# Helga von Schweinitz (neé Pörtner)

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#### A Word to the Reader

This book covers my life from birth in 1937 to my marriage to Hans von Schweinitz in 1958. At the time of this writing I am already 81 years old. I have tried to the best of my memory to be accurate. This a collaboration between me and my daughter, Bettina.

Helga von Schweinitz

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### Helga Johanne Hildegard Pörtner

I was born on 9 March 1937 to Rudolf Pörtner and Ella (nee Gößling) in Herford, a small town in Northwest Germany. I grew up in a middle class family as the third of five children. I was eight years old when World War II ended. The last three years of the war with bombing attacks at home and my Father away somewhere as a soldier, and the three years after the war with a shortage of food and all basics of life like wood and coal, our house a ruin, my Father first a prisoner of war and then without a job - those years are still vivid in my mind. They laid an early foundation for understanding that everybody has an individual personality which is kneaded like dough by the circumstances of life.

But first a brief history of my parents and my two older siblings.

## 1903-1927: Rudolf, Father was born until married.

My Father, Rudolf Pörtner, was born on 1 January 1903 in Herford, Germany. At birth his name was Hermann Heinrich Rudolf Pörtner, but he would use the name Rudolf with relatives and in official documents. Sometimes though he would be called Rudi. He grew up in Herford. His family was considered middle class. Rudolf completed Volksschule in Herford in 1913 and continued on Realschule (secondary school) and received his Reifezeugnis (School Diploma) after the Fifth grade specializing in Landwirtschafts (agriculture) in 1919. As is typical for middle class young men, Rudolf was active in society, sports, and the church. It is probably through these social events that he met Ella, his future wife and my Mother.

#### 1904-1927: Ella, Mother was born until married

My Mother, Ella, was born 12 June 1904, also in Herford, Germany. Her birth name was Anna Hildegard Gößling, but everybody called her Ella. She grew up in Herford. Before 1922, they lived in various houses build by her father Gustav Gößling, "Hinter der Mauer" which is part of town outside of the City where living conditions were not so affluent. From their former homes they had to walk through a spooky tunnel under the train tracks to get into town. The better social standing of the family was probably the reason why her father Gustav Gößling built the house at Fürstenaustraβe 10 in 1920 on the town side of the railroad tracks. In 1922, the family moved to Fürstenaustraβe 10. It was so much easier to get to good schools and cultural and social events from Fürstenaustraβe.

Ella grew up in a middle class family and would socialize in the same circles as Rudolf's family. At the time that Ella was growing up socializing included church, culture, arts, social clubs, sports, and relatives. This is how Ella and Rudolf probably meet. Although Ella never went to the Gymnasium and sat for her Abitur, she was well educated. In those days, females rarely went to the Gymnasium. After Volksschule, Ella went on to "Mittle Schule" or secondary school and received the "Einjähriger" diploma. Ella learned secretarial skills, English, and special home economy skills. Ella was 21 years old when the family moved into the house on Fürstenaustraβe 10 in 1922. Ella had a position in a bank as "Bankangestellte", bank employee. My Mother was very good with languages. She was very active in the "Esperanto" society and her fluency in English became an asset after the war. And so did her dancing ability. More about that tale later.

# 1927-1928: Year Rudolf and Ella were married until Rolf was born

My parents, Rudolf and Ella, were married on 23 September 1927. As is normal in German marriages, first there is the Standesamt or civil marriage ceremony at the Rathaus (Townhall). That ceremony is followed by the church wedding which was probably in the Radewiger Kirche (Jakobikirche), Herford. This church was attended by both the Göβling and Pörtner families for Sunday worship services. Eventually they established their home at Fürstenaustraβe 10, the family home of Ella. They were married for about 277 days before they first child was born. The honey moon must have been real productive. During the first year of marriage, Rudolf must have been busy establishing steady employment and active with the sports club because he loved to play on the local soccer team. Ella may still have been working as "Bankangestellte", bank employee and was active is social and church events. And of course there were many relatives in Herford to visit.

### 1928-1930: Rolf (oldest brother) until Margret born

My oldest brother, Rolf, was born on 26 June 1928. I would overhear Aunts and relatives talk about Rolf, saying that he was a happy and inquisitive child. But, that he was simple and not very bright. The house at Fürstenaustraβe 10 had a extensive walled-in backyard that included gardens, fruit tree, fruit bushes, and various animals. This backyard was a wonderful place for children to play and have adventures. Just before his eighth birthday in 1936, Rolf went into the backyard and ate gooseberries. They were not yet ripe and he gorged himself. He developed a tummy ache. At the first visit, Doctor Kupfernagel declared it as 'just a tummy ache' and for Rolf to stop complaining so much. What did Rolf expect after eating so many berries. When 'just a tummy ache' did not go away Rolf was taken to the hospital. It was too late. He later died on 8 June 1936 of complications because the gooseberries had blocked his intestines. All through my life, relatives loved to talk about Rolf. When a significant event would occur, relatives would comment "Wenn Rolf das wüßte!" which translates to the English saying "If only Rolf knew about this, he would enjoy it!"

### 1930-1937: Margret (oldest sister) until Helga was born

My oldest sister, Margret, was born 10 September 1930, in Herford, Germany. Margret was born with poor eyesight, and this handicap defined her character. Eyesight was later partial corrected by neighbor's son, Hartmut. Hartmut and Margret where childhood playmates. Hartmut always promised Margret that one day he would be able to help her see better. Hartmut went to university and became an Eye (ophthalmologists) Doctor. Hartmut succeeded in finding a procedure that could help Margret and performed the operation, that did indeed improve her sight. But Hartmut could not help Margret until they were both adults. All during my childhood, Margret had poor eyesight. Margret was over six years older than me, so we were never really playmates. Instead, to me she was a source of hand-me-down cloths, and of older boys that I could tease.

### 1937-1938: Helga born until Diethard was born

Finally, I was born on 9 March 1937, in Herford, Germany. My birth name is Helga Johanne Hildegard Pörtner, but everybody calls me Helga. After I was born, mother and I spent 10 days in the hospital. Not because anything was wrong but because this was normal and typical for hospital births. The mother would be able to rest with weight (usually a sand bag) on her belly, while nurses cared for the new baby. Soon after we left the hospital I was Baptized. I have no memories of my baptism, but it was probably at the Radewiger "District" Kirche (Church) also known as "Jakobikirche". The same church where my parents were married.

I was an adorable baby. Plump, healthy and huggable, always showing a cheerful, if sometimes mischievous face, I was the baby every wants to have. I made everybody who fed me, feel good. Not one of my baby pictures shows me biting my brother, throwing a fit or smelling bad. I was, of course, pretty and presentable, my Papa's pride. Relatives always commented on how I just giggled and smiled at anybody that looked into my pram

I would spend many happy hours in my pram. Starting the day that I was born the weather in that spring and summer of 1937 was sunny and very mild. Therefore I was outside laying in the pram on most days. Usually my pram was on the upstairs porch but sometimes I would be outside the front door, so that I could smile at people passing by. I think that my good disposition and good health comes from this early exposure to friendly people and fresh air.

Years later I would overhear relatives comment over my birth being so soon after the death of my older brother Rolf. Had my Mother become pregnant just to replace Rolf? I sometimes mull over this belief. Rolf died on 8 Jun 1936 and I was born 274 days later on 9 March 1937. Normal gestation is 280 days. Was my

Mother already pregnant with me when Rolf died, or did she become pregnant just after his death? There was no indication at my birth that I was a preemie. And if that thought is not disturbing enough, were they expecting a boy to replace Rolf? I would sometime feel that my parents really wanted a boy to replace Rolf. This suspicion was enforced by the fact that my Mother immediately got pregnant again and they had my brother Diethard 461 days later on 13 June 1938.

I only know what occurred during the first couple of years of my life because of the many tales relatives and my parents have told me. For example, on my first birthday, I was still bald-headed, and somebody had jokingly tied a ribbon around my head to doll me up. I like that ribbon, because I was giggling and smiling and showing the ribbon off to anybody that paid attention. Everybody admired me with the ribbon on my head.

I do not have any memories from this time in my life, but I was my daddy's pride, and he would be the first to agree to have me all over again.

#### 1938: Diethard was born 13 June

My youngest brother, Diethard was born on 13 June 1938 only 15 months after I was born. I have no memory of Diethard's birth. But finally my parents had a boy again. From birth, Diethard, was a week and sickly child. You would not know that now if you met him. He grew up to be a strong healthy man. But the doctors told my Mother and father that Diethard had this infliction because the womb had not had enough time to recover from the prior baby (me, Helga). Knowing this and hearing this repeatedly did have an effect on how I perceived my position in the family.

All through my childhood, nobody ever really paid attention to any ailments that I may of contracted. Diethard was always sicker. Diethard would also catch any virus that was around, such as chicken pox, measles, etc. When Diethard had such inflections, I would be put into the same bed, just so that I could also catch this inflection. This was actually common practice so that the healthier stronger sibling would get the inflection at the same time, and the family did not have to nurse two children at different times. Also it was important the I have some of these serious diseases, so that I would not get them during any future pregnancy. Then the disease could affect my baby. The only problem was that Diethard's symptoms were so severe that everybody tended to him. To this day, nobody remembers if I happened to also get the virus. Did I get chicken pox or not, how about the measles? When I became 80 years old it was important to know if I had chicken pox as a child, then there was the risk of shingles breaking out. Just to be safe, I did get the shingles vaccine which is only necessary if you have had chicken pox as a child. Did I have chicken pox?

#### 1938-1939: From Diethard born until Start of WWII

Even though Diethard received so much attention, I never felt neglected. I have a very outgoing personality, that was already blossoming at an early age. I do not have many specific memories of the time right after Diethard was born, but generally I remember there being many visitors, both family and friends, coming to the house. Also, I was already developing my "wanderlust" tendencies and would gladly walk into the houses of neighbors. Especially their kitchen.

I have fond memories of sitting the warm kitchen listening to the adults talking. They also made some time to pay attention to me. Our house at Fürstenaustraβe 10 was in a good location. The house is only one minute walk from the train station or from the bus terminal. Many doctors lived and had their practice/clinics in the neighboring houses. Friends and relatives would come in from the countryside or other towns by rail, bus, or bicycle to visit these doctors. And of course since they were so close by, they would stop in at our house for Kaffee and Kuchen (Coffee and Cake) and catch up with the latest gossip. Some friends and relatives did not even need the disguise of a doctor's visit, they came anyway.

Walking over to the neighbor for a bit of chocolate was also a wonderful activity for me. This is probably when I learned that compromising has its rewards. In those days, the doors to the houses were unlocked and it was normal just to open the door, walk in and announce oneself. The Meyer family lived in the house next door, and Mrs. Meyer had a never ending supply of chocolates (family had connections to a chocolate factory). If I would let her comb my blonde curls, she would give me a piece of chocolate. I walked into her house many times.

My walking did not stop with the next door neighbors house. My

"wanderlust" was fueled by my need to show my favorite doll the whole world. We (my doll and I) would wander far and wide, for a 2 to 4 year old, in search of new parts of the world to explore. Despite doing this multiple times, and search parties had to be organized to find me, I was never punished; instead everybody was happy that they had found me and that I (and my doll) was safe. One incident that I do remember is when I (and my doll) walked to the train station and walked along the train tracks. I became tired and I (and my doll) found a comfortable spot away from the train tracks to take a nap. The search party included Hartmut, son of Dr Lunecke the Eye Doctor, who lived across the street, and he eventually found me. He brought me back home and I remember everybody was happy to see me safe and unhurt. No punishment. Just the general comments that "she will do this again, because she has the wanderlust, it is just part of her, no hard feeling, glad to help, call us again next time."

Our house had two stories (floors) and was originally designed for one family, with a toilet half way up the staircase. There was no real bathroom with a bath tub. The weekly baths were taken in tin tubs, usually in the wash kitchen in the basement. The basement also had several other rooms for storage and a coal bunker. Tante Hilde (mother's sister) and her husband Hermann Rottmann and their son Paul shared the house in Fürstenaustraße 10 with us. Sometimes our family (Pörtners) lived upstairs and the Tante Hilde's family (Rottmann's) lived downstairs, Other times the families switched. But the one toilet stayed half way up the staircase. And the bath tub remained in the basement.

Oma Johanne Gößling came in July 1939 from American. My older sister, Margret, then almost nine years old, remembers when all the Pörtners and Rottmanns walked to the railroad station to welcome "Oma". Visitors from "Amerika" made half the town curious in those days. And a visitor she was; she

did not intend to move to Germany, as can be deduced from letters and documents. Discovering this fact during my research was quite a disappointment, because - having been as egocentric as children are - I had always thought that she had come to Germany to help me and Diethard grow up.

Barely two months after her arrival and to the surprise of many Germans, a war which later became known as WW II, began on 1 September of 1939 when German troops marched into Poland to reclaim some of previous German territory. Johanne was carrying a German passport with a re-entry permit for the United States which would expire within a few months. She tried twice to get on a ship for the return trip, once from Bremen, once from Italy, but for exact reasons I don't yet know, the boats never left to cross the Atlantic. I heard that some reasons for cancelling the journey was that there were too many Jewish people on board, which were not welcome in the US. This was the case with the MS St. Louis which carried almost a thousand Jewish refugees aboard in 1939 and was refused entry by Cuba, Canada and the United States and had to return to Europe.

Johanne finally gave up trying, because the general expectation in Germany was that the war would be over in a short time. She decided to stay.

### 1939-1941: Start of WWII until entered Kindergarten

The war may have started for Germany on 1 September 1939, but the war did not have a very noticeable effect on my home life right away. Oma Johanne could not return to the United States, but the only effect that had on my life was that now I had another person that could pay attention to me. My Father did have to become a member of the Nazi party on 1 May 1937, but that was due more to his position in city government as Stadtinspektor. On 1 January 1938, he became a member of the "Corps of Politische Leiter" which meant he was the block representative for the Nazi party. It was not until after I had entered Kindergarten, one and half years after the start of WWII, that my Father's affiliation with the Nazi party ever played a role in our lives.

Sometime between my second year (start of the WWII) and my fourth year (when I entered Kindergarten), my memories of my childhood begin. I can remember Oma Johanne putting on her thick warm stockings and clipping the tops onto some long elastic straps that were connected to a under-vest that women wore beneath their dresses. Amazing what kind of memories come from childhood.

Despite having the "wanderlust" in me, I did spend a lot of time at home. The house had a basement with a "Waschküche", laundry kitchen, which also served as the place to take the weekly bath in one of the tin tubs. There was no running hot water, but there was a big kettle in which one could boil water and also boil the linen. SAter butchering a hog, or something else - I don't remember what - other things were also boiled in there. Probably the intestines. Other rooms were for storage of potatoes, canned food, bottled apple juice, coal and bicycles and garden tools. After the war, this basement was a constant temptation for hungry folks near the railroad station to sneak in and help themselves. Because the house

was built for one family, the toilet was in between the ground floor and the second floor, halfway up or down the staircase. At night, chamber pots of different sizes were the key to relief and happiness. There was no central heat. Each room was heated as needed or not heated, Most of the time, only the kitchens had the hearth going for cooking and warmth.

Being outside in the fresh air is important for children in Germany. So anytime the weather permitted I was playing outside either in the front or the back yard. The back yard which was originally 943 square meters or about 1/4 of an acre. I can remember us raising chickens, rabbits and a pig or two (the second one secretly and illegally according to city ordinances). There were a few apple trees, blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and red currents bushes. And whatever was raised in special beds, like my Father's little patch of illegal tobacco plants. There was also a lawn on which linens could be bleached by the sun. A sturdy swing set was strong enough for adults, and a sandbox offered hours of baking cakes and digging ditches. Part of the back yard was leased out to Oma Johanne's brother-in-law Paul Reuter. He had a plumbing shop there and he also fixed leaks in pots and pans, sharpened scissors and was very much in demand. The back yard was constantly busy with people coming and going.

I also played in the front yard which was considerably larger before WWII. The front yard had blooming shrubs and a canopy of bushes under which a table and a garden bench invited you to rest and chat a while with visitors. After WWII part of the front yard was taken over by imminent domain so that the road could be widened.

We shared our house with Tante Hilde (my Mother's sister) and her husband Hermann Rottmann and their son Paul. Paul was born 28 January 1933 and was four years older than me. So we were never really childhood playmates. Instead, later when I was a teenager, Paul's friends where a constant supply of boyfriends for me. But, his father, Onkel Hermann would spend time with me and would take me on his errands into town. Along the way he would help me to learn to read using the posters on the round sign posts. One poster that I vividly remember was "Psst! Feind hört mit!" which translates to "Shush! Enemy is listening!" With Onkel Hermann's help I could already read when I entered Kindergarten.

Later I found out by listening to relatives talk that Tante Hilde was overly protective of her son, Paul, and would not let Hermann play or do anything with Paul, such as normal father-son activity. Her protective instincts may have been because Paul had been born a preemie and definitely needed the protection early in his life. Relatives also liked to discuss why Tante Hilde married Onkel Hermann. Tante Hilde didn't want to go to the US with the rest of her family. Her father Gustav Gößling had emigrated to USA in 1923 to start a construction business, and in 1928 wanted to move the rest of his family to the USA. So she married Hermann on the same day that the family emigrate, just so that she could stay in Germany. Hermann was probably an eligible bachelor that she knew from her work. Either way, Onkel Hermann was fun to be around and I learned more than just how to read from him; he was also a wiz at math, and I learned how to add from him. All before Kindergarten.

### 1941-1943: Started of Kindergarten until Volksschule

I entered Kindergarten in the spring of 1941 when I was four. Not all children went to Kindergarten, but my parents sent me because I was so inquisitive and needed the mental stimulation. The Kindergartens were usually run by churches and consisted only of a few hours, maybe two or three hours. In that time we played games, sang, listened to stories and of course play in the playground.

Kindergarten was a wonderful experience, when I attended. Sometimes I would submit to my "wanderlust" and added "truancy" to my list of behaviors I became famous for. I went to various Kindergartens throughout Herford, but the one I remember the most was located on the other side of the railroad tracks. To get to the other side, you could use the tunnel under the tracks or pedestrian bridge over the tracks. Soon, my parents let me walk to school alone. This might have been a mistake on their part. I loved to watch the trains, so sometimes when I used the pedestrian bridge, I would start watching the trains, and never made it to school. In those days there was no real telephone connections between the school and home, so the teacher would believe that I was at home sick and my parents would believe I was at school. Being home because of sickness was many times true, because my brother Diethard was often sick and I was to stay home to either also become sick (I was put in the same bed to catch the 'virus'), or I was sick myself. But many times I just did not make it to school because I was side tracked.

I have some vague memories of not only watching the trains but of also wandering off into other neighborhoods to play with children my age that were not going to Kindergarten. Again, many times I did not make it home in time and the search party would be organized to find me. I am not sure if I was still taking my doll with me on these wanderings. I have memories of being found and everybody

being happy that I was home safe and unhurt, and there was no punishment - "it is just what Helga does".

World War II escalated when Germany declared was on United States on 11 December 1941. The escalation of the war had no direct effect in my world, except that my Father received a special assignment. My Father belonged to the Nazi party and was the Nazi party representative or leader for our block. In this position he had to fit everybody with a gas mask. I remember that he had issues with one gentleman. I don't remember who it was, but this man had a long face, which made it hard to find a gas mask that would fit. Somehow my Father found the right mask. Everybody was safe, thanks to my Father.

In our neighborhood, there was this boy who normally ran in the streets just like the rest of the kids. But he was mentally retarded; seemed to be dumb, would laugh for no reason, his speech was hard to understand and he drooled. I remember that many times my Mother would tell me to bring this boy home and play games with him. We would pretend to play a word game. On a piece of paper; first I would write a word and fold the paper, then he would write a word and put another fold in the paper. The paper would go back and forth until there was enough words to possibly make a sentence. At the end, I would unfold the paper and read the sentence. We would both have a good laugh at the resulting nonsense sentence. But this boy would not stop laughing and he would drool even more. I found the drooling disgusting. Once, I told my Mother that I did not want to play with this boy anymore, the drooling was disgusting me. This was one of the few times my Mother got angry with me, and told me I must play with this boy. It was not until later in 1958-1959 when I was visiting Herford, the mother of this boy approached me and thanked her for saving her boy. Now I began to understand what had happened. My Father knew that the Nazi Party was about to

collect all the retarded children they could find in the neighborhood. So he arranged for the boy to be playing with me at our house, the one place the Nazi Party would not search. My Father knew, because of his position as Block Leader with the Nazi Party gave him advanced warning, of any Nazi Party activity being planned for his neighborhood. One of the jobs of the Nazi Block Leader was to provide assistance to any visiting Nazi Party members. His version of providing assistance was to make sure they did not find any retarded children. He did this because the Nazi party would gather retarded children, place them into institutions, and within a few weeks the child would die from 'pneumonia'. Now I am proud of my parents, for making me play with this boy.

