The Ruby Family Histories

The Early Lives of Stanley and Helga Ruby

By Walter, Daniel and Joanne Ruby

DEDICATION

This preliminary edition of The Ruby Family Histories is presented to Elana Ruby Rehm on the occasion of her Bat Mitzvah, September 24, 2005, and is dedicated to the next generation of the Ruby family –Elana, Zachary, Gene, and Twyla. We hope this family history project illuminates for you something of the lives of your wonderful grandparents and the many other members of this family who went before. May their life journeys inspire you to embrace life in all of its richness and wonder.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing this volume, we drew upon a lifetime of stories and anecdotes heard from our parents, grandparents and other family members, and upon separate interviews conducted with Stan and Helga in the months before their deaths in 2004 and 2005. Our deepest thanks to Sandy Brenner for providing us with a wealth of fascinating and essential information. Thank you also to Mel Brenner, Marsha Fields and Robert Felenstein for their contributions.

We are continuing our search into Ruby family history and hope this volume will stimulate the memories of those who read it, and may find errors in this document or have important information about Ruby family lore that is not included here. We will be publishing a fuller version of these histories, including the story of Stan and Helga's life together, at a later date.

CONTENTS

Stan's Story

BREISHEET—IN THE BEGINNING

THE KOVNO RAV

In the beginning—or as far back as anyone in the extended Ruby family can remember---was the Kovno Rav, the illustrious Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor (1817-1896) of the city of Kovno, (today Kaunas) Lithuania. Rabbi Spektor was likely an uncle of Joseph Rabinowitz, who emigrated from Lithuania to New York in 1874 or 1875.

(Walter Ruby is planning a trip to Kaunas in the summer of 2007 to attempt to pin down the precise familial link between the Kovno Rav and Joseph Rabinowitz, the father of the first Walter Ruby, who was born in New York City in 1893 and a great- grandfather of Walter, Daniel and Joanne Ruby. Walter Ruby the elder informed his son Stanley and Stanley informed Walter, Dan and Joanne that the Kovno Rav was indeed their forbearer).

According to Zalman Alpert, of the Gottesman Library at Yeshiva University, a modern-day authority of the great rabbis of 18th and 19th Century world of the Pale of Settlement (that part of the Russian Empire where Jews were allowed to settle), Rabbi Spektor was one of the giants of Litvak (Lithuanian) Jewry, and probably the most important rabbinical authority in the Russian Empire during his heyday. One testament to his importance is that the rabbinical school at Yeshiva University, the great academic institution of Orthodox Judaism in North America, is named the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in Rabbi Spektor's honor. The university was founded in New York in 1897, the year after the great rabbi's death.

Rabbi Spektor's son, Rabbi Zvi Hersh Rabinowitz, who succeeded his father as Kovno Rav, changed his name from Spektor to Rabinovich (or Rabinowitz in the American spelling), which means 'son of the rabbi'. It is unclear why Rabbi Rabinowitz, who died during World War I, decided to change his family name. Rabbi Spektor's grandson Jacob Rabinowitz was rabbi of nearby Vilna, one of the great centers of East European Jewry, until that venerable Jewish community was annihilated by the Nazis in 1941.

Accounts of the life of the Kovno Rav vary widely and tend to be allegorical and devout with much basic biographical material missing. According to one of the most authoritative ones, written by Dr. Sidney H. Hoenw, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor was born in 1817, in Rosh, Grodno province, in modern-day Belarus, where his father, Rabbi Israel Iassar served as rabbi. A child prodigy with an

incredible ability to absorb enormous tracts of Talmud and Gemara, Rabbi Spektor served as rabbi of a number of small shtetl towns in Belarus and Lithuania before attaining the position of Kovno Rav in 1864. Spektor was recommended for that position by Reb Yisroel Salanter, the founder of the *mussar* movement, which stressed reflection, self analysis, and ethics, and sought to counter the influence of the *Haskalah* movement, whose advocates, starting with Moses Mendelsohn in the 18th Century, urged Jews to abandon their exclusiveness and acquire the knowledge, manners, and aspirations of the nations among whom they dwelled. Reb Yisroel, is remembered as a *tzaddik* (righteous one), a holy man who spurned all possessions and titles, and therefore turned down the position of Kovno Rav for himself, but recommended his protégé, Rabbi Spektor instead. Rabbi Spektor had less personal charisma than Salanter, but he became an enormously respected decisor of halacha (Jewish law) during the mid to late 19th Century. He frequently dealt with the Czarist authorities in order to protect not only the Jews of Kovno or Lithuania, but all of the Jews of Russia.

Interestingly, despite his close personal connection to Salanter, once in office, Spektor became hostile to the *mussar* movement that Salanter created. Rather Spektor became a staunch upholder of the mainstream Litvak Orthodoxy of his time. While quite conservative theologically, he was open on occasion to cooperation with the M*askilim* (proponents of haskalah). Unlike many prominent rabbis, who spent almost all of their time immersed in study, Spektor took an active role in Jewish communal affairs. He was a supremely political figure, who balanced between competing streams within the Jewish world and took on the perilous role of representing Jewry before the hostile Czarist regime; all in a valiant effort to buttress a world of scholarship and faith that was being increasingly buffeted by modernity and political currents like socialism and the early murmurings of Zionism.

A number of stories are told about the Kovno Rav. In one, a young man approached Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor of Kovno and said, "Rabbi, I am an atheist." Rabbi Spektor answered, "Really, my son? How long did you study in yeshiva? Have you studied the Talmud?" The young man replied, "I did not attend a yeshiva. I never studied the Talmud." To this Rabbi Spektor replied with a smile, "My son, you are not an atheist, you are merely an ignoramus." Undoubtedly, Rabbi Spektor might have said something similar about some of his 20th Century descendants in the American branch of the Rabinowitz-Ruby family.

According to another story, the Czarist regime once issued an edict that threatened dire consequences for the entire Jewish community. In an effort to have this decree rescinded, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan organized a delegation of the most distinguished Jews of Kovno to plead for mercy from the Czar's minister. Rav Yitzchak Elchanan's command of Russian was not adequate to make the plea

himself, so it was agreed that Rav Yitzchak Elchanan would speak in Yiddish and his son would translate into Russian.

After the minister heard the Russian translation, he said to Rav Yitzchak Elchanan's son; “I want you to know that your father's speech in Yiddish, a language of which I am totally ignorant, convinced me much more than your rendition of it into Russian. Even though I could not understand a single word your father said, I sensed that each and every word emerged from a powerful inner truth that burns inside him. Words that come from the heart penetrate into the heart, without any need for a common language.”

Rabbi Paysach Krohn, in the first book of his classic Maggid Series, relates the story of Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, the Kovno Rav. Under Russian law, all young men were obliged to enlist in the army. Besides the obvious ubiquitous threat of violent death, maintaining any semblance of religious observance in the army was virtually impossible. The only way out was an exemption from army service.

Yaakov, a student who was much beloved by Rav Yitzchak Elchanan, applied for an exemption. The Czarist authorities did not immediately respond to the request, and each day Yaakov's friends, together with their beloved Rebbe, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan, waited to hear any news of whether Yaakov's exemption was accepted.

One afternoon, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan was engrossed in a rabbinic litigation. He sat together with Rav Elya Boruch Kamai, the Rav of Mir, and a third distinguished Rav. They were litigating a complex problem involving two wealthy businessmen. Both sides were willing to compromise, and for hours the three Rabbis attempted to find an amicable yet halachically acceptable resolution.

Suddenly, the door opened and a young man stuck his head into the room. As soon as he saw Rav Yitzchak Elchanan, he excitedly addressed him. "Rebbe!" he exclaimed. "We just got the news, Yaakov was granted an exemption!" Rav Yitzchak Elchanan on breathed a sigh of relief and said with a radiant smile, as he showered him with blessings. "May God bless you for bringing this wonderful news. May you merit long years and good health? Thank you ever so much!" The boy left smiling, glad that he had made his rebbe so happy. Immediately the rabbis resumed deliberations in an attempt to resolve the din Torah.

A few minutes later, another student opened the door. Not knowing that his rebbe already knew the news, he apologized for interrupting saying he had something very important to share. Then he announced with joy, "Rebbe, we've gotten word that Yaakov is exempt!" Rave Yitzchak Elchanan on replied with just as much enthusiasm as he had the first time. "How wonderful!" He showered him with blessings as well. "May God bless you for bringing this wonderful news. May you merit long years and good health? Thank you ever so much!"

The boy closed the door and left, beaming with joy that he had made his rabbi so happy. Five minutes later, yet a third boy entered the room. "Rebbe, did you hear? Yaakov is exempt!" Once again Rav Yitzchak Elchanan smiled broadly and

blessed the boy for the wonderful news. He thanked him and blessed him in the exact manner as with the previous boys.

Six times, different boys came in with the same news, each one anticipating the happiness their rebbe would feel at the news, each one not aware that others had preceded him. Rav Yitzchak Elchanan smiled at each boy, expressed his gratitude and made him feel as important as the first one.

The Ponovez Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Eliezer Schach, once explained in a talk to his students that the attention to the honor of a fellow Jew is one of the most important lessons we can learn. What Rabbi Spektor was demonstrating by reacting to the news about Yaakov as though hearing it for the first time was the importance of paying respect to each and every individual.

According to Dr. Hoenw, Rabbi Spektor had three children; the aforementioned Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Rabinowitz, his successor as Kovno Rav, who died in 1909, Freda Leah Spektor, born in about 1840 and the bizarrely named Peloni B. Peloni (other accounts mention other children, with the one common denominator being Tzvi Hirsch Rabinowitz). According to one biographical account from an apparent contemporary of the Kovno Rav, Rav Yaacov Haleivi Lischutz, entitled *Toldos Yitzhak* (The Life of Yitzhak) (adapted by Miriam Samsonowitz), young Isaac Elchanan Spektor was married at the age of 13, which was common in those days, to a woman named Sara Raizel. Lischutz specifies that he had a son named Chaim (not mentioned in other accounts), who was said by Lischutz to have been similar to him in appearance and to share many of his virtues. But might the young rabbi have given birth to yet another son, who might have been entirely different in his character and take on the world?

THE GONIF

They say the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree, but this crab apple landed in a whole different district. According to Ruby family lore, the Kovno Rav indeed had another son, separate and distinct from those mentioned above, whose name has lamentably been forgotten, but whom we have nicknamed here as the Gonif (the thief). According to the story told by Walter Ruby to his son Stanley, the Gonif ended up almost 1000 miles from cool northern Kovno in the gorgeously wild, rugged and semi-tropical Crimean Peninsula, where he moved as a very young man, probably because a good opportunity for money making had opened up, namely the Crimean War of 1854-56. The Crimean War began when the British, French and Turks invaded Crimea in order to prevent the Russian navy based in the Crimean port of Sevastopol from using that port as a base to attack Constantinople, directly across the Black Sea. Unfortunately for the allies, the war soon turned into a misbegotten mess of trenches and mud, with the British and French stymied in their efforts to capture Sevastopol, and losing tens of thousands of men to typhus, syphilis and other diseases.

The war is mainly remembered today as the scene where Florence Nightingale earned her wings as an angel of mercy. The Gonif also sought to seize his chance in Crimea; in his case to make big money while betraying the Russian homeland he no doubt despised for its persecution of Jews, by selling horses and loose women to the British. Business was said to have been going great guns, but, alas, the Gonif was apprehended by the Russian Army and promptly hung. Like a lot of other people, he probably thought the Russians would quickly collapse before the might of the Western armies, forgetting the painful lesson Napoleon learned 40 years earlier and Hitler would learn in the next century; namely that the Russians always fight hardest when their own land is invaded.

It should be acknowledged that we have, at this point, no proof that the Gonif actually existed or that he was in fact the son of the Kovno Rav. If the Rav indeed married as early as 1830, he could certainly have had a son who would have been around 20 at the time of the Crimean War. According to Zalman Alpert, if such a wayward son in fact existed, Rabbi Spektor would likely have preferred not to acknowledge his paternity in the respectable world of Russian Jewry. Yet Stan Ruby was certain the son existed, having often heard about him from his own father Walter Ruby (ne Rabinowitz), who may have seen the iconoclastic and entrepreneurial Gonif as a kind of role model. In any case, Walter's knowledge of the Gonif's existence appears to show that what may have been airbrushed out of the official account remained a vivid part of family lore.

So we are missing many of the basic facts, but the juxtaposition of the righteous father and wayward son, the tzaddik and the sinner, the sacred and the profane, is certainly compelling. There were various paths out of the constricted life of the shtetl, the world of the Pale during the 19th Century, and crime was clearly one of them. The Gonif was a rebel against the tradition and faith his father represented and certainly not the last such figure in the annals of the Ruby family.

TULBOWITZES ON DON

Flash forward 20 years or so from the time of the Crimean War to Rostov on Don, a raffish town on the Don River in southern Russia. Rostov was the hometown of the Tulbowitz clan, the other side of Stanley Ruby's family. Rostov was very different in character than the austere northern world of Litvak Jewry, the world of the Kovno Rav. Rostov is a southern town, just north of where the Don River flows into the Azov Sea, itself an arm of the Black Sea. In those days, Rostov had the characteristics of a wide-open river town, where extensive trading and smuggling flourished and the waterfront was filled with taverns, one of which was owned 130 years ago by the family of Rose (Raizel) Tulbowitz (1874-1947). When Walter Ruby visited Rostov in 1992 and 1999 to interview leaders of the revived Cossack movement, he found that the city has much the same character today.

Rostov was situated within Russia proper and just beyond the borders of the Pale of Settlement, the large area under the rule of the Russian Empire, composed of Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic states including Lithuania, and Bessarabia, where all Jews were legally required to reside. Yet by the late 19th Century, more and more Jews were taking advantages of loopholes in the system and rampant corruption in Czarist officialdom to literally move beyond the Pale into the growing cities of Russia proper. The Jewish community of Rostov was also growing by leaps and bounds; by the end of the 1870's the city was home to 14 synagogues and many cultural institutions.

