushing away a fly or two, soaking in the sun, so carefree... just waiting for someone to call you for dinner or lunch... aaaaah... life was much simpler then... such was Heaven.

I am 72 now, but would give everything to be that 5 year old girl just once again, living that carefree life and snuggling under those soft featherbeds at night, feeling so safe and loved while getting whiffs of the warm farm smells that found it's way up the stairs to my bedroom just when I was sinking into dream world... not a worry in my head.

I had a chance to visit the old homestead in Appensee in the year 2011 and I could not believe my eyes. The village is still small with just a few newer houses added. The system is still the same, such as the fields being all over the place; but most of the houses now have their livestock if any in barns next to or behind their main house. The houses have been modernized; they actually have bathrooms now with a *flushing* toilet. The roads, still only 2 of them, are now covered with asphalt. But most of the houses kept their beautiful woodwork on their walls outside. So, my Appensee, even 70 years later still has pretty much the same flavor. Most all the people I knew back in 1942 or so are now gone. I was so lucky to find one 90 year old lady which I did not recognize, but she knew who I was and invited me in for some coffee and cake. She was so delighted that she would meet me once more when I live so far away... way in America. We talked of old times and all the funny things us kids did and the war years and she told me that there is only 1 farmer left in Appensee, the others are working at different trades. She married into the Junker's family and was the daughter-in-law to Marie Junkers who I knew as a pretty old woman back then. Of course most everyone seemed old to me as I was only 5. Anyhow, a lot of reminiscing and several cups of coffees later together with some yummy homemade cakes she had baked for the weekend, we parted with the very best intentions to stay in touch.

The following made up the farmhouses in the village Appensee:

- *The Muellerbauers (the homestead of my grandfather)*
- *The Schimmelbauers (my grandmothers homestead)*
- *The Schneiderbauers (the last farm at the end of the village and somehow related to us)*
- *The Junkers (situated in the middle of the village and they were also related to us)*
- *about 4 or 5 more farmhouses (also distant cousins)*

CHAPTER 2

GRANDFATHER & GRANDMOTHER



Grandmother and Grandfather August and Margaret Schmidt.



Grandfather's Home in Appensee.

My grandfather, **August Schmidt**, born April 28, 1884, was raised in this house. This was and is still called the MUELLERSBAUER HOF in Appensee. A Mueller is someone who is in the business of grinding wheat into flour. Perhaps at one time, long ago, one of our forefathers was doing just that. At the time of my grandfather's birth, however, his father, Johann-Georg, was the first-born of his parents and therefore inherited the farm and the livestock. This house

had four stories: on the main floor were the stalls for the horses, cows and other animals. The second and third floors housed the family, and there was also an attic to store things such as spinning wheels when they were not in use. I also remember that each bedroom had a commode (a small dresser) on which stood a big ceramic bowl and a pitcher for water. The bowl was your sink. There was no running water in the bedrooms. The way you got “running water” into the bedroom was by taking the pitcher from the commode to the kitchen sink, filling it with water, and then “run like hell” (running water) down the long hallway to your bedroom where you quickly transferred the water from your pitcher to your bowl. With a little bit of luck you were lucky if the water was still on the warm side. The commode had a towel bar made of wood on each side. So this was where you washed up and brushed your teeth and combed your hair. If you needed a bath, perhaps once a week (if you were lucky), you would fill a big portable tin tub on the kitchen floor with water you heated on the wood stove in the kitchen... and you would hope that no one came into the kitchen while you were bathing. Speaking of the kitchen, it had a wood stove for cooking, where you had to constantly feed the firebox with wood. It also had a huge built-in wall oven made of tiles. The wall oven went from floor to ceiling. This oven was also fueled with wood. The opening was so huge it reminded me of Hansel and Gretel and the witch who put Hansel into the oven. It was a deep oven. They had these huge wooden long handled oven utensils (the end of the handles were carved into a thin round wooden piece that was about the size of a large pizza), which they used to slide cakes, breads, and other baked dinners in and out of the deep oven.

On the other side of the oven wall was the formal living room so that the same oven heat from the kitchen also heated the living room. But on the living room side, the oven was faced with more ornate, beautiful tiles. Thus, that living room was the only heated room in the house besides the kitchen. The featherbeds came in very handy in the winter months and also the heat that rose from downstairs where the animals slept in their stalls.

I remember the house had a long corridor (hallway) that led to a very primitive bathroom,

which was a little room, perhaps 4' x 4' with a boxed-in shelf, knee-high, that went across the rear of the room and was built-in. Now picture this: the top of the box had an oval hole cutout, the shape of a toilet seat, where one sat down on to go to the bathroom. This hole went all the way down deep somewhere; you could hear the sound when things arrived at the bottom of the pit. It always stank to high heaven... but we were used to it. And this was the only toilet in the house with all those people. I can imagine the kids running down the long hallway to the room hollering what would be the equivalent of "dibs", in German of course, trying to get there first.

These were the good old times. Everything was prepared from scratch and you always served homemade soup before the main dinner, which was served at noon and not in the evening. The farmers came home from whatever field they were working in to eat their warm meal (there were no store bought canned foods - only what was home canned). You also baked all your own breads, rolls, cakes, etc. Of course, when the girls got a little older, the mother had some help, and I can imagine that they had to help plenty. And I bet you 100 German Marks that the boys were put to work on that farm all day long. But life was simpler in other ways, there were no TVs, no movie houses, no cars, no telephones, no texting, but maybe a radio. More on that later in the story.

My grandmother, **Margaret Frank Schmidt**, born July 23, 1884, was raised in this farm house called the SCHIMMELBAUERS HOF. A Schimmel is an old workhorse. Perhaps the forefathers were known to keep old horses on their homestead?

This farm house still stands at the same site and above the front entrance, on the frame, were carved several year numbers, the oldest being the year 1528 along with the initials J.G.R. We assume that was the first Johann Georg Rueck that lived there. This number was followed by other years carved in with the same initials, J.G.R., since each farmer's first born son was called the same: Johann Georg Rueck. The last number was 1820 when my great grandfather on my grandmother's side was the owner of the farm. Unfortunately when I was visiting the homestead in 2011 and looking for the initials on that door frame, I was told by the current owner that he



Grandmother's Home in Appensee.

gave this piece of framing away to some relative that came by when they were refurbishing the old house and replacing the entrance door. He could not tell me who that was. Too bad, I sure would have liked a snap shot of that piece of framing. I may still search for it. It's interesting history.

My great-grandfather was born in 1820 and was married to Margarete Gross, born in 1830. They had 8 children of which 2 immigrated to America: Johann Georg, born 1858 and Jacob, born 1865. Both came to Canby, Oregon. From those 2 brothers that immigrated to the US, we have several family members in Portland cemeteries with the name Rueck. Another son, Johann Jacob, died after being hit by a stone during the construction of an addition to the farmhouse. He was only 2 years old. Johann's brother, Johann Michael, studied to be a minister. When he was finished with his schooling, he died suddenly just 6 weeks before his wedding date. The other

four children were girls. The eldest was my great grandmother Margarete Rueck (Mutterle) and her sisters Rosine, Regine, and Babette. Because there were no sons left to inherit the farmhouse, my great grandmother Margarete, being the oldest, then inherited the Schimmelbauers Hof. Soon after she inherited the homestead, she married George Friedrich Frank. They were blessed with 7 children: Two girls, Margaret and Emma, and five boys, Friedrich, Hermann, Georg, Gottlob and Karl. One of those boys also immigrated to the USA... Uncle George went to Salem, Oregon and stayed single all his life. Mutterle's husband unfortunately died early in a tragic accident with the workhorses and when none of the 7 children had any desire to take over the farm, the homestead was, regrettably, finally sold. I understand that the people that now live in that Bauernhof are in some way still related to us, distant cousins? Mutterle later went to live with her eldest daughter, my grandmother, in Stuttgart... "Mutterle" means little mother, or can be translated into English as Mommy instead of Mother. I was so lucky, not only did I get to live in the same house with my parents, but also my grandparents and my great grandmother.

From the photo on page 7 you can see that my grandfather and my grandmother lived very close to each other, only 3 houses apart. They were born in the same year, and I am sure they were playmates from an early age on, perhaps walked to school together and what not. Some 14 or 15 years later this friendship developed into a love story... and a great match... the best!

It is said that the daughter with the name Salome, from my great- great-great- grandfather on my grandmother's side, was a little "touched" (crazy) and that she had a girlfriend also named Salome in the neighborhood and that she was similarly touched. Whether this was really so, we'll never know. All the records of her visits to the doctors were destroyed during a fire in WW2. One wonders if all the marriages between cousins had anything to do with it (feeling touched, that is).

GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER MOVE TO STUTTGART

Because my grandfather was not the eldest son he could not inherit the farm from his parents. So when he was old enough to be on his own, he received 3,000 Marks (a lot of money in those days) from his parents and was off to start a new life for himself. The romance between my grandfather and my grandmother blossomed and they got engaged and later in 1908 married in Appensee. After the wedding, they moved to the big city of Stuttgart where at first my grandfather worked for a meat plant and my grandmother worked in a factory, sewing women's undergarments, such as bras and girdles. They had 2 daughters, Gertrud, born in 1909, and Emma (my mother), born in 1911. During those first years of my grandparent's marriage, they managed to put money into savings even though my grandfather earned only 18 Marks. This must not have been easy, after all he was supporting a wife and two children on these 18 Marks per week. To give you an idea how this money correlated, 1/4 - 1/2 of his money went for rent



The house that Grandfather built in Stuttgart.

while the rest went to food and clothing. Speaking of food, one bockwurst cost 12 pennies... there were 100 Pfennigs or pennies in 1 Mark.

In 1914 or 1915, my grandfather enlisted in the Army and fought in the 1st World War where only a few weeks after he had enlisted he was badly wounded and lost his left arm. He only had a stump, enough to later be fitted with an artificial arm. Because of this injury, he was sent back home. It was then, we believe, he and grandmother built a big apartment house that has eight 3-bedroom apartments and two 2-bedroom apartments, along with a big corner room at the street level for the grocery store. This house is still there (in 2012) at Burgstall Strasse 6 in Heslach, a suburb of Stuttgart.

My grandmother and my great grandmother, Mutterle, ran the store. I heard from Tante Gertrud (my mother's sister) that on the first day the grocery store was opened for business, my Grandmother said a little prayer, translated from German into English "Please, dear God, don't let anyone come to the store to shop." She apparently was a bit shy and afraid to be a business



Grandfather & Grandmother's store (Them standing in doorway).

woman... never having done this before. But, not to worry, she proved herself to be a good store owner and a great business lady.

My grandfather did not work in the grocery store because of his handicap (only one arm), but instead found steady employment with the city of Stuttgart. This was during the depression. Whenever grandfather found out he could get potatoes or flour or what-have-you, he would quickly go to the source and scoop it up for their customers. He had to be very resourceful and quick. He was a clever man, and so well liked by everyone who met him, that he made many contacts with the right kind of people. Some of the items he went to get, he had to haul back to the store with a wheelbarrow as there were very few cars and trucks then. The farmer who gave him the potatoes was an acquaintance of my grandfather. When things got better later, my grandfather went to see him on his farm to thank him and offer him more money. That farmer was so impressed, he asked my grandfather "Where then are the other 9?" This goes back to the Bible when Jesus healed the lepers... it seems there were ten he healed and only 1 came back to thank him. I am telling you this to show you what an honest man my grandfather was. He was a man with integrity and he was loved by everyone.

Later on, when my mother and her sister were older, they also helped in the business on the days they were home from school. My aunt, Tante Gertrud (my mother's sister) told me about how when she was too ill to go to school she would sit in the bed and smooth out the huge paper money on top of the featherbed. This is the money they took in at the store. You see, the depression led to inflation where everything cost lots and lots of money and they had money in denominations of millions and billions of Marks. My Aunt Gertrude put it this way: "We became millionaires and then billionaires." The paper money was so large that people had to fold it several times every which way so they could get it into their wallets or purses. And every so often, the money bills needed to be ironed to straighten them out again. This was usually my mother's and her sister's job.



Grandfather & Grandmother as I remember them.





Grandfather as I remember him.

Prices for goods changed daily during inflation, and at the store they got a new multiplication factor every day right after the mid-day pause (the store was closed for a couple of hours every day (noon until 2 p.m.). So every time someone bought anything, say a packet of salt, my grandmother had to convert the price and multiply it with the multiplication factor. That packet of salt was perhaps 20 pfennig, now multiply it by 10,220! And all this without an adding machine, can you even imagine it? No iPad, no calculator... no, it had to be all done by hand and your brain for each and every item the customers bought. What a nightmare that must have been for store owners and customers alike. My aunt Gertrud told me that for her confirmation, her uncle gave her 10,000 DM (Deutsche Mark), and that her mother had to add 3,000 DM so that she could buy a sweater. Around that same time, my grandmother had to take a lengthy trip with the train. When she returned from that trip and wanted to take the streetcar from the train station to her home, she had to pay more for that streetcar ticket than she paid for the total round trip on the train. One never knew when the price changed, so you never knew how much anything cost until you had to pay for it. I hope that never happens in our lifetime. So many people were struggling. And then the reverse happened with the monetary system. My aunt said that after they had been dealing with millions and billions of Deutsche Marks, something finally had to give, what she called the “implosion effect” when all of a sudden, just like that, one million Marks became only one Deutsche Mark.

CHAPTER 3

SISTERS



Gertrud Schmidt & Emma Schmidt.



From top: My mother Emma, a friend and Tante Gertrud.



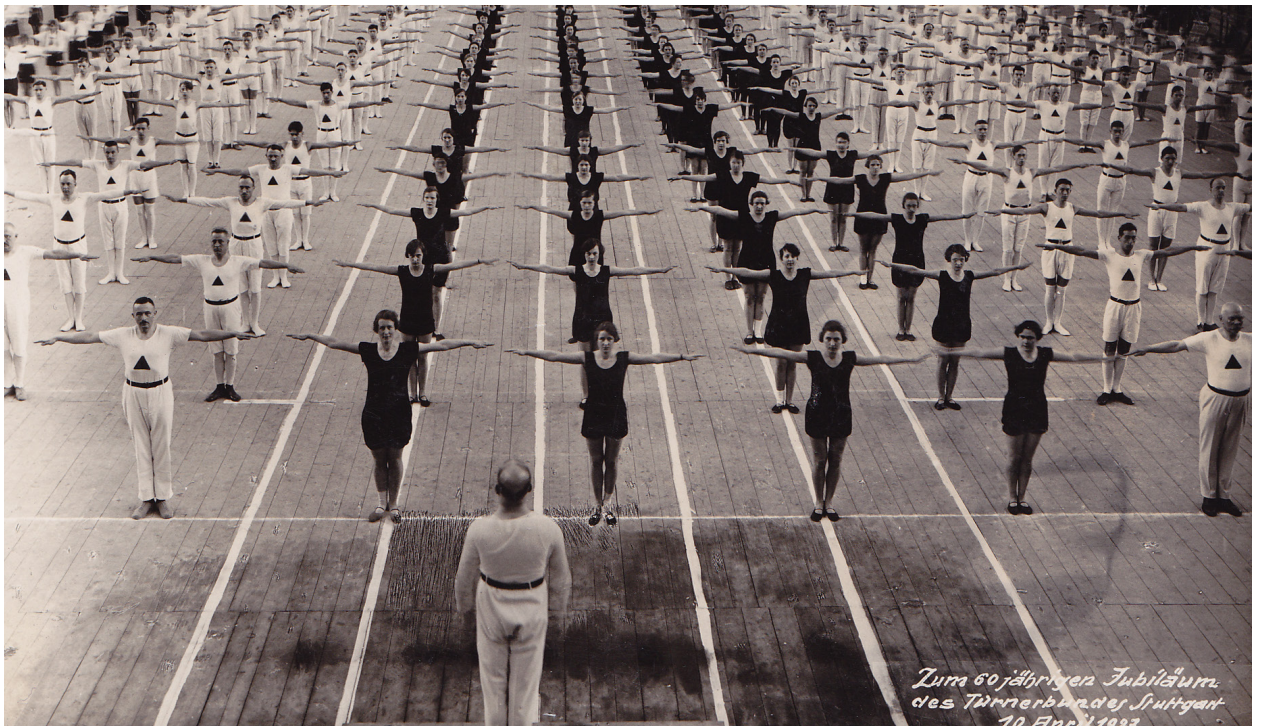
From left: 2 friends, Tante Gertrud, and my mother Emma.



My mother Emma.



My mother Emma sitting. Standing directly behind her is Mutterle and Tante Emma.



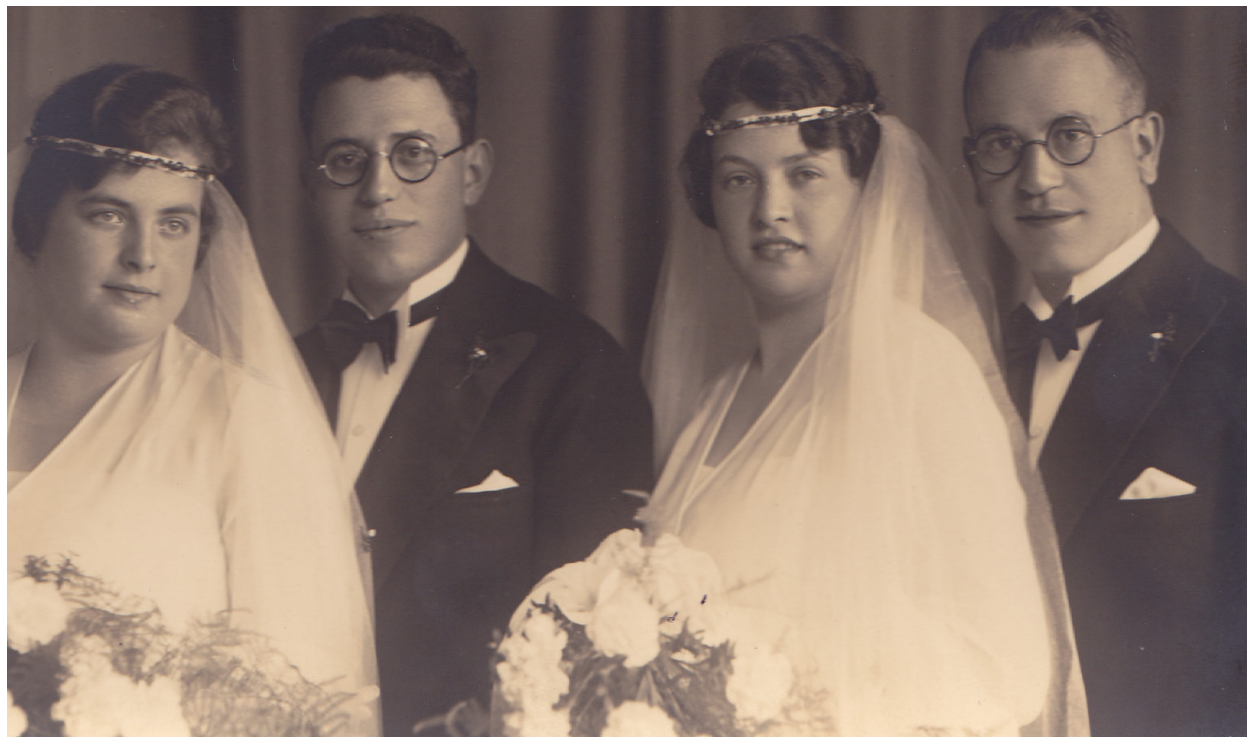
Stuttgarter Sportsclub: Where my mother Emma and her sister Gertrud met their future husbands.



My mother Emma is front row 2nd from left.

Let me tell you a fairy tale. Once upon a time, there were two sisters, **Gertrud**, my mother's sister (born in 1909, and my mother **Emma** (born in 1911). These two sisters were closer than any sisters in the whole universe. They were inseparable... just like glue. All of Gertrud's friends were also Emma's friends, and the other way around. It was like one happy family.

In their late teens they joined the Stuttgarter Sports Club where they were involved in gymnastics and swimming. It was at that club that they both met their future husbands. I would say that those four had a lot in common. The sisters not only met their husbands at the same place, they later got engaged on the same day - at the same time and place, and then had a double wedding just a year later. But it does not stop there, they even went on their honeymoon together! This was unheard of! But it really really happened. And then they lived happily ever after. At least we hope so. The End.



Emma & Hernann Rominger.

Gertrud & Karl Rossle.

But all kidding aside, someone told me that my Tante Gertrud was always the “know-it-all” tomboy and the adventurous one. In contrast to my mother who was the quiet and gentle one.

Their wedding date was July 23, 1931, the same as their mother's (my grandmother's) birthday. This was actually the date they were married by a judge at City Hall. Their double wedding in church and the big wedding party was on August 29, only 3 days after they all moved into their brand new apartments at the Villa in Stuttgart-Kaltental, Fuchswald Strasse 31.

From my Tante Gertrud's account of the wedding, it was a grand affair. The reception was held in a restaurant which was located in the woods about 2 miles from the new Villa Sonneck. They even had a Limo for the brides and grooms, and hired a bus for the relatives and friends to be chauffeured to and from the reception. This restaurant had a huge capacity and lots of outside terrace seating. For their honeymoon get-away they chose the Alps. They had planned to go to Italy, but all the borders to the different countries from Germany had been closed and no one was allowed to pass.

Having three families living in the same house was convenient, but sometimes could be trying. I got this information from my Tante Gertrud's diary. At the beginning of their marriage Tante Gertrud's husband Karl had a night job, an irregular hours type job. Often the two would sleep in half the mornings, much to the dismay of my grandmother (her mother) who could not understand how a responsible housewife could sleep in so late. I mean there were chores to be done... go to the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker. Oops, not really, but there were all these individual stores; a dairy store to get milk, eggs, and cheeses; a butcher shop for fresh cuts of meats and wursts; a nursery where you got all your fresh vegetables; a bakery for all the breads, rolls, cakes, etc. And last but not least, a regular store where you could buy lots of things, including noodles, rice, flower, salt, shoelaces, matches, and whatever you might need for the day. All this was done quickly every morning in time to get home and start cooking. That main meal at noon always included soup, which also was made daily. The evening meal was mostly just cold cuts, cheeses, salads and good bread. The refrigerators in those days were very small. But it was not necessary to have a large one, since the Hausfrau went shopping every single day, so everything was fresh and oh so nutritious.

Bertrud Schmidt

Karl Rößle

Oberpostsekretär

Emma Schmidt

Hermann Rominger

Versicherungsbeamter

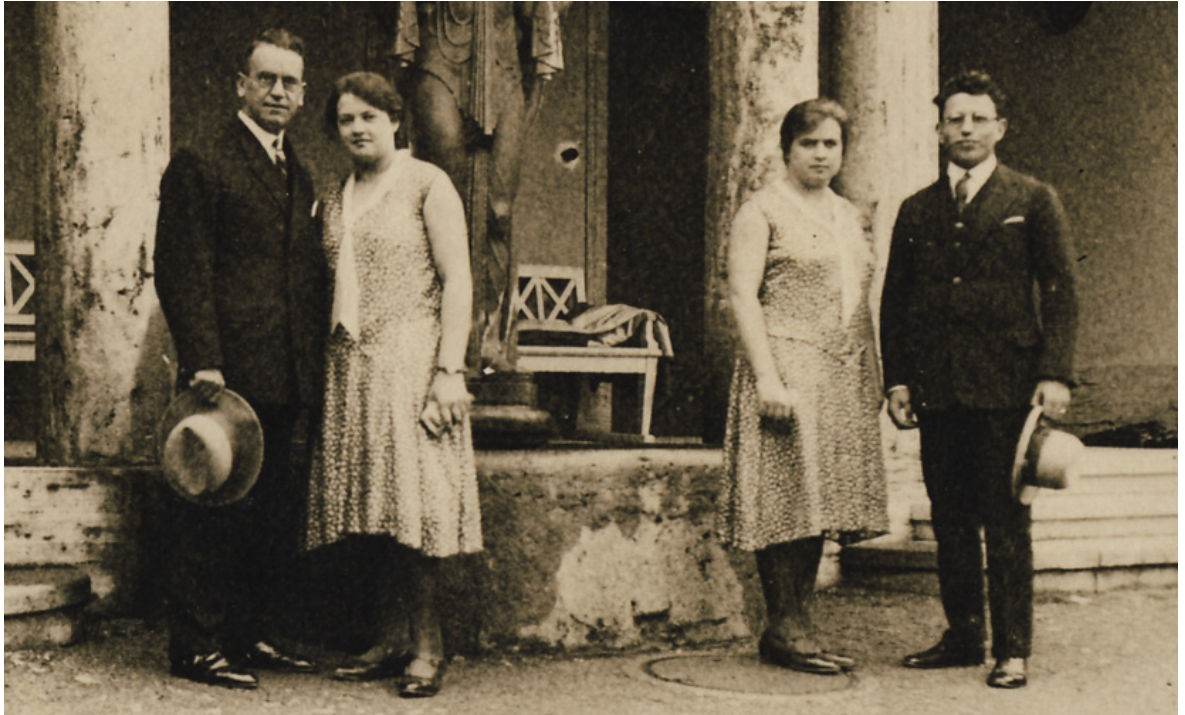
Verlobte

Stuttgart, Burgstallstraße 6, den 24. August 1930

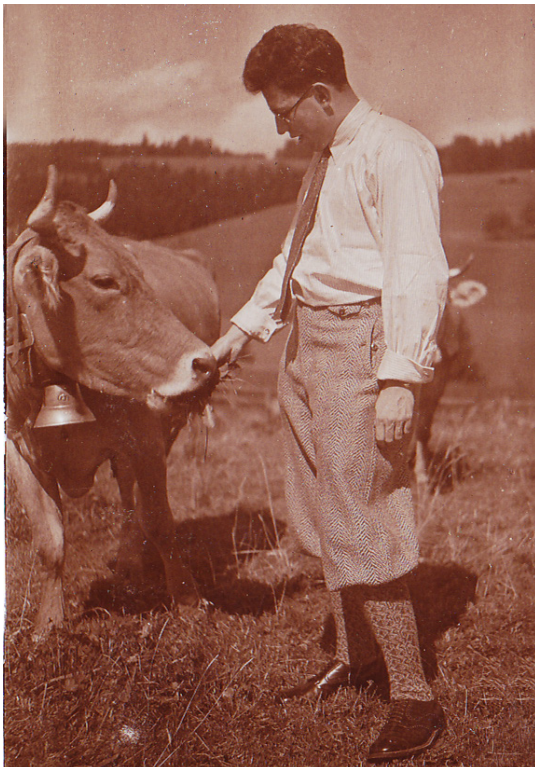
Double engagement announcement.



Engagement at Baerenschlossle.



On their double honeymoon.



My father on honeymoon.



Returning home from honeymoon.



The Schmidt Family: August, Emma, Gertrud & Margeret.

CHAPTER 4

MOTHER & FATHER



Mother and father's wedding photograph.

MY MOTHER – EMMA SCHMIDT

My mother was born on February 1, 1911 in Stuttgart-Gaisburg. At a very young age she was fortunate to be able to take piano lessons. Later, as a young woman, my mother was accepted at the Conservatory of Music in Stuttgart (not unlike Julliard in NYC). She was very gifted, so I've been told. Unfortunately, because my mother was always very ill and in and out of hospitals and away for cures when I was a little tyke, I cannot remember ever hearing her play the piano. That is one of the saddest points in my entire life since music means so much to me. But I know from the music literature she left behind that she played some really complicated classical music. She graduated from the Conservatory and later, after she was married, was looking forward to share her knowledge by giving private piano lessons.

Sadly, my father did not allow his wife to work since that would make him look poorly as a breadwinner and provider for his family. So my mother's dream was squashed, just like that! She must have been so disappointed.

Not that my father was mean; this is how things were looked at in those days. (We have come a long way since the 1930's, haven't we?)

I was told that my mother was a very kind and gentle person. Unfortunately, she was always sick. Whenever she was at home from the hospital, she was bedridden. I remember a nurse having to come to our house to give my mother her daily shots. She had tuberculosis of the kidneys and also leukemia. My brother Hans-Joerg, when he was only six years old, helped out



My mother Emma.

around the house and took care of my sister and myself (two and four years of age).

MY FATHER – HERMANN ROMINGER

My father was born on January 20, 1906 in Ebingen. His parents were Franz Rominger and Katharine Luisa Rominger, born Binder. I never knew his parents, they died early in life; first his mother and then his father during a bombing attack early on during World War II. I remember once being in Ebingen when one of my Dad's relatives got married. I was the flower girl in that wedding. Someone in that Rominger family owned a huge Knitting Mill where they manufactured fine cotton knits, mostly undergarments. Those relatives were very rich, owned a Mercedes, and I remember their daughters, cousins of ours, being very stuck up and spoiled rotten. My father had only 1 sister and I also can't remember ever seeing her. Someone in my father's family, either his grandfather or great grandfather, committed suicide. But little was said



My father (in middle) playing soccer.



Wearing his army uniform.

about it, as was the custom in those days. No one mentioned the bad horrific things, they were safely hidden deep in the back of a closet.

My father was a happy-go-lucky type fellow, always making jokes and laughing a lot. He also loved to play his mouth harmonica every chance he got. He carried it with him everywhere. One could never tell when it would come in handy. My father also liked to sing and recite poetry. He worked for a well-known insurance company, the Aachener and Muenchener Versicherung in Stuttgart. Later, along with all healthy young males, he was forced to join Hitler's Army. I believe that was in the year 1940, when I was only about 3 years old.



My mother Emma and me.



My father (circa 1979) playing harmonica.

CHAPTER 5

STUTT GART-KALTENTAL



"Villa Haus Sonneck" (The sunny corner house) at Fuchswald Strasse 31, Kaltental.

When my mother Emma and my Tante Gertrud both became engaged to be married my grandfather tried to get them each an apartment in his big house. There were 10 apartments in that house plus their grocery store which was at street-level. However, I guess they were all on lease agreements, so that he could not free any of the apartments he owned. So it was in 1930 that my grandparents decided to sell the large apartment house with the grocery store and build a brand new 3 family house in the suburb of Stuttgart, called "Kaltental". There, they built their gorgeous villa at Fuchswald Strasse 31. This spot is on a hill and at a bend of a winding road. It's a huge lot and was surrounded with a white picket fence and at the gate to the villa was a plaque with the name "HAUS SONNECK", which means "House Sunny Corner." It had terraced upper and lower gardens.



Front Entrance at Fuchswald Strasse 31.

My grandparents were great gardeners and the gardens were filled with bushes and flowers, terraced with stonewalls and steps and walkways. It had a patio in the upper garden and a terrace in the lower garden. There was a huge cherry tree and several apple trees and other fruit trees. So throughout the summers we had plenty of fresh fruits and berries to pick from. This house consisted of 3 stories, plus coal cellars and wine cellars and an attic. They all moved into this house on August 26, 1931, three days before the "doppel Hochzeit" (double wedding). My grandparents build this villa for themselves and their 2 daughters. So, Emma and Hermann, my parents, lived in the 3rd story apartment. One more story up was the attic. My grandparents lived in the 2nd story apartment, the middle, and my Tante Gertrud and her husband Karl lived in the 1st floor apartment. Below that apartment was the big Laundry Room, also the wood and coal cellars, one for each apartment in the house, and a few steps down were the wine cellars, where they kept huge wooden barrels of fermented apple cider and potato bins and all the home canned fruits and vegetables in glass jars. Those cellars came in handy during the war-years when we spent many nights in them... waiting... all scared to death... for the bombing attacks to stop. Our parents built several bunk beds to have enough room for us kids to sleep there.

The walk-out basement had a big laundry room. There was a huge wash cauldron (tub) filled with water that was heated on top of a coal stove. There were big tubs to rinse the clothes in and then just a short walk out the door to the terrace where the wash was hung on the clothes lines. Next to the laundry room was a finished room, which was later occupied by my brother when my sister and I were getting too old to have our brother in the same room with us.

The garage was built into the hill and the terrace was the top of the garage and was attached to the lower gardens but separate from the house, with a back stairway going up to the front door of the house. My grandparents were one of the very few people who had a garage and a car to put into it. I guess you could say they were upper class at that time. My grandmother, my aunt and my mother, along with their husbands, all learned to drive that car... a black convertible Ford Eifel. My grandfather could not drive due to the fact he had only one arm and so he bought the



Our Ford Eifel. Grandmother at the wheel outside our garage.

car with the understanding that my grandmother would learn to drive it. And that she did.

As time went on, the families grew and grew until there were a total of 8 children in that villa. My Tante Gertrud and Karl Roessle had 5 children: Ursula, Manfred, Roland, Ulrich and Helmut. My parents had us three: Hans-Joerg, Jutta (Aunt Judy to you all) and Christa (me).

Three girls and five boys - almost a baseball team. Just as there was a double engagement, a double wedding and a double honeymoon... naturally, the children were also planned to arrive around the same time. First, my mother had Hans-Joerg, born April 6, 1933, and my Tante Gertrud had Ursula, born only 14 days later on April 20th, 1933.

In 1935 Tante Gertrud had Manfred, my mother had Jutta. In 1936 my cousin Roland arrived, in 1937 it was me and so on, except my mother stopped having children and Tante Gertrud had 2 more, Ulrich (Uli) born in 1938 and Helmut born in 1940.



1933 - Hans & Ursula's diaper display.



Ursula, Manne, Roland, Uli and Helmut.



Hans, Jutta and me.

What a great time us children had together, we always had someone to play with. There was never a boring moment. And what fun it was to have our grandparents in the same house.

There were minor problems among the grownups here and there with the in-laws in the same house, but for us kids it was fantastic... so when we got angry at our parents, we could always depend on our grandparents to give us a big hug and calm us down. Thinking back, I absolutely adored my early childhood, with Grossmutter and Grossvater right there with us... after all, they practically raised us three with our mother gone... I miss them and I will always love them and think fondly of them.



Relatives walking up our steep hill.

SUNDAYS

Almost every Sunday afternoon someone would come visit us, mostly relatives would drop in unannounced (no telephones in those days). Actually, my grandparents were the only ones in our neighborhood who had a telephone. The relatives and friends had none, so they could not call ahead so easily. Shortly after the company arrived, there was the smell of freshly brewed coffee along with all sorts of home baked tortes. On nice days, we all would gather outside at our "Sitzplaetzle" (sitting place or in English the "patio") in the upper garden under the big cherry

tree. Around the patio was a tall green hedge so we were private from the outside world. Often the grown-ups played cards or just visited while us kids tried to stay out of trouble. We never ran out of games to play, or as my sister Jutta (Judy) remembers, putting on plays such as Haensel and Gretel for the families and our neighbors. We were serious actors, we charged an appropriate



About to go for a walk.



On one of our walks through the woods. I am second from left between Grandmother and Grandfather.



On our walk: L-R: Jutta, Roland, me, Hans, Manne.

amount, which would buy us candy later. Those shows took place on the terrace. I cannot for the life of me remember which parts I played. If only I could find one of the old programs, that would quickly settle the matter.

WALKS

Many weekends, weather permitting after the main meal at noon, most of us children, often with my grandparents and/or aunts and uncles, would go on a leisurely walk, usually in the woods. We would start out by the Wegle (path) which began right across the street from our house. The Wegle led us right into the woods. Those walks were the greatest! We could run all over the place, balancing on a dead tree trunk, or old bridges, and looking at lots of little creatures crawling around the moss. Often we would end up singing and, as we got older, harmonizing with each other, sort of like the Van Trapp Family from *The Sound of Music*. My father always had his mouth harmonica in his pocket and just like magic it would appear. He loved to play for us and we would keep in step with the rhythm of the music. Sometimes we would end up at a little forest locale where us kids would have a lemonade or ice cream while the adults would quench their thirst with a beer or a glass of wine. I still have so many great memories of those walks in the afternoons. And I was only 3 and 4 years old then. Amazing what I can remember from way back when.

PICKING CHERRIES AND APPLES AND MAKING MOSCHT

In the upper garden was a huge cherry tree which we climbed, especially when the cherries were ripe. Everyone was in the tree, adults and children alike. We each had a big bucket or basket to fill up with cherries. But most of us kids were sick by the end of the job from eating so many of the cherries. Grandmother and our mothers would then can most of them so we would have cherries throughout the year for cakes or for desserts. The canned cherries were taken to the cellar until needed. I loved pancakes with cherries, my favorite... Yum! We also had several apple trees, and when the apples were ripe, we helped pick them and loaded them into huge baskets

which we then carried up the hill to the place where they had an apple press. This was lots of fun for us kids to see and help with. The fresh sweet cider was put into the wooden barrels and brought to our cellars. At first it is sweet apple cider and is very tasty. But after several weeks and months of fermenting, it turns into an alcoholic drink which is called "Moscht". To us children it tasted like Yuck! However, the grownups seemed to prefer it to anything else. I remember so well, soon as we were old enough to maneuver the stairs, we were often sent down to the cellars with a glass pitcher to fill up with Moscht. That was ok during the day-time, but when it was nighttime it got a little spooky for us. We then had to turn the light on for the stairway down to the cellar. The lights in the stairway were timed, so when we left our upstairs apartment, we just made it down one flight to the next apartment and we would quickly push the timer button again until we reached the cellar. The cellar always looked scary to me, especially when no one else was around... you know "there could be bogeymen". But as you can see, none of them ever caught me, I survived! Yeaah...

My grandfather and my father loved that drink called Mosht and always had it with their sandwiches and cold cuts which we usually had at supper time.

A FOND MEMORY - LILACS

At the back entrance to the house right when you come out of the laundry room, in the lower garden and between two big lilac bushes (trees) was a huge wooden swing just begging to be used, and past that was the terrace above the garage. I still remember those times on that swing, swinging to my heart's content, without a care in this whole wide world, just swinging back and forth and breathing in the wonderful and strong aroma of the lilacs in bloom. To this day, this is my favorite flower... it brings back my childhood to me... a time when all was right with me in this world, my mother was still alive, and all my cousins were there to play with. Perfect!

FATHER'S THEME SONG

I remember my father and my uncle Carl had their own short theme song each, which they

whistled soon as they came walking around the last bend where they could see the house. They came home from work with Streetcar No.1 to the "Fuchswaldstrasse" Haltestelle (stop) and then had to walk up the steep hill every lunch time. This unique system, the whistling of the theme song was to tell us all that whenever we hear this tune being whistled, that our father would soon come through the front-door of our apartment and our Mom would know it's time to put dinner on the table. And we'd better be there to sit down for our meal together. I cannot remember my uncle's tune, but my father's tune went like this:



SHOPPING

Our mothers went shopping daily for groceries. Everything was fresh. They had their shopping baskets on their arms and off they went to the bakery, the dairy, the butcher and other stores for sundries like flour, sugar, rice, tea, coffee, etc. Many times when we were home from school, or were asked to help, we went along on those trips. Some of us were sent off on our own. All those stores were within walking distance. The warm meals were served at noon. That meant our mothers had to start cooking as soon as they returned from the shopping, to get the soup started. Soups and everything else was cooked from scratch. So you needed a bone or two or a piece of meat to make the stock. The evening cold supper, or "vesper" as we called it, consisted of breads, sandwich meats, cheeses, salads, etc. Sometimes when we children were sent to the stores, we started eating some bites of the breads or wursts before we got home... that was a no-no, but it all smelled so good and we were hungry, and it was such a huge temptation.

PINOCHLE AT GRANDFATHER'S PLACE

My grandfather loved to play pinochle. Whenever there were enough people around, they

would play a game or more. My grandfather, because he only had 1 arm, always had several empty open cigar boxes stacked in front of him where he lined up the cards so no one could see them. I remember lots of cigar smoke and my father smoking a pipe, and of course, pitchers of Mosht on the table. Sometimes, my brother and my older cousins were also playing cards at that table. There was a lot of fun and kidding going on along with some serious competition. You see, there was no TV in those days, so we played lots of games and cards and sang and danced to records on the old Victrola which you had to wind up by hand, or we listened to the radio. The pinochle players kept track of their games, and for a while they had a running score for several months. Now that is serious playing!

LAUNDRY DAY

Laundry day at “Villa Sunny Corner” was once a month only. That’s when all three women, Grandmother, my mother and my Tante Gertrud would take all their dirty laundry downstairs to the laundry room in the basement. There they had to heat the water in the huge washing kettle (cauldron) with coals and wood and stir the wash with huge wooden paddles. After a certain time of washing in the hot kettle, the clothes went into another huge tub to be rinsed. Then it got wrung out in some kind of wringer machine which was operated by hand and elbow grease. After that, they hung the washed laundry either outside on the terrace on the lines, or, when the weather did not cooperate, they hung the wash up on lines crisscross all over the laundry room. This was an all-day affair. As you can imagine with all the sheets and dirty clothes from one month for all these people there was a lot of washing to do.

In those days one did not change their clothes every day. No, you wore the same for days and days... hear this? Lauren, Kayla, Maddie, Lindsey, Gabrielle, Emma and Alexa and all the girls yet to join our family tree. We only had 2 or 3 outfits for during the week and 1 good dress for church and Sundays. Because of that, our rooms never got messy... ahem... we did not have to try on one outfit after another, and miracle upon miracle... there were no outfits lying on the

bed or on the floor. Can you even believe it? Our room was clean, and there were 2 of us girls in the same room. And we could always find our stuff... imagine that!

When the laundry was dry, it was folded. The big pieces, i.e. sheets and tablecloths, were put into a huge wicker basket the shape and size of a rectangular coffee table, about 4 feet long and 2 feet wide with handles on each side and was carried by two people, one on each side, to the Mangel on the next day. The Mangel was not in our house, but was a business in our little town where everyone went to iron their big pieces of laundry. Well, you went there and you had to iron it yourself with this huge ironing machine. Then it all was folded real carefully and stacked into the basket and you carried it home again. Us kids used to tag along with the grown-ups, just for something to do, also we were privy to all kinds of gossip from the other neighbors that happened to be there.

MENDING DAYS

Then there were mending days also. Those were fun at times. We got to help, especially with mending the socks. Usually we sat around in the evening to listen to some special radio program and all of us would have a sock in our hands. The socks with holes in it were pulled over a wooden egg so we could have a tight area for the darning. We made it a contest, the best darning job won. You bet, we were all trying to do the best we could do. Since money was scarce especially during and after the war, we could not afford to buy new socks. Some of the heels and toes of the socks had nothing of the original material left on them but turned into one darning on top of another. Those were the good old family-nurturing evenings. Everyone darned, boys and girls alike. But I don't remember my father doing anything like that, it was strictly the women's and children's job. I was actually too young before the war for this, but during and after the war years I was also included in the mending. I still have one of those mending eggs on my mantel over the fireplace and, for old-time's sake, I occasionally even use it. But, please do not bring me your old "holy" socks - thank you very much! But, whenever you have a hankering to learn an

old craft, I will be glad to teach you how it goes.

BATH TIMES

You won't believe our bath nights! We had a bathroom with a built-in tub. However hot water was a luxury. It cost too much to heat the water. Gas was very expensive at that time. I remember now, to get hot water we had to first put the water heater on just for a short time to get enough hot water for the tub. We all, that is us three children in our family, took our bath in the same water. My brother was usually the first, the lucky duck, then my sister, and by the time I got my turn, the water was pretty grungy... I can hear you all say...yuck!! So, think about that, my grandchildren, the next time you don't want to take a bath in your nice bathroom with all the hot water you wish to use, or, take showers as long as you like. What a luxury that really is, (and still is to me to this day). I will never take it for granted. Taking a shower or bath or sit in a jacuzzi or in a hot tub is a privilege I enjoy and am thankful for. I also don't take the water for granted, I will take short showers so I don't waste water and I don't let the water faucet run while I brush my teeth. We need to learn to take care of our environment... curtailing water waste is something every one of us can do to contribute to conservation.

A sermon you say? Well, what do you expect? As a mother and grandmother I have earned the right to give a sermon every now and then, it's part of my job, it's expected... ha,ha,ha

SLEDDING DOWN OUR HILL

We had some terrific winters, a whole lot of snow when I was just 3 or 4 years old. And since there were hardly any cars to be seen in those days, we were able to ride our sleds down the street right by our house. This is a long steep hill with 2 big curves. WOW!!! Did we have a ball!!! The only trouble was that once you arrived at the bottom of the huge hill, you had no other choice but to haul your sled all the way up to the top and start all over again. Sometimes our Dads would come sledding with us at night after supper. We had some big sleds that could hold 3 to 4 people at the same time. Since I was still so little I would always be sledding with an adult, and I also

was too little to schlep the sled up the hill (Yeah). After we got tired of sledding, we'd go home and change our leggings, all hand knit wool, and thick and scratchy (Ugh). They would be all wet and would have icy snow hanging on them. And getting these scratchy leggings off was heaven in itself, but top this off with hot cocoa which Grossmutter had all ready for us. *Yum - Makes me want to drink one right now. A little pause in my writing: I'll be right back. Yum, so good.*



In front of our house: Hans, Jutta, and me.



With our cousins in front of our house.

DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

December 6th is Saint Nicholas Day in Germany. On December 6, in the evening, Saint Nicholas comes to each house where there are children and asks if they had been good or bad. If the children were good, he would give them Oranges and Apples and Nuts (Those things were so special to us, we did not get them very often.) But if the children were bad, they were taken outside and given a good talking to and given black coal. I remember one Saint Nicholas Day where all 8 of us kids, my cousins and us were in our upstairs apartment all anxiously awaiting the visit of St. Nick. At one point, I remember we were getting antsy and started looking outside the window to see if we could catch a glimpse of Santa. But all we could see is our neighbor from across the street coming towards our house. And then when Santa stepped into our room and

started talking, well, he sounded suspiciously like that same neighbor. That's when the eldest of us found out the truth about St. Nick. And for a short moment the magic of Saint Nick was gone. However, that same night, my brother was taken outside for a good talk and some black coal. I don't remember why he was punished, but it must have been bad, whatever he did. But in our hearts, especially us little ones, we still wanted to believe in Saint Nicholas, and so we did.



Christmas 1939.



Christmas 1942.

Christmas in Germany is always celebrated December 24th and 25th. But it is not St. Nick that comes on Christmas Eve, but the Christ-Child. Our Dad bought and decorated the tree on the 24th in the afternoon, and that night, a little bell that was hung on the tree would ring and that meant that the Christ-Child had arrived. That was our cue that we were invited to go into our formal living room and see the tree for the first time. And what a wonderful awe-inspiring beautiful scene it was. A real Christmas Tree with real candles burning on the tree and silvery icicles hanging on every branch. And the first thing we always did, was to sing Christmas Carols. The memories are still so vivid, the smell of all those candles, one at each end of the branches (a bucket of water was always handy, just in case). And the presents were under the tree or right

next to it. Mostly I am thinking of the Christmas my sister and I got doll carriages and a doll to go with it. The following Christmases we would get that same doll again, but with a new outfit of clothes. And one year we also got a doll house. There were only a few presents, plus oranges and chocolates and Christmas cookies that our grandmother, my mother and Tante Gertrud baked for all of us. We could keep the doll house for a few weeks and then it got put away until next Christmas. But we were as happy as could be with only a few things, our lives were simple; we had no problem to figure out which present to play with first. We were definitely not spoiled with presents since our parents could not afford it. And these were happy times for us children. I don't think you can imagine only having 2 or 3 presents to unwrap, can you? And yet, we were totally satisfied with that. But we knew nothing else, so everything was just fine.

PARADES BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Sometime in the years 1939 and 1940 (I was about 3 years old then) we watched the parades: Hitler's army marching down our main street. We would buy Pretzels from the bakery and give them to the soldiers as they marched by. I remember how neatly they marched in step with each other, just like robots. And how we stood, along with our neighbors, at the side of the road. Also, it was in that era where we were required by Hitler to fly the flag with the Hakenkreuz (Swastika). I know we had a big flag on a flagpole right over our garage by the terrace.

It's strange to me that I was so little and still remember those soldiers marching. Just goes to show you that older people can remember their younger years, but not what they did 2 days ago.

I believe it must have been around 1940, once the war was going on, that we had to give up our family car, the beautiful black Ford, to Hitler's Army to help the war effort. My father also had to give up his motorcycle. Those were not good times. Our fathers had to have been worried that they will have to sign up soon to fight and our mothers must have dreaded the unknown future.



Sitting on our lower patio. Hitler's flag with Swastika was required to be displayed.



Ursula, Hans, Jutta, Manne & Roland at entrance of our house.



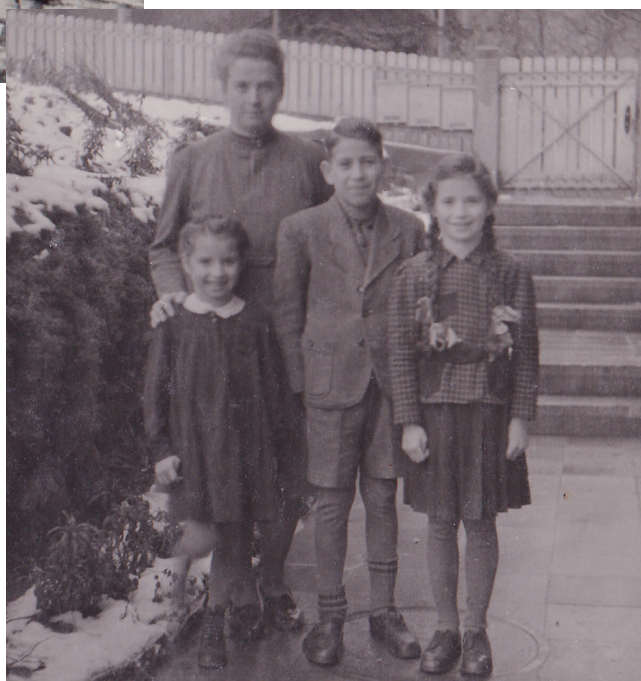
Jutta, me and Hans.



My mother Emma and me.



Mutterle (great grandmother).



Me, my mother, Hans & Jutta at the front of our house.

CHAPTER 6

WORLD WAR II - KALTENTAL



My father in uniform.

World War II started on September 1, 1939. From what I was told, my father did not have to leave right away. I believe it was 1940 or so that both my dad and my cousins' father, Uncle Karl, had to don their uniforms and leave their home and their families, to go and fight for Hitler.