My family and relatives were never really sure what kind of ideas I would come up with next. On 6 December St Nicklaus Day is when in Germany children put out their shoes or boots for St Nicklaus to fill with candy, nuts, and fruit. One year on 6 December, St Nicklaus showed up to our house and I noticed that the boots of St Nicklaus belonged to a neighbor Herr Paul (This Herr Paul was not Paul Reuter, the plumber in the back yard, but another neighbor). Herr Paul had the largest feet in town and the boots were obviously his, so St Nicklaus must be Herr Paul. To stop me from blurting this news to all the other children, Herr Paul and my Father gently placed me in St Nicklaus' sack. They kept me in the sack while they went from house to house filling in the shoes and boots of other kids. I was too stunned to say anything or to call out. St Nicklaus was real gentle with the sack and eventually let me out. But I had to promise not tell anybody. Another year on 6 December, I had a wonderful idea. My boots and shoes were small, so I would only get a few candies. But if I could find the largest boot ever, and St Nicklaus filled that boot, then I would get lots of candy. So I went to Herr Paul and asked to borrow one of his boots, since he had the largest feet in town. Herr

Paul only laughed at me. I had to use one of my own boots. I no longer know which St Nicklaus day story happened first, and neither do relatives who keep bring up these two stories to demonstrate the types of ideas I had as a child.

By the spring of 1942, my brother Diethard was old enough to attend Kindergarten. Soon I was responsible for walking him to school. He was not so easy to talk into truancy. He enjoyed watching the trains as much as I, but he was not so keen on wandering the neighborhood in search of adventures. He was too shy. Luckily he was often sick, and I had many days where I walked alone to Kindergarten could submit to my "wanderlust".

Sometimes both Diethard and I would make it to Kindergarten. One day we both were playing in the sandbox. When the teacher called us back into the class, we did not leave the sandbox. She came up to us and repeated that we were to go into class. I got up but Diethard did not. So the teacher picked him up. It became obvious right away why Diethard had not stood up, there was a wet spot right where he was sitting, he had peed in this pants. The teacher scolded him and gave him such a nasty face. I still remember that nasty face. Diethard does not remember anything of this event. I was so worried that I might do something so bad that I would receive such a nasty face from the teacher. For days I would be so scared that just before I arrived at the Kindergarten I would wet my panties in fear. The teacher noticed this and had a talk with my Oma Johanne about my wet panties. They determined that I must have a bladder issue caused by the cold weather. So Oma Johanne knitted me a pair of scratchy woolen panties to keep me warm. I remember wearing these scratchy panties, but I do not remember if they stopped me from wetting my panties. I do know that I never received that nasty face from the teacher.

Diethard was prone to fits. He would cry, scream, and jump around. He was inconsolable. To help him calm down, either our mother Ella or Oma Johanne would put him into the dark broom closet. The absolute darkness helped him regain control. Diethard finally grew out of having these fits. But remembering these incidents, reminds me of a common threat that adults made to misbehaving children in Germany. "The black man will get you in there! Just wait till the black man comes. He'll get you!" As children we heard this threat often from other parents, relatives, and our own parents. After the war, American troops marched into town, and there were several black soldiers. But I never associated the American black soldiers to the "threatening black man" that was supposed to get me, mostly because the American black soldiers had brown skin.

Fürstenaustraβe was often used for parades. I remember once a group of soldiers were marching up the road when it started to rain. The soldiers had no umbrellas and I wondered why they didn't run to the railroad station for shelter. I felt sorry for them. Either my Father or my Onkel Hermann told me "German soldiers are German soldiers in any kind of weather," The answer must have impressed me. Whenever us children were outside playing, I made it a point never to end the game on account of bad weather. I spent many a week in bed with a sore throat.

There were also parades with older boys and girls, I think on Sunday mornings. I loved the music and the uniforms. The boys and girls were members of the Hitler Youth groups and you had to be at least 10 years old to join. I couldn't wait to grow up and join them.

During the first years of the war I enjoyed watching the enemy planes move along the sky like little silver stars. When the sirens warned the population of the planes, we made sure that we were close to home or close to a shelter, but not out of knowledge of danger, rather because we were told to do so. After the all clear was sounded, we would look for the little strips of aluminum foil that fell out of the sky at times. Later I learned that these strips were dropped by the bombers to confuse the radar from the anti-aircraft guns.

The humming squadrons of British or American bombers would fly over, usually very high to avoid the anti-aircraft guns at the Bismarck tower a few miles. After a while the grown-ups would turn on the radio to find out where that attack had taken place. It was just one of those things. There are two kinds of bombs though, those that fall on other people and those that fall on you or near you. Soon after I started Volksschule in 1943 the second kind made itself felt in Herford.

Just two days after my birthday in 1943, the war began to effect my home life. On 11 March 1943, my Father left for his military service with the Wehrmacht. First he went to Hasenheide near Osnabrück for basic training. By April he was in Frankreich (France).

Later that same spring in 1943, I entered the Bürgerschule Wilhelmsplatz Volksschule at age 6. My life was changing fast and my Father was away at war. I did still have my Mother, siblings, relatives, and of course Oma Johanne to take care of me.

### 1943-1948: Start Volksschule until Enter Gymnasium

In late April of 1943, right after Easter, I entered the Volksschule at 6 years old. This was the normal age for children to start their formal education. Volksschule is for five years. During those years a lot happened in Herford. The war came to Herford in the fall of 1944, the ruins, father away from home, the liberation by the American troops, the end of the war on 8 May 1945 in Europe, the occupation by British troops and then the rebuilding of the country are the background to an exciting and - in spite of it all - happy childhood.

For the first three years of Volksschule, my Father was away at war. My Mother found work in a county office, so Oma Johanne took care of me and Diethard and the house. We were still sharing the house with Tante Hilde and Onkel Hermann. I was lucky, my Father eventually did come home. How he came home is a story within itself and will be told later. In this chapter I am concentrating on school and family tales, the war stories are in the next chapter.

I attended Bürgerschule Wilhelmsplatz Volksschule, in the central part of Herford. Just a side note, later in the 1967, my daughter Bettina attended this same school for a few months. From our house at Fürstenaustraβe 10 it was an easy walk to the Volksschule. And every day, rain, shine or snow, I would walk to school. At that time, Volksschule was only in the morning, and I would be back home about 1pm for lunch.

On the first day of Volksschule it is traditional that the new student receive a large cone filled with candy. I remember receiving such a cone on my first day. All my family members were there to help me along on my first day of school. That is all, except for my Father. He had just been drafted into the Army (11March1943) and was off to training and could not come home.

In the first year (Este Schul Jahr) the students are called "i-Männchen". The era was called Nationalsozialismus (1933–1945) and Führer Hitler and the Nazi party was in power. Every morning collected in the hallways, opened all the windows so that we would get fresh air, and sang Volks songs and patriotic songs, especially "Die Fahne hoch". We would also pledge our allegiance to Führer Hitler.

For some reason my "wanderlust" did not prevent me from walking all the way to school like it did when I attended Kindergarten. I do not remember why I was so good at attending Volksschule. Probably because I developed friends that would also be walking to school with me. Or maybe because there were monthly school bus trips out into nature or other exciting places. On this bus trips, we students were convinced that our teacher and the bus driver were in love. Several times the teacher and the bus driver would stay behind on the bus while we went exploring in nature or in the museums. What were they up to? Only our imagination knew.

School was only in the morning and I was home by lunch at 1pm. And there was no shortage of adventures at home. My Mother was a good conversationalist so people come from far and wide just to enjoy her company. I loved to sit in the warm kitchen with the adults and listen. The adults thought I was smart, because I had learned at an early age to listen and they mistook my listening skills for being smart. Really, I just wanted the attention and the cake.

Coffee was difficult to find during and after the war for a few years. That did not stop people from visiting us. We adjusted. There was a "ersatzkaffee" coffee substitute which had the nickname called (never really written, and in America only said quietly) "muckefuck", guess why. This ersatzkaffee was made

from roasted barley. It tasted like a weak coffee. It was so weak that us children were allowed to drink it. Even today, my favorite drink, yogurt, and ice-cream has a coffee flavor.

We liked to play board games and card games, especially on those many days of bad weather that happen in that part of Germany. A favorite card came was called '66', but now I cannot remember the rules. But one of the board games was Mühle. Mühle is a board game for two people which is very popular in Germany. Rules on how to end the game varied. In my home the fastest ending happened when my Mother said, 'Macht den Tisch frei, das Essen is fertig.' (Clear the table, dinner is ready). The slowest version came later in the evening when my Mother said, 'Jetzt ist das aller, aller letzte Mal, dass ich euch ins Bett schicke.' (This is the very, very last time that I'm telling you to go to bed.)

Not only did relatives and friends come to the house, we also had a cleaning lady, a seamstress, a laundry lady, and a cook. To have so many helpers was normal for a middle class family. We did not need a handyman, because my Mother's family consisted of men that worked in various construction trades. They were always willing to help when needed. I remember that when the cleaning lady came, she first had to take her coat off, sit in the kitchen with a cup of coffee, and then she would begin to bring us up to date on the latest gossip. And best of all, she knew all the best jokes. Only when this formality was finished would she begin to clean the house.

Many an evening would find us sitting around in front of the radio. The radio was a shiny black box with a brown cloth covered hole in the middle, commonly called "Volksempfänger" (People's Receiver). We listened intently to Hitler's speeches. We also enjoyed listening to dramas, comedy stories, news, and

of course music.

Because of bad weather my brother and I often had to play inside. We were very inventive. Sometimes too inventive. I remember my brother, Diethard, one day decided to use his air pistol inside. So he set up a target by leaning a piece of paper on the glass front of the china cabinet. He then went to the other side of the room and got ready to fire. Luckily I realized that there was a problem. I told him to stop. It took some explaining, but finally he realized that he was about to break the glass in the china cabinet. Sometimes my brother could be real dumb.

But one time his inability to think fast kept him from getting into trouble. We both were in our backyard and "stealing" apples over the wall from the neighbors yard. The neighbor's yard belonged to a factory, and the factory workers would sit outside during their break and pick apples from the trees. The apples looked so delicious. Of course the apples looked more delicious than the apples on our trees. So we attached a basket onto the end of a pole and began picking. Diethard was sitting on the wall so that he could better reach the apples that were further away. The owner of the factory came out and caught us with pockets full of his apples. When confronted, Diethard did not know what to say or do. Then Diethard took an apple out of his pocket, offered it to the factory owner, and asked him if he would like an apple. The factory owner was so stunned that we were allowed to keep the apples.

The definition of "stealing" has different meanings in German society.

Children "stealing" fruit to eat was not really considered stealing, but was an allowable custom. Green Grocers would have open boxes in front of the store, and children were allowed to take a fruit only if they were going to eat the fruit. When we were "stealing" apples from over the wall, we were taking more than we could

eat, and that was a problem. But another German society custom came to our rescue. Children were pampered over the simple items in life, if a child wanted something, any adult would try to get it for them. This applied especially towards food and items required to survive. This was a custom, not a result of the war.

We had a family dog, named Flocki. I do not remember anyone from the family feeding him. Flocki was very good at finding food for himself. Flocki would go to the train station everyday at lunch time. Flocki went to steal sandwiches from taxi drivers. The drivers would sit in their taxis with the door open and the other half of their sandwich on the passenger seat. In a flash, our dog would jump in, grab the sandwich, and run. No taxi driver ever came to us and complained. It was just part of life.

Flocki's life came to a sad ending. He was allowed to run freely around the neighborhood, as was all the other neighborhood dogs. A girl in the neighborhood was very afraid of dogs. When Flocki approached her, she panicked and began to kick Flocki. Flocki bit back. The girl's father was furious and was convinced that our Flocki had rabies. There was nothing my parents could do, but to have Flocki put down so that a rabies test could be performed on his brain. He did not have rabies.

Homes in Germany do not have large refrigerators, so daily shopping for fresh food is still a normal custom. At a very early age I helped with daily shopping. Many times I would be sent to the corner grocery store with a memorized list. Paper was in short supply during and after the war, so I had to memorize the shopping list. I enjoyed helping mother. What would be considered strange in today's world, is that I never paid. Every family had "an account" at the local stores, not just the grocer. Once a month my Mother or father would go to

each store and pay on the "accounts". Today we use credit cards. While playing with friends out in the neighborhood, I often stepped into the grocer and asked for some candies. The grocer always made sure that I would not overeat and he never asked me for money.

Besides having a garden and fruit trees, our backyard had lots of animals. We had rabbits and egg laying hens. Sometimes there would also be a pig or two. Our organic household waste had plenty of mouths to feed. I can remember my Father sending me to the train station for a pack of 3 cigarettes and that evening we would have rabbit stew or chicken soup. He would never let me be home when the deed was being done. It was the same when the pigs had to be slaughtered. By city ordinance we were only allowed to have one pig, but we had two. So they had to be slaughtered at the same time. Neighbors were very involved and also received their share. I only remember that I was not home when the deed was done, but I do remember eating all the wonderful products.

My Father was the city "Stadtinspektor" in charge of education, arts, and culture. Being in such an important government position you would think that he was very law abiding. But not only did he violate City Ordinance with having two pigs, he tried to avoid taxes by growing his own tobacco. Hiding among the garden plants were tobacco plants. In that attic there were leaves of tobacco drying. I can remember playing in the attic with my friends and the tobacco leaves were hanging above us. Nobody turned us in to the "law", there were more important issues to worry about.

The attic also had a coop for homing pigeons. Father loved to race homing pigeons. He would spend hours up in the attic attending to the pigeons. He belonged to a local Brieftauben Klub. Every once in awhile he would put the

pigeons into cages, and take them to a meeting location, and hand them off to somebody from the Klub who would take the cages to southern France, either by train, truck or wagon. Then Father would spend hours standing outside the house looking at the hole in the roof where the pigeons would fly into the attic. When a pigeon arrived, father would go inside to remove the ring off the pigeon's leg and insert the ring into a Measurement box so that the arrival time would be recorded. His pigeons where very fast and accurate fliers. Father often won the race.

Not only did we have an attic with the illegal tobacco and homing pigeons, we had a basement with a still. Oma Johanne, being from America, had learned how to make alcohol during the prohibition. She made good use of her skill and we had a supply of alcohol. I do not know what kind of alcohol it was, probably whiskey, but after the war it was handy for bartering.

The basement had many rooms. If the rooms weren't used for a still or for the bathtub, they were used for storage. One year the basement flooded, not because of the war, but because the river Werre over flowed its banks. It was on 9 February 1946. The heavy January rains had put too much pressure on a dam and the dam broke. All that water came down the Werre and into the downtown Herford. There was over a meter of standing water in the streets. The other effect of this much water was that the ground water came up and sewer systems did not drain. Many basements flooded with ground water and sewage. What a mess.

Our neighborhood had many interesting families. Across the street was Dr Lunecke, the eye doctor. I would go over to his house and his daughter, Nanni, and I would go up into the attic. In the attic there were a bunch of mattresses laid out for gymnastics. Nanni and I would spend hours practicing our moves and routines. I had dreams of the Olympics.

The house that I could see from my bedroom window belonged to a "Jewish" family by the name of Spanier. Crystal Night "Reichskristallnach" happened in November 1938 before I have any memories. My parents do remember the day in 1938 when this family was targeted. Luckily they had taken advantage (at great risk) of Hitler's program to have daughter Marion sent to England for safety. So Marion were not there in November 1938.

I do remember Oma Johanne coming at night into my room (I pretended to be asleep) and opening the window, and sending a basket of food across a laundry line that connected our two houses. The basket would come back with a hat. The family used to own a milliner (hat store). Because they were Jewish, their store was taken away from them and now they could not buy any provisions because no store would sell to them. Years before, Ella, my Mother, had been arrested for buying a hat in Spanier's forbidden milliner's store. Somehow my Father managed to get her released. Although we were not requesting a payment for the food, they felt that they had provide something in return, and all they had was hats. My Mother would wear these hats out in public until somebody asked her about all these pretty hats and how come she had so many. She stopped wearing the hats and just put them in a "Shrunk" wardrobe cabinet. If caught, there could have been life threatening consequence, not just for my Mother and Oma Johanne, but for the whole family. It took unusual courage and took risks to help others.

Not only did we have a garden in the back, we also had a garden plot outside of town. This was actually rather common. Even before the war, nothing would go to waste. Even the manure from the delivery horses. Many things were still delivered by wagon, such as the beer to the corner store, ice to those that had ice-boxes, and the milk man. I was often sent out to scope up the manure so that we could put it on our different gardens.

And mentioning the iceman reminds me. We did have an ice-box. Whenever the ice-men arrived they would not deliver the ice right away. First they needed a bracing shot of something, I am not sure, but probably something like whiskey or snaps. Then they would bring the big block of ice into the house. I wonder how drunk they were by the end of a day of delivery? Luckily the horse was doing the driving.

For several years I still had those blonde curls, so I would go to Mrs. Meyer for chocolate. I also liked to go on trips with Mr. Meyer in his car. I think it was an Opal 4/8-PS. Adults like to have me along on drives because I was such good company. I was easy to please and was always happy, and had a wonderful smile. Tante Hanna (my Father's sister) would come all the way from Bad Salzuflen-Schotmar in her car. She would bring us shoes from her shoe store. Tante Hanna would also take me along on her drives.

I was adventurous and would leave the house, enjoy myself and have a good time. But my brother was finding life hard to coop with. He was shy, preferred to stay indoors, and afraid of many things, especially if it was new. It was very common in Germany to have a seat attached to the handle bars of a bike so that a small child could sit up front. This seat was very similar to the child seat in grocery carts. My Father would put Diethard in this seat and they would bike to a local park that had a lake. There they would play on the grass and in water. Father and son time. At least Diethard was out in the fresh air. These trips to the park must have worked. Now Diethard travels the world with his family.

My Father would take me for walks also. On one walk we saw a stork flying, and my Father told me that storks bring babies and that this stork had a sack with twins inside. To this day I still believe that I actually saw the stork with a

sack in its beak big enough for twins. The next day a neighbor gave birth to twins. I was convinced baby's came by stork and I had seen the stork deliver the twins the day before.

On other walks with my Father, we would watch the clouds. To this day I still enjoy watching clouds and it always brings back memories of my Father. He knew how to predict the weather for that night and the next day. He was so accurate. On cold or stormy days we would sit inside and watch through the window. From him I learned all the names for the types of clouds. And in Herford we had every type of cloud. The weather came from the North Sea and would create interesting formations while trying to get over the mountains. We also liked to find interesting shapes.

Friday main meal at 1pm would consist of fish. Most of the time it was Herring. We ate our main meal in the middle of the day. Father would walk home every day from city hall in time for lunch. On Friday mornings I would go early to the fish monger for the herring. Special trains would come to Herford on Fridays so that we would have fresh fish and herring. Not only on Fridays but every day, after lunch my Father would take a siesta. Diethard and I knew to play quietly for this hour, and mother never had to remind us to be quiet.

If my Father had an issue that he had a hard time resolving, or had to find something that was lost, he would take a siesta and then wake up knowing the solution. If that did not work, he would tell me about his concern. Many times, with lots of thought, I could come up with a solution or figure out where the missing object should be. I was so proud of my special skills and to be of help.

On Sunday's we had a special midday meal. First was soup and then something special. Mother was usually still busy in the church, so my Father made

the Sunday meal. Sunday Church services seemed to be an activity that was attended by more women then the men. Do not know why.

When we had the money we would rent a cottage on "Steinhuder Meer" near Hannover for our summer vacations. I found a wonderful picture of Oma Johanne, Diethard, and I with the lake in the back ground. That is where I developed a taste for smoked Herrings. While we were there, several other family members or neighbors would come a stay for a few days. Once Mrs. Meyer's family, our neighbors came for a visit.

For another vacation, my Father arranged for me to go to a camp on the Baltic See shore for 'fresh air'. The camp was for children from inner cities, so that they could get fresh air and get out of the depressing environment of the cities. Herford was not a depressing environment, but the fresh air was good for me. Also, there were boys from other cities. One group of boys had to stay longer because there was a 'plague' or disease outbreak in their city.

In November 1944 the bombing started in Herford. I was already living with my Father's sister, Tante Hanne's in Bad Salzuflen-Schotmar. That house did not have indoor toilet, but there was a proper outhouse. The reason I was sent to live with Tante Hanna in Bad Salzuflen was the belief that the Bad Salzuflen would not be bombed because the British Officers want to occupy the town after the war. The spas at Bad Salzuflen are world known for their healing powers. The British Officers would need the houses to live in that were not bombed when the occupy Germany after the winning the war.