We do not know when Rose Tulbowitz's family arrived in Rostov or from where they originated, but by the 1880's, they were relatively prosperous and running a riverfront tavern. The family was also very proud that their first language was Russian and not Yiddish, the language of the Pale. In fact, Rose, who was known as Raizel before arriving in America, is said to have barely known any Yiddish.

As we will see, there was a vivid contrast between the Rabinowitzes of Kovno and the Tulbowitzes of Rostov that was already manifest in the Old Country and remained discernable in America (where the Rabinowitzes would settle in East Harlem, New York City and the Tulbowitz/Ratners in Albany, New York. The Rabinowitzes (with the notable exception of the legendary Gonif) were devoutly Orthodox Jews; the Tulbowitzes were less strictly observant and much more modern in outlook. Thus, when Walter Ruby, son of the profoundly *frum* (Orthodox) tailor Joseph Rabinowitz decided, as a young man to become fully 'American', he felt compelled to make a complete break with the rigorous faith of his forefathers to the point of eating pork, celebrating Christmas, and deciding more than 40 years after his parents arrived in the U.S. to change his name from Rabinowitz to the more *parve* (neutral, not overtly Jewish) Ruby. The Tulbowitz/ Ratners, on the other hand, appear to have quickly embraced a more flexible American form of Jewish identity in Albany, and therefore did not feel the need to rebel against the faith in such a radical and abrasive way. That did not, however, prevent several of the younger generation of Ratners from marrying non-Jews.

A visit to Albany by Walter and Dan Ruby in July, 2006 to search family gravesites yielded much new information on the Tulbowitz-Ratner clan. On their trip to Albany, Walter and Danny Ruby found the gravestones of Abraham and Rose Ratner in the Albany Hebrew Tailor's cemetery on the city's west side, where they are buried side by side in the small and homely graveyard, together with Thelma Ratner, their oldest daughter. On Rose's gravestone, she is referred to as Rose T. Ratner, as well as Raizel, the daughter of Reb Shalom, in the Hebrew inscription ('Reb' is a Hebrew honorific that can be translated as Mr. and the 'T' in Rose's name clearly stands for Tulbowitz). Yet in the 1900 U.S. census, we found Rose's father referred to as Solomon Tulbowitz, the Hebrew variant of which would be Shlomo, not Shalom. We do not know the reason for this

discrepancy. The 1900 census says that Solomon Tulbowitz was born in Russia in 1848 and lists his profession as tailor.

Shortly after Walter and Dan's trip to Albany, Walter was able to confirm that Rose's parents are buried in the Beth Abraham Jacob cemetery on Fuller Street which belongs to the only surviving Orthodox synagogue in town, and is about one mile from Hebrew Tailors Assn. cemetery. The names on the graves are Solomon and Sophie Tulbowitz, who are clearly the parents of Rose Tulbowitz Ratner and, thus, our own great-great grandparents. Sophie is listed as having been born in 1850 in Russia. Until the trip to Albany, we did not know Sophie's name; she had come down to us only as 'Bubee' (Grandma). According to accounts by both Sandy Brenner and Stan Ruby, Bubee was beloved by everyone around her and was involved in everyone's affairs. Sandy Brenner's mother Lillian nicknamed Bubee 'the social worker', not because she was actually a social worker but because in her involvement in the lives of everyone around her, she reminded people of one. When Solomon Tulbowitz followed his wife to Albany, he brought along their son, Edward (born 1876), the younger brother of Rose Ratner.

On Abe's gravestone his name is spelled 'Abram', although the Hebrew name is Avraham (Abraham). Having trained as a tailor, Abe supported the organization as a charity. His philanthropic role is signified by the memorial bench inscribed with the 'Ratner' name near the cemetery entrance. Walter and Dan also visited the graves of Leon and Lillian Klein and Morton Ratner in the more upscale and modern Temple Beth Emeth cemetery on the north side of Albany (Lillian and Morton were also children of Abraham and Rose Ratner, Leon Klein was the husband of Lillian and the father of Sandy Brenner).

Returning to Rostov, it is known from Ruby family lore that Rose's family, as upwardly mobile Jews of a thriving town just outside the Pale, felt themselves superior to the more *frum*, less modernized Jews of the Pale, living only a few miles away across the administrative border separating Russia and Ukraine. They would say in no uncertain terms; "You can't live with these people." That's one reason Rose so disliked the Lower East Side of New York upon her arrival in America with her husband Abe and her mother. Stan Ruby recalled of his grandmother and other members of the Rostov branch of the family; "They wanted to look good for the goyim. My mother (Selma) always heard when she was a girl, the following statement from her mother Rose; "The goyim are watching you, so you need to be spotless."

That sentiment was likely reinforced by a traumatic event that happened to Rose as a small child. Even though the Tulbowitz family relished life in Rostov and felt part of the world of Russian culture and literature, that relatively open and cosmopolitan place remained a dangerous one for Jews. Pogroms swept across

the Russian Empire with the encouragement of Czarist authorities in the wake of the assassination of the so-called liberal Czar Alexander II in 1881, a four year outburst of savagery, during which thousands of Jews were killed and injured. Rostov did not escape this explosion; with the encouragement of local Russian officials, a wave of anti-Jewish riots (*pogroms*) swept the city on the 15th of Iyar (May 3), 1883.

Another danger for the Jews of Rostov was that the notoriously anti-Semitic Don Cossacks were all around—their agricultural settlements (stanitzas) were just a few miles upriver from Rostov and there were plenty of them along the city riverfront as well. One day when Rose was about three or four years old, which would make it 1877 or 1878—five years before the Rostov pogroms, she was grabbed by several Cossacks and held for ransom. This kind of thing happened frequently in those days and Jews routinely had to pay steep ransoms to free kidnapped family members.

Rose's parents scraped together the money, paid their tormentors and got their little daughter back only to find she had a bad burn on her leg. While with the Cossacks, a samovar had tipped over and poured boiling hot water on her. Rose carried a scar on her leg for the rest of her life. There were undoubtedly psychological scars for her as well.

For reasons that remain unclear, at the age of 15 or 16, Rose was set up with a boy from a nearby country town named Abraham "Abe" Bloch (1870-1941). The match was a bit surprising because Abe, who at that time was making his living as a roofer, was from a lower social class and not as well educated as Rose. Stan Ruby believed Abe was basically adopted by Rose Ratner's family around the age of 15. Unlike Rose's family, his own background was quite religious and he had been a yeshiva bucher (student) as a boy. His family was said to have come to the Rostov area from Odessa, which was inside the Pale but was a rollicking seaport, with an atmosphere even more cosmopolitan than Rostov. (On Abraham Ratner's gravestone in Albany, he is referred to as the son of Reb Chaim, but we have no further information on his parents).

In any event, Rose herself was unsure about the match before meeting him. She informed her family that when Abe approached the family house to court her, she would be watching from an upstairs window and if she didn't like the way he looked, she would refuse to even meet him. But Abe was a nice looking man even in his later years, and so Rose must have thought that day because she came downstairs to meet him. The two soon decided to marry.

Abe was determined to get out of Russia to avoid the Czarist army, to which Jewish boys and young men were forcibly drafted and sometimes forced to serve for as long as 20 years. It was a method employed by the Czarist regime to compel Jews to assimilate. Abe convinced Rose to leave Russia with him and go

to America as soon as they were married, but she agreed on one condition; that they would take her beloved mother, Sophie along with them upon leaving the country. Not, however, Rose's father, Solomon, and other family members, who, as it turned out, would follow the pioneers to Albany about five years later. Abe and Rose would always joke throughout their lives that Abe was such a *nudnik* that he took his mother-in-law along with himself and his new bride on their 'honeymoon'; which was, of course, the couple's difficult voyage out of Russia, across Europe and then to the New World.

OFF TO THE GOLDENE MEDINA (Golden Land)

According to a notation we found on the 1900 U.S. census concerning the Ratners and Tulbowitzes, Abe, Rose and 'Bubee' Sophie made their way out of Russia in either 1890 or 1891. What came down through Ruby family lore was that Abe, who was dodging the Russian military draft, had to slip across the border undetected, whereas his wife and mother-in-law could, and did, leave openly. So Abe, like other young men in similar circumstances crossed the border on a horse-drawn cart concealed under a bale of hay. Abe used to say years later that as he lay under that hay, he was praying that the border guards would not poke him with pitchforks. Stan Ruby recalled that many years later, in 1970, he was at the Austrian-Hungarian border with Helga and they saw the Hungarian border guards using spears to poke at some rolled-up sod being brought by truck across the border. Apparently, the guards suspected someone might be trying to slip across the Iron Curtain under the sod and it reminded Stan vividly of his grandfather's tales of his escape from Russia.

After successfully exiting Russia, the family took a train to Bremen, Germany where they had to wait three months for money to arrive for them from Rostov that would allow them to buy passage on a boat to the U.S. When they arrived in New York at the end of the long voyage, Abraham Bloch was unaccountably registered by a U.S. immigration official with the name 'Abraham Ratner', and the family name in America became 'Ratner' from that time forward. There was a tradition among U.S. immigration officials of shortening and simplifying Jewish, Polish, Italian and other old world family names to make them more 'American' sounding, but the name 'Ratner' was certainly no simpler or American sounding than 'Bloch.'

The accounts of Stanley Ruby and Sandy Brenner of what happened to the family upon their arrival in New York are very different. Stan said he was told that Abe, Rose and Bubee were at first held by the authorities on Ellis Island because they had no sponsors in America, but Abe managed to escape the island and went in search of a Russian Jewish family he knew from Rostov who could help them. Stan said that Abe was gone from the island for seven days and finally returned

with a person who signed whatever papers were required, allowing Abe, Rose and Bubee to land on Manhattan Island as legal immigrants.

Yet Sandy says that Abe, Rose and Bubee never came to Ellis Island at all because the processing center on the island was not yet open when they arrived, and they were processed elsewhere. That is what she and her mother Lil learned when Ellis Island was re-opened as a museum in the late 1980's.

The Ellis Island Immigration Center opened on January 1, 1892. Between 1855 and 1890, the processing of immigrants was done in a former military facility called Castle Garden (previously Castle Clinton) on the Battery. Castle Garden processed its last immigrant in April 1890, and after reviewing several possible sites, the United States government selected Ellis Island for the establishment of a new federal immigration center for New York. On the island, it would be easier to screen and protect the immigrants before they proceeded out onto the streets of New York. After the closing of Castle Garden, immigrants were processed at an old barge office in lower Manhattan until the opening of Ellis Island.

Now that we know that Abraham, Rose and Sophie arrived in 1890 or 1891, it appears certain that Sandy's version is correct and, most likely the family was processed at the old barge office. An effort by Walter Ruby in 2005 to scour the database on the Ellis Island web site to find a record of the arrival there of 'Abraham Bloch' or 'Abraham Ratner', a married man from Russia in his early 20's, turned up no results. A similar search on the Castle Garden web site also turned up no mention of either Abraham or Raizel (Rose) (I need to check the barge office statistics).

According to Stanley, the family moved to a tenement on the Lower East Side and Abe immediately went to work in the Garment District as a tailor. Stan believes they stayed in New York for about two years. Abe used to joke that he thought he was making progress in learning English until one day he figured out that the language he was learning was actually Yiddish.

From the beginning, Rose disliked the crowded, unhealthy conditions of the Lower East Side. She said to Abe adamantly, "There is no way I can tolerate living here". It appears likely that the couple's first two children, George (Peyzer) and Herman were born while the family was still living on the Lower East Side, and Rose must have been concerned for their health and well-being in such an environment.

In any case, as noted, Rose spoke little Yiddish and, in general, having grown up as a relatively privileged girl in Rostov, she was not inclined to put up with the pressure-cooker living conditions of the Lower East Side. For the Ratners, as for hundreds of thousands of others of newly arrived East European Jews, the squalor of the Lower East Side made the dream of finding prosperity in the *goldene medina* that had caused them to turn their lives upside down and start anew in a new land, seem to be a bad joke.

So, like thousands of others, the Ratners decided to get out of New York City and try their luck elsewhere. They decided to head 150 miles up the Hudson River to Albany, the state capital, a smaller, more manageable place without the grinding poverty of the Lower East Side. Probably, they knew someone who had gone there and was doing well. So they got on the train for Albany, which, like Rostov, was a middle-sized river town. Apparently, they liked Albany immediately, for they never moved again after that.

THE RATNERS OF ALBANY

During the family's first years in Albany, Abe worked as a tailor, sewing pants. They lived in a house in downtown Albany, near the Orthodox synagogue, Congregation Beth Abraham Jacob. Eventually, Abe found a new profession. He went into the soda business. He bought several barns located in the alley behind the Ratner house, and set up shop in several of them producing and bottling soda water. He also kept in one of the barns, several horses and a delivery wagon, which he used to make deliveries of soda all over the city. In 1912, he got an offer from a man from Atlanta to affiliate with an up and coming firm, who told Abe he could have the company's franchise for all of upstate New York. Abe said, "No thanks, I have more business than I can handle as it is." He turned the offer from the representative of Coca-Cola down flat. Within a few years, that company became enormous; one of the largest in America. After that, whenever Abe would offer an opinion on anything, people would say, "Yeah, yeah, and you are the guy who turned down Coca-Cola."

Once, Morty, Abe and Rose's youngest son, who was helping his father out with the business as a teenager, badly cut his arm and nearly died when a bottle exploded. No doubt that near-tragic accident was one factor in pushing Abe, by that time, a man in late middle age, to get out of the soda business and put the money he and Rose had saved into buying real estate. Within a few years, Abe was the landlord of a number of properties around Albany. The family moved to a bigger house at 16 Cuyler Avenue in the non-Jewish section of the city. Sandy Brenner recalls that the new house had a really nice dining room and a piano. While the family was not particularly religious, Abe was active as a volunteer with the Hebrew Free Burial Society, preparing bodies of Jews from poor and indigent families for burial. He died of a heart attack in 1941 while collecting rent from tenants in one of his properties.