Uncle Karl in Nazi uniform.

BOMBING ATTACKS

My hometown Stuttgart had many important industries, such as Mercedes-Benz among others. Soon after our fathers left, around 1940, our enemies were heavily and frequently bombing those landmarks. This was so scary to all of us. To this day, when I hear a siren I shudder, it puts me back to the war years and gives me a queasy, scary, and very uncomfortable feeling... *deja-vu*.

Many houses were prepared for war. They were painted camouflage or with very dark colors so that the enemy could not see them as easily. While living in our home in Kaltental, we could never get totally undressed when we went to bed at nights because we never knew when the sirens would start blaring to warn us of an enemy attack. Soon as the siren was heard, everyone jumped out of bed and as quickly as possible got the rest of their clothes on and were ready to run down our hill to one of the town bunkers. This was a place that was built into the side of a mountain which provided much more protection than our house.

There were many such bunkers throughout the different districts in town. Inside the bunker the community had built bunk-beds, 3 tiers high, to accommodate as many people as possible. Can you imagine how horrible we must have felt when the sirens came on. At times we had to run in all kinds of weather as quickly as we could. There were many people, friends, and strangers, running from all directions to the same bunker. So there we were, huddled together and all shut off from the outside world and we could hear the high pitched whistling sounds of the bombs coming closer and closer, getting louder and louder and louder, and finally... **POW!!!!** **POW!!!!** **POW!!!!** We never knew if one of those bombs hit our house; or our best neighbor's house, or which of the houses were burning down right now. And, even worse, would it hit us in the bunker? We were kids, and yes we were scared crazy, but I can only imagine how very afraid our mother must have felt. She did not know how long we would be all together, or whether we would still have our home after the attacks, and at the same time she would worry about the fate of her husband, our Dad, who was God knows where, fighting this war and possibly getting

wounded or even worse. Will our family be all together again?

At other times, when the sirens did not sound and we heard planes coming closer and closer and there was no time to run to the community bunker, we ran downstairs into our cellars where we also had set up bunk beds with extra blankets and foods and water in case we got buried-under if our house got hit. The bombing occurred mostly at nights. All the shutters were closed every evening before the lights went on inside the houses, so that no light showed through. That way our house could not be seen and we were less of a target for the enemy bombers.

When the frequency of the bombing attacks got worse, my grandparents and my mother and her sister decided it was time for us to move from our house in Stuttgart to the country side near Crailsheim to the little village of Appensee; to the old homestead where my grandparents came from. But just before we were going to leave the town, we wanted to see my grandfather who happened to be in the hospital for surgery on his eyes. The hospital he was in was bombarded the night before and was on fire and they had to take the patients to another hospital. We were walking through the ruins of houses around spots of fires that were still flaring up. Streetcars could not run anymore, there was too much rubble on the tracks. Some of the streets we could not travel on because they were totally burned out. We were trying to find out where our grandfather was. Things were quite hectic and dangerous. But finally we found out where he was taken to, and went to see him... at which time his first worried and angry words to us were: "Why have you not left for the country yet? What are you still doing in this mess?" So we rushed home and packed only the bare necessities, mostly just clothes, and left behind the only home us children had known until then. We bid farewell to our friends in the immediate neighborhood and traveled first by street car, then by train, carrying our belongings in suitcases to our new life in Appensee. How lucky we were that we had a place to escape to, away from the heavy bombing and all the sadness and the madness of war. How fortunate that our family came from farmers' stock and we had a fairly safe place to be at. But my grandfather and grandmother were adamant they stay in Stuttgart to keep an eye on their house, Villa Sonneck. They both were very brave.

My grandmother's sister, Tante Emma and her husband Fritz, also stayed in Stuttgart. He was the custodian for a big school. Custodians always had an apartment on the top floor of the school. So, at least, my grandparents and my aunt and uncle had each other during those trying times. We were, of course, very worried about them all. We could not get word from them unless some acquaintance came through our village. There were no telephones, and mail service was scarce and frequently interrupted. The trains did not run regularly anymore. Trucks and regular cars were not available; one could

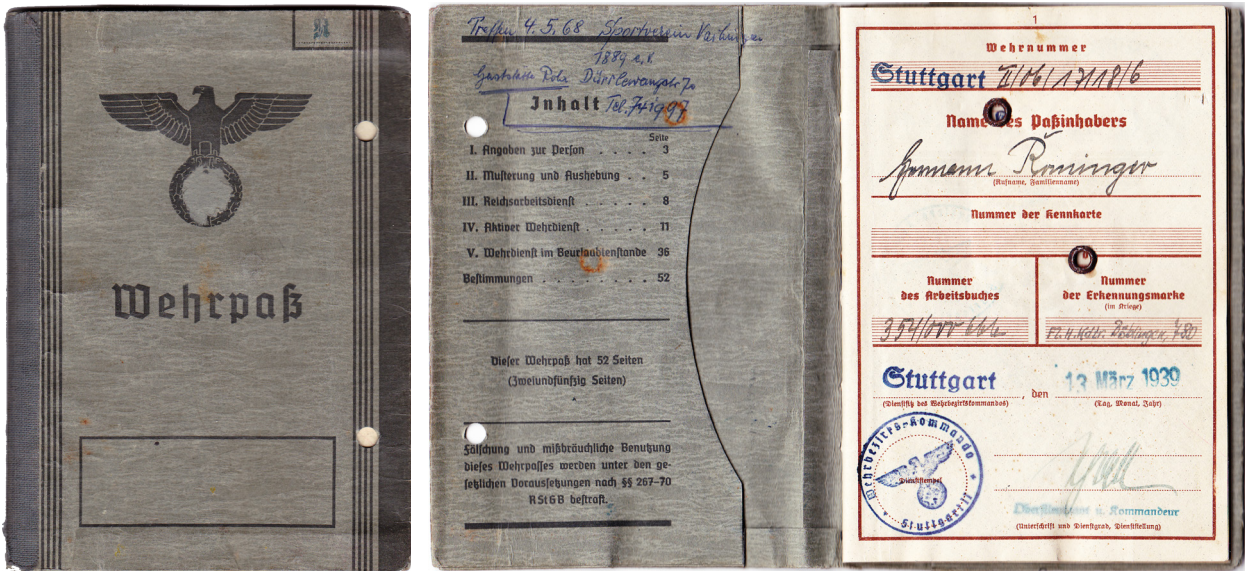


Above & left: Hitler postcard sent from Uncle Karl to his son Uli.



November 8, 1944
 Dear Uli, This beautiful card, of our leader, I want to give to you as a gift. Monfred should help you to put it on the wall. Are you still being good? Greetings to you dear Uli. Love, your papa.

not hitch a ride anywhere. Most of our men were in the Army. Everything was topsy-turvy and out of whack. We were deeply into World War II by now.



My father’s war credentials. He was required to keep this with him at all times.

CHAPTER 7

THE WAR YEARS IN APPENSEE



Mutterle's (Great-Grandmother) house where my Grandmother grew up.

As luck would have it, there was a house in Appensee which was soon to be evacuated. It stood directly across a dirt road from Grandfather's birthplace, the Homestead. What a coincidence that it would be standing there about to be empty just when we needed shelter for the next few years. It was a small one-family house with 2 bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen. I know there was an outhouse which we used. The house also had a basement and an attic.

We were 10 people all together living in that 2-bedroom house. So there was lots of bunking together and very little privacy, as you can imagine. There were my Mom and us three children, and then there were Tante Gertrud and her five children. Sometimes we also had visitors and on those occasions a few of us kids would be farmed out next door to aunts and uncles. Mutterle, my great grandmother, was with us from time to time. But before we moved into that quaint little house, we had to be farmed out to other relatives until the house was totally ready for us, so us three kids and our Mom went to Wechner, a village close to Appensee, where a cousin of my mother was the farmer, just a horse-and-buggy ride of about a half hour away. My Tante Gertrud and her 5 children went to the farm called Hirschhof, to another relative, also in the area. There we lived in Bauernhofs together with all their animals inside their houses.

THE ATTIC IN OUR LITTLE HOUSE

Having 8 kids in the little house was *heaven* for us kids, but perhaps more like *hell* for our moms. It didn't take us very long to discover a pigeon home in the attic. The attic had air-venting holes big enough for the birds to find and make themselves a home. Well, we saw this place as our opportunity to build a private hideaway for us kids. So, we went to work and cleaned it all out and set up our den. There we would play and act out things; such as that some of us would be the grown-ups and some of us the kids. The kids were in another part, outside the little den and two of us were pretending to be a radio. We would act out all the news and songs, all the sort of things you would hear on a radio. Since we had no real radio we resorted to pretending. When the "grown-ups" got tired of listening to the radio, they pushed some kind of contraption

(the knob to turn the radio off) and us radio performers then had to be quiet. I am sure we played other games, but this one seems to have made a big enough impression on me to remember it so clearly.

RESIDENT MOUSE

After we lived in our house for a while, we discovered a little mouse peeking out of a hole in the wall by the floorboard in our living room. Well, we started giving her crumbs and cheese, and soon she got so used to us, we could actually handle her. I can't remember what we named her, but she lived with us for quite a while; becoming part of our family. I also can't remember if it was a he or a she, and I cannot remember for the life of me what happened to her, but there were a lot of cats in the village, so you can imagine her destiny.

RABBITS

We also had cages set up right outside the front-entrance of the little house. There we raised rabbits, not for pleasure, but for extra food. Rabbit meat tasted very good in those years. I have not eaten any rabbit since the war years when you ate what you were fortunate enough to have. However, us kids gave those rabbits names and started treating them like house pets. That was unfortunate, since some of us became very attached to certain rabbits and had no appetite when our "pet" was served for dinner. You can imagine how terribly tragic that must have been. And each time this tragedy occurred, we had an elaborate funeral right after dinner. Our backyard resembled a cemetery.

COW-SITTING

We were always ready to help our uncles and aunts with chores around their farms. Cow-sitting was not unlike babysitting, only the cows were much bigger than a baby, and they were harder to budge into the direction you wanted them to move. The farmer would herd his cows out to wherever the field was that needed some grazing. There were no fences around his acres so we would be there to keep the cows in check. Sometimes we had a dog along to help us keep

the cows in place. Well, there were always a bunch of us together and we learned to entertain ourselves. We would laze around, tell funny stories, run around doing cartwheels, etc. Or we would lie in the meadow chewing on pieces of grass, sometimes looking at the cloud formations, other times picking some of the red poppies which grew wild all over, and making little dolls out of them (you just take the poppy and fold it's petals down, now it looks like a skirt with the seed-head on top for the face). We also ate lots of poppy seeds... mmm so good. Someone told me later that this was like dope, perhaps that explains some of the wild and crazy things we did. Before it started to get dark, the farmer would return to his field and we all helped him bring the cows back to the village and into his house to their respective stalls. Cows were kept in the house's bottom floor - remember?

LOOK-A-LIKES

Our mothers were very crafty and could sew almost anything. And since they had a lot of yardage of this one design, they made us all the same Dirndls to wear. We looked kind of like a group of singers from Austria; our mothers and us girls all wearing the same outfits. We were very proud and happy to have those dresses. In those days it was very seldom that you got a new dress. You wore the same dress for days on end. Can you imagine how bad we must have smelled? I am including a picture of us in the Dirndls on opposite page.

Just like the Van Trapp Family in "The Sound of Music", we also sang and harmonized any chance we got when we were together, and it really sounded so good to my ears. I think we would surely have won first prize if we had entered any singing contests. Yes! We were all very musical with perfect pitch; I am so thankful we inherited that talent.



L-R: Uncle Karl, Manne, Uli, Jutta, Ursela, Hans, Mutter, me, Tante Gertrud, Helmut and Roland.



The back entrance of our little house with rabbit cages on the left.

POTATO EYES? (What's that?)

Every so often, we kids would have to go to the cold cellar. Remember that is the cellar built into the ground to keep things cool since we had no refrigerators way back then. We also kept smoked meats there, like hams, wursts, canned vegetables and canned fruits (all home-canned). But it's the potatoes that were the problem. You know how they grow new growths when they sit around too long. Well, it was our job (us kids) to pull those white new growths (we called them eyes) away from all the potatoes and there were mountains of potatoes piled up. We all sat around in a circle with the potatoes in the middle of the cold cellar and did just that, breaking away the eyes. To make it more interesting, we told lots of stories, some funny, some scary, or we sang some silly songs, we had to do something to keep us from going buggy. Speaking of buggy, read on...

BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Just recently (2002), after talking to my cousin Ursula (she is 6 years older than me), I learned that the potato bugs that we had to catch and destroy were thought to be the enemy's plan to starve us. They introduced these bugs to Germany. It was disturbing to everyone when it was discovered that there were bugs invading the potato fields that killed the plants. Now we had to go to the potato fields with glass jars in our hands and pick off every potato bug we could find on the plants and quickly stuff it into the jar and close the lid. Aha, got you! I believe we had some kerosene or some such awful smelling liquid in the bottom of the jars to help kill the bugs faster. We were suffocating them to death. None of us kids liked this particular job... it was really yucky to touch those bugs. But we saved our plants and had plenty potatoes throughout the year. One of our favorite potato dinners was boiled potatoes served with buttermilk in a soup bowl. Yes! Delicious! Believe me, Really!!

CRAMPED SLEEPING QUARTERS

One time, when my favorite aunt Tante Emma (my grandmother's sister) came to visit us, we had to share our bedroom with her, which meant we doubled up on the bunk beds. Well,

while everyone was sound asleep I had to get up and go to the bathroom. Since we only had an “outhouse” outside we kept a Pee-Pot in our rooms for emergencies. Well, I apparently was half asleep when I relieved myself. It was discovered in the morning, when my aunt got up and was ready to pull on her shoes, that one of the shoes was rather wet all over. It seems I mistook her shoes, which were really booties, for the potty chamber, Ooops!! Needless to say, my aunt Emma had to stay another day or so until the shoe was dry. In those days, one had only one pair of shoes at a time. This particular episode was a topic that came up many times in the years after, and years after that, and we always got a good chuckle out of it.

Can you imagine - Gabrielle, Lauren, Kayla, Lindsey, Maddie, Emma, Alexa, etc - only 1 pair of shoes??? How would you be able to live with just one pair of shoes! Egads! Che horrore!



The kids on our hayride.

HAYING - HARVESTING

We kids had such fun during harvesting season. When the wheat grass was tall enough, it was time to cut it down, often only with a hand held scythe. This was done early in the morning while the dew was still on the grass. It was left lying until about mid-day when we all went out to the field with rakes to turn the grass over so it could get dry on the other side. That evening we

then gathered the grass into little piles for the night. The next morning if the weather was nice, we went out to the field a second time and spread it all out again to dry some more in the hot sun. Then the next day it was gathered into individual little haystack. A day or so later, it was gathered into bundles, and my uncles and aunts would prepare the wooden wagon and harness the oxen or horses to it. We then all climbed onto the wagon, legs dangling over the side or end of the wagon and were off once again to the field, and this time if it was all dry, the adults would pick up the bundles with a pitchfork and throw them up into the wagon where one of the adults stood and made sure the wagon was loaded evenly. That wagon was loaded so high they had to add wooden slots to the sides of the wagon to hold it all in place. Well, the most fun part of the whole haying season was when we kids got to sit on the very top of the haystacks for the ride home to the barn, where we then had to help unload it. Some of us younger kids of course did not have to help, so it was just plain fun for us.

We also helped hand-gather the straw. We were so frugal, that after the farmers were done harvesting it and had taken it to their barn, we again went out to the fields to pick up every stray piece of straw that was missed or fell off the wagon, and we gathered it into bundles and carried it home.

MUTTERLE AND CHRISTMAS EVE

It was Christmas Eve in 1944, our great grandmother, Mutterle, was staying with us during those last war years. That evening she was lying down on the sofa in our living room, she did not feel so well. But our whole gang, my mother and Aunt Gertrud and all of us 8 children decided to go Christmas caroling in the village. We always sang together and did a lot of harmonizing, so we were getting better all the time, at least we thought so. But before going outside for our caroling in the village we decided to sing a few carols for our Mutterle who was looking like she was sleeping. She opened her eyes at one point and exclaimed that "the Angels are singing". It seems we sang while she was passing on into heaven. What a beautiful way to go. But, of course,

we were very sad when we realized that she had died. We all loved her so very much. She was 84 years old. It was a sad Christmas that year.

FEEDING AND GATHERING

Feeding the animals was great. We got to help feeding the cows, the horses, the chickens, rabbits, kittens, and dogs, and not to forget the pigs and the little piglets. I especially enjoyed going outside to the chicken-coups in the early morning and gather all the fresh eggs we would then have for breakfast. Some of us also helped with the milking of the cows... all done by hand in those days. I was too young and also too afraid I was going to get a swift kick from the cows, you know where, they could get pesky at times. Fresh milk tasted so good. We also liked the cream on the very top of the milk pail, though that was skimmed off to be used for butter, etc. I certainly would not be able to drink that fresh milk today. I have trained myself to like fat-free skim milk, anything more than that tastes too rich for me now.

WITCHES AND GHOSTS

Some of our relatives lived in another village near-by. Often we kids would decide to go visit them. Well, it was all dirt-roads. There were lots of fields and meadows, and also a small patch of woods and that patch was always so dark and scary looking. Perhaps the scary part developed from the fact that a story went around that there were witches and ghost living in that patch of woods. So, we never walked alone, we always were a bunch of us together for strength in numbers. We were so relieved when we got past that patch and not one of us was eaten up or kidnapped. It always was a big relief when a grown-up was with us. Later on, my brother and Ursula had to make that walk every day to go to school in that next village. I don't know what gave them so much courage, us little ones were so very scared.

SCHOOL DAYS

I remember that at one point us younger ones also went together to an elementary school in another village called Stimpfach. This was quite a long walk and sometimes we got carried away

playing on the way there and probably frequently arrived after the bell rang. There were lots of fruit trees on the way at the side of the road and we often helped ourselves to apples or pears or whatever. We also had some religious schooling. Some pastor came to the village and we would all gather in a room at the Junker's farmhouse and be taught about the bible. This was perhaps once a week. I am a little hazy on some of those details. After all, I was very small then.

HELMUT DROWNS

Often during the hot summer days, one or more of the adults would accompany us kids to the river Jagst where we would go play in the water and next to the river there was a field of wild grasses. But one summer day, there were no adults available so my cousin Ursula, who was already about 11 or 12 years old and could swim, was to watch us younger ones. But while we were there at the river having much fun, Ursula and my sister Judy decided to climb up the hill next to the river to look for wild flowers. While they were gone quite a ways from the river, Helmut who was only 4 years old decided to throw some rocks into the river. He found his way up to the bridge which was close to the place we played at and experimented with the rocks from there. Well, it seems he climbed on the railing to see where the rocks went when he lost his balance and fell into the deep water. When the rest of us heard the big splash, it was too late. He was floundering around frantically with his arms.



My cousin Helmut.

We called out Ursula's name as loud as we could, but she was too far away to hear us. We then tried to figure out how we could help him. None of us younger ones could swim (I was 7 perhaps). We looked around and found a tree-limb which was lying on the ground and threw it into the water for him, But Helmut could not find that limb. He was too frantic and scared and fumbling around. Soon he disappeared and later started floating in the water. In the meantime we started to run out into a far away field where some farmers were

working. But by the time they came back with us, it was too late. They got him out of the water and laid him down on the grass and tried to get the water out of his lungs...but it was simply too late. Helmut's body was laid out in a small coffin downstairs in our little house. It was the second funeral I ever attended other than for birds and rabbits. We were all so devastated, especially his mom my Tante Gertrude and his older sister Ursula who now blamed herself for his death.

END OF WAR YEARS IN APPENSEE



Junkers' (cousins) farmhouse in the village.

Toward the end of the war, we got more action where we lived. You see, the train tracks were not so far from our little village, and the enemy tried to hit the trains and the tracks so nothing could be transported. We often heard the bombs coming down. I remember one specific time where we were standing outside our little house just minding our own business when we heard an aircraft coming closer and closer. As we looked up to see the plane, it released a bomb. My mother hollered to us to run quickly to the downstairs of our house for more safety, but I was so fascinated or perhaps shocked when I saw that bomb coming out and getting bigger and bigger, and the whistle from it louder and louder... it was like I was frozen and could not move (not

unlike in a dream)but finally I got myself together and started running into the house. I didn't get too far when I heard the impact... POW!!! I don't know where it hit, but we were saved. Our little house was shaking like crazy for a few seconds. My brother Hans and my cousin Ursula had to attend a school in Crailsheim now. I believe that must have been Middle School. To get to school they had to take the train. That was so scary for them and for us, since the trains were bombing targets. One day when they got home, they told us that the train station where they got on the train to return home again was bombed very heavily and how everyone on the train got off and ran into hiding in close-by bushes, as far away from the station as they could. Luckily, they never got hurt. After that incident, the train was equipped with a cannon so when the bombers came, they could shoot at them. When the bombing attacks increased, my brother and cousin stopped going to school by train and took their bicycles instead. Another time, during a bombing attack on the train tracks close by, my brother was standing outside our house when the bomb hit it's target. It must have hit very close to our village. The pieces of the bomb (shrapnel) were flying all over the place and one just barely missed my brother Hans... he was so lucky, he could have been killed.

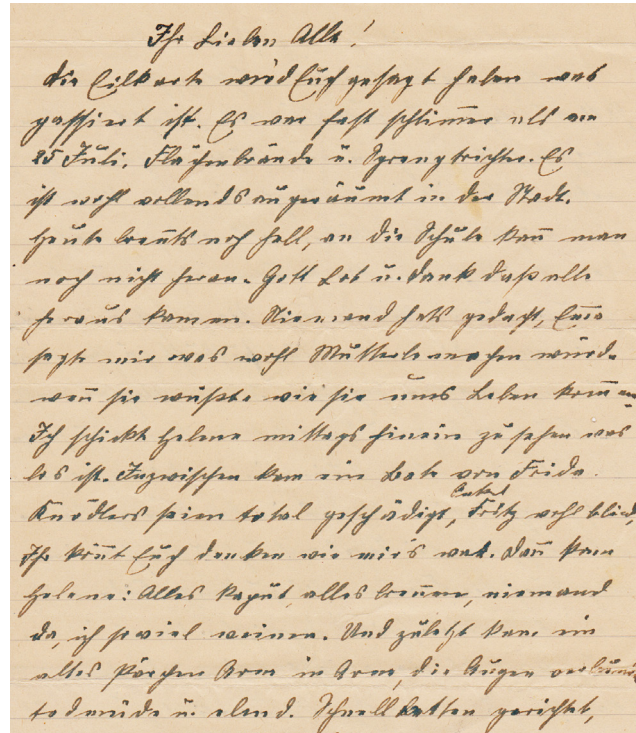
RECONNAISSANCE PLANES

One quiet summer afternoon all of us kids went to a field close by, a little ways outside of our village to gather pieces of wood for kindling. We were at the edge of the woods when we heard the plane coming closer and closer, and closer yet. It came so close that we could actually see the soldiers' faces. We were all huddled in one place, hoping they would not shoot us. Thank heaven, they left again and we ran quickly home to safety. This was a reconnaissance plane that was to case the area, to see if there was anything worth bombing, or to see if they could find German soldiers.

LETTER FROM GRANDMOTHER

I will include part of the original letter from my grandmother in Stuttgart which she

wrote sometime in early 1945, it somehow got delivered to us in Appensee. My grandmother's handwriting was done in the old German style of writing. Luckily, I can still read it. Here is the translation into English as best as I know how.



Grandmother's letter.

All my loved ones,

The express card must have told you what happened. It was almost worse than the 25th of July, huge fires burning over many wide areas and mines that exploded. The inner city is now totally cleaned out. Today it is still burning very bright, one cannot yet get close to the School. Give God praise and thanks that no one had to give their life and they all got out of the burned school. I sent Helene to the city and the school to find out what happened to them all (she was talking about her sister Emma and husband who worked in the school). But in the meantime, Frieda sent someone to tell me that Tante Emma and Onkel Fritz were hurt very badly and that Onkel Fritz has probably lost his eyesight and could be blind. You can imagine how worried I was. Then came Helene back saying: "All kaput, all burn, no one there, I much cry". And then later in the afternoon there came an old pair, arm in arm, the eyes wrapped in a bandage, totally spent

and lost. I made up the beds, with the bedbottles filled with hot water, fed them and stilled their thirsts and put them to bed, with the help of Lilo, just like you would little children. Of course, at 10:30 p.m. they had to get up again and be taken to the bunker. They could not save even one item, all was on fire, all they had was what they were wearing on their bodies. The two with about 100 other people who had sought safety inside the big school could only run out of the burning building with wet carpets and water all over them from the fire trucks. Then they sat on an old ruin in a side street, totally wet and ice-cold. After that they went to the gym of the Johannissschule. As soon as daybreak they looked for a way through the flames to Tante Frieda's house and from there they went to the Marienhospital. In between they had to run to bunkers a few times until they came home to us, all tired out and heartbroken. It was a sad picture, one wanted to cry out loud. Today it's better. I let Emma inherit from Mutterle, and Fritz got clothes from Hermann and the old coat from Karl. Next week, Tante Julie will make new clothes for Emma, she still has material. But Onkel Fritz is not so easy. Nothing fits him from Vater. I will give my brown dress material to Emma also. Both of them sleep in Mutterle's room. If our house survives, then they will go into Roessle's apartment. In the summer into their gardenhouse. We go mornings and afternoons to the bunker, in between those times we try to cook or get groceries. At 8 pm to bed, at 10:30 pm to bunker, at 2 am back to bed, at 5 am to go for groceries, and with all that going on, nothing gets done and one is dead tired. How good do the people in the country have it and they still gripe a lot. But now, done with complaining, there is so much to be thankful for, thankful that all our loved ones were saved during their horrific ordeal, and thankful that our Mutterle was not here to go through these scary days and all the running to the bunkers. But now I put you all in God's hands that he should keep all of us safe and that he will give us peace. I am to send you greetings from Onkel Fritz and Aunt Emma, they will visit you as soon as possible... probably not before the end of the coming week.

Greetings to all of you from your daughter, mother, and grandmother.

The school she is talking about is the Friedrich-Eugene-Ober-Realschule in der Langestrasse Stuttgart. My Uncle Fritz and Tante Emma (my grandmother's sister) were living on the top floor of the school in their apartment. Uncle Fritz was the custodian, responsible for keeping the school clean and in order. The girl Helene was a Russian girl who was doing her apprenticeship as a

helper to a household and was assigned to my Aunt Emma. But she also helped my grandmother from time to time. She spoke German only haltingly. Every time there was a bombing alarm, they had to run to the bunker to be saved from all the bombs. For elderly people that was not so easy, having to get up all hours of the night.

BURYING OUR VALUABLES

When it got close to the end of the war and we heard that the Germans were retreating and the enemy was not far behind and surely will come into our villages and do God knows what to us, we quickly, that is, our mothers and other adults quickly gathered things like radios, watches, silver, etc. and buried it behind the barns in the dirt. We were afraid the enemy would take all those things from us.

PRISONERS

Toward the end of the war, the German soldiers who were retreating were also bringing with them some Russian prisoners. On several occasions, these prisoners were put up in an empty barn close to our little house. These prisoners did not speak our language, but they were willing to trade with us kids---some potatoes for a crude tin ring they had fashioned out of scraps. Well, it seems my sister Judy got too close to them and contacted hair lice. The soldiers and prisoners had already left, when we noticed that problem. So it was that when the enemy, the American soldiers, came into our village just a few days later, my sister still had a towel wrapped around her head to keep the lice from the rest of us. Of course, she was treated with lots of combing and washing and scrubbing.

CRAILSHEIM IS BURNING

The enemy was taking over Crailsheim, but before they came into the town they completely bombed it flat. Everything was burning. This was the biggest town close to us and where we sometimes went to buy special items and also to visit some relatives, one of which had a bakery and café in that town. The fires were huge with black smoke everywhere. The war was just about

over. WW2 ended in May 1945.

THE AMERICANS ARE COMING, THE AMERICANS ARE COMING

Before the Americans came into our village, they threw in hand grenades. I don't know exactly why, perhaps they were scared that some German soldiers were hiding in our houses or barns. They were in full battle gear with helmets on and their rifles cocked and ready to shoot as they came around the corners of our houses. We were scared out of our wits. I can only imagine how scared our mothers must have been for their safety and their children's well-being. Finally, they stopped the hand grenades and started to search each house for soldiers and also for valuables, and they did take away a lot of silver, watches, etc. and mailed it back to their homes in the States. Right away they gave us house arrest, or rather curfew times... we could only be outside certain hours of the day. Then they proceeded to take over my uncle and aunt's farm house (our homestead). They made my aunt and uncle move out of the main part of the house and made that their headquarters. They cooked in the kitchen and hung around the farm all day. We kids soon found out that the enemy, (the Americans), were really nice guys; they smiled at us and gave us chewing gum and chocolates and later played with us; they were great to us kids. There were instances where some of the older girls were raped, but nothing like that happened in our village. They gave us GI rations, canned food... we thought this was great stuff. To us kids, they, (the enemy) were Heroes!!!

However, the occupation of our home town Stuttgart was a very different story. We were so lucky we didn't stay there. Stuttgart was invaded by the French soldiers and many of those soldiers came from Morocco. These soldiers were given permission that anything goes and they were like uncivilized natives. They raped everything female, no matter what their age...children, mothers, grandmothers. My girlfriend, Margarete, who lived across the street from us in Stuttgart, was forced to watch her aunt being raped... she was only 8 years old then. Many women actually opted to jump out of their window with the risk of getting severely hurt or even killed, so they

would not get raped. The story is that my grandfather was for some odd reason very much liked by these Moroccan soldiers. Perhaps they liked his stature and his nice long beard (remember my Grandfather looked like a Santa Claus with a kind loving face and demeanor). Anyhow, they would not touch any women who were in my grandfather's house. So the neighborhood women came to live for a while at our house to be safe from those barbarians. Thankfully, the French occupation soon ended and the Americans took over that area of Germany. What a blessing for us.

After several weeks of occupation in Appensee the American soldiers left the village and things got pretty much back to normal again. But we had very little contact with our grandparents who lived in the town of Stuttgart in our house there. My grandparents did not want to leave our house unattended during the war, so they were there during all the heavy bombing, etc. We were very worried about them all the time. Remember, no telephones then.

A FATHER RETURNS FROM THE WAR

One day while we kids were playing in front of our little house, someone came running through the village announcing that some soldier was walking up the road towards our village, but they did not know who it was. Well, we got all excited, which father would it be - ours or our cousins'? We told Ursula and Manfred, "oh it's most likely your father", and they would say, "no, it's probably your father." I guess we all wanted it to be our father but were afraid to hope. But soon we could not stand the suspense any longer and started to run down the dusty dirt road until we came right up to the weary soldier and it was our father. What a reunion it was for us. We had not seen our Dad in several years. He looked very worn out and skinny from what I remember. The only reason he came home so soon is because toward the end of the war he got shot in his shoulder by the neck inside the Russian border and the Russians did not want to have to take care of wounded soldiers so they were sent home. So, thank the Lord that my father got shot, otherwise he would have become a prisoner for sure and who knows what

might have happened to him. My cousins' father, we found out later, got shot and killed on the very last day of war in Belgium. He was buried there in a community grave. My aunt and Ursula went to visit that graveyard many times after the war when one could move around again.

SURPRISE VISITORS

One Sunday morning Ursula, my sister Judy and I decided to go to church by ourselves. We had to walk quite a long way to the next village where the church was. As we were walking along and having a good time talking about all sort of things, we noticed that there was a couple of people coming toward us, but they were quite a distance away still. As they got closer, we couldn't believe our eyes, it was our grandparents. They had walked all the way from our home in Stuttgart to come to us and fetch us home. Remember there were no telephones available, the mail also did not go, so, in order to get us they had to walk about 100 kilometers. That's about 60 miles. WOW!! And you know they were older already, and my grandfather with only 1 arm. What a huge trip for them.

PILGRIMAGE BACK TO STUTTGART

So after Grandfather had rested a few days, he and my Tante Gertrud and my brother Hans (12 years old) and my cousin Manfred (11 year old) decided to return to our house in Stuttgart. With the occupation of the enemy there, my grandparents were afraid if no one is in the house, the authorities will place a strange family in there. (So many people had no place to live since so many houses and apartments burned down). To make the trip on foot easier, they took the frame and wheels of an old baby carriage and built a wooden crate on top of it, so they had a contraption to carry along food and drink and blankets for their long journey, by foot, back home to Stuttgart. It took them several days, and at night they would sleep in some farmer's barns, sometimes they also got food from the farmers. The rest of us followed several weeks later. How we traveled I don't remember anymore, but we did not have to walk the 60 miles, thank God.

CHAPTER 8

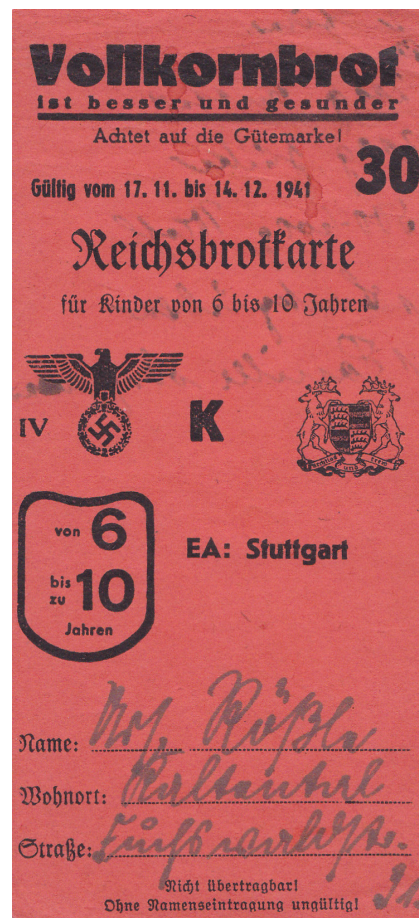
BACK HOME IN KALTENTAL (1945)



Back to our Villa in Stuttgart-Kaltental.

Finally, WW2 was over. We were all back home again in our Villa in Stuttgart-Kaltental. The town looked ghastly – all in rubble, one burned house after another and whole streets destroyed. It was so sad to see such chaos. There were only small amounts of food left in the stores. The school close to our home was set up as a soup-kitchen. I remember having to stand in line to get my kettle filled up with soup so I could bring it home to our family. I was about 8 years old then. Every family got ration cards, which meant we could only get so much butter, flour, sugar or meat per person. And then you had to stand in line for hours. Our mothers had to be very creative to put enough food on our table each day.

We also were restricted on gas which was used for cooking. When my mother wanted to bake a cake or bread for the family, she had to mix it all up and put the dough into the baking pans. Then she had to carry them all the way to the local bakery to be put into their ovens, using their gas, hoping they had extra room on their baking racks. Later in the day, we had to return to the bakery to pick up the baked goods. All this extra work was because the gas allotted for our family was not enough. We had to save the gas for cooking our regular meals. (This usually ruled out special treats like our favorite cakes, which, believe me, did not sit too well with us kids). A lot of time was spent shopping for each day's dinner and supper and the next morning's breakfast. And then it started all over again: the soup line, the shopping, and the long waits to get enough food to feed 7 kids and 5 adults. All this was done by foot; we had no car after the war. No one had such luxury.



Ration card for bread.

Kinderscheckkarte für Mädelchen vom vollendeten 3. bis zum vollendeten 12. Lebensjahr rech. am	1	2	3	4	5	b 1	b 1	a 1	a 1	71	72	73
						b 2	b 2	a 2	a 2	61	62	63
						b 3	b 3	a 3	a 3	51	52	53
						b 4	b 4	a 4	a 4	41	42	43
						b 5	b 5	a 5	a 5	31	32	33
						b 6	b 6	a 6	a 6	21	22	23
						b 7	b 7	a 7	a 7	11	12	13
						b 8	b 8	a 8	a 8	1	2	3
						b 9	b 9	a 9	a 9	1	2	3
						b 10	b 10	a 10	a 10	1	2	3

Kleider	I	II	III	IV	Taghemden, gewebt	I	II	III	IV
Röcke, Leibchenröcke, Hosenröcke,	24	13	20		Nachhemden, gewirkt oder gestrickt	6	—	6	10
Hosen, gewebt	11	7	10		Unterjacken jeder Art	—	10	17	
Hosen, gewirkt oder gestrickt	10	7	10		Hemdhemden, gewirkt	6	—	11	
Blusen, auch gewirkt oder gestrickt	9	7	9		Schläpper und sonstige Beinbekleider,	—	—	—	
Polo- u. Charmeusehemden od. -blusen	7	9	9		auch gewirkt oder gestrickt	7	4	6	
Spielböden	6	8	8		Unterleider und Unterröcke (soweit	10	7	10	
Schürzen	8	10	10		keine Sonderregelung)	3	—	—	
Pullover, Strickwesten, ohne oder mit	14	8	14		Leibchen, Strumpfhaltergürtel	—	—	—	
¾-Ärmeln	11	6	11		Strumpfhaltershenden	4	—	—	
Jacken aus Wolle und wollhaltig, ge-	33	—	—		Söckchen	2	—	—	
füttert, gewirkt	—	—	—		Trainingsanzüge	16	20	—	
Jacken, ungefütert, auch gewirkt od.	21	11	10		Trainingshosen, Eislaufhosen	9	11	—	
gestrickt	21	11	10		Trainingsjacken	7	9	—	
Janker, auch gewirkt oder gestrickt	21	11	10		Taschentücher	1	—	—	
Gummi-, gummierte und imprägnierte	—	—	—		Strick- und Handarbeitsgarne 100 g	4	bis 6	—	
Regenmäntel und Regenanhänge,	18	—	—						
ungefütert, ungefüllte Popeline-	—	—	—						
mäntel	37	18	23						
Sommernädel, auch Umhänge und	40	—	—						
gefüllte Regenmäntel	16	—	—						
Gamaschenzüge	2	—	—						
Gamaschenhosen	—	—	—						
Handschuhe, auch Fäustlinge, aus Spinn-	—	—	—						
stoffen, gewirkt mit Futter od. gestrickt	—	—	—						

Nähmittel A	Nähmittel B	Nähmittel C	Nähmittel D	Nähmittel E	Nähmittel F	a	b	c	d
Gültig ab 1.8.44	Gültig ab 1.10.44	Gültig ab 1.2.45	Gültig ab 1.3.45	Gültig ab 1.8.45	Gültig ab 1.10.45				
und gegen 1½ Punkte	und gegen 1½ Punkte	und gegen 1½ Punkte	und gegen 1½ Punkte	und gegen 1½ Punkte	und gegen 1½ Punkte				

Bezugsnachweis über 3 Paar Strümpfe Zu beziehen ab 1.12.45	Bezugsnachweis über 3 Paar Strümpfe Zu beziehen ab 1.9.45
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Ration card for various items.

GOVERNMENT CAMPS TO FATTEN US UP

Because we had so little food after the war, and many of us were anemic and had lost weight, the government sent all children to camps to put us on a healthy diet and get us well again. We were divided by age and boys and girls were sent to separate camps. For me to be with so many girls my age was such fun. We played, exercised, went on day trips on buses, and even put on a play at the end of camp for our parents.

MY MOTHER

As long as I can remember, our mother was always sick. She became even more ill towards the end of the war. What made it so difficult for her is that the medicine she so desperately needed was not available in Germany. It came from America only, and America was the enemy! When we got back to Kaltental, she had to go directly to the hospital.

In 1946, I clearly remember one Sunday afternoon. When my Auntie Emma decided to go visit my mother, I asked to go along. We had to walk through the woods to get to the hospital and it was quite a long walk. I remember seeing my mother just lying there, very tired looking.

But we did have a nice visit. Little did I know how serious her sickness really was. I was the last person from our family to see her alive. It was the following Sunday, June 9th 1946, when it happened. We were just walking home from church with our grandparents when we saw our father rushing toward us with the devastating news that our mother Emma had just died that morning while we were in church. My mother was only 35 years old. I was barely 8 years old, my sister Jutta was 10 and my brother Hanse only 13. There were many very sad days for us. We were lucky though that we had grandparents living in the same house, and grandma cooked for us and took care of us along with Tante Gertrud, my mother's sister. But, still, it was just not the same without our own mother. I missed my mother so much, and as I get older I miss her even more.



Me, my father, Jutta, Tanta Marta, Oma.



Hans, Klara, Jutta, me, my father.

A BRAND NEW MOTHER

Klara Blochinger came into our lives in late 1946. It was in 1947 when our Dad married his secretary. He needed someone to take care of us children. I remember I was so excited to have a Mom again. But the honeymoon was short. Klara slowly turned into the mean "stepmother from

hell." I was almost 10 years old then. She was much younger than my father and so she felt she had to compete with us children for his attention. She also wanted a child which he refused her. I don't blame her so much anymore for how she was with us. I take some responsibility since I am sure it was not easy for her to raise teenagers. We found out later that when Klara was in her early 20's she became pregnant without being married, and so she was shunned a lot because she



Klara's childhood home in Seeburg.

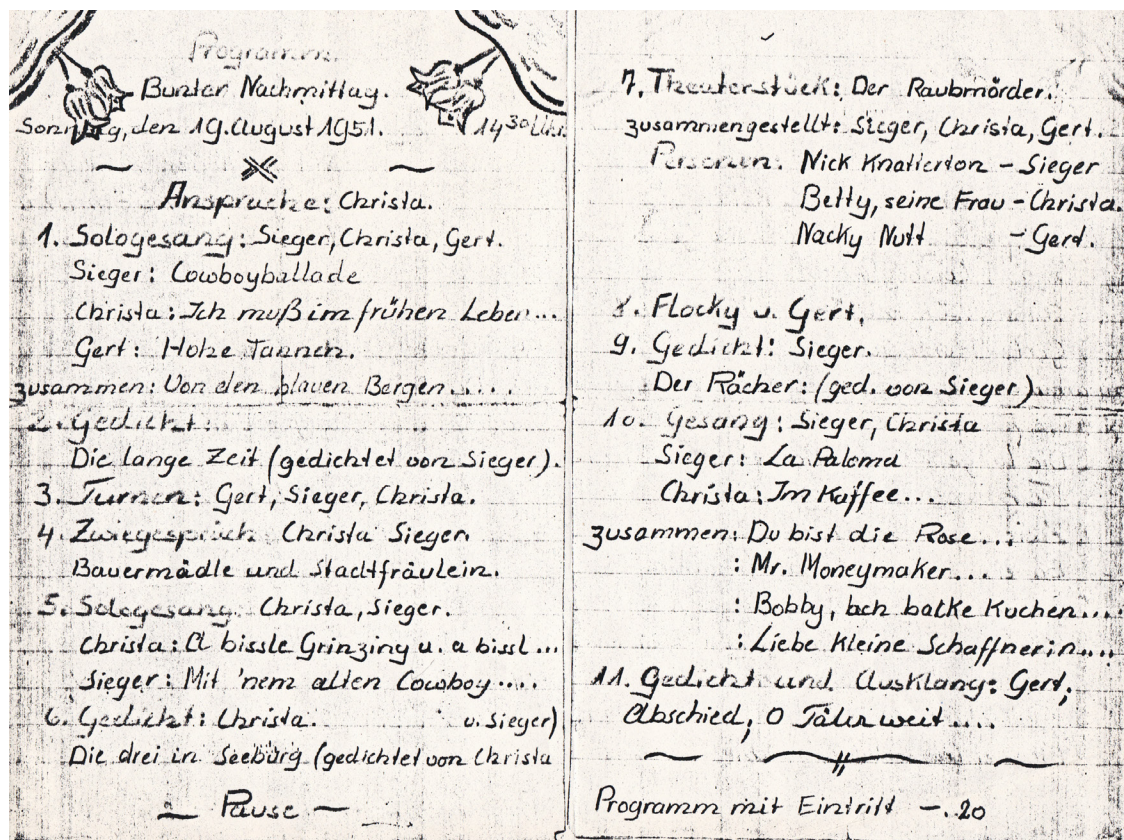
had shamed her family. In those days it was a really terrible thing. She lost her little boy when he was 3. Someone had left the garden gate open which led out to the area where a little brook ran through the property. The brook then found its way down a little hill and collected into a deep pool. This water was needed for the Waterworks. The little boy was found in the pool having drowned.

Through that marriage we acquired new aunts and uncles and also new cousins, Sieger Zepf and Gert Herrgen. Sieger is the only son of Tante Marta, sister of my stepmother, and Gert is the

only child of Minna, also a sister of Klara. During summer school vacations I stayed in Seeburg together with Sieger and Gert. We became really good friends and Sieger and I even had a crush on each other.

A few years ago when Sieger was visiting me in N.J. (we were then 68 years old), he told me how he remembered our first kiss and, to my astonishment, he even knew what dress I was wearing. (That is so sweet. After all, this was 57 years ago.)

I remember one particular summer when we put on a show for our parents and Oma and Opa. We even included Oma's little dog Flocki in the play. Sieger sang an American song, and we sang some songs together, harmonizing. We also composed poems for our show, and designed our own programs. Here is a copy of our Variety Show Program.



Variety Show Program from August 19, 1951.

When he was only 14, Sieger was diagnosed with diabetes. He ended up having to give himself shots daily ever since. Because of his sickness he decided to become a medical doctor, and later went into the field of psychiatry with a PhD. He ended up teaching psychiatry at the University of Tuebingen and wrote several text books and many papers. Sieger's mother, my Aunt Marta, is one of my favorite aunts and the sister of Klara.

She gave me my favorite ring. The ring has a light blue "aquamarine" stone in a silver setting and I still wear it every day. You will read more about that ring later in my book.

Sieger gave Marta 2 grandsons, Florian and Johannes. They both are musicians at heart, with a lot of talent. Too bad we all live so far away from each other.

Our step-mom often locked our clothes in our Armoire. We received many care packages after the war from another sister of my step-mother, Gertrud, who lived in Hawaii. Tante Gertrud had a daughter my age, and so she sent all the hand-me-downs from Lynn to us and they were gorgeous dresses and blouses. Instead of letting us wear them, Klara kept the dresses locked up in our Armoire, away from us, except for one dress which we had to wear all week long. Also, she had a key to our little refrigerator in the kitchen so that we could not get into it when we were hungry. It was all controlled by her. I still dream sometimes about some of the things that took place then.

My father and my stepmother did not get along. He was such a happy-go-lucky fellow and she was mostly cranky and would hold grudges for weeks on end, where she would not talk to whoever she was angry with at the time. She definitely had the Blochinger trait: stubbornness. Or, perhaps she was bipolar. I must say, after I got married and had my own children and she became a grandmother, she could not do enough for them. I guess she tried to make up for some of the mean things that happened during our life with her. I felt sorry for Klara, she had a tough life. As time went along I even learned to forgive her, and hope she can forgive me for all my bad thoughts of her. Towards the end of her life, we became good friends.

GIRLFRIENDS

I had two close girlfriends in Stuttgart. They both lived right across the street from our house, Margret Baeuchle and Helga Gleiss. I remember when we were little, we played with our dolls and doll carriages a lot, especially with Margret, who had a Gazebo in her backyard, which was our make-believe house for us and our “children” (dolls). Later on when we were a bit older, Helga and I would pretend we were opera singers and dancers, and yet much later, famous pianists. We both took piano lessons from the same teacher. There was always a rivalry who was the best. Often there were squabbles, as you can imagine, with the 3 of us as friends.



Me (in the middle) with Helga and Margret.

One would almost always be “on the outs” —but it never lasted very long. All 3 of us attended the same elementary school which was located just up at the top of our hill, about 3 houses away from my house. This was especially nice for me, since my uncle was the school custodian after the war, and my Uncle Fritz and Tante Emma lived on the 3rd floor in the school building. So during recess I could run upstairs and visit with them.

I often was invited to stay overnight at my Tante Emma’s place. She used to make the best hot-cocoa for me with goat’s milk. They raised goats in an area behind the school. During the winter months, I would curl up in a nice warm blanket and sip that hot cocoa. Hmm. It makes

me want to go back in time once again. This aunt always had neat little toys to play with, such as little toy chickens or a Russian wooden Mamushka with several dolls fitting inside each other. Perhaps that's why I like those wooden dolls so much even now... it reminds me of my favorite aunt and my childhood.

MORE SCHOOL MEMORIES

One memory from my grade school was when my favorite teacher asked me to be a model for the art class she was taking. She picked me up to take me to her class in the evenings. They posed me there, sometimes my prop was a chair or some other objects. I felt very special to be picked by this teacher. I think I was about 11 or so.

Later on I attended Middle School. The school was further away and Helga and I had to take the street cars to get into the city of Stuttgart to our School. Remember we lived in the suburbs. This school had 2 buildings, one for the girls and one for the boys. The school yard where we went for recess was also separated, the upper part for girls and the lower section for the boys. But we could see each other through the chain linked fences. And a couple of years later we started noticing the opposite sex. Exciting and confusing years. YIKES -- I was a teenager now!! That was the time when I fell madly in love with my 1st boyfriend. And soon we had our first kiss! The weird thing is what I remember mostly from that experience is his bad breath. Yuck... That boy definitely had a problem.

Around that time, we were also getting more and more interested in the boys in our village. Which is why on Sundays, we often ended up walking to the Sportsclub where the boys were playing soccer. There was a clubhouse, where I entertained at the piano with all the pop songs and boogies I knew. That made me very popular and I must say that felt really good.

During those Middle School years (ages 11-14) Helga and I always met outside our houses and walked together to the street-car stop. And even when we were not speaking (had a spat) we still would go arm-in-arm together. Margret did not attend Middle School. She did not pass the

exam and so she stayed in the Grade School for all 8 years.

After the 2nd year of Middle School, Helga and I thought ourselves to be pretty good in English. Remember, we only spoke German but had to take English as a second language. We felt we were so good, in fact, that we used to pretend we were from the USA. We thought we would fool the passengers in the street-cars into believing we really were Americans. You see, being an American was very special in our minds. Americans were rich and had everything they wanted and we all wanted to end up in America some day to become famous movie stars or pianists. What a dream... don't let me wake up.

