

Interview with Hedy.

I was born on November 15th, 1902, as the first of three children, which my parents had, followed within one year and 1½ months by Lisa, who was born on January 3rd, 1904, and then, another 2½ years later by Erich, who was born on September 30th, 1906. We had a very happy childhood, there was love and contentment. I went to public school, a short walk from our home, where I always was a favorite of the teacher, and I liked school very much. My first teacher's name was Mrs. Schwanzer, and I think I was a good student, because I got good marks, and I also remember that she liked the way I kept my school books, my copybooks. Sometimes she put secretly chocolate into my schoolbag, which I then discovered at home, and since I was really her favorite, she invited my sister to come to my class and just sit there and listen. This went on for 5 years in public school and my mother also became very friendly with the teacher.

I also had pleasant memories of summer vacations. We went together with my mother to the country, spent many weeks there, always in beautiful places, where we also met nice people. I learned swimming at an early age, at about 4 years, and was very proud of it. My mother took good care of us. She was a very beautiful woman, much admired and loved by our very large family.

My father was one of 17 brothers and sisters, and there were many nieces and nephews, and my parents were sort of a center of the family. Whenever somebody had problems and needed advice, they came to my parents for it, because they were considered as very outstanding people with a very sensible outlook on life.

Besides, they had a very active social life, with many friends around all the time. They went out a lot, before the

First World War especially; they really enjoyed social life. My mother was a gay person, very friendly, had a great sense of humor and everybody loved her, and she had visitors all the time. I remember that all the cousins came and adored her. There was a great difference in age between my father and my mother, about 19 years. My father also enjoyed company and a pleasant way of life. He was a general practitioner, who liked visiting his patients at home, was very friendly with them, and they appreciated him very much and loved him.

He had many very clever and somewhat funny utterances, which made the round in the family, which showed much wisdom. He was called "Uncle Beni". He was a very modest man, never a spendthrift, and loved his family life and his home, and his office and his friends. My mother just the same. She was unusually pretty.

We were very good children, we never were naughty, and had also a good reputation as the best brought-up children. No problems of any kind. After grammar school, I had to take an examination to be admitted at the Beamtentochter Lyceum, which was not easy to get in, but I made it. From then on, I had to travel by streetcar, leave very early in the morning, which was quite a hardship for me, to get up so early. It was quite a long trip, an hour, I think, to that school. There I learned French and English. In many subjects I was a good student, but in mathematics I was not so outstanding, as it was my worst subject. My geography and history teacher, I remember, later owned the hotel "Zum weissen Roessel" (White Horse) on the Wolfgang See, as she married the owner of that place. I was also her favorite student. Only with mathematics I had trouble. There was a professor Zeeman,



who always was picking on me, although I tried very hard to please him, but I was not very successful with him. But in English I was good. The teacher's name was Bendorf, who became later one of the leading Nazis in Vienna, which surprised me, because she was a very intelligent and educated person. I went to that lyceum for 8 years, took the last examination, which was called Matura. Lisa went later to the same school, and we travelled together in the morning and came home together. We had a professor there who became much interested in me and he encouraged me to take a course in chemistry which he had started. So, I studied chemistry. There was a professor Grafe and a professor Feigl. Later I studied at the Vienna University chemistry, but as a non-ordinary student, since I had not learned Latin. I tried to make up for it, but it did not work out. But I studied anyway at the University for a few years.

I then got a job in Tchechoslovakia as a chemist, where my cousin, Ernst Goldschmied, was Generaldirektor of one of the biggest sugar refineries. I worked there in a laboratory, where I made analyses of sugar, which was made from beets, also made analyses of the molasses. I lived with my relatives there, who had a wonderful home, a big house, very elegant. Adolph visited me there quite often on weekends, and once or twice my mother and Lisa visited me there too. I worked during the summer sugar campaign, which lasted 3 months, for 2 or 3 years.

Here I interrupted the interview with Hedy to avoid duplication. I had written already in detail about our marriage, our home and office in Vienna, in the Taborstrasse, the birth of Francis in 1931 and then of Johanna in 1936, the invasion of Austria by the Nazis in March of 1938 and in consequence of it the breaking

up of our pleasant family life by the emigration first of Lisa in May, then of Erich and Lisl in August of that year, and finally my emigration with Francis on September 30th, 1938. What I wanted Hedy to tell is what happened afterwards, how she continued living with Johanna after we left.

Here is what she said: It was a very sad moment, when I saw that I had to send my child away. The situation in Vienna had become more and more dangerous for Jewish children. Francis had to leave the school and was put into a Jewish class. He could not play anymore with his friends in the street; they always offended him and we saw that it got worse and worse for a Jewish child, that there was no way to live and to be educated.