Later we temporarily moved to Onkel August's house which was part way between Herford and Bad Salzuflen. Onkel August was the husband of my Father's sister Lieschen. We had two rooms on the second floor and there were other distant family members also living in this house for safety from the bombings. There were lots of people living in this house and was no inside toilet. We had to use buckets and then empty them into some kind of hole. Uck! But we adjusted, that is just what you had to do. From the upstairs window we could see Herford burning. I remember that Onkel August's sister got so scared that her feet bleed. There is actually a medical term for this phenomena, Hematidrosis.

Eventually we moved back to Fürstenaustraße 10 after the war. For several years afterwards everything was in short supply. During the British occupation I would search the streets for discarded cigarettes. The British soldiers would not smoke their cigarettes all the way and threw them on the ground. I collected the butts and took the unused tobacco out, then gave that pile to my Father. He would enjoy rolling his own cigarette.

Anything used to heat the house was also in short supply. Because my Father held a high position in the city government he could not participate, but Mother participated in "stealing" coal from supply trains. This activity was so common that it was given a name "Kohlen Klau". Outside of town there was a sharp bend in the train track and the trains had to go very slowly. At night, some people from Herford (it was mostly the women) would wait at the turn, jump onto the train cars, and throw down the coal. Mother said that the train engineer must have known this was happening because the train would travel very slow for a long time, and then the engineer would blow the horn just before the train picked up speed. So they always had time to jump off of a slow moving train. Later I found out that this was happening in other towns. On 8 April 1946 in Hamburg, about 100 people looted a coal train and the police rushed to the scene but made no arrests. Probably because the people were their family members or maybe the definition of "stealing" changes when everybody is desperate.

My Father did get involved with cutting down trees for firewood. Trees are precious in Germany and you cannot cut a tree down without permission and permission is rarely given. But if the tree is dead anyway, then you can get permission to cut it down. Many father's found ways to discreetly make a tree die, especially a tree along a public road. Our stove was graced with many a log from these trees, and we were grateful for the warmth.

In April 1947, Oma Johanne final made it back to her husband and family in Milwaukee Michigan. I would think of her a lot, and I am sure that she thought of us. She understood how difficult it was for us to find anything because everything was in short supply. Oma Johanne would frequently send us a care package. We were very grateful for every item. Paul her son in Milwaukee, years later told me that one winter he could not find his coat. When he asked his mother (my Oma Johanne) about his coat, she told him that she had sent the coat to Germany because Diethard needed the coat more than Paul. The packages also contained a Crisco like lard called "Spry" which was greatly needed because of the shortage of any fat or butter. There was also something called "SPAM", which I did eat, but even today I do not like the taste. Guess you just have grow up with SPAM to develop a taste for it.

Some care packages contained not only food and clothes, but also books and a few magazines with pictures of American landscapes, which I proudly shared with my friends. Although we could not read English, we began to dream of campfires in the Rockies, riding over the open prairie and smoking the peace pipe with Indians, just like our American relatives were probably doing.

My brother and I always had lots of interesting toys. Our parents or relatives liked to make toys for us. They also like to buy us toys. We had the best toys in

the neighborhood. One toy was a "Dumpfmachine", steam engine that once you got it running would turn all kinds of contraptions. We were not allowed to play with this toy unless there was an adult helping us. You had to pour some alcohol into a tiny tray, place the tray under the water filled tank, and then light the alcohol. No wonder we had to wait for an adult. Another toy came in one of Oma Johanne's care package. For some reason, toy guns were not a popular toy for children in Germany. Oma Johanne sent us a Cowboy Revolver. All of a sudden, Diethard was popular with all the neighborhood boys.

Despite the bombings that began in Fall of 1944, I managed to attend all five years of Volksschule. Many of the schools were hit during the bombings. Unfortunately that did not mean the end of my education, instead, we had to attend classes in another building nearby. To compensate, sometimes my class would be scheduled for the afternoon. Everybody had to adjust when the heavy bombings began. The war ended on 8 May 1945 for Europe and I continued to attend the Bürgerschule Wilhelmsplatz Volksschule with my friends for another three years.

I was a very good student at the Volksschule. I was so quick at learning that my teacher began to use me as a teachers-helper. When girls from the Gypsy camps or the traveling carnivals would attend school, I would be assigned to help a girl with her studies. The Gypsies and the carnivals traveled to different towns throughout the year. Many of them would winter near Herford but "Hinter der Mauer" outside of the city were living conditions were poor. The children always had to attend the local school. Because they changed schools so often every year, the children were way behind in their studies. I was honored to be chosen by the teacher to help. One time I was invited by one girl to walk home with her. When we got to her home we found her father drunk and mother at home but being lazy and also drunk. Their living conditions were terrible. I forever felt lucky for my

own life and family. Even today, whenever I feel that my living conditions may be deteriorating, I think of my visit to this one girls home. Then I realize how good life has been to me.

My parents had originally decided to send me to the school which would lead to a solid business career or open the way for nursing and other vocations. The assumption was that I was such a nice girl and quite pretty and that I would marry early anyhow. In late 1947, my teacher at that time, Miss Düwel, however, has other visions for me and the future role of women. She explained to my parents that if God gave a child good health, intelligence and some talent, that child's parents owed it to God and society to develop those gifts for everybody's benefit. And that child would later have the duty to use the education gained to be useful to society. My parents were easily persuaded, I passed the test to the Gymnasium, and I became the most expensive child my Father ever had (the others did not attend tuition charging schools) by entering the Gymnasium in spring of 1948.

### **1939-1945: War time Stories**

First a history lesson. For Germany the war started 1 September 1939, USA entered the war on 7 December 1941 due to Pearl Harbor, Germany declared war on USA on 11 December 1941, and the USA Army Eighth Air Force began bombing operations over Europe on 29 September 1942. These events did not have a direct effect on my life in Herford until 1944.

There were some indirect effects. In 1937 my Father received a promotion to Stadtinspektor, and that required that he join the Nazi party. In 1938 he become the Nazi Block Party Leader. As a Nazi party member and Block Leader my Father was supposed to have an official uniform. Mother did buy the correct material and hired the seamstress so that the uniform could be made. But for some reason everyone kept procrastinating and the material was never even cut in preparation for the uniform. After the war our seamstress finally cut the material and made some wonderful winter coats for us kids.

Near my Volksschule, in Wilhelmsplatz there was a monument "Wittekind auf dem Wilhelmsplatz" that was taken down in 1942 in support of the war effort. It was melted down for its metal. Not until 1959 was another monument to "Wittekind" was put in its place.

Three days after my birthday in March 1943 my Father left for his military service. He was in service until July 1945. Father had his basic training in Hasenheide near Osnabrück which is only about 50 kilometers from Herford. So Tante Hanna, Mother, and I could drive to Hasenheide and visit him. I remember Father saying angry things about his drill sergeant. The sergeant would yell at the young recruits from the mines. They would not straighten out their fingers and do a perfect Hitler salute with arm out, hand and finger stretched out straight. They

also would not stand at attention correctly with their arms by their sides and the hands perfectly straight alone the trouser seam line. Father said, how could the sergeant not know, these miners spend all day holding tools and their hands have permanently deformed to accommodate these tools. No amount of yelling from the sergeant would straighten the hands of these unfortunate miners. How could the sergeant be so cruel?

Fathers leaving was happening to many families and we just adjusted. Luckily for my Mother, Oma Johanne and Tante Hilde were living in our house, and there were several relatives close by that could help if needed. My Father was able to get leave to come home on Christmas of 1943. I have wonderful photos of our family around the Christmas tree. In 1944 he did not come home for Christmas. Like many men, my Father was a volunteer fireman. Every year near Christmas the volunteer fireman would organize a Christmas party for the children and would serve the type of food that children like and hand out gifts. Even during my Father's military service years, we would be invited to attend. At one such party I received a doll that I still have.

During the war my Father was first stationed in France (April 1943-Aug1943), and then later went to Italy (September1943-April1945). In France, he was stationed with a "Das Geschütz" weapon. Which was a gigantic artillery gun pointed toward England. While in Italy, he somehow ended up in the countryside of Yugoslavia. By 1944, most of the farms only had women, children, and old men working. Almost all the men were either dead, at war, or in the resistance. There were no men on the farms. This was causing problems. For example, slaughtering pigs and other larger animals takes strength. Not many women can handle the carcass of a full size pig. My Father had experience in slaughtering farm animals, and was willing to help. Another problem was that there were no

Veterinarians available. My Father always wanted to be a Veterinarian plus with his farming knowledge, he could help with treating the farm animals. He was in high demand.

Herford had a major train junction station which was just meter from our house. Until late 1944 our street was spared any major bomb damage. This might have been because the anti-aircraft guns kept the bombers away. But everything changed fall of 1943. Later I found out that the British bombing strategy changed. In fall of 1943 the "Bomber's Baedeker - Target Book Strategic Bombing in the Economic Warfare against German Towns" was released and the bombing policy changed from focusing on destroying targets important for war economy to demoralizing the German civilian population by means of 'de-housing' through area bombing. In 1944 there was a second revision which included 'indiscriminate' area bombing to demoralize the civilian population. The bombing started and now our family really felt the effects of the war.

My Mother did take protective measures by renting a storage room outside of Herford. In the storage she placed many family heirlooms. She included a Grandfather Clock that Oma Johanne had left in Fürstenaustraβe 10 when she had left for America to join her husband back in 1928. I inherited this clock and it moved multiple times across the Atlantic Ocean as my family followed my husband's US Air Force career. Now it finally rests in my living room in Pflugerville Texas USA (small town on the outskirts of Austin).

Prior to this change in strategy, Herford was occasionally a strategic transportation target because of the train station and switching yard that was a few hundred meters from our house. On 15 October 1944, the US Eighth Air Force used 1,000 heavy bombers in the Hannover and Munster-Kassel area, that includes

Herford. But the indiscriminate bombing began in earnest on 2 November 1944. The US Eighth Air Force used 1,100 heavy bombers in one day to bomb "targets of opportunity" around Bielefeld. Supposedly over 160 German fighter planes were claimed to be destroyed. US lost 40 heavy bombers. Herford is only about 16 km from Bielefeld and we were definitely a "target of opportunity". On 6 November 1944, US Eighth Air Force used 1,000 heavy bombers to bombed "targets of opportunity" in northwest Germany. Sixteen fighter groups afford close escort and later strafe ground targets in northwest Germany. Streets in Herford were now in ruins. I cannot find any pictures in our family albums of the devastation on our street, but in a book that I bought years later shows a 7 November 1944 photo taken of Rennstraße Herford completely in ruins. Although my Mother had already sent me out of town to live with Tante Hanna for safety, I remember the adults talking about the damage at Fürstenaustraße and at the train station. On 26 November 1944, US Eighth Air Force used 1,000 B-17 and B-24 bombers and 25 fighter groups attacked 7 "Targets of opportunity" which included Herford. US lost over 35 bombers, but US fighters claimed over 100 air victories. On 26 November 1944, our house on Fürstenaustraße was seriously damaged in spectacular fashion. More to this tale later.

Herford was spared on 5 December 1944 from probably complete destruction by cloud cover. Another new British strategy called Operation Aphrodite sent Two B17 (#39824 and 30353) drones to target Herford, but because of cloud cover, the planes were directed to alternate target of Haldorf where both planes fully loaded with bombs crashed outside of town. Haldorf now is a community within Edermünde which is about 150 km away from Herford and near Kassel. The bombing was not over yet. On 14 Mar 1945 US Eighth Air Force bombed 2 rail bridges and a Marshalling Yard near Herford.

Not that we knew at that time on 31Mar1945 was the last time sirens were used for Air Raid. In Herford the bombings had completely destroyed 480 buildings, partially destroyed 2,380 buildings, and worst 137 people dead.

By April 1945 the war was not going well for Germany. The American ground troops were quickly liberating parts of Germany. The American tanks come into Herford and the neighboring town of Bielefeld on 3 and 4 April 1945. On 30 April 1945 Hitler committed suicide. On 7 May 1945 German high command surrenders unconditionally all land, sea, and air forces at Reims effective 8 May 1945. By 16 to 20 May 1945 in the Herford area the American Liberators were replaced by British troops and the "der Britischen Besatzungszone" (British Occupation Zone) began. Nationalsozialismus for Herford was over, it had existed from 1933 to 1945.

Now for tales of what happened in my life while all this history was happening.

#### BEFORE THE BOMBING TALES

This may be the place to mention something concerning ownership of the house Fürstenaustraße 10. When Gustav Gößling, Oma Johanne and three of their children moved to America, My Mother Ella and Tante Hilde stayed in Herford and lived from then on in Fürstenaustraße 10, their father's house, with their families. These is a contract between my Father Rudolf Pörtner and Gustav detailing the responsibilities of the tenants. Instead of paying rent, they would make all the payments on the liens which were recorded, take care of all repairs and maintenance, pay the taxes, for Rudolf to keep books on all expenses and a few more points of interest. This situation brought Rudolf into political trouble during the Hitler times and during World War II. We have a letter from some

office in Muenster asking Rudolf, why was he taking care of the property of an enemy of the people, an American. Signed: Heil Hitler, and then a name. Rudolf responded that the American was his wife's father, and somehow the officials accepted that as an excuse and got over that and let the problem rest.

In July 1939 Oma Johanne came to Germany and could not return the United States until 1947.. When the United States entered the war in 1942, all correspondence between normal residents of Germany and the USA stopped. That must have been hard on Oma Johanne, my Mother Ella, and Tante Hilde. Oma Johanne had left a husband, two sons, and a daughter in America. The family was split across two continents.

During the years of WWII Oma Johanne was awarded the "Mutterkreuz", a Mother Cross, by the German government. Expecting Germany to rule the world eventually, the Hitler regime thought it wise to promote having a lot of children. With that in mind, they presented all mothers of five or more children with a medal. Oma Johanne was one of them. I don't know where her medal and the accompanying certificate are now. Maybe she bartered it for food after the war, because American GIs loved to have them as souvenir. Maybe she destroyed it when the American troops swooped into town, because possessing anything with a swastika on it could get you into serious trouble.

Outside my window I could see the house, Fürstenaustraße 12, that belonged to the Jewish family "Spanier". Luckily the Spanier's daughter was already in England. The Spanier's had given my Mother a box for safe keeping. The box had their precious items such as silverware, jewelry, and other valuables. I was not home when it happened but I remember my Mother, Oma, and Tante Hilde talking about the night the Spanier family was taken away. A truck pulled up at night and

Mr. and Mrs. Spanier were never seen again. Within a few weeks a German family moved in to the house. They had bought the house at an extreme discount. The selling of Jewish property at unrealistic low values was happening throughout Germany. The family had two children who looked nice enough, but they came from east German state of Prussia and we were told not to play with them. That family had no right to live in that house, we were told, they had stolen it from the Spanier's. We were not to play with thieves. Because this family came from another German state, they had an accent that was different than our Herford accent. Even the children kept the accent, so they were always easily identified as outsiders.

Years after the war, Marion, the Spanier's daughter came back from England. My Mother still had that precious box. Mother gave this box to Marion. The box and its contents is all that Marion has of her parents. In front of this house, there is a memorial stone (Stolpersteine or stumbling block in German) now in the sidewalk that is engraved "Arthur Wilhelm Spanier Murdered in Warsaw, Grete Spanier murdered in Warsaw, persecuted or murdered by the Nazis."

#### **DURING THE BOMBING TALES**

During the war, one room in the basement at Fürstenaustraße 10 was turned into an air raid shelter, but it was structurally not very solid due to the circumstances under which the house was built right after the first World War. We usually ran for other shelters in the neighborhood when we heard the sirens early enough.

We bought black-out curtains and used them every night. We did not want to be the house that let out light, and showed the bombers that there was a town here. Black-out curtains are made of strong black paper that are on a roll and anchored to the top inside of the window. The paper is then rolled down and the edges are secured to prevent any light from leaking through. In German black-out curtains were called Verdunkelung (Black Out).

Most attacks took place during the night, during nights that defy description, Wake up, hurry, wake up, shoes on the wrong feet, I want to sleep, where is Oma, where is mother, cold winter air, why don't you carry me, why don't they let us sleep, my stomach hurts, I have the stitches, I can't run any more, do you think they'll kill us tonight, I lost my shoe, I am cold, please, pick me up and carry me

The nearest reinforced bunker was in the basement of Dr Lunecke's house across the street. He had a proper reinforced bunker built and allowed other to join his family. Once we were in the shelter we could catch our breath and calm down. Many houses on the block were reinforced with concrete slabs outside certain parts of the basement, but the Lunecke's house was the strongest. We tried to be equipped for everything but the worst: there were mattresses with blankets and fresh water, sandbags and a big box of sand that nobody was allowed to play in, there were pick-axes and shovels, gas masks, flashlight, first aid equipment, a radio and even a telephone, a bucket to be used as a toilet, and even games for the children and a hymn book. There were mice, too, because the basement was also the storage room for the Lunecke's food supply for the winter. And it was always cold and wet in there, because the cellar was not too well insulated, and sometimes the ground water came up and soaked the mattresses. We did not always make that dash for the Lunecke's; sometimes we stayed in our own cellar, and mother would say, "Tonight they are going to bomb somebody else."

Lunecke's air raid shelter was usually very crowded. There were mostly

women and children in there and two or three old men. The fathers were in the battle fields or dead or at the fire station. Most women just sat there and listened to the sounds outside. Some of them looked very angry when we children made a noise, they told us to sleep, but we were wide awake by then and also a bit apprehensive. Sometimes an adult would performed tricks or told us stories or played games with us. Actually, the only game we ever played was "mensch ärgere dich nicht", because you did not have to count to more than six.

One night in a bunker, Oma Johanne said, "Children really ought to be doing something useful." And then she taught us how to crochet. Her crotchet and knit instruction looked awkward, since she was left-handed and I had to transfer every one of her moves to my right - handed mind. We worked on potholders. I was ever so proud when I discovered that I could crochet, but when we looked at the finished product, mine was all crooked and looked like a profile of a pyramid. After that she taught us how to knit. Our teachers had told us that we should all make something useful for our soldiers at the front, especially for those in the snow of Russia. I decided to knit a pair of socks Oma Johanne unraveled an old mitten, and I forgot about the air raids and knitted to help those poor soldiers who were freezing so far away from home. I don't know what ran out first, the wool or the war, my first sock grew no longer than little over an inch, my good intentions however could only be measured in thousands of miles.

No bomb ever fell directly on the Lunecke's house. Usually we emerged as soon as the sirens gave the all-clear signals and stumbled straight to bed only to be rudely awakened a few hours later when the planes were on their way back. The adult often ran off and busied themselves in the new ruins, but just as often they would drop on the bed without even taking their coats off, happy that this time the passing planes had not dropped anything.

Occasionally the bombing took place during the day. The sirens disrupted many a school day and sent all the students into the basement of one building. Once in a while we were surprised on our way to or from school and had to run into a stranger's house for shelter. Our school was hit during one bombing attack. Unfortunately that did not mean the end of our education, instead, we had to attend classes in the afternoon in another building from then on.

We never knew what we would find when we came out of the bunkers. One afternoon a bomb fell right in front of Lunecke's house and dug a deep crater into Fürstenaustraße. We were all in a cloud of dust and stucco for a while. The windows of the entire neighborhood were shattered and the fronts of some houses were marred by flying cobble stones, but nobody was hurt, or so we thought until the iceman, came running out of one of the houses and started to swear and furiously threw cobblestones into the crater. Then he sat down on the ground in the middle of all the destruction and stared. His horse and the ice-cart had stood in the very place where there was now nothing but a dust-puffing hole. No horse, no cart.

Another time we came out bunker somewhere else in town (we always ran to the closest bunker) and I remember as we walked home I saw a person sitting on the sidewalk with his back against the wall. He was just sitting there with his eyes open. The concussion from the bombs had killed him, there was no other visible injuries.

Sometimes we came out of a bunker and could collect the chaff dropped by the bombers. In an attempt to confuse the radar that controlled the anti-aircraft guns, the bombers would drop thin strips of aluminum, called chaff. We put the chaff on our Christmas tree as decoration.

The war dragged on, life became difficult in many ways. My Father Rudolf Pörtner and later Onkel Hermann Rottmann were drafted, so my Mother, Oma, and Tante Hilde had to fend for the family with little income. My Mother took on an office job. Oma Johanne took on many chores in the household and helped raise us children. She never had her own room, as far as I remember. I do remember sharing her bed many times, especially during cold winter nights. I also remember sharing her bed together with my little brother, Diethard, who had a kicking-leghabit. Many nights we children were wearing shoes in order to be ready to run for the bomb shelter when the sirens screamed the alarm.

For relaxation - if or when she had time for that - Oma Johanne loved to play cards, simple games, not bridge. I don't know at what age she began having corns on her feet, but I saw her cut a hole in a good shoe to make room for a corn which bothered her. I loved to watch her brush her long black hair, which made her so different from everybody else's grandmother. She saved the hair that came out because one did that and sent it off for insulation for submarines.