CONFIRMATION

When I was 13 going on 14 I was attending confirmation classes at our Lutheran Church in Kaltental. I decided I wanted to get a new hairdo for the special occasion. So I talked my parents into cutting off my long hair, which I usually had in braids. My mother took me to the Beauty Salon and not only had them cut my hair, but gave me a permanent. Because I had such naturally curly hair, the permanent came out horrible... like a frizzy mess. Unfortunately, it showed up in our group picture. Sometimes you can be wrong, even when you are 13 going on 14 and you think you know everything. This was a hard lesson to be learned.

MY PIANO LESSONS

As far back as I can remember I have always been interested in music, and especially in the piano. Perhaps that was because we had our mother's piano at home. While we were in the country during the war, I started taking lessons from an elderly man who lived in the next village. I used to walk there on a dirt road. There were lots of wild flowers on either side of the road, also apple trees and fields of clover and wheat. It was fun walking through that paradise, anticipating what I might learn that day. I walked all alone. Some of the farmers were out working their fields. I was about 5 or 6 then. I wish I could describe how I felt. I was so happy to be playing the piano, even though I just started. I could not wait to get home to practice my new lesson on

my aunt's piano. These lessons were just for that summer. That was during the time we were in farm country by our relatives.

My next memory of piano lessons comes after the war. We were back in Stuttgart again, and it was after my mother had died in 1946 when my grandfather thought I should be taking lessons again. My father did not want to spend the money, so my grandfather paid for my lessons. I thank him to this day!

My teacher, Fraulein Kraemer, was a recent graduate of the Conservatory of Music in Stuttgart. She was a very good teacher. In just 4 years, when I was 13, I played some very substantial material such as Chopin's Military Polonaise, many of his Waltzes, Schubert's Scherzos, among many other classics. I was so happy to get these lessons; I did not mind walking 1½ miles each way. I wasted no time walking home since I could hardly wait to learn and practice my new pieces.

At that age I was also asked to play for our community functions, even accompanying a professional singer at her concerts. I loved my piano recitals. I was such a "ham" when I was young. I was told there were people coming to our recitals that did not even have a child performing in it, but came because they had heard of my talent. I remember wearing a very elegant white silky blouse, with puffy long sleeves which made me look the part of an artist. My grandfather was especially proud of me. Thank you, Grossvater for everything. I wish I could give you a big hug right now.

When I became a full-fledged teenager, however, I decided that I did not want to play solely classical pieces anymore. I wanted to be cool and play the latest music, such as boogie-woogies, jazz, popular songs and pop-music. But my stepmother did not let me play anything other than classical. I still think of the times when my sister would stand guard to signal me when she saw her come home while I played to my heart's content everything I wanted to play while she was out shopping.

Soon after that I decided to quit my formal lessons. My father did not mind at all, since he had taken over the paying of the lessons from my grandfather by then. He was glad not to have to pay any longer. I wish he had insisted that I continue. Looking back I can admit now that I was way too young to stop my lessons. But it was the teenager with all the wild ideas who conquered. I was too young to know what was good for me.

So I kept on playing on my own, mostly modern pop music. I even played for money at a tavern for a few weekends until my father found out what I was up to. He got very angry and made me stop. I was about 14 then and as most teenagers, I was adventurous and had my own mind.

I graduated from Middle School and went on to work for Format Werbung on the Alexander Strasse in Stuttgart. This company was in the dias business which were shown at the theaters. While working there, I was an apprentice to become a secretary and went to business school twice weekly where I learned typing, shorthand and general office procedures.

Both my girlfriends died early in life. Margaret had cancer of the brain, and Helga had breast cancer. They both were only in their late 30's. I don't know why some of us have to leave this earth so early, like my mother. I think of them often.

CHAPTER 9

C.R. AND HOW WE MET



Calvin Richard "C.R." Conn in his office.

I believe it was 1952, I was a mere 14 going on 15. My sister Judy and I often walked to Vaihingen, a town close to Kaltental, where there was a huge outdoor Freibad (swimming pool). We loved going there, not just for the swimming, but also to flirt with the American soldiers who were stationed nearby in the 7th Army Corps and came to the pool on their “off duty” days. While walking to and from the swimming pool, we encountered many cars and got quite a few cat whistles from the soldiers as they drove by. We were, after all, 2 young ladies and may I say (yes, I may) not- too- bad- looking. We even wore “forbidden” lipstick. Wearing make-up was not allowed in our family. We always had to make sure we wiped it off to erase all evidence before we arrived home.

One lazy afternoon, when we were returning home from the Pool and were almost at our house, a very showy American red Dodge slowed down along the sidewalk where my sister and I were walking. There were 2 American soldiers in that car. The driver was C.R. He started a conversation with “Hallo Fraeuleins,” asking us where we were going. To their surprise, I was quick to answer in perfect English. They wanted to know if we would come along with them. But, because we were close to our home and could not be seen talking to GI’s, we decided to make a date for the following week in downtown Stuttgart.

I suppose I should tell you what those initials “C.R.” stand for. His mother named him Calvin Richard, but as you will see later, he was no “Calvin.” C.R. was a Sergeant in the 7th Army and had a platoon under him. He was joking all the time. He was quite a character. You either loved him or you didn’t like him at all. He was a happy-go-lucky kind of guy with lots of crazy, cockamamie ideas. He was like a magnet and everybody was pulled toward him. There never was a dull moment while you were in his company. He was unpredictable and always on the go. He was also 11 years older than I, and so I was quite flattered that a guy like him (a grown man of age 26) would be interested in a girl like me.

We dated almost a year before we had our first kiss. Now, how romantic was that?? Often, we took my sister Judy along to the Officer’s Club at the Army Base, where we would eat and



Me in 1953 (15 years old).

dance to Big Band music. C.R. and I both liked to dance and he was a terrific dancer. He told me that for a short time, just before he joined the Army, he and a buddy owned a skating rink in Wallace, Michigan where he got quite good dancing on roller skates. Later on, C.R. bought clothes for me at the PX (that's a store at the Army Base). I wore these clothes to the dances and I felt like I was in a Fairy Tale. American clothes were so much fancier than German clothes. At the time I could not afford to buy clothes. I worked in an office as an apprentice, learning to be a secretary, and earned very little money.



Me during our courtship.

After 1 year of dating, I finally got brave enough to bring C.R. home to our house to meet my father, my grandparents, and cousins. He was a great hit. He spoke a bit of halted German and he brought pop-corn and cooked it on our kitchen stove. Well, that was really something. It was "The Greatest Show on Earth!" Those few kernels of corn popping and popping and popping, making such a big racket and then like: "PUFF!" the kettle... it ran over!! What great magic! We had never seen anything like that before. It was fantastic! In Germany, people did not eat corn. No, corn was only meant for pigs! After that first meeting with my father, I did not have to sneak out to be with C.R. My father did not think that C.R. and I were an item; he thought we were just good friends, and he was ok with that. (I think.)

A HOLIDAY

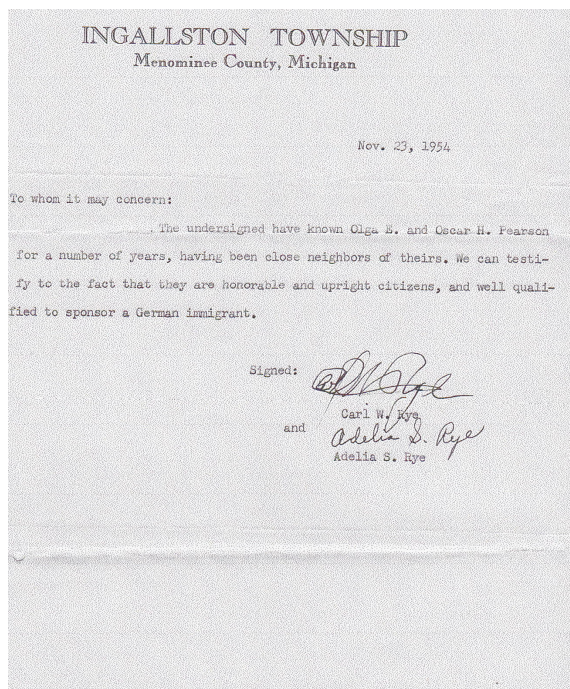
One time during our courtship we decided to go on a week-long trip, much to my grandfather's dismay. He thought it was terrible for a single young lady to go with a man alone and not be married to him. I would wholeheartedly agree with him now, but at the time I was a silly teenager. We could not marry because C.R. was still married to a woman who was, at that time, in a psychiatric hospital in Germany. On that vacation trip, we had a lot of fun. I pretended to be C.R.'s wife and spoke only English that entire week. Everyone thought I really was an American, although I wonder what they thought when I played all the latest German pop songs on the piano at the resort. Anyway, it was such a fun week full of intrigue and adventure. Like I said before, things were never boring around C.R.

C.R.'S TRANSFER BACK TO AMERICA

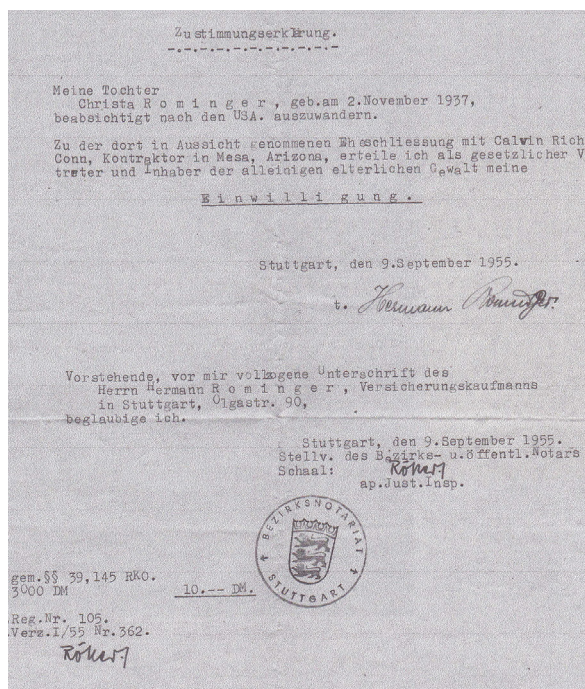
About 1-1/2 years into our relationship, C.R. was transferred back to the U.S.A. He asked me to come as soon as I could get my papers (VISA) from the Consulate. He also asked his parents to be my sponsors. Everyone going to immigrate into the USA had to have a sponsor if they were not married to an American, to make certain that they would not become a burden to the US Government. (C.R. decided to also bring his current wife to the US and then divorce her once she was well again.) Can you believe that I listened to him? He was married already, I was only 16, and I am going across the ocean to a strange land, to strange people? Would I do that now? No. Never. But I was young and in love. (By the way, no one knew that C.R. was married but me.)

I remember I had to fill out many, many papers and then it took a full year to be approved. At that time I had to travel to Munich, Germany where the Consulate was seated for an interview with the head consul. This was all very exciting for me. I was only 17 and had to travel all by myself, stay in a hotel, and find my way around Munich. I had never even been on a train or in a hotel all alone. I was so proud of myself that I could do these things and no one had to tell

me how. Just call me Superwoman! Where is the phone booth? At the Consulate, after lots of preliminary paperwork, I was asked to see the head consul. During my private interview with him he mentioned that my sponsors, C.R.'s parents, did not have an adequate income to support me once I am in America. (They lived on a small farm in Wallace, Michigan with just an acre or so and lived very frugal). So the guy asked me if I could support myself, and how I planned to do that. Well, I was very proud to tell him that "I am a typewriter and can work in any office," He laughed so hard he almost fell off his chair. Apparently in the English language when one types on a typewriter, one calls himself a typist, and not a typewriter. But he promptly approved my immigration papers.



Sponsor letter for the Consulate.



Permission letter to travel from my father.

WOW! I was on my way to a whole new life in America, Land of the Free!! But before I could travel, my father also had to give me permission to leave the country and to marry C.R. because I was still underage. I was 17 when I made the journey across the big Atlantic Ocean all by myself. Was I ever brave then! What happened? As I said before, when one is young one thinks one can take on the World and nothing is beyond reach. I sure did think that way. Boy, do I wish I still had that kind of attitude now. Make room World...Here I come!

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ORIGINAL
TO BE GIVEN TO
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

No. **7979482**

Petition No. 5301

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Date of birth November 2, 1937 sex Female
 complexion Medium color of eyes Blue-gray color of hair Black height 5 feet 4 inches.
 weight 101 pounds; visible distinctive marks None
 Marital status Married former nationality Germany

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

(Sign here)

Christa Conn
 (Complete and true signature of holder)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA }
 DISTRICT OF ARIZONA } ss:

Be it known, that at a term of the United States District Court of
District of Arizona
 held pursuant to law at Phoenix, Arizona
 on March 23, 1959 the Court having found that
CHRISTA CONN
 then residing at 1320 Terrace Road, Tempe, Arizona
 intends to reside permanently in the United States (when so required by the
 Naturalization Laws of the United States), had in all other respects complied with
 the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be
 admitted to citizenship, thereupon ordered that such person be and (she) was
 admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 23rd
 day of March in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and
Fifty-nine and of our Independence the one hundred
 and Eighty-third.

WM. H. LOVELESS
 Clerk of the U. S. District Court.

By Jenna Libby Deputy Clerk.
 Jenna Libby

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Seal

It is a violation of the U. S. Code (and
 punishable as such) to copy, print, photograph,
 or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

My "very serious" Certificate of Naturalization.

MY SEA-VOYAGE TO AMERICA

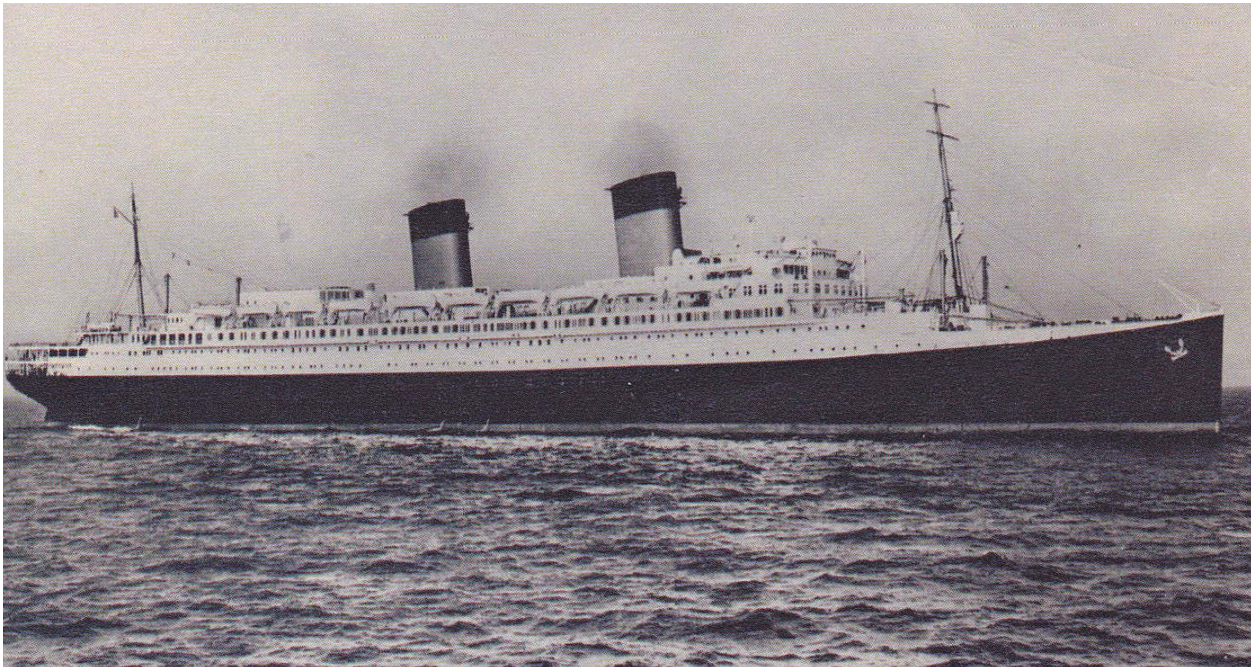
I chose a huge passenger ship, the Ile De France, a French ship that left from Le Havre, France. The departure was set for September 16, 1955. On the day I left Stuttgart I said good-bye to many friends and relatives, it was especially hard to say good-bye to my elderly grandmother. I did



Saying goodbye to my Grandmother and Sister.

not know when I could return. Would she still be alive? A trip to America was very expensive then, and to fly was not even an option. My brother went with me as far as Paris, because my train from Stuttgart arrived in Paris at midnight, and Paris was known as a town with many shady characters. The next morning, my brother came along to the Train Station where I boarded the train to Le Havre. We said our final good-byes and then I was really on my own. Seventeen. All alone. Did not know anyone on the Ship, never was on any ship before in my life. And then traveling on the Ile De France... Wow---

The ocean liner was huge; there were shops, beauty-parlors, movies, swimming pool, dance floors, a huge dining room. I traveled coach class. The upper class was for the rich and famous. I



A photo of the ship I took on my voyage to America.

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My actual ticket from France to New York.

LISTE DE DÉPARTS				
LIGNE LE HAVRE - SOUTHAMPTON - NEW YORK				
ET RETOUR				
Proposed Sailings 1955				
LE HAVRE - SOUTHAMPTON - NEW YORK (WESTBOUND)				
NAVIRES SHIPS	Départ - Leave		Arrivée - Due NEW YORK	
	LE HAVRE	SOUTHAMPTON		
FLANDRE	Sept. 6 Sept.	Sept. 6 Sept.	Sept. 13 Sept.	
LIBERTE	Sept. 13 Sept.	Sept. 13 Sept.	Sept. 19 Sept.	
ILE DE FRANCE	Sept. 16 Sept.	Sept. 16 Sept.	Sept. 22 Sept.	
FLANDRE	Sept. 26 Sept.	Sept. 27 Sept.	Oct. 3 Oct.	
LIBERTE	Sept. 30 Sept.	Sept. 30 Sept.	Oct. 6 Oct.	
ILE DE FRANCE	Oct. 11 Oct.	Oct. 11 Oct.	Oct. 17 Oct.	
LIBERTE	Oct. 19 Oct.	Oct. 19 Oct.	Oct. 25 Oct.	
FLANDRE	Oct. 22 Oct.	Oct. 22 Oct.	Oct. 29 Oct.	
LIBERTE	Nov. 8 Nov.	Nov. 8 Nov.	Nov. 14 Nov.	
LIBERTE	Nov. 24 Nov.	Nov. 24 Nov.	Nov. 30 Nov.	
ILE DE FRANCE	Dec. 13 Déc.	Dec. 13 Déc.	Dec. 20 Déc.	
FLANDRE*	Dec. 28 Déc.	Dec. 28 Déc.	GALVESTON 15 Jan. 1956	

* Via SOUTHAMPTON (Dec. 18) - VIGO (Dec. 30) - SAN JUAN DE PORTO RICO (Jan. 5, 1956) - POINTE-A-PITRE (Jan. 6) - FORT-DE-FRANCE (Jan. 7) - LA BARBADE (Jan. 8) - TRINIDAD (Jan. 9) - LA GUAYRA (Jan. 10) - CURAÇAO (Jan. 11) - KINGSTON (Jan. 12).

NEW YORK - PLYMOUTH - LE HAVRE (EASTBOUND)			
NAVIRES SHIPS	Départ - Leave NEW YORK	Arrivée - Due	
		PLYMOUTH	LE HAVRE

Dates of our voyage to New York.

still have the passenger list. The Sea Journey was to take 5 days only, but because we encountered a hurricane on that last day, we were delayed almost 2 days. That storm was awesome and very scary. The waves came over the top of this huge ship. Thank God I was too young to know the dangers. I saw a lot of nuns and priests praying. Most people got sea sick and had to stay in their cabins. There were ropes put up so that where ever you walked, you could hold on to them. I never got sick, thank heaven. Before we got into that storm, I socialized with the passengers and met some very nice people. They were worried that no one is meeting me in New York upon my arrival. C.R. could not make it, he was stationed in Fort Huachuca in New Mexico at the time. Several nice ladies gave me their addresses and telephone numbers in case I needed their help in the big city. C.R. told me in his letter, I should go to the "Travelers Aid" for help, since I had to find my way from the Dock to the train station to continue on to Fort Wayne, Indiana. There I was going to stay with my Uncle Bill and his wife Minnie. Uncle Bill was my grandfather's brother who had immigrated to the USA before WW2. I was to help my uncle to take care of his very sick wife and stay there until C.R. got his divorce.

Upon arrival at the Dock in Manhattan in the early morning I went to the Travelers' Aid and asked for help. There was a very nice young fellow who decided to be my guide. He said he just worked all night and had just finished his shift, but that he wants to show me the town. So he took me to a small restaurant close to where he lived and ordered me breakfast. He then left me there, said he wanted to shower and shave and would be back as soon as he could. So here I was... all alone in Manhattan... somewhere... in a restaurant...somewhere... waiting for a complete stranger. What if this guy won't come back? What will I do? But I worried for nothing, he did come back. We then went to the train station to put my baggage in a locker, and then he showed me Manhattan in all its glory. All those tall, super tall buildings! We went to Central Park, to the Empire State Building for a look, and even to Radio City Hall where we took in a show. After that, I got a good taste of the 5-o'clock rush hour on 5th Avenue. Where did all those people come from and where are they all going? Little did I know that one day I would be living

very close to Manhattan (only a 45 minute train ride). And that I would have a skyline view of the Empire State Building and the Trade Centers from our house in New Jersey. Anyhow, the fellow from the Travelers' Aid took me to the train station, very reluctantly. He wanted me to forget all about C.R. and about going to Indiana and stay in NY City. I guess he took a liking to me.

FROM N.Y. TO INDIANA

The train ride from NY to Fort Wayne, Indiana was interesting. I got to see all the towns and countryside as we passed. However, when I got off the train, I wanted to turn right around and head back home to Germany. Fort Wayne is not a pretty town. My first impression was of all the deteriorated ad signs on both sides of the road and old rundown buildings. It was an ugly site. I stayed in Fort Wayne with my relatives to help them and get acquainted with America. But finally I could not resist C.R.'s begging for me to come and see him sooner than we had planned. And I, being so young, really did see that as a way to get out of being a nurse. Taking care of my aunt Minnie was a horrendous job being she had cancer of the bowels. I had to clean her and the bed several times each day. I later regretted that I did not stay a little longer. My aunt soon passed away after I left. My time in Ft. Wayne was very short. I arrived in September 1955 and left for Arizona in late November.

The flight to Phoenix was the first one I ever took and it was quite scary. There was so much snow in Chicago that the plane could not land right away. It circled around and around above the airport, ascending and descending which made me sick to my stomach. By the time we finally landed my connecting flight to Phoenix, Arizona had left. I was then taken to a Hotel close to the Airport. TWA paid for all of that expense and also had a driver pick me up in the morning to take me back to the airport for my flight to Phoenix. They were really classy and I even received a letter of apology.

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

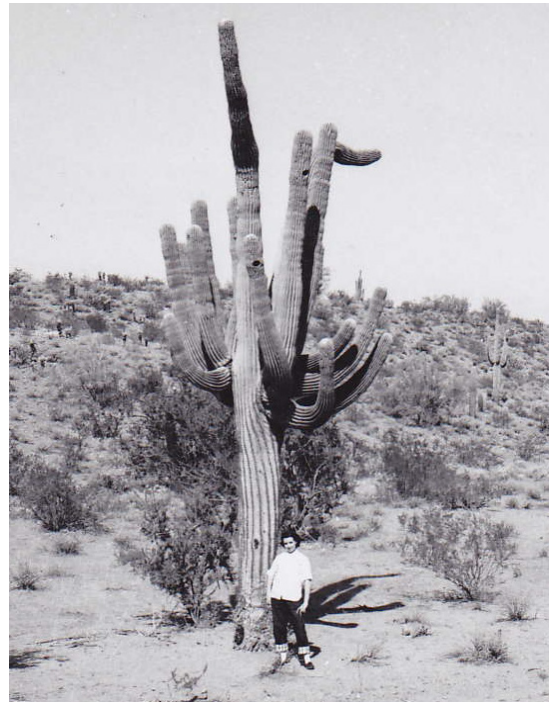
When C.R. met me at the Airport, I hardly recognized him at first. He was out of the Army

now and it was strange seeing him all tanned and in civilian clothes. And it was exciting and breathtaking to see all the palm trees and the cacti and the whole desert landscape---so different from what I was used to in Europe. C.R. lived in a Motel in Mesa called La Mesita Lodge where he was the manager. We both stayed there. This was our first apartment together. I helped the



Our first home in Mesa, Arizona.

owner's wife by being her companion. She was not well. Life at the Motel was much fun—we had a swimming pool where we spent a lot of time. C.R. was still full of surprises. Like when he decided to bring home a baby crocodile about 1 ½ feet long. We kept it in our enclosed shower stall. One day when I went into the bathroom I noticed that the crocodile was “oh my God” not in the shower. Did I panic? You bet! That little rascal was mean and could bite. I was on top of the furniture until C.R. came home much later and came to my rescue. Occasionally, C.R. would spring a surprise on our friends, like the time when the crocodile ended up being in the swimming pool. I never saw our friends climbing out of the pool so fast. As you can see, C.R. had a peculiar sense of humor. At that time we had no car, but a Harley Davidson Motorcycle. We often took wild off-road rides into the Arizona desert - bumpy but much fun.



Our first days in Arizona.



GETTING MARRIED

On the very day C.R. got his divorce papers, we drove down to New Mexico to get married. Arizona did not allow someone who got divorced to marry again until one year has passed. Well, we did not want to wait and so I put on my best dress and we drove all day and most of the night until we arrived in New Mexico where we found a Justice of the Peace at around midnight. We woke him up and also his wife for our witness. I don't know how much that cost, but I am sure it was quite a bit for that couple to want to get up in the middle of the night. We then drove all the way back to Phoenix, Arizona so C.R. could go to work the next day. Not very romantic, was it? No honeymoon either. But I was happy. I married "my guy."



My wedding dress.

SUNNYSLOPE, ARIZONA

One of the first places we moved to is called Sunnyslope, a suburb of Phoenix. We lived in a 1-bedroom duplex. I even had a piano then, the 1st one I owned in America. C.R. would lie on the sofa and listen to me play that piano for hours—he loved classical as well as popular music.

I loved that about him. He always encouraged me to practice and play; he liked to show off my talent to our friends and neighbors. Without his appreciation and enthusiasm I would not have practiced as much.

While living there, we became friends with a young minister and his wife. At this time, I don't even remember what kind of church it was, but they believed in baptizing people by completely immersing them in water. Well, C.R. decided we should get baptized like that, and so that's what we did. Dressed in white gowns we walked into a simple square concrete construction, which was built high enough to immerse our entire bodies. We then kept attending that church every Sunday morning. During that time I remember one Sunday when C.R.'s friend "Boris", an Army



Wes Morris "Borris."

buddy, came to visit us with his 2-seater plane. His real name was Wesley Morris. Boris was as crazy as C.R. For example, when he bought his 2-seater plane, he had no idea how to fly. The plane was in bad shape, but with some ingenuity and some duct-tape Morris took off and flew from Ft. Huachuca to Phoenix, Arizona.

The morning he arrived, C.R. had to go to work. Boris kindly offered to accompany me to church. Suddenly, during the service, I passed out right in front of the congregation. Well soon after that I found out I was pregnant with Audrey. What a way to announce it. A few days later I got to fly with Boris in his 2-seater, pregnant and all, and not just a little worried about the duct-tape. That was Audrey's first flight, still in the womb. (Perhaps that's why she took to flying. She got herself a pilot license when she was only a teenager). Boris and his wife later owned and operated a small Airport in Van Nuys, California. I believe either in 1992 or 1993 he flew his last flight over some rugged mountain range where he crashed and died. They did not find him until a week later. It was no secret that he wanted to die cruising in a plane... so he was granted his last wish.

In Sunnyslope and all over that part of Arizona were many Orange Groves, and their blooms had a very strong fragrance. It was just my luck, that every time I smelled this fragrance during my pregnancy I got sick to my stomach. So, needless to say, I was constantly sick. The only time I felt good was while I was eating a hamburger which I later, you guessed it, threw up again. What a waste of money which we did not have enough of in the first place.

MESA, ARIZONA

After Sunnyslope, we moved to Mesa. There we lived in a guesthouse behind the main house on 1st Avenue, about 2 blocks from the Mormon Temple. While there C.R. thought it might be a good idea to check out the Mormon church. His good army buddy was a Mormon and lived nearby in Mesa with his family. We took a few lessons at the church. But when my grandmother heard of it, she was very worried about me... that I was becoming a heathen or something like that. We finally decided that being Mormon was not for us after all. We liked our coffee.

One day C.R. started to make wine out of corn and set up a Still in our basement. A few weeks later the Still blew up. This was when C.R. decided to donate the residue (fermented corn) to the chickens next door. Much to the dismay of our neighbor, the chickens' owner, they all

got quite tipsy. C.R. thought it was such a Hoot! I must say it was funny to see those chickens running around in circles. I still have to laugh.



Me posing for the camera.



C.R. the "Macho Man".

TARGET SHOOTING

We often went camping in the desert where C.R. taught me how to target shoot with a 22 pistol. We also went bow and arrow hunting for deer. I did learn how to work the bow and arrow but I never shot a deer. I don't think I could have killed it anyhow. On one of those camping trips

we took along Lacita, our German Shepherd, who just loved to roam around our campsite. One night as we were cuddled in our sleeping bags in the open, without a tent, Lacita got introduced to a skunk and afterwards decided to come and snuggle in between us. Oooooooooo, that was horrific!! Sooo bad. We had to quickly find some cans of tomato juice and scrub ourselves all down good. What an awful experience. Needless to say, my love of camping was short lived.

AUDREY (born November 9, 1956)

Well, it was November 9th, 1956 when Audrey decided to show up. We were actually shopping for clothes in a department store the night before. All of a sudden my water broke and made a big puddle on the floor of the store. We quickly made our exit, jumped on the motorcycle and headed for the Mesa Hospital. Audrey arrived several hours later. We were so excited, she was so cute and so helpless. I had just turned 18 the week before, and did not know much about how to take care of an infant. But a lot of that comes from instinct and somehow I did ok. It was hard not to have any relatives around, no mother, no father, no sister, no grandmother, or any close friends to help me. One good thing, back then you got to stay in the hospital for five



Audrey at 11 days old.

whole days. This helped me to get adjusted to taking care of my new baby. We were poor as mice then. So when it came time to check out of the hospital and go home, the Hospital demanded payment before releasing Audrey to us. However, we had no money, so C.R. suggested to the administrators of the hospital, that they keep her! It was then that they quickly changed their minds and decided we could take Audrey home after all and make monthly payments to the Hospital. You see, we had no insurance. C.R. had no permanent work, but did all sort of odd jobs as they came along so we could eat.

I remember one particular incident when we actually had absolutely not a cent to buy the next day's dinner and milk. As we were sitting in the living room, and wondering what we could do, C.R. ruffled through his worn-out billfold, when lo and behold, "what's this?" He found a secret pocket which he had forgotten about. In it were...ta, ta...\$10 Dollars! You thought we had won the million dollar lottery. I never was able to go grocery shopping without having to add up all the items as I put them into the shopping cart, to make sure I had enough money when I checked out at the register. Many, many times I had to let items go back. We ate a lot of spinach, liver, hamburger meat and beans and rice. I don't think we had credit cards then... everything was cash.

C.R. did quite a bit of drinking. I remember one night when he left me at home and went to his friends to party. Audrey was just a tiny baby and I had to stay home to take care of her. I was very worried because C.R. never came home that night. It was early in the morning, when he finally arrived and sprawled out on the living room floor. He was so drunk that he could not even move into the bedroom. I got very angry and took a glass of cold water and poured it on his face to wake him up. Whoa!!! He got up so fast. He was livid! He then took me by my neck, dragged me over to the kitchen sink and started running the water. The drain was closed and he held me under until I thought I would drown. He was like a monster. The next morning I decided I needed to get away from him, so I called my sister in Wisconsin. I had marks all over my neck. I could have had him in so much trouble, but now I cowered and very scared of him. I had no idea

how I could even get away with Audrey with no money, etc. It was a very difficult time for me. But, like the old saying "time heals," things eventually got better again.

We moved a few times while in the Phoenix area. One of our good friends, the Fitzgibbons, Bill and Annie, decided to give us financial help until C.R.'s GI Bill for Education came through. So C.R. attended Arizona State University in Tempe where he got his BA Degree. During the school years he took on many jobs, such as "Sanitary Engineer," that meant cleaning toilets. He also managed the grounds at a Country Club in Scottsdale. For another job, we moved into an old Gas Station which was made into a little house with kitchen and all. We got the rent for free, but had to take care of 25+ German Shepherds. The owner of the dogs tried to breed miniature German Shepherds and so he always took the smallest of the dogs for breeding. They were so inbred that some of them were not too smart. Anyway, while C.R. went to classes, I was watering and feeding the dogs. This was in the burning heat of Arizona, and there were no waterlines to the dog's cages; I had to carry the water in buckets to each dog. The place where we lived was infested with scorpions. I had to put the legs of Audrey's Crib into "Ball" glass canning jars so that the scorpions could not crawl into her bed. I found them under the rugs, and in other dark places. We never put any of our shoes on without shaking them out first, just in case. But once, C.R. had one in his cowboy boot and he got bit. It was very poisonous and he had to rush to the Emergency Room right away. I still can't believe that we lived in that dump with a baby. But we were desperate then and very poor.

My grandmother's brother George, who immigrated to the U.S. long before I did, came to visit us while we lived on that dog farm. My grandmother had asked him to look in on me. When he saw the shack we lived in, he felt so badly for me, that he gave us the money to buy a small house trailer. That, of course, meant another move. This time we were able to park the trailer onto a little farm. So C.R. and I, Audrey and Lacita our shepherd lived in the 8 x 40 foot Trailer. Everything was very compact, everything had its place. We did not have any junk at that time; there was no place for stuff.



Uncle George visiting from Oregon.



Uncle Bill visiting from Fort Wayne.



On the way to church with Audrey. I sewed us matching dresses.

TEMPE, ARIZONA

Next we moved our house trailer closer to the campus in Tempe into a Trailer Park. C.R. was still attending school. To help with the groceries I took in ironing for a living. Let me tell you, that was not easy. Everyone wore those darn fancy cotton cowboy shirts which needed to be starched

and ironed. The pleats had to be just so. I did that until I almost had a miscarriage while pregnant with Heidi (Nicole now). The doctor ordered me to give up the ironing and stay in bed. One day while living in that trailer park, Audrey decided to use our front patio to do her “doodoos” and show us quite proudly what she had accomplished. I suppose she saw our German Shepherd do her thing and thought it was pretty cool. Ha, ha we still laugh about that.

APACHE INDIAN RESERVATION – SHOW LOW, ARIZONA

In the meantime, C.R. graduated and took a job teaching Indians on the Apache Indian Reservation. But because we were expecting the birth of Heidi and I had the RH factor and had to be close to a hospital for the birth, Audrey and I stayed with our good friends, the Fitzgibbons, in Phoenix. Bill Fitzgibbon was the Superintendent of the Cotton Research Farm which was associated with the University of Arizona. He had a house right by the farm on Broadway, the main road from Mesa to Phoenix. While Audrey and I stayed there, C.R. moved our trailer and stuff up to the Apache Indian Reservation to get ready for his new job. He sold our house trailer and found a nice, but primitive, cabin right there in the woods. There were several small cabins that were built for the employees of the Fish Hatchery. The cabins next to us were occupied by Apache families.

HEIDI (born October 29, 1959)

Soon as our little Heidi was able to leave the Hospital, C.R. was anxious to show us our new home on the Indian Reservation. He had the biggest surprise waiting for me. When I walked in through that front door, there it was... surprise - a piano! I hadn't had one for quite a while (the trailer was too small) and I really missed it so much. Well, I quickly put Heidi down and bonded with the piano for several hours. Audrey was glad to have a little baby sister, we finally were all together again, and, not to forget, I was the owner of a brand new piano. What more could one want? Life was good. No worry about how the cabin was decorated. We had very little to our name. The most luxurious item was my piano. Life was simpler then, and I did not have

to impress anyone. Also, I was simpler then, and because of that I was happy with very little. (Whenever I am totally stressed out and need some meditation, I think of that tiny cabin in the woods surrounded by pure nature. Life was less complicated and not overwhelming, but straight forward. I take a deep breath and this memory never fails to calm me.)



With Heidi in front of our log cabin.

Living on the Indian Reservation was a one-time experience. For instance, there was an elderly family member living next door to us. This Indian woman would not use the indoor toilet, but just squatted down outside somewhere. She wore several skirts, one above the other, but I don't believe she had underpants on, so it was easy just to gather up all the skirt material and squat for the business at hand. One night she came running to our door all excited and out of breath, but she did not speak English so she gestured a lot. I think what had happened was that the old goat which belonged to another neighbor bucked her while she was squatting. This old goat was nasty and stank to high heaven. Whenever I washed and hung the clothes out on the

line, if this old goat came around, the whole wash would smell like her. One time when she came close to my door, I poured a bucket of hot water on her to shoo her away. She left me alone for a while. But soon she was up to no good again. This time I was outside hanging the wash when the goat started running toward me. I took off across the way toward C.R.'s truck and quickly went up into the cab. However, C.R. did not have any doors on that old truck, so the goat followed me. I went out the other side and ran home all out of breath. I was pregnant with Tina at that time and was not the fastest sprinter. After that incident, I was really petrified of that goat, but we could not hurt it or the Indians would possibly get mad at us. It was interesting to see how very shy the Apache children were. I visited a few times when C.R. was teaching and I noticed that they all raised their little desktops and tried to hide behind their lids. They were very, very shy.

The cabin we lived in had electricity but only a wood stove to cook on and to heat the water with. When Heidi would wake at night for her bottle, I had to make sure the fire was still on in the wood stove so that I could heat the formula for her feeding. In those days, no one breast fed; everyone was put directly on formula. Breast feeding definitely would have been more convenient for me then. To wash the diapers, I had to boil them in a pot on top of the stove. Later, C.R. got me an old washing machine, but I still had to heat the water first.

The wood stove was a problem. I remember one Thanksgiving when we invited the Fitzgibbons to come and eat with us. It was impossible to keep the fire at a steady heat. With the fire not being consistent, that Turkey was finally cooked and ready to eat - would you believe it? - at midnight. We had more than just a few drinks while waiting for that bird and a lot of good laughs about the trials and tribulations of living like a pioneer.

C.R. was an avid hunter. He decided to get us deer even without the permit. Every now and then, he would come home at night and hang a deer into the bathtub so we could clean it and cut it up for roasts and steaks and stews. This was all hush-hush. After all, C.R. was a schoolteacher and was expected to respect the law of the land. What he did was called poaching. People go to jail for that. But C.R. was never one to stick to the rules as he liked to live "on the edge." One time

while we were still living in the house trailer in Tempe, Arizona, he and Fitzgibbons went out at night and the next morning when I awoke, there was a Skull sitting on my nightstand greeting me. He and "Fitz", as Fitzgibbon was called, decided to dig up a grave and take the head home. I don't know how those two got away with the crazy things they did. Another time, C.R. decided to play a trick on me. He asked another one of our friends to sneak into bed with me. They came home late and I was sound asleep already. Well, in the middle of that night, I turned and put my arms around what I thought was C.R., but after a while I realized it was somebody else. What a shock! I could not believe he would do that to me. It was both scary and embarrassing. Enough said about C.R.'s outrageous sense of humor.

PINETOP, ARIZONA

Next we moved out of the Indian Reservation and into a gorgeous little chalet in Pinetop, Arizona. What a change from the rustic little cabin. One thing that stands out in my mind during that time was when Audrey was punished for doing something wrong. She was sent directly to bed without being allowed to brush her teeth. This was traumatic because Audrey believed that all of her teeth would fall out if she missed a single night of brushing. C.R. was very strict with the girls. I really loved that chalet, but unfortunately we only lived there for a few months and then bought our first house in Lakeside.

LAKESIDE, ARIZONA

Here we lived in a single-level type cabin that had real logs on the outside. The inside was knotty pine which made it very cozy. I felt like a pioneer again. We had a rustic, rough hewn fence all around our property. This was just a short distance from the Reservation where C.R. was still teaching.

THE INDIAN BABY

While we were living in Lakeside, C.R. came home one night with an Indian Baby perhaps 4 or 5 months old. The infant was all bundled up in dirty rags and clothes, and never once cried or

smiled or made a peep. It seemed like she hadn't been washed in months. I tried to get her shoes off; her feet had practically grown into the shoes. And the diaper was so filthy, I could hardly stand the smell of the little package. C.R. had found the baby laying on the floor of a Tavern and the mom was nowhere to be found. I took all her clothes off, bathed her, and put her old clothes and shoes outside in the incinerator for burning. Then I dressed her in fresh clean baby clothes that I had from my girls. The next day the sheriff came to get the baby. They had found the mother. Can you believe that C.R. was actually thinking we should keep that child? I never knew from one day to the next what C.R. would do or bring home or what outrageous idea he would come up with. I'll say it again, it never was boring. How did I ever deal with all the moves, wild ideas, and constant change?



Pregnant with Tina on our fence in Lakeside.

Also, while living there in our cabin in Lakeside, our old German Shephard got very sick. C.R. took Audrey and the dog into the woods and shot him dead, right there in front of our little girl. Audrey must have been about 5 years old. I did not know that he was going to do this or I would have never allowed it. But in his twisted way of thinking, he thought the little girl should learn the realities of life. I am so sorry he did that to Audrey. I since found out, that he did

something equally inhumane with kittens while Audrey was made to watch. I know now that this behavior came from his upbringing on the farm. When animals were no longer useful they were “put away”.

PIANO LESSONS

It was in Lakeside where I started to teach piano. Occasionally I was playing the piano at the Pinetop Tavern. This was not a paying job but it was all just for fun. Some customers asked me if I could teach their children. After I had several students and it was time for my first student recital, I got together with a violin teacher and we combined our concert. The violin teacher and I had so much fun performing a Mozart Sonata for piano and violin. Heidi was about two years old then and I was 8 months pregnant with Tina; and just as I finally got settled in, it was time to move. C.R., once again, got tired of his teaching job. His new position was in Purdy, Missouri.

TINA (born August 3, 1961)

She was so little so we decided to listen to our friend who came to see her in the hospital and named her Tina for *tinsy-tiny*. She was born in a hospital right outside the reservation. My doctor was used to delivering Indian babies and could not believe that I did not help him more with the pushing and breathing. He told me how the Indians just squatted down and delivered



Tina at 2 days old (just kidding).

their babies, washed up, and went right back to work in the fields. Yeah, sure! A little hard to believe because it definitely was not that easy for me.



Audrey (5) and Heidi (2) in 1961.



C.R.

FROM ARIZONA TO PURDY, MISSOURI

Our doctor thought we were nuts when we stopped in at his office for Tina's 7-day check up on our way out of town. C.R. bought a little camping trailer to pull behind his pick-up truck which held all our worldly belongings. Audrey and Heidi traveled with him in the cab. A good friend drove our station wagon which we outfitted with a soft mattress for Tina and me. This worked out really well since both of us slept a lot. We traveled in tandem so when it was time for a feeding for Tina, we would all pull over at a rest stop where I would heat up the bottle on the stove in the trailer. Finally we arrived in Purdy where we had rented a nice house at the end of a dead-end road. C.R. was the new Principal at the Middle School. There was a lot of politics going on, half the school-board liked C.R. right away, and the other half hated him for whatever reason. .. perhaps because he was not the conventional type of school-principal. So when we bought a piece of land at the end of the town and bought some pigs, C.R. named each pig after each school board member that did not like him. Now, that was hilariously funny! Again, his job lasted only 1 school-year due to the friction C.R.'s personality caused. And we were off once more. Let's see now, this was move No. 14 in our 6th year of marriage.

SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

Our next stop was Springfield, Missouri where we rented an old mansion that needed a lot of renovation which we did in return for the rent. Now we had all three of our girls - Audrey, Heidi and Tina. The mansion sat on a nice piece of land and the girls had fun playing outside and riding their tricycle on the sidewalks around the house. C.R. went to Summer school there working towards his Masters and I attended Business School taking a secretarial course in short-hand and typing. At the same time I tried to hold down a job as a waitress. That was very short-lived and did not even last long enough to pay for the purchase of my uniform. I hated that job.... and the fact that I spilled a whole tray full of puddings and jellos did not help any. Once the summer was over, we found a house in Kansas City, Missouri. Another move? Yep...

RAYTOWN, MISSOURI

We bought a house in Raytown, a suburb of Kansas City. It was there that I found my first office job in the states, working for Aloe Company where I typed on a typewriter that punched out computer cards - the old cards that had the little cutouts.



Our house in Raytown, Kansas City.

C21C01	CCCC916	FRAN, FRANK	57100	57100						
LOAN NUMBER	SHORT NAME	DU D TE	TOTAL PAYMENT	MORTGAGE PAYMENT	A & M PAYMENT	MTG. LIFE INS. PAYT	MISC. PAYMENT	TOTAL PAYMENT WITH LATE CHARGE		

IF PAYMENT IS EARLY, PAY THIS AMOUNT

IF PAYMENT IS LATE, PAY THIS AMOUNT

HAS YOUR MAILING ADDRESS CHANGED? IF SO, PLEASE ADVISE OUR OFFICE IN WRITING.

YOUR PAYMENT CANNOT BE PROCESSED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY THIS CARD.

LAKELAND SAVINGS & LOAN ASSOCI
F.C. BOX 1400
DEVER, Mo. J. 07801

DO NOT BEND OR MUTILATE THIS CARD

PAYMENT COUPON

COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF MAKING OTHER THAN REGULAR MORTGAGE PAYMENT

REGULAR PAYMENT	
LATE CHARGE	
ADDITIONAL ESCROW	
TOTAL PAYMENT	

IBM computer card.

This was not a fun job since the machine I typed on was so noisy that one could only work about one hour or so and then had to take a rest doing something less noisy. I did not drive in those days and had to depend on someone else who also worked at the company to pick me up and take me home every day.

C.R. stayed in Springfield so I was all alone in this place with the girls and one German Shephard. I remember I got pretty sick with panic attacks. It got so bad I could not walk into a restaurant or any other place where there were many people without getting actually dizzy



The girls having fun in Raytown.



and breaking out in sweats. I finally found a doctor who gave me vitamin B-12 shots for several weeks. I had a live in housekeeper since I had to work. It was nice to know the girls were taken care of and supper was ready when I arrived from the office. C.R. was staying in Springfield to finish his schooling. It was then that I found out that he was carrying on with other women. HOW I EVEN GOT THROUGH THAT PERIOD IN MY LIFE I WILL NEVER KNOW. I remember

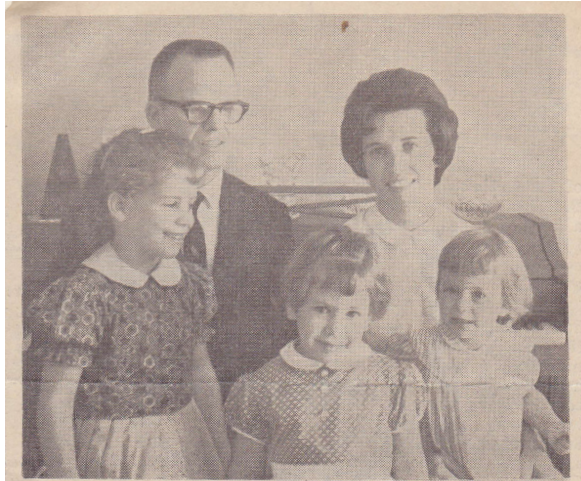
also that while living there in Kansas City I had to have my wisdom tooth removed, the one on the right upper side. It had been infected and the dentist had a hard time with it. I was put on pain pills and I believe I was “out” for several days. When I finally came to, my sister was there. She came all the way from Kenosha, Wisconsin with her 2 small children and her sister-in-law. I had no idea she was coming to see me. It was like God had sent her to take care of me. During that visit my sister asked me “What happened to you? Where did the Chris go that I knew in Germany?” She thought that my fighting spirit has left me and that I was intimidated by C.R. I don’t remember how long we lived in Kansas City, but it was perhaps less than a year. Once again C.R. changed jobs, and you guessed it, it was time to make another big move.

During one of our moves, I can’t remember which there were so many, C.R. decided that now would be a good time for me to “practice my smile.” What??? He thought that my mouth was open too wide when I smiled and he found that not attractive. So his thinking was that if I practiced how to smile while we were on our move (we were moving in a truck with all our belongings) then by the time we get to our new destination, I’d have that new and improved smile down pat and I would look better to everyone. I still can’t believe it, it was so bizarre. He did crazy things before, but this one was over the top. Let alone, it made me feel very unattractive and very sad.

LAKE MILLS, IOWA

This time C.R. got a job as a school principal in Lake Mills, Iowa. This was a nice little town close to the Minnesota border. See the newspaper article on the next page.

It was in the 1st house that we rented there that I remember being upstairs where the girls slept. It was November 22, 1963. I was busy ironing that day when the TV program was interrupted... President Kennedy was shot!! It was just too sad to believe that it really happened. President Kennedy, the man everyone fell in love with, was dead. The whole country was in mourning and shock. It’s still sad even now when I think about it.



MR. AND MRS. C. R. CONN and three daughters, Audrey, 7, a first grader, Heidi, 4, and Tina, 2, are new residents in Lake Mills. Mr. Conn is the new elementary principal of Lake Mills Community school. He received his B. A. degree at Arizona State college, Phoenix, Ariz., his M. A. degree in business administration at Drury college, Springfield, Mo., and plans to take graduate work towards a Ph. D. degree in his chosen field. Mrs. Conn, who is a native of Stuttgart, Germany, is a talented pianist and teaches piano. She took commercial studies while attending school in Stuttgart and was awarded a scholarship to the conservatory of music in Stuttgart where her mother had previously studied. Because of her desire to come to the United States, she began working and her ambition was fulfilled. She and Mr. Conn, who met while he served with the armed forces in Germany, were married eight years ago. Mrs. Conn hopes to further her studies in piano. She has taken some commercial work in the U. S. but found that her German shorthand handicapped her and she took speed writing.