Walter and Danny Ruby visited the house on Cuyler Avenue in July 2006 and found a sprawling three story white house with a large front porch. The house was in somewhat dilapidated condition and, like the south-side neighborhood in which it is located, had clearly seen better days. The various entrances to the house and its large size made Walter and Dan theorize that the house had been

built as a multi-dwelling house, and that the Ratners must therefore have had renters in their own dwelling as well as their other properties.

Sandy Brenner recalls her grandfather, Abe Ratner, as follows; "I adored him. He played cards with me and taught me casino. He was a very sweet man." Sandy also has vivid memories of Morty, the youngest Ratner son. "Morty was a great dancer and taught me dances like the jitterbug. But at Stan and Helga's wedding, he forgot all about me and was smitten with one of the Margots, (two friends of Helga's who, like her, were Jewish refugees from Germany), with whom he kept dancing. One of the Margots was very beautiful and that day I was very jealous."

According to all accounts, Rose was a dynamo who did everything around the house. She was an excellent cook (Stan remembers her matzoh brei, Sandy her brisket with ginger snaps in the sauce) and also did the sewing, and cleaning. She made all the dresses for the girls and kept a pickle barrel in the back of the house. She was active until the end of her life in 1947.

The following are thumbnail accounts of the children of Abe and Rose Ratner in chronological order. We will attempt to fill in some of the blanks here concerning Abe and Rose's children and their spouses in a future edition of this family history. What seems clear is that the two oldest sons, Peyzer and Sas became estranged from the family, apparently because both married non-Jewish women, whereas all of the daughters, Til, Selma, Ruth and Lil, remained close to their parents and close to each other throughout their lives.

George (Peyzer) 1891—?
He married a non-Jewish girl named Emma Paeglow, and according to Stan's account, his furious father, Abe Ratner, refused to talk to him for the rest of his life. Americanizing was one thing, but marrying a shiksa (non-Jewish girl) was apparently quite another. George eventually became a grocer in New Jersey. He and Emma had two daughters, Marjorie and Maryanne. Marjorie, known to the family as Margie, married Ken Decker, and that couple eventually inherited Abe and Rose's house at 16 Cuyler Ave in Albany. Sandy Brenner believes Ken died fairly recently and, Margie, who was friendly with Joan Ruby as a girl, is likely still alive and living in an assisted living facility.

Using U.S. Census material available through Ancestry.com, Dan Ruby was able to follow George Ratner and wife Emma to Englewood Cliffs, NJ, in 1920, where he was listed as a grocery proprietor. Household members at that time were wife Emma, daughter Marjorie (age 2) and Emma's mother Louise Paeglow. From there, he was able to follow Marjorie into her marriage with Robert K. Decker, evidently known as Ken. We know that Marjorie (Stan's first cousin) and Ken had two sons, Kurt and Ronald.

Herman "Sas" (1892-?)

Sas was short for Sarsaparilla, a medicinal herb that was used in popular sodas of the day. Abe, the soda man, must have given his son that nickname. Sas also married a non-Jewish woman, who was named Ida. She was said by Stan to have been very proper and to have affected an English accent.

Thelma (Til) (1896-1984). She never married and lived her entire life in Albany.

Selma (1899-1980), wife of Walter Ruby and mother of Joan and Stanley Ruby. As a girl, she was a tomboy who from an early age, and influenced by her mother's assimilationist tendencies, wanted to be as American as possible. She was the light of Rose's eye, loved the horses in the barn and had a dog. She was a great ice skater and a leader of the girls.

Ruth (1900-1992) ---was called "Fuffie" by Wendy (Joan and Milton Felenstein's oldest daughter, who couldn't say 'Ruth', as a baby but said instead 'Fuff" and the name stuck). Ruth was married in her 40's to Lou Cowan, who was introduced to her by one of Selma's boyfriends. Ruth and Lou lived in the Bronx. They were a gregarious fun-loving couple and, while too old to have their own children, they were great with the nieces and nephews. Ruth had an important job as head of the order department at the Book of the Month Club.

Lillian (born 1905-1994)—married Lee Klein of Albany and had two children Sandra and Alan. After moving in with Walter and Selma Ruby upon losing his livelihood at the height of the Depression, Lee Klein eventually prospered in the liquor business to which he was introduced by Walter Ruby, serving as upstate New York representative for the 21 Brands Company. Lillian was the historian of the Ratner family and almost all of the information Sandy Brenner shared with us for this book came from her mother. Lee and Lil were active Democrats and well connected politically in Albany. Late in life, Lee Klein became the Ombudsman for nursing homes in the Albany area.

Morty (Herman) 1911—? the youngest of the Ratner children and the one Sandy said was such a superb dancer. He married a woman named Thelma (also believed to have been non-Jewish woman). Stan recalls that he married her after he was 40, but Dan Ruby's family tree has the date of the marriage as 1928, which seems suspect, especially since Morty was apparently footloose and fancy-free at Stan and Helga's wedding in 1947.

There were also two other boys who died as infants and a girl named Dora who was born and died in 1900, and may well have been Ruth's twin.

FROM RABINOWITZ TO RUBY

Stanley Ruby's father Walter Ruby, ne Rabinowitz, (1894-1939) had nine brothers and sisters. His parents, Joseph (born 1855) and Lena (ne Lincoff-born 1857), came to New York from Lithuania in either 1874 or 1875, according to conflicting census records. They are descendants of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spekter, the illustrious Kovno Rav (1817-1896). According to the 1900 U.S. census, their children were Julius (1874-1940), Henry (Born 1879), Sadie (born 1881), Abraham (born 1883), Mamme (believed to be Meta) (born 1886), Seymour (born 1887), Blossom (born 1891) and Walter (born 1893). The family, which then resided at also had a boarder, Barnard Lincoff, obviously Lena's younger brother, whom the census said arrived in the U.S. in 1874 at the age of 5. The 1900 census shows Joseph's profession as peddler, Barnard Lincoff, a clothing salesman, and several of his oldest children already employed, with Julius, a bookkeeper, Henry, a stock clerk and Sadie, a milliner. The family lived at 288 Pleasant Ave in East Harlem, a short distance from the East River between 115 and 116 Street. In those days, before the large black emigration from the South, large swaths of Harlem (especially East Harlem) were predominantly Jewish.

Then we move on to the 1910 census for the same family. The Rabinowitz family now lives at an address on 118th St. Those mentioned as living at that address include Joseph, Lena, Abraham, Sadie, Meta, Seymour, Blossom and Walter. Barnard is still in residence along with his spouse, Fannie. Joseph is still listed as a peddler, and all of the children now have jobs. Walter, the youngest at age 16, is listed as an office clerk.

According to Stanley Ruby's account, Joseph Rabinowitz was a pious man and while he might have been listed as a peddler, in fact, he produced minimal income, spending most of his days learning Torah and Talmud in a nearby yeshiva. His wife, Lena, ended up making the living in the family running a small grocery store in Harlem. Lena was said not to have been overly fond of this arrangement and passed on her disquiet to her son, Walter, who considered his father a worthless ingrate who contributed nothing to the upkeep of the family. All his father had managed to accomplish, Walter felt, was to impregnate his wife almost every year.

One of Walter Ruby's elder brothers was Abraham Rabinowitz who cut men's coats in the garment district and, like his father, was very pious. According to Stan, his own father, Walter, looked at his older brother and said to himself; "It doesn't have to be like this." As noted, Walter had an ideological ally in his mother Lena, who encouraged Walter when he grew up to be more modern and to become a productive citizen.

After the Ruby brothers visited Albany in July, 2006, Dan Ruby did some superb work pouring over censuses and other documents and was able to confirm some family stories about the fate of the various Rabinowitz children and reveal some things we didn't know. The 1920 census lists the oldest son, Julius (born 1874) as

living in New York with a wife named Anna, and three children Seymour, Abner and Judith. Stanley remembered Judith Rabinowitz as being about the same age as his sister Joan, with whom she maintained a friendship. Sure enough, Judith Rabinowitz is one year old in the 1920 census. Julius' occupation was bookkeeper in the 1910 census and dry goods clerk in 1920.

There is an Abraham Rabinowitz who matches Stanley's memory of him as a men's clothing cutter. In 1920, he lives in the Bronx with wife Celia and children Yetta and Isadore.

Dan Ruby was able to locate a 1917 draft registration card for Seymour Rabinowitz listing him as an unemployed bookkeeper who is blind in one eye (perhaps a dodge to escape the draft. A 1930 census record shows him living alone in the Bronx and working as a truant officer in the New York City public schools (Stanley apparently incorrectly remembered Julius as having been the truant officer). Dan also found a New York death notice for Seymour Rabinowitz recorded in February 1963.

As noted above, Walter Rabinowitz Ruby had two older sisters named Blossom and Meta. Blossom was said to be vivacious and attractive, while Meta was much less attractive and had the manner of being worn down by the world. Part of this was due to the fact that she had a very tragic life. According to Stan, Meta married a man who was ambitious and had great promise and rose to become the Superintendent of Schools in Newark, N.J. Unfortunately, he developed schizophrenia and eventually had to be institutionalized.

The couple had a son named Thaddeus or Tad who graduated from Columbia Law School in the late 1940's and seemed set for a brilliant career. Previously, he had served in the infantry during World War II. Then suddenly and inexplicably at the age of 28 or 29, he killed himself. Stan, who was about five years younger than Thad, looked up to him and saw a fair amount of him when both were at Columbia. Stan was stunned when he heard the terrible news. Stan wondered out loud in the last interview his son Walter did with him a month before he died whether Tad decided to end his life because he recognized in himself the symptoms that had destroyed his father's life.

According to Stan, Julius Rabinowitz's daughter, Judith, also developed schizophrenia at some point in her life, perhaps in her late teens, early 20's. So there appears to have been a strain of mental illness among some members of the extended Rabinowitz clan, which, as we shall see, may have impacted Walter Ruby himself.

Sandy Brenner recalls that Blossom was a beautiful and vivacious red haired woman who settled in New Jersey and married a man named Ben Goldman, whom Sandy remembers as "one of the funniest joke tellers I ever heard. He should have been in the Borscht Belt." Sandy recalls occasions from the days in

the 1930's when she and her parents lived with the Rubys at 138 W. Walnut Street in Long Beach when there would be a dinner party at the house and Blossom's husband, Ben, would have the entire company in stitches telling jokes. Sandy said she and Stan, who were supposed to be in bed, would creep out of our bedrooms to the top of the stairs and listen to the action downstairs. She recalls, "I didn't understand a lot of his jokes because many of them were in Yiddish. But it didn't matter, because his whole manner was hilarious. The grownups were almost hysterical from laughter and seeing them laughing so hard made us laugh like crazy as well."

Walter Ruby, who grew up in Harlem, went to De Witt Clinton High School in the South Bronx. At that time it was an elite high school for college bound boys. By age 14, he was already buying himself things. A natural born operator and entrepreneur, he taught himself many things, including how to read signatures upside down. By all accounts, he raised himself and was determined from an early age to make it big.

According to Stan, Walter fantasized about "going to a *goyische* college and to learn golf and tennis". But economic circumstances did not permit, and, in any event, Walter may have too much energy and determination to succeed right away to sit around in school. So he went to work and soon became a salesman. By 1917, he was already the upstate representative for International Silver, traveling from Peekskill to Buffalo to visit jewellers, whom he beseeched to buy the company's product. He was considered a rising star, a superb salesman. Apparently as soon as he was 21 and legally an adult, he changed his name from Rabinowitz to Ruby to be more American and less overtly old world and Jewish.

Walter met Selma, who was 18, after being invited to the Ratner family home in Albany. He was immediately smitten with her. Not only was she lovely to look at, but he may also have liked her because she was Americanized and not "too Jewish". The whole milieu of the Ratners was much more 'American' than the Orthodox Jewish world his family inhabited in Harlem. They soon announced their intentions to marry, but Abe and Rose beseeched Selma to wait a while.

Perhaps Abe and Rose thought the connection was too sudden and were concerned that she would end up alone because America had just entered World War I and Walter had been drafted to join the U.S. Expeditionary Force in France. So Selma's parents counseled caution, but the impetuous young couple decided otherwise, running off to elope and then heading for a honeymoon in Chicago. Shortly thereafter Selma returned home pregnant and Walter went off to war. Sandy says Abe and Rose were "quite upset" about what had happened, but soon reconciled with their daughter, as they did with Walter after he returned from the war. Walter and Selma's first child, Joan, was born in 1918 while Walter was still in France.

In his Internet research in 2006, Dan Ruby was able to locate a copy of Walter Ruby's 1917 draft registration card from June 5, 1917, apparently filled out in his own hand. (The U.S. entered World War I in early April, 1917 and the 'selective service' law was implemented a few weeks later). In the document, Walter lists his name as Walter Ruby Rabinowitz and provides his birth date as October 15, 1893. He lists his occupation as "salesman" with what appears to be Lenox Novelty Co., located at 109 Lenox Ave. in New York City. He is 23 years old and writes that he is a "natural born" citizen.

After arriving in France, Walter Ruby was sent to the front lines. We have little on his military service, except that he was gassed with mustard gas (both armies were using poison gases on each other) and spent months recovering in a military hospital in France before being shipped home at the end of the war. Sandy Brenner recalls that Walter always talked with a husky voice because of the damage done to his larynx by the German gas.

THE HIGH LIFE OF WALTER RUBY

After Walter came home from France, he retrieved Selma from her parents and the young couple and their baby daughter moved to the Bronx and later Manhattan. Selma was a small town girl and had problems adjusting the big city and its heavily Jewish milieu. One person who helped her in doing that was her friend Netty Ullman. Stanley, their second child, was born on July 19, 1924. By that time, Walter was beginning to prosper in a major way, and in 1929 he bought a huge house in Long Beach without informing Selma and then surprised and delighted her with the news they would be moving there. The house was at 138 West Walnut Street, a few blocks from the beach. Long Beach was then a posh town; one of the first suburban commuter communities on Long Island, which in those days was still mainly potato fields and duck farms. Walter loved the suburban life, commuting to Manhattan every morning. Probably he also believed that living in a less crowded and turbulent environment would suit Selma, who had grown up in Albany.