There was or still is one location in the house which is the strongest, and it has a somewhat supernatural story to go with it: Architect Liesel who lived in the neighborhood, had told Oma Johanne, that - should she ever be in the house during an air raid and could not make it to a stronger shelter - she should stay very close to the chimney in the basement. One night of 15 October of 1944, she felt that she did not want to leave the house. She said that her husband, Gustav, had built the house, and she wanted to be close to him in her thoughts, and that she would be safe enough near the chimney. The rest of the family ran to Dr Lunecke's bunker nearby. That night the US Eighth Air Force flew 1,000 heavy bombers and 15 fighter groups from England over Muenster to Kassel, which meant over Herford. In an Air Force publication I found the passage about the event. Bombs were

dropped, but our house was not yet directly damaged that night, however, we had to fear for her life because she was not with us. After the war we found out that Gustav had died that very night, the 15th of October, 1944. At the time we, including Oma Johanne, did not even know that he was sick, because there was no exchange of mail allowed during the war years between Germany and the USA with few exceptions. Notification through the Red Cross did not reached us until after the war.

This tale shows, that Oma Johanne must have been torn between two worlds ever since her emigration to USA to join her husband Gustav in 1928. When in Wisconsin, she missed her children and grandchildren in Germany; when in Germany, she missed the family that lived an ocean away. Obviously, that night in October of 1944, her thoughts and her longing were with Gustav while he was taking his last breaths without having her by his side.

The bombing was getting intense and with train station being so close to our house and such a tempting target for the US bombers, I was sent off to live with my Father's sister, Tante Hanna in Shotmar section Bad Salzuflen.

Tante Hanne's husband Onkel Ernst had a shack in the back yard. Secretly because it was illegal, he had concocted a radio so that he could listen in to transmission concerning the bomber's mission. Onkel Ernst had a chart hidden in an old stack of magazines. The chart listed what looked to me like names of people across the top line and another row of names straight down the first line. When a man would announce on the radio that a squadron of bombers was flying over a certain combination of these names, we could draw lines and thus come up with the name of one of the towns listed on the chart. If, for example, the man said: "Heinrich-Siegfried Fünnef," we knew that the enemy was over nearby

Herford. I worried.

I remember that I was so worried about my family who were still living in Fürstenaustraβe 10. One day, about a week after Onkel Ernst had let me in on his radio secrets, I heard on the radio that another major attack had been flown against "Heinrich-Siegfried Fünnef," Herford. I decided to walk back to Herford and check. I had to go and see what had happened. Not knowing was too much of a burden for me to carry.

The walk is about 17 km. I had it all planned out. There were a lot of people on the road, some with cars, some with horse and buggy, most people were walking, carrying bundles and suitcases or pulling their luggage and their babies in little handcarts. There were soldiers on crutches with a leg of their pants rolled up and held in place with safety pins or with a sleeve hanging down loose and empty. The luckiest of all, I thought, were those that had a bicycle. But I had only me feet and one of my woolen stockings sliding down unless I held on to it because the rubber band had torn.

I don't remember much about my hike except that my mind was ahead of me in Herford. Over and over again I imagined how all the people I longed for would run into the street and welcome me with hugs and kisses. If they were all dead, I thought, it was my duty to tidy up the ruins and to salvage what was still usable.

Along the way I stopped at Onkel August's house for a meal. While at his house, Tante Hanna and Onkel Ernst drove up and they convinced me not to continue walking to Herford but to go back to Bad Salzuflen with them. Everybody was just grateful to see that I was safe and sound. Even though we were all worried about family that was still in Herford.

Not long after, the rest of my family moved out of Herford and into Onkel August's house along with other families. I joined them and we had the two rooms upstairs. Tante Hilde and her son Paul also moved out of the house in Fürstenaustraße 10 and went to live with her husband's parents. The house in Fürstenaustraße 10 was now empty. It was not safe to live so close to the train station. In Onkel August's house, I was again sharing a bed with my brother and Oma Johanne.

Surprisingly enough, despite all the uncertainty with the bombing, life continued. There were always birthday celebrations, visits without reasons, funerals and weddings, and plenty of Sunday afternoon visits for cake (when available). Because I was easy to get along with and always pleasant, I went along on most of these events. I listened while enjoying the cake and ersatzkaffee. I understood far more than the adults thought a child should know. I worried.

One day my Mother had taken Diethard and me to a wedding in a village a few miles out of town. To return to Onkel August's house we had to catch the streetcar that ran through several villages and past several open fields. It was late and we were traveling home in the dark, which was a dangerous situation, because most bombing attacks were flown during the night, and it was a lot wiser to be home after dark. Sure enough, it was during this night that I made my first personal acquaintance with a bomb. We had just settled down on the benches behind the driver, when we left the station and moved out of the village in high speed. "It's better to be out in the open fields somewhere," said the driver, "they are always trying to hit the stations." Somewhere in the country he stopped and turned off all lights and yelled at one of the few other passengers to stop smoking. Any light might give us away to the pilots. We had not been there for very long when we heard that deep humming sound. "That's them," said the driver, "thanks

goodness they are on their way home and have unloaded." But suddenly a light appeared in the sky and came down, it illuminated the entire area around us, "out! in the ditch!" shouted somebody, and we all jumped out of the street car, ran along the road for a few seconds and dove into the drainage ditch. Here I learned about the courage of a mother who is protecting her children. My brother and I were down in the wet ditch, and my Mother laid her body on top of us as protection. And there came the bomb, at first it looked like a big M written into the sky with fire, then there was a hissing sound and then a terrible pain in the eardrums. Afterwards I screamed and Diethard threw up. But we were safe and unharmed.

The house at Fürstenaustraβe 10, in November of 1944 was empty. In November, there were several bombing attacks on the area around the Herford railroad station. On November 26, 1945, the house at Fürstenaustraβe 10 was heavily damaged by bombs exploding nearby and launching - among other things - half a locomotive through air and onto the roof and down to the ground floor. Luckily nobody was in the house. We had already moved out as a precaution, so the family survived. I could not find any photos of this damage to Fürstenaustraβe 10. For months afterwards the house at Fürstenaustraβe 10 stayed empty before any repair and restoration could start. During that time we stayed most of the time at Onkel August's house, but at times we had to move elsewhere, sometimes back to Tante Hanna's house. We stayed were we thought it might be safe, and where there was space. We had no idea how long this intense bombing was going to continue, we just adjusted.

This was war and us children really did not know any other way of life. It did not mean much to us when the adults talked about the war coming to an end very soon.

We never had to worry about food during the war. Since most of our relatives were somehow connected with agriculture, they naturally brought a few eggs or butter or homemade sausage along with them every time they to visit. This was true no matter where we were staying. With a little hugging and a smile they would give me anything I asked for. I was so sure of my tricks that I gave away most of what I received, knowing that there was more where that came from. This generosity never left me; even during those meager years after the war, I supplied other kids with my last reserves.

After the war the situation was different, but all through the cold winter of 1944 we managed rather well. I know where the wood for the kitchen hearth came from and the grass for the rabbits and the garbage we fed the pig and the chicken. We children were busy day after day collecting and gathering these things. Even on our way home from school we picked up little branches that the icy wind had broken out of the tree tops. The lower branches of every tree in town seemed to have disappeared over night. Looking for things was our play, our chore and our education. We had use for everything, from an old newspaper to bent nails.

My brother Diethard and my sister were shy and never liked to leave the house and therefore the only thing they got to eat was what my Mother or Oma could find for them. I tried to tell them both that they had to learn to take care of themselves. I would roam the neighborhood and I learned in a hurry. I learned that the safest way to obtain a slice of bacon or half a sandwich or whatever else looked desirable was to be friendly to a person, especially if the person was a man. Women were more realistic and not so easily charmed out of useful items. I knew the neighborhood kitchens and the larders better than the kids who had lived in that area all their life. And I knew the degree of generosity of each family. Sharing was not a matter of how much was available in a house, but of how much they

were willing to share. It was obvious that most people had a lot more food then my Mother was able to come up with.

We heard that the Americans were coming. Propaganda spread. Everyone was fearful of what the Americans would do, how would they treat women and children, especially what would they do to our teenage daughters. For protection, my sister Margret was sent to the local Red Cross station to work in the kitchen. The hope was that the Americans would not attack the Red Cross and rape the young women. A neighbor bound the chest of their teenage daughter and put her in bed with the cover all the way up. When the Americans came they told them that their "son" was in bed with a sickness. Despite moving around, I continued to attend the local Volksschule and one of our teachers told us that the Americans would cut off our thumbs! That is what they will do! I kept my thumbs hidden.

AMERICAN LIBERATION TALES 3 and 4 April 1945 to Middle of May 1945

On the 3 and 4th of April 1945, we were living in the two upstairs room in Onkel August's house that was on the road between Herford and Bad Salzuflen. We could look out the upstairs window and see Herford burning. Then we saw the tanks coming down the road. As the tanks and jeeps rumbled past the house, I saw for the first time in my life a "black" person. They did not resemble the black man that was supposed come when I misbehaved, instead these "black" men were brown. I was relieved.

The young soldiers came house to house, barging into each house with their machine guns at the ready. I remember when American soldiers entered the Onkel August's house, machine guns swing, yelling "Nazies, Nazies, Any Nazies here?". My Mother was standing on top of the stairway, and I was right behind her, hiding

behind her skirt (keeping my thumbs hidden) and peaking around. Although I was extremely afraid, I was too curios to miss this event. Oma Johanne was at the bottom of the stairway, and announced in English that she was an "American". The young American Soldiers did not know what to do, they were looking for Nazies not Americans. The confusion helped to calm down these young nervous soldiers. She talked some more with them in English and they then left the house. What courage! Not only did she defuse the situation, she probably saved the lives of old Onkel August and Onkel Ernst, who were also living in the house and could have been arrested as "Nazies" just because they were men.

As a side note, even today it is not clear when Oma Johanne ever became an American. It might have been a misunderstanding. Her husband Gustav had become an American citizen and she probably believed that if her husband was American, then she was automatically an American. Either way, her conviction was strong and it greatly help us in other ways also.

During the American liberation, the American officers needed houses to stay in. Everybody in Onkel August's house was forced to move upstairs while the American Officers occupied the ground floor. I remember that they would not let us use the outhouse, and we had to resort to "pisspots" and buckets and the stable for the goats.

I loved to play in the back yard at Onkel August's house. There was a work shop for Onkel August. He was a smith and made tools. He had several apprentices. Because of the goats there was a manure pile. One day I was playing in the back yard when the manure pile exploded. A bomb had fallen into the manure pile and had not exploded. Nobody remembers when the bomb fell from the sky. But I still have a scar to remind me of the day that bomb exploded. When

the bomb exploded, a bicycle pump that must have been lying close by was driven into my leg just below the knee. Family quickly came to my aide, removed the bicycle pump, and bandaged my leg. Luckily it was only a skin wound and no bones were broken.

Oma Johanne soon made the acquaintance of a young black American soldier whose home in Milwaukee was in a neighborhood, West Allis, where Gustav(Johanne's husband) had built houses. That young man smuggled bread and other food to us in the dark of night at great risk to himself. Oma and this soldier would talk in English long into the night about live in West Allis USA. The soldier was so homesick. And I think Oma Johanne was missing her children and husband also. By the time the American liberated us, Oma Johanne's little visit which started in July 1939 was already in its sixth year. She would not be able to go back to the USA until April 1947, another two years.

We nicknamed the American soldiers "Ami". Of the American soldiers, the black soldiers were the most friendly. Whenever they meet German child they would distribute the candy and chocolates. We were sad to see the American soldiers leave. On 8 May 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies and the British Army come into the Herford to begin the occupation.

BRITISH OCCUPATION May 1945-2September 1945 end of war only.

Between 16 and 20May 1945 the British occupying forces arrived and the British Occupation Zone was established. The zone would exist until May 1949. We called the British soldiers "Tommy". I do not know how they got this nickname.

With the skilled help from Oma Johanne's friends and relatives, the house on Fürstenaustraβe 10 was made livable again. The locomotive had destroyed in the house on 26 November 1944. We moved back into rebuilt Fürstenaustraβe 10 before the re-build was completed. The re-build would not be completed until December 1945.

Oma Johanne had another important role to play. The occupation forces - by then the British were in Herford - needed homes for the families of their officers. Usually they knocked on the door and gave people a few hours to vacate the premises. Not many houses near the railroad station were fixed up again. When the British officers came to Fürstenaustraße 10, Johanne faced them and declared, that she was an American citizen and that this house belonged to her husband who lived in America. Of course, she had nothing to prove that she was American, because that would have been a dangerous document to have during the Hitler era. I think that she never took out her American citizenship. (Gustav did in 1930). She may have innocently and naively thought that if her husband Gustav was an American Citizen, then she automatically became an American citizen. Who knows what gave her the courage. The British did not know how to handle that and moved into another house which had just been repaired by the owner.

We felt sorry for the British, they were so poor. Or that is what we believed when we saw the British wearing short pants with socks. The weather was cold and they could not even afford long pants to stay warm. And the British all looked alike to us. We believed that they were all alike because the British lived on an Island and therefore had to inbred. So many misunderstandings.

In the summer of 1945, I was playing in the backyard of Fürstenaustraβe 10, when an extremely thin man (emaciated) walked through the gate. I became

scared and ran indoors. I stayed inside while either my Mother or Oma Johanne went outside to confront the man. He was my Father! I remember this so vividly. I had dreamt about how I would great my Father when he coming home from the war. And in none of my dreams, did I believe I would not recognize my Father. He was so thin. Later we found out that he had been stationed in Italy when the Americans came. He was taken prisoner and put into one of 19 camps under the Rheinwiesenlager (Rhine Meadow Camps) program per General Dwight D Eisenhower's directive. These prisoners were not POWs (Prisoners of War) but classified as Disarmed Enemy Forces (DEFs) and the camps were called Prisoner Of War Temporary Enclosures (PWTE). These camps were controlled by the American Army. Enclosures is correct. They were in an open field surrounded by barb wire fence and there was no attempt to shelter or feed the prisoners. Daily the dead would be loaded onto a wagon and taken away. My Father had become so thin and weak, that the Americans thought he was dead. So they loaded him onto the wagon. Turned out he was not dead. He rolled off the wagon and nobody noticed. Or they did not care that they had lost a body into the ditch. Either way, he finally stood up and walked all the way back to Herford. My Father was home!

The official end of World War II was on 8 May1945 for Europe. But for me it ended that summer day when my Father came home. The family was together again.

## 1945: End of WWII: May and Sep

On 7 May 1945 the German high command surrenders unconditionally all land, sea, and air forces at Reims effective 8 May 1945. The accepted date of the end of World War II for Europe is 8 May 1945. There were no celebrations in Herford. We were bombed out, trying to find enough substances to live by and keep a secure roof over our heads. The American's were occupying Herford, and for them the war was not over yet. World War II was still going strong in the Pacific because Japan, the third member of the Axis powers had not surrendered yet. Back on 8 September 1943, Italy the other member of the Axis powers had already surrendered. The Americans that were assigned to Herford were worried about being reassigned to the Pacific Ocean Theater. How could they celebrate.

On 2 September 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allies. World War II was finally over for everybody. There might have been celebrations in the USA. We were busy rebuilding our house and rebuilding our family because my Father had come home. We were not so aware of the US involvement in the Pacific Ocean.

# 1945-1948: Right After War memories until Entered Gymnasium

World War II official ended 8May 1945 in Europe when I was nine years old. It is difficult to describe the circumstances in a few sentences. The war was over, my family had moved back into our bombed-out house, we children played in the ruins of the neighborhood, usually unsupervised, because our mothers were too busy trying to get food for us from somewhere. As long as we were not cold or hungry we generally had a great time.

My Father had come home recently from being an American prisoner. He had been terribly mistreated for months by being almost starved to death and by having to live in an Alpine pasture without shelter. I had not recognized him when he had walked into our yard one day, and I had run away into the house to hide. But my Mother's and grandmother's good care had soon brought him back to the halfway healthy state, and I had my "Vater" at home again.

Many of my friends were not so lucky. Many dads had died in the war, some were known to be prisoners of war, and many were simply lost. Nobody knew where they were if they hadn't died. The same was true of sons and husbands, daughters, mothers and on and on. Every day the Red Cross read long lists of people looking for other family members.

My friends Bubi and Liane knew that their daddy had been taken prisoner in Russia and had been seen in Siberia in a labor camp. There was no mail, only rumors and the hope that one day he would walk into their yard just like my Father had. Among the trains that came through our town every day was occasionally one which carried prisoners of war from Siberia. Local charities and whoever had time

would greet the train, and take food to the travelers and ask if they knew anybody from our town who was till back in Siberia and still alive. Every once in a while one of those thin, scruffy, sick bodies would get off the train before it left the station; he had made it home.

We lived just a few hundred yards from the railroad station and hardly ever missed a prisoners train unless we had to be in school. Liane, Bubi and I would sit on a piece of fence and watch closely. We had one big hope every time, we were hoping to meet their daddy. We did not know what we would say to him or if we would even recognize him, but we waited - again and again. During all those months, actually years, that we waited for him and for other people from our town that we knew or knew about, we heard from those who had already returned about the awful conditions of the prisoner of war camps in Siberia. These tales haunted me at night. I had lived through some horrifying experiences myself during the bombing raids and when the Allied troops invaded our town, but I had no trouble coping with that. However, stories of the cold Siberian nights with the prisoners trying to sleep in unheated shacks without blankets, with nothing but watery soup for food, but above all the cold, windy nights when they couldn't sleep unless they huddled up close together and maybe find their companion dead in the morning, these stores and the fact that there was nothing I could do to help the, disturbed me greatly. Liane, Bubi and I told ourselves, that their daddy had to be in a better sort of a camp.

Several years after the war - I don't remember how it happened - their father came home. Others have never been heard of. I still feel for them.

What lasting effect did this episode have on my life? To this day I never go to bed on a cold cool night without being grateful for having a blanket and a bed of

my own in a well insulated home. With grateful I mean a deep physical feeling of well-being which makes all worries and troubles I might think up during the day seem insignificant in comparison to having to spend a night in a Siberian prisoner of war camp. That's why I don't need a fancy mansion for a home. (But I would like a house with a big guest room).

After the war, surprisingly fast and with the skilled help from other Göβlings and Oma Johanne's friends and relatives, the house on Fürstenaustraβe 10 was made livable again and turned into a proper two family home in the process, with one apartment upstairs and one downstairs, and with a bathroom (with a tub) in each of them. The locomotive had destroyed in the house on 26 November 1944, and by 6 December 1945 the last finishing touches where completed. Not bad for rebuilding during a war.

Then disaster hit on 9 February 1946. Flooding, caused by strong rains in January and the cutting down of the forest for firewood, resulted in the River Werre rising and the pressure behind the dam in the river upstream of Herford caused the dam to fail. Over (anderhalb Metern) half a meter of water covered the downtown streets. Between the rains and the flooding the ground water also came up. Basements were filling with water, and some of the water was sewage. Even our basement filled with water. Basements in town were used to store food, the precious food that was hard to come by in this time of shortage, and the food was contaminated.

My Father was home, his military service officially ended on 11 July 1945 and on 13 July 1945 he was hired again as Stadtinspektor. This lasted until two days after the official end of the war on 2 September 1945. Like most employees of the government (any level) they lost their jobs and father was unemployed from

5 to 30 September 1945. By 1 October 1945 he began volunteering for a local Dentist: Zahntechn. Laboratorium Wilham Wolff, Herford, Fielefelderstrasse, Voluntär as Zahntechnik (volunteer Dental Technician). Eventually the government structure was reestablished and my Father once again became a Stadtinspektor (City Official, Inspektor is a civil service rank) and was in charge of Education, Arts, and Cultural.

Employment that paid a salary might have been hard to find or keep, but my parents were not idle. At first though, my Father was too weak to work. Because of his emaciated condition he had to have special food. He needed protein, but the only meat that he could have was horse meat. Horse meat does not contain fat and is easier to digest. Every other day I would be sent to the butcher for another package of horse meat. With this meat and other good food, my Father's health improved.

British occupation began on 16-20 May 1945 and went until May 1949. Soon the British began investigating all the surviving men for possible ties to the Nazi Party. My Father had joined the Nazi Party in March 1937. He had to join because it was a requirement for his job in the city government. But as I explained in other tales, when he did not agree with Party policies, he quietly made sure that these bad policies could not be enforced. On 20 Mar 1946, father filled in forms listing his Nazi party affiliation and his military service. He then received a letter on 13 August 1946 where "They" (the British) were going to investigate his Nazi Party past. On 28 November 1946 he received letter where "They" explained their findings. Luckily the findings matched what Father had filled in on the forms.