Our article in the town newspaper.

A few months into C.R.'s job we found an older, bigger, 2-story home. This place had several bedrooms, 2 stairways (one being in the front off the entrance hall, and the other in the back off the kitchen). The girls loved all the niches, closets and many hiding places. There was a big yard to play in. We also had a big park close by. The school was within walking distance. I went to work as a secretary at a plant called DeLuxe Corporation. We had a woman coming in during the day to help the girls get ready for school. In the late afternoon, after the office hours, I gave piano lessons. Since we had so many bedrooms we took in 2 other teachers, a woman and a man. While I gave piano lessons they did the cooking in lieu of their rent. The female teacher was a very good looking gym teacher and she and C.R. soon started taking night classes in a college close by. I was very jealous and was sure there was some hanky panky going on. We also took in a high school girl who did not get along with her parents. C.R. and Janelle stayed up until all

hours of the night talking. Janelle was good for our girls. I was not crazy about her because she took a lot of C.R.'s time away from me. I am sure it was not her fault. Some evenings we all went to the Gym for Volleyball games. I was the ref since I did not want to play for fear I would hurt my hands (which I had done once before... not good for piano playing). There was also a huge trampoline there and we had such fun working out on it. Being married to a school principal had its perks.

Audrey was now in 1st grade. Her first grade card was not the best. C.R. got all over her. After all, he was the principal in that school and his kid should do exceptionally well. It was the last time Audrey didn't have an excellent A+ grade card.



Our bigger house in Lake Mills, Iowa.



The girls in front of our new home.



Family fun at our new home.



It was around that time that my grandmother in Germany decided to sell the villa, the house we all grew up in. She wanted to divide the inheritance early while she could overlook it. My sister and I took some of our money to fly to Germany to see our grandma one more time. The school year was up and it was time for C.R. to find another job. We drove with the girls up to Wallace, Michigan where C.R.'s mother and stepfather lived. They wanted to get acquainted with their grandchildren, and so the girls were staying with Grandma and Oscar Pearson while I was visiting Germany. A few days later, I flew to Chicago where I met my sister for our flight to Stuttgart. C.R. drove back to Lake Mills, Iowa to pack our stuff into a truck and then moved us out to Colorado.

Audrey, Heidi and Tina loved being there with Grandmother in Michigan. They got to help her with the cooking and baking. Grandma lived on a quaint little farm in an old farmhouse, cozy and old fashioned. The girls got to do things like picking berries, apples, etc. One time while they were baking with Grandma Pearson, they were all making some dinner rolls. Tina decided to cut her dough in half and stick the half she wasn't working with under her armpit while she rolled out the other half. (She was not wearing a top, it was summer and hot and sweaty). She was only about 3 years old. Of course, no one wanted to eat her rolls for fear it might be one that was under her armpit. We still think this is a pretty cute story. To this date (2012) Tina, who is 52 years old, still likes to bake biscuits but I think her methodology has changed a bit.

Grandma Pearson's parents, I believe, came from Sweden. Grandma Pearson's first name is Olga. She was married to James Conn who left her and their 3 children and was not heard from for years and years. Olga later married Oscar Pearson. C.R. left his home at a very young age and he never did forgive his father for leaving the family. Apparently, James Conn had some Indian blood in him and also was involved with the Mafia. Whether that is true or not, we'll never know. He later remarried and his wife did get in touch with us through a letter, but C.R. never answered it. James Conn apparently had lost a leg in one of his dealings with the Mafia. Perhaps C.R.'s sister, Eleanor White, might know more about this in case anyone is interested. Her full name

is Eleanor White, and she wrote me one year for Christmas telling me she lives in the "White House" (in North Dakota). C.R.'s other sister is Sally Cutie (or Cuty). He also had a half-sister, Christine, and a half brother, Chuck.

MY VISIT IN GERMANY

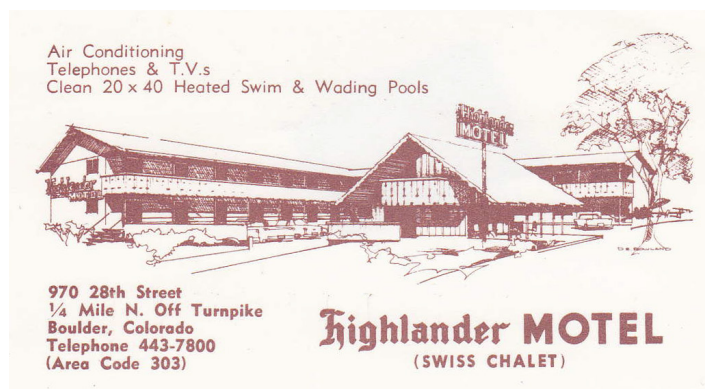
It was great seeing everyone - my family and my friends. It was also an opportunity to bury the hatchet that was between my stepmother and us kids and so the visit was friendly and my father was much relieved. It must have been hard on him to see my stepmother treating us as she did when we lived at home. We tried to push it all under the carpet and continued with our lives and never spoke of the terrible times. There was some friction between my grandmother and my parents, since my grandmother felt that we should have spent more time with her than with my parents. It was never easy to please them all. But my sister Judy and I tried our hardest to make it as pleasant as we could. I missed my girls. But soon returned to the States and back to Michigan to pick them up and fly to Boulder, Colorado to see our new living quarters. What will life be like in Boulder?



Flying home to Germany in 1964. People used to dress up to fly in those days.

BOULDER, COLORADO

The year now is 1964. C.R. has had it with keeping school boards happy and decided to try something else. He took a job as a Manager of the Highlander Motel located right on the main highway going from Denver into Boulder, across from the University of Colorado. As an aside, the Highlander Hotel no longer exists and is now a Motel 6. ("We'll keep the light on for you.") The chalet for the office which was right at the entrance is also gone. Boulder is a beautiful small



city surrounded by Mountains with snow caps - I felt I was in the Alps. The people were friendly. We lived in the Chalet at the entrance to the Motel. Right inside the Chalet and behind the office, there was a nice Apartment with kitchen and living room and the bedrooms upstairs. The only drawback was that the girls had to be quiet while in the house since the office was right next to us and there were always customers sitting in there. But the girls loved the place. There were a lot of people to talk to and in the summer time there was the swimming pool. I helped in the office, signing guests in and out and answering the switchboard - an old-time board where you pulled the plugs and inserted them into the various room numbers. At night I closed the cash-register and did all the book-keeping for that day. I was also in charge of the Cleaning Service. I had an older woman, Mrs. Green, who was very good and who I put in charge of the cleaning crew. But when there were not enough girls to clean, I sometimes had to jump in and help.

We took in a lot of student's during the off season. There were many cute girls with fantastic bodies at the swimming pool. C.R. was like a "chick magnet" with his sculpted body (he weight



C.R. working out.

lifted all the time) and he was fun to be around, so he could take his pick. Besides, he was very entertaining. We had Dancing Parties in the Conference Room at the Motel. C.R. and I taught the students how to Ballroom dance. We made a good dancing couple and we both loved it. Eventually C.R. brought his girlfriends into the office where I could see them in the Front Office from our bedroom upstairs. Finally I had it and told him I did not want him to bring his girlfriends home any more. He got so upset with me. He stomped out to the front office and had a few words with the woman and then returned to me to tell me in a very nasty tone of voice..."I hope you are happy now, I told her to leave." He seemed to think I was the bad one to dare ask him to send his girlfriend away from my home. Anyhow, to make a long story short, he actually handed me his gun one night after we had a disagreement and told me to shoot him... that he cannot help how he is. It was then that I knew I had to leave him and asked him for a divorce.

35TH STREET IN BOULDER COLORADO - MY FIRST HOUSE

We decided to make it easier for our girls by not telling them that we will get a divorce. Our story was, "Mommy and you girls will move into a house close by where you can finally have a cat as your pet. " And they still could go to the Motel to the swimming pool and to see their father whenever they wanted. I never bad-mouthed him in front of the girls. I think neither did

he badmouth me.

With the money I inherited from my grandmother I could buy our little house on 35th Street, not very far from the Motel. C.R. decided that he should also get some of the money and bought himself a fancy stereo system. Thanks for the money from my grandmother I was able to start a new life with my three girls. I called our house The 4-girl house. I kept working at the Motel for a while but then decided to get a full time job and become more independent. I took a job at Beech Aircraft and later left there for Ball Brothers (a subsidiary of Ball Brothers in Indiana). However we did not make Ball Canning Jars but worked on a contract for the Space Programs, i.e. the LEM Project. The LEM was the vehicle that they took up to the Moon Landing. I had to have a Secret Clearance for that job. To get a Secret Clearance one must list every address one lived at from birth, and that is when I found out that I moved 21 times in my life up till then (in 9 years of marriage). Many moves I did not mention in this Bio because they were mostly within the same city. The rule was, whenever we found a cheaper place, we moved.

C.R. and I were on good terms for the children's sake. They had no idea until one day C.R. came to visit us with one of his girlfriends and told the girls that they were married. Audrey ran out of the room hysterical and into her bedroom and cried and cried all afternoon. It was such a shock to her. Actually, C.R. did not marry that girl, but he thought he should say he was married because he moved in with her. You see, Audrey was always hoping that C.R. and I would get together again and now that dream was squashed. The other two, Heidi and Tina were too little to realize that we really were divorced. So everything was fine with them.

As the saying goes in "The Sound of Music" ... when one door closes, another one opens and into that door walked **FRANK AUGUST HOVEN, JR.**

CHAPTER 10

ENTER FRANK HOVEN, JR



Frank August Hoven, Jr.

As I mentioned before C.R. and I rented to students throughout the off season. So it happened that one day a guy named Frank A. Hoven, Jr. stopped in to inquire about renting a room. He drove into our parking lot with his snazzy red convertible Chevy II (1963 model) and entered our office. I happened to man (or should it be 'woman') the counter that very day. Frank rented an apartment together with 2 other young students who he was acquainted with and who already rented an efficiency apartment with us. They were all students at the University of Colorado. Frank told me later that he thought I was a Mexican (si, si senior), since I had very dark hair and an accent. He also did not realize right away that I was the wife of C.R., my co-manager.

This fellow Frank was tall and slim and very good looking. He often wore sweaters or sweater vests, jeans and loafers, and he sported a crewcut, totally preppy... Wow! Frank became very friendly with Audrey, Heidi, and Tina. One could see right away that he liked children. I specifically remember thinking one day when I saw Frank playing with the girls "how nice it would be if C.R. was that interested in our girls." C.R. was too busy gallivanting about, befriending different people, wheeling and dealing, and always trying to "get rich quick."

One day C.R. asked Frank to write a blurb about the Highlander Motel for a new advertising pamphlet. He told me to work with Frank. I was to type it all up when Frank was done writing. In return for Frank's work on that article, C.R. promised to take him out for a steak dinner. He chose Frank to write because he was an English Major before he went to school for Engineering. Frank and I worked on the article together. After the pamphlet was finished, C.R. was too busy the day he was going to take Frank for his free dinner, so he asked me to take him instead. Well, as Lady Fate would have it, that was our first "unofficial" date. We went to a restaurant in Boulder called The Red Lyon where they served great charbroiled steaks. This was a very long dinner date. We talked and talked, and talked some more. He told me about his life, his schooling, his family, his dreams and expectations, etc. and I told him about my family and my background. We also talked about C.R. and his lust for other women and how hard that was on me.

35th STREET, BOULDER, COLORADO

Frank and I started seeing each other more often and the kids got pretty attached to him. Frank helped me out a lot with food. The girls and I lived on simple meals, such as hamburger meat, liver, and cheaper cuts. But Frank every now and then came over with steaks and other yummy foods which he would cook for us. Money was scarce and C.R. did not make his child support as he was required to. At one time I did not have enough money to pay the mortgage payment. Again, Frank was there to rescue me. He was the most reliable person I knew, and after living with crazy, happy-go-lucky, impulsive, glib and unreliable C.R. for nine years, no wonder I admired Frank's solid qualities. It soon became apparent that we were pretty stuck on each other.



Frank in Boulder 1966 (in sweater I knitted).



Frank in Wyoming 1966.

Frank finally had to tell his mother that he was seeing me since she and his sister, Joy, were about to take a train from Putnam Lake, N.Y. to visit him in Boulder, Colorado. After their arrival, Frank picked them up at the train station in Denver. On the drive back to Boulder he told them all about me and that I had several children. After the initial shock, his Mom asked him how many? Then Joy asked him, "Is it 1?" No answer from Frank. Then Joy asked, "Is it 2?" Again, no answer from Frank. So she kept asking until she reached the number 10! It seems Frank never

heard her say the number 3. When he finally told the truth that it was 3, they both gave a big sigh of relief...it was almost ok now... only 3 children. Anyway, when he brought his Mom and sister to my house, I was quite scared and felt that I was really being examined to see if I was good enough for her son. Of course, she was taken right in by my 3 very cute little girls. They were liked by everyone. And I am not saying this because I am their mother, (sure), they really were liked by everyone they met. Because C.R. was so strict with them, they turned out to be very well behaved. It was a pleasure to be around them. They were charmers. I can't say enough about them.



Tina (4), Audrey (9), and Heidi (6).

I was very, very proud of my girls. I used to dress them alike. I sewed all their clothes on an old Singer Treadle Machine. I also knitted dresses and coats for them. I don't know how I had so much time to make all our clothes, work full time, teach a couple of piano lessons a week all while also taking piano lessons myself to keep improving. I wish I had as much energy now. (Looking back, perhaps this was because I was not watching umpteen hours of TV every night.)

My first car was a used light blue Cadillac! Think about it, a CADILLAC! Frank taught me how to drive. And guess what? Miracles among miracles, we were still on speaking terms after the lessons. We were so in love! Now I was truly independent... and somebody really liked me. Thank heaven for Frank.

Sometimes Frank and I went to the mountains to target-shoot with pistols. Often we took the kids on drives to play in the hills close by us. When we went high enough they could play in the snow. We also went on a vacation trip to Jackson Hole in Wyoming and to Mesa Verde in New Mexico to the Indian Ruins, and every now and then but not too often, we would stop in at McDonald's. That was always a very, very special treat and I think hamburgers were 15 cents back then.

Frank used to like to drive his convertible with the top down, sitting in front by the wheel and smoking a cigar, acting like a big-wig. He looked like he had no care in the world. On our trips in the car we would always sing up a storm. "99 bottles of beer on the wall," or "The bear went over the mountain, and what do you think he saw?" etc. (Remember this, girls?)

Frank also baby-sat the girls while I attended evening classes at the University. I took Creative Writing and Greek Mythology courses, among others. I was hoping to work toward a Bachelor Degree in Music. The girls enjoyed playing with Frank because he was so much fun. He always roughhoused around with them and was ready for games. "Games" was Frank's middle name and was always ready to play. He was a kid himself at 24. When it was time for bed, he would tuck the girls in and tell them stories that he made up on the spur of the moment. He was terrific and he was so talented he could have been a professional story teller.



The family in our backyard in Boulder.



In August 1966, I was involved in a Master Class at Chautauqua in Boulder, Colorado where I played the Mozart Coronation Concerto, K537 on the piano together with a small Chamber Orchestra. I had occasionally accompanied violinists and professional singers in the past, but playing with an orchestra was a whole new experience for me. As you can see, I sewed look-a-likes for my girls just for that occasion.



Audrey, Heidi, Tina and me.



Me at the piano.

One of the things I remember well from that time with the girls in Boulder, among other happenings, was the day Tina decided to get creative with her bow and arrows. She decided to walk on top of the fence around our house on 35th Street when they played cowboys and indians. I remember getting a call from the hospital while I was typing a letter for my boss. I was notified that Tina was in the emergency room. They got the arrow out from the back of her throat, but if it had gone just a few millimeters deeper, she would have been dead. Later I found out that Audrey saw what had happened and quickly held Tina still so that the arrow would not do any more damage. Amazingly C.R. chose to make one of his rare visits only a few minutes after this occurred and took charge of the situation. That was one scary episode!

The girls played a lot with the Montgomerys and with Rachelle and there were other kids on that block. They had some wild times together, always playing outside in the fresh air. (No video games in those days). I also remember how Tina was when she started Kindergarten. I was told, unfortunately too late, that she did not participate at the beginning of the school year, that she was always on the side of the room all by herself. Had I known earlier I would have taken her out and started her a year later. She was tiny and probably a little too young for Kindergarten. The way Tina takes charge of things now it is hard to believe she was ever intimidated.

Heidi was a real tomboy. She had a Daniel Boone hat that she wore a lot, and she still owns 50 years later. She liked to play with the boys - no girly stuff for her. And our Audrey was the exact opposite, always a proper lady. She loved to dress up, play with her dolls, and practice ballet every day. And little tiny Tina had a hard time figuring out which sister she should emulate. One day she was a cowboy, and the next day a lady.

FRANK THE MUSICIAN

We often got together with Frank's friends and class mates and had parties where Frank played his guitar and sang and made up songs right on the spot about anyone and everything. He was a very good rhymers and a very quick thinker. He also was a real good teller of jokes, where he could change accents from English into any language the story required. So, needless to say he often was the life of the party. I liked that of course. I also soon found out that Frank was very much into composing his own songs. He had already written quite a few - both the melodies and the words. When he sang, he sounded a lot like a famous singer of our time, Glenn Yarborough (with beautiful vibrato). Frank did not read nor write music, so when he was done with a song, I listened to him playing his song over and over until I knew exactly what to write on the staff so he could then print and copyright all his songs. We also had a good friend in Boulder who decided that Frank should make a record. This he did. In fact, when he had the record made of all his songs, I played this recording for my friends from Ball Brothers who were over at my house for lunch, and they all thought it was Glenn Yarborough. What a surprise when they found out it was my Frank.

Jumping ahead to the year 2000, our son Brian made a CD from the recording of Frank's songs and surprised his Dad for Christmas. Brian, our musical whiz, also added his own voice to one of Frank's songs and sang the harmony. What a beautiful duet! On the CD case is a picture of Frank which I snapped of him in Rome, Italy while he was actually composing one of his songs.



Front and back of Frank's 'Greatest Hits' CD.

FRANK THE COLLECTOR

Besides being a talented musician and a very learned man, Frank also had another hobby - he liked collecting things. All sorts of things. Well, I guess it began with stamps when he was about 5 or 6 years old. His Aunt Margaret and his Mom got him started. His grandfather Simon Hoven (Maha's husband) was an avid philatelist. However Simon in his later years got ill, perhaps Alzheimers. Nobody knows how it happened, but somehow his extensive stamp collection disappeared, never to be found. This was unfortunate for Frank, who really took to collecting stamps. We now have many, many albums, leather albums full of stamps, used ones and new ones from all different countries, plus a United Nation stamp collection. No one in our family is even slightly interested in this hobby, which is too bad. I will probably end up selling the collection one of these days. It's so very sad. Frank spent years, months, days and nights with those stamps, picking each one up with the tweezers as not to ruin any of the pretty sides and slipping each one into a plastic cover and then attaching it into the album exactly where it belonged. After he had his stroke when he was only 33 years old, he could no longer do this, but he had hope that someday he might be able to get his right arm and fingers back to normal again. So he just kept right on ordering more and more new stamps over the years while sorting out all



Frank's den New Jersey.

the used ones he could find.

Later the collecting became somewhat of a sickness, he collected everything: pencils according to sizes, rubber bands (he never threw one out), bread wrappers, tools, hundreds of videos with thousands of taped movies, all cataloged like in a library, 20 different screw drivers, hammers, saws, thousands of nuts and bolts, old and new and rusty nails. You name it, he collected it. Nothing could be thrown away. He might need it someday! I am still cleaning out after him. (He died in 2006, and now it's 2014.) The workers who moved us in our retirement from New Jersey to Portland, Oregon said that they never ever had as much to move for only 2 people. And you better believe it as our move was very expensive. When Frank's father, Frank Hoven, Sr. died, his shop was so full of "stuff" that he literally could not walk into it. Well, Frank inherited all his father's "stuff" and added it to his own "stuff." Frank's shop was twice as big as his father's. But after Frank added his father's stuff to his own "stuff," he also could not get any work done in that mess. My Frank had no choice in the matter, he inherited this sickness from his forefathers. I can tell you from personal experience that this sickness is catching because I also got infected and started to save stuff. At this time in my life, I am seriously cleaning house. Give me a simpler

life. I am tired of "STUFF!"

FRANK, THE T-SHIRT MAN

As I already pointed out, Frank is a collector and so it happened that he came upon a few t-shirts with clever sayings. Well, that was the beginning of this T-shirt career. By the time he passed to the other side he had collected about 40 different funny t-shirts that he would happily display daily. When we went to Riedlbauers every year, he would pack at least 3 shirts for each day, and then a couple more for good measure. He probably packed about 25 t-shirts for the week. The guests all knew him and checked out his sayings whenever he entered the dining room. Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner. Each time he had a different saying to display, plus also a new shirt for the bar scene at night. But for the grand entrance when we first got to Riedlbauers, he always wore the shirt that said "Where the Hell is Roundtop." You see, Riedlbauers is located in Roundtop, N.Y. And when we left at the end of our 7-day stay, he wore the very appropriate shirt that said "Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho it's off to work I go."

CHRISTMAS WITH FRANK

Our first Christmas with Frank was like a fairy tale. Christmases with C.R. were hardly remembered. C.R. was not into it. He waited until Christmas Eve when he could get a tree for practically nothing and bring it home. The girls perhaps had one or two presents under the tree, if that. I really can't remember that anything special happened on Christmas. C.R. was the same with birthdays. He could care less about them. But enter Frank Hoven... this was a completely different story. Just before the holiday season, Frank drove back to New York State to visit his folks and then returned with a car full of goodies. Most of them were used toys he and Joy had as children, but also there were new items he and his Mom and Joy had bought for our first Christmas in Boulder together. What joy and excitement on Christmas morning when the girls got up and saw all those packages under the tree. WOW!!! I don't think they will ever forget it. Their eyes were wide open, they could barely believe that all of it was for real. And it is because

of that particular first Christmas with Frank, that Tina and Heidi keep having huge Christmases for their own families now. Though I do think they carry this tradition somewhat to the extreme, to say the least, they blame it all on Frank. On that particular Christmas we also found a present outside in front of our glass sliding door in the snow: An old-fashioned red flyer sled for 3 children and on top were 3 wise men, handcrafted out of felt. To this day we don't know where that present came from.



Our first Christmas with Frank in 1965.





Visiting Putnam Lake during Christmas 1967.

In 1966, I believe, Frank finished his schooling in Boulder and looked for a job. He got several offers but decided to accept the one from Exxon (then ESSO) because it was in New Jersey which was close enough to his folks and his beloved Grandma (Maha). However, it was a great distance from us and we missed him terribly. We corresponded a lot and also kept the phone company afloat. After about 1 year in 1967, Frank invited us up to his place in New Jersey for the holidays. We stayed with Frank in N.J. and went to Putnam Lake, New York to Frank's family for Christmas. The girls had 2 Christmases that year....one in Putnam Lake, and one back in New Jersey. They could not believe their luck.

Frank and I got engaged on that visit. Well, actually, I told him if I did not get an engagement ring I would leave him. Life was too short, either we do it or we forget it. Besides I did not want to go back to Boulder where all my friends were anxiously awaiting the news of an engagement... I could not bear to tell them nothing happened. So, there you have it, the romantic story of our engagement. We corresponded again for almost another year. We decided to get married on October 5, 1968. Now it was set in stone and I was preparing to sell my house and pack and move to New Jersey. My co-workers at Ball Brothers had a bridal party for me, as well as a going-away party. It was sad to leave everyone behind. My friend, Barbara, took us from Boulder down to Denver to the Train Station. We made a stop in Chicago, Illinois to visit with my sister for a few days. The girls loved the train ride and visiting with their Aunt Judy and Uncle Don and their cousins Wendy and Tim in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Then we continued on to Putnam Lake to prepare for our wedding.

THE WEDDING

I knitted my own wedding dress. I used off-white linen yarn and knitted an intricate lace design on the long sleeves and upper part of the dress. Then I added small white pearl buttons for the closing of the back and the sleeves on the wrists. I still have the dress. But Frank's mother had a problem with the fact that it was too short. In those days mini-skirts were very much in style, although my dress was not that short. However, to keep peace in the family, I lengthened the dress by about 2 inches. My good friend June Mitchell at Ball Brothers helped me make my hat with a short veil. For the girls I sewed 3 dresses, all alike, white with tulle on the puffy sleeves, and on them I embroidered white daisies. I also knitted each of the girls a coat. They wore white gloves, white knee socks and black patent shoes. I was so proud of them. They looked adorable. Tina was then 7, Heidi 9, and Audrey was 12.

The wedding went very well. Frank and Jon Tessman (his best man) did finally come out of that church closet where the minister told them to go until I started to come up the isle. Frank's



Our wedding in Putnam Lake on October 5, 1968.

Uncle Rudy walked up the aisle with me to give me away, and his friends and co-workers were there along with all the relatives. At the end of the ceremony when Frank and I walked out of the church, Frank's grandmother gave me a wink and whispered "you did it, you rascal you." I think she really liked me, after all we were both from Germany. However, I guess it was difficult for them to see Frank marry a woman who already had 3 children...after all, he just got out of school and did not earn that much money yet to support a big family. He was 28 years old. I

was 31. After the church wedding, we went to the local VFW Hall where Frank's mother had arranged for the food and drinks. We danced to live music (a Record Player). It was all much fun. This was my first, and only, official wedding party. I was happy.

Our honeymoon took us to Bar Harbor in Maine. The girls stayed with Frank's parents. We saw the beautiful foliage on our trip up to Maine. When we came back to New Jersey, we moved into our new house which Frank found for us in Succasunna, New Jersey.

SUCCASUNNA

It was a split-level, 3 bedroom house on 21 Henry Street right off Eyeland Avenue. We were close to a big Shopping Center and several churches. Tina was so close to her school she could walk to it. Audrey and Heidi had to take a bus. They loved the neighborhood and made friends right away. I found a job at Warner-Lambert Pharmaceutical Company and worked for



Our first house in Succasunna, New Jersey.

Dr. Chafetz in the Applied Analytical Department. I was his secretary and had to type those long medical terms for all the different medicines. I could hardly pronounce them. Dr. Chafetz was a great boss and as long as all his work was completed, I could take time off if I needed to. Audrey, now 13 years old, took care of her sisters after school and most days she started supper for me. I often had something ready for her to put into the oven at a certain time. Twice a week, I took Audrey for her ballet lessons to Morristown which was about 25 minutes away from us. She was very talented and I found her the best teacher I could without having to travel all the way into

Manhattan.

We were a regular family now. We played board games and cards, and watched television together, such shows as *The Waltons*. In those days, we had only one TV with about 3 or 4 channels. Occasionally, we went to the drive-in movies with the girls in the back of the car. We had a lot of get-togethers with Frank's family. They would come down from Putnam Lake, NY for the week-end to stay with us, or if there were too many family members at one time, they would stay in a motel close by. One Christmas we invited them all: Uncle Rudy from Manhattan, Frank's parents and Aunt Joy, Maha, Uncle Walter, Aunt Margaret and Aunt Agnes all from Putnam Lake...we were so excited. Then the unimaginable happened on Christmas Eve. Our hot-water heater exploded!!! There was water all over our floors. With so many people in the house and the cooking and washing of dishes etc...it was a small disaster. But with help from Bing Crosby on the Record Player we cleaned up and somehow we survived the holidays.

The girls made friends with our neighbors, the Detagnis, the Hromnaks and the Kotars. One afternoon in the summer they were playing behind Audrey Kotar's house where there was a wooden railing fence that kept the horses in. The girls decided to give the horses some apples. When Heidi climbed the fence with half an apple in her hand, she accidentally touched a bee's nest and they immediately came after her, attacked her and stung her all to pieces. That was quite a scare for our Heidi... luckily she was not allergic to beestings.

Our lives were pretty normal for a family of five. We had just enough money to get by. We often had impromptu parties on Fridays after work. Frank would bring home some of his co-workers and everyone brought food or drinks and a great time was had. At one of those parties we met Linda and Jerry Hunnewell who lived really close to us in Succasunna. They also had 3 children, theirs being a little younger than ours. Another fun couple was Pauline and Svein Hasund who were just recently married. The guys all worked at ESSO in Florham Park, NJ. and were about our age. We stayed in contact with both couples all these years.

As I said before, money was not in abundance. I remember our first really bad fight. It was

about 2 new dresses I bought. I was working then and needed nice clothes for the office, so I saw nothing wrong with buying 2 outfits at the same time, since they really fit so well. Frank did not see it quite that way. But he was always tight with money. I was ready to divorce him but that was in the heat of the moment. This got better with time, thank goodness. We certainly had our share of disagreements, like all couples. As you get older, you learn to give and take, and often you realize afterwards that it was not worth getting so worked up. Over the years, we both got quite good at apologizing. And just as I thought we were settled down and my moving days were over, Frank was offered an overseas assignment... Rome, Italy!!

Our stay in Succasunna was very short, only about 1 ½ years. Preparation for the big trip was a priority. We had to get our passports and shots... and I'll never forget our Heidi. After she got her shot we had to put her arm in a sling (even then, she was the drama queen). And next thing I knew, we had some person in our house sent from ESSO to teach us the Italian language. One of the sentences we learned went like this: *che horrore, e una liona a mia casa!* Which means in English: "How horrible, there is a lion in my house!" Now, tell me, how many times do you think we needed that particular sentence while living in Italy? But it is such a crazy sentence that I will always remember it. And I still cannot wait until I can try it on some Italians. We had many good laughs about that. But we only had about 2 or 3 lessons when the time came for the limo to pick us up and take us to the Airport. I believe that was the girls' and my first limo ride. We felt so special. However, I am jumping ahead. Days before that classy limo ride, I had to go through all our belongings, decide what to take along, what to put into storage until we returned from this assignment, and what to leave behind for the people who would rent our house while we were overseas. What a horrific job that was!! But soon it was Ciao, New Jersey. Rome, Italy... Here We Come!

CHAPTER 11

ROME, ITALY



Me, Audrey and Frank at Il Duomo in Italy.

Bellissimo... fantastico... What an exciting city! We fell in love with that town from the moment we stepped off the plane. Our first home was the Hotel Shangri La Corsetti. It was a first-rate hotel with everything at our fingertips. Their kitchen was superb. We loved all the Italian foods... dinners were 5 courses long... and one never stopped eating. In the mornings we went to the breakfast buffet, which offered just about everything one can think of: from eggs (soft boiled, scrambled, over easy or omelets), to fish, cheeses, fruits and juices, to rolls, sweet cakes and chocolate. Yummy! The rooms came with maid service, of course. I was getting so spoiled, never even had to make our beds. There was a swimming pool where we spent many sunny afternoons. We stayed at that hotel for several weeks until we finally found our permanent Italian home at 30 Piazzalla Champagniat, in EUR.

PIZZA

One night before we moved into our apartment the girls decided at dinner that they wanted to eat pizza. We ordered pepperoni pizza for them and Frank and I ordered steaks. The waiter kept asking us if we really wanted pepperoni pizza and in our limited Italian language we answered, "Si, Senor, Si Si." After about 35 minutes or so of waiting the girls were really hungry and we all wondered why it was taking so long. Then finally we spotted the waiter approaching our table and I noticed that many of the other diners were staring at our large pizza dish. He put it on our table and we were so surprised while the girls almost gagged. The pizza was simply baked dough covered with boiled strips of plain green peppers for the entire topping. Nothing else was on that pizza. Pepperoni was nowhere to be found. We learned the hard way that "pepperoni" translated into Italian means "green peppers". The girls were so hungry that they reluctantly ate some of it. They never again ordered a pepperoni pizza while in Italy. Furthermore they are not terribly fond of green peppers, even now. Our big lesson here: when you want good pizza, book a flight back to the USA.

OUR APARTMENT

EUR is a suburb of Rome, a ten-minute metro ride away from the downtown Termini. EUR was built by Mussolini in 1930 for the next World Fair which was to take place near Rome, but never did because of the start of World War II. Mussolini wanted to impress the whole world and therefore built many wonderful and architecturally stunning buildings and lots of beautiful statues. The town was relatively new and everything was still clean. When we lived there in 1970/71 there was no graffiti to be found. We were lucky to be able to live in the suburbs and yet be so close to the Old Town of Rome with its fantastic history and art. What a stupendous education for our girls - not to mention the great adventure for us all!

Our apartment was in a gorgeous building which was surrounded by an ornate iron fence with gates. There was a big garage under the building for everyone's car, including ours, a Fiat 850. We even had a Portiere, the person who takes care of the building and watches who comes in and who leaves. We also had an elevator to our 3rd floor apartment. The gardens around our building had water fountains and beautiful flowers, bushes, trees, walks and benches. From our apartment, we could step out onto the terrace from the living room which ran the whole length of the building and feast our eyes by looking down into the beautiful park-like garden. Another terrace was out by the kitchen, plus one outside each of our bedrooms. The apartment was very formal, just like us (ha-ha), all marble floors, even marble walls in all 3 bathrooms.

We had a separate entrance for the maid and butler (WOW), and a small place for a live-in maid. The living room had a marble fireplace on one end and on the opposite side was a step up to the reading area with build-in bookcases and a hardwood floor.

The reading area was furnished with wicker benches and chairs with comfy cushions. But best of all, the living room also had... are you ready... a large Grand Piano! How lucky could I get???



Uncle Rudy visiting us in Rome.



Checking the stock market.

MARYMOUNT SCHOOL

The girls went to Marymount, an English speaking Catholic school, on the other side of town and got to take a very elegant bus to and from their school every day. It was a tourist bus, with nicely upholstered seats and piped in music. It took 45 minutes to get to school and the girls loved it. What a ride! Because this was a Catholic school they had to wear school uniforms. At first I was very upset that I had to buy these very expensive clothes, but I soon found out that this was not such a bad idea. The girls always knew just what to wear: those plain navy blue jumpers or skirts every single school day. I just had to make sure they all had clean and ironed white blouses. No fuss, no muss, trying on one outfit after another—No, none of that! And don't they look smart.



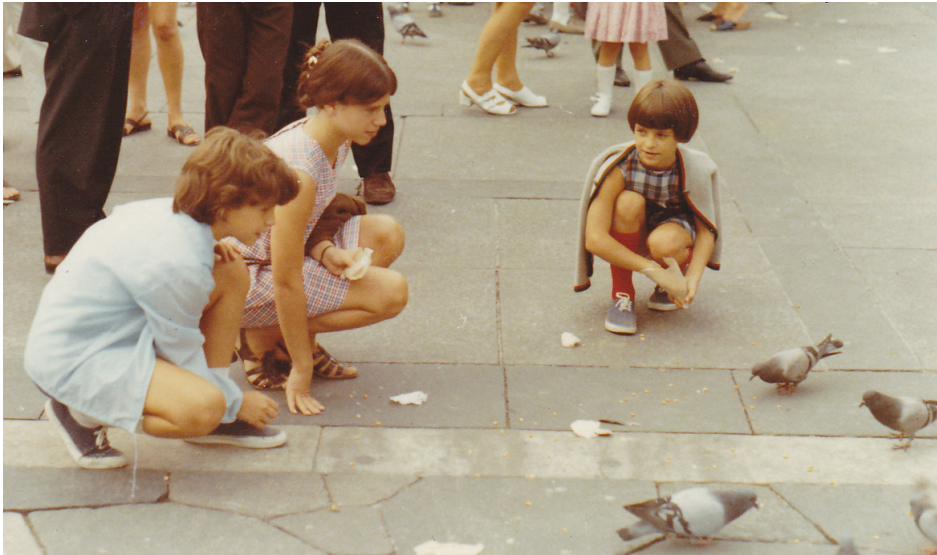
The girls all ready for school.

THIS AND THAT

Frank's office was very close to our apartment, so near that he could walk home for lunches, which he often did. Many times the girls went to meet him at the end of the work day to escort him home. And often they would stop off at the Gelati Store to get Italian Ice. Yum! When we first arrived in Italy we did a lot of site seeing, checking everything out and there was so much to look at. We later went to see all those places again and again, whenever we had company and they needed to be shown around. We never tired of it, you could always discover more to see. All the history and the architecture - it was so interesting and so exciting to be there. And the evening atmosphere of Rome: late night lengthy dinners outdoors, people strolling through tiny alleyways on cobblestones, piazzas where you could find little tables and chairs for resting in the fresh air by moonlight, and ending with a fresh cappuccino or enjoying sweets and gelati. Every hour on the hour you could hear church bells ringing, and now and then encounter a strolling musician who wants to serenade you. Such a romantic town. It was a fantastic fairy tale life for me. Frank, on the other hand, had to work very hard and long hours which is the reason we did not do much touring to other places. However, we took care of that at the end of our assignment when we toured 7 countries in the time span of one week. We saw Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, France, Belgium and Holland. I would not recommend this hectic pace to anyone; the towns and castles and ruins somehow started to run into each other in my mind

One of the Secretaries at Frank's Office was a German Girl, very vivacious and lots of fun. Sonja was her name and she was fluent in Italian. She also had an affair with a married Italian Doctor of Medicine who was very well off and owned a small yacht. He invited us to join Sonja and him for an outing on the Mediterranean Sea. This was a great experience. We stretched out on top of the Deck sunning ourselves, and when we got too hot we would dive into the water and swim a bit. There is an old saying, that when you swim in the Mediterranean Sea you become fruitful and soon will be pregnant with child. Well, as we would find out later, that magic seemed to work for me.

During the girls' summer vacation we drove to Stuttgart, Germany to visit my parents, Oma and Opa. I brought along my Super Eight Movie Camera (without sound) and took a lot of good pictures of the countryside while we travelled along the La Strada (Highway in Italy) and later over the Mountain Pass into Innsbruck and on to Stuttgart. My parents were anxious to meet our girls. They had never seen their grandchildren before. For this very exciting occasion, my stepmother prepared her most favorite menu: Tongue and Spaetzle with Gravy. The girls started digging right in, but as soon as they heard the word "tongue" they started to choke on their food. I was so proud of their valiant efforts to finish it so Oma would not feel badly. Thank goodness there was Spaetzle. Tongue is a specialty which is an expensive treat in any German Restaurant. But I don't think that Audrey, Heidi or Tina ever want to taste it again.



In front of Il Duomo in Milan, Italy.

We had some wonderful outings with my parents. One was to the TV Tower in Degerloch where you can go up and look around and see the whole valley. We also went to Seeburg, Oma's birthplace, where as a child I spent many summer vacations. Somewhere during those travels we stopped at a field and kicked the ball around. Oma and Opa were right there playing soccer along with us. Great fun was had by all. One night, Opa, Frank, Audrey and Heidi went to the October Fest in Cannstatt. They came home really late that night and were very noisy, waking

up all the neighbors in my parents' neighborhood, singing at the top of their lungs some German Drinking Songs. To top it off, they were a bit tipsy. Needless to say, Oma was not too happy about all that, and my father got a well-deserved lecture. Soon our time at Oma's and Opa's was over and we prepared for our trip back to Rome. Heidi, ever the diplomat, was very busy writing something down for Oma. She had the English/German dictionary next to her. When it was time to say good-bye, Heidi proudly handed that handwritten note to Oma, and I wish I had the good sense to save it. Heidi wanted to tell Oma how much she liked her visit and how much she was going to miss them, etc. But she took every single word and literally translated it from English to German, so the sentences absolutely did not make any sense at all. What can I say, you had to read it. It was hilarious!

On our long way back to Rome we ran into some bad weather. It was raining like cats and dogs when we came upon a little town right outside of Innsbruck. Unfortunately, we had no reservations, but were very hungry and tired and needed a place to sleep. So we stopped at a little roadside Guesthaus and ordered Wiener Schnitzel mit French Fries, or Pomme Frites as they call them there. The meal was delicious. While there we asked the waiter, who probably also was the owner, if he knew of a hotel where we could stay overnight. Well, he called his young daughter over, who was probably about 10 years of age and told her to go with us in our car to show us where the Buergermeister (Mayor) lived who happened to have rooms for rent (sort of a B&B). I was surprised they would trust us with that little girl since we were total strangers. That really was another world back then. We ended up in nice accommodations with breakfast the next morning. And on we drove. We also stopped at Oberammergau where they hold the Passion Play every 10 years. Unfortunately it was not one of those years. But we saw all the hand carved figurines they make there. During the Passion Play many of the people in town become characters in the reenactment of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. The men grow their beards all year to get ready for that play. Many, many tourists go there every decade to watch this live theater.

Soon after we were back in Rome and into our everyday exciting life there, I found out I was pregnant with Michael. So I had to find an Italian doctor who also spoke some English. In the year 1970 not too many people spoke English in Italy. Many times when I could not make myself understood with my limited Italian, I had to resort to German and that came in very handy. We did learn simple words, words in the present tense, and could manage most of the times using lots of hand movements, etc. I remember when we needed a screen for our fireplace and before we went downtown to shop for it, Frank learned this whole sentence by memory, and he kept repeating it over and over until we got to the store: "Io voglio comprare un paraciantile per il fiocco, per favore." He got so fluent at it that when he approached the salesman with this one excellently executed sentence, the salesman answered right back rattling away in rapid speed. He thought Frank was Italian and knew the language well! This sure had Frank stumped. We laughed a lot and so did the salesman.

One day at lunchtime Frank arrived at our door with an Oriental Rug slung over his shoulder. He had managed to hassle with some street peddler and got it for a reasonable price. We bought another one at a Department Store and they looked really nice on top of our marble floors. We opted not to have a television while living over there (though in hindsight maybe it would have helped us learn the language faster). But while we were at the Shangrila Hotel, we did have a TV in our room, and it was so funny to watch an American Western Film and hear the Indians yell "Ciou" instead of "How," or listen to John Wayne speak Italian... it just didn't do it for me. The interesting things to watch though were the commercials believe it or not. They put all their commercials into one half hour spot, and each one was cleverly disguised so you did not know what product it was for until the very end of the ad. We made it a family game to guess what they were trying to sell. And sometimes we were even right.

So without a TV to keep us entertained, our girls often made up shows for us. Sometimes we were in tears we laughed so hard. For instance, once they decided to become a band. They dressed really funky and played air guitars and homemade drums, and I remember one of the



Tina our waiter.



Heidi and Tina having fun.

songs was “We are the Abstracts.” They kept singing that one song over and over again. Of course they had made up tickets which we had to buy to see the band, and they set up chairs for their large audience (Dad and I). Other times, they acted as our waiters, with a towel draped over one arm and a notebook to take our orders. These are just a few instances I can recall. We also played cards a lot, especially Pinochle, for hours and hours... mostly until Dad and his partner had won the whole thing. I am sure the girls got very sick and tired of that particular game. But we also played Monopoly and other board games. Tina, being so young, usually was excused from Pinochle, and she would go outside or downstairs with the Portiere’s son, Mario, and play soccer or some other Italian game. She was so fluent with the language, one could not tell her apart from the Italian kids.

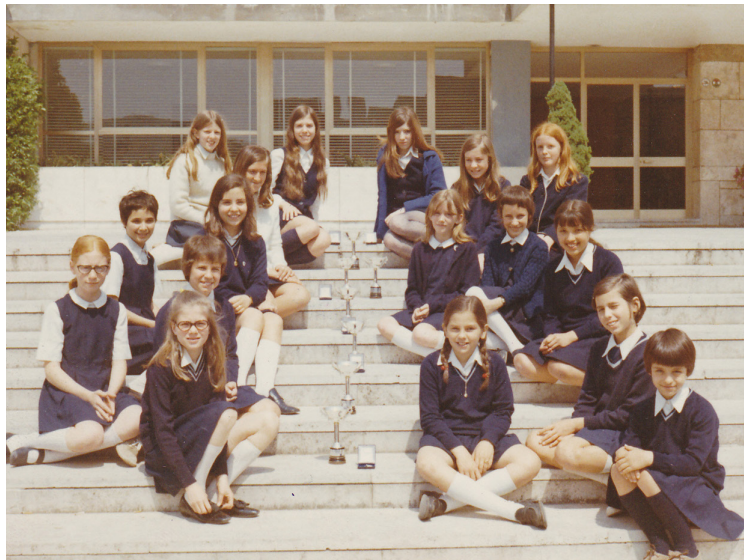
Audrey was always the ballerina and she practiced many hours (until the dishes were done). She also had a part in her school play and I helped her practice by playing the song she had to dance to on our piano. I remember the girls had a big science fair at school and they each were awarded prizes. Audrey and her friend Marina won 1st prize for their project in their grade, and Heidi won 1st prize for the sixth grade. I don’t remember what Tina did that year, but the



Audrey practicing her ballet routines.



Audrey the valedictorian.



Prize winners Audrey, Heidi and Tina.

Nuns came up to me afterwards and said that those Conn girls sure took a lot of first prizes. Which brings me to Audrey once again, she had such good grades that she was picked as the Valedictorian for her 8th grade Graduation. We were very proud of her. I am jumping ahead, but in case I should forget it, Audrey was also the Valedictorian for her High School Graduation in White Salmon, Washington.

There was another time that stands out in my very selective memory. Frank had to make a trip back to the states for Exxon, and when he came back he brought with him the record of the latest popular song called "Jesus Christ, Superstar." You would have thought we had won a million dollars the way the girls carried on. They were hugging and screaming and squeezing Frank and thanking him over and over and over again, jumping up and down for joy. And after that we all ran around singing: "Jesus Christ, Superstar, do you think you're what they say you are" ... or something like that.

MICHAEL SCOTT HOVEN (Born May 14, 1971)

As the time drew closer for Michael to arrive, the girls could hardly wait. We had no idea if it was going to be a boy or a girl. I was getting bigger and bigger and more uncomfortable as time went by, so the girls had to help a lot more, even with the grocery shopping. Finally the day arrived! May 14, 1971. My water broke in the morning after the girls went to the school-bus stop. I called Frank at work and he rushed right home and took me to the Salvatore Mundi Hospital. The sister who prepared me for delivery predicted it was going to be a boy because he was lying so high. And then since the labor took so long they decided to induce and give it some help. In the meanwhile, Frank was served a Spaghetti Dinner and a glass of red wine in the same room where I was going through my labor pains. How do you like that? But when it came closer to delivery they wheeled me out to another room. Well - the Sister was right. It was a boy and Frank walked on clouds for the rest of the day and night and the next year or so. Frank had sent a note to the school so the girls were informed in their class rooms. They were so excited and could hardly wait to get home. Frank brought them right over to the Hospital where they were allowed to come into my room, even with Michael there. In the States that did not happen since they were too afraid of germs being brought in. But in Rome they were very relaxed about those matters. Frank took the girls out to dinner that night after they left the Hospital and I guess they had a great time celebrating Michael's birth.



May 14th at the hospital in Rome.



Michael at 2 1/2 months.

The name Michael was picked through a democratic process. We all put names on pieces of paper and then started to draw. There were so many names but all of them did not make the cut, because one of us would know someone by that name and that someone wasn't liked or was weird, or had frizzy hair, or some such thing. When we finally came up with Michael Scott everyone was in agreement. And when we told Tutu and Pop-pop in the States they could not believe it. They wrote back telling us that it was the most popular name that year and every other boy was named Michael. Perhaps they were hoping for a Frank August, III. Well, as far as I was concerned, Michael was a great name for my boy. His name was easy to pronounce in German, in Italian, and in English... what more could we ask for.

Michael was very lucky. He had 4 mothers: myself, Audrey, Heidi and Tina. He got so much attention. I had an Italian pram that I took Michael for walks in every day, going grocery shopping to all those Specialty Shops. And the Italian women would peek into the pram and proclaim, "piccolo, bambino, molto bello." Italians adore babies. They all coo over them like there is no tomorrow. Of course, for me it was fun, I was very proud to have such a sweet handsome baby boy. But the ladies all told me that my bambino was too skinny. He really was not, but Italians

like their babies very meaty (healthy!), almost like the Pillsbury doughboy.

Since the sun was always shining, I often took all of Michael's clothes off, diapers and all, and placed him on a blanket on top of the round marble table that we had right by the window where the sun rays came in. His little tushy would get nice and warm in the sunshine and he seemed to like that. Of course that was before he could turn over. Well, it seems I started something, because to this day Mike likes to soak up the sun whenever he gets a chance.

Life was good! We had 3 girls and a baby boy, we lived in Rome, and had sunshine just about every day. We made good friends through the Refinery Project, Germans as well as Americans, and through Audrey's Ballet lessons, also made some Italian friends. We read, played board games and cards and had a lot of good conversations. There were no iPhones, no texting, no laptops, no computers, and for us there was also no TV. I think we were richer for not having all those gadgets... we were interacting with each other. What a concept!



Playing games.

So everything was going along real smooth. Until that one fateful Saturday night. I decided to use the bidet in the Maid's bathroom to soak Michael's dirty diapers, and while I was running the water into the bidet I went to see what kind of game Frank and the girls were playing. I guess I sort of forgot about the time because all of a sudden there was a loud banging at the door to the Maid's entrance. When I checked to see who was there, it was a very excited Portierre who at the top of her lungs shouted a lot of Italian words at me, perhaps some not so nice, and then pointed to the floor where I discovered the dirty diaper water running right out from under our door and down the stairway. It seems the Portierre had just finished cleaning the steps in anticipation of a party which was going to be held in the apartment below us and all the guests were to arrive soon. Well, you can imagine my embarrassment at the whole situation, and I apologized in my best Italian over and over again and again, while I desperately began to soak it up with Michael's clean diapers. So, my advice to young mothers in Italy: Do Not Use the Bidet to Soak Diapers. Well actually nowadays, we are no longer soaking diapers since they are now disposable. (No more touching poopy diapers... something of the old days I won't miss).

We ate a lot of Veal. Beef was not as plentiful and very expensive. I had to do all my shopping in the morning for the dinners at night since the whole town was shut down for Siesta Time, usually from 12 noon until 3 p.m. The Italians know how to live! They take their naps every afternoon and then stay up late into the night. After the siesta they have renewed energy to last the rest of the day. In Italy, nothing can be done in a hurry. They don't know what that word "hurry" means. Everything is "domani, domani" tomorrow, tomorrow. Don't do today what you can put off until tomorrow. Who cares, life goes on. Frank got frustrated with this attitude since he had to get work done at the office, but I got used to it after a while. If you can't fight them, join them. Domani... always domani.