Joan used to tell her little brother Stan that their father was a bootlegger during Prohibition and that International Silver, for whom he continued to work during the 1920's, was a cover for those activities. Stan himself opined as an adult that, "Perhaps my father was involved in the business back then, but we didn't ask too many questions as to what he did before 1933."

In fact, the underground liquor economy in the early days of Prohibition was something of a wild west for an ambitious young man recently home from the war. While liquor was officially illegal, it was readily available in hundreds of New York speakeasies and in the age of the flapper and the jitterbug, liquor held a glamorous role, more so than if it had been legal.

Walter Ruby was undoubtedly exposed to the drinking culture as a salesman for International Silver, which began offering a line of cocktail shakers, flasks and other barware to satisfy customer interest in drinking accessories. In keeping with the veneer of secrecy required by Prohibition, International designed cocktail shakers disguised as a lighthouse, penguin and other elaborate shapes. Such items regularly are traded on eBay today.

According to news accounts we have recently uncovered, it appears that Walter Ruby also was involved directly in distribution of alcoholic beverages, at least in one instance labelled "a rum conspiracy" in the *New York Times*. In April 1922, a federal grand jury returned an indictment against Col. Herbert Catrow, a former military hero and assistant director for Prohibition in New York, charging him with accepting a $20,000 bribe in exchange for his approval to release 1,000 cases of whiskey for sale as a medicinal product. Six other men were charged along with Col. Catrow, including Walter Ruby.

According to the *Times* article, the indictment charged that Walter Ruby was one of two men granted a carrier's permit, good until December 31 of the previous year, allowing transport of intoxicating liquors for non-beverage purposes. The article quotes the indictment charging that the defendants transported liquor each and every day from December 1, 1921 to January 5, 1922, thus defrauding the United States.

All the defendants posted bail on the day of their arrest, and Col. Catrow and others loudly protested their innocence, claiming the arrangement was above board and known to the Federal Director of Prohibition.

We know nothing of the impact of the case on Walter Ruby's personal or professional life, but four years later, all charges in the case were dismissed by a federal judge on the motion of the U.S. Attorney. The investigating attorney concluded that there had been no bribe given or accepted, and thus no crime committed beyond the bending of a few office procedures.

Though Walter Ruby was absolved of criminality in the case, it does show that he played a more active role in liquor distribution than was ever openly acknowledged in the family. Today, we can understand it as a symptom of the folly of Prohibition, which led to widespread flouting of the law. Even the prosecuting attorney in the Catrow case seemed to acknowledge as much when he spoke to the press on the day the indictment was handed down:

"I represent the opinion of the Grand Jurors in giving expression to the statement that the continuous and accumulative defiance of authority by so many of the people in respect to the Prohibition Act is not wholesome to the body politic or beneficial to society," he said.

Among his many ranging interests, Walter Ruby was an avid baseball fan. Stan recalls that his father was a frequent attendee at Yankee Stadium during the Babe Ruth era, and told a story of learning how gamblers hedge their bets while attending a World Series game with his father (This was almost certainly the World Series of 1932, which the mighty Yankees swept from the Chicago Cubs 4-0, and during which Babe Ruth famously 'called' his home run). Having won with the Yankees in Game One and having seen the odds makers subsequently substantially increase the odds the Yankees would win the entire World Series, Walter explained to Stan how he would wager a lesser amount *against* the Yankees in Game Two. Walter explained to his son that he was now in a situation where he couldn't lose. He would win big if the underdog team came back from its 1-0 deficit and won the Series, but he would still come out nicely ahead if the Yankees won the Series as expected. Stan did not catch his father's passion for baseball, but he was fascinated by what he learned of probabilities and gaming.

A gentleman about town like Walter Ruby who reveled in the world of sports would likely turn up at the racetrack during horse-racing season, and he might also have some familiarity with the various gyms and sporting clubs where the sport of pugilism was pursued. We have no corroborating family stories about Walter having any involvement in the boxing business, but the *New York Times* reported on October 17, 1923, that a Walter Ruby was one of two boxing managers sanctioned by the New York State Athletic Commission for boxers' failure to appear at contracted bouts. According to the article, Ruby was cited "for signing Manny Wexler for a bout without first finding out if Wexler was available for the date involved and whether the boxer could get into condition."

Could the errant boxing manager have been *our* Walter Ruby? It is certainly possible to imagine this dynamic, gregarious and entrepreneurial young man having meandered into the world of sports management early in his career in an effort to earn more money. If so, the bad publicity from the *Times* report, combined with the fact that he was still under indictment in the Catrow case, might have convinced Walter to cut his losses and get out of boxing management before he got himself in more trouble than he could handle. As far as we know, there is no mention of his having been involved in the world of boxing from that point on.

In the early 1930's at the height of the Depression, Walter Ruby took in Lee & Lou Klein and their small daughter, Sandy, then about two or three years old, to live in the big house in Long Beach. Lee had owned a sporting goods store in Watertown, New York but lost it after falling from a ladder and becoming an invalid for quite a few months. Walter took Lee into the liquor business with him and Lee made a lifelong career in the business, moving back to Albany after a few years and being upstate representative for a firm called 21 Brands, which owned and operated the swank 21 Club in Manhattan. Stan recalls, "Taking in the Kleins,

who were then down on their luck, was the kind of 'big' gesture for which Walter Ruby was known. Lil and Lee's daughter Sandy became like my little sister".

Sandy notes that she and her family only lived with the Rubys in Long Beach for about three years, before moving out on their own, first to Washington Heights and later back to Albany where she arrived at the age of 8. Nevertheless, she and her parents came back to the house on Walnut Street on visits for many years after they moved back to Albany on holidays and vacations. Sandy continued to visit Selma there for a number of years after Walter's death. (Selma appears to have sold the house and moved back to New York after remarrying to Dr. Jack Prager, a medical doctor who had an apartment and office at Five Riverside Drive (at 73 Street).

As small as she was when she came to Long Beach, Sandy was conscious of having suddenly moved from difficult circumstances to an environment of wealth and comfort. Among her memories of the house; "There was a huge living room that ran the whole length of the house. It had a winding staircase that went up to the first floor, where the bedrooms were. My parents and I lived in a bedroom on the floor above that." She added, "Years later (in December 1939, six months after Walter's death), Joan and Milton Felenstein were married in the house and I remember how gorgeous Joan looked when she came down the staircase in her wedding gown. There were window benches that went all the way down the side of that long room which were filled with magnolias. The outdoor garden was filled with hydrangeas."

Sandy recalls that the Rubys had as servants a black couple, Ben and Lucille, who lived in an apartment above the garage. Lucille was the cook and Ben did the serving, dressed in black and white. Selma had a buzzer under her seat at the dining room table to summon Lucille. "Selmi was a tiny woman and she would have to slide down so far in her seat in order to press the buzzer with her foot that she would sometimes almost disappear under the table", Sandy said with a broad smile at the memory.

Stan recalls that his father and "Muz" (Stan's nickname for Selma) were very affectionate with each other but also yelled a lot. But clearly, he believes, "They were happy together. They were a very modern and assimilated couple."
Sandy said that Walter was "a very loving and incredibly generous person", but that he was also "very jealous of Selma". Sandy added, "There was some basis for that because she was very pretty and all she had to do was bat her eyes and men would be all around." So Walter watched her carefully.

Once Selma decided she badly wanted to go to Mardis Gras in New Orleans. Walter almost never travelled and was not interested in going, but she pressed him to let her go on her own and after refusing he finally relented if she would agree to travel with another woman. So Selma convinced Walter's sister Blossom

to travel with her, and off they went. They came back saying they had a wonderful time."

Sandy said she does not recall Walter Ruby spending any time on the beach; he was an urban person who was decidedly not outdoorsy, having probably moved to Long Beach because it was a desirable address, not because of any predilection for the sea. But Stan grew up on the beach and became a lifeguard and Joan also enjoyed the prerogatives of wealth in a glamorous setting. Sandy recalls Joan galloping down the beach on a horse. Yet despite the obvious differences in wealth between the Rubys and her own family in those days, Sandy emphasized she and her parents were never made to feel as the poor relatives. "There was no sense of 'us' and 'them'. Walter loved me dearly, Selma and my mother were very close and Walter related to my mother as a kind of confidante. We were all very much together, all one family."

Stan recalls the many trips he made with his parents to Albany to see his grandparents. He recalls one trip in particular which must have taken place when he was still quite young because at that time the Ratners still lived in the first house and Abe was still in the soda business, which he had left by the time Sandy's family moved back to Albany in the mid-1930's. Stan recalls, "I would get back in touch with the Old World visiting my grandparents in Albany as a kid. We usually went by train, but once on a steamship. It was my grandmother Rose who taught me the joys of pickles and matzoh brei. You would out the back door, down a couple of steps and there was the pickle barrel. When I would stay there, I would share a bed with my Uncle Morty. In the morning we would lie in bed and shout so that Rose could hear us in the kitchen, "We're hungrrry! We're hungrrry! We want matzoh brei."

Stan explained that matzoh brei is composed of egg, chicken fat and milk and is cooked in a large black iron skillet. He added, "My grandparents had a great big police dog and three horses in the barn. It was a wonderful place to visit." Sandy also remembers Rose Ratner as having been "a great cook".

One precious momento of Stan's early life came to his children from beyond the grave. Going through boxes of old artifacts after Helga's death, Dan and Joanne Ruby found a reel of 8 millimeter film and projector. It turns out that Walter Ruby was a motion picture buff (ownership of such an expensive camera and projector were quite rare for that period), and that he had made films of at least two visiting days at Brant Lake Camp in the Adirondacks to which little Stanley Ruby was sent during several summers starting in 1932. Stan must have known of the existence of these films, but his children never heard of them until discovering the ancient reels of films and projector among the stash of artifacts that turned up after Stan's and Helga's deaths.

The film is absolutely fascinating and more than a little spooky; footage of Stan doing camp activities and of a happy Ruby family, including wonderful scenes

with Walter and Selma Ruby, their daughter Joan, and several Ratner sisters. In addition, there are other films from Long Beach and New York featuring the Ruby family (for a fuller description of the films, see the account on the Ruby Family History web site http://rubyfamily.blogspot.com/search/label/Stanley%20Ruby

In the summer of 2006, Walter and Dan Ruby visited Brant Lake Camp, which incredibly, has been in the same family for 90 years. It was run by the Gerstenzang family as a nominally Jewish camp--almost all of the campers were Jewish but there was little or no religious observation. The main focus of the camp was, and is, athletics and in the Ruby family film we can see little Stan avidly playing tennis (a game he enjoyed for life), horseback riding, swimming, golf, basketball, boating, archery, shooting and crafts.

Our guide for the tour of the camp was 86-year-old former camp director Bob Gersten, who was four years ahead of Stan in camp and in Long Beach High School. Gersten was a star athlete who went on to play starting guard at University of North Carolina. He has fond memories of young Stan Ruby.

LIQUOR MAGNATE AND MORE

Walter Ruby got into the liquor business in a big way as soon as Prohibition ended in 1933. Now that whiskey, rum and other spirits were legal to sell and transport, a number of entrepreneurial liquor distributors and importers set up shop in New York City to get the product from distillers in Kentucky, the Caribbean and elsewhere to the thirsty consumers in the large American cities.

By the mid-1930's, Walter Ruby was comfortably employed as vice president of sales for American Spirits, Inc., whose most important product was Puerto Rican Carioca Rum. "He made very good money in the middle of the Depression, when so many other people were in such bad shape," Stan recalled. "I was very proud that he had an office in Rockefeller Center from the time the complex opened."

Stan confirmed a central story in Ruby lore; that Walter Ruby popularized the rum and coke cocktail in the U.S., through a marketing campaign for the Carioca Cooler. Stan recalls that to publicize the launching of the drink, Walter Ruby orchestrated a publicity campaign event that included the releasing of parrots over Times Square.

Sandy remembers Walter's career in the liquor business involving a business partner named Peter Siskind. According to Sandy, the two men formed a company named Carioca. There was a popular Latin-flavored song at that time called *Carioca*, written by songwriter Gus Kahn (1886-1941), which the company caused to be written and helped to promote, and which also became a well-known

dance step. Sandy said it was only several years after operating Carioca with Siskind that the two men joined American Spirits.

The liquor company prospered throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. The success with the Carioca Cooler was followed by a bigger win for the Zombie, a drink also made with Carioca Rum, and American Spirits reported continuous years of increasing sales and profits. In 1945, six years after Walter's death, Peter Siskind and his new partner Sidney Kessler, sold the business to Schenley Distillers for more than $4 million. In the 1960s, Schenley was sold to Guinness, and today is a part of the multinational corporation Diageo.

Sandy recalls that Walter and Selma entertained a lot at the house on West Walnut Street, including many prominent people of the era, especially in show business. Among the famous songwriters who performed on the baby grand piano at the end of the living room were Harry Ruby and Harry Warren. Ruby (1895-1974), our family namesake, wrote music for Hollywood films of the 1930's and 40's, including such Marx Brothers classics as *Animal Crackers*, *Duck Soup* and *Horse Feathers*, and is co-writer with his partner Bert Kalmar of such classic songs as *Three Little Words* and *Who's Sorry Now*. Harry Ruby also made a cameo appearance as himself in the 1951 film *Angels In the Outfield* about angels helping the woeful Pittsburgh Pirates to go from last place to win the pennant. Warren, (1893-1981) is remembered as the most prolific Hollywood music writer ever, with 42 Number One hits and 11 Oscar nominations.

Selma and Walter and Lil and Lee went regularly to the most fashionable nightclubs in Manhattan, including places like the Cotton Club in Harlem. According to Sandy, "They had a wonderful time. Selmi and my mother looked like flappers, with those funny hats."

Stan said, "Overall, Walter Ruby had a glamorous life. He was the first person I knew to fly in an airplane. He would sometimes fly to Illinois, where much of our liquor was produced. He was a strong and confident person, a "large" man, who seemed not only to me, but also to many others around him, to be larger than life.