At that time, everybody tried to get away as fast as possible and whoever could escape and run, did it. Adolph had the wonderful opportunity to go to Cuba, through the help of my uncle Josef Feingold, who was already in Paris, who had given him tickets for a boat trip, and through the help of my cousin Suzanne, who was working at the Alliance Israelite, he got 500 dollars landing money as a kind of a loan. We had then different options, of course. We figured that it would be wise that Francis get out of Vienna with Adolph, and that I and Johanna stay on. I thought that I will get my American immigration visa, since we had a very good affidavit, very soon and will go then right to the United States with Johanna, on the way pick up Francis in Paris. I thought that in the meantime it would not be so dangerous for us than for a doctor and a school child. Johanna was then 3 years old - she was called then Hammerl - and I thought I can stay on with her and pack up all our belongings. I also thought of my parents, did not want to leave them, thought I could help them



in some way. May be it was good that I was there; and in the meantime I started to learn different things. I knew I will have to make a living in the United States, which would help me after I arrive there with a little child, without money. I learned sewing, I took courses, I learned baking and making candies, and whatever courses were offered. I even tried to become a maid. Young women were admitted as maids in England, but they had to pass a test and therefore had to learn certain things. That I did too, I scrubbed the floor, and washed. I don't remember what else. I passed the test too, and if I would not have gotten the American Immigration visa, I would have been able to leave for England as a maid with my little girl. Then finally, I had packed all my things, and the furniture and everything was put in a lift-van. The Nazis who did that were even very nice to me, allowed me to take silver along, which usually was forbidden to Jews. I also remember a little incident, when they were friendly towards me, for instance in the streetcar, when one Nazi jumped up and gave me his seat, which was really amazing. Or when my parents were supposed to give up their apartment, because there was a law that Jewish people were not allowed to live in apartments facing the street and had to live in the rear of the buildings, I went to a very important Nazi, who was a former patient of Adolph and told him the story that the neighbors wanted to throw out my parents of their apartment, where my father had lived already for 40 years in that apartment, when he was a bachelor, before he got married. He gave me a paper on which he wrote that Dr. Ziegler can stay in this apartment. The Nazis could not understand how we managed that. So, they could stay and they were glad, but it was not for a long time. When I was gone, they lost their place.

When our furniture were packed in a liftvan, I moved with my little girl to my parents' and lived together with them. It was a very sad situation, as there were very strict laws instituted. When it came to food or to get out into the street, everything was so arranged that the Jews couldn't go on living anymore. The meat they got was so bad that you wouldn't even give it to a dog here.

I had to wait for our visa over a year, after Adolph had left. When he got his passport, he also got one for me. But when the Nazis saw my passport they said: "My God, you haven't left already?" I had to appear many times in the Rothschild palais, where there was the passport office, and they told me that they will send me to Poland if I will not leave soon. They punished me by having me stand there with the face towards the wall. I had to go to other places to get proof that I did not owe any taxes, also to a place where they took my picture and fingerprints, like a criminal. The American consulate was not in a hurry to give me the visa; there was a quota system and they made things difficult. Many of our friends were ready to go, but the American consulate found something to delay it, or to deny the visa. Friends of ours, a Dr. Pollatschek and his wife, committed suicide, when the doctor in the consulate denied them the visa, because he had a kind of eczema on a foot, which resisted treatments.

Finally, when I went to the American consul with Johanna - she was the cutest child you can imagine, with big blue eyes and rosy cheeks, blond hair, looking more like a child the Nazis adored, the Nordic type - everybody liked her and smiled. She was an asset to me, and the American consul examined her and wanted her to count. She was about 4 years old and she refused to open



her mouth, would not speak one word. But they just accepted it and laughed and loved her, because she was so adorable. So, we got the visas, and the consul told me that he will send the papers for Francis to the American consul in Paris, so that he could get his visa there.

The situation had changed in the meantime. The original plan was that I would pass through Paris and pick up Francis. I had even tickets for the boat "Normandy" for all of us. But the war had started on September 3, 1939, and I could not go to France anymore, and we had to leave from Rotterdam, Holland. Correspondence between Austria and France was also not possible anymore on account of the war, but indirect contact through Anny Lux in Amsterdam or Maurice Ziegler was possible, though difficult and insufficient, and I hoped that Francis had gotten his visa in France and would join us in Rotterdam. Lisa had told me later that the consul in Paris had denied Francis the visa, when Suzanne went to the consulate and that he had said that Francis needed another affidavit, and that he could leave later with another boat.

After I got the visa for me and Johanna in Vienna, there was the problem to get the tickets for the boat. A very good friend of mine, Mr. Lazarus, got them for us under most difficult circumstances for the boat "Rotterdam", it was just a miracle. He was such a wonderful good person that nothing was too much for him.