And as with life, everything has a beginning and an end. And our end in Italy was nearing. The engineering part of the project was completed and it was time to go "on site" to the physical plant in Hamburg, Germany. Frank and I left the girls with friends to go to Hamburg to find a

house to rent. Once more we lucked out, and found a nice gated Villa in Blankenese, a very well to-do suburb of Hamburg. But before we moved, we took the whole family back to the States for a nice vacation and to show off our littlest newcomer, Michael. We stayed in Putnam Lake in what they called the store building because Frank's grandparents owned and ran a little General Store there years ago. Aunt Agnes lived above the shop at the time, Tutu and Pop-pop right next door, Maha down the hill a bit, and across from her was Aunt Margret and Uncle Walter's house. So the whole family was together once more. I remember we started playing the card game PIT one night and it got so noisy once that nobody listened to Tina when she hollered "PIT!" She climbed right on top of the table where we could no longer ignore her. We died laughing. Tina was always such a cut-up... and even though sometimes she could get on our nerves, she was too cute to get angry at. Pop-pop was so proud of his grandson that he took Michael for frequent walks in the baby pram to show him off to his neighbors. I believe we stayed about 2 weeks and then visited our good friends, Linda and Jerry Hunnewell in New Jersey. And then, like the world travelers that we were, hopped on a jet back to Europe. First to London to visit good friends Svein and Pauline Hasund and then on to Hamburg, our home for the next year.



Pop-pop showing off Michael to the neighbors.



Four generations.

CHAPTER 12

HAMBURG, GERMANY



68 Frenssenstrasse in Hamburg-Blankenese.



Our driveway to our garage.



Opa and Michael walking up our driveway.



Our trusty Volvo.



Heidi, Frank, and Michael.

Our Villa was on 68 Frenssenstrasse in Hamburg-Blankenese. It was a gated property. Once you opened the gate, the driveway up to the house and garage was adorned with Rhododendrons on each side. Up at the house you could see the rose gardens surrounding the entire home. The landscaping was gorgeous. Especially when the roses were in bloom and they bloomed all summer long. In the back of the house we had a patio with a few steps down to the grassy flat area where we played badminton and volleyball. I remember on one of my father's visit from Stuttgart, he was playing badminton with the girls when he missed yet another feather ball, and we heard him shout "Oh, shit!" Well, my father knew very little English but he was trying to be just like the girls who actually were saying "Oh shoot." But somehow he heard it differently. The girls died laughing and when my Dad heard how much fun they had with his words, he kept on yelling them. We never did tell him what he actually said.



The girls goofing off in Hamburg.



Frank and I going on a date.

The girls had to go to a new school now that they were in Germany. They attended what was called the International School, which was located several train-stops away from where we lived. So they had to learn to take the bus to the train, ride the train and then walk from the train stop to their school. They seemed to like this routine and they made friends with other American kids

there. Audrey, because she had such excellent grades got special permission from the principal to leave school early after lunch and take the train to downtown Hamburg to the Opera House where she took ballet lessons on a daily basis. Audrey got so good that when it came time to leave Germany to return to the States, we were actually looking into keeping her in Stuttgart, maybe living with my parents to attend the ballet school at the Opera House there. But after much soul searching, I did not want to leave her alone. She was at a precocious age and I felt that it would be best for her to come home with us. Also, I knew from past experience, that my step-mother could be pretty difficult at times.

I took Michael with me in his baby carriage every day when I walked up the short distance to the section where the stores were located. He really did enjoy those rides.

We had lots of visitors from the States and friends and relatives from Germany. My sister's daughter Wendy, who was only about 11 years old, traveled all alone from Wisconsin. She stayed with us for a week or two and then Tina and Wendy took a train to Stuttgart to be with Oma and Opa. Wendy did not speak German, but Tina had learned quite a bit already and was able to make herself understood. While in Germany, we also did some touring and visiting with all the other relatives.



Oma and Opa visiting us in Hamburg.



On our terrace with Wendy.



Girls working hard with Michael.



Pauline and Svein Hasund.



Gerda, Hans, Frank, Oma, Opa, me.

Since we were so close to Hannover we decided to join Uncle Rudy at the big family gathering of Frank's side. The Heermeiers, the Korsmeiers, Boehne, etc. Their group gets together in Rinteln/Weser, close to Hannover about every 2 or 3 years. They had a gathering while we were over there. We have Frank's family history in a library of about 8 albums of pictures and history, mostly in German, a few now also in English. We visited Uncle Rudy's homestead. Maha and Rudy's parents had a restaurant/hotel right by the Bahnhof. Rudy's sister Hermine was still living in that area, right across from the Bahnhof and his other sister, Amalia, lived in assisted living. She was still up and around and walked the gardens with us at the age of 100. When we visited with Tante Hermine she offered us coffee and tea. I took a cup of coffee when she brought the sugar container to me. I took about a teaspoon full of loose sugar and took a sip. Yuck... instead of sugar she gave me salt. Now I had just met her and did not want to embarrass her, but Uncle Rudy always the fixer-upper, took care of it. Have you ever tried salt in your coffee? It makes a believer out of you, a believer of sugar. Ha...



Bahnhof Restaurant in Rinteln.



With Tante Hermine in 1972.

During our stay in Hamburg, my parents decided to invite us to go with them to one of their favorite places in Austria. Buchboden is the name of the little village and it is close to Sonntag. It is in the mountains, a beautiful countryside. The place we stayed at had a party one night with Schuhplattlers dancing. I donned my Dirndle for the evening. We had so much fun with Opa and I could show off my dancing when one of the Schuhplattlers asked me to join him. Frank was slightly jealous. We did a lot of hiking and singing. I had made Dirndles for the girls also, as you can see from the snapshots. And when I had to stay at the Resort while our Michael was sleeping, I took advantage of that time by sketching the surrounding scenery. The days went fast. It was a wonderful short holiday.



Exploring Buchboden.



I drew this landscape from our room.



My new dindle.



With Opa and Frank.



Hiking in Buchboden with Oma and Opa (and Opa's harmonica).



Sonntag, Austria.

We also visited my cousins in Muenklingen Manne and Uli. Manne and Marianne have 4 girls: Barbara, Brigitte, Ulrike, and Susanne. Helga and Uli are blessed with 2 boys and 1 girl: Helmut, Juergen and Martina. So my girls had lots of fun the short time they were with their second cousins. Tina and I were in Germany just now in 2015 and met all those kids again.

Too soon our assignment in Germany was over. It was time to go back to the good old USA and to our old house in Succasunna. After all the fancy places we had lived in, this did not particular excite me. See how fast one can get spoiled?

Oh yes, I forgot to mention earlier that we ordered ourselves a Volvo from Sweden, which we drove in Europe and then had it shipped to the States (see pictures earlier in this chapter). It was a bright solid yellow station wagon, one could not miss it, and I could always find it in any parking lot. We loved that Volvo and kept it for many, many years, at which time we traded it in for, guess what, another new Volvo Station wagon; call us creatures of habit.

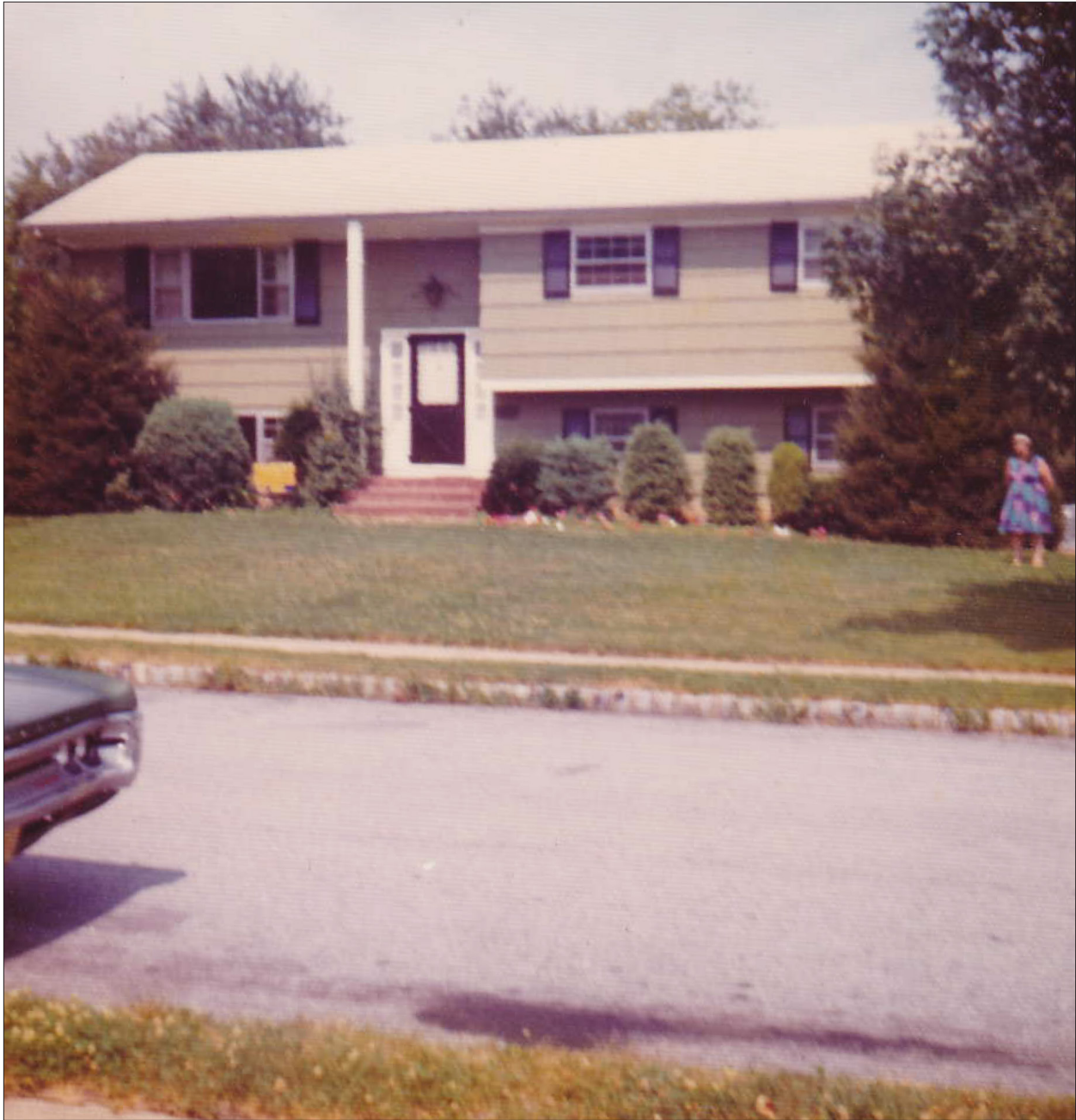
Auf Wiedersehen, Hamburg! Tschuess! And Hello USA!



All the cousins.

CHAPTER 13

BACK TO THE USA



21 Henry Street Succasunna, New Jersey.

I had mixed feelings about going back home. However, on the trip back we were treated like royalty. As we entered the Hamburg Airport we were greeted as Mr. and Mrs. Hoven by a TWA agent and immediately whisked away to their private lounge. As first class passengers our every need was taken care of. I felt like a famous dignitary or a movie star. (It surely didn't have anything to do with the fact that we traveled with a small baby, could it?) They chauffeured us out to where the plane was parked and we were completely settled before any of the "ordinary" passengers could board. This extra special treatment at least got my mind off the impending reality.

You see, I did not want to go back to my former normal life. How could anyone expect me to be happy to go back to an ordinary split level home. No gated living with a portiere, no terraced formal gardens with water features, no marble floor tiles, back to being just an ordinary housewife and living in an ordinary house in a suburb called Succasunna. How boring was that?

In contrast, our girls were terribly excited. They could hardly wait to be with all their old friends again, and they looked forward to eating hamburgers and french fries at McDonald's, going for pepperoni pizzas and baloney sandwiches, and watching their favorite TV shows such as Star Trek, The Waltons, Bonanza, etc.

But I learned to adjust. The girls settled back into their schools and had fun getting reacquainted with their friends. Audrey attended the Eisenhower High School, Heidi went to Roosevelt across Highway 10, and Tina's School, Jefferson Elementary, was just around the bend from our house across Eyeland Avenue. Frank went back to work for Exxon in Madison, NJ and I tried to get into an everyday routine. Michael, now 1 ½, kept me plenty busy.

AUDREY, MY FIRST BORN, LEAVES HOME

I chauffeured Audrey to and from the ballet classes in Morristown to the same instructor she had before we lived overseas. But Audrey was too advanced by now and would eventually have to be driven to Manhattan for classes. This was a real dilemma. We had Michael, and I just

could not see myself going into Manhattan 2-3 days a week with Audrey, and I certainly could not let her go alone. So we had a hard decision to make. Actually, Audrey made the decision for us. She decided she would go and live with her father, C.R., in White Salmon, Washington where she thought she could talk him into taking her to Portland for ballet lessons. Sure... C.R. traveling to Portland and back, two times each week? Does a cow jump over the moon?

It was very sad for me to let Audrey go. I missed her so much, it was like a link was missing from a bracelet and I could not find a replacement. I missed our rides to her ballet classes and our private talks we had while traveling to and from, her wonderful smile, her help in the household and with the shopping, even for wall-paper. (I had to throw that one in, because I know how much you girls just loved going wall-paper shopping with me.) But all kidding aside, how do you let go of your first-born? And let her go so far away? But I also knew I could no longer give her what she needed as far as her ballet went, and I also knew that if I said no to her request to live with her father, she would be depressed and nothing would be gained by that. So Audrey left to live with C.R. in 1973. It's a decision that I later very much regretted and felt that I failed Audrey. It is very hard to let go of your child at such an early stage in her life. She was only 16. But I also knew she loved her father. Audrey missed C.R. much more than Heidi or Tina and could not wait to live with him again. He had a very special connection with her, perhaps because she was the first, or perhaps because she was older and he could talk to her like an adult.

But soon as Audrey went back to C.R., he promptly talked her out of her dream to become a prima-ballerina... he has a gift of convincing people to his way of thinking. So instead of dancing, Audrey ended up in construction, eventually operating and driving heavy machinery like cranes and flatbeds. Now, that is a huge change, going from ballet to bulldozers. At that time C.R. was the principal of the high school which Audrey attended. This was when he trained her in his concrete business called Mongoose Enterprises. Audrey, being smart as she is, ended up being the Valedictorian of her Columbia High School class in White Salmon. We were so very proud of her. Not only was she the Valedictorian but soon after graduation she also got her pilot's license.



Audrey working the crane.



Audrey and her plane.



Audrey at 18.



A flying selfie.

Next, Audrey met an older man who owned a Pitts Special aerobatic plane and a Piper Cub tail dragger. Audrey wasted no time in taking advantage of that. I guess she felt invincible. However, she told me about one landing she had not planned. I think she was flying with another pilot when they ran into a problem and tried to land on a stretch of beach. The plane rolled completely upside down on the sand (each pilot yanking off their safety straps before the gas tanks could blow). Fortunately neither one of them was hurt... but I had hoped it would give Audrey a healthy respect for what can happen. However, she continued showing off with acrobatic spins, stalls, inside loops and other crazy stuff. During those years I was actually glad I was not close by so I did not know when she was up in the air. I definitely did not need that kind of worrying on top of all the bundles of worries I had already gathered in my worry basket.

CHANGE OF SCENERY

It wasn't long after our move back to New Jersey when Frank got dissatisfied with his work at Exxon and started looking for a new job. Perhaps it was because the excitement of living overseas was gone. He needed a change. He found a job with Crawford and Russell in Stamford, Connecticut. But until we found a house there he started commuting back and forth to Stamford, a 2 ½ hour drive each way. On weekends we got into the car and drove up to Connecticut to look for our new home. It took us several times, but we finally found a big colonial in Ridgefield, Connecticut. I was so glad when we found our new home, due to the fact that I was pregnant with Brian and those first three months were hell. I was very nauseated and had a horrible time riding in the car all over the countryside.

When the time came to move, Tutu, Frank's mom, and Joy came down from New York to help me finish up with the cleaning of the house and the last minute things to pack into our cars. But there was one snag... around 8 or 9 o'clock that night we discovered that Tutu's keys to the car were locked inside her car. It was late Sunday night and the shops were closed. After much searching, we finally found a locksmith who helped us out of our predicament. I think we left the

house after midnight with some very tired children and drove to Connecticut to stay in a motel. After a good rest it was time to begin the unpacking yet again.

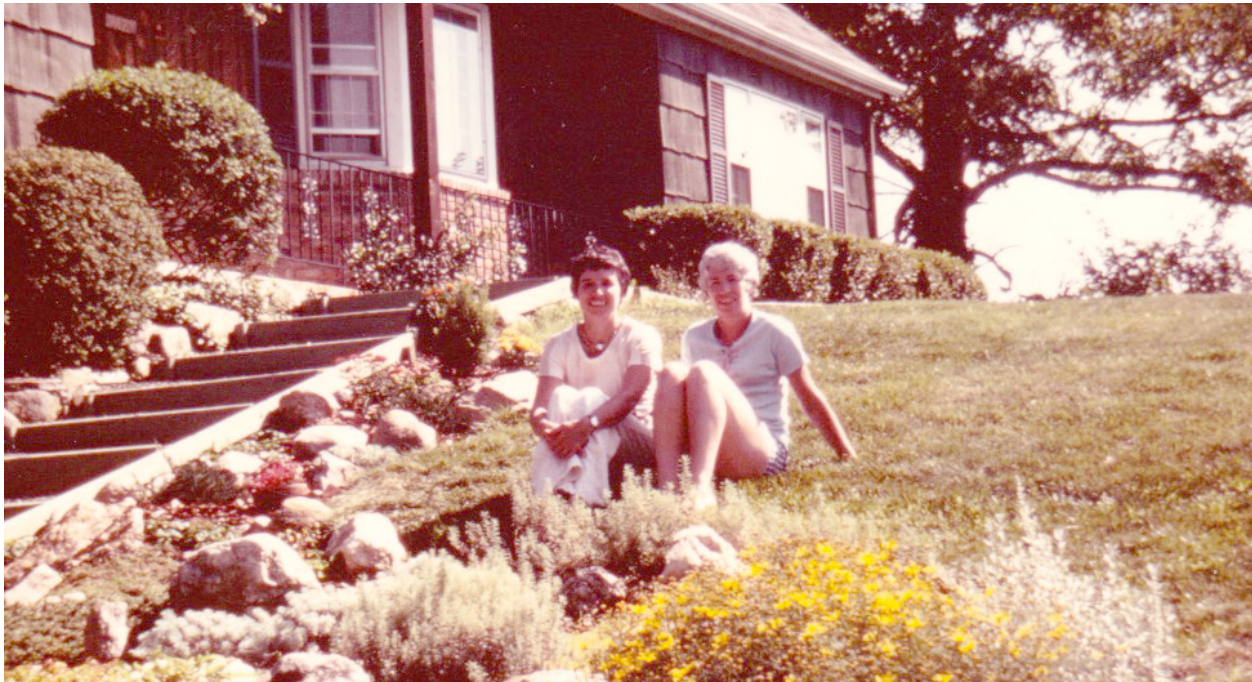
RIDGEFIELD, CONNECTICUT (1972)

Ridgefield was quaint and beautiful. We lived on 199 Holmes Street in the Westmoreland Development which was just a short way, within walking distance, from the actual town center. Our house was on an acre lot and except for a few little trees, all else was lawn. There were a bunch of ornamental apple trees in the back of our property line which were gorgeous when they were in full bloom.

Now we were only about a half hour away from Frank's folks in Putnam Lake, New York. This was great because we could have many more get-togethers with everyone, and I always felt so good when we had a crowd. I guess that comes from growing up in a house with 3 combined households and all my cousins. Everyone came over or we went to their place: Maha,



199 Holmes Street Ridgefield, Connecticut.



Me and my sister Judy.

Aunt Margaret and Uncle Walter, Aunt Agnes, Tutu and Pop-pop, Joy and Uncle Rudy (Maha's brother) made up the usual gang. Later on, when Maha was too fragile to walk up all our front steps, we set up a ping-pong table in our walk-out basement, which had 2 sets of sliding glass doors right next to each other, bringing in lots of light. We put a tablecloth (rather a sheet or two) on the ping-pong table and brought all the food downstairs from the kitchen. The kids loved to run, do cartwheels, kick balls and play all over the back yard where we could see them, and they could show off to a captive audience.

I remember especially the time when my father and mother (Oma and Opa) visited us from Germany. It was the first time they came to the USA. And so we all got together for a big dinner, Frank's family and mine. What a great time we had! By then I was past the first 3 months of pregnancy (with Brian) and felt very good. After my parents stayed with us for a week or so, I joined them for a visit with my sister and her family in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Heidi, our middle one, was probably the happiest child we had. She was like the Heidi in the story: curly hair, dimples, cute as a bug, kind, and a natural people pleaser. She was a diplomat

through and through. She knew how to keep everyone happy and just what to say to them. Back in New Jersey, all her school mates liked to be around her and so she became the “Dear Abby” for everyone. The phone never stopped ringing with the calls being mostly for Heidi. This move to Ridgefield and going to a new school was very hard for her. Actually, both Tina and Heidi had a rough time adjusting. The kids in school were very cruel and made fun of the girls’ short hair, calling them “shims” ... that was like being not a she or a he, but an in-between... and it was not flattering. True, the girls were tomboys, but they dressed like all of the other girls in skirts and dresses as well as slacks and shorts. I remember once when they came home from school, Heidi got so hysterical about how some girls treated her, that I became afraid and actually had to slap her right across the face to break this cycle of ranting and raving. She was totally losing it, even hyperventilating.

But slowly, thank heaven, they both adjusted to their new surroundings. Heidi got into basketball because she loved sports, and she once more became popular. Tina also made a couple of new good friends. Heidi at first, and Tina later, both delivered newspapers on their bikes to earn some extra spending money. Well... sometimes I was recruited when they were sick. Soon they also had their first crushes on boys, and both went to their respective school dances for which I sewed long dresses. Of course they got to pick out the design and the fabric. Both looked very pretty in their new long gowns, as you can see.

At about the same time, Heidi had a huge crush on none other than Clark Gable (even though he died years before). She was 13 ½ or so. Her whole being revolved around black and white movies with Clark. She even designed her bedroom in black and white and placed posters and memorabilia of Clark Gable all over it. She painted her bed and dresser black with white knobs. She also took our super-8 film camera and started filming old Clark Gable movies that were being shown on our television. Her clothes hangers had his handsome face on it. She also had a diary in which she was writing constantly. I believe even then she wanted to become a writer and a movie director. Earlier in her life she made up newspapers with articles of “Dear



Tina ready for her first dance.



Heidi and friend ready for a dance.



Heidi's first date.



Heidi before a basketball game.

Abby" columns written in pencil, and also created funnies strips like Charlie Brown. But most of all she was an avid reader.

Right away Tina made friends in our new neighborhood. There was a boy next door named Carlton and a family on the other side of us who had several daughters and many puppies. We hardly ever saw our Tina. She practically lived at the girls' house. She liked her brother, but she got jealous when little Michael got so much of our time. Tina was 10 years older than her baby brother, and I thought that she would be alright, knowing that babies always get more attention. She finally told me many, many years later that this really was hard on her.

As I mentioned before, we did many things with Frank's family who lived so close to us. We also had visitors from Germany. First came my Tante Gertrud, my real mother's only sibling. She was accompanied by my Tante Hilde. We will always remember how they had an aversion to screens in the windows. They thought the screens kept the air from coming into the room and they could not sleep without fresh air. Well, unbeknownst to us, they took out the screens at night, and of course, that brought the mosquitos into our house. We all ended up with many itchy bites, much to our dismay. The two of them stayed with us for a while and then continued on via Greyhound to the West, all the way to Oregon where they visited and stayed with Aunt Christine in Portland. Aunt Christine's father came to the USA before the First World War and settled in Canby.

We joined the Newcomers Group in Ridgefield and this is how we met other families in town with young children. We formed play groups for our kids which was a great way to get involved. We also joined a Gourmet Group, where 4 couples got together monthly. The women planned the whole menu and decided which house to use for the dinner. The hostess was responsible for the main meal, like meat or fish, and the others brought side-dishes. This helped us to get acquainted with even more couples in town.

I started giving piano lessons to a neighbor's daughter, Barbara Winsaur, and sometimes accompanied her mother who was an opera trained singer. She sang at Carnegie Hall. I got into

macramé (really big in those days), and also sewed clothes and knitted sweaters. I remember I decided to make our drapes (ceiling to floor) for the dining room. Only there was one problem. I was very pregnant when I laid out the curtains on the floor to fit the lining and gather the pleats. My big fat belly kept getting in the way. But I did manage to finish those drapes and they looked very stylish. I definitely don't recommend that kind of a project while being 8 months pregnant.

Michael was the "king" of the house. He had so much room to run around. We had a huge family room with a fireplace which was all wood paneled. And Michael had myself and Heidi and Tina to mother him now. He had a Big Wheel in which he sat and drove down the little embankment next to our long driveway. When Michael was about 3 years old, Frank took him along to the bank one Saturday morning and Frank tells us that while waiting in line at the bank, Michael saw a big truck driving by outside the window. He got so excited about the huge truck



Dressed to kill.

that he hollered out really loudly right there in front of all those people standing in line: "Look Daddy, a big fuck." You see Michael, this kind of thing follows you forever. (Look, it made it into print... ha, ha.)

Another time which comes to mind is when Joy and I took Michael and Brian to Friendly's, a chain of restaurants back east. They had the best ice-cream there and Michael decided (I think he was about 4 years old) that he should have the biggest cup one can get with vanilla ice cream and all the trimmings, i.e. nuts, M&M's, chocolate syrup and whipped cream. And even though Joy and I tried to talk him out of it, he was very stubborn and promised he could eat that much. Well, needless to say, about an hour later he was suffering the consequences. We both learned a lesson that day. I, the mother, decided in the future I will control my children's portion sizes. However still to this day, I overindulge a lot, especially when it comes to chocolate! So much for portion control.

Life was not always a bed of roses. Like many married couples, we had our share of problems. Having children from a first marriage also came into play at times. Frank was not very happy with his job, they had promised him a lot of things and they never panned out. He started drinking much more (and he drank a lot before) and could be very nasty when he was drunk. Frank was never able to hold his drinks. He usually ended up falling asleep no matter where we were. As a joke, our friends gave him a pair of paper glasses which were painted with eyes wide open, so he could wear them when he was actually asleep, and everyone pretended he was still wide awake. Often, he ended up being in such a drunken stupor that he embarrassed me to no end. There was a time when I seriously considered getting a divorce to start out a new life once again. But I was pregnant with Brian and it was not such an easy decision. I sure did not want to rush into anything which I might later regret. Unfortunately I had no one to confide in and so many times I ended up in Heidi's room and cried because I was so unhappy in my marriage at that time. Poor Heidi, she was only 13 and 14 then and I surely should not have put this on her plate. But in those days, she was my very own "Dear Abby."

BRIAN MARK HOVEN (Born December 6, 1973)

Brian Mark Hoven decided to enter our world on December 6, 1973. In Germany, December 6th is St. Nicholas Day where Santa brings us fruits and candies if we were good. When the contractions were getting really close, Frank and I rushed to the hospital in Danbury, Connecticut. And much to our surprise, just before I got wheeled into the delivery room, the doctor turned to Dad and asked if he would like to watch. Dad had not even a second to think this out. In no time at all he was handed hospital garb and a mask, which he quickly got into to keep everything sterile. This is the only birth where I was fully awake and was able to watch in the mirror above the birthing table. This incredible miracle unfolded before my very eyes! I wish I could have seen all my children being born this way instead of being knocked out with drugs to kill the pain. Well, that's not exactly true, I still went through all the labor and that was no picnic. But obviously, the pain does not leave a lasting impression, or else why would I have subjected myself to that experience not only once, or twice, but five times?

Brian Mark Hoven came home to two sisters who became surrogate mothers to him (Audrey was no longer living with us). Michael was excited about his little baby brother, but perhaps also



Brian lounging.



Tu-Tu and Brian.

a little put-out since he was not the youngest any longer and had to share the attention. Brian was our early Christmas present that year. And what a wonderful present he turned out to be.

THE STROKE (April 20th, 1974)

April 20th has always been significant to me because it was my cousin Ursula's birthday, and as an aside, it was also Hitler's birthday, which we were forced to celebrate before and during the war years. And now that fateful day became the day of Frank's unfortunate stroke. Life as we knew it changed in a blink of an eye.

It was a Saturday morning and started out like any other day. The sun was shining and we were to meet with a landscaper who was going to work on our lawns in front and in the back of the house and was coming to give us his estimate. Frank decided he would take a quick run into town and make some deposits at our bank. He thought he would be right back in time for the appointment with the landscaper. He and Michael, almost 3 years old, took off in our baby-blue Volkswagen Bug.

It was on the way to the bank that Michael, as little as he was, noticed that his Daddy started driving over some people's lawns instead of on the road. It seems Frank had a stroke while he was driving. And even though he could not shift anymore, he kept going in the same gear he was in until he managed to get to the bank parking lot. Once there Frank tried to get out of the car. Michael got out and since Daddy wasn't going anywhere he started playing with the pebbles in the parking lot right next to his Daddy's car, unaware that anything was wrong. Frank had trouble standing up and he could not walk. It was then that a lady living above the bank looked outside and saw what she at first thought was some drunken guy by his Volkswagen. After looking at this situation a few minutes more, she came to the conclusion that there was something seriously wrong with that fellow. So she came down to see Frank, and when she realized that Frank could not speak (no words came out), she was smart enough to look into his billfold to see who he was and to find out where to call.

She then made that most frightening call to me from the bank. When I talked to her I didn't know what to think, but told her to call 911 and I got down to the bank as fast as I could. Tina and Heidi took care of Brian. Once I got to the bank, the ambulance was there already and I followed them to the Hospital in Danbury, about 25 minutes away. Once there, I called Frank's parents who came right over to meet us. Frank was kept in the Emergency Room for most of that day. They did not seem to do much but kept sticking him with needles to see if he could feel anything.

He could not speak, and he could not move his right arm at first, but after several hours he seemed to come out of it. He was able to talk and move his arm again. However, the doctor wanted Frank to stay overnight to keep an eye on him. At that time I was not even aware of what a stroke was or never was around anyone I knew who had one. I also did not know that strokes often come in pairs, so that after you have one a second one will most likely follow soon.

When Frank was feeling better that evening, his parents and I went back to our respective homes and decided to get together the next day. Well, when I called the hospital the next morning, I was told he had a second stroke and this one was major! It was so severe that he lost all of his speech again and had no control over the right side of his body. This was so scary and it was such a shock to us all. I cannot even describe it. Frank was only 33 years old when this happened. Michael was barely three years old and Brian only three months. My life was crazy at that time. You could say it spun out of control. Here I was with two young sons and my days were spent at the hospital from morning to evening. And later I had to travel 1 ½ hours each way to visit Frank at the Gaylord Rehabilitation Clinic.

Heidi and Tina continued their schooling and helped in the afternoons when they got home. While Tina played with Michael, Heidi took care of baby Brian. Joy and Tutu helped a lot, and some of the neighbors took turns to baby-sit for me. Tutu joined me often for the drive to the hospital. I remember one time when the Social Services people at Gaylord called both of us into their office to tell me that I best apply for Social Security, because Frank was never going to be able to work another day in his life. Frank had to relearn to speak and read, starting over with books

for Kindergartners. (And this was a man with three different College Degrees, a Bachelor's and two Masters, one of which was in English.) Frank's Mom and I did not want to believe what we were being told. We got out of that conference and were both balling our eyes out. But we had to compose ourselves quickly because we were about to visit Frank and we sure did not want him to know how drastically dark his future looked. He got physical therapy daily now since he could not walk. His whole right side was paralyzed. I had to learn the therapy also since I worked with Frank once he got home. We did that faithfully for several years. Unfortunately, Frank did not get back the use of his right arm and hand or right leg and foot. He could not speak at first. It was a great adjustment for all of us, especially the girls. They were always wrestling on the floor with him and also with Michael. And he played soccer on our lawn. And now that all came to a halt.

When he first came home from the clinic, he was in a wheel-chair and his arm was in a sling. Fortunately his Norwegian stubbornness (which I often did not like, but now was grateful for) helped him learn to do everything with his left arm and hand. It was amazing how much he could do with only one hand. He learned to write with his left hand (formerly right-handed), opened cans and cooked food, laced his own shoes, put on his own ties, typed on the computer, used the remote control, mowed the lawns, and even drove a car one-handed. Well, at first he had a special contraption on the floorboard for driving, but soon learned how to manage without it.

After a couple of months at home, Frank was able to return to work. It's amazing how fast he recovered his speech and thinking processes. He did well, even though he suffered some aphasia (This is when you can think of a word you want to use in a sentence, but try as you may, that word won't come out of your mouth.) As you can imagine this was very frustrating for Frank as well as the people who were listening and had to wait so long for him to find the right words to make himself understood. When he got upset or nervous, that's when his aphasia got even worse. It was hard on him when people were rude on the phone or in person because they did not realize his handicap.

I felt very proud of him, the way he adjusted to this hardship and I want to explain what we

went through together. Over time, his muscular tone diminished and his leg brace which started out about mid-calf, later reached to the knee, and even later had to be built all the way to the top of his thigh. This was before prosthetics were made out of plastic, so he had to carry around a very heavy and cumbersome leg brace mostly made out of metal. They had to continually adjust his braces every time he needed more support. Each time this happened, he developed sores while trying to get used to the new braces and I helped clean and rewrap his damaged skin every day. He never complained but I knew he was in pain. Just taking showers was very difficult for him and took hours.

Sometimes I would even forget how hard it was for him to do every little thing with just one hand. Can you imagine? Try cutting a nice piece of steak, which he loved, while using both your knife and fork with one hand. At first we were diligent and took a lot of time (spent countless hours) going through a long regiment of physical exercises. We were so thrilled when he could move his little pinky even just a couple of centimeters! But over the years this became more and more of a struggle, partly due to an operation that I had which required a long recuperation during which time I could not help Frank. But we also realized that no matter how much effort we put in, it became obvious to both of us that there was going to be very little progress. Yet, Frank made the best of his situation: playing cards, singing at parties, recording movies, doing crossword puzzles and expanding his many collections... and I surely admired his healthy outlook on life.

HEIDI LEAVING HOME

Heidi was nearly 15 years old when she decided to join her sister Audrey and go to live with her father in White Salmon, Washington. When Heidi told me she wanted to go I was devastated. I could not blame her though, there was too much pressure put on her young shoulders. She was who I depended on to help me get through Frank's recovery and raising a small baby and a toddler at the same time. She was also the one I confided in since Audrey had left. I just could not believe that she would want to leave me, especially at that time. Tutu was downright angry

with her decision; she knew I needed Heidi's help. But I guess Heidi believed that life would be so much easier in Washington, and she would be with her big sister and her real father. Who could blame her?

Heidi was never a problem and was a pleasure to have around. I just could not imagine our family without her. Many tears were shed. And I know Frank was also very disappointed and saddened by Heidi's decision. Perhaps, I should have been stronger and insisted that she stay, she was, after all, my responsibility since the court had rewarded the girls to me when C.R. and I got divorced. But I also remembered how I flew the nest at a very young age, and I did not want to stay in the way of her happiness. Or at least so I thought. I found out later, that being with C.R. was not the best situation for either of the girls.

Several months later I found a new hobby which later turned into a part-time job. I don't remember how it started, but one day when I was checking out the new Boutique Shop in Ridgefield, they learned that I liked to sew. Well, that was the beginning of my sewing and alterations "career." I was now designing new wrap-around skirts and braided belts for the Boutique Shop, and I also was called in to "fit their customers", many of whom then decided they wanted to have other jobs done, such as hemming, or taking in, or what have you. That's when I decided to turn Heidi's room into my new Sewing Shop. Out went Clark Gable's black and white furniture. In came the same pieces, now painted yellow. I had a desk for my sewing machine, a huge table to lay-out the fabrics to cut, a large bulletin board with hooks where I hung every color spool you can think of, baskets of trim, thousands of buttons in all shapes, colors and sizes, and lots of cloth inherited from Aunt Margret. I even had a dress form (also inherited from, you guessed it, from Aunt Margret). The room now looked really professional and this work gave me a lot of satisfaction. One of my customers was an opera singer who needed a costume for her upcoming role as Carmen. I went to the library to study the head-piece to give it an authentic look and also designed the dress. I created one other dress for her for another role. So word got around in the circles of the theater, which brought in more customers for which I worked. To this



Designed and sewn by me.



Designed and sewn by me.



Designed and sewn by me.

day I can't believe I was that gutsy. But it gave me a lot of self-confidence when things turned out well. Maybe I should have continued designing. Just think, you could be wearing an original "Christa Hoven," or how does this sound: "Designed by Christa." WOW!!

TINA GOES TO WASHINGTON

Tina was still at home and a lot of help to Dad and me. At one time new neighbors moved in right next door who had daughters Tina's age. She practically lived over there. We only saw Tina occasionally. She had a boyfriend who asked her to the school dance. I got busy and sewed a long fancy dress for her. She also had a girl friend named Kim who had a motorcycle, and so the two could be seen motoring about in our subdivision.

Kim and Tina were very strong and helped dig holes so I could plant bushes in front of the house. Tina was amazing in what she could do. She even painted our big colonial house. Dad would stand at the ground level holding the ladder, sometimes Pop-pop was there too to direct the job. I know at one time, Tina dropped a whole bucket of paint onto Pop-pop... he was all green after that and I don't think he appreciated it very much. This house was so tall, that when Tina had to do the very upper part, she first had to tie a rope around the chimney and then secure herself. That was a bit scary, even just to watch. Sorry Tina, I can't believe we had you do that, but I think you wanted to make some money and so you helped talk us into it.

I don't remember when Tina moved out to C.R.'s, but I do remember that we had problems with her. She was very lively, precocious, and had her own mind. Dad said at one time, "It's either Tina or me." Tina was a teenager and had trouble coping. So we packed her up and sent her off to C.R.'s, hoping she would be happier, having her two sisters there also. Plus she would get some discipline, or so we thought, hoping C.R. would straighten her out and she would come back all "new and improved." What were we thinking?

It was sad for me. Now all my girls were gone. Our family had shrunk and I had to deal with Michael and Brian, help take care of Frank, keep up the big house and also maintain our large yard mostly by myself.

And once again, Frank was unhappy with his job and pursued going back to Exxon in New Jersey. He succeeded, they made him an offer, and he accepted. Well, what do you know? Here



Tina painting our house.



Tina and Kim.

comes another move. Oh no, this was the guy I married who I thought would stay put but I guess it was not meant to be.

My Tante Gertrud's visit from Germany came just at the right time. She and Uncle Rudy baby-sat the boys while Frank and I drove to New Jersey for a long weekend to find our new home. Linda Hunnewell, our good friend who now also was in real-estate, drove us all over the place. Frank wanted to live fairly close to his work. On the last day of that weekend, we said we would look at just one more house and then call it quits. Well, that "one last house" turned out to be our new home, and for the next 26 years I did not have to move again. Hallelujah!



Michael in his lederhosen.



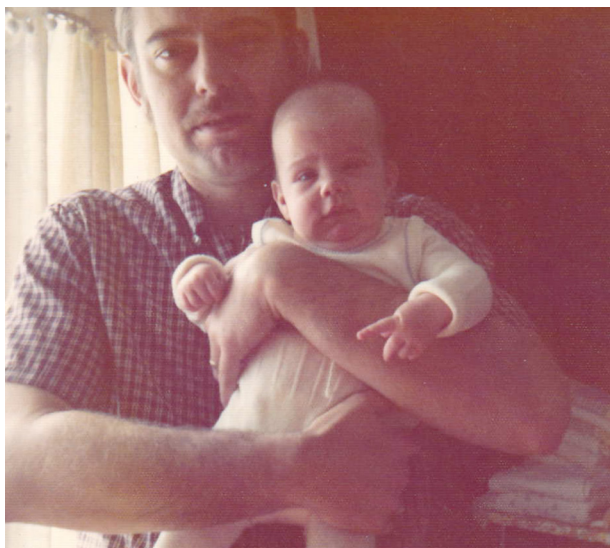
Michael on the deck.



Brian and Michael.



Brian at the piano.



Frank and Brian.



Brian and me.

CHAPTER 14

PUDDINGSTONE HEIGHTS



17 Long Ridge Road.

Let me introduce you to our new home on 17 Long Ridge Road, Randolph, New Jersey. The area of the two connecting streets, Long Ridge Road and High Ridge Road, is called "Puddingstone Heights," named after a dark-brown brittle stone that is found in this particular place. The stones' color looks like chocolate pudding. Our mailing address was formerly the city of Dover, then turned into Randolph, even though we belonged and paid taxes to Parsippany. Are you confused yet? I surely was.

But, to come to the best part, our ranch style house was built on an acre lot, high up on a hill, with a fantastic skyline view of the skyscrapers in Manhattan and the Trade Centers right smack in the middle of our sight. It was impressive! Our house was painted a barn yard red with quaint country flair, unlike the other houses around us. There was a white rail fence just before you entered the yard at the front of the house. Our driveway was fairly long and at an incline, so as you came closer to the house you could see the beautiful flowers I cultivated right along the railing. You entered the house through the front french doors.

As you stepped into our flag stone hallway you could see the formal living room and extended dining room where the whole wall was a huge ceiling to floor window, and right next to it were the french doors to the patio in the back of the house. The main attraction on the patio was a large oak tree on which I hung several flower pots with hanging plants all around the circumference at different levels. It was gorgeous and had a friendly view of the woods in the background. I just loved it when I spotted deer come up to look for food on our picnic table. Sometimes they even had little fawns with them. Our kitchen had one brick wall that went from the floor to the ceiling with a fireplace and an inviting stone seat around it. The other wall was a large picture window with a view to the woods on that side of the house. This is where we sat at our kitchen table and watched the entertaining antics of the many squirrels playing outside. One step down took us to the family room, which was wood paneled with built in book cases and a free standing fireplace. Again, one wall had a picture window across the whole room, with a seating bench under it. I had many plants on that bench; it looked like a friendly sun room. Since



Our new home in Puddingstone Heights.

it also had an outside door, it became the perfect music studio for me. It was inviting and cozy and everyone loved to be in our family/music room. The whole room could be separate from



My teaching room.

the main house. Here I taught piano to many, many students over those 26 years we lived there. Some of them are still in contact with me, and what makes me really happy is that most of the students are still playing the piano.

A NASTY SURPRISE

I'll never forget the day of our big move into this home. The Gypsy Moths (worms at first) were rampant and were crawling all over the place, up all the windows and they were hanging on thin spidery webs from all the tree branches. Talk about "creepy," this was it! I had never even heard of these creatures before. When you stood still and listened, you could hear their excrement falling through the tree branches onto the stone patio. It was impossible to stay outside. What a shock! And we were going to live here? The movers looked at me as though they were saying, "Lady, what were you thinking about when you bought this place?" Of course, there were no

signs of the Gypsy Moths when we looked at the house. No, they waited to come out of their hiding places just in time to greet us on our move-in day. I later found out that the Gypsy Moths are a problem every so many years. They go in cycles, and generally they are sprayed from above, but they must have forgotten to do it the year we moved in. I can't remember now exactly, but they stay underground for 8 or 9 years and then they start appearing again. The first year they are hardly noticeable, the next year a few more, and so on until they get out of hand again and have to be controlled with insecticide. They keep chomping away at the leaves on the trees until they demolish them. Anyhow, what a nasty surprise!

The next day, Tante Gertrud (my real mothers's sister visiting from Germany and who helped take care of our boys while we were moving), came with the boys to join us. The boys really liked their new digs. They could run in a circle from the living room, through the kitchen, to the hallway and back to the living room again. Also, they quickly discovered that there were some boys living close by. Both families on each side of us had kids the same age. There was Richie Baierline on one side, and Billy Michalek on the other, plus a whole lot more in the immediate neighborhood. So many, in fact, that when it came time to join the cub scouts, we had enough in the Puddingstone Heights section for us to have our own group. And guess who the cub-scout leader was? Yes, Moi! But I get ahead of myself.



Cub scout meeting. Brian second from left, Michael in middle.



Me and Brian.

We put in a large sandbox, partially situated under a huge tree close to the front of the house, so I could keep an eye on the kids. The boys and their new friends spent a lot of time building castles, tunnels, forts and making mud pies, etc. We also had a tire swing on the other side of the house and further to the front on the grassy area we put up a volley ball net. Many years later, Michael added a horse shoe court in the area where we had the tire swing. The whole lot was perfect for the kids. It had lots of trees to climb, lawns to play ball on, and a long driveway to set up the coolest matchbox-car racetrack ever. Later when the boys were older, we blacktopped an area close to the driveway for a basketball hoop.

I quickly became acquainted with the neighborhood women by joining the bowling league and the Puddingstone Community Club. In those days, most of the mothers were house wives and did not have to go to work, so we did a lot of things together. We had luncheons, fashion shows, make-up sessions, and crafts classes including making quilts. We arranged for aerobic classes and yoga classes. We even had some political meetings at the clubhouse, and at least once a month a party in the evening where our husbands could join in. Life was very busy and fun and I was happy.

During summer vacation we joined the Stardust Swimming Club down the street and the boys and I, together with a bunch of neighbors, spent many wonderful sunny afternoons there. The kids swam and played in the pool while us mothers would sun ourselves and just gab and exchange recipes. Looking back, it was truly the "Good Ol' Times." Life was a little slower and I had less stress back then. Sometimes we took along our sandwiches and stayed all day. Other times we went to the pool in the evenings again when Frank got home from the office for a family swim.

The school bus picked up our boys right at the bottom of our driveway. I could watch them from the house until they were on the bus. The school was quite a distance from us so they were on the bus about 35 - 40 minutes each way. When we bought the house, we had no idea the school was so far away. All we knew at the time was that the school system had an excellent rating.



The boys ready for school.



Brian waiting for the bus.

A REALLY WILD IDEA

This was in 1977 after Heidi and her best girlfriend Rani graduated from Columbia High School in White Salmon, out West. Rani's parents had a big farm with several horses. This was wonderful for Heidi as she got to ride the horses every day. She even learned how to jump horses and ride bareback which was apparently not so easy and landed her in the dirt at times. They both got really good at it and decided they were now ready to start their adventure: travel on horseback on a super trip throughout the USA. Their plan was to go from Washington State, through Oregon, down to California, Nevada and across to Texas and Florida for the winter months, and then go up the East Coast and stop in at our house in New Jersey before going across the US following I-84 back to Washington. It was a good plan. They worked at the mill and also bundled onions on a farm to make enough money to start the trip. They carried everything they needed on the horses: blankets, pots, long winter underwear, snacks, rifles and dog food. Yes, those crazy young girls also opted to take their dogs with them for protection, two adult Great Danes. I guess they looked like cowgirls of the Old West wearing their big black cowboy hats.

Can you imagine it?

They decided to take on new names and called themselves “The Gold Dust Twins” and told everyone that they were sisters. They even carried false identification cards so they could go into bars. Well, what they did not foresee in their plan is that the dogs could not take the long walk, day and night, much of it on the highways. One of the dogs developed a bad sore on his paws. Rani’s father apparently came to their rescue. Since they were not too far down their trail yet, he came and picked up the dogs to go back home.

They were not discouraged and ON they rode. In one state they were not allowed to sleep anywhere on the Indian Reservation, so they had to ride a long stretch to make it to the border where it was safe to sleep for the night. They also rode through all kinds of weather and horrible lightning storms where they had to take all the gear down from the horses (metal on them) and then huddle down a bit away from the horses who were targets on the flat landscape. Truckers found out about these two crazy girls and the word got around from one trucker to another and they all looked out for the girls. At one town they were greeted by a group from the radio station who then interviewed them on the air. They were a news item by now and people came to see



Heidi practicing jumps.

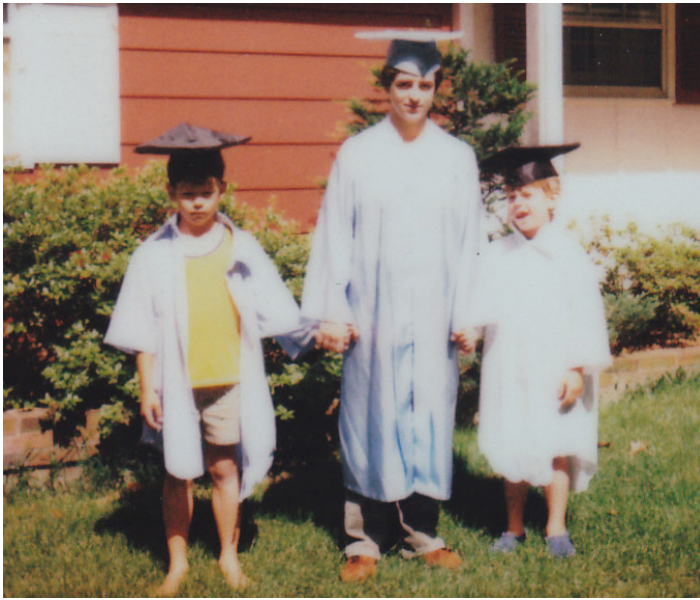
them. Heidi, our writer and “Hemingway-want-to-be” kept up her daily diary. I was hoping I would see a book about this trip, but so far nothing (hint hint). Heidi’s horse did not last long. She had to bargain with one horse trader after another and probably did not make the best deals. By the time the fourth horse went lame, they ran out of money and were forced to give up their dream. This was in Nevada after they travelled for 44 days. At the end of the trip, they called C.R. who came down with a horse trailer to take them back home. After making such a big deal about the trip I am sure it was not easy for them to go back to Washington with their tails between their legs. So they did not want to stay there and decided to make their trip in an old van instead. They travelled all over the United States, stopping and taking jobs as they needed money. What an adventure.