Clearly rebelling against his own Orthodox Jewish upbringing, Walter Ruby insisted on having ham in the house and celebrating Christmas. Sandy recalls that there was no Christmas tree; instead Walter's custom was to hide presents all over the house for the children to find. "There were a lot of presents. It just went on and on, as we rushed around the house looking for all the presents."

Despite celebrating Christmas, the Rubys belonged to a synagogue in Long Beach, to which they went only a few times a year; mainly on the High Holy Days. According to Stan, "Typically, on Yom Kippur, my father would make a contribution to the shul and the Talmud Torah. My mother was always afraid he would give too much. My father was a notorious soft touch who would go out of his way to help those less fortunate. He was always 'lending' $50 to a friend and

never getting it back. When I came to visit him at work, he would always splurge and take me to first class restaurants like a lobster restaurant at Times Square."

Selma was magnetic in her own right. According to Sandy, "There was not a man, child or animal who was not drawn to her. She herself loved animals and had a number of canaries at the house. She would bring them out to the sun porch and they would sit on her shoulder. She would say, 'Give me a kiss' and they would peck her on the cheek. Stan had a Scottish terrier named Lucky, and we also had cats at the house. There was one little kitten I loved, but one day, we were sitting on the porch while my mother was brushing my hair and the cat came out holding Selma's favorite canary in its mouth. The bird was quite dead. I grabbed the brush and threw it as hard as I could at the cat. I didn't want anything to do with it after that and I think we got rid of it."

Sandy recalls that there was a billiard room in the basement of the house where Stan shot pool with friends like Phil Sobel (who later became Norman Lear's best friend), the Ditchik twins, Lee Hannauer and Howie Kaminsky. "That room was where the action was," she said, "There was a line of checkers on a string and you would turn the checkers over to keep score." As a little girl, she used to get underfoot and make a nuisance of herself and sometimes Stan would tell her, "Leave us alone." She remembers that Stan, who often called her 'Sasha', used to pick up Compton's Encyclopedia at random and read to her from whatever subject he happened to turn to. He already had that insatiable intellectual curiosity he would take with himself through life.

DECLINE AND FALL

Suddenly, in 1937, things turned dramatically downhill for Walter Ruby. According to Stanley, Sidney Kessler squeezed him out of American Spirits. Then said Stan, "For 5-6 months, he sat home, not sure what to do with himself. He thought about selling soda to drug stores and down in the basement, deciding to make a perfume. Then he invented a pen that included a corkscrew and blade. He found a manufacturer to sell it. I believe it was the Schenley Liquor Company. I saw a check for $50,000 he received for that." Walter was clearly still a player after his firing; he retained an office at 49 West 49th Street in Rockefeller Center.

On July 22, 1939, Stan was in the bathroom shaving—having just received his first razor and shaving kit for his 15th birthday three days before. He was in a good mood, because he was still expecting a wonderful gift that he had been promised but hadn't yet arrived. His father had gone to the office earlier that day. Joan was already off at college at New York University. Suddenly the doorbell rang and he heard his mother go to answer it. She opened the door and then Stan heard a man identify himself as a police officer and gravely inform Selma that her husband, Walter Ruby, had been found dead in his office in Manhattan a short time before.

Stan recalled that upon hearing those horrible, incomprehensible words, the first thing that went through his mind was, "Damn, now I won't get that present after all." An instant later, he comprehended the enormity of what had just occurred; the father he idolized and adored was gone forever. He was eaten up by enormous guilt at his initial thought, and that guilt would consume him for years to come. In the weeks and months ahead, he would also be consumed with anger, which perhaps he might have felt at his vigorous, dynamic 45-year-old father for disappearing so abruptly and without warning from an apparent heart attack in the prime of life, but which he instead focused on Judaism.

He was furious at being forced to go through what he considered the "barbaric" custom of going to his father's grave every day for a year to say *kaddish,* the Jewish prayer for the dead. As a result of the need to say *kaddish*, he was not able to play that year on the high school football team, something he had set his mind on (The following year, he would be a star tackle on the varsity team, one of the few Jewish kids on a team mainly filled with a lot of Irish and Italian boys). In any event, one consequence of Stan's life-altering loss of his father and the aftermath of the event is that it created in him a deep distaste for organized religion in general and Judaism in particular.

The simple death announcement in the *New York Times* on July 23 read:

Walter Ruby, beloved husband of Selma, devoted father of Joan and Stanley. Services Monday July 24 1 P.M. at the Riverside, 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

After leaving the services at the funeral home, the mourners accompanied the body to Mt. Hebron Cemetery in Flushing, Queens, where Walter Ruby was laid to rest. The cemetery overlooked Flushing Meadow where the 1939 Worlds Fair was in full swing, and Stan vividly recalled how desolate the incongruity of the whole scene made him feel. "There we were grieving, while just beyond we could hear the sounds of people celebrating and enjoying life. It was a vivid exposition to me of the absurdity of existence."

Stan was informed by his mother that Walter had died of a massive heart attack on the couch in his office. That is the version of events Stan narrated to his own children Walter, Dan and Joanne decades later, and the one we assumed to be true. Indeed, Stan would always warn Walter and Dan as they advanced into middle age that they were at risk for heart disease since his father, Walter, had died of a heart attack and he himself survived two heart attacks.

Then, after Stan's sister Joan passed away in 1997, the mourners repaired to the apartment in Rockville Centre, N.Y. Joan shared with her husband Ruby Meyers for a reception in her honor. Among the many guests there to console Ruby and Joan's three children, Wendy, Marsha and Robert, and Joan's grandchildren,

were Stan, Helga and their three children Walter, Dan and Joanne. At the event, the Ruby children were discussing family history with Wendy, who herself would die far too young of cancer only a few years later, and were stunned when Wendy told them; "You were aware that Walter Ruby killed himself, weren't you?"

No, they replied, when they had recovered from the shock, they had never heard that. How did she know that to be a fact? Wendy said her mother had told her that once when she was a girl. Wendy offered no more evidence than that, but both Walter and Dan had the sinking sensation that what she said must be true, and were imbued with the eerie feeling they had known it all along. The three Ruby children looked at each other and across the room at their father standing there blissfully ignorant, drink in hand, and shook their heads collectively. Certainly, this was not something that made sense to take up with him at that moment.

When the three of them discussed if afterwards, Dan contended that perhaps it would make sense to go and find their grandfather's death certificate to find out the truth, but Walter, who was living in New York, never did so, and the issue was brushed under the rug. Joanne felt that if the story were true, perhaps it was something Stan should know before he died, but as he slid into declining health between 2002 and 2004, such a revelation seemed more than he could deal with.

It was only 10 months after Stan's death in October, 2004, as Walter began moving forward with the first draft of this manuscript, that he felt the issue could no longer be avoided. So he asked Marsha, Wendy's surviving sister, about it, and Marsha responded that she herself was informed by Wendy as a child that their grandfather had committed suicide. Still, Marsha recalled hearing a very different version of Walter's death from Selma. "Grammy told me that Walter had been on his way to sign a huge insurance policy that day that would have left her in a better financial situation if he were to die," Marsha said. "Unfortunately, though, he never signed the policy because he died that day of a heart attack in his office". What Marsha said about Selma makes clear that she had sought to perpetuate the story that Walter had died of a heart attack, even decades after the event.

After speaking about the matter with Marsha, Walter raised it with Sandy Brenner, who remarked that she always suspected Walter Ruby had committed suicide. She noted she was a ten-year-old living in Albany at that time of his death and her parents never confirmed to her he had taken his life, but nevertheless, "Kids pick up vibes" and those were indeed the vibes she picked up from older family members.

On September 19, 2005, Walter Ruby went to the New York municipal archives and asked an attendant there for his late grandfather's death certificate. The certificate was produced and listed as the cause of death "acute corrosive gastritis, pending chemical examination". Attached to that form was another; a

Medical Examiners' Supplementary Report from a few days later. That document lists the "means of injury" as "cyanide poisoning."

Walter Ruby clearly died an excruciating death from unnatural causes. His grandson, Walter filed a Freedom of Information with the New York City Police Department to see if the police did a homicide investigation at that time, so as to make sure that we are correct in the presumption that Walter Ruby died at his own hands and not those of someone else. On April 20, 2006, the younger Walter Ruby received an official letter from the New York City Police Department Legal Bureau informing him that the NYPD had found no evidence that such an investigation had been carried in the wake of his grandfather's death in 1939. Thus we are left with the suicide hypothesis as the only one that appears to fit the facts as we have them.

No one who is alive today has a clear idea why such a dynamic, magnetic and highly successful individual would have taken his own life. The most plausible theory may be that Walter Ruby was unable to cope emotionally with the professional setbacks he incurred in the last two years of his life; that his self-image as a self-made man who had risen to fortune and renown at an early age, and who generously supported family and friends less fortunate than himself, could not tolerate the reality that he had been reduced to more humble circumstances and could not find a quick path back to the top of the heap. Could there also have been a mental illness in his family that he had inherited? Or could there have been a connection to his activities during the 1920s? These are questions we are unlikely ever to have answers for.

Certainly, Walter Ruby left an indelible impression among those who loved him as having been a charismatic personality the likes of whom they would never see again. Selma would marry again five years later to Dr. Jack Prager, who himself died of a heart attack only a year or two after they married, and would date other men throughout her life, but she always spoke of Walter Ruby with a kind of awe at having spent the most exciting years of her life in his trajectory. She may have loved other men, but none of them held a candle to Walter. For his part Stanley clearly idolized his father and would describe him decades later as an enormously powerful and compelling personality.

We also can only speculate why Stanley apparently went on believing the 'official version' of his father's death, when others in the family appear to have known the truth. Perhaps that truth was too hard for him to have borne in terms of the image of his father that he carried in his mind, and he therefore chose to tune out the 'vibes' that Sandy spoke of. Stan's son, Walter, felt, after learning the truth about his grandfather's death, that Stan's lifelong tendency to intellectualize the world around him, as well as his decided disinclination to 'get emotional' and inability to relate to others' emotional distresses, may have stemmed in large part from the trauma he experienced that terrible July day when his world suddenly and unaccountably fell apart. The senselessness of that event may have pushed

him in the direction of his subsequent career as a physicist, a space in which he immersed himself in a perfectly functioning world of atoms, molecules and quarks. That world was one without God or intrinsic meaning, but still governed by ironclad, perfectly functioning laws of nature.

In reality, Stan functioned quite well in the 'real' world, holding together a happy and fulfilling 57- year-long marriage with Helga and raising three children and four grandchildren who loved him and looked upon him as he had upon his own father, as a brilliant, charming, enormously engaging personality who was truly larger than life. But there was a sense about him that he was happiest in the world of physics where he could poke around in search of the fundamental properties of the universe itself without messy and irrational human emotions intruding on the grand and inspiring search for truth.

Perhaps in his sheer intellectualism, ability at abstract thought and commitment to the search for truth, Stanley Ruby was most like his great-great grandfather, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor, the Kovno Rav, a figure he sometimes portrayed as the polar opposite of everything he believed in. Yet Stan held fast to his faith in the laws of the universe and in the progression of humankind to an ever higher level of consciousness, despite the rise of irrationalism, political conservatism and religious fundamentalism in the last decades of his life, with the same kind of steadfastness that Spektor held to the Orthodox Judaism of his day in the face of the movement of the younger generation toward more 'modern' forms of belief. Ultimately, Stan's immersion in physics seemed to his son Walter to be a profoundly spiritual, deeply Jewish enterprise.

SELMA REBUILDS HER LIFE

For her part, Selma Ruby responded to the tragedy of her husband's death by continuing to give love—especially to the grandchildren who would begin arriving within about a half decade of Walter's death. Walter, Dan, and Joanne Ruby remember Selma with great fondness, but they lived at a geographical distance from her in Pittsburgh and Chicago, and saw her only once a year or less. Marsha and Robert Felenstein, who grew up in Rockville Centre, Long Island, had the good fortune to see 'Grammy' far more frequently, and she left an overwhelming impression on them still vivid a quarter century after her passing.

According to Marsha; "Grammy was simply the best human being I ever knew and a really dynamite grandmother. When it was my time to become a grandmother to someone and I was asked what I wanted the baby to call me, I said, 'Grammy' because in my mind nothing could be better than being known as a Grammy. When I was a kid, Grammy always took me to all kinds of wonderful places. Grammy didn't care if it was the Jewish holidays; if you wanted pastries, she would take you to the place on 72nd Street. She would take me to my favorite shows at Radio City Music Hall. Late on, if I wanted to have a date with a

boyfriend in the City, she would let me stay over at her place (the apartment at 5 Riverside Drive that she inherited from Dr. Prager, where she would reside the rest of her life)."

Marsha added, "Grammy was there for all the ages of her grandchildren right up till they were adults. When I pass on, she will be part of the aura I leave, because she was a very important person in my life. Grammy never stopped talking about Stanley and all of the Ruby family, even when you were 2500 miles away. She thought Stan was the greatest guy, the greatest son and the best brother to my mother who ever lived. There was nothing she could have wanted from a son that Stanley did not fulfill for her."

Robert also remembers with palpable love and affection his visits to Grammy's apartment on Riverside Drive, when she took him to the Christmas shows at Radio City Music Hall or the Central Park Zoo. There were even more prosaic pleasures such as "the times when she would take me to Horn and Hardart; that place where everything came in vending machine at ridiculously cheap prices. I remember you could get a big slice of chocolate cake—the best I ever ate—for a nickel a slice."

He added, "Grammy was very vibrant, very active. She never sat still for a minute. Even when she was older, when she came out to the house on Oxford Road in Rockville Centre, she would prune all the roses in our rose garden." Robert added that she had a very common sense, down to earth approach to life. "I remember her saying 'Never be afraid to ask questions if you don't know something. If you are lost in the City, go to a cop.'"