There were funds available through the city for rebuilding war damaged homes. Father tried to apply for some of these funds. On 26 February 1946 he

received a letter denying war related damage retribution because house was owned by Gustav Gößling in Milwaukee and was signed by the Stadtkämmerer. Father then submitted the contract he had with Gustav Gößling, where for the right to live in the house, father would continue to pay the liens on the house and maintain the house. There was no rent. I do not know if we ever received any money from these rebuild funds.

Mother Ella was good a acquiring good food. She was a good conversationalist and used this to help the family. The green grocer would set aside her portion, so that when she come into the store, he could personally give it to her and have a good conversation. Mother was also good at bartering. A special store appeared after the war, were you could bring old items and exchange them immediately for another item in the store, or get credit. My older sister Margret was five years older than me, and although many of her items could be modified (we had a seamstress), some items could not. Such as coats. So we would take her old coat to the barter store, and I would receive my very own coat. For some reason it was a better coat because it was not a hand-me-down from Margret. It was still a used coat, but better.

Father also used his skills to acquire daily necessary items. Before the war father had been active in the soccer team. Many of the members were farmers. Their sons were going to inherit the farms, but with several of the sons there were problems. The sons were not doing well in their education, especially in math. My Father was great at math. So he would bicycle out to the farms and tutor the sons. In exchange, he came home with wonderful fresh farm products.

First though, Father had to put together a bicycle. My Father was not very good mechanically, but with the help of other family members, they put together

bicycles. One day, the family was to go to a family get-together in another village, it might have been a wedding, and there were not enough bicycles. I had to stay home. I felt worse about missing the cake than about being left behind.

My Father's mother had survived the war and was living on, not very far from Fürstenaustraβe 10. It was traditional in Germany to call Oma's by their address. So I called my Father's mother, Oma Engerstraβe instead of Oma Christine, her given name. Actually, I should have been calling Oma Johanne, Oma Amerika, but because it was not wise to use the word "Amerika" during the war, I called her Oma Johanne. Back to Oma Engerstraβe, she was already a widow and did not have a lot of means. Tante Hanne, her daughter, would send care packages by train. I was sent to the train station to pick up the package and deliver them to Oma on Engerstraβe. She was very kind to me and would share the contents with me, especially the chocolates and cakes.

As Oma Engerstraβe became older she started to believe that I was her long dead daughter. Her daughter, Ännchen, was in her early twenties when she died in the 1920's. Because of the World War I retribution and dept payments Germany had to pay, everything was in short supply and inflation was explosive. The whole family was suffering from malnutrition, but it effect Ännchen the most. My Father, Ännchen's younger brother, would hunt sparrows so that Ännchen could have meat. It was not enough, and she died from malnutrition. Later, Oma Engerstraβe also thought my Mother was her long dead daughter. My Mother would visit Oma often, and never corrected Oma's delusion. I think that Oma Engerstraβe died thinking that her daughter Ännchen was alive and healthy (instead that was my Mother).

While I was in Tante Hanne's house in Shotmar section of Bad Salzuflen

during the bombings, I found a \$1 million Papiermark (Paper Mark) note from the early 1920's. In the 1920's mass starvation and high inflation Tante Hanna had a \$1 million Papiermark note, that could not even buy bread, so she folded it up and used to hold door to the wardrobe shut. I left it there because it was still worthless. Papiermark had been replaced by the Reichmark (RM) in 1924.

The Reichmark (RM) was used until June 1948 when it was replaced with the Deutsche Mark (DM). We were supposed to exchange our Reichmarks for the new Deutschemark. I do not know why, but I did not want to exchange my money. I kept my Reichmarks in my dress pocket. When I did take them out of my pocket to buy something it was worthless. The time to exchange had passed. I had my first financial lesson; timing is important.

Soon after the war sometime in summer of 1945, Oma Johanne received bad news. Gustav Gößling, her husband in Milwaukee, had died on 15 October 1944, the same night that she had refused to leave the house for a bunker, and through the bombing raid she had hung onto the chimney that her husband had built. Although correspondence between Germany and US did not resume until the fall of 1945, the Red Cross had finally been able to connect the dots and notify Oma Johanne.

According to letters and other correspondence I found, Oma Johanne tried to return to the States as soon as possible after the war. Her daughter Grete (Margret) led the effort by writing and pleading and trying different ways to get a re-entry permit for her mother, but without success. Oma Johanne had to apply for a new immigration visa which was eventually granted. She left Germany (probably Cuxhaven) in late April of 1947 and landed in New York on May 7, 1947. Her long "visit" which started in July 1939, was finally over.

During the night before Oma Johanne left, she slipped a little silver ring with

a coral bead on my finger. I pretended to sleep because I did not want to say goodbye. I know she must have been happy to be back "home" with three of her children and (then) five grandchildren there. Once Oma Johanne left Germany, we began to call her Oma Amerika. Oma Amerika adjusted quite well to her life as a widow in Wisconsin, it seems. But she always worried about Diethard and at some time tried to get him to come to Milwaukee, which, of course, was refused by my Father.

Herford was within the British Occupation Zone, and there was a large presence of British troops. I was walking home one day when a strange man approached me. I am usually friendly, but something was not right about this man. He grabbed me and started to yank me behind a wall or bushes. It happened fast. I kicked him and must have made contact with some sensitive area. He let go and I ran down the road. There were some British Officers smoking on a doorstep not far away. They saw this altercation and immediately chased the man. I ran home. I was so distraught, my Father could tell that something drastic had happened. I told him. He ran out of the house in search of the man. Somehow he found out that the man had been taken by the British Officers to the police station at the train station. I heard that when my Father got to the station the same British Officers had to restrain my Father from attacking the man. The tale I heard later was this man had just been released from jail, did not know what to do, had no family, no skill, no job, no place to live; so he did the only thing he knew. Break the law so that he could go back to prison where there is food and shelter. To this day I do not know how far he would have taken the attack. I am just grateful for the quick action of the British Officers with this man and with my Father.

We felt sorry for the British troops that we saw in Herford. Not only could they not afford long pants during cold weather, they also were no used to many of the things we took for granted. We were definitely under the impression that even at home England they did not have the same quality of food, clothing, and products that we were used to. The British were dismantling old German factories and shipping them to England. They were also shipping machinery and construction material back to England. They must also have a problem with their education system. The British were encouraging highly skilled and highly educated Germans to emigrate to England to continue their careers. The US and Soviet Union was also recruiting.

One thing that the British did have was penicillin. My brother Diethard's appendix burst and he had to have an operation to have it removed. What made it worse, the appendix was on the wrong side. In those years, the surgeons had no way to know this before the operation. So his scar is extremely long. Although the surgeons tried to remove the burst appendix and all the puss, Diethard still developed an infection. He was dying, slowly. My Mother and Tante Hilde had heard about this new medicine that the British doctors had. But it was only available for soldiers, not civilians. This was also true in England and USA. It was still an unknown drug. Tante Hilde was determined. While my Mother stayed at my brother's side, she went to the British. She worked her way up the chain of command and finally reached the Court of Appeal. Tante Hilde could not say "Appeal" correctly and it always came out as "Apple". This Court could approve the use of penicillin for civilians. She came home with a vial. Our family doctor came to administer the drug. But the instructions for dosage were in English and he could not read English. My Mother and the doctor sat together and translate the English language and the English measurements. They must have translated and converted correctly. Diethard survived and grew up to have a wonderful family and career.

Shortage after the end of the war came in many forms. My Father was put in charge of Displaced persons. This included refugees from "Eastern" part of Germany. He would find homes for these families. Not everybody wanted to have strange families living with them in their own house. Some refugee families had to be split over multiple homes. No matter how hard father tried, he could not keep everybody happy. Many times somebody would approach him and offer a bribe. He would not accept. As the shortage became worse, and we were in desperate need for certain items, he would discuss with my Mother that he did not want to accept the bribes. Luckily, somehow we always managed to adjust and endure.

One adjustment was the lack of paper. Although we were moving around I still attended the local Volksschule. Doing the homework became a problem. Paper was in short supply. Many times I would do my homework on the white margins of the newspaper. We started using the "Tafel" again which is a small hand carried chalk board. That hardest part of use a Tafel, is making sure that my work did not accidently get erased on the way to school.

For some time I wore wooden shoes. They were great for walking in wet streets. But they were too big. So I had to stuff them with newspaper or old cloth so that they would not fall off.

Interesting enough the Quaker's from Amerika were involved in the war effort, but indirectly. In the Volksschule, the Quaker provided a mid morning snack that we called Quäker Speisung. Mostly it consisted of Chocolate milk, a one pot soup, and porridge. For many students it was their only descent meal. I was lucky that my parents were so good at bargaining for food. And I was perfecting my skill of being friendly so that I would be invited into people's kitchen.

The shortage of food effect people differently. There was a neighborhood boy that we called "Der Dicke" would steal eggs right from the hen house. My Father always said "Let him do that". The boy had lived in a Siberian camp with his mother and younger brother. Der Dicke was allowed under fence to find food for his family. Because he learned to steal food from the local village, he was able to keep his mother and brother fed. Father made sure that there were eggs under the hens for Der Dicke to steal. Der Dicke never did learn right from wrong. Later in life he always had problems with the law.

Der Dicke's younger brother fared better. His name was Fredie. Their mother liked to bake cakes. So I made sure that Fredie (who was more my age) was always my boyfriend so that I would be invited over for cake.

By 1948 I was admitted to Gymnasium, Herford was in the middle of rebuilding, Germany was once again trying to find a place in the world's stage, and I was ready to fulfill Miss Düwel vision. Miss Düwel was the teacher who had convinced my parents to send me to Gymnasium. She had explained to my parents that if God gave a child good health, intelligence and some talent, that child's parents owed it to God and society to develop those gifts for everybody's benefit. And that child would later have the duty to use the education gained to be useful to society. I was ready.

## 1948-1950: Enter Gymnasium school until Renate was born

All through my nine years in the all girl Gymnasium the idea of increasing knowledge and skills as a matter of responsibility towards society was the underlying philosophy. Few teachers expressed it in those words, it was simply taken for granted. The notion of getting an education in order to earn more money did not cross my path until I came to the United States.

I attended Königin-Mathilde-Schule, which is named after the first German Königin (Queen) Mathilde, Wife of German King Heinrichs I, and Mother of German Emperor Otto I. Königin-Mathilde grew up in Herford sometime in the 900's. In 1948 there were enough girls entering this school that we were divided into two classes. Our class had 52 girls at the beginning. We were called the Sexta Klasse B (sixth class B). In our Class group picture is our main teachers, Frau Piek and Frau Dr. Glaubitt.

Gymnasium is not free, my parents were paying tuition and for books. Throughout the year, we would go on special class trips and events which also cost money. I felt honored that my parents were willing to take on this responsibility. And I took to heart the argument that Miss Düwel, my Volksschule teacher, used to convince my parents to allow me to attend the Gymnasium. That if God gave a child good health, intelligence and some talent, that child's parents owed it to God and society to develop those gifts for everybody's benefit. And that child would later have the duty to use the education gained to be useful to society. During my nine years I was active in the school council, clubs, and local politics.

The German Gymnasium is different than the American High School. Students enter the Gymnasium close to their twelfth birthday and if they stay the whole nine years, they leave when they are age twenty. At the end of the nine

### 1948-1950: Enter Gymnasium school until Renate was born

years, the students sit for the "Abitur". The Abitur is equivalent to two years of college in America. After the Abitur, the students usually continue on to the University.

Not all students make it through the complete nine years. After six years students can leave with a "Ein Jährigan" which is basically equivalent to the American High School diploma. In 1953 to 1954 the Ein Jährigan's left and there were 31of us remaining. Others left along the way and by 1957 there were 17 students that sat for the Abitur.

The following is the year, age and class names used during my Gymnasium:

Gymnasium class 1948 age 11: Sexta Klasse

Gymnasium class 1949 age 12: Quinta Klasse

Gymnasium class 1950 age 13: Quarta Klasse

Gymnasium class 1951 age 14: Untertertia Klasse

Gymnasium class 1952 age 15: Obertertia Klasse

Gymnasium class 1953 age 16: UII Untersekunda Klasse

Gymnasium class 1953: Einjährige leave

Gymnasium class 1954 age 17: OII Obersekunda Klasse

Gymnasium class 1955 age 18: Unterprima Klasse

Gymnasium class 1956 age 19: OIb Oberprima OIb Klasse

Gymnasium class 1957 age 20: Abitur

During the first summer, 1948, some of us created a "Spielgemeinschaft", play group. We created our own plays, and invited guests to see us perform. And we also just played together. We would also read and discuss books. I was very fond of a series of Wild West small booklets, especially the main character Connie Curl, Der Wunder Schütze. This is when my friends began to call me "Connie" as a nickname.

Gerda Neyer and I began to walk together to school. She lived closer to school so I would walk by her house. We developed a sophisticated system of leaving stones so that we would know if the other had already left for school. When I arrived at her front gate, if the stones were in a particular pattern, she had already left for school. If there were no stones, I would wait, she was still in the house, then we could walk together. Gerda 's father was a doctor and he had his practice in the house. One of his nurses (Else Berger) observed that stones were being left at the gate and that they would change. She had not seen Gerda or me leave the stones. She was convinced that some spies were at work and sending messages. She called the police to investigate. The police investigated and were quickly able to determine that it was just two school girls leaving messages, not spies. There was no national security threat. This same nurse, Else Berger, would years later become my Stepmother, but that is another tale.

Gerda Neyer's father was a OBGYN doctor. Dr Neyer was also very interested in mind games, especially telepathy. He would develop tests to determine if Gerda and I had any telepathy powers. We would stare at cards and try to transmit the image. Or try to determine the thoughts of the other person. Dr Neyer seemed pleased with our abilities. I have never figured out how to develop my telepathic abilities into a useful skill.

One of my Father's responsibilities was to organize summer camps for inner city children. It was important for these children to have a safe place to play and to spend time in fresh air. For several summers in my childhood, he would send me to these same camps. I think my Father understood that I enjoyed these summer camps because I enjoyed meeting new people, was always looking for new adventures and activities, and of course the fresh air was good for me. In the summer of 1947, I went to a children summer camp in Espelkamp not far from Herford. In the summer of 1949, I went to a "Kinderheim" vacation summer health camp on the island of Langeoog, in the North Sea.

My family was also busy. Oma Johanne had managed to make it back to her family in Milwaukee America in April 1947, just before I entered the Gymnasium. In 1949, buildings were put in the backyard which served as a garage, office space and storage rooms for Onkel Hermann's business. Onkel Hermann had a wholesale business in chocolates and other sweets. He had a truck that he used to distribute the confections. Onkel Hermann years later, committed suicide in one of these buildings. He did leave a note. My Father found Onkel Hermann and the note. My Father would never let Tante Hilde (Onkel Hermann's wife) read the note.

In late 1949, my parents got a shock of their lives. Mother was proud that she had passed her "time of life" event without even one hot flash. She went to her Gynecologist just to make sure that all was ok. Her Doctor informed her that she had not gone through her "time of life" but that she was pregnant. I can remember that when she came home, I was sitting in the living room, and my parents were sitting at the kitchen table. Suddenly I heard my Father say "what at your age!". But they both quickly adjusted, and my younger sister Renate was on her way.

## 1950-1953: Renate being born until Mother dies

Renate was born 7 August 1950, in Herford. My parents were delighted. Especially my Father. By 1950, he had a stable job and stable family in a stable society, so he could really enjoy being a father to a darling daughter. The rest of us children were busy with our own lives. Margret and Diethard had already left school and were working. I was busy with my studies at the Gymnasium.

Once I was babysitting Renate, I wanted to enter a radio competition sponsored by the North-West German Radio Station. You were to write an essay on "What I did over the Summer". The only paper I could find belonged to a calendar, so I wrote my essay on the back of a calendar page and sent into to radio station for competition. I won the competition and story was read over radio. I did not hear the reading. But neighbors stopped me and congratulated me. Obviously I do not have a copy and I barely remembered what I wrote. I think it was about taking a walk though a field when a storm came up suddenly with lots of lightning and thunder. I ran for cover, but could not remember if it was safe to take shelter under a tree or not. Wish I could remember the details, I do not even remember if there was a prize, or if the reward was to have your essay read over the radio.

I started writing without ambition or great hopes, rather following an intuition while I was babysitting for my little sister one night. During the following years I wrote essays about places I visited and few very short stories that I sold to daily newspapers.

In 1951 I had my confirmation in Jacobikirche (Radewiger) on 27 May. This was the first time I wore nylons. Then in Germany we called them "Perlons" which is actually a trade name. During the confirmation we had to kneel several times. We were kneeling on a grid over the heating system. The heat ruined my

Perlons. Several of my friends attended my confirmation including; Nanni Lunecke, Peppi Moszin, Anne Storm, and Gerda Neyer.

Nanni was the daughter of Dr Lunecke, the eye doctor across the street from our house on Fürstenaustraße 10. Many an afternoon, I would be at her kitchen table helping her with her homework, and enjoying a piece of cake. The Lunecke's housekeeper would bake wonderful cakes, and of course I knew exactly when Nanni needed help with her homework.

I also developed an interest in the performing arts and 4 February 1952 I attended a performance at the Landestheater Detmold, which is about 30km from Herford. An easy train ride. Many times I would have free tickets because of my Father was in charge of the cultural department in city government. Sometimes after the performance I would be in charge of presenting the flowers to the lead actors as tokens of appreciation.

Father would still come home for the main meal at midday or 1pm. I was also home from school by this time. We would sit and talk. Often he would be trying to resolve an issue at work, and he would explain the details to me. Many times, by just going through the explaining, he would arrive at a solution. Other times, I could help him with suggestions. But he also would still take a siesta, and wake up with the solution.

In 1952, I went to a summer camp on the Priwall peninsular on the Baltic See. We camped in tents, enjoyed the fresh air off the sea, and had many adventures. I have a photo of me and my new found boyfriend standing outside of my tent, or is it his tent? When the boys were supposed to return to their city, there was a delay. Their inner-city had some kind of plague or disease spreading, and the boys had to stay an extra week or two in the camp. I was elated.

Exploring Germany by hiking, biking, or train was a favorite pastime of mine and my friends. In my 1952 and 1953 Youth Hostel pass there are stamps for Goltau, Priwall, Hamburg, Wingsy, Duhnen, Bremerhaven (22Aug1953) and Bremen. My friends and I were around 14 to 16 years old and Wunderlust was in our blood. In early 1953 I went on a bicycle trip through the Lüneburg Heath with my friends Hella, AnneMarthe, and Gisela.

At the Gymnasium, in June of 1953 our class year was called UIIb Untersekunda Klasse. Many students left the school with their Einjährige certificates. In our class photo UIIb, there were 31 left in our class to continue.

What was popular in the 1950's is having pen pals. I had a Japanese pen pal who wrote in English and German, Yasuo Nakaye from Tennoji, Osaka, Japan. He was 20 years old.

In the summer of 1953, my Mother developed gallstones. She went into the Herford Hospital to have them removed. The surgeon that was scheduled to do the operation was called away and a substitute surgeon stepped in. The substitute surgeon was not as experienced, and my Mother developed a post-operative infection. The infection was not getting better. My Mother wrote a letter to Dr Brackts and surgeon friend of hers asking for assistance. She then gave the letter to the nurse, Else Berger, to mail or take to Dr Brackts. Nurse Else did not mail or deliver the letter to Dr Brackts. Instead, my Mother was then transported by ambulance to a hospital in a neighboring town, Bad Oeynhausen. On 1 July 1953, my Mother died.

In Milwaukee, Oma Johanne watched her son Otto walk up the driveway.

Just by the way he was walking, she instantly knew that he had bad news about one of her daughters in Germany. Oma Johanne died of a heart attack on July 6, 1953,

# 1950-1953: Renate being born until Mother dies

when she learned of Ella's death. Johanne never met her youngest grandchild, Renate, who was born in Herford in 1950

## 1953: Mother dying on 1 July 1953 in Herford

This experience came out of a very unique set of circumstances and is of significance only because it might explain my relationship to organized religion. I do not want to say that my view is right or of relevance to any other person.

I was sixteen. My Mother had died a few months earlier after a long time in the hospital. My Father, my two sisters and my brother were coping somehow with the motherless situation at home. I told myself that in the overall scheme of things in the universe my Mother would only temporarily be separated from me until it was time for me to die and join her in heaven. In the meantime she would be watching me, and in my mind I could have conversations with her. That was the vision of the world I thought I had learned about in church, and I had always accepted that.

Then, on rainy, windy afternoon in the fall, I happened to run into our Pastor Henche. He had known my Mother very well and asked about how we were getting along and how we were taking the loss. I told him that I felt that she was somehow still with me. And then I asked him how he, as an authority on these matters, envisioned the actual meeting of the souls in heaven. Would I be able to recognize her right away? As soon as I uttered that question I found it very naive, yet, I was not prepared for his answer.