UNEXPECTED VISIT

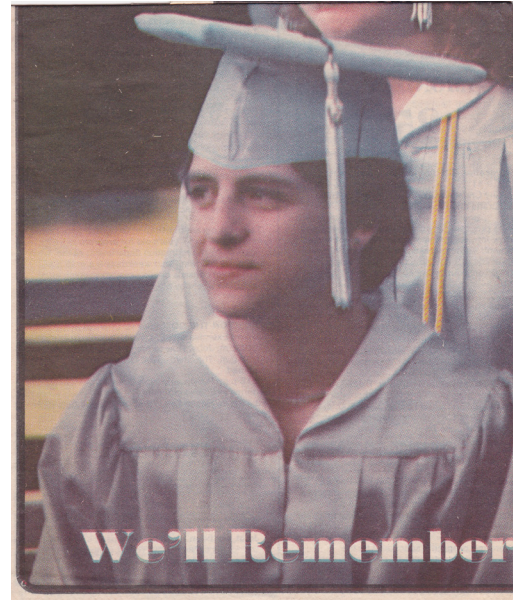
So, one day perhaps that was in 1978, we had a knock on our door and who could that be? It was Heidi and Rani in their old van, together with their family. Out from the van stepped not one, not two, not three, but four Great Danes, two adults and two puppies. I love Great Danes. But four? This was a bit awkward since Brian was just diagnosed by the doctor as being allergic to animal dander. He had asthma and so we were concerned with having those dogs in our house. Well, they could not stay very long. We kept the adult dogs upstairs with us and put the wild puppies downstairs in the basement. The basement was still not finished so it did not matter so much that the dogs were not yet totally house trained. The girls bedded down with the dogs in the basement. Just what are those girls thinking up next? That was my question!

A BIG FAMILY GATHERING

I believe in 1978, Tina decided she wanted to come back and live with us. Things did not go too well with her and C.R. She was welcomed home, of course, and attended Parsippany Hills High school for her last year. We celebrated her graduation. The boys wanted to graduate too right then and there. We told them that they will surely get their turn. What a surprise when we



Tina and the boys before graduation.



Tina in the paper.

got the Sunday newspaper and discovered that our Tina made the front page of the paper. This was June 20, 1979. During that time, my parents, Oma and Opa from Stuttgart, Germany came for another visit, and Audrey and Heidi came out to see us also, so for once the whole family was together for a few days. Frank's family also joined us. We hovered around the piano and sang and Opa had a blast telling his jokes and teaching us the very active song "Die alte dampf, dampf, dampf Eisenbahn" (the old steam, steam, steam train), where we all joined in with the "pfff, pfff, pfff" sounds and moved our arms as though we were a locomotive. Frank's father, Pop-pop, made beautiful music on an actual saw with a violin bow. He would play oldies like "Take me out to the ballgame" or "I love you truly, truly I do."

Since Opa and Oma did not speak English, it was good we all liked to play pinochle. This was perfect since the rules of that card game are the same in America as in Germany. Remember girls? When Opa had a good card, how he would take it out and hold it up in his hand before he played it by slamming it down on the table with a very exuberant Tzzzack!! He was such an entertainer, full of enthusiasm, always the life of the party. I wish you all could have gotten to know him better. You would have loved being around him. He was a great father and Opa.



Singing, games and family fun at our house.

When Michael was 8 or 9 he joined a bowling league and won several trophies. He was so proud and so were we. When he was 12 years old he had a whopping 184 bowling game. Both



Michael with his trophies.



Frank, me and Michael.

Michael and Brian also took up soccer. At one time Dad and Tina were co-managers of Michael's team. I will never forget the time when my parents came to visit from Germany and we took them to one of Brian's first soccer matches. He must have been 6 or so. My Dad laughed so hard when he saw all these little boys running after the ball, tears were rolling down his cheeks and he almost fell off the bench. Every little boy ran after that ball and none of them stayed in their assigned area for the ball to be passed. It was a hoot!



Brian attacks the ball.



Opa, Heidi, Frank and Michael watch the game.



Michael warming up for the game.



Michael and Brian ready to play.



Tina and Frank coaching Michael's team.

WINTER IN PUDDINGSTONE

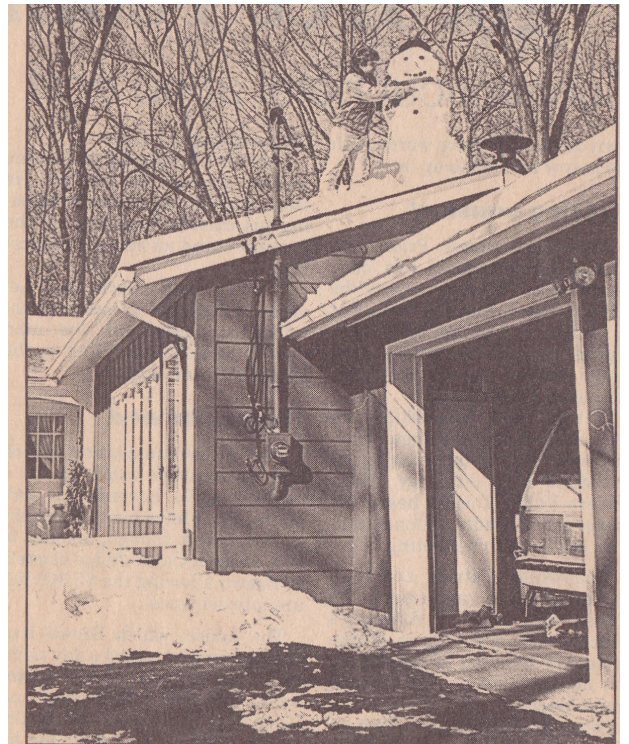
Just a few snap shots to show you what winter looked like. It was such fun to sit inside by the fireplace, a roaring fire going, and big white flakes falling from the sky. I do miss that now. Sometimes the snow was so high that our doors got shut, or so high that you could walk from the entrance right up to the roof. Look at Michael's snow man he built. Michael also built himself eskimo huts where he slept all night outside in the hut under the snow. Of course, Frank and the boys had their work cut out with shoveling.



Snowed in!



Brian losing the battle vs the snow.



Snowman with a view

JOHN BELL / Daily Record

Michael Hoven, of Parsippany, puts some finishing touches on the snowman he made when he went up to clean off snow and ice that was leaking into a window and into his house.

Michael's snowman on the roof.

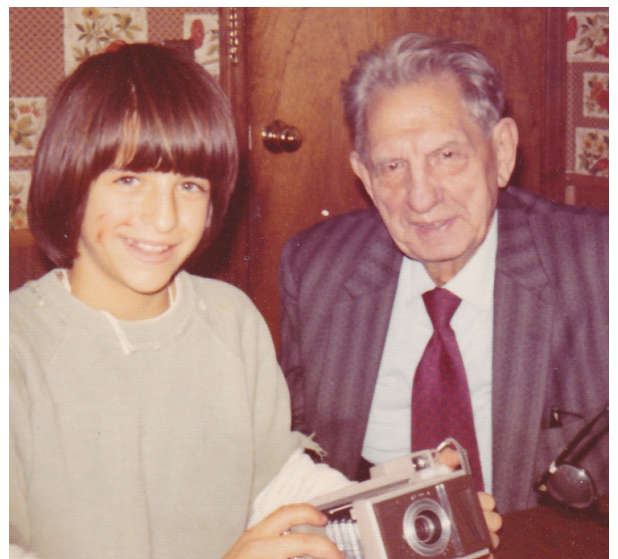
Life in Puddingstone was definitely exciting. Frank worked at Exxon which was about 20 minutes by car from us. In the evenings and on weekends, when we were not going to one of the boys' games, Frank found all sort of jobs to do at our home, such as building steps and walkways all around the house with stepping stones and flagstones. Uncle Rudy was a great help to him, he was a born fixer.

HELLO UNCLE RUDY

Uncle Rudy Korsmeier and his brothers, August and Carl Korsmeier, were half-brothers of Martha Heermeier Hoven (Michael and Brian's great grandmother, Maha as we called her). She and her brothers August and Carl came to the USA early before WWII. Their hometown was Rinteln an der Weser, close to Hannover, Germany. Their parents owned a hotel right by the train station in Rinteln. After WWII Maha, August and Carl sent for their youngest brother Rudolf. Rudy started to work for his brother August who owned a parking garage in Manhattan. Well Rudy was a very smart and clever young man and when Mr. Otis, owner of Otis Elevators (who parked his car at that garage) needed a driver for his family to go on a vacation, he asked for Rudy. Otis knew that Rudy could fix just about anything should the car break down on the trip. After that trip, he took young Rudy under his wings and paid for his schooling to become an engineer and then hired him onto his company as a trouble shooter. Rudy was sent all over the world where there were Otis elevators. His job was to find the problem and fix it. He lived in many countries including China and Brazil. At one time he sailed the Atlantic Ocean which took many days and was such a great adventure. He also was a passenger on the famous Zeppelin. Always curious, he decided to test the smoothness of the flight. So, at night, before going to sleep, he filled a glass with water to see how much spilled out of it by next morning. But all the water was still in the glass. Luckily, he was not on the fateful flight when that Zeppelin exploded in N.J. during landing.



Uncle Rudy with Audrey and Heidi.



Tina with Uncle Rudy.

Rudy had many women interested in him, but somehow he stayed a bachelor. He played the stock market which was his hobby and his life. He rented an apartment in a hotel in Manhattan, so whenever he was in the states he had a place to live. But he was a miser. He never ate in expensive restaurants. Actually he ate in fast food places where the food was behind little glass doors and you just picked what you wanted. Nothing fancy, but fast. I cannot remember what they were called, but you can see them in old movies. Maybe they were Automats? Rudy did not own an automobile so he always took public transportation, again to save money. Uncle Rudy was particularly fond of his nephew Frank and he liked me because I was a fellow German. But when I wanted to buy material for new drapes for our home, the investor Rudy tried to talk me out of this totally crazy idea and advised me to buy stock instead! However, I stuck to my plan, and that was that!

Rudy visited us many Saturdays and Sundays. Perhaps he came so often for my home cooked German dinners, yes? He came to visit us everywhere we lived, first in Rome, Italy and then in Hamburg, Germany. Years later it was sad to see him get more and more disoriented until eventually we had to put him into a nursing home. We tried first to have him live with us, but it became impossible. I had always said to Frank, if Rudy ever gets too old and needed help that I would take him in. But old people who do not think clearly any longer can be very difficult to be around. He thought I was trying to poison him, and every afternoon he waited at the front door for Frank to come home and then attached himself, never letting Frank out of his sight like a little child. We finally had to do the nursing home bit, even though that made us very sad. It was difficult trying to find a nursing home for him. He was so stubborn that several places did not want to take him in. But we finally found a place in Morristown where Frank was able to visit with him every afternoon on his way home from work. Rudy's sister Martha was 98 when she died, another sister, Amalia was still up and around at 100, and Uncle Rudy died at 98. He was a real gentleman, tall, always wore his beret of dark blue wool... you thought he was a Frenchman. Rudy was well travelled, spoke several languages, was very wise and was a great

conversationalist. He also was a real miser but died being a multi- millionaire. All of his relatives including us were very fortunate to be in his last will. **Thank you Rudy for thinking of us all.**

PIANO STUDIO

A few weeks after we moved into our new home some neighbors approached me about piano lessons for their children. That's when I opened up my beautiful sun room where I placed my teaching piano. I taught part-time before, but now it became my profession. Before long, through word of mouth advertising, my studio grew so I stayed plenty busy. At times I had 25



Me with my students at our spring recital.

or so students per week, kids and adults. I entered all my students into the New Jersey's Music Association Audition Program where they were evaluated and received diplomas. A couple of my students I also entered into piano competitions. My most talented student won 2nd prize one year and the next year she was picked first place from all the 12-year-old pianists who entered throughout New Jersey. This student, Katrin Chin, went on to the Manhattan School of Music. The last I heard of her, she was a student at Harvard University. She was the only 5-year-old student I took on. Most 5-year-olds cannot sit still for a music lesson. Her mother was German and her father Chinese so there was a lot of discipline in their house and Katrin had to practice

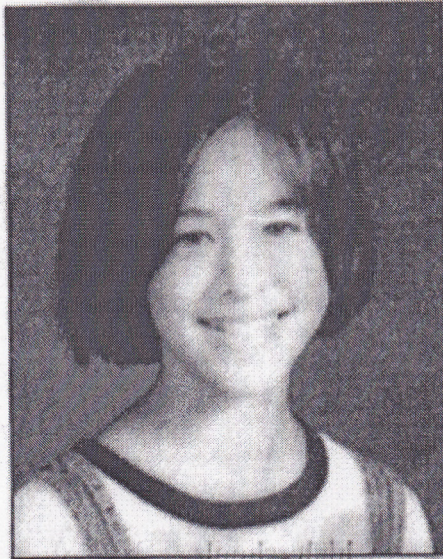
Mendham's Katrin Chin wins first in piano competition

MENDHAM — Katrin Chin of Mendham is the first prize winner among 12-year-olds in the 1997 Piano Competition sponsored by the Music Educators Association of New Jersey (MEANJ).

Chin performed the "Allemande" from the Partita No. 6 by J.S. Bach, and "Valse" by Kodaly.

She will be featured in a concert on Sunday, April 13, at Rutgers University, New Brunswick.

Chin placed second in last year's competition. She has studied the piano for seven years with Christa Hoven of Randolph Township. Chin is a seventh grade student at Mountain View School.



KATRIN CHIN

observer-Tribune 4/10/97

My student is featured in the news.

every day without exception. She was an excellent student. Every time I assigned new material for her, she came back to her next lesson playing it almost perfectly. Katrin told me once that every time she sits at her piano she imagines herself being on a stage playing for a huge crowd of people. She was a born artist. I surely thought she would be some famous pianist one day. On the other end of the spectrum, I had one student who could not distinguish one tone from another. She was a real challenge. But even though it was a struggle for her she was determined to learn, bless her heart. For recitals we always were able to find something that was fairly easy for her to play, but sounded so much more sophisticated. She stayed with me until she started college. Twice per year I arranged for the students to have a recital, one in my house and one at the end of the school year in a hall with stage and grand piano. There was always much to do: get the students ready with their pieces, have a rehearsal, print the programs, arrange for the flowers, get together the punch bowl for the refreshments along with the cookies, fruits, coffee, beautiful

table cloth and napkins, video camera, etc. Then after all the stress and excitement of performing, we all mingled during the social gathering. Most of my students stayed with me through high school and some are still in contact with me.

MY MENTOR

I was lucky to find a wonderful teacher for myself, therefore spending much time practicing and learning. My teacher, Mary Jean Nelson, was a graduate of the Julliard School of Music in Manhattan. Mary Jean performed a lot in our area and was well known as one of the best teachers. She became a very close friend of mine. We often had lunches together and talked “shop.” We were judges at the auditions every year.

Mary Jean had all her adult students get together at her studio in Morristown, N.J. for recitals twice a year. This was exciting and nerve wrecking at the same time. And after we all played for each other, we enjoyed the camaraderie and all the chit-chat about all our trials and tribulations, shared our practice habits and techniques and how to calm our



My good friend and teacher Mary Jean Nelson.

nerves when we had to perform. We would sit and sip cider or wine and talk about the new pieces we will attack for our next recital. At the end of the evening, Mary Jean would play for us, which always was a real treat and gave me the incentive to practice even more.

WE HAVE A TEENAGER ...OH NO

I am now coming to 1984. Our Italian Michael decided his life had not enough excitement when he started to put us into a horrible spin. He was now a teenager and he made sure we knew it. He was close to 14 and by then also very headstrong like his Dad (no doubt Frank would say, like his Mom). I don't know where he got this idea, but Michael believed he was old enough to



Michael the teenager.

do whatever he wanted to do. He just knew everything better than we did. I had a saying posted on the outside of my refrigerator door which said something like... "Send your teenager out into the world to work right now while he still knows everything." So, what happened you ask? Michael decided he could stay out the whole night without telling us. He actually climbed into the bedroom window of a girl he knew, whose parents were not at home. The next morning

when we discovered that Michael was missing we called the police. They promptly found him and brought him home. That was the beginning of many horrific times with him and I believe for him. We were in limbo for close to 10 years.

Young Michael was a bit of a loner. He liked to play all by himself and when he was little he made up many games, such as building houses with cards or playing office. He could entertain himself for hours on end. Later, Michael got lessons playing the saxophone and the guitar. But he did not stick with either. He had a good voice and while playing his guitar he would sing along, I especially remember the Beatles songs. When Michael was in 9th grade, his first year in high school, he joined the wrestling team, and he was good at it. For the first match Michael got ready for it early in the morning. When he got to the school, the coach did not let him go on the bus with his team. He told Michael that his grades were not good enough. Michael was so disappointed, and so was I. I often wondered if this was the real turning point. My thinking being, if he had that sport to put his attention to, he might not have gotten into drugs. But Michael was also a very stubborn young man and did not want to be told what to do. He got very moody and I remember when he came home from school in the afternoons, at times he would come in, go to

the kitchen cupboards to look for food or a cup or glass, and he would slam them shut as if he was mad at something and had to let his frustration out. Then he would go into his room and slam that door shut. Next he would play his music at such a volume that he could not hear me knock on his door. I had to scream and bang like crazy to get his attention. His behavior became worse and worse and it was impossible to reason with him. His hormones must have gone berserk.

We went to family counseling a few times with Michael and then he decided he did not want to go any more. We were physically not strong enough to make him go. Needless to say, we were beside ourselves, not knowing how to handle him. Since we could not do anything with him, and he did not listen to us any longer, we decided to ask his sister Tina if she would take him in. He always got along with her. By that time Tina was in Portland, Oregon already and living in her own little house. She was renting and doing quite well for herself. We had no idea that he was into drugs already. In hindsight, we should have known from the way he behaved.

It's so unfortunate that Michael got into the wrong group of friends. If I could do it over again, I certainly would pay more attention to the company my kids were keeping. That is so very important. We tried to do all the right things, such as getting the boys into sports, music, playing games with them, and when they were real little, reading to them every single day. Michael joined my cub scout troop, he had saxophone lessons and then played the guitar. We took him to bowling where he was on a team and did very well. I took the boys to Sunday School at the Presbyterian Church in Morris Plains. Michael was very interested in the Bible and read out of it many times. Nevertheless, for reasons unknown, Michael picked a very hard road to travel.

Soon after Michael stayed with Tina, he decided to play hooky from school. When Tina checked with the school principal she found out that he very rarely attended. And then Tina found drug paraphernalia in his room. She had forewarned him that if he did drugs he could not live at her place. So she had no choice but to throw him out. Michael ended up living on the streets and once again we had to call the police. They soon found him sleeping on a bench at Lloyd Center and took him into custody. They agreed to keep him there for a couple of days

until Frank could fly out to Oregon to pick him up. In the meantime we were in such an uproar. What to do, where to go? We didn't know where there was a program that could take him in for rehabilitation. We knew we could not bring him back home to us; it brought too much hardship to the family. Al Bryski, our good friend who lived in Albany, New York, agreed to help Frank make the trip to Portland. Now we had to find a program immediately. I heard about "Straight." This was highly recommended by a co-worker of Frank's. Nancy Reagan also was impressed with this program. She was President Reagan's wife who was at that time in the White House. Nancy Reagan liked this program so much that she took Princess Diane there while she was visiting Washington, DC. This was a program with the motto Youth Help Youth. "Straight" had a very intensive and intimidating program. The whole family had to participate.

STRAIGHT

Frank and I were traveling back and forth to Washington, D.C. sometimes two times per week. Michael was in that program a little short of two years. We were all going through our own private hell. I remember the day we left him there. He had just gotten off the plane from Portland with Frank and Al Bryski and was meeting me at the hotel in Virginia where we all stayed that night. We went for dinner that evening and then the next morning brought him to Straight. They did an evaluation on him, and because he was so cocky and decided he was going to brag about all the drugs he ever did, they decided he was definitely a candidate for their program. (In hindsight, they would have taken him no matter what; we found out later it was a money driven outfit.) When Michael found out that he was not coming home with us, but we were leaving him there, he gave me the saddest look, he was so shocked. I will always remember this look, and how my heart broke and how I felt for him. How I just wanted to take him into my arms and hold him and tell him I love him. How I ached to take him home but how I knew it would not work out. Our trip home was a very sad one. That night I wrote my Michael a letter which he has not read to this day. Both Dad and I felt rotten, and at the same time we were also relieved to know that he

was taken care of and off the streets where he could have been hurt. Who knows what might have happened to him. And I was praying that this program would help him and we would have him home soon again. I prayed for him every night he was at that place. Again, one cannot know the heartache a parent must endure when their son or daughter is straying off the path.

The program was very, very rigid with lots of rules for the inmates and their families. For instance, we were not allowed to talk to Michael until he earned that privilege and has stepped up to the next phase. At times we would travel all that distance and then not be able to talk to him. That sucked! Then, once he got to the next phase in his program, we could only talk to him by confronting him in front of all the other parents in the room. And there were many, perhaps 200+. Every time we went there we had to stay with another parent whose child was also in the program and we never knew who it was until after the program that night. The boys and girls in the program also never knew where they were sleeping that night. They were like gypsies being moved every single day. Each old timer had to take care of a newcomer by holding on to his belt. And I mean they were constantly connected even when one had to go to the restroom. So, later on after Michael progressed in the program, he was the leader for a newcomer and helped him while constantly holding on to him. After several months Michael finally achieved a certain phase where he could be trusted and had to attend school outside the program. We also had to take him to doctors and dentists which meant even more flights to Washington. Thinking back now, I wonder how we all made it through that difficult time, not only Michael, but Frank, Brian, and me.

We got special permission to take Michael out of the program for our yearly vacation, a week in the Catskills in New York. During that week, Michael and the other kids decided to go into the woods late at night. They bonded and hung out together. But during a dark walk home he fell down a ravine and broke his thumb. This happened at midnight. The closest hospital was 20 miles away. He was in much pain. The doctors reset his thumb and gave him medicine for his pain. Well, when he went back to his program they found out about the medicine the

emergency doctor gave him and he was immediately demoted down to the lowest phase. While in the program no one was allowed any drugs not even aspirin. That meant starting all over again. It meant a longer program and more money. It was soon after that fiasco that Frank and I got discouraged with the program and decided to pull Michael out and bring him home. Later we heard the program was sued by several parents and shortly after that, Straight closed down.

HANDYWOMAN

Somewhere during those years, I decided to do some improvements in the house. One being the downstairs where we had a radon pump installed and then carpeted it all. This was where the teenagers could hang out. We brought our old kitchen cabinets downstairs which we made into a bar. On the main floor, I decided to refresh one of our bathrooms. I ended up tearing the floor out and putting in new plywood and then the real tiles. It was quite a job, I had problems with the hand cutter for the tile. Luckily I did not have to cut too many, just around the toilet fixture. I also rebuilt the cabinet with the sinks. When I was finished, the girls were here and we had a little party. Frank was the main singer and Audrey, Nicole and I were the “pips” the background dancing singers. This was the only time I ever tiled a floor. I did a lot of other things like all the painting, patching, wall papering and upholstering. Since Frank was handicapped and also tight with money, I had to do a lot of things myself. Doing and accomplishing was gratifying.

EGADS, I AM A GRANDMOTHER!

And to keep our family growing, Tina gave birth to our first grandchild, Madeline Christa Conn. She came into this world on November 22, 1986. Little did she know what an “interesting” family she had picked. Her Mommy special-ordered her when she was ready and really wanted a child. Tina was not married and asked a friend for the sperm. Tina was already out of the closet, but I had problems accepting the fact that my daughter is gay. So I hid this from my friends and family for many, many years. But even with all the craziness in our lives there was a lot of love going around. I always accepted my “can do everything” and “no problem” gay daughter Tina

and loved her very much.

I was only 49 years young, and not yet ready to be called “grandma”, but Tina had other ideas. And once I held Madeline in my arms, I melted all to pieces. Yes, Maddie you were so cute and lovable, and what’s most important, you did not talk back (ha, ha). You were definitely a



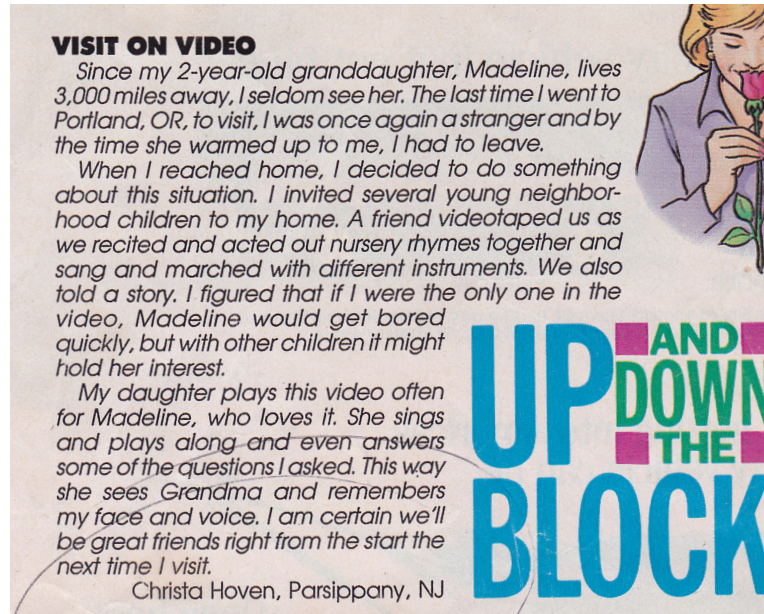
Madeline Christa Conn.



Maddie looking cute and playing.

keeper. From then on, I made many more trips to Portland to visit Tina and our newest addition. Of course, Nicole was there also and Audrey showed up occasionally. They both lived close by. When Maddie was a bit older and I hadn’t been around her for a while, it took almost all of my visit before she warmed up to me, and then it was time to say good-bye again. Well, I thought about this and came up with the idea of making a movie just for her, starring grandma and grandpa. I pulled out my movie camera, invited the little folks in my neighborhood and we sang together and acted out all the children’s songs like “Ring around the Rosie” and “This is the way we brush our teeth”, with the many verses. We also marched with all the musical instruments and at the end, Frank sat down into a rocking chair and told Maddie a bedtime story. This turned out to do the trick. The next time I went to visit her in Portland, she came running to me at the airport and gave me a great big hug. No more shyness since she had listened and looked at my

movie almost every single day since I had mailed it to her and really got to know her grandma and grandpa. I sent this idea to Woman's Magazine and much to my surprise, it was actually published! (Issue: Woman's Day, June 1990). I even received a check in the mail. I also received several calls from other grandparents who read the article and thought it an excellent idea. I kept a few copies of that magazine, I was so proud of it. After all, I was now a published author! Or, maybe a freelance writer? (LOL)



My Woman's Day article.

MORE ABOUT MICHAEL

When he came out of the program he attended AA meetings for a while and kept himself clean. It was at an AA meeting that he met Kiersten Stewart. Both of them were only 17 years old. It was not long after they met that Michael told us that he and Kiersten wanted to get married. We did not take this seriously and told him it was ridiculous at his age, without a high school diploma and without a job. How were they going to support themselves? Well, they showed us and Kiersten got pregnant. They actually wanted to have that child. Their thinking was that now we would surely allow them to get married. But listen to this - It was not long after that conversation when they decided to break up. Kids! At that time in their lives they knew it all.

Our wonderful grandchild Ryan Scott Stewart, Michael and Kiersten's son, was born on October 24th 1988 and became our 2nd grandchild.



Ryan Scott Stewart.



Ryan and Michael.

Things were going good for a while. Michael took classes and earned his GED. He also got a job as a car salesman with Honda. I was so proud of him. He wore suits with dress shirts and ties and dress shoes and he looked like a clean cut young man. He even had his own business cards.



Brian and Michael.

It seems the Straight program had done its job after all. This lasted a few months and then he quit his job, decided he did not like what he was doing. He tried some other jobs, mostly landscaping. And then the unthinkable happened.

ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE

“Knock, knock.” It was early in the morning. Brian was just about to leave for the school bus when he opened our front door. There were two policemen pushing by him to come into the house. One tried to arrest Brian, thinking it was Michael, the second one walked right in and down the hall, gun drawn, into Michael’s bedroom and handcuffed him. When I heard the commotion, I got out of bed. I faced the policemen who did not care for small talk, but told me that they are booking Michael and that I can see him in jail. It seems that Michael was approached by an undercover cop the night before this and that he told the cop where he can get drugs. I still don’t know if Mike just told him where to get the drugs or if he actually sold him some. To make a long story short, Michael ended up doing jail time. It was no picnic for me to go and visit him in jail. I cannot remember how long he was in there, but he later stayed with us for a little while and then we helped him to get his own apartment outside of Dover.

GRAFFITI AT MACY’S

I did a lot of my shopping in the Rockaway Mall. One day when I was shopping at Macy’s for a bathing suit, I discovered some graffiti about my son in the try-on cabin. I could not believe it. But Brian was a real charmer and the middle school class and high school girls were after him, so one of the girls wrote on the wall “I love Brian Hoven.” Ha, ha. He got real embarrassed when I showed him the snap shot of the graffiti. Brian and I did a lot of shopping in that mall.



At the Macy’s bathroom.

SOCIAL CHAIRWOMAN

During that horrific time while Michael was in his recovery program, I totally immersed myself into my piano teaching and the community club in our neighborhood. I was voted in as Social Chairwoman in charge of all the parties. That was a lot of fun and kept me plenty busy planning, shopping, cooking and decorating. I arranged for entertainment, some of which I did myself like playing the piano or accordion, and making up fun games. Those monthly parties were always successful and well attended. This kept me busy and away from all the worry and commotion I had about our Michael. I learned that the more you put yourself into a project the more you get out of it. Believe me, it works. We had a Hawaiian Luau, complete with a whole roasted pig. There were Halloween parties where everyone came dressed up. Every year we got together for a St. Patty's Bash, where Frank sang his famous rendition of "Oh Danny Boy"



Halloween at the clubhouse.



Oktoberfest fun.



New Year's Eve.



St. Patrick's Day.



Me and George - the 2 cooks



Mr. and Mrs. Frankenstein.



More halloween fun.

and other Irish songs complete with an Irish brogue. Some years we had also a barbershop singing group, conducted by my neighbor George Avenner. George and I cooked all the Corn Beef and Cabbage dinners for huge groups, sometimes up to 80 people. Christine Wujack baked the Irish Soda Breads. We had Oktoberfests with German Sausage, Potato Salad and Sauerkraut all cooked by myself with the help of some neighbors. I played the accordion and we all sang the Schnitzel Bank while we locked arms and “schunked” from side to side with the music. At the annual picnic, we played games that were competitive between the families that lived on Long Ridge Road against the ones that lived on High Ridge Road, such as tug-of-war, water balloon throwing, egg tossing and pie eating contests. And toward the end of the picnic, we gathered for a baseball game with all the men, women and children. Everyone helped decorate for our New Year’s parties, and at midnight while everyone was on the dance floor, the ceiling opened up and out came the confetti, streamers and balloons.

I also worked with the teenagers in our neighborhood. We gathered all the old newspapers from our neighbors and took them to the recycling place where we got money for each pound.

With this money the teens were able to throw parties and invite all their friends. Brian, Drew and a few other boys started a band for entertainment.

Since I spent so much time and energy for our Club, the Board voted to give us a free membership. Our neighborhood was like a big family. And because we were such an active group, the Mayor and other VIPs would often join our parties. Of all the neighborhoods I lived in this one was the best. I should know as I moved more than 30 times! We miss our neighbors and will never forget our times there. As Bob Hope sang... "Thanks for the Memories." Our memories will last us a lifetime. See a great write up on our family in the Appendix.

AUDREY MEETS BRIAN KISHLINE

In 1986, Audrey met Brian Kishline. They both lived in Seattle, Washington at that time. When they met, he had just returned from a long-term job in Saudi Arabia. He was an independent engineering contractor and traveled quite a lot. Audrey finally found a decent guy who was about the same age as herself. She had a history of being attracted to "father figures" and had two long term relationships with much older men. She was shortly married to Grant who was 30 years older, was a wild and crazy man and a criminal attorney who also owned several planes which was her initial attraction to him. She left him because he had a severe drinking problem. Then she met Boy, "only" 20 years older, who was a very wealthy restaurateur. He wanted to marry Audrey in Paris and surprise her with my visit there. Well, not long after I had this discussion with him, she decided to break up because he did not want children. And just like that, there went my Paris trip. But Audrey was certain she wanted a family especially after a visit to Oma in Germany. There she saw how Oma's eyes lit up as she showed off all the pictures of her grandchildren covering the walls. So when several years later Brian and Audrey found each other, it seemed to be the right thing.

But Audrey knew she had a problem with alcohol and she wanted to nip it in the bud before getting more involved with Brian, so she put herself into a rehab program. Soon as the



Brian Kishline and Audrey.

program was over, she decided to come home for us to spend a week together for some mother and daughter time. Frank and our boys were scheduled to go to Riedlbauers in the Catskills of New York for that week. It was a joy to see Audrey walk towards us at the airport. I had not seen her in a while. She looked so beautiful, her hair just to her shoulders and a great smile. She was holding a bouquet of red roses for me. She must have been about 30 years old. The next day the boys went to school, Frank to work, and Audrey and I went for a walk in my neighborhood. I walked and she ran back and forth, crisscrossing the road so that we could still talk while we each exercised. After lunch I decided we had to go to the grocery store for a few things. Audrey said she was



Audrey coming home.



Audrey the athlete.

too tired from all the running and she would like to take a nap while I went to the store. Well, I knew I would not take too long and it all seemed to be OK. Little did I know about the extent of my daughter's illness. When I returned home, Audrey was lying on our bathroom floor, passed out, and was unresponsive. I freaked out! What to do! I could not pick her up. It seems that during the 45 minutes that I was gone shopping Audrey managed to find a bottle of vodka in our cabinet in the basement (which was locked) and drank all of it straight down. Luckily, Michael and Brian came home from school about that time and Michael was able to help me get Audrey in my car so I could take her to the emergency room at the hospital. I was afraid she had alcohol poisoning. I had never seen Audrey drunk before this incident. I could not believe my eyes, or why she would do something like this. Believe me, I had no idea how bad alcoholism can be. That was a drastic eye opener, the realization that my daughter was really very, very sick. I am talking about my Audrey, my first baby, my perfect girl who was the valedictorian at her middle school and high school, who got herself a pilot license to fly aerobatics, who was exceptionally bright, who excelled as a ballerina, who learned to operate the big rigs, and to top this all, was a gorgeous girl.

Audrey's Brian arrived (unexpectedly) the next day. My first impression of him was good. He looked nice, was not "ancient" and was well dressed in a brown suit. However, the rest of his hours by us were not very pleasant. He insisted that since I could not keep Audrey away from alcohol, that I was not a very good mother and that he would take her back with him immediately. After quite an argument with him he proceeded to tell me that he could make it so I would never see my daughter again. It was absurd. I gave in because I felt so bad for Audrey to be in this fight. I don't know if Audrey was afraid of him or what, but at the end she decided to leave and go home with him. Frank was not involved in this since he was at work until later. Brian had a rental car and left with Audrey. I had so looked forward to being with my daughter since she had not been home in a long time. The Mother-Daughter time was no more. Needless to say, Brian did not make the best first impression on his future mother-in-law.

It was not very long after this experience that Audrey had to put herself into yet another rehab center, this one in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Brian Kishline called me to ask if I could join him at the program. Apparently this was very important for her recovery. We met at the hotel there and were able to iron out some of the bad feelings and misunderstandings between us. Actually, everything went well.

THE BELLS WERE RINGING

Audrey and Brian were married in Seattle on July 11, 1987. Our whole family was there and that was really wonderful. We even took Michael out of his Straight program for this occasion. Dad walked Audrey down the aisle. Her own father did not want to face us. Frank was honored that Audrey asked him. Audrey looked gorgeous in her wedding gown. I could not take my eyes off her. It turned out to be a storybook wedding. Audrey had asked me to play one of her favorite pieces on the piano during the church service. It's called, very appropriately, "The Wedding Day" by Grieg. The reception was in the Officer's Club on Mercer Island and what started out very





My five children. L-R Nicole, Michael, Audrey, Brian and Tina.

formal with classical music ended up with everyone doing the “Chicken Dance” while I played the accordion. Also there was a grand piano where our Brian showed off some of his jazzy style. The next morning everyone gathered by the pool at the hotel. There was so much to share, we cried and laughed and enjoyed each other’s company. It’s been many years since I had all my children together. I will always fondly remember that time. But all comes to an end and we had to say goodbye and go our separate ways. Michael had to go back to Straight and Brian, Frank and I flew back to Puddingstone and everyday life as we knew it then.



Tina's partner Kate.



Aliens from planet Gridlock.

OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH KATE

When Maddie was about 5, Tina met her life partner Kate Doebke. Her introduction to our family was somewhat unusual, as life often is around Tina. Frank and I came for a visit from New Jersey. The afternoon of our arrival, Tina came up with the crazy idea of surprising Kate (more like scaring the wits out of her) when she comes home from work. So we all positioned ourselves on the floor, all stretched out stiffly, our voices speaking in unison in a monotone style “We are aliens from the planet Gridlok. We are aliens from the planet Gridlok” etc, etc. Our forearms were going up and down, synchronized. So we practiced this for a while, Kate was to come home soon. However, Kate did not arrive for another hour or so and by that time we were pretty

worn out. I think Kate was shocked but she covered it up pretty well. (These are my in-laws?) As she was about to find out, shenanigans like this are not unusual in our family.

BACK TO MICHAEL

When Michael went to Portland the second time, we set him up in one of our rental apartments. He was to pay a small amount of rent while there. However, he started to get into drugs once again and did not work. It got so bad that Frank and I finally had to use “tough love” and kicked him out of the apartment. He found another place to live where he worked part-time for his rent. Things got so bad that I remember when I visited Portland around that time, I tried to take him out for dinner so he would get something nourishing. Joy was also with me. He would not look at us, and when he did, it was an empty stare. He would not even answer one question or talk to us. When I went home from that visit I knew I could not take that stress any longer. And as though God could tell I needed someone to talk to he had a young woman minister sitting next to me on the plane home. That lady was praying with me for Michael. I had to accept the fact that he will probably die soon and that I will get a knock on the door or a telephone call from Portland telling me that my son is dead. I never thought it was possible to come to that point where you accept the fact that you cannot do anything more for your child. It was a nightmare for so many years. I could not take the stress with all the worry about our son any longer, and I finally after many, many years of strife and stress and sleepless nights, divorced myself from my son and this horrendous situation by giving up on him. Only those who have gone through similar chaos can understand how difficult that was. I never thought it possible that a mother can give up on her child - but I had to as I became numb from all the worrying. Please forgive me Michael, but truly I was at the end of my rope.

THEN A MIRACLE HAPPENED

It was just a few weeks after that when Michael turned his life around. He took himself to a detox center and from there he got help with his rehabilitation. He was very active in both AA and

NA programs. He found a good job with the Oregonian newspaper and decided to go to college where he got his 2 year degree while also working. He did this all on his own. We were so very proud of him!! He went to the authorities in New Jersey where he had outstanding warrants and debts and he set up a schedule to pay back all he owed. He started contacting his three children and got involved with them. Kiersten stopped asking for child support a while before that.

MORE GRANDCHILDREN

During all this time when we were dealing with Michael's problems life went on. Let me think, what else happened during our 27 years in Puddingstone. While Michael gave us our second grandchild in 1988, Audrey and Brian Kishline presented us with our third grandchild, Lindsey Rose, who arrived on April 24, 1989. Lindsey did not have much hair at first, but made up for it later with her gorgeous locks of strawberry blond. I remember her Mommy coming for frequent visits and each time asking if I detected any more hairs on Lindsey's head. ("oh yes, I am spotting 3 more.") Audrey and family were then living in Princeton, New Jersey, very close to us.



Lindsey Rose Kishline.



Samuel Jacob Kishline.

Then Audrey delivered little Samuel Jacob Kishline on March 12, 1992. He became our grandchild number five. How do I remember Samuel? As he grew up, he was always “full of the dickens” and always ready to play a joke on me. He also liked to dance really fast with those little legs, he was my wild boogie man, no standing around idle for him. He had to be busy. He hasn’t changed that much, loves to joke around, and makes me laugh a lot. But the little feet and legs are no longer little, they grew very tall.

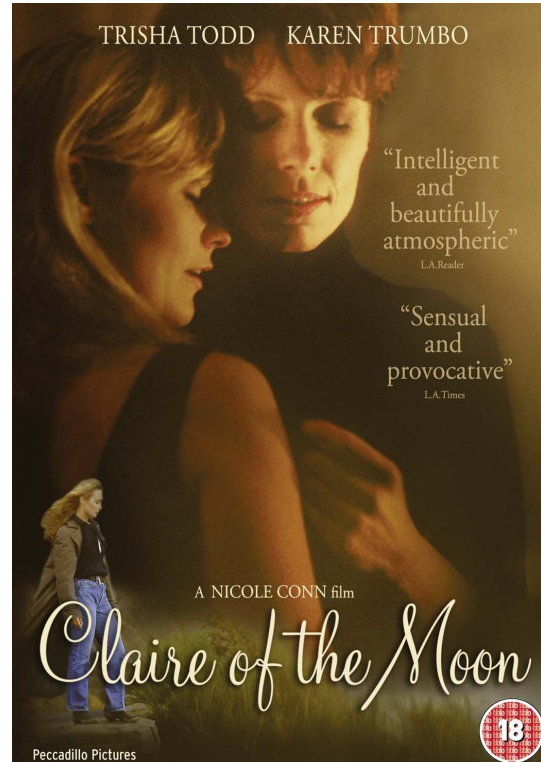
OUR MOVIE DIRECTOR

1992 was a very exciting year for us. I don’t recall exactly when our Heidi became a “Nicole” but she changed her name legally. Apparently there were too many German Shepherds named Heidi. Well, it was not easy for us to get used to her new name. However when I visited her and was around her friends nobody knew who “Heidi” was, so I finally slowly after many years got used to having a Nicole for my daughter. Nicole always wanted to become the great American novelist (Hemingway) and later also a movie director. So she kept on writing and writing daily. Her day job was being a book-keeper and financial adviser to a small construction company in Portland, Oregon. She had a great relationship with her bosses and as long as her work got done at the office, she could take as much time off as she needed to devote to her dream, her first movie. It took months and months, but she finally got it started. “It” became the famous movie “Claire of the Moon.” She begged and borrowed, took out more credit cards, and even borrowed credit cards from her friends to charge her expenses. Frank and I invested quite a hefty sum, so did Joy, and others...and the movie got off the ground. She hired local actors. Michael Harrison, the famed piano artist of Portland, wrote and performed the sound track. She hired a professional cinematographer and she used her own home and her beach house at Cannon Beach for her set locations. She had me play all the classical piano pieces and that was the most exciting experience in my life. First, the recording, some of which we did in Michael Harrison’s studio, some of it at the Recording Studio at Moe’s Piano store in Portland and some of it was

done in New Jersey. It was absolutely the most wonderful and exciting project I was involved in. At the premier of the movie, to walk into the movie house and to hear my recording playing in surround sound was beyond description. And to see the finished product that my daughter did



Our movie director Nicole.



Movie poster for Claire of the Moon.

so beautifully, on such a low budget, what can I say... I was speechless.

Nicole is being hailed as the Pioneer by the Lesbian and Gay communities all around the world and also by Hollywood. It was after Nicole's love story of two women played in theaters around the globe that Hollywood finally took the risk to make these types of movies also. But at the time, they would not touch Nicole's project...so Nicole did everything herself. She wrote the script, directed the movie, and then also distributed it herself. It was after the movie came out she was asked to write the novel to go along with it. This book was translated into many different languages, including Hebrew where you read the novel starting from the back. I read the German version and it was very close to the original English version. You can go into any bookstore and

ask for "Claire of the Moon" by Nicole Conn or online at www.nicoleconn.com. Also exciting was the fact that Nicole included in her movie a song written by Frank titled "Another Place, Another Time." He still occasionally gets royalties for that song. The first payment he received came to a total of...are you ready?...we need a drum roll here...a whopping \$1.76! Yes you read that right. We promptly framed that check and it hangs in my studio over the piano. But all kidding aside, Dad's song is great and the woman who sings it in the movie did a wonderful job. I know that



Frank and I in front of theater.



Red carpet premiere.



Audrey, Kate, Tina, Kate's mother, Joy, me, Frank.



Tina, Nicole, Michael Harrison and me.

it was one of Dad's highlights to hear his song being performed on the big screen and on the CD with the soundtrack. At the premier in Portland, people lined up for blocks around the corner of the theater. There was a red carpet when we stepped out of the limo and people were lined up on each side as we entered the theater. I felt like a VIP. There was an air of Hollywood right here in Portland, Oregon, an unforgettable night. Since Nicole did the distribution herself she could not afford too many copies of the film, so it had limited movie houses to play in. Dad and I went to the premiers in Manhattan and Toronto. The movie also played in Hamburg, Germany where our friends wanted to see it but it was all sold out. It played all over the world. In 2002, Nicole came out with a special Anniversary Edition along with the DVD of "The Making of Claire of the Moon." Each time I went along to film festivals or premiers, the people would come over to me and congratulate me for having such a talented daughter and also to thank me for being there for her and totally accepting her lifestyle. Some even wanted my autograph because I was one of the artists in the movie. So I was living in a dreamworld through my daughter. I could easily get accustomed to that lifestyle, Ha, ha, ha. But all fairytales end and life as I knew it before the movie, continued with the everyday buzz...cleaning, shopping, cooking and then the dishes. Always the dishes. B o r i n g ! But, every afternoon during the week I also taught piano and that was very satisfying.

EVEN MORE GRANDCHILDREN

About 4 years after Michael's Ryan was born, Michael fathered another son with another young girl, Jessica. Michael Scott Hoven, Jr. arrived on February 23, 1992. We found out about that when we received a letter from Jessica's mother who lived in Pennsylvania and who told my husband and me that we are the proud new grandparents of little Michael. Jessica put in for child support which Michael could not pay since he was mostly without a job, so he ended up in jail for non payment. This put him into a roller-coaster he could not get off. His license was taken away so he could not get to a job, without a job he could not get paid, without pay he could not make

child support, if he does not make the child support he gets put back into jail. While being in jail he cannot make any money to get himself out of this situation, etc, etc. I went and talked to the sheriff in Morristown, NJ and was told by him that unless we pay the child support for our son or make some kind of deal with the mother of that baby, that Michael would not be able to get off that merry-go-round ever. I believe we helped him out in some way but not all. He got out of jail and left our area and moved back to Portland. But before he left for Portland, Michael dated a former girlfriend, Denise. We got to know her quite well.



Michael "Mikey" Scott Hoven Jr.

She even joined us at our yearly hang out in the Catskills. But this relationship also went sour and about a month after their breakup she informed him that she was pregnant. Can you believe it? Yes, another grandchild. Kayla Ashley Lockman came into our family on March 16, 1994. She was a tiny little one and had to stay in the NICU for a few weeks. But she grew up quite feisty and turned out to be a very beautiful and bright young lady. Denise did not ask for child support and



Michael and Denise.



Me and Kayla.

that helped Michael tremendously. Kayla was our 7th grandchild.

But before Kayla was born Tina delivered her second child. On March 4th 1993, Lauren August Conn decided to join our crazy clan, with the help of a donor, and thus became our 6th grandchild. I was allowed into the delivery room and so became the “first alien from Gridlok” to hold her... what a joy! Dad was also very excited that he shared his middle name with Lauren. He would say to our friends, “Lauren August Conn is a beautiful baby, and I don’t just say that because she is my namesake.”



Lauren August Conn.

TINA TALK

So here is a little more about Tina, my youngest daughter. She was a doer and could do anything. After she graduated high school she started working, first at McDonald’s, then as a Security Guard for a big company. She also drove a semi trailer across the United States, but decided that was not a fun job. Then she was hired on at R&C construction company in Portland and in no time at all made it to the title of “Foreman” and had her own business van. I was with her one day where she had to go to several building sites carrying around the blueprints, pulling them out of her briefcase and showing the guys what they had to do next. But several years of this made her think she needs a better job where she can climb the ladder. In construction she was definitely held back because she was a woman.



Tina the security guard.



Tina the mechanic.



Tina the construction worker.



Tina the construction worker.

The guys in construction saw Tina wearing her construction boots and jeans and t-shirts. When the company had a party, I went and shopped for her and put her into a dress and heels. WOW, the guys could not believe it... she cleaned up really good. Tina also had a motorcycle which was bigger than she was. She worked on her cars and on all that needed to be fixed. But she decided she needed a better and more secure job. And since nurses are always in demand

and Kate was also a nurse, Tina decided to attend the Nursing School where she was a straight A student. She received a financial grant from the State of Oregon. We were very proud of her. She made a very smart and excellent nurse. When she worked in the emergency room, the doctors voted her in as the number one nurse they wanted to have on their shift. What an accomplishment. She was an emergency nurse for 5 years and then seized the opportunity to coordinate the Portland VA participation in a nationwide Parkinson's Study and ran their seven neurology clinics. This included things like Botox injections for patients with Torticollis Movement



Tina and me - all dressed up!



Tina all dotted up.

disorders like Huntington disease. The Parkinson's study involved a stereotactic surgery to implant Deep Brain Stimulators into patients with troubling Parkinson's symptoms, after which patients would come in for programming of the implants. After 2 ½ years of working on this Tina was offered a more secure position in the Cardio Thoracic Surgery Department. She ran clinics and worked with patients undergoing open heart surgeries such as Coronary Artery Bypass and heart valve replacements. On the thoracic side, the majority of her cases had lung cancer. Again



Tina the nurse, with Sam.



Tina and me.