Not that Selma was a perfect mother, but then, has there ever been such a specimen? Both Marsha and Robert's wife Jane remember Joan telling them that Selma would give her a hard time as an adolescent for being slightly overweight, an issue that super svelte and glamorous grown up Joan would revisit on her own daughter Marsha when she was a teenager. It is, of course, far easier for a grandmother to unreservedly indulge a granddaughter than for a mother to indulge a daughter.

STAN RUBY AT WAR

Stanley had weight issues of his own as a child. Sandy has kept a photo of him at about age 13 standing with her in the garden on Walnut Ave. in which he is, in her words, "somewhat pudgy". Sandy then showed Walter Ruby another photo of Stan as a soldier during World War II, about which, she said; "He lost his chubbiness and become very good looking. People who saw him during his army days say he looked a lot like Gene Raymond, a Hollywood matinee idol of that era."

Sandy has preserved two letters Stanley sent her from his tour of duty in the faraway Pacific during the war where he served in the engineering corps in New Guinea and the Philippines. Late in Selma's life, when reality concerning long ago events would become ever more elastic a concept, she would insist that Stan had been involved in hand to hand combat with the Japanese during the war. In fact, his army tour took place hundreds of miles from the front lines, and involved setting up radio towers in primitive jungles. During his time in New Guinea, Stan lived in a hut with a pet monkey and had the chance to watch the life of the aboriginal peoples of northern New Guinea at close range.

The first of Sandy's letters is dated 'January 21, New Guinea', although it is not clear from the obscured postmark whether the year is 1944 or 1945. After the salutation, 'Dear Sasha', he writes about the beauty of a tiny offshore island that he visits every day, of which he observes that it is "precisely like those tiny tropical islands you've read about, except this one doesn't have any of those native belles that figure so prominently in the literature of the region. The swimming is perfect and the water is so clear you can see the bottom in 35 feet of it. And beautiful tropical fish swimming all around. They are driving me slowly mad for they keep playing with me. They bump into my arms, stay within a few inches of my head, and yet I can't catch them. Not for lack of trying, however. I've made two nets already and failed with both however. Just give me time." Stan would maintain his love for and fascination for tropical fish and all the beauties of the natural world for the rest of his life.

The second letter, dated March 27, 1945, is addressed to 'Grandma (Rose Ratner) and Til, Lee, Lil, Piz and Sandra'. In the letter, Stan complains, "When I came overseas I thought I'd be able to write great letters for there should be a lot to describe. Then I found out about (military) censorship, and there was not much left to tell. And the things I can write about are boring; for that matter, that word is a good description of life here." He writes, however, that during the previous week, his unit experienced a nice "change of routine" and in the absence of the normal workload, they had been able to spend their time "swimming, volleyball, taking naps, reading and listening to the radio. I also got a textbook to study…I only hope it lasts for a while longer. It's an easy bet that it won't."

Not that army life was always boring. Stan writes, "The funniest thing happening now is that I'm learning is to climb telephone poles with those iron spikes linesmen use. And it is cute; the ground gets so far away before I'm ten feet up and those hooks are seemingly very insecure. You should see me shiver." He closes the letter by predicting, "By the time you get this, I bet the Germans have stopped fighting" and signs it, "Lovingly, Stan."

And so we leave Stan, slim, tanned, halfway around the world, full of hope and growing self-confidence and about to embark his adult life trajectory. At the age of 20, he was at once the product of his family's American Jewish experience of 50 years, with roots deep in the soil of Eastern Europe, and a brilliant young man

in the process of forming a modern, even futuristic vision of reality that is uniquely his own.

Today, exactly 60 years later and a year after Stan's passing, we can only read those long forgotten letters and hear the stories of his early life, and reflect again on how profoundly he enriched the lives of everyone he touched. Some of us also struggle with the irrational but palpable feeling that there is something unnatural and out of kilter about a world that appears set upon continuing its erratic course for eternity even though Stan Ruby is no longer around to explain its complexities and absurdities with his wry and insightful observations. Indeed, the world somehow seems a paler and less interesting place without Stan Ruby in the middle of the action.

Helga's Story

HELGA'S ACCOUNT OF HER EARLY LIFE

My grandparents, Julius and Bette Volgemut, came from Konigsberg, the capital of East Prussia. Julius was in the moving business in Danzig, which was then also part of East Prussia. They decided to move to Berlin in order to marry off their two beautiful daughters, Elli, my mother, who was born in Elbing, near Konigsburg in 1900, and Hilda who was several years younger. Elli was already a teenager when they moved. There were a lot more eligible wealthy Jewish young men available in the capital than in Konigsburg, where the Jewish population was small. When Elli was 20 in 1920, she met Herman Ringel at a dance and married him soon thereafter. Hilda married Herbert Peiser, who was said to be the most eligible Jewish bachelor in Berlin. I was a bridesmaid at the wedding.

Hilda and Elli were both rather superficial in their values. They were totally involved with their looks and were indifferent to being Jewish. Hilda never had any children because she didn't want to ruin her figure by becoming pregnant.

Julius Volgemut came from money, as his father had owned the largest clothing factory in Konigsburg. He and my grandmother had a happy marriage. He would read to me and tell me stories when I was little and I would often stay with my grandparents when my parents went on vacation.

My father, Hermann Ringel, was born in Berlin, but his parents had come from Galicia. They were *Ostjuden* (East European Jews) so it was socially a step up for him to marry my mother, whose family was very, very German and practically non-observant, only going to synagogue on the High Holy Days. My father, by comparison, attended an Orthodox synagogue on the Pevtavetsi Strasse. He had two sisters, Rosa and Bette. He was more than 15 years older than my mother, and by the time he proposed to her, he had already prospered as a manufacturer in the men's clothing business. My father owned a big factory on the Alexanderplatz together with a junior partner. My mother never trusted the man, but my father believed in him.

I was born on October 20, 1924 in Berlin. Throughout my childhood, we lived in the most fashionable part of Berlin, Charlottenberg, just of Kufurstendam, on Schlutestrasse off Goethestrasse. Schluter was a 14 or 15th century German philosopher. (Wikpedia lists Andreas Schluter as a baroque architect who lived from 1660-1714-ed).

Our apartment fronted on the Tiergarten, Berlin's loveliest park and from our beautiful balcony, we could see the Spree River. Once during a trip to Berlin many decades later with Stan, when he was giving a talk in Dahlem University, I found the apartment building where I lived as a child. The building had survived the war unscathed. Stan and I went upstairs to our floor, but I didn't have the nerve to ring the bell.

I attended the Theodor Herzl School in the Tiergarten in the heart of Berlin. I was there from first grade on in 1930-31. It was a small school until 1936, when the Nazi government decreed that Jews could no longer attend school with non-Jews. Then we had a huge influx of Jewish kids from German schools that made the school many times larger than it had been before.

My father, an ardent Zionist, insisted on sending me to Theodor Herzl School, although my mother had been strongly opposed, just as she was to anything Zionist. My father always planned to make *aliyah*, but my mother would say things like, "Over my dead body will we go to Palestine". That infuriated my father because he believed deeply in a Jewish homeland. He said, "We have been wandering in the desert for 2000 years so we could get back to our land and now we have to move there." My mother could barely stand hearing that. She was a lady of leisure who wore white gloves, and who had a cook and a couple of maids. She was decidedly uninterested in moving to a pioneer society in the desert. In fact she never visited there, even after Israel was created in 1948. She would frequently vacation on the Cote D'Azur, where, of course, Hilda was living with her second husband, the diamond merchant Joe Liebman, in the Hotel De Paris in Monte Carlo.

My parents' closest friends were the Meisners. My father grew up playing with Mrs. Meisner. The Meisners' son Yossi was then in England studying to be a rabbi. Ze'ev (nee Wolfie) was my father's nephew, the son of Tanta Rosa. Ze'ev had a sister named Margot. My father had a big impact on Ze'ev, the only boy in the Ringel family, influencing him toward Zionism. Ze'ev, who was seven years older than I, also studied at Theodor Herzl School and was a member of Habonim, a Zionist youth movement. I remember vividly taking him to the Berlin train station in 1936. He and his comrades, seven boys, all members of Habonim, were headed for Palestine. What a scene that was! I remember their excitement to be setting off to fulfil their dream. It was both a painful and beautiful moment. After they got to Palestine, they worked together as a group on the docks in Haifa for years to raise enough money to buy the land needed to start their kibbutz. I didn't see him again until we came to Israel in 1961 and went to Kibbutz Afek, near Haifa, of which he was one of the founding members.

There was also Tanta Bette, who had two daughters, Edit and Gina. They managed to get to London, where they lived all their adult lives. We visited them at their home in London in 1961. Neither of them married or had children.

My father went to Orthodox synagogue regularly, but my mother went only on the High Holy Days and then to a Reform synagogue, where you had to pay for your tickets. My father would often take me on Shabbat to the Orthodox synagogue. As a small child I sat with him, but as I got older I sat upstairs in the women's section. Sometimes it was boring, but overall I enjoyed the services. My father often ate at kosher restaurants. At home we were not kosher, but we never ate pork or ham. In fact, from my childhood, I felt sickened by the idea of eating pork or ham, which Stan ate and liked to have in the house.

Meanwhile, anti-Semitism in Germany was growing by leaps and bounds. In those years, just before Hitler came to power, it seemed like there were elections every Sunday. My parents were always voting. I'm not sure for which party they voted, although my father was very pro-business. In those days, we would stand on our front balcony and watch the Brownshirts march up and down Goethestrasse. They shouted 'Heil Hitler' with arms outstretched. When they marched, we would usually close the glass-fringed doors so we would not have to hear it. I remember them shouting, 'We are going to kill all the Jews.'

In the midst of all of that, my parents tried to give me a normal childhood. My mother wanted me to become a ballerina on ice and gave me ice skating lessons. I enjoyed that a lot. In school, my favorite subject was geography, which was taught by a wonderful man named Herr Traubner. He also taught math, which I always had a lot of trouble with. Still, It was my father who installed in me a love of maps, which had a lot to do with why I loved geography. My father had a game in which he would draw a map of the park and leave it for me in the house for me with hints about where to look for him. Then he would go out the door. I would wait for a while and then take the map, walk to the park and search for him based on the clues on the map until I found him hiding behind a tree. It was something like a scavenger hunt.

We went on a lot of vacations. I remember, especially, our summer skiing holidays in Cortina in the Italian Alps. I remember how we crossed the Brenner Pass in the train to get there. We would leave for Cortina in June, as soon as school was out. Once there, I would go to ski school, while my mother would go by the hotel limousine to daily *tea dansant* sessions, where ladies would dance with gigolos. She also liked gambling casinos and the spa treatments, including sulpher and mud baths. She really loved mud baths.

My father and I would walk to reach the same destination through the glorious alpine scenery. He loved nature and taught me the names of plants. In that sense, he was very much like Stan, who so loved walking by the sea in Monterrey (California) and out on the rocks in China Cove, watching the sweep of the waves and listening to the seals barking. I miss all of that very much. In any case, in addition to Cortina, my father also took us to a similar place in the German Alps south of Munich and in the Carpathian Mountains between Poland and Czechoslovakia.

He was austere and believed that Jews needed to toughen themselves through sports and hiking in preparation for moving to Palestine. He was a muscular Jew who worked out at the gym two or three times a week and was a member of the Maccabi sports club. When we went on vacations to resorts like Marinebad, my father took me on long hikes. He had always wanted a son, so treated me like one.

I preferred my father's values to my mother's, but he could also be very stern. At dinner, I was supposed to sit silently and eat my food. He believed children should be seen but not heard. My parents did not have a happy marriage or a loving relationship. They fought a lot. There was a lot of yelling and maybe some physical abuse. There was that 15-year age difference, and more important, their values were obviously very different. As far as I know, they did not consider getting divorced, as divorce was heavily stigmatized at that time.

My father was able to get tickets through his Maccabi connections to the 1936 Berlin Olympics. I remember the whole scene made me very uncomfortable; there was a lot of Nazi music in the stadium and cries of 'Heil Hitler.' But it was also very exciting. I remember watching Jesse Owens run. We were cheering for him to win, but we had to bite our tongues and not do so openly.

My mother had no intention of ever leaving Germany, even after the Nazis took over, at least until 1936, when things started to really go downhill rapidly. Hilda had the same attitude. I remember having political discussions with Hilda; trying to reason with her about what was going on and how we had to get out quickly. The irony was that Hilda would leave Germany before we did. Her husband, Herbert Peiser, had inherited his father's business and as things began to really deteriorate for Jews in Germany in the mid 1930's, he moved the business to Holland. Then they moved there themselves, and did not return to Germany.

My father died suddenly in June of 1938 after developing blood poisoning (sepsis) during a vacation he took with Ogi in Czechoslovakia (Ogi was a nickname for Elli she acquired in the early 1950's when her toddler grandson Walter Ruby called her 'Ogi' instead of 'Omi' (grandmother)). If penicillin had existed at that time, Hermann Ringel surely could have been cured. His death threw my parents' plans to get out of Germany up in the air. My father had been squirreling away money out of the sight of his firm's clerk/accountant who by this time was reporting to the Gestapo. Actually, my father had also hoped to buy a factory legally and move to Holland, but by 1938, it was too late for that.

After my father's death, my mother and the junior partner plotted for a month. He too was planning to get out of the country. Then, one morning in late August, she went out at 6 A.M. to meet the partner. I heard her go out and came downstairs and saw the milk bottles on the doorstep. Soon thereafter, she came home very upset. The partner had cleaned out all the company funds and disappeared. He had tricked and betrayed her.

I must say that my mother performed magnificently in that crisis. As already pointed out, she had been a society lady who left all business to my father. And yet, when things were really desperate, after we had been cheated, she did not fall apart, but instead, turned herself around and did whatever she had to do to get us out of there. That morning she took stock of our situation and said calmly we would have to leave immediately. She then contacted Mr. Meisner and told him what had happened. In a little while, he called back to say that he had gotten us train tickets to Munich and the train was leaving in an hour and a half. He told us, "Don't take anything with you; just get on that train with a couple of small bags, like you are going away for the weekend."