The pastor said in his ever-comforting man-of-the-cloth voice that, oh no, once a person is dead the soul goes to heaven and is no longer interested in anything or any person on earth. All the moral suffering is left behind, and the soul enjoys eternal life in the beauty and purity of God's presence.

I was shattered. My Mother was now nothing but an unidentifiable, happy

bubble? The pastor had just killed my Mother, right there in the wind and rain, he had killed her with the words he had just spoken. As a figure who had always presented what was true and right, my first reaction was to believe what he had just told me, that my Mother was no longer interested in me, did not exist anymore.

It took me several weeks to come to terms with that experience. But I did not cope with it by accepting the pastor's description of "life" after death. I coped with it by deciding that the pastor might be wrong. Maybe he was just like any other human being trying to make a living, and somehow he became a pastor, and not matter what he believed later on in life, he had to act as the man of God. People expect that from him.

And then I looked at the institution of the church as I knew it, the Lutheran variety, and then I looked at many other organized religions, and I came to the conclusion, that while there is a definite need in most people to believe in some superior power called God in our language, the organizations that people build around that God are based on their social needs. There is nothing wrong with joining one of those groups or congregations, but I would keep in mind that even the pastor or the preacher, even the pope, are only human. (The Catholic Church says that the Pope can do no wrong).

I do believe in God, in a being greater than myself, and I still believe that (if we have a soul, if we are not just a constellation of energy bundles0, we stay "ourselves" even in heaven, whatever that is, and that there can be conversations between people in heaven and people still on earth.

## 1953-1957: Mother dying until Abitur

Since my Mother's death was not unexpected, my Mother had pre ordered some funeral attire for me, a black skirt and black blouse. My Father did not know anything about what a daughter should wear to a funeral, and I was too disturbed to ask my Father for money to shop for cloths for myself. My Mother had thought of everything although she was suffering from post-operative infections.

Others in Herford were concerned about our family situation. In the 1950's you could not just check a book out from the library. You had to ask the Librarian for the book and she would approve of the selection before letting you take the book home. One day I wanted to read Die Verwandlung (The Metamorphosis) by Franz Kafka, and she did not think it was appropriate for me to read this book so soon after my Mother's death. Not only did she refuse to let me check out the book, she called my Father because she was concerned. My Father told her that I was mature enough to know what was appropriate for me to read, and I could check out any book I desired.

Renate was two years old and I was sixteen, when our Mother, Ella passed away. After school, I would have her with me while I did many of my chores. One day at school, my Latin teacher wanted to us to turn in our Latin class notes. I had a thick notebook and had entered notes from my English class along with my Latin class in this same notebook. The Latin teacher told me to bring my notebook to her home after school so that she can grade the Latin entries. That afternoon, I put Renate in her pram and we walked to the Latin teacher's house. You would have thought the world had ended, the Latin teacher was so upset that I had brought my baby sister along with me. What should I have done, left Renate at home alone?

My Mother's passing changed my life and my perspective on life, but life must go on. I continued with my education which included school day trips. On 19 August 1953 we were in Hamburg, and I get a traffic ticket for crossing at red light in as pedestrian! What was I thinking!

While I was attending Gymnasium, my brother Diethard and sister Margret finished their education. They both went from Volksschule to Realschule (Secondary School) and finished with a Mittlere Reife at about age 16. Diethard specialized in accounting and later had a career with the Energy Company in accounts collection. Margret specialized in retail sales, and work for a while in sales.

Margret married Hans-Gerd Bruhn on 3 December 1954. Margret thought she was pregnant but bleed heavily during honeymoon, and probably lost the baby. Her first born, Andreas, was born two years later in 1956 and later she had another son Mathias.

Hans-Gerd was in the fashion industry. He was responsible for manufacturing clothing for women. One summer he found me a job. I was ironing labels on to some type of item that I do not remember. The job was boring and repetitive. There were several us sitting together, and of course we could iron and talk. One lady knew Italian, and she began to teach us Italian using the story "Pinocchio". We had studied Pinocchio in German, but the story was originally written in Italian. Pinocchio sounds so much better in Italian. To this day, I still have fond memories of this summer job, and all because she made the difference.

Sometime in late 1954 or early 1955, a friend, Ilse Peemüller, and I went on a hitchhiking trip through Bad Pyrmont (about 60km from Herford), and stayed in youth hostels along the way. My youth hostel passport has a Hameln stamp, so we

made it that far which is about 130km from Herford. Ilse grew up in another part of Germany, and to complete her education, she had do an apprentice. She did her 1 year apprentice as Housekeeper for Mrs. Meyer's, our next door neighbor. Mrs. Meyer is the neighbor who used to brush my blonde curls in exchange for chocolate. I remember sitting in Ilse's bedroom, and it was very cold. Much colder than my bedroom. Later in the 1960's when my husband was stationed in Roswell New Mexico USA, we sponsored Ilse to immigrate into the USA.

It was about this time that in our house, Fürstenaustraβe 10, the bedrooms finally got heat. Before, the bedrooms had no way to be heated, but the kitchen and the living room had a big stove for evening comfort. In the late 1950s or 1960s, electric heaters or gas heaters were installed in most rooms, doing away with waking up in the morning with icicles on the tip of the nose.

I became involved in local issues in Herford. I felt that a particular Kriegerdenkmal (war statue) in Alter Markt downtown Herford was inappropriate. The statue depicted a Angle woman holding a soldier in her lap, and the soldier is dying. I believed it was inappropriate because it glorified a soldier dying. I campaign local Herford officials to replace the statue. Eventually we did come to a compromise. The statue with the dying soldier was moved to the Alte Freidhof (cemetery). Maybe by now Herford has placed another more appropriate statue in the Alter Markt.

Part of our education in the Gymnasium included learning to organize school trips. Some were local and just a few hours. Other involved traveling to another city. Day trips included Porta Westfalica, Externsteine Teuteburger Wald, Hermans-Denkmal near Detmold, Bad Salzuflen, Kaiser Wilhelm Denkmal, and Marburg. These trips sometimes involved expenses. There were a few families

that could only barely afford the tuition for the Gymnasium, and they could not afford the extra cost of class field trips. The more well-to-do families voluntarily paid more toward the class field trips, to offset the cost and allow all of us to attend. This generosity was unique to our class. Normally only part of class can attend the extra field trips, but in our class, almost all of students went to every field trip.

As a family we would sometimes drive or take a train to Dümmer See for a day trip. I have family photos taken about 1956. If we were driving, many times Hans-Gerd, husband of Margret would be driving us. This See was a popular destination and provided lots of opportunities to swim, play, and eat.

I had other interests that did not include the Gymnasium. Since I was home from school by one in the afternoon, I had plenty of time to pursue other interests. I had a Photo Agfa camera box, and used it to take photo of solar eclipse from balcony in about 1955 or 1956. I also took piano lesson from Frau Schultze. My sister, Margret, was also taking piano lessons. She was so much better than I was; could be because she was much older than me, but I was jealous. Later when I became a Language Teacher in the United States, I used my piano lesson to teach German to students through songs.

I also took a evening course in the Economics of Money. From this course I learned that a single dollar that is spent in the economy, becomes three dollars in circulation as businesses leverage the one dollar by lending, borrowing, and delaying payments. Later in my life, my husband and I would invest in various financial ventures and rental real-estate, and my knowledge of economics came in useful.

I also enjoyed taking French Seminars after school. They were taught by a

young, good looking, very charming man. I might have missed a several days of Gymnasium because of all my extracurricular activities, but I had a good attendance record for these French Seminars. One of the novels that we studied in French was "Le Petit Prince" (The Little Prince) by Antonie de Saint-Exupéry. I was studying about a little prince on a little planet, while I could look up and see my very own prince charming. I do not remember if the teacher ever knew that I was so enamored.

My friends and I would develop skits. Then we would play these skits in front of the patients sitting in Dr Lunecke's waiting room. In those days, you did not make an appointment to see the doctor. Instead you would arrive at the clinic in the morning and sign in. If there was a long list of other patients already signed, you had a long wait. Some patients would leave for a few hours and visit friends (for example, my Mother) or shop. Others just sat in the waiting room. We had a willing audience.

In the Gymnasium we also performed plays. I have a photo of a cast of six, all of us with paper bag masks on our heads. The masks are all some kind of wild cats. I was the lion. The play was called "Die Tiger." We had to do everything for this play. We wrote the text for this play, designed the costumes, and organized the rehearsals.

The Gymnasium was not only about cerebral studies, in Physical Education class we learned different sports. In 1956 I was playing basketball, when I took a jump towards the basket and landed incorrectly. Our families General Physician, Dr Werner wrote me an excuse from Physical Education for six months due to a back injury. Luckily my back did heal and I have not had any back problems.

I had many boyfriends over time (rarely more than one at a time). Wolfgang

Milke was a journalist for the local paper Herforder Kriesblatt. I dated him and his motor bike in 1956-1957. When he found out that I liked to write, he easily talked me into attending local events and writing a short piece for the newspaper. He would put his name on the byline. Did not matter to me, I enjoyed attending the events and writing the articles. Throughout my life I have honed this skill and have written several articles that have been published in newspapers and magazines and the byline has my name.

Others included another Wolfgang who considered me a feige (coward) because I did not want to "do it". This drove him to poetry. I belonged to a Wandervogel (Wandering Birds) group in 1955 and 1956. Manfred Köhne was leader of our group. Manfred Köhne in 1956 addressed a letter to me as "an Helga Pörtner der lieben, lieben in der Fürstenaustr 10 in Herford in Westfalen". I have photos of Hans-Georg who was my boyfriend sometime in 1955 or 1956. I was also a member in 1956 of the Anglo-German Club. Years of membership in the Anglo-German club gave me many enjoyable evenings and outings and some practice in English. Erich Pieper wanted to pay me 3,000 marks if I would marry him later. His father was a U-boat commander and died. Therefore mother had a large widow pension. She needed a "male" guardian so my Father was appointed. Spoiler alert, I went off to America and married Hans instead. Erich Pieper never did marry. One boyfriend, Hans-Joachim Echternkamp in 1955, became rather jealous and possessive. I was not ready for a steady commitment. It was not easy, but we eventually part ways.

Most of my boyfriends eventually just became friends. We would exchange postcards. It was popular to send a postcard to all your family and friends whenever you traveled. In our teenage years, we all traveled around Germany quite a bit. So I received multiple postcards from current and ex boyfriends. The

postman noticed all these postcards. And of course, the words are all there to be read by anyone, including the postman. Unknown to me, our postman entered me into the "Friendliness Person" contest. In his opinion, I must be very popular and very friendly. The number of postcards from boyfriends was proof. I won the contest. I do not know if there was a prize other than being given the title of the "friendliness person".

Most of the time when I was with a boyfriend, we were actually in groups. In the summer of 1955, Anne-Marthe Schröder, Wolf-Dieter and I were heavily into camp fire poetry. Another favorite group activity was to walk along the old town "moot". This walk way is five kilometers and normally would take one hour to complete, without a boyfriend.

One time my popularity had an unintended consequence. I was absent from school one day. The next day, I find out that I had been elected "President of the Student Council". How did that happen? I was very outgoing and already involved in multiple clubs. So when there was an election, who did they think of, Connie (my nickname at school).

After becoming Student Body President, I missed a lot of school by giving speeches and representing the school. In 1956, I took a trip to Bonn, as president of Student Council, with other student presidents to protest against what Minister Kaiser had said. In this case, we were disagreeing over the separation of Germany into East and West. We students felt that the new German government was not protesting enough against the actions between the USSR and the rest of Europe. This was not the only political related event that I attended. I was very active in political issues. I was concerned that the new German government was just a puppet government. Even today, no matter where we live, I care about issues

become involved in the local politics.

It was the 1950's and the Soviet Union (USSR) was very active. The "iron curtain" had been drawn dividing Germany into the West and East. Other countries were drawn into the USSR, not all willingly. The Wall, especially the Berlin wall would not be erected until the 1960's. The form of government in the East was communism, and several of us were curious. We formed a group and began to question and investigate. Through this group, I was contacted and was invited to visit a major city in East Germany, so that I could experience firsthand, the positive aspects of communism.

So in June 1956 I took a trip to Leipzig in East Germany. The event was for Sportsfestival between multiple schools throughout Germany. I did not participate as an athlete, but as an "intellectual". East Germany was already under Soviet Occupation and was separated from the rest of Europe, especially from West Germany. I had an East German minder that would join me every morning. His job was to make sure that I received a favorable impression of life under communism. I had to be careful of what I said, especially any comment concerning my observations. I did notice that the family that I lived with was receiving extra portions of coffee and butter. And that my minder made sure that he arrived in time for breakfast so that he could have some coffee and butter. He enjoyed the coffee, but I had not yet developed a taste for coffee, but I was a good guest and finished my cup. Whenever I expressed a desire to see a museum or go to a pub, arrangements were quickly made, and I never had to pay for anything. Including going to Auerbachs Keller. Young Goethe often visited Auerbach's Kellar while studying at Leipzig University from 1765 to 1768. Auerbach's Kellar owes its worldwide reputation to Goethe's play Faust as the first place Mephistopheles takes Faust on their travels. The Gymnasium, we had studied this

1953-1957: Mother dying until Abitur

play in Literature.

A very strange thing happened in Auerbach's Kellar that night in 1956. I did not know about the "almost" encounter until my future husband, Hans, was being investigated in the mid 1960's for a high level security clearance for the US Air Force. Hans was in Auerback's Kellar in 1956, the very same night when I was there. We never meet that night in 1956. Luckily the minder that I had, was a double agent. He was reporting to his communist bosses, and also to the USA FBI. In the mid 1960's the FBI knew in exact details whom I talked to, where I went, what I said, and what I drank or ate. The FBI had the information for my complete trip to Leipzig, not just for that evening. They knew that Hans and I did not meet that night in Auerbach's Keller, but the coincidence was very disconcerting to the FBI agents. My husband, Hans, eventually did get his security clearance, but only because the FBI had so much detail from the double agent.

On 7 February 1957 I received a Bescheinigung (certificate), stating that as of 7 January 1957 I had meet the requirements to sit the Abitur. I received my "Zeugnis der Reife" (certificate of completion) dated 8 March 1957. The day before my 20th birthday.

My Abitur was held near the Stiftberg Kirche in Herford. I know this because I have a photo taken from the window of the Abitur that looks down on the Stiftberg Kirche. Maybe I felt that I needed Devine help. At the Abitur you go before a board of teachers. This board decide which subjects and questions to test you on. The questions and answers can be written or oral. You have no warning on the subjects.

The one oral question I remember is "how would you calculate the mass of our sun?" Luckily Herr Schmale our Physics teacher had taught me how to calculate the mass of our sun. I could provide a confident and comprehensive answer that impressed the Abitur board members. The other board members were impressed on how effective Herr Schmale could teach Physics.

In most of the subjects I received a grade of good or satisfactory, except for mathematics, I received a grade of inadequate. I have a good foundation in mathematics, but I never grasped the higher concepts. The board was satisfied with my education and awarded me the Abitur completion certificate on 8 Mar 1957.

The written questions during the Abitur are answered with essays. The use of multiple choice questions and fill in the blank questions were not used in our Gymnasium's education. Years later I wanted to enter the University of South

Caroline in the USA and had to take the SAT. This test is full of multiple choice questions. I had to study how to answer multiple choice questions. I did well enough to be accepted in the University.

After the Abitur we held an "Abitursball". The school was for girls only, therefore we had to find our own escorts so that we had dance partners. Herr Huber was my escort. He was my current boyfriend of the month. I do not remember much about Hurber. I must have been so excited about receiving my Abitur that I was not paying much attention to my boyfriend.

The seventeen girls/women that passed the Abitur attended the ball and so did our teachers. We all worked nine hard years for this accomplishment.

#### A little comment about each:

Fräulein Haukohl: Taught us Latin. She had become incest when I showed up at her house in 1953 with Renate in her pram. Several years later during a Class Reunion in 1997 Fräulein Haukohl mistook my daughter, Bettina, for me. She began to apologies for her behavior toward me after my Mother's death and when I had to babysit my younger sister Renate. My daughter quickly brought me into the conversation, so that Fräulein Haukohl did not have to apologize twice. I gracefully accepted Fräulein Haukohl kind words.

Fräulein Dr Weihe: Dr Weihe taught us religion. We did not concentrate on any one type or philosophy, but studied a wide range. Dr Weihe lived with her brother. Despite teaching such a emotionally prone subject, Dr Weihe was rather stern.

Fräulein Dr Glaubitt: She taught us mathematics. She was also what is called in America, our homeroom teacher. We were encouraged to bring our

problems and absentee excuses to her.

Herr Schmale: Our only male teacher. He taught us Physics. He drove a small car, and on rainy days he would pick up a student or two on the way to school. He liked to let his hand slide off the gear shift onto the knee of the student in the front seat. I never felt violated, instead felt honored that I could have such an effect on another person. In class, he once asked me to meet him alone in the physics lab. There he showed me how a magnet can effect small carbon slivers as they slide along on glass. Again, I felt honored that he believed that I had the potential and deserved such personal attention. Once during a private session with me, he helped me to calculate the mass of our sun. This became important later during my Abitur. Herr Schmale was on my Abitur board and this was my Physics question. I could provide a confident and comprehensive answer that impressed the other Abitur board members.

Fräulein Klemp: Taught us biology. I only had 6 years of biology during the 9 years at this school

Fräulein Passe: Possibly taught us Chemistry. Of course she burned her hair during one experiment. I only took 1 year of chemistry, the minimum required.

Frau Dr Kirbis: Our Physical Education teacher. She believed that we should be ready for the practical aspects of life. Since there was a good chance that each of us would have a child, she taught us practical exercises to perform while pregnant.

Fräulein Röttger: Taught us English, especially Shakespearean English. Fräulein Röttger is also a distant relative to me.

Fräulein Wittenstein: Taught us Art of all kinds; how to appreciate cultural art, and how to make art.

Fräulein Baars: Taught us German Literature. She had just joined the Gymnasium teaching staff. Because of her teaching, several Professors from Wisconsin University later in my life story, would be impressed on how much I knew about world literature.

Fräulein Feldhahn: Taught us Music of all kinds; how to appreciate cultural music, and how to make music including singing. We did a lot of learning through singing. She did not teach us how to read musical notes. I learned how to read musical notes during my piano tutorial classes in the afternoon after school.

Fräulein Merz: Taught us French. Fräulein Merz was difficult teacher. But she must have taught me well. Later when I was meeting my new Husband's Grandmother in Wiesbaden, I impressed her by addressing her in French, the language of the upper social class.

Margret Müller: Smartest of us all. Lived on a farm, and when she went home she had to run the tractor and work the farm. She married a doctor.

Gerda Kurse: Now Gerda von Paleske and lives in Florida USA. Parents had a pharmacy.

Hella Wölke: Parents were well to do. Father was an accountant. One day I was at their house before school and found out that they have fresh bröchen every morning.

Helga Pörtner: Also known as "Conny" or "Connie". That is me.

Gudrun Landre: Always did what was requested of her.

Thekla Bettac: Belonged to an English hiking club where you were only allowed to speak English during the hike.

Sigrid: Strange, always fell in love. Father wanted to become a priest but mother had become pregnant so they had to get married. Sigrid once fell in puppy love with a Catholic Priest. Priest never knew. I cannot remember her family name.

Erlinde Schmeiβing: Did not live in Herford. Likeable, funny, always joking around.

Ragnhild von: Smart. Was tall and thin. Good in math. I cannot remember her family name.

Ingrid (Inge) Weiβ: Father worked for the Railroad. Father was strange, he liked to spank Inge.

Bärbel Seebach: Right now I cannot remember another about her.

Gerda Neyer: My best friend. Father was Dr Neyer the OBGYN, who loved to test our telepathy abilities.

Hanni: Transferred to our school. I cannot remember her family name.

Leonore (Lore) Quest: Father was a pianist. Lore became a soprano singer.

Renate Ziehm: Boys liked her and she was good looking. For some reason, she died young sometime after the Abitur.

Christa Brundt: Right now I cannot remember another about her.

Brigitte (Pepi) Moszin: Right now I cannot remember another about her.

During the Abitursball we wrote a little sonnet for each of us. My entry was: "Wurfparabeln, ich biete Wurfparabeln sehr gern zum Abitur, das hebt mir die Zensur. Miserabel ist deine Wurfparabel, mein Freundchen Conny, nur, von Können keine Spur." My classmates are making fun of my inability to keep up in mathematics class. When we were studying the parabola for throwing items, I had a hard time understanding and was miserable. And in the Abitur, my mathematics question was about parabola's and I received a score of 'inadequate'. Despite mathematics being my hardest subject, I did receive a good foundation and that was more than satisfactory for me to understand finances.