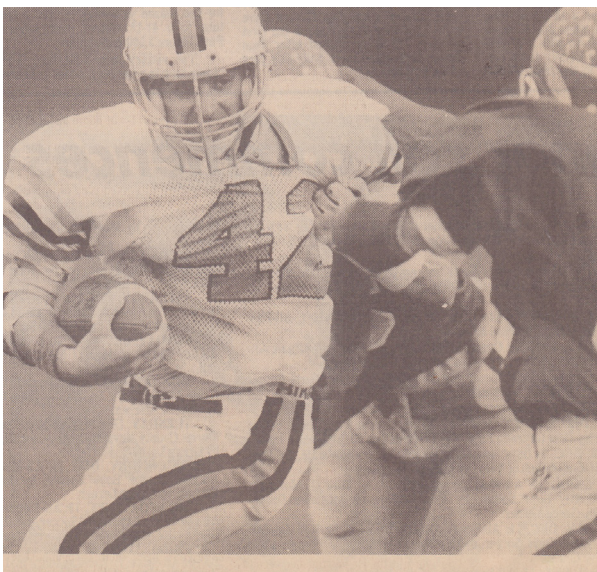
opportunity came knocking and she got a position with the VA's Nursing Professional Service Department. Tina puts it like this: "My work included the shaping of nursing policies and procedures, designing, writing, and implementing a nursing portal (website) that contains tools and resources for all the staff." This is my daughter Tina's work history. I am a proud Mamma!

OUR SON BRIAN

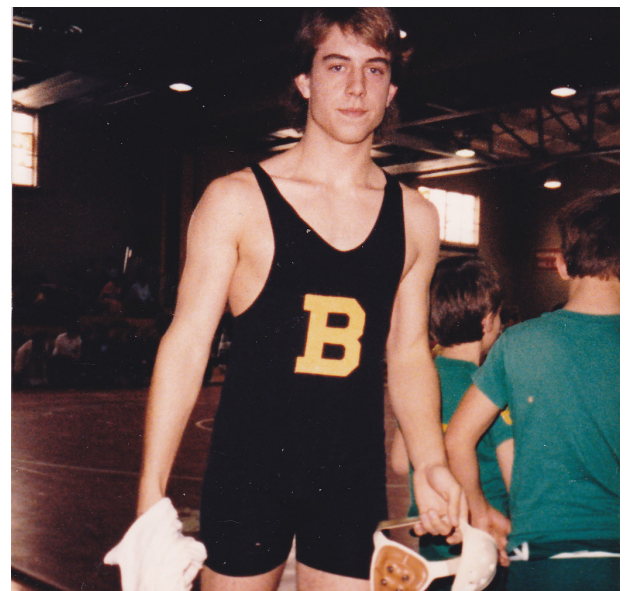
During Michael's ordeal with Straight, Brian was in 7th and 8th grade (1986 and 1987) and wanted on various occasions to become a rock guitarist, a classical guitarist, a keyboard musician, a pianist, a drummer, a football player, a hockey player, and/or whatever else came to his mind, including being rich. And he was so talented in everything he did, except the getting rich part. While in Junior High School Brian was on the wrestling team and was so good at it that he won the Regional Wrestling Championship. He was good at all sports, so he did not know which to concentrate on. We much later found out he had ADD so it's no wonder he could not just stick to one subject.

He did form his own 2 man band with his friend Drew and they played for their school's variety show in the 6th grade. He also showed off his break dancing skills in 5th grade.

Later, he was very involved in music and showed off his talent when he played his own original songs on the piano for the variety shows at his high school. He also played drums, guitar, trumpet, saxophone, and for a while took violin lessons. Then there was a time when he was heavily into skate boarding. He met his friends after school where they would practice with half pipes, etc. I remember when he tried to skate down the steep hill in front of Drew's house. It



Brian Hoven of Parsippány Hills attempts to break away from Chris Foti and Brian Kelly (32)

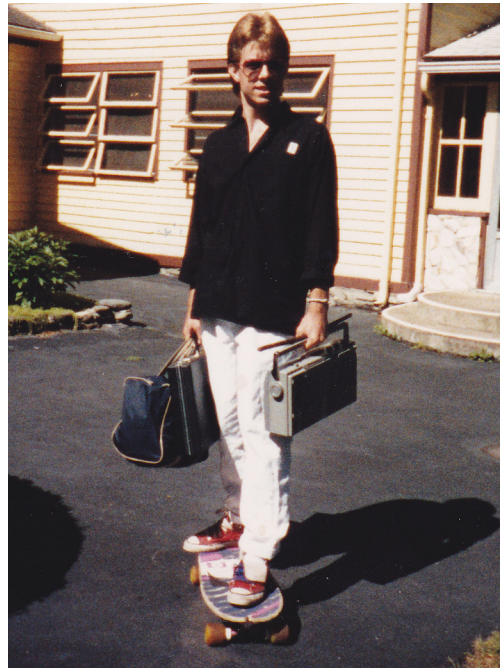


Brian - our athlete.

did not go so well and we ended up in the emergency room. He also loved ice skating. His first skating experience was when I took Michael's cub scout group to the skating rink. Michael never took to it, but Brian ice-skated every chance he got, in the rink or on the ponds. He got so good at it that he joined the town's hockey team. It was very exciting for us to watch him play. Less exciting were the practice times where we had to get up as early as 4 a.m. to drive him all over the place. There was a rink right down the street from where we lived but there were so many hockey teams that needed to practice that they sent us all over the area. But this gave us a lot of bonding time with Brian (when he was awake in the back of our car). After practices we would go to McDonald's for my favorite Egg McMuffins. My mouth waters right now just thinking of those biscuits. I have to stop right now and look for something good to eat... will be right back.

Ok I am back. I am now in the year 1988 when Brian started his freshman year at Parsippany Hills High School. He joined the football team there, the Vikings. So, now besides going to hockey games we also went to all the football games. This was sometimes a problem

since the games did overlap. He really loved football and was especially good at kicking. In fact, he was voted one of the New Jersey State Outstanding Punters. I especially recall one game. I was actually flying out of Newark Airport that night to Paris and then on to Germany. This was a free trip we had won on one of our many flights to Virginia for Michael's program. I was not totally packed yet but decided to attend Brian's game that afternoon (being a very supportive parent) figuring I had plenty of time after the game. I had to be at the airport at 6:30 p.m. for the 8:30 flight. Well, about half way through the game, Brian got hit hard and Brian did not get up... and he stayed down...stayed down... My adrenalin zoomed up real high and I could not



Brian the macho man.



Brian - our musician

stay in the bleachers any longer and I ran out to the field. In the mean time they had the coaches and refs looking at him and the ambulance drove right into the field where they put him on a stretcher and took him to the emergency room. I was petrified. What a scary thing to happen. It took a while before they checked him all out. It seemed he was going to live and I had to



Frank and Brian before the game.

leave to continue to pack. I called the airline to let them know I might be a little late. They gave me a difficult time. In the meantime Brian and Frank came home. Brian's kidney was alright but his leg (tibia) was pretty messed up and he will have to walk with crutches for some time. I convinced myself that the two could make it on their own and took off for the airport. Was sure glad I rushed right down there as the plane was delayed due to some repair they had to make. We sat around the airport until after midnight. The date of flying now changed from the 12th to the 13th and several passengers decided they did not want to fly on that date with a plane that

is not 100%. I was worried what will happen in Paris since I am missing my flight to Germany. A frenchman, one of the 400 passengers, offered me a ride with his car to my brother's house. I called my brother to let him know, and he thought that I was crazy, going with a complete stranger, and a frenchman to boot. He forbid me to do this. Well, as it was, I never saw the guy again, and I arrived safely at my brother's house. What a trip.

There was another eventful game among others. It was during his senior year. Every Thanksgiving the two high schools in Parsippany Township were big rivals on the football field. It was always the last game of the season. Brian attended Parsippany Hills High School on this

side of Route 10, and we just had to win over Parsippany High School on the other side of Route 10. I prepared the turkey early that day so I could leave it in the oven while we attended the game. Well, what do you know, our Brian made the winning touch down and became the greatest hero for that day! So much excitement! Even Michael was there for that special game and he was just as proud of his brother as we were of him. I believe Michael had Denise with him that day. Needless to say, we had a great Thanksgiving Day Celebration.

BEAM ME UP

I remember the day I took Brian to pick up his girlfriend for their first formal school dance at the end of 8th grade. It was on the way to her place when we delivered some bottles of soft drinks for the after-dance-party at a friend's house down the road from us. I stopped and he got out to leave the stuff on the doorstep. I heard the car door slam shut and I quickly took off since we were a bit late. I kept talking to Brian who I thought was in the back seat. Kept talking and talking to him when after a while I wondered why he did not answer me. At the next traffic light I looked back and found no Brian! I was flabbergasted, even wondered if aliens beamed him up or what. I decided to turn around soon as I could. When I got back to where we delivered the goodies, here he was, excited and throwing his arms up and giving me that look of "what gives" and why did you leave me behind. Well he was in the backseat so he could quickly deliver the stuff and I just assumed when the door shut that he was back in and I could go. Well, he shut the door and was coming to the front of the car to sit with me when I took off and he was dancing and jumping up and down trying to get my attention



Brian going to his 8th grade dance.

as I sped away. Now we were really late for his date and we were not happy. But as time passes, whenever the story comes up, we think it was pretty funny. Right, Brian?

In 1991 Brian was 18 years old was in the midst of a great senior year in high school. He was again voted to be included in “Who’s Who Among American High School Students”. He was mentioned by the United States Achievement Academy as a National Award Winner, he was listed in the Future Business Leaders, and he was one of only 350 students in the US to be invited to visit Washington, DC. He won an award for composing an original song and performed it on the piano. He was also on the Dean’s list. In November he was voted Homecoming King and with football season over with, he was recognized as first team specialist for his punting by the Iron Hills Conference Division in Morris County. He was applying at several schools and was hoping for a football scholarship. He was also into ice hockey. I will never forget one game where he scored a hat trick. Frank got so excited that he threw his own baseball cap into the rink arena, ha, ha. Now that was funny.

In 1992, Brian attended Lehigh University in Pennsylvania as an accounting major, with music as a minor. He also was skating on Lehigh’s hockey team and played football one season. During summer vacations while he was home with us, he was his own contractor and sealed driveways, enough so he had some spending money when he went back to Lehigh in the fall.

Brian worked for Price Waterhouse in NYC after Lehigh before moving to California. He first lived in San Francisco and then moved to Los Angeles. There he worked for Paramount Pictures in Hollywood on some major films. He has since been a Creative Director of a magazine, Vice President at an apparel company, composed music for a film, and photographed some of his favorite bands. He has done very well but still doesn’t seem to know what to focus on!

NICOLE MEETS GWEN

It was “love at first sight,” so they told us. They looked at each others eyes and it was “electrifying”... just like in a romantic novel. Not long after they met, Nicole moved in with Gwen who had a house in Silver Lake, Los Angeles. And just a few years after we were surprised by the announcement “We are pregnant and expecting a girl!” They knew about it for a while

but wanted to surprise us and they surely did. Gwen is well connected with politicians in high places. She has photographs of her and Al Gore's family and also pictures with the Clintons. She was and still is on the Board of Directors for the Human Rights Campaign and responsible for organizing huge fundraiser dinners with guest speakers such as high ranking politicians. She also comes from a well-heeled family background who co-own several office buildings in downtown San Francisco.



Nicole with Gwen.

Nicole went on and made more movies. She also continued to write and has several books published, some of which have been optioned to movie studios. My favorite book so far is called "Angel Wings" and is a mainstream novel. I ended up going along to some of the book signings. They are always very interesting. Nicole gives a short introduction, reads some lines from the books, and then opens up for Q&A time. Soon after Angel Wings came out, it was recommended in the straight newspapers as a good idea for a Christmas present. It is still optioned out for a possible film.

OUR 25th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

October 5, 1993 was our special day. Mission accomplished. The boys took us out for a fancy dinner at the Hilton in Morris Plains, NJ just down the road from where we lived. We spent a great evening with Michael and Brian. Now, off to the next 25 years of married bliss.



Happy 25th Anniversary!

ICE SKATING

What can I say, I am crazy about ice-skating, even though I never ice-skated in my entire lifetime. Because I was always very conscious of my hands and did not want to break any fingers or wrists. I kept away from sports where I could get such an injury. But I love to watch skating. It is so beautiful, so graceful, and must be very invigorating for the skater to speed along the ice, hair blowing in the wind, and jump up for the twirls, and do all that accompanied by wonderful and moving music. There is nothing more beautiful in my mind. These skaters often have me in tears, I get so overwhelmed with the beauty of it. All the years since they have televised the skating programs I have been practically glued to the TV screen. When you call during one of these programs, forget it, my phone won't get answered. I especially love the competitions. And when it's possible, I also go to live shows.

Because Nicole is so well connected in Hollywood, she is acquainted with several big names in the ice-skating world. And so one day when Dad and I were visiting Nicole and Gwen in LA they threw a party for my 60th birthday and who would walk into the house, but Randy Gardner, partner



Rudy Galinda, me, and Randy Gardner.

to Tai Babilonia, and Rudy Galinda. All of them former World Champions. Randy is doing choreography now and Rudy is still performing. At the moment he is skating for "Champions on Ice" which tours the United States. It was very exciting to meet these two famous skaters who put their arms around me and started calling me "Mommo" which is what Nicole calls me.

COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET

In 1993, Nicole came out to see us for her appearance on the Jane Pratt show. Frank and I joined her and sat in the audience when Jane Pratt asked Nicole how her parents felt when she told them that she is a lesbian. Without hesitation, Nicole told her she could ask us ourselves because we were in the audience. "Oh no, Oh my God, what is she doing to me?" Promptly the video people came up to where we were sitting and I had to answer the question. It was in that instant, this unexpected and unprepared moment, that I opened the doors, stepped out of that dark closet and came out to the whole world including my friends, my neighbors, my relatives, and whoever was watching, that my daughter is a lesbian. Did you hear it? There, I finally said it. I finally, finally could be open with everyone. What a huge relief!!

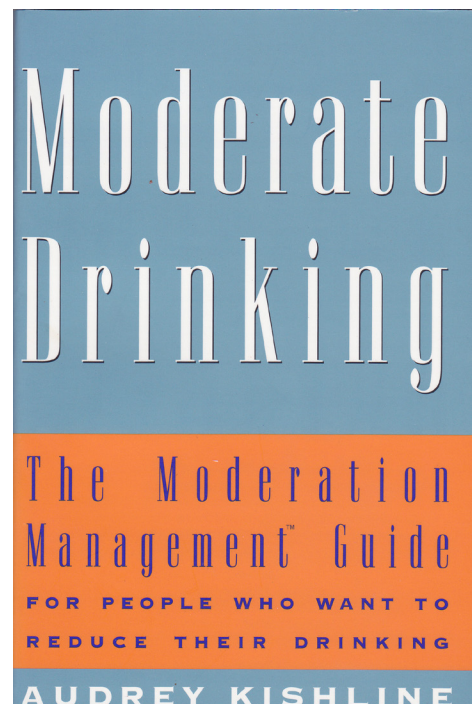
Well, every one except my elder relatives in Germany, like my mother who was in her 90th year. That generation just did not understand. Whenever my mother asked me if my girls had found a boyfriend, I had to make up some story, "the right man has not come along yet." Well, I did not really lie.

And as I told it on the TV when I was asked, it took me about 10 years before I could accept the lifestyle of two of my three girls. I kept thinking it was a phase and they would come out of it. I was afraid my friends would possibly not want to have anything to do with me, or they might not like my girls. I still loved my daughters but it was hard to accept the fact that they will have a hard life and they would not have the husband and children and the white picket fence. But after much reading and many visits to the girls in Portland and meeting their friends, and seeing how "normal" they all lived, I slowly came to accept it and through that acceptance met many really

wonderful and loving people. And throughout the years I tried to tell my ex-husband (their father) how much he is missing by not having any contact with his girls and all his grandchildren. I finally after so many years understood that this is no phase, or stage, or what one might call it, but it is the way it is. God made us all, straight or gay or whatever. And that's life! Love Thy Neighbor.

MODERATION MANAGEMENT (1994)

Audrey and her family also moved many times. From Texas to Carmel, California, to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Indiana and Anne Arbor, Michigan. It was there when she got the idea of a program she called Moderation Management or MM as it is called now. She did an enormous amount of research. There are many boxes stored all full of research papers for this program. She received a lot of support for her program from many experts in the addiction field. Groups of MM started sprouting up all over the USA and even overseas. This program was geared towards problem drinkers who knew they had to control their habit but did not want to be associated with AA. With MM you were allowed a certain amount of alcohol weekly and if you could not follow the MM program, you were advised then to go to an abstinence program such as AA. After Audrey wrote her book (which is still available in book stores or libraries) she was on all sorts of talk shows including the Oprah Show, Allen King, Dateline, Dianne Sawyer, among others. There was a lot of controversy. AA was completely against it. But other programs wanted to adopt it. She was also speaking at Seminars for Doctors and Nurses. In our home town of Parsippany they had weekly meetings. On one of her visits home Audrey took me to such a meeting. It was very



Audrey's book cover.

interesting and I was proud of Audrey for bringing this program to so many people, many of which were able to stick to it and became healthier. Anyway, she had quite a following. It must have been a job and a half to keep this organization running. She liked that period in her life. She felt that she had accomplished a great deal. And the first few years, she was able to hold to her program. It was later, in 1999 when she decided to step down and asked someone else to manage the Moderation Management. Since she could not follow her program any longer, she took her own advice and attended AA meetings.

RIEDLBAUERS (Our home away from home)

Uncle Rudy introduced us to a hotel resort called Riedlbauers which is located in the Catskill Mountains in upstate NY. You will find it in Round Top, NY. Frank and I spent some time there together with Rudy in the early 1970s. He lived there entire summers and took it upon himself to build all the trails through the woods. He named them and put signs up so you would not get lost. He even designed the maps which Riedlbauers used as their placemats. That way the guests could use it to walk all the trails. He built steps with flat stones, used small logs as railings to hold onto when the trails were steep. This resort is now run by a family who came from Bavaria. So all the food is Bavarian or German, even the cakes. The owner plays the Zither, and on weekends there is a band that plays all the oom-pa-pa type music and German Lieders. They have their children do the Shoe Plattlers dance. Their whole family is involved as entertainers, as cooks, as waiters and waitresses. The music is piped to the outside so you can hear it throughout the place all day. There is a huge swimming pool outside, and a huge hottub, and another pool inside next to the bar. There are tennis courts, a pond with boats, a golf driving range, and fields for fussball. They often arrange for the guests to play against guests from the other resorts in the area. Several of us parents decided to spend the same week each year when we found that our children got along so well. Our children are grown up now and still go there, together with their own children. And so the generations get together and it's just so much fun how we kept the



The early years.



Ready to dance.



My dindle and Frank's "lederhosen".



Frank and Jon.



Frank singing for the crowd.



The crew of kids and now lifelong friends.



Me and Frank circa 1996.



Relaxing with Ryan, Sam, Frank, me, Lindsey.



Dancing at 'dance night'.



Until next year!



Frank and Al Bryski.



Friends playing the hat game.



Frank, Brian and Jon - the hat game.

family ties. Of course, Frank spent most of his time and dollars at the bar where there was always much entertainment. We played cards and other games together and we still look forward to that one week in July. Our good friend, Jon Tessman, also joined us every year. He came all the way from Fort Wayne, Indiana. Jon has passed away, but his daughter Tina and her husband, Stewart, and their children still join us every year.

In 1999 we invited Michael who already was living in Portland, Oregon to join us. We brought Ryan, Michael's eldest, who lived really close to us in New Jersey. And, of course, Brian was always there for the week. After all, their friends were mostly girls who were rather cute and lots of fun.

RYAN

Toward the end of our stay, I received a call from Ryan's other grandma and she told me that we cannot drop off Ryan at his home when we return from Riedlbauers. What?? Because there was no one there to take care of him. Seems his mother Kiersten took off for Texas with her latest boyfriend and left Ryan's sister Kathryn with her Dad, took some money from her grandfather who was in his 80's and some of the furniture. She never told Ryan that she was going to move, she just took off... on drugs, we believe. She must have been on something. No one who is sober



Ryan and his favorite pancakes.



Ryan with his dog.

would do such a thing. Anyhow, I found out that Kiersten planned to leave Ryan with us for a month or so and then have us send him to her. Well that was not going to happen. We talked with a lawyer and got custody of him. We did not know how long he would live with us, but just like that we had another boy at home going through elementary and middle school. Frank took him under his wings and watched him do



Ryan mending a sock.

his homework. We also played a lot of Monopoly, Risk, and other games with him. At night when I put him to bed he would always ask for me to either play my piano or put on “Eine kleine Nachtmusik” by Mozart. This was his favorite music at that time. He was happy and we gave him the steadiness and love he needed. Ryan did great in school. He stayed with us for about 2 years. Kiersten had straightened out her life by then and so Ryan went back to his family.

TINA DID IT AGAIN

It was time to have another baby. Her plan was to have one more. Madeline in 1986, Lauren in 1993, and now it was time for another one. And just as planned, Jackson Roger Conn arrived on September 3, 1999, specially ordered, of course. Good thing you came now, Jackson, or you might have been a puppy. You see, your Mammie Tina needs a baby of some kind every 6 years, someone to cuddle and take care of. Well, we all got a lot of cuddling with you, especially your Aunt Joy. She spent every day with you, I believe. After another 6 years had passed you noticed that “Pepper” arrived and she is a dog. I am just thinking, isn’t it time for another baby or a dog?



Me with Jackson.



Jackson Roger Conn.

LIFT IT UP

What do you do when your house is too small? You lift it up and put in a whole new floor at the bottom of your house. Now it is not in the basement, the windows are fitting in nicely to give you a feeling of being above the ground. That was Tina's and Kate's project in 1999/2000. I was talking to Tina on the phone when she was inside her house while it was being lifted several feet. Her house became a tourist site, the house was lifted up so high that one could see underneath the house from one side through to the backside and there were only a few sturdy posts holding the whole house up. I believe Jackson, then a baby, was also in the house during the big lift.

Tina and family stayed in that house throughout the renovation. Instead of a stairway to the upstairs, now they had a huge ladder they had to climb to get into their bedrooms. What an adventure that must have been, for the kids especially. They also set up their camping trailer in their driveway where they cooked and ate their meals. The remodel gave them a master bedroom upstairs with fireplace and walk-in closet, a laundry room in addition to the two other bedrooms and bathroom which were originally there. On the main floor, they added a wonderful big kitchen and the stairway was remodeled. The new downstairs has a beautiful eat-in kitchen, a family room, 2 bedrooms, plus a laundry room which is also an extra pantry room. The house



Tina 'lifts' her house to make more room.

now has 7 bedrooms, 3 full bathrooms, 2 family rooms, 2 eat-in kitchens, a front porch along the whole front and a beautiful deck out the kitchen in the back. It is quite an accomplishment. Good work, Tina and Kate! The most important thing about this remodel? There is always a room for me to sleep when I visit them! And that's good.

OUR NEW YEAR'S EVE CRUISE

It was 1999 going onto 2000. Everyone was concerned what would happen when the millennium comes to an end. What will the computers do to the world? Is everything going



Bahamas with the Hunnewells.



New Year's Eve 1999.

to stop? There was a lot of concern. Well our good friends, the Hunnewell's, and Frank and I decided to be on a ship. It was our way of getting away from the vast turmoil Y2K would bring with it. We sailed to Jamaica, the Bahamas, Grand Cayman and Mexico. We had a ball! What fun being there, enjoying the sunshine, the sea, the beaches, and all the champagne we wanted on New Year's Eve. And when we arrived home again, all was well. The computers were smarter than us, they knew what to do. And except for being a few pounds heavier, Frank and I felt renewed.

MARCH 24th, 2000 - AUDREY'S FATAL ACCIDENT

The holidays were over, we were forced into our normal everyday lifestyle once again. Frank went back to work, and I into my social cub, going to gym, practicing the piano, and giving lessons every day.

And just like that, in a blink of an eye, things changed. I remember it so well, we received a phone call from Tina, rather late that night. She was all excited in a not good way and was telling us that "at this very moment, Audrey is driving on I-90 while intoxicated and is somewhere on that highway to go to her Dad who lives in upstate Washington." She was apparently trying to get away before her husband came home from a 6 month job in Chicago. Brian Kishline was expected to arrive that night. But Audrey got herself into a very drunk stupor, a black-out, where she had no idea what she was doing. Apparently, she just got into their pickup with her booze and her cell phone, leaving the children at home alone. As she backed out of the driveway she ran into their car. But nothing kept her from leaving right now. She was in a hurry to go to her Dad. Everything would be alright then. During the drive, she remembered she left the kids and called her sister-in-law to let her know. The sister-in-law could tell that Audrey was drinking and quickly called Audrey's sister Tina to see what they could do. They both ended up calling the highway patrol in that area and hoped they could find her and take her off the roads.

Too late. By the time they found her, the accident had happened. Audrey ended up traveling

on the wrong side of the highway, driving north on the side of the south bound traffic. Several people got out of her way and called the patrol also. But a father and his 12-year old daughter, LaShell, were not so lucky and they lost their lives that night. Audrey was tangled up in the pickup and they had to pry her out. She was rushed by helicopter to a hospital in Seattle.

While this all happened, Tina had me on the line. I actually knew right away that Audrey was in that accident but I could not find out if she was dead or alive. We hung up and I somehow managed to arrange a plane ticket for my trip to Seattle. I since found out that Audrey's husband, Brian Kishline, was informed by his sister-in-law and kept calling his wife while he was driving toward Seattle on his way home. After many tries, which she did not answer, he finally got someone on her phone. But it was not Audrey. It was a patrolman who was at the scene of the accident and who heard Audrey's phone ringing. What an awful way to find out that your wife is hurt. At that time they did not know if she would survive.

When I arrived at the hospital I saw two policemen sitting outside her room. I saw Audrey just as she was waking up from a very drowsy stage. She was hooked up to several machines. She had broken ribs, a collapsed lung, cuts and bruises all over her face, even part of her tongue was cut. Her eye lids felt like "500 pound weights" and crusty goop and extreme swelling had all but sealed them shut. She slowly realized that she was in a hospital bed all hooked up to different machines, including the one that makes the constant swoosh sounds of air being forced into her collapsed lung, and her body was horribly bruised. She did not know why she was in that place. When she finally spoke to us with her lips so sore from the cuts, stitches, etc. and asked what happened, we had to tell her. Oh no, did anyone get hurt, she pleaded. And we had to tell her the awful truth of what she had done. A long pause, tears running down, and then she said, "why couldn't I have died instead." She kept saying that so many times over and over.

But nothing could erase that horrible accident. She was facing prison time. We got her a lawyer and he suggested that she go to a rehab once she can leave the hospital to give her a bit more time to recuperate before she has to face the judge in court. The judge agreed. She was in a

rehab facility for several weeks before she could go home with a police bracelet on her foot. She could only go a few feet outside her home. They also installed some equipment where she could breathe in for alcohol tests on a daily basis. Audrey took advantage of the few days she had left to be with her children, Lindsey and Samuel. Dad and I flew out to Seattle to visit with them those last days. Going to court was very hard. To face the family that lost their loved ones was heart wrenching. I pleaded with the judge, even wrote him a letter before the court date. At the time of her hearing I stood in court and read another letter:

Your Honor,

I am Audrey's Mom. I have known Audrey for 43 years and prior to this past March, I have never known her to do harm, intentionally or unintentionally, to anyone in all that time.

I can't imagine what this ordeal must be like for LaShell's and Danny's families. There are no words I can say that can help ease their pain. Our deepest sympathies are with them all.

But there are two others who cannot help but suffer whatever the decision of the court today. Audrey is the mother of two wonderful caring children who, through no fault of their own, must now face the future without their Mom being there, to offer her daily guidance and support.

I realize a judge's powers are necessarily limited when it comes to sentencing. But your honor does have some leeway. On behalf of my two grandchildren I entreat you to keep the time Audrey actually spends behind bars to a minimum, the possibility of a second period of house arrest to follow for whatever additional time the court may deem necessary. At least that would minimize the children's loss.

Thank you for hearing me out, your honor.

I pleaded for a shorter sentence since there were her children left without a mother during the years they needed her the most. Lindsey was only 12 and Samuel 9. I suggested she should have time in prison and then the rest with a bracelet and breathalyzer at home. But the judge

answered me by saying he would like to give her even more years if he legally could. So, we saw her being handcuffed and taken away to jail before they would take her to prison. It was a very sad time. But on the way out of the courtroom, LaShell's and Danny's families came over to us and hugged us. They felt bad for us and Audrey's children. They are a christian family and their hugs were so appreciated.

For Lindsey's and Samuel's sake we had to keep our spirits up. We stayed a few more days with Brian Kishline and the kids and then flew home to NJ again.



Audrey with Lindsey and Sam - last day before prison.



Me and Audrey.

During her prison time, we were able to find a cheaper way to make phone-calls. Exactly how that worked I cannot remember now. So Audrey and I talked to each other on only certain days where she knew I would call and she would stay close to the phone that the prisoners could use. Audrey started writing a novel in prison as she kept time of every single day she was there. She had only a pen and lined paper, so all her writing at the beginning was done by hand. I don't know how she did it but she ended up with an old, old antique typewriter where she could write with the copy paper behind the regular paper. Throughout the writing of this story, she kept mailing me 2 or 3 pages at a time. She was afraid they might take it away from her. I got so into her story that I was always looking forward to get the next pages to see what is happening. My eldest grand daughter who is an avid reader, was also anxiously awaiting the continuation of



Audrey made mugs for her kids with pictures and a note.

that story. Audrey did finish it while in prison and waited to rewrite it into a computer program so she could send it off to a publisher. She always thought of herself as a writer. Sitting at the computer in her room, playing with words and their meaning, and all the grammar that goes with that, gave her joy and a feeling of accomplishment. She studied grammar for fun; a real wordsmith she was.

The prison days must have been terribly hard on her. Not being with her children when they needed her was the biggest punishment of all. But she also had a very hard time to forgive herself for causing two deaths. How can one ever get over that. During her prison time she became a janitor to take care of the prison hallways and bathrooms. She took a lot of pride in doing that where she even got complements from the prison guards. Then for the most part she got a job to help in the library where she also tutored many prisoners to prepare them for their GEDs. She enjoyed that job. One thing she did like is the fact that she could not own many things, so there was no problem of what to wear and it was easy to keep your things neatly put away. Frank and I went to visit her several times. We combined that with visits to Portland. Everything was so strict and serious. Just to see the wires curled above the walls, and all the gates one had to go through, and one could not take a pocketbook or anything where you could hide something. Once, Frank was wearing shorts and we were not allowed in. So we went back to the town to buy him long slacks. When we left and the prisoners went back to their cells they had to be padded down and even their private parts were checked. How horrible that must have been.

AUDREY'S VISITOR

It was in the first few weeks while in prison that she got an unexpected visitor. This visitor was announced to her and she was very afraid to deal with this person. This visitor was LaShell's mother. She went to the prison to give Audrey a very long hug and told her that she is forgiving her for what she did. Many tears were shed that day. Sheryl Maloy is a real Christian. It must not have been easy for her. Audrey and Sheryl became good friends and stayed in touch through all the years. When Audrey was released from prison, the two got together and wrote a book called "Face to Face." However, the first edition was written with the help of another writer and a lot of the story is not correct.

When Audrey finally read what was written, she decided to republish the book with a new preface by Audrey Conn. If you are interested in reading this sad story, look for the version that has two black and white silhouettes on the cover.

MORE GRANDCHILDREN?

Our little Gabrielle Helene Baba-Conn, our 9th grandchild, came to join us on May 22nd 2000. Such a cutey. I called her my wiggleworm, she could not sit still and kept me very busy. She had beautiful light brown curls and a smile that melted your heart. Gwen carried her. The mothers were so proud of their latest acquisition. And the mothers were very happy at that time. So were we, the grandparents, and the rest of the family. I think back and it was a beautiful time for the Baba-Conns.



A Hollywood-style birth announcement.

TINA'S 40th

It was August the 3rd, 2001. The whole family was prepared to surprise her in one way or another. We all had an excuse before the date why we could not make it to Portland in time for her birthday. And then we planned the big never ending surprise. We knew Tina would go out first thing in the morning to Starbucks for coffee. It just so happened that Gwen was in that coffee shop at the same time. Then next she needed to gas up and who comes out in the uniform and fake mustache to ask her if she will fill'r up? Non other than her sister Nicole from LA. Next, now that she had company she decided to get some goodies to munch on, so of course she had to stop in at New Seasons. Well, there were several places to surprise her...at the deli counter, the fresh veggies, and the bakery section. Frank and I were shopping there at the same time, and Gabrielle also. Then we all had to go to the hotel where we all stayed because Tina was redoing her house and we could not stay there. When we got to the Hotel, our Brian and his girlfriend came out of one of the rooms. SURPRISE!!!



Brian, Nicole, Gabrielle, Joy, me, Frank, Michael, Madeline, Gwen, Kate, Jackson and Lauren.



Nicole and Tina reminisce.

Half the day was gone by the time she met us all. So after we all munched on all the goodies we bought, we put on a show for our 40th birthday girl. Nicole had all the T-shirts made, from the biggest to the smallest. In the meantime Kate, Lauren, and Jackson and Joy joined us all. Frank had written the words to the tune from "Argentina" which we all learned by ourselves and then

put together for Tina. The song went like “Don’t cry for me, Sargent Tina.” which is also the front of the t-shirt. The back of the t-shirt spelled, “I survived Tina’s 40th.” The song had something to do with Tina being bossy sometimes. Well, Tina kind of took over as the social director of our family. If Tina did not set up things, we would never get together like we do. She is directly responsible for us having a lot of fun parties. So, sometimes one has to come across as bossy to get things moving.

Nicole and I made her a memory book that is fantastic, and I wish I could see it sometime again. I think that shows an excellent story of Tina’s wit and humor. If you have a chance, ask Tina for a look. It is really unique.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

It was early in the morning. Frank was already up and exchanging a video in our bedroom. He was sitting on the floor in front of the TV. He was sitting because his brace made it hard for him to bend over to do all that. I was awake and heard the phone ring. I ran over to my side of the bed to get the call in time. It was our Michael. He was at the Portland Airport getting ready to board his flight to New Jersey to come home and visit us for a week or so. He was really excited about his trip since he had not been home in a long time. And just at that moment, we heard all the confusion on the TV screen and saw that unbelievable picture of a plane flying into the Trade Center. At the same time, I was right at our window and could see all of it happening in front of my eyes. Remember we had a skyline view of the big buildings from where we lived. I thought it was a small plane at first and told Michael what we were seeing. He got really upset with me, “why are you telling me that now before I am going onto my plane? Thanks a lot, Mom.” Well, he found out shortly that he was not going on his plane, nor was anyone else. All air traffic was stopped immediately throughout the United States.

It was unbelievable! Did we see it, was it a dream? We, the all powerful USA were attacked by the enemy on our own territory? Right after the first tower was hit, another plane flew into



Our beautiful city scape view with the twin towers in the center.

the other tower. And then we learned that a third plane was flying toward the capitol. There were thousands of people already in their offices getting ready for the day. Frank and I were glued to the TV, occasionally looking outside at our view. Most of the people did not survive. The buildings were crumbling, the elevators did not work, everything was dark inside and lots of smoke everywhere. Some of our brave firefighters went into the building to rescue, but many did also succumb while trying to help. It felt like it was the beginning of World War III. Many people who knew they would burn up in the fire, jumped out of the windows to a very certain death. Some of the people trapped inside were able to say good bye to their loved ones via the phones. The whole scene was so terribly sad. Is there a better word than "sad", it does not do it justice. Frank and I decided right then and there that we are going to move out West to where all our children were living. Family took on a much greater importance in the scheme of things. "Dear God be with the people that lost their loved ones that day." Perhaps you may want to go on Google to learn more about that horrific day. They call it 9/11. I cannot write any more today. It brings me to tears. Will continue tomorrow.

GUESS WHAT? ANOTHER GRANDCHILD

Yes, Gwen and Nicole wanted to have another child. Gwen did not want to carry another baby since she was already over 40 years old and Nicole was incapable due to all the medicines she took. So they decided to find a surrogate who would be impregnated with Nicole's egg and a sperm from the Sperm Bank in San Francisco. They found such a surrogate through an agency, paid plenty of money, and decided to go ahead with their plan. Nicholas James Baba-Conn was born on the 15 of March, 2002. He was carried by a surrogate who was selected by Gwen and Nicole and was supposed to be healthy and ready to carry a baby. However, after several weeks it was discovered that the surrogate did not tell the truth on her information sheet and that she only had one kidney and some other problems. This turned out to be disastrous. In order to save the surrogate and the baby, Nicholas had to be taken by cesarean in his 25th week. He only weighed 1 pound (474 grams). He has the unenviable distinction of being the smallest white baby that made it through that NICU and lived. The surrogate did fine but Nicholas, however, had many problems. He was hooked up to every imaginable machine in the NICU at Cedar Sinai Hospital in LA. He was so little, his whole foot fit into my wedding ring. He looked like a birdy without feathers where you could see through his skin. Nicole sent me photos of him next to regular items to show me how small he is. But when I first saw him at the NICU, I lost all color and apparently fell into a nearby chair. I cannot believe he made it, but he is a fighter, even now. He has been going through so many operations, and now he is 13 years old and still has nurses around the clock. He does speak a little and knows how to spell words on the computer. Because he had to get so much oxygen at the beginning of his life, he cannot hear very well, thus he has speech problems. His eye sight is very bad and he wears thick glasses in order to see even a little bit. His first glasses he wore made him look like a baby Harry Potter. He seems to be happy most of the time. But it is a huge worry for us all and especially his mommy Nicole. My daughter is practically a doctor by now without a degree. She has learned so much over these last 13 years discussing what to do with the doctors who also are questioning things since they never worked



Gabrielle and Nicholas.



Clothes that fit vs 'preemie clothes'.

with a baby that small.

Nicole, always thinking ahead, decided to make a documentary about surrogates. So she started it right at the beginning when they got together with the woman who they both admired for being able to carry a baby and then after nine months being able to give it over to the real parents. But when the story totally changed by the fact that this woman did not reveal her total health history, Nicole decided she now will make a documentary about her baby son who she was not sure at all how long he would be able to hold on. Our Brian was living with Nicole and Gwen at that time and so helped out in the hospital with the filming of the documentary. The film became a huge success and won 12 best documentary awards. This film is being shown in hospitals all over the world. If you have a chance you should look at it, it's powerful. Look for

ONE OF THE TOP 10 FILMS OF THE YEAR! — *The Advocate*



"An edge-of-your-seat, heart-in-your-throat suspense story." — *Kevin Crust, Los Angeles Times*

"Such a personal piece of filmmaking, Conn makes Michael Moore look like an impartial observer." — *Steve Warren, The Weekly News (Miami)*

"Outstanding from every perspective: humanly, emotionally, educationally and artistically. Every parent, every person working with preterm infants and their families must see this movie." — *Dr. Heidelise Als, Harvard Medical School and Director of Neurobehavioral Infant and Child Studies at Children's Hospital, Boston*

Purchase your Limited Edition DVD now at www.littlemanthemovie.com

“little man” by Nicole Conn.

What the documentary does not show is the slow corrosion of the marriage of Nicole and Gwen. It kind of hinted at it though. Gwen was not able to deal with a “special” child who needs 24 hr supervision. Nicole could never forgive her for wanting to abort the baby at the very beginning and so together with the fact that Nicole spent her whole life in the NICU for several months, it was inevitable that the marriage would deteriorate and come to an end. This was hard on their girl Gabrielle. But at this writing (2009) Gabrielle seems to be adjusting to her new life: so many days with Mommy Gwen, and then so many days with Mommy Coco and her brother Nicholas. This parting also meant that Nicole had to find new housing. Along came Marina who was also trying to find



Our little man Nicholas.

someone to share her life with. So the families combined and now Gabrielle had not only one brother but also David who was 11 and a very likable chap who loved to play basketball and cards. Gabrielle shared a room with her new sister Lauren, who was 1 or 2 years older. Then there was Alex, a teenager who probably would rather her Mom had not taken in another family, and Daisha an older sister, adopted by Marina, and who helped out to take care of the whole brood. At this writing (2016) Marina moved out and Nicole has the place to herself and her 2 children. They are still friends. But the core family is still Gwen, Nicole, Gabrielle and Nicholas.

Also, at this writing (March 2016), Nicholas will be celebrating his 14th birthday this year. I will be flying to Glendale on the 8th and I cannot wait to see him and his big sister Gabrielle who has become a very beautiful young lady at 16.

THE BIGGEST MOVE ON EARTH - Move No. 31

Believe it or not...after 10 years of Tina's and her siblings' nagging, we finally took the biggest step in our lives. I never thought it would happen. Frank had accumulated so much stuff, that I did not think he could go through it in one lifetime and actually throw some out. This was the accumulation of 38 years. "What, throw stuff out? What does that mean, throwing out?" "That little one inch long pencil can still write and give us service." And what about the thousands of rusted screws and nuts and all different size nails and washers and clips and doo-dads and doo-moms (ha ha) and fiddle-faddles, and more odds and ends, actually there were a lot of odds, but no end to it. Tools from his father and grandfather, some of them valuable antiques and a lot of them just old rusty pounding things, old telephones, and old wires from underground New York City where Frank's Dad worked for AT&T all his life. He managed to bring a lot of stuff home to his house. And my Frank, not being able to throw anything out (since we might need it in 30 years or so) took all of his father's stuff to his own shop once his father had died. Not only was our big tool room full, so was his office. His den had no more room to walk through, there were papers, books, boxes and beer cans from floor to ceiling. He was a hoarder. He told me once that he did not feel comfortable in a clean place but only in a crowded room with all his mementos and lots of stuff gathered around him. This was a big problem between him and I. I like clean and sorted and so I was always embarrassed about his room and tried to keep the door closed. When it was time to get a realtor to look at our place to tell us what he/she thinks our home is worth, Frank got an enlightening. All the realtor said while he was standing at the entrance of the room. "Oh my God, Frank. You need to take everything out of this room and put into storage while the house is being sold, and then you have to repaint and take the old carpet out to show the hardwood flooring." Finally Frank heard it from someone else. He always got annoyed because I was "nagging" him when I asked him to throw stuff out. For instance Frank had a lot of old Time magazines which he never had, no pun intended, "time" to read. Well, he packed them several times into suitcases when we went on vacation in Florida or Hawaii with the

best intention to read them. But he never had time to read them and then brought all back home again and there they would lay around until the next vacation. By that time all the news that was written about, was old news. "Oh my God, I better check how many Better Homes and Gardens I have lying about throughout our house." This hoarding is catching, Che Horrore.

Anyhow, Frank actually ordered a dumpster and started throwing stuff out, mostly stuff from his shop. He filled it and they took it away. Hallelujah!! However, his shop was still filled with stuff he decided to take along to Portland. Our movers mentioned sometime during the move that they have never moved that much stuff for just two people. It took two trucks. And it cost a small fortune. And what we could not move in a van, Frank decided to take along in his car, such as several half-filled cans of motor oils, cans of WD40's, paints, glues, etc. etc. We ended up staying at our friend's the Hunnewells that evening. Both Frank and I were totally exhausted that night. Liz Bitterman, our next door neighbor came over to help us with the last bit of cleaning and so did the Hunnewells. Without them, I do not know how we could have accomplished the task. When we arrived at the Hunnewells for that last night, we could not even accept a drink. All we wanted to do is stretch out on a mattress and die. We did not even undress, we were too tired. The next morning I was flying to Portland with our Mini Schnauzer, and Frank was starting his trip in the car together with our son, Michael. But before they left our friend's house, Jerry Hunnewell decided to talk some sense into Frank's thinking. They ended up taking all those flammables back out of his car and took them to the dump.

We did it, and we were off to Portland, Oregon, our New Frontier. What might it have in store for us? We will be closer to all our children. And that is good...or is it? This was move No. 31. Stay tuned.

CHAPTER 15

PORTLAND, OREGON



11777 SE Masa Lane in Happy Valley from front and back.

We bought our house in August 2002 at our last house hunting visit with Tina. It took a long time and many visits to Portland and surrounding areas to find the right house for the two of us. And believe it or not, you can find our “perfect” home by driving up **Sunnyside Road** into **Happy Valley**. How sweet that sounds. But, watch out, if you miss the turn on 122nd and continue on up Sunnyside Road you will eventually arrive in **Boring, Oregon**, oh no.

Our address is 11777 SE Masa Lane, Happy Valley, Oregon 97086. Our section is called Lazy Hawk. And even though it is only 1 road long with 31 houses, it has a proper HOA and very proud house owners to boot.

It was in May 2003 when we left New Jersey to continue our lives out here in Portland, Oregon. I flew with Ms. Parker, our little Miniature Schnauzer. Frank decided to drive our red Dodge Caravan out here. Our Michael joined him to take the wheel. It was also to get the two together to reacquaint after we had missed several of Mike’s growing years. The two also took some side trips to see the landscapes and to look at some land Frank had bought, sight unseen, in Colorado...back in the boondocks, undeveloped. They also visited Boulder, Colorado where Frank and I met.

I stayed with Tina, until the moving vans arrived to deliver our household, including my 7 foot Steinway piano. I was really worried about that piano, but the moving company assured me that they move pianos all the time and knew what they were doing. However, even though they knew how to take the piano apart in New Jersey, they had trouble putting it back together again at its destination. Finally though it was all corrected and we were safely in our new home. Let me tell you how aware you become of all the STUFF you have accumulated. You wish you had discarded more on the other end. Now, you have the job of finding room again for all that “Stuff”. A degree in engineering and space allotment would have been helpful. Needless to say, we were living out of cardboard boxes for almost 2 years until we found a carpenter who built us several closets in our bedroom. And finally we finished our family room with a built-in wall of bookcases and entertainment center. It definitely made the room cozier. Tina actually did all the planning

of that huge wall design and gave the company all the correct measurements so all the units were individually built and then put together as though it was all one unit. Tina is clever that way. She can fix just about anything. I guess working herself up from a carpenter and jack of all trades to the foreman for R&H Construction Company did that trick.



Looking up to the back of our house.

Our first important buy was furniture for our deck where we found ourselves taking in the gorgeous sunsets every evening. The deck runs the whole width of the house in the back. Our view is spectacular and is the reason we bought this house. The other reason is the closeness to



Sunset view from our deck.

everything. We have 2 Starbucks within walking distance. The mall is just a hop-skip down the road, 10 minutes or so, if that much. And what was really cool, it had an ice skating rink on the main floor. You could sit on the upper floor by the food court and watch all the ice-skaters. One of the infamous Olympic ice skaters, Tonya Harding, practiced her programs there. I am speaking

in past tense about the skating rink because it was not long after we moved here, they did away with the rink and added more stores. What a pity, especially for me, I just **adore** ice skating.

That first summer in Portland was mainly spent seeking and buying things for this 4000+ square foot home. Joy, my sister-in-law, was a lot of help, she enjoyed shopping and definitely loved spending my money, ha. Usually we would be gone until 8 or 9 in the evening because the sun was still out and we would think it's just supper time. But the reality was, we got carried away shopping and Frank had to fend for himself for a meal. We usually found him on the deck enjoying the sunset while sipping a beer. He did not even ask what crazy things we bought. Well, we did not shop every single day... but I like to think back to that time in 2003. We had so much fun, Joy, don't you agree?



Sisters in law - 2 clowns!

Another reason we bought that particular house: it was the only one we found that had a separate room which most people would probably call the game room or the man cave. This particular room was big enough to hold Frank's huge beer can collection. Yes you heard me right:

1,800 empty beer cans, set up in alphabetical order, only one kind of each brand, reaching from ceiling to floor and wall to wall. What a sight. I was worried of what it might look like once they are up on the shelves. It looks pretty fantastic, just like wall paper in a way. Only one question here: Who is going to dust them?



At last count there were more than 1800 cans on display. Quite a sight!

We have lots of family gatherings now that we are here with our children and grandchildren. They willingly come when I serve German pancakes or spaghetti dinners (our favorite meal). We also play many games. Frank and I are game fanatics: cards and/or boards; and while our children grew up they had no choice but to play. Luckily, there were no separate phones, no one had ever heard of “texting” or playing electronic games. Do you hear me my grandchildren? WOW, those were the good ol’ days, when you had to interact with your parents, grandparents and siblings, and you did not even mind, there was nothing else to do that was as much fun. Imagine that.



Me, Joy, Jackson, Frank, Lauren, Madeline.

WINTER IN PORTLAND

Our first winter here in Portland was something else. One night we had an ice storm. The next morning we heard a lot of noises that seemed to come from the garage. After lying in bed and wondering where that noise is coming from, I finally got up to explore. Slowly I opened the door to the garage and was promptly bombarded with water, not unlike Niagara Falls. Water gushing from the ceiling of our garage. I had a hard time opening the door to the garage since there were several big pieces of sheetrock that had fallen down and were leaning against the door. We were frozen, literally, neither one of us knew what to do. Since we did not even know where the water faucet to the house was located, we freaked out. I called our neighbor, Loren Smith, and he risked walking down on the side-walk on a sheet of ice to help us stop the water before it caused more damage. Loren was one great neighbor, often helped us when he could see Frank was unable.

CHRISTMAS IN OREGON

Since our ceiling in the family room is 12 feet high, we bought a 9 foot high artificial tree. We placed the tree right in front of our huge picture window, so we had twice as many lights to look at. Instead of 700 little white lights, we saw now 1,400 with the reflection in the window. And then the Christmas village houses on our fireplace mantel and a huge wreath above it on the



Enjoying the tree.



Mrs. and Mr. Santa Claus.