We appealed to my grandmother, Betty Volgemut, to come with us, but she declined, as she had all along. She said she was a German, first and foremost, and would never leave the Fatherland. She had always said that Hitler was a passing phenomenon, that Germany was too decent a country to suffer such barbarism for long. I don't know if she still believed that in 1938, but she projected a sense of fatalism. Betty met us at the train station, but we had to keep apart and not embrace. We had to hold our emotions and not cry, because we didn't want to attract any attention to ourselves. She just gave us a peck on the cheek, as though we were going away for the weekend. Of course, we would never see her again. As will be seen, we left in her possession $20,000 my father had been hiding with the idea that she would send it to us when we needed it. Two years later, she managed to do just that and that money quite literally saved our lives.

In Munich, we stayed at the house of a rabbi, who had been contacted on our behalf by my father's rabbi in Berlin, while the arrangements were being made to smuggle us out of Germany. We were supposed to be there only 2-3 days, but that turned into a week because I contracted pneumonia. He was a very good man and he and his wife took good care of me.

When we were ready to go, an official SS car came to pick us up at the door. Some SS officials did a nice business smuggling Jews to the border. We were placed in the back seat of the big black car together with a young Jewish man, who had also paid to be smuggled to the border. Two Gestapo men sat in the front seat. We were on a high-speed road that only official cars were authorized to use. We were sitting in the back, but sometimes the men in front would order us down on the floor. Once we got to the western part of the country, we drove along the Siegfried Line, the German military line facing France and Belgium. Everywhere we saw soldiers and military activity. Finally, well after it was dark, they stopped somewhere, and told us to get out and run across a wide ditch, which was the Belgian border. There were German border guards nearby, but apparently they had been bribed not to shoot at us. We were told that on the other side of the ditch, inside Belgium, there would be people waving white handkerchiefs who would help us.

I remember that during the escape I felt no sense of panic, even when I stumbled and fell in the ditch. I just got up and kept moving. I felt numb and emotionless, like a wound up toy. We had no way of knowing whether the whole thing was a trick and the border guards would shoot us. The point was just to keep moving, to survive. We crossed the ditch and, sure enough, there were the men with the white handkerchiefs. They motioned us to follow them to a farmhouse, where we were to hide until the following night. Our saviors quickly turned out to be the most despicable human beings I ever encountered in my life. They were smugglers and had been so for generations. Ogi was nearly raped that night by the thugs. It was the young Jewish man who came with us who saved her. Then they extorted more money from us than previously said, but we had no choice but to pay it. We were dependent on those awful people because we still had to get to Liege, 50 miles from the border. If we were to be apprehended by the Belgian police before reaching Liege, we could be sent back to Germany.

We slept during the day and moved at night, walking on trails through the forest. I remember walking in my sleep. After four or five nights of walking in the dark and sleeping in farmhouses during the day, we arrived in Liege. We were finally safe from being sent back to Germany. We headed from there to Antwerp, a raucous port town near Holland with a large Jewish population, at the end of August. We would stay there for three months.

In Antwerp, we reconnected with Hilda, who, as noted, had left Germany earlier with her husband Herbert Peiser. He was a bad man, very greedy, and after we all got to New York he sued my mother in New York State Superior Court, claiming falsely that he had supported my mother and I while we were fleeing together with him and Hilda through France and Portugal and now we should pay him back. The charges were thrown out of court. As noted, we saw some of the worst of humanity in those years; first my father's business partner who cheated us, then those despicable Belgian smugglers and finally Peiser, who sued us despite everything we had gone through together. Hilda was furious at him for that act and left him shortly after that.

Antwerp was quite a scene. You could see Hasidic rabbis would take uncut diamonds out of their *shtreimels* (fur hats worn by the Hasidim) and displaying them. We lived in a hotel room. For the first time in my life, I wasn't going to school, and, in fact, would be out of school for the next three years until we got to New York. I got upset because Ogi would go out with men at night. She went to clubs with Belgian soldiers. I felt abandoned and would have panic attacks, but that didn't deter her. A couple of times, I even called the police and asked them to find her.

We left for France just before the end of the year. We spent Christmas Eve, 1938, at a train station in Paris on our way south to Nice, to which Hilda and Peiser had already moved. It was cold and snowing at the station. Then we went on to Nice. We rented an apartment in a three story walk-up building on the west side of the

city. I became fluent in French, but my circle of friends was mainly German Jewish refugee kids. We hung out on the Promenade des Anglais, the beachfront, which was where I flirted with flyboys from the RAF (Royal Air Force), who were based in southern France after the France and England went to war with Germany in September, 1939. Some of them were really gorgeous.

Ogi and Hilda spent a lot of time gambling at the Casino in Nice, as well as in nearby Monte Carlo and Villefranche. Sometimes, I would make scenes, because I thought going to the casino and gambling was really vulgar and decadent, especially that that world was at war and people were dying. Still, occasionally Hilda would win some money and take us all to a fancy restaurant. That I didn't mind.

Meanwhile, my mother was doing something practical; learning how to make hats. She also made pretty dresses and suits. She had always been good with her hands, doing things like knitting and crocheting. I have criticized my mother a lot, but I always admired her strength of character to learn a trade. She was able to put aside the fact that she had been wealthy and never had to work before and to acquire a skill that would enable her to pay the rent and put food on the table, no matter what the situation or in which country we would next find ourselves.

1939 and early 1940 slipped away rapidly, but we were unsuccessful in finding a way to get out of France to a safer country. Of course, the south of France was a very nice place, but the future appeared very ominous. France had declared war on Germany in September 1939, after Germany invaded Poland, but then nothing much happened. It was a strange time, the *sitzkrieg* (sitting war). There was no fighting, but everyone was apprehensive of what might be coming because the Germans quickly conquered Poland and later Denmark and Norway and the Allies didn't seem to be able to do anything right.

In May 1940, the Germans invaded the Low Countries and France, and quickly smashed the French armies. By mid-June came the terrible news that Paris had fallen. Southern France would remain under the nominal rule of the Vichy French government, but Gestapo agents soon flooded into the area. For our part, we were now desperate to get out in order to save our lives. It didn't matter where —just to get away from the Nazis. Palestine seemed like our most likely option, although even in this crisis, neither my mother nor Hilda wanted to go there. Unfortunately, in any case, the British blockade was preventing any refuge boats from getting through. America seemed like a wild dream in June 1940 because it was very hard to get U.S. visas. Instead, my mother, Hilda and Peiser were thinking about places like Argentina, Costa Rica, or maybe Australia.

Meanwhile we were shuttling back and forth between the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of France, between the ports of Marseilles and Bordeaux, trying to find a ship to smuggle ourselves onto. A lot of people were doing that and such things could be arranged by greasing the right palms. In Bordeaux, on the

Atlantic Coast, my mother and I rolled up our pant legs and ran onto a boat that, I seem to recall, flew the English flag. We got onto the boat, but then found out from sympathetic ship hands that the boat would be sailing shortly for England, so we made an immediate decision to run off the ship again. France had just collapsed before the Nazis, and we feared England too would fall in a few weeks. We decided not to risk going there.

Meanwhile we had managed to purchase fake visas clearing us for entry into Costa Rica. We paid for the visas with the $20,000 my grandmother had kept for us in Berlin. We had paid a smuggler to go to Berlin to get the money for us, which he did. Soon thereafter, we got a notification from the Red Cross that she had been picked up by the Gestapo and taken away. We never heard from her again and believe she died in Auschwitz. We also got word that Margo, Ze'ev's sister, was picked up by the Germans trying to flee to Yugoslavia, where her father had once been a citizen. She too was lost forever.

For our part, that $20,000 definitely saved our lives. With the Costa Rican visas in hand, which gave us a country of destination, we were able to buy passage on a sealed train across Spain to Portugal. It was that $20,000 that bought the visas, not Herbert Peiser's money as he falsely claimed later in the Supreme Court of New York. The fact is that we arrived in New York without a penny in our pockets, our remaining money having gone for visas and living expenses.

EDITORS NOTE

While Helga spoke at length about the Costa Rican visas in her last interview with Walter, at previous times she had also spoken of her mother having secured Ecuadorian visas for the two of them as well. She had also mentioned at other times that Elli had attained a fake Polish passport for the two of them. It seems likely that it was the Polish passport that they purchased in France (together with the Costa Rican visas) for the $20,000. We are not clear exactly when she secured the Polish passport (was it necessary for maintaining a residence in France or simply too cross to Spain and Portugal?), but it seems likely that the $20,000 in question may have paid for both Ecuadorian and Costa Rican visas. Dan and Joanne found the passport in a box after Helga's death and it contained a page with a stamp with a transit visa in New York and an Ecuadorian visa issued in Lisbon. Thus it may have been the Polish passport and the Costa Rican visa that got Elli and Helga to Lisbon and the Ecuadorian visa that made it possible for them to cross the Atlantic.

Valery Bazarov, the present-day historian at HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), the international refugee agency that helped Elli, Hilda, and Helga at several points in their three year long odyssey across France and Portugal offered in the summer of 2006 look in the organization's archives in New York to see what they might have on Elli and Helga Ringel. HIAS was very active in southern France from the time of the fall of Paris to the Nazis in June 1940 until the

German occupation of southern France in November 1942--helping thousands of Jews escape the Nazis including prominent people like Marc Chagall --and therefore might be able to determine whether the organization helped them there as well as in Portugal and New York.

Unfortunately, all that Valery was able to find were two pieces of paper that seem to have been part of a larger file, but the file itself seems to have disappeared. To see the documents and the Ecuadorian visa in Elli's passport, please visit the Ruby Family History Project web site at http://rubyfamily.blogspot.com/search/label/Helga%20Ruby

The first is a hand written scrap of paper, apparently from their days in Lisbon, reading:
Ringel, Elly
Ringel, Helga
Polonaise, Kattovice, 3.7.900
Address: rua de gloria 41-28

Indeed, as we know, the fake Polish passport listed Elli's birthplace as Kattovice and the date is her correct birth date. The address is clearly where they lived in Lisbon. The second document was issued by HIAS upon their arrival in New York on April 23, 1941. It gives us the important information that the ship they arrived on was the S.S. Guine, a Portuguese ship that Bazarov said was one of the main ships that carried refugees from Lisbon to New York during those years. It lists Elli as a widow 40 years of age of Polish nationality and Helga as being 15 (actually she was 16). It lists their residency as Hotel Paris in New York, which was probably where Elli and Hilda stayed during the week that they spent in New York (Helga was held on Ellis Island during that period), connecting with Judge Ringel who apparently signed on as their guarantor in New York even though he had never met them before and there was no discernable family connection It lists the HIAS worker who dealt with their case as Neubau (the first name is indistinct), who Valery said was a well known HIAS worker during those days and had the distinction of handling the very last immigrant held on Ellis Island when that facililty closed in 1954. The HIAS form lists them as "in transit to Ecuador" and specifies that they arrived in New York on "4/23-bonds to 5/10", apparently they would have to leave by May 10.

We now return to Helga's narrative:

Before receiving the visas and getting on that sealed train out of France, we had a terrifying incident in Lyon, in east-central France, where had gone with Hilda and Peiser in an unsuccessful effort to try to get into Switzerland. My mother and I were sitting in a café, when Hilda came to us, her face deathly pale. She told us in a hushed voice that she had just seen the Gestapo agent who used to monitor us in Berlin. She saw him walking the streets in plainclothes, mingling with the crowds. She was absolutely certain that it was he, and therefore he was probably

looking for us. We got up right away and ran out of the café back to the train station, to catch a train back to the south of France.

We knew we had to get out of France urgently after that. My mother was ready to take me and walk across the Pyrenees, which was pretty amazing for a lady who had spent her life in high heels. Fortunately, soon thereafter our tickets came through for the sealed train. We left Marseilles and cross into Spain at Hendaye. No one was allowed on or off the train in Spain. After the border crossing, it went all the way to Lisbon non-stop.

Lisbon was an interesting place. We were there for nine months, long enough for me to learn to speak good Portuguese. We lived in a furnished room somewhere away from the center of the city. I was 15 going on 16, and not going to school. I had an intense social life, hanging out with a group of other teenage refugees who were mainly Jewish kids from Frankfurt and Berlin. Unlike teenagers in other times and places, we didn't drink alcohol. We drank Coca-Cola. As in Nice, Ogi and Hilda spent a lot of time at the Casino.

We didn't stay so long in Lisbon because we wanted to be there, but because of long delays at the American Embassy. We were among thousands of Jewish refugees milling around the embassy, trying to get visas to the U.S. Everyone, ourselves included, had to be investigated, cleared and OK'd. A lot of people have blamed the U.S. government for those delays, but, in reality, there was one guy at the embassy, the head of the visa department, who was an anti-Semite and personally went out of his way to slow things further. Periodically we would get in a long line to see him. Finally, it would be our turn to see him. I remember him as a faceless bureaucrat sitting behind a big desk. He would say, 'Your number hasn't come up yet' and dismiss us in a preemptory tone. HIAS, which was in Lisbon working to help the refugees, complained about the man's behavior and eventually he would be dismissed.

At some point, we realized that we couldn't afford to wait in Lisbon until we managed to get U.S. visas. Any day the Germans might invade and occupy Spain and Portugal, like they had France and most of the rest of Europe, and that would be the end of us. We had come to the end of the continent and there was nowhere left to run. So Hilda, her husband and my mother and I purchased tickets for a boat to Costa Rica, to which we had those life-saving visas, with transit visas to the U.S. The boat was to make a stop in New York and we had visions of jumping ship and trying to stay there.

My mother frugally had managed to hold onto just enough money to pay the very high cost for that ship. The conditions on board were awful. That boat was a cattle car, with six bunk beds stacked one on top of the other. Of course we were afraid of being torpedoed by a German submarine. It was the late spring of 1941, and civilian boats were getting blown up all the time. But we didn't worry too much about that because the main thing was that we had finally managed to get

out of Europe. As at the German-Belgian border, we did not think about danger, but rather, pushed forward one step at a time.