After this Abitursball, we felt that we were ready to conquer the world. At least our little corner.

### 1957: Abitur until emigrating to US

After the Abitur I started at university. I intended to study anthropology and to become the best journalist ever, but my Father insisted that I learn something more respectable, like becoming a teacher. So I attended College of Education in Bielefeld. I had to take a train to Bielefeld to attend classes and finished one semester before I had a change of plans.

Then only twenty years old, I decided to spend a summer in Italy. My current boyfriend was Donald Brown, a British soldier (P.E. trainer) who was stationed in Herford. I had met him in the Anglo-German club. Donald Brown and I went by train to Tarquinia Italy. We spent 2 or 3 weeks with a group of British artists in a villa.

But, I was starting to have second thoughts about following the safe route of getting a University degree and becoming a Teacher. My Mother had died when I was sixteen. Ever since I had observed that my Father was very lonesome as a widower and longed for female companionship, but refrained from it for the sake of his children. During my first semester at college I decided that I should leave home to give him more freedom. My intuition must have been correct, because just two years after I left, my Father married Else Berger, the nurse from Dr Neyer.

Even before sitting for the Abitur, I had written on 1Feb1957 to Amerikanische Konsulat requesting forms to emigrate to USA. On 22 Mar 1957, my Father wrote a letter of reference (Erklärung), stating that he agrees that I can emigrating to USA by myself. And that he has too many connections to Germany and does not have the desire to emigrate himself.

I also received an invitation from Moscow to attend the Moscow University

### 1957: Abitur until emigrating to US

on a full scholarship. Offer was everything paid for, tuition, room and board, for any major I wanted. Sadly I could not take advantage of this offer. My Father still had a position with the City government, and any connection with communism would have jeopardized his career.

I was only twenty and the world was waiting. I decided to take a year off from attending the university and spend some time in the land of popcorn and beef steaks, the USA. I did not flee poverty, persecution or the law, I was simply hungry for adventure. Combined with this reasoning was an irresistible desire to prove myself in the world without anybody's help.

## 1957: Emigrating to United States

In October 1957, Father and Hans Gerd took me to Cuxhaven, to the Columbus Kai, to the "Alte Liebe" pier. I took the ship "Italia" to America. The night before boarding we spent in Hotel Haus Vaterland in Hamburg. Just like in the movies, the ship left the dock with bands playing and the passengers standing along the rail waving goodbye. I had my green card in my purse and was ready to spend one year in the land of opportunities and adventure.

When I stood on the pier, 43 years later, with my husband, Hans, and when I looked way out to where the horizon melts into the sea, I was again overcome by the longing to know what's out there in that space beyond and the fear of what the future would bring. This mix of hope and fear must have seized every emigrant before me. Being just twenty years old at the time, my uneasiness had vanished the first evening on the ship Italia when I fell in love with the cutest guy on board.

The trip across the Atlantic takes 10 days. I had a good time. I knew how to play chess, knew a lot, could do a lot, and was a good conversationalist. So I received many invitations to tea. And there were lots of single men. When we entered New York harbor, I never saw Lady Liberty because I was fooling around with some guy.

Like most immigrants I had problems with the language. My knowledge of English was largely a collection of grammar book sentences (He/She/it goes to town) and Shakespeare (...it cometh like a gentle rain from heaven upon the earth beneath). My great appreciation of American culture was a Hollywood product: I had watched miles of films like High Noon, Mickey Mouse and - to top them all - Rock Around the Clock. I felt therefore well prepared when I disembarked in New York one day in 1957, survived Immigration, Customs and a taxi ride to Grand

### 1957: Emigrating to United States

Central Station and followed the luring scent of sauerkraut to a pushcart vendor around the corner. Mensch, was I hungry!

The guy was selling skinny sausages on little loaves of bread, with or without sauerkraut.

"I would like to buy a little sausage on ..." I stopped when I realized what my eyes had just read on the banner above the cart: 'hot dogs - .15w, .20w/o". Dogs? Sausages made of dachshunds or Dobermans? My stomach jumped into my throat. I had come to America for adventure, that was true, twenty years old and ready to meet any challenge, but life among dog eaters was definitely beyond my worst expectations.

Still famished, I dragged my suitcase into a narrow sort of restaurant nearby where people rushed along a buffet, grabbed some food, paid, gulped it down and ran. I carefully picked out a fairly civilized looking cheese sandwich and a bottle of beer.

"Your driver's license for that beer, hon," barked the cashier. I knew what a driver's license was, but I didn't have one. I knew nothing about age limits for drinking.

"I do not want to drive the bottle," I said very distinctly, "I want to drink the contents therein."

She yanked the beer away from me and slammed a glass of water (Wasser!) on the tray. What was that talk of liberty and the pursuit of happiness all about when you needed a driver's license to enjoy a bottle of beer? I felt betrayed and wanted to go straight back home to Germany on the next boat. But I didn't have enough money for a return ticket and could only think of a useless phrase, "...my

1957: Emigrating to United States

kingdom for a horse ..." (Shakespeare).

So I stayed and tried to cope. I quickly learned to listen for words that are similar in German and English. Many basics of life sound almost the same: house (Haus), man (Mann), bed (Bett), God (Gott), wine (Wein) and beer (Bier), to name just six (sechs) of them in random order.

From Grand Central Station I took a train to Milwaukee Wisconsin, where Werner Bayer greeted me. Werner is the son of Aunt Margret, sister of my Mother. Werner had been stationed in Germany during his stint in the US Army (there was a draft at that time, so all men spent a few years in the military), and had come to Herford to visit family. So I already knew him. I stayed with Uncle Otto Göβling and his wife Francis. Uncle Otto is the brother of my Mother. Uncle Otto was in the construction business and Aunt Francis was a professional musician (piano).

Sooner or later even the most reluctant immigrants find themselves indulging in the favorite American pastime: working. I started in the advertising department of a Milwaukee journal which must not be named here. I had to contact business people by phone and ask them if they wanted to renew last year's Christmas greetings to their customer in this year's edition. Has anybody ever counted how many ways there are to express "yes" and "no"? "Ahm nut shoor" and "Lettuce think a Dover" were some of the answers that hit my puzzled ear. Since I was paid on a commission basis I decided to mark all customers as "yes" unless I was sure they had meant "no". The supervisor praised me as one of the most successful telephone girls ever. By the time the bills were sent out to the clients, I had already found employment in another part of town.

I was a waitress then, breakfast and lunch in a hotel coffee shop near the

campus where I attended afternoon classes. The clientele was mainly of the business type (two eggs over easy), but not the blue-haired lady in a grey knit suit who, on my second morning, sat inconspicuously in a corner by herself. She ordered a grapefruit. I had never eaten one myself, but I had seen one in the refrigerator and put it on a dinner plate. A whole, round, pink grapefruit. I gave her a paring knife to peal the fruit with and an extra napkin for the mess. She mused over her plate for quite a while, touched the knife, then the grapefruit - and finally she called me over by waving her little finger at me. She snuck a two-dollar trip into my hand and said "I would like to show you how we serve a grapefruit in this country, sweetie. We serve only half..." To this moment I feel the eyes of all the guests watching us.

For lunch she sat in the same corner and ordered a bowl of soup. Refills, a basket of bread and the butter were free. In those days even coffee was free in most restaurants, but not in all.

"Is the coffee on the house?" she whispered after the third bowl of soup.

"Oh, no," I hastened to assure her, ever so anxious to avoid another lecture, "the coffee is right here in the kitchen."

In this same cafe, I did make a good impression to some University Professors. They quickly found out that I could converse in depth on various subjects. They were astounded on the extent of my education. One Professor would bring German literature and ask me to read it out loud. Most of the time it was poems by Rainer Maria Rilke. This professor might also have been a Jesuit Priest. Then we would discuss what I had just read.

Most of the jobs were in Milwaukee and Uncle Otto lived in West Allis, a

suburb, which made getting to work time consuming. I decided to move into the YWCA in Milwaukee. The two girls with whom I was to share a room in the YWCA looked friendly enough on first sight. They had been living together happily for over a year, said Nancy, and they had been expecting me. I felt a bit like a third eye in somebody's face. Mary handed me a bottle with a German wine label on it and beamed with anticipation of my reaction.

"A welcome gift for you," she said.

"A gift?" Poison? There is a German word "gift", and it means poison, nothing else. It can kill you. Naturally I let Nancy and Mary drink most the gift before I touched it. We did become friends after I had a chance to consult my dictionary.

We were all single women in a big town and we knew that there were many eligible bachelors. To help things along, we organized a dance party. To make sure that the bachelors meet some basic requirements, we invited men in uniform. What a potential catch, bachelors with good careers, and good steady income. So we wore our tight sweaters.

## 1957-58: Milwaukee and Courting Hans

Hans saw me across the dance floor and picked me out for a dance. The dance was a waltz. I recognized that his dance steps were German Waltz. American dance in spirals, Germans do a box like pattern. Then I recognized his accent. We had a wonderful evening and he asked me to join him for breakfast the next morning.

We soon exchanged our life stories. Hans had also grown up in Germany. Hans immigrated from Germany into the USA looking for employment. Instead he got caught up with the draft. He was serving in the US Air Force and was stationed nearby.

Our courting began. Hans had an old car, a 1949 Pontiac green two door sedan that he had bought for ninety dollars. The passenger side floor has a large hole. So whenever it rained or we drove through a puddle, I had to lift my feet, otherwise my shoes would get wet. We took many day trips, and we also took a longer trip. We drove from Milwaukee to Niagara Falls then Montreal Canada, and back. Hans was good at keeping the old Pontiac running.

When I first met Hans he was living in a barracks with other GI's. Because of some issue with barracks he had to find another place to live. So Hans moved to the YMCA. I happened to be looking for apartment. Hans helped me by taking me around to look at prospects. On 19th street in Milwaukee, we looked at an apartment. The lady landlord thought we were married so she filed in the lease using Hans' name. The landlady loved Hans. Hans worked in POC (Fuel) and smelled like gasoline so she insisted he take shower as soon as come home. We did not say anything to convince her that we were not married. At that time in Milwaukee, it was illegal to live together and not be married.

One night, the police knocked on the front door. They were there because they had received a tip that a couple was living together and they were not married, they were living in sin. Landlady was so upset that the police would accuse her of renting an apartment to a couple living in sin. She insisted that she would never rent to unmarried couples. She honestly really believed what she was saying. Later, she was invited to our wedding on 1 November 1958.

We had other issues also. I did not know how to cook, I did not even know how to boil an egg. When I was growing up, our middle class family had a cook, cleaning lady, seamstress, and laundry service. In Germany, that was normal for a middle class family. So I never learned these skills. I could quote from Shakespeare and Kafka, but not boil an egg. Now in America I had to perform all kinds of domestic chores. Luckily Hans had live skills. Which was strange, because he had been born on an estate into a family of nobility. His last name is 'von Schweinitz' and he is related to the Red Baron, Werner von Braun, and Queen Elizabeth II. He is the first born son, and was supposed to inherit the estate. The education he received was based on there being a large contingent of servants and laborers. He was supposed to management these people, not perform the work. But World War II changed his whole life. The family lost everything and became refugees. Hans had to learn life skills very quickly, because suddenly he was responsible for feeding the family when there was no food available. He had to teach me.

The difference in cultural norms almost got Hans arrested one day in Milwaukee. In Germany, it is ok for a guy to whistle at a good looking woman. The woman takes the whistle as a compliment. We had driven into Milwaukee, and I had just exited the car. I was crossing the street in front of the car, and Hans was in car still. Hans whistled at me, as a compliment of my good looks.. A

# 1957-58: Milwaukee and Courting Hans

policeman heard him and thought he was harassing me. The policeman had not seen me exit the car. Hans was about to get a ticket, because there is a law against whistling at women in Milwaukee. Somehow we talked our way out of the ticket.

Which was a good thing. We did not have a lot of money, and needed every cent to pay for a wedding.

### 1958: Married Hans

On 1 November 1958 we married. Our church ceremony was in the United Presbyterian Church on 76th Street in West Allis. I think it is now called Apostle Presbyterian Church. I borrowed a wedding dress from Francis and Hans wore his Class A uniform. When exiting the church, we walked under the crossed rifles from an Honor Guard consisting of soldiers from Hans' squadron.

Afterwards, we had our reception in the basement of Uncle Otto's and Aunt Francis house. It was just the right venue. There was nothing formal. We had invited all of our families, friends, and coworkers. My family has lots of musical talent and mixed with some beer, we had us a party.

Our honeymoon was spent the Wisconsin Dells. One event that I remember well, is when we crashed a Polish wedding. The Polish have big weddings and everybody is invited. So we walked in. Whenever somebody asked us, who were we, we answered that we related of the other side of the family. The Polish also have another tradition. If you dance with bride, you have to put money in her bra. Of course, Hans danced with the bride.

After our honeymoon, we went back to our apartment on 19th street, but now we really were married. Our Landlady was not too upset about the misunderstanding about our prior marriage status. She realized that she had made an assumption, and we had not corrected her.

Soon, Hans received his PCS (permanent change of station) order to transfer to Wiesbaden Germany. We were fast learning to never ask why. It was hard to follow the logic of transferring Hans, who was a German citizen in the US Air Force, back to Germany.

1958: Married Hans

Hans could fly to Germany on the US Air Force planes. But I was not allowed. So I followed him by ship. I took a train to New York, then a ship to the west coast of France, Cherbourg. Then finally a train to Wiesbaden, West Germany, to rejoin my husband.

For the next twenty years Hans and I would go where ever the US Air Force transferred us. We had many adventures and raised a family while defending the USA. We both also eventually became US citizens.

## **Timelines**

HELGA
1903: Father was born. 1Jan
1904: Mother was born. 12June
1927: Father and Mother married 23 September
1928: Rolf (oldest brother) born 26 June
1930: Margret (oldest sister) born 10Sept
1936: Rolf (oldest brother) dies 8 June
1937: Helga born 9 March
1938: Diethard born 13 June
1939: Oma Johanne Gößling came in July 1939 from American
1939: WW II started for Germany 1 September 1939
1941: Helga Started of Kindergarten
1942: Vacation at Steinhuder Meer near Hannover, rented cottage
1943: Father left for basic training Military Service 11Mar
1943: Helga start Volksschule right after Easter Sunday
1943: 8 September 1943 Italy the other member of the Axis powers surrendered
1944: Went to live with Tante Hanna in Shotmar/Bad Salzuflen, Summer
1944: Oma Johanne stayed in basement, instead of going to bunker, 15 October
1944: Father came home for Christmas
1944: Lived in Onkel August's house with family, late Fall
1945: Bomb went off in manure pile, spring
1945: American liberators and British Occupying forces arrived April-May
1945: End of WW II 8 May 1945 for Europe theater
1945: Father walked into back yard and came home, July
1945: End of WW II September 2 for Pacific theater (now end of all of WWII)
1947: Oma Johanne Gößling went back in to America April 1947
1947: Espelkamp children summer camp, meet Christel Schuppener
1947: Teacher Miss Düwel convinced parents about Gymnasium
1948: Helga enter Gymnasium school time Spring
1948Aug "Spielgemeinschaft" play group would put on plays, skits, and also jus paly together.
1948 Spring first year of Gymn is "Sexta B" photo
1949: "Kinderheim" vacation summer health camp in Langeoog Island in North
g

1950: Renate (youngest sister) born 7 August

1951: School day trip to Porta Westfalica

1951: Confirmation in church

- 1952 Enterance ticket to Landestheater Detmold 2.4.1952
- 1952 Priwall camp on Baltic See
- 1952/1953: Youth hostel pass
- 1953: Bicycle trip through the Lüneburg Heath with Hella, AnneMarthe, Gisela
- 1953: Mother dying on 1 July 1953 in Herford
- 1953 June Gymnasium class photo UIIb
- 1953: traffic ticket for crossing at red light in Hamburg 19Aug1953
- 1954/1955: Hitchhiking trip with Ilse Peemüller
- 1954: Margret gets married to Hans-Gerd Bruhn 3 Dec
- 1955: school trip to Marburg
- 1955 Summer, Anne-Marthe Schröder, Wolf-Dieter and I were heavily into camp fire poetry.
- 1956 Excuse from Dr Werner for back injury from basketball
- 1956 Trip to Bonn. As president of Student Council took trip to Bonn with other student presidents to protest against what Minister Kaiser had said.
- 1956 Took evening courses to add knowledge not taught in school, on currency stability.
- 1956: Margret has Andreas
- 1956: June Trip to Sportsfestival in Leipzig in "east" Germany
- 1957 Last Gymn class photo OIb
- 1957: Letter admitting Helga in to the Arbitur, final exam for Gymn dated 7Feb1957
- 1957 Arbitur
- 1957 Arbitursball, escort was Herr Huber
- 1957 Youth Hostel pass
- 1957 Tarquinia Italy, Villa with group of British artists
- 1957 on 1Feb1957 wrote to Amerikanische Konsulat requesting forms to emigrate to USA.
- 1957: University
- 1957 on 22Mar1957 Father wrote a letter of reference agreeing to Helga emigrating to USA.
- 1957 took ship "Italia" to America
- 1957: by Oct/Nov was in Milwaukee
- 1957: Meet Hans and courting
- 1958: Wedding
- 1959: Assignment Wiesbaden Germany

#### **FATHER**

1913: completed Volksschule

1919: Received Reifezeugnis (School Diploma) from Realschule (Secondary School)

Employment: 1/1(Jan)/1931-9/2(Feb)/1936 Stadt Herford, Stadtsekretär

Employment: 10/2(Feb)/1936-29/1(Jan)/1937 Stadt Herford, Stadtobersekretär Employment: 30/1(Jan)/1937-10/3(Mar)/1943 Stadt Herford, Stadtinspektor

Party Affiliation: Nazi Party Joined 1/5(May)/1937

Member of the "Corps of Politische Leiter (leader) from 1/1(JAN)/1938-18/2(FEB)/1943

Military service: 11/3(Mar)/1943-11/7(July)/1945 Military unit E. Batterie 712, Rank Obergefr. Duty Kanomier.

Stationed: Kriegdienst: Osnabrück, Frankreich (France) Apr1943-Aug1943, Italien (Italy) Sep1943-Apr1945

Military service: was American POW in the Italian Alps and had to walk home. Employment After military service: 13/7(July)/1945-4/9(Sep)/1945 Stadt Herford,

Stadtinspektor

Employment: Unemployed: 5/9(Sep)/1945-30/9(Sep)/1945 Ohne Stellung

Employment: Zahntechn. Laboratorium Wilham Wolff, Herford, Fielefelderstrasse, Voluntär as Zahntechnik.