So, I went with Johanna to Amsterdam and it was there like a different world, where the Germans did not have any influence yet. It was a peaceful, beautiful country, the people so friendly and lovely. We couldn't get over it, we were so impressed. We came from a place, where we lived like in hell, in fear all the

time from one hour to another; we didn't know what would happen to us, what sadistic plans the Nazis had, and now we were in the most friendly country and there were preparations for Christmas celebrations, Saint Nicholas was there and Johanna got so many beautiful gifts. They brought us coffee when we arrived at the station. My cousins, Max and Annie Lux were there and received us with open arms. I got invitations to the finest homes and most exquisite parties and dinners. There was also my cousin Maurice Ziegler, I remember, in Amsterdam. In Holland there was still abundance and wonderful food and wonderful things to see. My great disappointment was that Francis did not come. There was no contact possible with France on account of the war and up to the last minute, when we left Holland, I did not know what had happened. This was very sad for me, because he was in great danger there.

When we went on the boat, it was also a great impression, the lights, gayety, music. I remember the wonderful food, which I hadn't seen for a long time. The voyage lasted 12 days, but I became seasick very soon. People prayed on the boat, as there was the danger that the boat may hit a mine, which the Germans had laid, which would have killed all the people on the boat.

I was most of the time seasick and lying in bed, while my little girl had a good time. She looked gorgeous, with rosy cheeks, and ran around the boat, a friend of everybody. But I thought I would not survive, I felt so miserable. My body got colder and colder and my hands blue. It was a very bad sickness and the doctors didn't do much for me. I was lying there, very miserable, didn't eat anything until we arrived in New York. At that time, I think, I felt already a little better, and got



ready to get off the boat, where so many of my cousins and friends waited for me, Maurice Ziegler and Hansi Hilkwicz and Dr. Lazarus and Dr. Holzer. All together, I remember, there were 9 people waiting for me and they had everything ready for me, a home and a job, money they gave me, everything. I must say I always had the best of friends.

So, we started life in New York. I could work right away, crochét-ing gloves. But, of course, it was not enough. I also got from the Council of Jewish Women some support. I had a little apartment in Manhattan on West 89th Street near the home of Hansi Hilkwicz. Maurice had given her money for food for us and we went there for meals, but only for a very short time, when she told us that she could not give us anything anymore for the amount of money she had gotten. I did not believe my ears. I had thought that I had understanding and helpful relatives there, but instead she became very nasty and very hostile and treated me really bad, as if I had no right to be there. She told me that I had no right to live in a good neighborhood, things like that.

Johanna got very sick, had a severe tonsillitis, and they thought it was diphtheria, but it was not. Life was not easy for me. Johanna went to a Kindergarten, to which I brought her every morning and on my way back from work, I did my shopping and picked her up. Prices were so low, I remember, that I could buy a chicken for 60 cents, a whole big chicken, a basket of strawberries for 8 cents, a pound of coffee for 15 cents. So, I managed. I had always good friends around, like Dr. Lazarus, Dr. Lindenfeld, Dr. Holzer. Then some friends offered me a place in Queens, where I could take care of a house. So, I did that, I moved with Johanna to Queens. It was a nice little house, it was even offered

to me to buy it for \$ 5.000. I could have bought it, but there was no hope that Adolph could come and live there. He stayed in Havana for years and years. Else, I could have managed very well. But he wanted us to go there, to Havana. It was frustrating for me. I was all the time trying to do something for my parents in Vienna, find somebody who would give them an affidavit.

Very soon when we arrived in the United States, a Mrs. Ray Bruell visited us. Her husband, Max Bruell, was a brother of Sami Bruell, a banker, who had arrived in the United States as a refugee from Vienna shortly after me. His son Paul had arrived there a few months before him. To come back to Mrs. Ray Bruell, she was very friendly towards me, took me and Johanna once out to the Radio City Music Hall and invited us to her home in Woodmere, Long Island. Her husband, Max Bruell, liked and respected my father very much and promised me that he would write an affidavit for him and my mother. I was very happy about it and counted very much on it. I waited for quite some time. But one day, I received a letter from him, in which he told me that he could not give me that affidavit, since he had to take care of his family. It was a terrible blow to me. I was quite sure that his wife Ray was the one who had influenced him, and that he could not help it and had to retreat from his promise. I had lost valuable time. I then tried to find other people. A rabbi from a synagogue gave me then an affidavit, and I myself wrote one too. But both these affidavits were rejected by the American consul in Vienna as too weak.

And then there were other very bad news, when the Germans invaded France and occupied the northern part of France, just that area, where Francis and Lisa were. I had lost all contact with



them and was very worried about them. Just at that time Adolph became very insistent that I leave New York and join him in Havana. So, I finally had to give in and leave with Johanna for Havana. We left New York by train to Miami, and went from there by boat for Havana, arrived there on October 1st, 1940.