Most of the other passengers also had visas for Costa Rica and other Latin American countries. Yet when the boat docked in New York, the four of us were the only passengers whose U.S. transit visas were rejected and who were forbidden to get off the boat. Somehow someone must have informed the U.S. authorities that we had no intention of going to Costa Rica, but might try to stay in New York.

After some consultations, including with a representative of HIAS, we were informed that our visa application to the U.S. was in order, but that we would be allowed to stay in New York only if we could find an American citizen who would sign an affidavit of support for us. HIAS agreed to help us find such a person and quickly turned up a judge on the Superior Court of New York whose name was Ringel. I don't know if Judge Ringel was actually our relative, but he agreed to sign an affidavit for us and on that basis Ogi and Hilda were allowed off the boat to make various arrangements for starting our lives in New York. Meanwhile, Peiser and I were taken by police launch to Ellis Island, where we had to spend about a week waiting for Ogi and Hilda to come back.

We never got to meet our benefactor, Judge Ringel, at that time, but many years later when already living in Los Gatos, I became friendly with a wonderful woman named Barbara Mendenhall, whose maiden name happened to be Ringel. We compared notes and I realized that her father was Judge Ringel, the man who made it possible for us to become American citizens. Stan and I met him at Barbara's home in Saratoga. It was totally amazing to meet him like that.

So it happened that I spent Passover on Ellis Island, of all places. I recall that the authorities gave the refugees who, like myself, were being held there until various bureaucratic issues were resolved, a wonderful Pesach seder. There was an exultant feeling in the air that night shared by many of us at the seder. Passover celebrates the Jewish struggle for freedom, and although we were being held at Ellis Island for the moment, we knew we were finally safe from the Nazis and that we would be free soon. We had all survived those who wanted to kill us, just as did the Children of Israel in fleeing the Pharoah.

I did not have access to a telephone on Ellis Island, so was unable to speak to Ogi for that whole week, but being there felt like a fun, crazy adventure, rather than being in captivity. The hall at Ellis Island looked like a huge railroad station, but with an upstairs and downstairs. I was thrilled by the sight of Lady Liberty on her own island in New York harbor, very close to us. Suddenly, the young man who had transported Peiser and I on the police launch from our ship to Ellis Island—a blonde Irish Catholic guy—reappeared and asked me if I wanted to go on something called a 'date'. I didn't understand what that was, so he explained it to me; that he wanted to take me out to a nightclub once I was free. I knew a little

English from elementary school and had taken some lessons in Lisbon, so we were able to communicate.

After about a week, Peiser and I were taken off the island and reunited with Ogi and Hilda on another boat that was going to Costa Rica, with a stopover in Cuba. We had arranged that we would get off in Havana and get the visas we would need to return to the U.S. as legal residents. The choice had been either to pick our visas in Montreal or Havana and they chose Havana at the suggestion of HIAS.

We stayed several days in Havana, getting the needed documents from the U.S. Embassy, and once that was done, Ogi and Hilda, predictably enough, headed for the casino. I was full of disapproval about that and let them know it. My Theodore Herzl values caused me to view such activities with a jaundiced eye. I spent most of my time on the lovely beach in Havana.

Then we got on a boat to Miami, and I got violently seasick on that short trip. I had to laugh at myself. I had made it all the way across the rough and dangerous Atlantic crossing, and here I was getting seasick on the last 90 mile run. We made a brief visit to Miami Beach, which I found very tacky, and then aboard a train, for the long ride back to New York.

It was the end of May 1941, and as we rode on that train, my mother was wracking her brain trying to remember people we knew in New York who could help us find a place to live and help her get a job. We had managed to save our own lives, but now it hit us that here we were in a strange new country where we knew almost no one and with almost no money left. We were practically penniless. My mother had never been without money in her life, but she was resourceful and was hopeful she would be able to make a living making hats.

When we got to New York, we found a place to live in a rather shabby apartment building at 101st and Broadway on the sixth floor. We shared a common bathroom with the residents of six other apartments. My mother quickly found work in a small hat-making factory in the Garment District in Manhattan. Meanwhile, in those first days, I managed to connect with my friend, Ruth Nash, a beauty my age who was also from Berlin and had been part of our refugee crowd in France and Lisbon. Ruth told my mother and I that it was terribly hot and humid in Manhattan during the summer, so why not rent a cheap place in Long Beach for June through August? Her family was doing just that and so were a lot of other German refugees. Coming from northern Europe, none of us were used to the equatorial summer heat in New York, and even with hardly any money, German Jewish refugees sought to flee the city for the summer.

So my mother and I went out to Long Beach to find a cute little apartment a few blocks from the beach. Ogi would take the train every morning to her job in a small hat factory in Garment District, and I ran the household in Long Beach,

doing the shopping and cooking. I have been critical of my mother for many things, but that was one of those times when I thought she was terrific. She had to go to work every day in a broiling factory, but instead of making me hang around the city and also suffer in the heat, she found us that place in Long Beach. Doing that added two long train rides to her already long and difficult day, but made it possible for me to be on the beach that summer.

I was one of hundreds of kids who used to hang out on the beach in front of the Nassau Hotel, which Ogi used to call the Nauseous Hotel. As I said, I arrived in America with a little English from grade school and lessons I took in Lisbon, but it was on the beach in Long Beach that I really learned how to speak English fluently. We were there not only during the summer of 1941, when I was 16 going on 17, but every summer for the rest of the war years.

My best friend and sometimes rival for male attention was Ruth Nash, the aforementioned beauty from Berlin. I dated a guy named Zola for the first couple of years and then my boyfriend was Sandy Count, who grew up with Dad on Long Beach. He was the most handsome, really gorgeous, creature around. He drove a convertible. Sandy wore thick glasses and didn't go to the war because of his bad eyes. Eventually, Sandy became an expert carpenter and made beautiful furniture, which he sold for a lot of money.

I met Stan on the beach in the summer of 1944. He was there with a bunch of army buddies, including a lifelong friend from San Francisco, Dick Diamond. The two of them had been trained to run a radio installation, and expected they would be shipped to England, not the Pacific. During the war, girls were writing to a number of soldiers to help keep their morale up, and even though Stan was not my boyfriend, I wrote to him once he went overseas. Stan had been dating a girl named Lorraine, a rich Jewish girl from West End Avenue. I didn't think much of her, because I knew she started going out with other boys after he left for the Pacific. Of course, I didn't write him about that.

At the end of that first summer, I was set to go back to school, where I hadn't been in three years. Frankie, the elevator man, who was black and a very nice guy, gave my mother information of nearby public schools, which he warned us were not very good. He advised her to send me to Julia Richman High School, which was over on the Upper East Side. I hadn't been to school in three years, so initially the Board of Education people wanted to send me to a junior high school on the West Side, but a teacher there heard that I already spoke good English and recommended I be sent to Julia Richman, which I was. It was a long trip. Every morning, I would have to take one subway train down to Times Square and then crosstown to the East Side. My mother was worried about a young girl traveling across the city every day, but she finally agreed.

I thrived at Julia Richman, coming in as an 11th grader and graduating two years later as school salutatorian. At the beginning, I was in a class for immigrant kids

called 'Foreign Accent', which was taught by a wonderful teacher named Miss Gannon, who became a mentor for me. She was a pure person, who dedicated herself to helping her best students, including those without money, to reach their full potential. Miss Gannon thought I was a fast learner and a good writer. She had me write a lot of essays and spent a lot of time with me. I also got high grades in American history, which I had known nothing about until then.

I really became an all-American girl and embraced American culture in a big way. I loved the Brooklyn Dodgers and went to a lot of games at Ebbets Field with Sandy Count and other guys. We loved the Dodgers because they were the underdogs against the hated Yankees, and because they were the team that brought Jackie Robinson, the first black player, into Major League Baseball. I was also one of the bobby-soxers who screamed for Frank Sinatra outside the Roseland Ballroom when he sang there. I adored Frankie and his music for a long time.

From the time we landed in America, I refused to speak a word of German. I simply couldn't stand the sound of the language, which reminded me of the Nazis, and wanted to wash away the terrible memories the language evoked in me. My refusal to speak German was very hard on my mother whose English was, of course, much worse than my own. She sometimes pleaded with me to speak German with her, but I stubbornly refused to do so. In fact, I did not speak German again for many decades; only 30 or more years later when I accompanied Stan to conferences in Germany. I spoke German sometimes with Mike Kalvius, a physicist from Munich who was part Jewish.

I hadn't imagined being able to go to college, given that we had no money, but Miss Gannon helped me to get a scholarship to the University of Wisconsin and a job there that would pay enough to cover my room and board. I was tremendously excited, but my mother stamped her foot down and said to Miss Gannon, "No, Helga needs to go and work here in New York. Stop filling her head full of fancy notions." When I persisted and told her I was going to go to Wisconsin no matter what she said, Ogi replied that if I did leave she would jump out the window and kill herself. She seemed so desperate that I believed she might actually do it.

Ogi could be a very strong-willed person, and in this case she was determined not to let me go. I was all she had in the world and she couldn't bear the idea that I would go away to far-off Wisconsin and leave her all alone in New York. I couldn't change her mind and finally had to tell Miss Gannon I wouldn't be able to go to Wisconsin. She was, of course, terribly disappointed, having made such an effort on my behalf, but she understood why I had to say 'No.' It was a hard blow for me, and I always resented Ogi for that.

Actually, around that time, Ogi acquired a suitor. His name was Herr Repper, and he was a refugee from Prague. He had a wife and two boys there, but he

happened to be out of the country on a buying trip when the Germans marched into Prague and he never went back. His wife and children were rounded up and died in Auschwitz. I don't recall how and when he got to America, but when he met Ogi, he fell in love with her. He was a very nice man and I liked him a lot. I thought they might get married, but something happened and they broke apart. I'm not sure what caused that to happen, but it was sad for her, because she never found another man with whom to build her life.

As for Hilda, she divorced Peiser in disgust after he sued my mother and I. After her marriage ended, Hilda went to work as a chambermaid at Grossingers, then a posh Catskills resort where the richest Jewish men would be. That is where she met Joe Liebman, a much older and very gross diamond merchant. He was a Russian Jew who left Russia as a very young man, and was already in the diamond business in Antwerp before World War I. He was in the U.S. during the Second World War, but afterwards he relocated to Paris and Monte Carlo, where he had the two most beautiful jewelry shops, both called Clerc, one on the Place de la Opera and the other in the Hotel de Paris in Monaco. Like Peiser, Joe was a rough, sometimes swinish, person, and Hilda was certainly not attracted to him physically. As she had all her life, she went for the money.

But to get back to my story, after I gave up on the University of Wisconsin, I got a job on Wall Street. It wasn't so easy to get hired there because a lot of the firms were anti-Semitic, so Miss Gannon sent me to Lehman Brothers because she knew it was a Jewish firm. She was angered by a system that allowed such prejudice, but of course, she was not in a position to change it on her own. Miss Gannon also helped me get started at the City College of New York, where I attended classes in the evening. It was then located on East 14th Street, which wasn't so far from downtown and I would head there after work.

CCNY was considered a good school in those days and I took classes at the School for Social Research. I took quite a few classes in different subject areas, and picked up credits hither and yon, but at some point I dropped out. It was very difficult to study at night after working all day and something had snapped in me after I was not allowed to go to Wisconsin. Somehow, under the circumstances, immersed as I quickly became in the 9-5 grind on Wall Street, I couldn't approach night school at CCNY with the same sense of excitement and determination I would have felt if I had gone away to Wisconsin.

At Lehman Brothers, I started out as a "runner", running from office to office around the building and hand delivering stuff to the brokers and executives. The runners all sat on a long bench between runs and after you completed a run, you went back to the bench and sat at the end of the line. However, the war was on and most of the able bodied brokers were away, so pretty soon they made me a broker. I felt insecure a lot of the time, like I didn't really know what I was doing. I was learning on the job. I had a big switchboard in front of me, and someone would call with an order to buy or sell, sometimes at a specific price. They would

say, 'Sell at $23—no lower." I must have been doing the job basically right, because they kept me and even gave me some promotions. Still, working as a broker was never something I particularly enjoyed.

After Stan returned from the Pacific, he and his fiancé Lorraine had a big engagement party at the Waldorf Astoria, but shortly thereafter he broke off the engagement. Having experienced the war and seen something the world, he quickly realized that he and Lorraine no longer had anything in common, if they ever had. Their values were very different. She was all about money, and he was an intellectual. He was back at Columbia studying physics and I guess they didn't have much to say to each other.

After his break-up with Lorraine, Stan checked his little black book and found the names of three girls he was interested in, including Ruth Nash, my friend and perennial competition, and myself. Fortunately, Ruth was dating someone else at that moment, and wasn't available. She would go on to marry and divorce three or four times. So I was the one he called for a date. Actually, he later told me he decided he would only date girls who lived within 20 blocks of where he was living—which at that point was with his mother at her apartment at 73rd and Riverside. I was still living with my mother at 101 and Broadway, which was closer to 30 blocks distant from him than 20, but I guess he decided to extend his range a little bit. So he called to ask me out, and I was happy to accept.

It was October 1946. We went to the movies and then when we were having an Ice Cream Sundae at a nearby soda shop, I was suddenly wracked by the most terrible stomach pains I had ever experienced. Stan called an ambulance and I was rushed to St. Luke's Hospital where I was diagnosed with acute appendicitis and operated on immediately, which was vital, because my appendix was about to burst. Stan stayed at the hospital and after the operation came and sat by my bedside and held my hand. It was certainly very romantic and we were married just six months later, in June 1947.

For our honeymoon on Lake George, Milton Felenstein, who married Stan's sister Joan, arranged for us to spend our first night at the Green Mansions Hotel. It was very posh and formal and we didn't like it at all. The next morning, Stan asked Sandy Count, who also happened to be vacationing up there, to pick us up in a canoe and take us away from there to a more rustic setting. We had a wonderful honeymoon paddling around the lake, sometimes together with Sandy.

Walter was born on January 13, 1950, at the Polyclinic Hospital on 10th Avenue.