April1945 after was POW and then walked home

April 1945 before was stationed in Italy

July1945 end of service (probably when arrived in Herford)

July 1945, two days after was employed as Stadtinspektor

#### WWII

- 1933-1945 : Nationalsozialismus
- 1938: Richskristallnack Nov 1938 (Crystal night)
- 1939: WW II started for Germany 1 September 1939
- 1939: WWII from 1 September 1939- 2 September 1945
- 1941: started for US 7 December 1941 with Pearl Harbor
- 1941: Germany declares was on US 11 December 1941
- 1942: Civilian correspondence between Germany and USA stopped.
- 1942: The monument Wittekind auf dem Wilhelmsplatz was taken down to be melted for its metal to support the war effort. In 1959 it was another monument was put in its place.
- 1942: First US Army Air Forces operations over European continent began 29 September 1942
- 1942: first ground operations in European continent 8 November 1942
- 1943: Bomber's Baedeker Target Book Strategic Bombing in the Economic Warfare against German Towns. First version was approved and released. First version targeted 392 towns with populations above 15,000 inhabitants.
- 1944: Second version released. Towns with populations with as few as 1,000 inhabitants are now also targeted so the list of towns increased to 518.
- 1944: 15 October, US Eighth Air Force: bombed Hannover and Munster-Kassel areas
- 1944: 26 October, US Eighth Air Force: bombed ordnance and storage depot at Bielefeld, Munitions yard Munster, military vehicle plant near Hannover, Mittelland Canal at Minden, and city of Hannover
- 1944: 2 November, US Eighth Air Force: as liberation and conquest of Germany accelerated, five separate forces using 1,100 heavy bombers bombed synthetic oil plants and "targets of opportunity" around Bielefeld. Supposedly over 160 German fighter planes were claimed to be destroyed. US lost 40 heavy bombers.
- 1944: 6 November, US Eighth Air Force: Six separate forces using 1,000 heavy bombers bombed Airfields, Marshalling yards, and "targets of opportunity" in northwest Germany. Sixteen fighter groups afford close escort and later strafe ground targets in northwest Germany.
- 1944: 7 November photo taken of Rennstraβe Herford in ruins.
- 1944: 26 November, US Eighth Air Force: Using 1,000 B-17 and B-24 bombers and 25 fighter groups attacked oil refinery, marshalling yards, and 7 "Targets of opportunity" which included Herford. US lost over 35 bombers, but US fighters claimed over 100 air victories.
- 1944: 5 December Operation Aphrodite: Two B17 (#39824 and 30353) drones were targeting Herford's marshalling yard on 5 December 1944, but because

- of cloud cover, so the planes were directed to alternate target of Haldorf where both planes crashed outside of town. Haldorf now is a community within Edermünde which is about 150 km away from Herford and near Kassel
- 1945: 22Jan1945: Official correspondence to Ella Portner from Reigierungspräsident
- 1945: 14 march US Eighth Air Force: bombed 2 rail bridges and a Marshalling yard near Herford
- 1945: 31March last time sirens were used for Air Raid in Herford. 480 buildings completely destroyed, 2,380 buildings partially destroyed, 137 people dead.
- 1945: 3 & 4 April: American Liberation. American tanks come into Herford and the neighboring town of Bielefeld
- 1945: 12Apr1945, FDR died
- 1945: 20April 1945: Certification that house owned by American Gustav by Obergürgermeister
- 1945: 30 April 1945 Hitler committed suicide.
- 1945 7 May 1945 German high command surrenders unconditionally all land, sea, and air forces at Reims effective 9 May 1945.
- 1945: 8May1945 End of WWII in Europe, WWII in Pacific theater would continue until 2Sep1945
- 1945: 16 to 20 May 1945 in the Herford area the American Liberators were replaced by British troops and the "der Britischen Besatzungszone" (British Occupation Zone) began.
- 1945 Gustav Gößling: It was not until this time after the war that we learned of Gustav's death 1944. Probably from the Red Cross.
- 1945: Nationalsozialismus for Herford was over, it had existed from 1933 to 1945.
- 1945: 2September1945: WWII ended in Pacific theater also, WWII end complete
- 1945-1949: In der Britischen Besatzungszone May 1945-May1949
- 1946: 26Feb1946: Official correspondence to Ruldof Portner from Reigierungspräsident
- 1946: 26Feb1946: Denied war related damage retribution because house owned by Gustav in Milwaukee by Stadtkämmerer.
- 1946: 25April1946 Certification that house owned by American Gustav again by Obergürgermeister
- 1946: Father filling in forms. Had received letter (13Aug1946)where "They" were going to investigate his Nazi Party past. On 28Nov1946 received letter where "they" explained their findings (matched what Father had filled in on form) and also included that he had purchased material zzzzzzz look at pink letter more.
- 1946: Term Iron Curtain is used to describe divide between USSR and Europe

- 1947-1948 Morgenthau plan was in effect, but never approved by US or UK
- 1948: 3Apr1948 Marshall Plan signed into effect (approved by US congress)
- 1948: 3Apr1948 Marshall plan was modelled after the rebuilt of the US south after the Civil war. Rebuild enemy instead of make enemy pay retribution, like after WW one.
- 1949: Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (May1949–)
- 1956: 5Apr1956 "A sentence of death can be imposed on any German who wears a German military uniform according to a revised ordinance issued by the Allied control commission. The ban on uniforms has not been strictly enforced so far because it was often the only clothes discharged soldiers had to wear. In the future it will be enforced more strictly."
- 1961: Berlin wall and other sections are erected to define the Iron Curtain.

#### OTHER dates

- 1920: house on Fuestanaustrasse 10 built by Gustav Goessling
- 1922: Ella and family moves into house on Fuestanaustrasse 10
- 1923: Gustav Goessling emigrated to USA
- 1928: Rest of Gustav Goessling family emigrated to USA, Oma Johanne, daughter Margret, sons Paul and Otto. Stayed in Germany Ella and Hilde
- 1933: Paul son of Tante Hilde and Onkel Hermann Rottmann born 28Jan
- 1933-1945: Era of Nationalsozialismus (1933–1945)
- 1942: Radewiger Hühle during winter (Jan) the Aa and Werre were frozen with ice blocks.
- 1943: Easter Sunday 25April
- 1944: Gustav Gößling died 15 October
- 1945-1968: In der Britischen Besatzungszone und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1945–1968)
- 1945: 6 Dec 1945 all windows were installed in Fuestanaustrasse 10
- 1946: River Werre flooded in Herford, 9Feb. Flooding caused by strong rains in January and the cutting down of the forest for firewood. The river Werre rose and the pressure behind the dam caused the dam to fail. Over (anderhalb Metern) half a meter of water covered the downtown streets.
- 1967: Daughter Bettina went to Volksschule in Herford

Gymnasium class 1948 age 11: Sexta Klasse

Gymnasium class 1949 age 12: Quinta Klasse

Gymnasium class 1950 age 13: Quarta Klasse

Gymnasium class 1951 age 14: Untertertia Klasse

Gymnasium class 1952 age 15: Obertertia Klasse

Gymnasium class 1953 age 16: UII Untersekunda Klasse

Gymnasium class 1953: Einjährige leave

Gymnasium class 1954 age 17: OII Obersekunda Klasse

Gymnasium class 1955 age 18: Unterprima Klasse

Gymnasium class 1956 age 19: OIb Oberprima OIb Klasse

Gymnasium class 1957 age 20: Abitur

- 1: Helga with curls
- 2: Helga in crib
- 3: Diethard and Helga
- 4: Margret and Rolf
- 5: Rolf
- 6: Helga, Margret, Diethard
- 7: Father and Pigeon club
- 8: Father as volunteer fireman
- 9: Father as soldier
- 10: Mother and Tante Hilde
- 11: Christmas 1943 and father home 12:
- 13: Christmas 1944, with Tante Hanna
- 14: Helga, Renate, Margret, Diethard
- 15: Helga and Renate in Pram
- 16: View from Fürstenaustraβe 10 upper window, Dr Lunecke house with car, Helga and Diethard walking on path, Chocolate Factory chimney
- 17: Herford Bahnhoff
- 18: Jacobikirche Radewiger
- 19: Ingrid Weiβ birthday party
- 20: 1951 Confirmation group photo
- 21: August 1948 Spielgemeinschaft. Helga back row 2nd from left.
- 22: Gymnasium 1948 school building
- 23: Gymnasium 1948 Sextra B class photo
- 24: Gymnasium 1953 UIIb class photo
- 25: Gymnasium 1957 OIb class photo
- 26: Gymnasium 1957 P.E. Exam class photo
- 27: Day Trip to Porta Westfalica, Tertia b class
- 28: Stage production in school

- 29: Abitur, Stiftberg Kirche view from window 1957
- 30: Abitursball 1957
- 31: Landestheater Detmold ticket 1952
- 32: Abitur Herr Huber escort
- 33: Doctor's excuse basketball
- 34: Trip to Refute Herr Keiser position
- 35: Economic class receipt
- 36: Kinderheim vacations on Langeoog
- 1949 group photo
- 37: Espelkamp 1947, group photo, Helga 2nd from to on right with pigtails.
- 38: Walk through Kurpark with boyfriend Hans-Joachim Echternkamp 1955.
- 39: 1953 Traffic ticket
- 40: Figuring out mass of sun
- 41:
- 42: Letter for Abitur admission 7 Feb 1957
- 43: Youth hostel pass 1952/53
- 44: 1952 Boyfriend and tent at Priwall Camp
- 45: Letter addressed to Helga by
- Manfred Köhne a boyfriend.
- 46: Liepzig 1956 June documents
- 47: Japanese pen pal 1953
- 48: Anglo-German club membership
- 49: Anglo-German group photo
- 50: Youth hostel pass 1957
- 51: 1957 Targuinia Italy group photo
- 52: Letter to American Consulate 1 Feb 1957
- 53: Father's Erklärung 22 March 1957

54: Ella and Rudolph Pörtner

55: Oma Johanne and Grandfather clock

56: Helga, Oma Johanne, Diethard on Steinhuder Meer 1943

57: Margret in back yard of Fürstenaustraβe 10

58: Helga's confirmation 1951 with Preacher leading the way.

59: 1957 November Helga on the "Italia"

60: Shortly before Abitur, OIb class photo

60a: Names on back of photo

61: Fürstenaustraβe 10 in 1998

62: Else Berger 1956 at Dr Meyer with baby

63: Dr Meyer House front

64: Helga and Hans in front of 19th Street Milwaukee on way to Canada 1958

65: Hans in front of Pontiac at Niagara falls 1958

66: Helga with Father and Hans-Gerd on way to ship "Italia" 1957 Nov

67: Hans 1958 in uniform

68: Hans and Helga on water at Niagara falls 1958

69-72: Pages from Zeugnis der Reife (Abitur Certificate)

73: Herford old town map

74: Herford on map of Germany

75: Helga's family tree



Figure 1

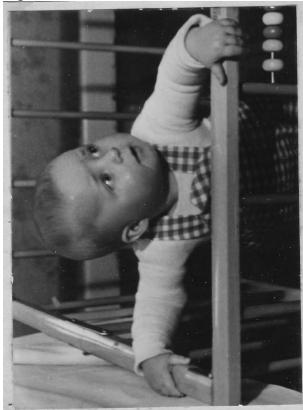


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Vater, a volunteer fireman 1

Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11
Figure 12 not used



Helga, Tante Hanna, 1944 Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Stiftberg Kirche as seen from the excem room at Abitur, 1957

Figure 29



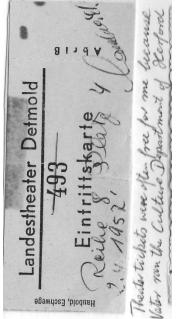
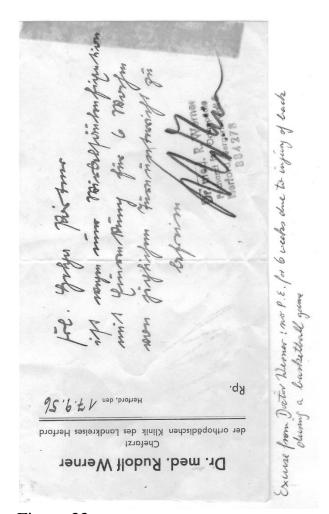


Figure 31

122



Figure 32



Helga im "Kaiser-Schatten" 

Wie wir meldeten, befand sich unter den elf Schulsprechern, die in dieser Woche nach Boni führer, um für die Wiedervereinigung zu sprechen, auch eine Herforderin — die Unterprimanerin Helga. Försner von der Königingen Auf unseren Bilde sehen wir sie ganz rechts im "Schaften" des Ministers Kaiser, der gerade mit einer Schüllerin syricht

Figure 34

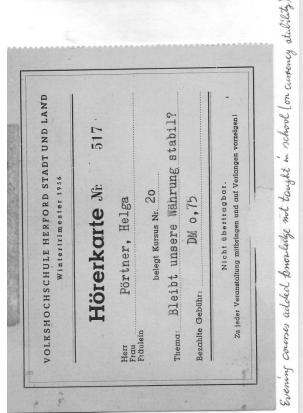


Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38

**Figures** 

194254
Gebührenpflichtige Verwarnung:
Ubertretung: B 3 52 12
Wegen dieser Übertretung werden Sie hiermit gebühren-
pflichtig verwarnt.  Sie werden gebeten, künftig die Straßenverkehrsvorschriften genau zu beachten.
Hamburg, den 19.8.53
Weiber 09, 45
o planststelle
Pol. Revierwache 74
1.— DM Verwarnungsgebühr erhalten
(Name, Dienstgrad und Dienstnummer des PolBeamten)
A traffic ticket from 1953 in Hamburg Ccrossing at
red light)

Figure 39

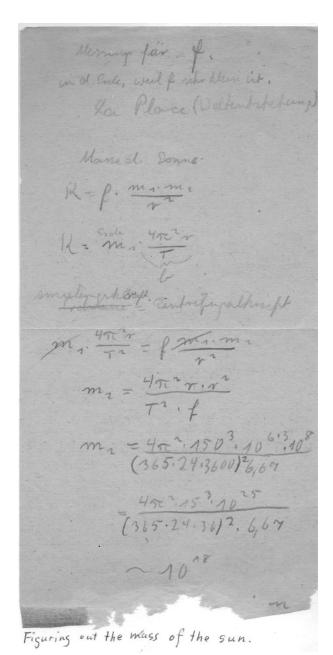


Figure 40 Figure 41 not used

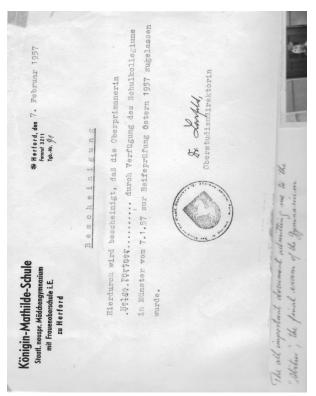


Figure 42

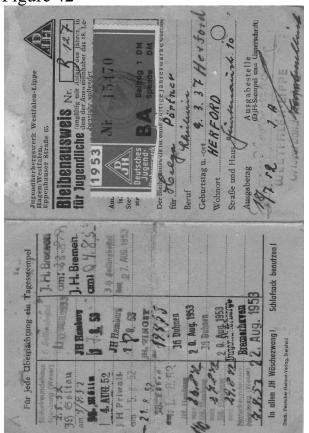


Figure 43



Figure 44



Figure 45

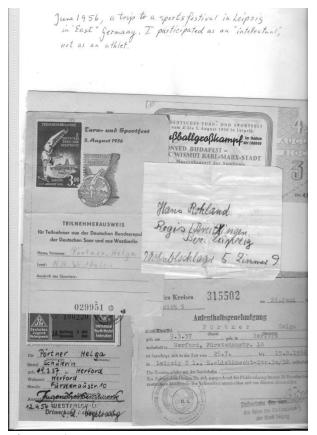


Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48



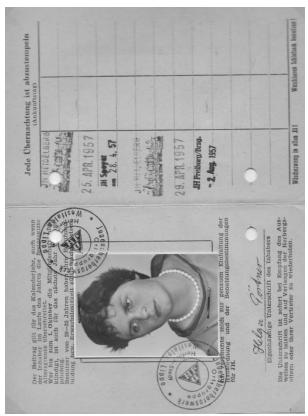


Figure 50



Figure 51

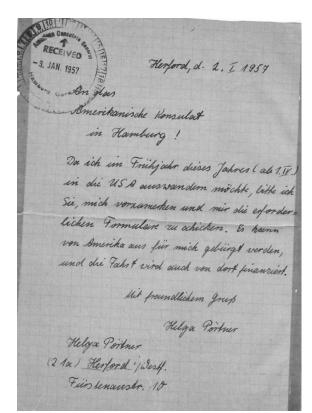


Figure 52

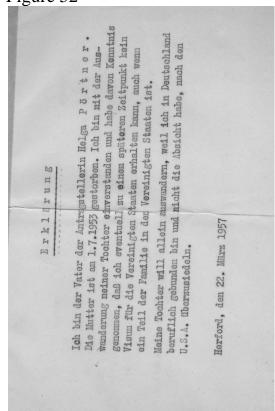


Figure 53



Figure 54



Figure 55





Figure 57

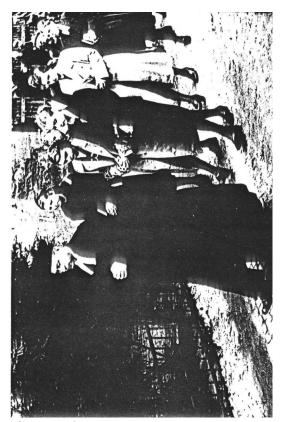


Figure 58



Figure 59



Figure 60



Figure 61





Figure 63





Figure 65





Figure 68

Figure 66



Figure 67

(staatl. neusp	Königin-Mathilde-S in Herford erachl. Mädchengymnasium mi	
•	ZEUGNIS DER	REIFE
- Helga	Hasma Hildeger	a Permer
geboren den 4.	Mary 1927 20	Herford.
Kreis		Bekenntnisses
wohnhaft in the	for (Wohnort des Erziehungs	berechtigten)
war <i>g</i> Jahre a	ut der Königin-Mattii	ede- Shule in Herford

Fi	gure	69

	NNTNISSE UND FÄHIGKEITEN  te: sehr gul - gul - befriedigend - ausreichend - mangelikall - ungenügend
1. RELIGIONSLEHR	n şint
2 - PHILOSOPHIS:	
S. DEUTSCH:	befriedizend
4. GESCHICHTE:	Sefriedizens
* 6. ERDKUNDE:	şüt
LATEINISCH:	Sefridizend
7	
E ENGLISCH:	Sefricalizand
9. FRANZUSISCH:	ausreichend
10. MATHEMATIE:	mangelhaft
11. PHYSIE.	Sefriedizend
12. CHEMIE:	befriedigend (1 galor) [u1]
12 81010016:	befriedigend (0 Jahre) [05]

Figure 70

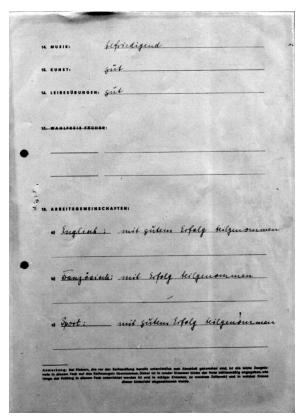


Figure 71

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Figure 72

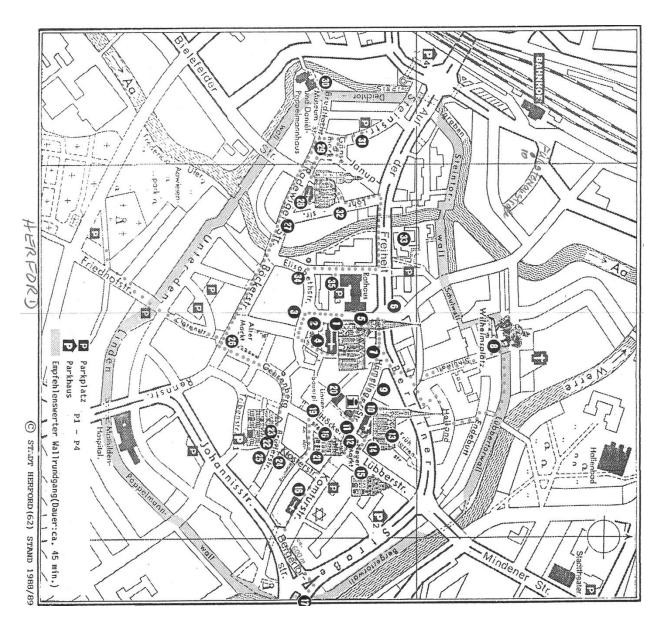


Figure 73 Herford old town

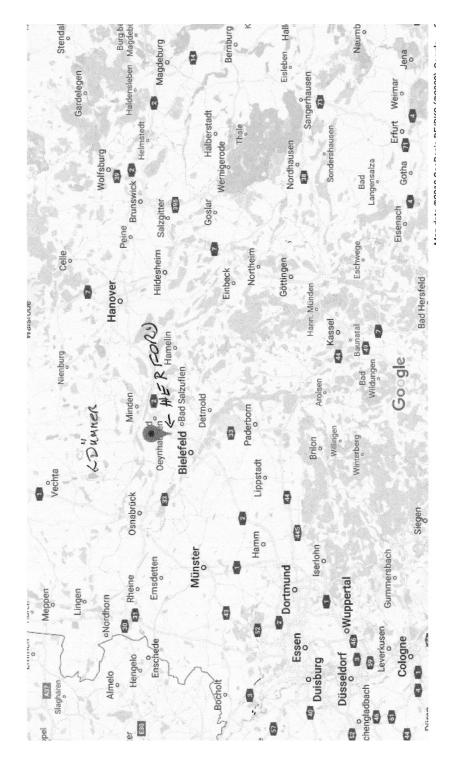


Figure 74 Map of German with Herford

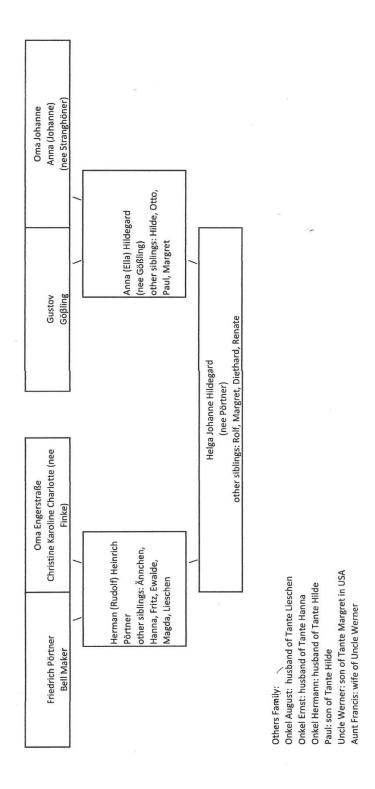


Figure 75 Helga's Family tree