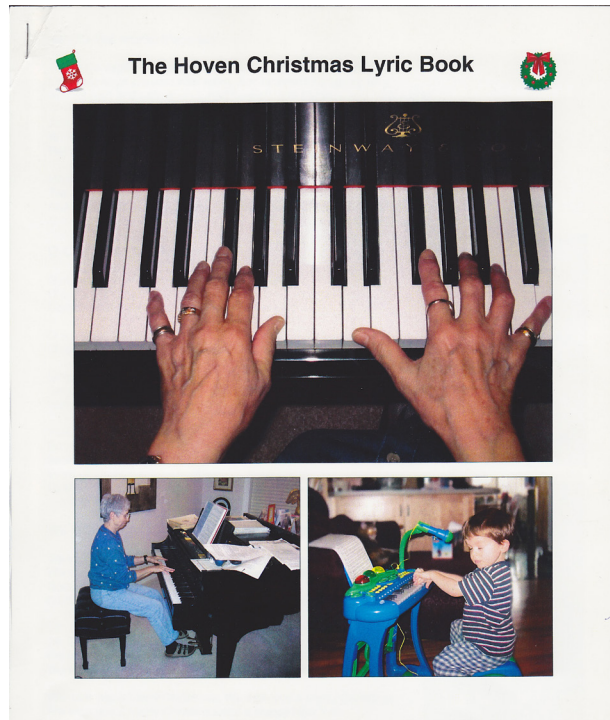
wall, it looked so homey and wonderful. We also had a big train riding around the tree on the floor, with smoke and whistles. And the conductor hollering every now and then, "All Aboard!!" But besides all that, I now have 5 huge nutcrackers standing on the floor, one on each side of the fireplace and several others down the entrance hall. And for the last 5 years or so I also decorate 3 smaller trees, each one different in height which I place on top of the half wall that separates



With my nutcracker collection.

the kitchen from the family room. Those 3 trees have themes. One is decorated only with red apples and smaller red cherries. One displays miniature kitchen tools along with miniature pots and pans and cups, etc. The last one is decorated with stars made out of straw. We all get together on Christmas Eve where we serve hot and cold appetizers and lots of different cookies and chocolates, hot cocoa and egg nog, or the apple champagne our young ones like. We play a game where we sit around in a circle. Everyone brings a small present, no one sees it until they grab that particular wrapping. They unwrap, show every one what was inside. The next person can either take that present or opt for another wrapped one, etc. After the game the little ones get to open one present that night to play with. Then we gather around the piano where my whole family sings Christmas carols. This is where Frank really got into it, he had such a wonderful voice, and belted them out when required to do so. Frank is no longer with us. But we are lucky,

Brian supplied us all with sing-a-long books which has all the words and also shows us singing them. The girls usually ask me to play the “Bumblebee Boogie” so they can hop and dance to work the Christmas cookie energy out of their system before they get ready for bed. You’ve got



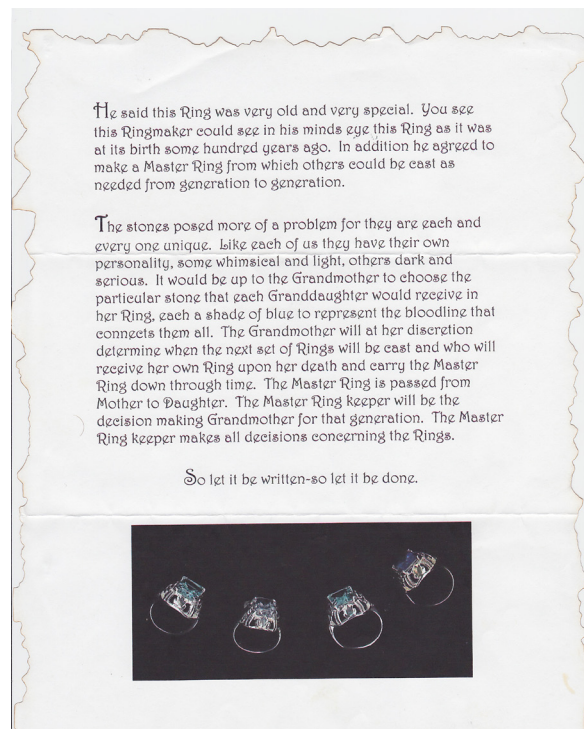
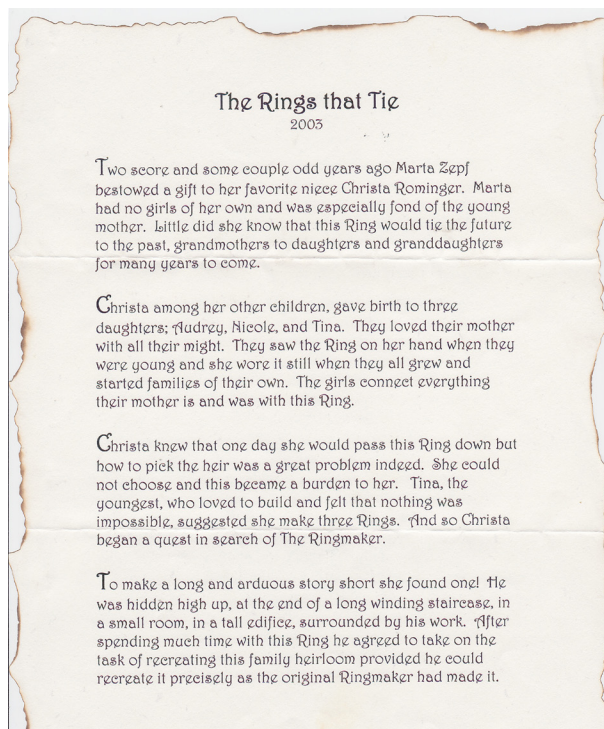
Our Christmas Eve song book.

to go to sleep so Santa can come. I really do miss Frank, around that time especially. He would always sing along when he heard the songs on the TV or radio. Thank heaven for my memories. Sorry Frank, you can't get away from me, you will always be with me in thought. This past Christmas, I served a hot meal and we all were sitting around the big table, when Brian's two girls, Emma 7 and Alexa 5, started a very new tradition. One person starts telling a story, the next has to continue and so on. It can be a very long story with lots of twists and turns, surprises and hilarious adventures... the whole thing is ridiculously funny.

I thank the Lord for keeping me here a little longer so I can enjoy being among my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Each one is a part of me. But each one is different. Each one has a talent that's their own, and I hope each one finds the ultimate goal, happiness. That is my biggest hope!

THE RING

On one of my trips to my home in Germany, my Aunt Marta, sister to my step mom, came to the airport when it was time to return to USA. As we said our goodbyes, she slipped a ring into my hand and whispered into my ear "don't mention it to anyone." She said this is our secret. Her husband was at the airport also and I think it probably was a ring he had given to her and she did not want him to know she gave it to me. My sister was there also, we flew together back to the States and I believe she also got a ring from Tante Marta. Tante Marta was one of my favorite aunts, I probably mentioned that before. So, the story goes as follows: I am wearing this ring every single day of my life. It's a silver ring with an aquamarine stone in a gorgeous setting. Well, I think my girls were wondering which one of them would eventually inherit this ring. I also kept trying to figure that out myself. And finally, Tina helped me make a decision and on Christmas 2003, the girls each got a ring, an exact duplicate, with this scroll attached. I still am wearing the original.



The scroll for the ring.

THE ADDITION

Since we inherited six pieces of very antique wicker furniture from Frank's Grandmother, we decided to add a sun room which is accessible through french doors from the lower floor of the house. From there we still have more steps which lead us out to the fenced-in yard at the back. This was a bigger project than we anticipated. We had to make sure the roof of the sun room was 100% waterproof. The roof of the sun room is our deck upstairs to which we have access from the kitchen and also from the master bedroom. So the roof under the wooden deck was treated like a regular roof with asphalt, etc. You cannot see that roof, it is hidden by the boards we used for the decking. It turned out really well. The sun room is all glass. We put a hot tub inside which had to be brought over the house with a huge crane. The floor is finished in a mexican type tile. And with the six pieces of wicker and plants and flowers, it makes a stunning sun room. While sitting in the hot tub one can enjoy the view through the front and sides of the glass wall or look into the house, also with glass windows where every view is reflected. Unfortunately, I cannot use the hot tub very much. My blood pressure is way too high. But Frank took advantage of our spa as much as he could.



A crane to bring in the hot tub.



The wicker set in our sun room.

The wicker furniture is made by a firm called Heywood Wakefield. If you look that up on google it will give you the history. The Wakefields were one of the first who imported the bamboo from China and started the furniture company. They are a real find, antique, their metal name plates are attached to the furniture.

THANKSGIVING 2005

We were all gathered at Tina's place for the big dinner. Even Jacob, Amy Boomhouwer's father was there. Amy was Brian's girlfriend. They found each other on the internet and the two were in love. It was during that turkey dinner that Brian dropped to his knee and asked Amy to marry him. So much excitement! She was surprised... there was a big "Really?" And then a definite "YES." Well, my youngest child has found his girl. His promise to me when he was 6, "I will always be with you, I will never leave you, Mommy" went right out the window. (I believe he had even promised he would marry me) I figured I was no match for Amy, I'd best get used to being No.2.



Amy was a little surprised. She said yes!

WEDDING BELLS

Brian and Amy picked October 14, 2006 as their wedding day. We all went to Pasadena, California and stayed at a hotel. My sister Judy and her daughter Wendy from Kenosha, Wisconsin

also joined us. It was a beautiful wedding with a gorgeous bride and groom. The wedding ceremony was held outside, first at the beach with only the immediate family, where we all were barefoot in the sand, and then at the backyard of Amy's boss. Several of our friends also joined us: The Hunnewells from New Jersey, the Bryskis from New York, and the Kohls from New York and Las Vegas. I am so happy that Dad could still be with us for this occasion. He and I left directly



Michael, Lauren, Gwen, Nicholas, Gabrielle, Tina, Jackson, Amy, Brian, me, Frank, Kate and Madeline.

from there with the Hunnewells for a cruise of the Hawaii Islands. We had a great time there and also visited my 98 year old aunt Gertrude on Maui. Her son, Chuck Boerner, has a plantation called ONO in Hana. Her daughter Lynn lives on Island Hawaii and is raising race horses. These are relatives connected through my step mother. Aunt Gertrude Boerner, my stepmother's sister, kept sending care packages to us right after the war. I will always be thankful for that.

RYAN COMES TO LIVE WITH US ONE MORE TIME

It was at the wedding that Ryan mentioned that he might quit his school and get a GED instead. Well, grandpa and I did not want to hear of that so we invited him to come and live with us here in Portland and finish his high school year. This worked out just fine. We loved having him with us, Grandpa helped him with his school work and he took a special apprenticeship course downtown where he learned how to build computers. In May 2007, he graduated with special honors and good grades. We were very proud of him, so was his father, Mike, and everyone in the family. His mother and grandmother came out here from New Jersey for his graduation. Unfortunately, Frank was no longer with us to see his grandson graduate. Perhaps he was with us in spirit, I like to think so.

FRANK SNUCK OUT ON US WAY TOO SOON

Ryan, Frank and I had just come back home from visiting Michael who cooked Frank's most favorite dinner, "standing rib roast." We enjoyed the meal immensely. But we were very tired that evening. I was driving, it was pretty dark already and I did not see two guys on their bicycles as they crossed the highway at the same time I made my right turn onto Division. Luckily though the two did not get hurt, their bicycles, however, had seen better days. Since it was decided that it was not my fault, their insurance took care of things. But I was so shook up I asked Dad to drive home the rest of the way, especially since I did not see so well. Dad was upset also, I think he already did not feel right. When we got home I excused myself and went to bed early. Frank and Ryan stayed up. Frank went downstairs to watch some TV and Ryan, I believe was in the

computer room when he heard a loud thump. He ran downstairs and found his grandpa slouched behind the bar where he was fixing a drink for himself when he had a massive heart attack. Ryan immediately called 911 and had the ambulance and fire trucks here very quickly. It was then that he woke me to tell me the horrible news. We all gathered at the hospital when it was decided he could not be revived any longer. Too much time had passed. The next day, December 29th, would have been Frank's 66th birthday and we all planned to come together at our house for this special occasion. Instead, we planned for a celebration of his life on another day. We decided to celebrate



Michael and Brian.

him in his downstairs beer can room where he spend much time meticulously setting up his fabulous collection and did not yet have a chance to show it off. We accomplished that on his special day! Prosit, Frank. We have had many people downstairs admiring his collection since then. We even sold two additional collections which he saved for our two sons. You can still see them at HUB's Bikebar in NE Portland.

Frank loved this house. At one time when I told him that we probably will be moving at least one more time, thinking of a place like Assisted Living, he was very adamant that he will never move again and that we would have to carry him out of this house. Just like Frank Sinatra's song, which was one of Frank's favorites... "I did it my way." Well, you got your way, Frank. Just wished you had waited a few more years.

SAD NEWS FROM GERMANY

My brother, who came down with Parkinson disease when he was 70 years old passed away March 2007. He hallucinated and stepped out of a 3rd floor window to his death. He was my only brother, my big brother, and I was very fond of him. He was your Uncle Hans, Hans-Joerg Rominger. He was the CEO, the Bezirks Director for a big insurance company in Germany where



Hans-Jorg.



Hans, Brian, and Gerda (1997).



Hans and Gerda (circa 1950).

he was in charge of many of its agencies.

I am getting up in age now, have been writing this life story for at least 15 some years, so it is not strange that I am past middle age (you think?) going onto 78, experiencing several losses of friends and relatives as I go along and wondering when it will be my turn. Will I finish this saga before then? And who, if anyone, will even be interested in reading it? At the beginning I thought that my story is special. So much has happened in all those years and people kept telling me that I should write a book. But I am not so special, everyone's life could be a book. Maybe not everyone has moved 32 times in their lifetime or had to deal with so many problems. But I also had exciting happy times, often living through my children. So for the time being, I guess I keep on writing and see how and where it will end. Frank, my husband and songwriter wrote a catchy little song, part of the lyrics are:

"Where will it end,

Where will it end,

I ask you my friend

Oh, where will it end."

Two years before my brother's death, at Christmas time in 2005, my cousin Ursula and my cousin Manfred's wife were both taken from us: cancer of the pancreas. They were in the same hospital at the same time. Tina and I made a special trip to Germany when we knew they did not



Uli, Helga, Marianne, Ursula and Manfred.



Ursula and Tina.

have much longer. Ursula was always there for us when we visited. She was never married and so had time to take us to castles and other sights. She is sorely missed. In 2006 my Frank died, six months later his best friend Al Bryski died also with a massive heart attack. It almost seemed like the two had planned it that way. Not only my relatives and good friends passed on, two of my next door neighbors also died around the same time. Six month before Frank left, our neighbor Don, Gladys' husband decided to stop eating since there was no hope for him to ever recuperate. Next to her house was Janet with also a Don who had cancer of the throat who died early in his life. Then my neighbor's wife Karen right next to me on the other side of my house passed with cancer of the pancreas. And several houses up on our side of the road was a good friend, Diana. Again, died from cancer of the pancreas. She was only 56 years old. It was a terrible year. My neighbor Gladys kept saying, "perhaps it is time to move from this neighborhood."

OMA (My Stepmother)

Finally Oma was also called home to the other side. She was glad to go. She passed away on 6th of November 2007, a half year after Hans. Tina and I had to quickly get on a flight to Germany to get everything settled. There was a lot of paperwork involved and decisions to be made. At the end, I was relieved I did not have to look after her and her business any longer. It was not easy to do that from here. There was a lot of correspondence which had to be written in German, not an easy task when one has been gone from there for over 60 years. But it all worked well.



Opa and Oma.



Klara (Oma).

Thank you Oma for trying to be our mother. Things did not work so well when we were younger, but once we were grown and had our own children you certainly were a great Oma to them and always tried to make them happy.

LIFE AFTER FRANK

After Frank died, Tina stayed with me for several weeks to help me deal. I am so thankful that she did that for me. It's not easy to lose a partner that you lived with for 38 years. And even after all these years now, I miss him. Not his sometimes obnoxious side, but his loving looks and a wink with his eyes as though he is telling me across the room that he loves me. And I so miss holding his hand while we watched our favorite shows on TV at nights. It gets pretty lonely, especially in the evenings. I am so thankful for the company of my Schatzie, my miniature Schnauzer and Taylor, my fat black cat.

AMY AND BRIAN JOIN ME IN PORTLAND

Brian and Amy decided to move from LA to Portland, Oregon. They came to live with me so I would not be so alone, and at the same time it gave them a chance to look around the different areas to see where they might want to buy a house. Amy, a lawyer who had successfully practiced

law in California now had to study to practice law in the state of Oregon. Amy would often leave in the morning to drive across the bridge to Battleground, Washington where her parents had a house for whenever they are in this area. This gave her a place where she could be alone and concentrate on her studies. They kept horses there which Amy is so fond of. Amy and Brian also brought Amy's two beautiful cats which she had for a long time... Ellie and Grace. They got used to my place fairly fast. Then one evening Amy arrived with yet another cat, all black with a crooked tail. She found him at her parent's place sleeping in the stalls with the horses. He was just a kitten. We named him Tails (he has a crooked tail), and later Tails became Taylor. When Brian and Amy moved into their own house, closer to down town, they were nice to leave Taylor with me so I would not be all alone. Taylor is such a lovable animal. He loves to come onto my lap and just cushion himself in for the evening, putting his paws around me making sure his toenails do not harm me. He is such a lover. When he was a little younger, he would retrieve things. I used to roll up little balls made from aluminum foil which I then would throw off my bed onto the floor or down the hallway and Taylor would jump off the bed and find it and bring it back so



My sweet Schnatzi.



Taylor and Schnatzi.

that I could toss it again. Now, that is an intelligent cat... one in a million. I think! Schatzie joined Taylor and me a few months later. She is a miniature schnauzer. We love her but she sure does do her share of barking, whether you are friend or foe.

MICHAEL INVITES DENISE

In the meantime, Michael has become “the Landlord”. He has acquired several houses that he rents out. One of the houses that he had just purchased before Dad died is a 3 bedroom bi-level with a swimming pool. Everyone was excited... we could go swim now. And Michael would invite us over and often he would fix hamburgers and hotdogs, or steaks on his grill in the backyard next to his pool. In 2007, he invited his former girlfriend from New Jersey and mother of his daughter Kayla to come and live with him and he helped her with her younger girl so that Denise could go to College and get a Nursing degree. This she did. It was great having Kayla and Emily here with all of us. They stayed about five years. At one time Michael and



Kayla at prom.



Ryan, Kayla and Mikey Jr.

Denise mentioned marriage, but things did not turn out so well and Denise, after she finished schooling, gathered her stuff and returned home to her parents taking Emily with her. Kayla was

now graduated from high school and started going to school at Mt. Hood College and also had a steady boyfriend which kept her here with her Dad. Michael eventually lost that bi-level house... I believe due to gambling. He got himself into a lot of financial problems. He never found another job after being laid off at the Oregonian.

EMMALENE MARIE HOVEN (Born May 4, 2009)

On May 4th, 2009 Emmalene Marie decided to join this family. I almost missed that important moment. Tina and I were just returning from Germany and I was hoping that I would get back in time for the birth. As it was, Brian called us at O'Hare in Chicago where we had to catch our



Me with Emmalene.



Emmalene Marie Hoven.

second flight home to Portland. And he let us know that they are going to the hospital, "Amy is in labor." So I was really hoping we would land on time. I went directly from the airport to the Kaiser Hospital in Happy Valley and just made it. WOW!! That was close. What an exciting time it was...a brand new baby, so cute and cuddly. She sure got a lot of attention from all of us. Both, her grandmother on Amy's side "Nana" and I, "Oma", took turns taking care of her to help out with some of the finances for play school and also so we would get our very own special time

with Emma. Just two years later, before Alexa was due, Amy and Brian bought a house close to me in Happy Valley. Luckily, the stork was in the neighborhood and delivered yet another very important package. You guessed it, it was...ta-ta...drumrolls...none other than...

ALEXA JOY HOVEN (Born July 30, 2011)

July 30th, 2011 was the lucky day Alexa came into our family. Another little bundle of joy! And just like in a blink of an eye, in no time at all, the girls were old enough to play together, and make up all sorts of stories. With their great imaginations, they turned into princesses and



Me and Alexa.



Alexa Joy Hoven (and my finger).

ballerinas and horseback riders and gymnasts and soccer players and you name it, they did it, and are still doing it. I get so much pleasure watching them grow. Emma is the best little make-believe teacher I have ever had. Alexa loves to sing and they both dance constantly. We need lots of room for snapshots here. Now, I did enjoy all my other grandchildren, but it's been a while since they were little and also I was not with them as much because I was living back east while they were living out west, so I did not have as much time with them, unfortunately. But their mothers filled me in on all the cute things they did over the years. I cannot believe that I have so many grandchildren. Here you are, one person (well two) and your family keeps growing and

growing and wow, you have a whole village related to you. That brings me to a horrible thought... what if I lived in China... there I could have had only 1 child. That was the law in that country. So I guess I have to thank my lucky stars that I grew up in Germany. I am blessed with 5 children and 12 grandchildren for me, so far. Actually, I now also have a great-grandchild Aidan, Michael Scott Jr's son, born in March 2016, and one other on the way... Kayla is pregnant and will have a boy in October 2016. Life goes on. I hope I will be on this earth a few more years so I can continue to see how you all are doing. And, I really don't care how rich you will get to be, but I will care how happy you are. Happiness is the secret ingredient that I hope you all will find in abundance.

AUDREY

I don't know where to start. Audrey had so much potential and she started her life full of ambition. Everything went fine until she became addicted to alcohol. Her addiction was horrendous. She tried so very very many times to overcome it, but it always came back to bite her.

She was my firstborn and my pride and joy. She was very talented and could do so many things. I admired her, people around her admired her for what all she accomplished.

Her biggest ambition when she was younger was to become a ballerina. It all started out with ballet lessons in Boulder, Colorado. She excelled. She was very serious with her studies. She practiced every single day on the home-made ballet bar that Frank built for her. She would get up extra early so she could practice before school as well as in the evening before bedtime. Perhaps evening practice came in handy, it meant she got out of doing the supper dishes. She also excelled with her school work, always was a straight A student. And besides all that she helped me get the dinners started while I was working as a secretary for Warner-Lambert in Morris Plains, NJ. She was about 11 or so when she already had so much responsibility, like babysitting her smaller sisters, Heidi and Tina. But she seemed to strive. She and I spent a lot of time together on our rides to her ballet lessons twice weekly.

What was very hard for her is the fact that she missed her real Dad, C.R. who had moved

to California at that time. But soon we all moved to Rome, Italy where Frank was working for Exxon. That was such an exciting time in our lives. Audrey adjusted and after our overseas stay, she joined her father in Washington State when she turned 16 years old. I really missed her at the beginning but with the rest of the kids still at home I was plenty busy and involved in all their doings. Audrey and I kept in touch with letters and phone calls. And every so often she would come and visit us. I had no idea how much drinking she did with her Dad C.R. but I think it was a daily thing. Well, we know the sad story, about her accident, prison, and her constant struggle to stay sober. C.R. never had any intention to take her to ballet classes while she was living with him. And so her life's dream never came to fruition. For many years she could not even look at performances.

On December 19th, 2014 Audrey finally just could not see the light at the end of the tunnel. She reached that time after several tries before. She gave up on herself after much suffering. She felt she disappointed us all, especially her children, so many times and she longed for her father in heaven where she hoped she will find peace. She was on medicines to help her depression. It was hard for me to understand why she thought that her life was not worth living anymore. We had so many good times just a few weeks before the end. We made plans to live together since we got along so well. We also went to Sunday services in several churches close to us here in Happy Valley, hoping we could find a place that we felt comfortable with. Audrey went to the Creator Church almost every Friday to their AA meeting. She liked that particular one. At times I went with her. We still had not made up our minds which church we wanted to belong to. I remember I was at a Sunday service without Audrey when I heard the choir sing there. I immediately knew that is the church we should go to. Audrey was so much company and help to me that it is very hard for me to think of life without her. But I keep her in my thoughts all the time, daily and nightly. And often I even talk to her. We used to sing when we got up "... Oh, what a beautiful morning..." and then we would discuss what we each wanted to accomplish that day. During lunch times we got into a habit of reading from the Urangia Book and the Bible.



Me and Audrey having fun.

We took turns reading out loud and then we discussed it. I know she was very spiritual and I learned many things from her, such as don't judge people by their looks, or give them the benefit of doubts...or when I talked about someone and thought they should behave differently, Audrey would say, don't criticize...you don't know what their story is. Yes, Audrey had a good soul. She learned a lot, living on the streets mingling with the poorest of the poor. Sometimes I walk into her empty room and talk to her, and sometimes I am very angry with her... how could she do this to her children and to me. And some times I light a candle and talk to our God and pray that she is in a good place now. That fateful day, she must have started to drink right after I left to go Christmas shopping. Or, maybe she started in the evening before...I remember she was tired and went to bed earlier that night. Next morning I left at 10:30 or so and returned at 4 p.m. When I came into the house I called for her, I had something exciting to tell her that just could not wait... she did not answer, that's when I wondered where she was and turned toward the stairway when I discovered Audrey hanging over the banister. **Oh Lord please help me... PLEASE...Oh my God... Oh No...Audrey what did you do...** That may have not been exactly what I said, but I asked "Why" and helped her down. Tried CPR but it was too late. Praying for Audrey's soul

was important to me.

I was in shock! I never believed she would do it. But one can almost understand her predicament. She never got over the deaths that she caused... how can anyone live through something like that. She disappointed her children so many times, first by not being able to be with them for 3 ½ years while she was in prison and while they desperately needed their mother. And then later every time she fell off the wagon again. And then she had awful times living on the streets every so often. Unless you have been in her shoes, you really cannot know what all she suffered. Toward the end she really felt sad. She wanted to make amends to her siblings but some did not respond to her. People often think that it is selfish to commit suicide. They leave a wave of collateral damage behind them. Since then from reading and talking to people I learned that when they get to the point of taking their own life that the anguish is so deep, they literally cannot think of others. They really cannot see their way out. They are in such hell. They see no other alternative. Audrey would never have intentionally hurt those she loves, of that I am 100 % sure.

This tragedy is a life changing moment. Our whole family is suffering. I think that she was drinking and perhaps did not even know how far down she sunk. I found out later from her phone that she called her AA sponsor to ask for help to come and give her a ride to an AA meeting, that she needed it desperately. But the sponsor did not see the message until much later. I hope none of you, my children, and the coming generations will ever consider to leave this world on your own. If you feel down and out and lonely, please find someone to talk to or call 911. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel, where things will be good again for you. Audrey will forever be with me in my thoughts and in my heart. I thank God that he gave me such a wonderful girl who I so enjoyed and loved, and who became my best friend. Thank you God for letting me have her for 58 years. Many people are not that fortunate.

I was lucky I have found the Creator Church and made friends with many neighbors and friends of my children and also my Bunko group. Without them I don't know how I would have coped. My Bunko group also got to know Audrey since she played with us a few times, subbing.

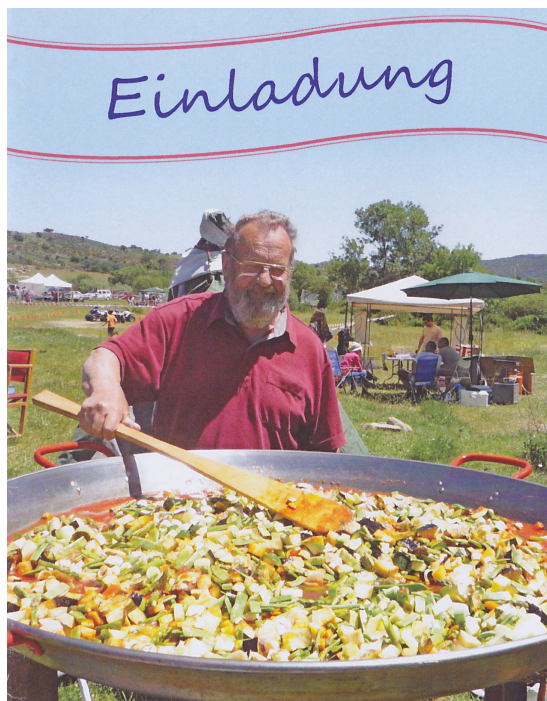
Those girls got together and hosted all the food after the church service. They were there for me 100%. Thank you girls. Thank you especially for all your prayers.

A ROBBERY

One more incident that is somewhat out of the ordinary. It happened to Michael, sometime during spring time 2016. Kayla was living with her Dad at that time and her boyfriend was there with her. It happened on a bright sunny morning. Michael, Kayla and Tyler were still asleep at 10 am when 2 hooded robbers, pointing rifles at them, came in through the kitchen sliding glass doors. It seems someone left them open the night before. The hooded men were demanding money and marijuana. They ordered Michael and Tylor to lie down on the floor. Michael refused, that's when they hit Tyler and Michael on top of their heads with the butt of the rifles. Lucky for them all, Kayla ran to the bathroom, locked herself in and called 911. It was not long when the policemen arrived... the robbers heard the police and ran back out the kitchen door and climbed over the fence in the backyard. Both Michael and Tyler were taken to the hospital emergency room. They were hurt pretty bad. The police put the yellow tape all around the house. While this fighting went on, one shot was fired. Luckily, no one got hit. They later found the 2 fellows and arrested them. I believe they had to go to prison. Somehow these guys knew that Michael was growing the Marijuana plants in his house. He had permission and it was sold to people that needed it for their health.

BACK TO THE OLD COUNTRY

The invitation came and we decided to honor it. I needed a change desperately. So planning for our trip was fun. My cousin Manfred, one of the 8 that lived in our house in Stuttgart, decided to celebrate his 80th Birthday. We were 7 growing up together, but now there are only 4 left. So Tina and Madeline, her eldest daughter, and I made the trip. We knew we would see most of our living relatives and all their children and grandchildren. As luck would have it, Brian had to go to Munich on business around that time. He decided to take a few extra days and had his wife Amy



Manfred's party invitation.

join him. So we all had a wonderful visit, slept at my cousins house and ate lots of good German food. Here are a few snap shots of some of those relatives living in Germany. All the young ones speak English, so I hope our younger generation will keep in contact with each other. What I hear a lot in America from people is, "yes I have relatives who came over from Germany but I don't know if there is anyone left over there, we have lost contact with them." So sad.



At Manfred's party with Uli, Brian, me, Son, Helga, wife, Tina and Madeline.



Manfried's daughters sing at the party.



Saying goodbye with Manfred, Brian and Amy.



Showing Amy and Brian my old house and the store my Grandfather built.

OH NO, NOT AGAIN

OH NO...NOT AGAIN... GIVE ME STRENGTH DEAR LORD. It is with a very heavy heart that I must tell you what happened on September 23rd of this year (2016).

This is unbelievable. Its like a horrible dream, so devastating, so sad, so unbelievable. There is no word that I can describe how I felt when I got the news and how I still feel. My Michael was robbed at gunpoint again, again in his house and this time he lost his life. This also happened during broad daylight. He was involved in growing marijuana which is legal now in Oregon. But we believe he was also involved in other drugs. He had not been in contact with me since

May of 2016 and he was murdered on September 23rd of the same year. And even when I texted him to ask him what's going on and why he has not called me, he never answered. And then



Ryan with Michael.



Ryan, Mikey, Kayla and Michael.



Emily and Michael going for a ride on his Harley.

this happened in September, just four months before this writing. The people who did that are sitting in jail and are awaiting their days in court. Michael had just turned 45 in May. He was way too young and he was so looking forward to seeing his soon to be born grandson. Kayla was pregnant with Tobias who came to this world just a few days after Michael left us. Poor Kayla, she is devastated. Thank heaven Denise, her mother, came from New Jersey to be with Kayla for the birth. Michael also missed seeing his grandson Aidan who was born in March of 2016. Aidan's parents are Michael Scott, Jr. and his girlfriend Crystal who live in Pennsylvania. Michael's eldest son, Ryan still lives in Stanhope, New Jersey. I am hoping that my Michael can see all his children and grand children from wherever he is now. May you rest in peace, Michael.

We all love you and miss you very very much!

...AND ANOTHER MOVE

My last move happened about a year ago in March of 2017, and unless you got a Christmas letter from me, you would not be aware of this very last move. So we are up to 32 all together. Moving became such a natural happening in my life that I almost forgot to write about it in my book. But we need to send it to the printer tomorrow so I best get on with it!

So, here is what happened: Brian found out about a house going up for sale right in his neighborhood and it sounded like just the size I needed. Oh, it's still a little big but so much cozier than my house on Masa Lane. The house Frank and I bought was 4,200 square feet. This was nice when all our kids came over. The house I live in now is one level and about 2,400 square feet. And the best thing is that my youngest grandchildren are living just 3 houses up the road from me and can come and see me whenever they feel like it. I am still downsizing and giving away a lot of stuff. What's really good for me now is that everything is on one level - this is good due to my Parkinsons and the trouble with my legs and feet. I have only one step out the front door and going out through the garage has no steps at all.

I am still in Happy Valley off Sunnyside Road. It's easy to find. As you come down the front walk toward the front door you will notice a small village of Gnomes toward the right and on warm evenings you will see me sitting on the wooden swinging bench.



Reading a classic to the girls on my favorite swing.

HOLY SHIRT OMA IS 80!

In the meantime I have turned 80. How can that be possible? It was just a few years ago when I stepped onto the "Il de France", the French ship that brought me to America. I was only 17 then and did not pay attention to politics but I knew that Eisenhower was the president in 1955 and that things were very good in America. Everyone wanted to come to America and get rich and live a happy life. Lots has happened since then. I hope and pray that we can find the America again that we can be proud of.

It was last year on November 2, that we all jumped into our cars and drove up to Leavenworth, Washington where we stayed 3 nights to celebrate my 80th. When you enter this town you think you are in the Alps in Germany. The houses are built like German Architecture, with beautiful German drawings. There was already some snow on the ground and the trees and shops were decorated for the Christmas season. This town is a 7-hour car ride from us but we all decided we

will have to go there again, maybe on my 85th if I make it that far.

I reserved several rooms in the Enzian Inn. We also rented a cabin across from the Inn where Tina and I slept and which was large enough to give us room to have my party. We got together for informal luncheons, colorful conversations and games that everyone could play. Tina made a very special video for me, some of it very funny. All my children and grandchildren are represented in this video. They set themselves up in the room, all dressed alike with little Tyrolean hats and sang for me. They called themselves "The Van Krapp Family" and sang a song from "The Sound of Music" but the words to the song were all about me. I will treasure this forever. The shirts were specially printed for us and had a German Motive on the front. The back of the T-shirt had a picture of me when I was 17 with this saying: "HOLY SHIRT OMA IS 80!"



The Von Krapp Family Singers: Tina, Lauren, Alexa, Madeline, Jackson, Kate, Chelsea, Sam, Amy, Brian, Emma and me.

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END

Well, this is the moment when I finally say “Good Bye.” I have been on my computer writing about my life since the year 2000. There were many years or months where I was not “in the mood” or my time was occupied elsewhere. It definitely was not 18 years of writing.

What fun it was walking, hopping and skipping down memory lane. Every now and then I came upon some rough spots, moments in my life that were already sort of dimming. This writing helped me to bring all those special moments back into focus and let me relive them again. How exciting! I was able to spend time again with my loving Grandmother and Grandfather and all the uncles and aunts. And the great get-togethers in my grandfather’s house in Stuttgart, Kaltental. It also brought up so many good as well as not so good times I had with my husbands and our children. I hope as you read this, you will take into account that I am not a writer, which you have probably figured out a few pages ago. Being from Germany, my sentence structure is not always what it should be. So this is totally me, German sentence structures and sometimes English structures all mixed up. But it’s me and this is my book. I enjoyed all my family. I love each one of you. And as you read this book you will most likely recognize that even though you did not always see it my way, you surely realized that I was totally 100% perfect! (LOL) So, as I encounter new moments in my life, I will keep them to myself, unless of course they are so unbelievably incredible that I cannot help but share them with you all.

All who know me, know I would like for everyone to get along, to be happy, and for my family to be like “The Waltons.” Don’t be fooled. I know the real world doesn’t work like that. However, having been through all the things I have seen, done and experienced, I am certain that the way I have survived and kept my “eternal optimism” was to live in a bit of a fantasy world.

These are the truths that have kept me sane for 80 years:

1. Forgiveness, I believe, feels SO MUCH better than anger/hate.
2. Love thy Neighbor. Be kind.

3. Only watch movies with happy endings.
4. Sing or whistle as often as you can.
5. Do the work it requires to maintain friendships.
6. Consider the possibility that your parents actually know what they are talking about.
7. Teaching can be the most rewarding thing you will ever do.
8. Don't take yourself so serious, enjoy life.
9. Stop and smell the roses.

And finally,

10. Take a deep breath every now and then and relax.

I greet every morning with a song. Music has enriched my life. It's either "Oh what a beautiful morning", or a song from Mary Poppins", or "The Hills are alive" from "The Sound of Music". You get the idea. And living in Portland it's appropriate to sign off with..."The sun will come out tomorrow..."

The End

A LIST OF MY MOVES - 32!

Christa Hoven - all my moves.

P.S. There were 3 more moves - I missed on the list

1	Fuchswald Str. 31	1937	1942
2	Stuttgart - Kaltental		
3	Appensee / Gailsheim	1942	1945
4	Stuttgart - Kaltental	1945	1954
5	Robinson Barracks		
6	Stuttgart, Germany	1954	1955
7	4307 Seerman St.		
8	Ft. Wayne, Indiana	9-1955	11-1955
9	La Mesa Lodge, 2254 W. Main St.		
10	Mesa, Arizona	11-1955	11-1955
11	2536 East Polk		
12	Phoenix, Arizona	11-1955	12-1955
13	9101 N. 13th		
14	Sunnyslope, Arizona	12-1955	9-1956
15	636 E. 1st Street		
16	Mesa, Arizona	9-1956	7-1958
17	4208 S. 40th Rd. 2		
18	Phoenix, Arizona	7-1958	12-1958
19	Trailer Court across from		
20	Tempe, Arizona / Masonic Temple, Road 2	12-1958	8-1959
21	Williams Creek		
22	White River, Arizona	8-1959	2-1960
23	Rural Side		
24	Lakeside, Arizona	2-1960	7-1960
25	Show Low		
26	Arizona	7-1960	9-1960
27	Rural		
28	Lakemills, Arizona	9-1960	8-1961
29	Rural		
30	Purdy, Missouri	8-1961	5-1962
31	504 Delmar		
32	Springfield, Missouri *	5-1962	8-1962
33	Novak's Cabin		
34	Beal's Beach, Stover, Mo.	8-1962	11-1962
35	Ind. - 314 N. Harrison		
36	Lakemills, Arizona Iowa	9-1963	11-1963
37	970 - 28th		
38	Boulder, Colorado	7-1963	3-1965
39	795 - 35th		
40	Boulder, Colorado	3-1965	1968
41	8205 E. 86th, Raytown, Kansas City, MO	(11-1962	9-1963)
42	21 Henry St.		
43	Succasunna, N. J.	1968	1971
44	Rome, Italy, P.le M. Champagnat 30	1971	1972
45	Hamburg, Germany	1972	1973
46	Succasunna, N. J.	1972	1973
47	Ridgefield, Ct.	1973	1976
48	Puddingstone, N. J. (269th)	1976	2003
49	Happy Valley - Masa Lane, Oregon	2003	2016
50	Happy Valley - Rimrock Drive, "	2017	→

PUDDINGSTONE ARTICLE ON 'THE HOVENS'

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MEMBER PROFILE — THE HOVENS

When **Frank and Christa Hoven** moved into Puddingstone Heights in 1974 at 17 Longridge Rd, two prior residents had already occupied that address. To PCC Pioneers the house remained known as the "Foraker" house for quite awhile, so named after the family who brought in the only modular home hereabouts in 1966 (since then added onto several times.)

That changed in 1983 when the **Hovens** began to take very active parts in the Community Club. **Frank** became a Trustee for three years and served as Treasurer, and **Christa** began to dominate the social scene with a vengeance! Today the **Hovens** are remembered for masterminding the most active socials period in PCC history during the mid and late 80's!

Yoga; bowling; cooking-; fashion shows; costume parties; music lectures; Oktoberfests; piano parties; luau's; holiday and New Year dances and theme dinner parties, making it the most fun-filled social event years in PCC's history.

The **Hovens** and their committees seemed able to dream up and deliver more food and fun and music and laughter for the grown-ups and the resident children than anyone before or since. There are several picture albums of those days that are fun to behold. (When a recent fire threatened her house, **Christa** went for those albums first, throwing them literally out of a window in order to save them...)

Who are those **Hovens** and where did they come from?

Christa was born in Germany and came to this country after WWII, managing a hotel with her first husband in Colorado. She had three daughters and met **Frank**, her second husband, in 1964 while he was studying for a civil engineering degree in Colorado. They were married in 1968. Frank garnered three degrees in nine years and started working for several engineering firms, ending up with Exxon (then Esso) in 1967. They have two sons, Michael and Brian.

Christa says she moved 26 times during her two marriages, including living in Germany and Italy. "Living in Rome was the nicest", she says without meaning to be a disloyal Puddingstoner. "Where else could one encounter a pig, wandering around in one's yard," she recalls a Villorosi (20LR) pet.

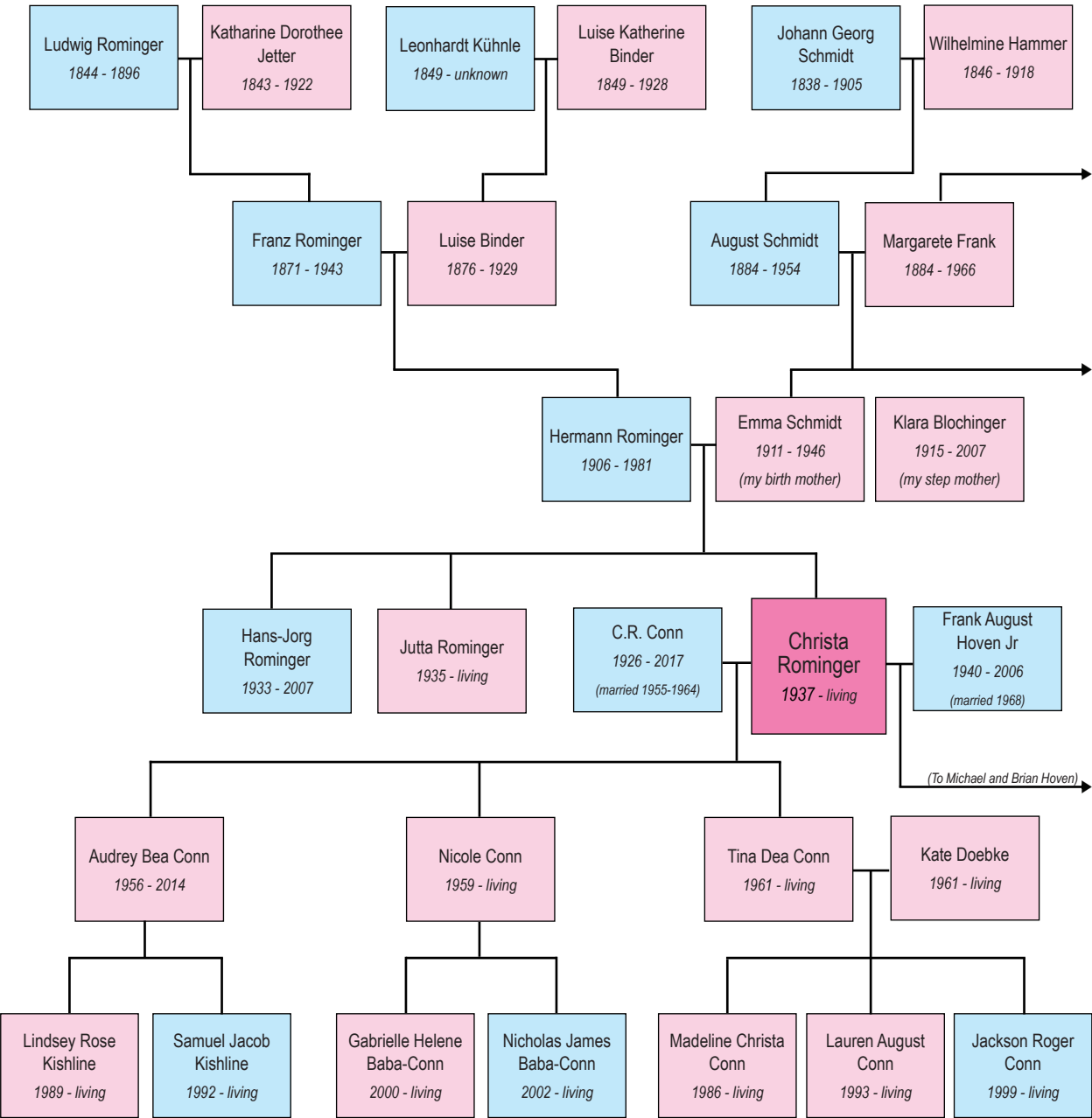
Frank suffered a stroke while in his VW while driving with Michael, age three, in the car with him in April of 1974 when he lived and worked in Ridgefield, CT. and Christa was home with three months old Brian. While in the hospital he suffered a second stroke which left him severely disabled to this day. After a lengthy recovery and rehabilitation period and despite his handicap he was kept employed by Exxon and transferred to their Florham Park, NJ offices. Hence the move to our area. He finally retired in 1995. He keeps busy with the house and yard and tapping whatever catches his fancy on TV. as a hobby.

Aside from playing piano after a classical early training, **Christa** also plays the accordion, and has been giving lessons to many children in this area. She also fondly remembers organizing the caroling around Puddingstone with other residents at Christmas time.

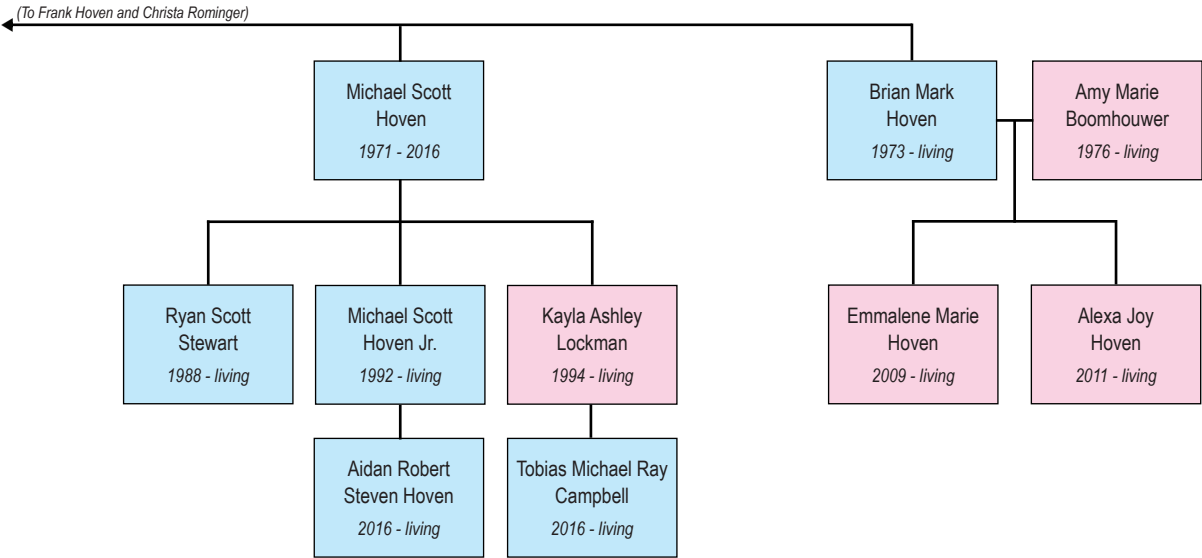
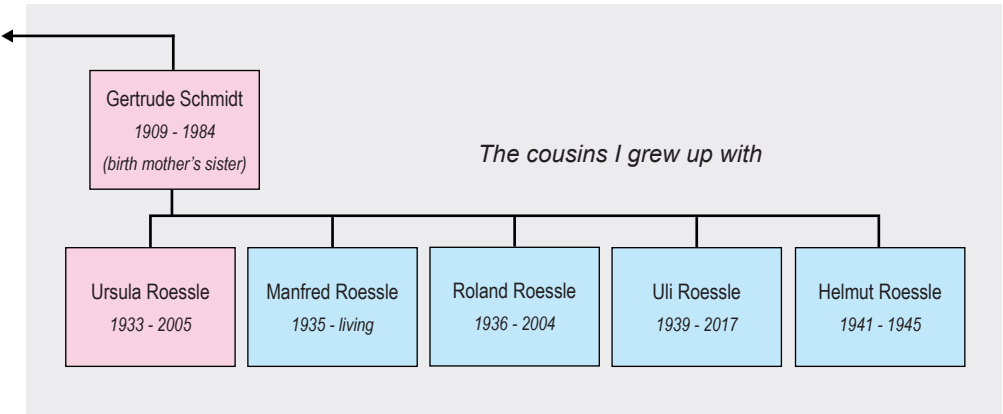
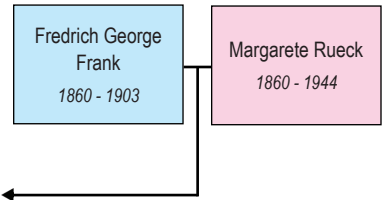
Frank will always be remembered for his inimitable rendition of *Danny Boy* at the St. Patrick's Day parties over the years. He is also an avid collector of beer cans (more than 4000 of them, which is why they are seriously preparing to move to a larger home in Oregon. "More room", they say....)



MY FAMILY TREE (left half)



MY FAMILY TREE (right half)





Exxon friends Svein and Pauline, and Linda and Jerry.



With my cousin Uli.



Standing: Sieger, Judith, Gitta, me, Gerda, Don, Judy and Hans. Sitting: Tante Gertrud, Tante Marta, Oma.



My sister came to visit in Oregon.



My sister's family in Kinosh, WI.



My cousin Gerd's son Christian playing the alpenhorn.



My girls!



My favorite spot in Masa house.



Michael and Brian in early 2001.



German pancakes anyone?



My boys Michael, Brian and Frank at a birthday dinner.



Lindsey, me and Sam in Seattle.



Downloading the music into my hands.



Alexa (5), me and Emma (7) at Riedlbauers in 2016.



A favorite of Alexa (2) and Emma (4) in 2013.



Alexa stealing my hat!



Brian, Amy, Sam, Lindsey, Emma, me, Nicole, Alexa, & Gabrielle in 2016.



Madeline, Jackson, Tina, Lauren and Kate at my 80th in 2017.



Emily, Denise and Kayla (with my quilt).



Visiting with Nicholas in Los Angeles.



Audrey at 56.



Wow! Jackson looking graceful.



Gabrielle with the starring role in Chicago.



Amy and Brian in 2005.



The crew at my 80th birthday dinner in Leavenworth in 2017.



*Michael's kids all together - my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Mikey, Mikey's Aidan, Kayla, Kayla's Tobias, and Ryan.*



Tina and Kate on their wedding day.

