

Interview with Walter.

I was born on June 13th, 1910. Since World War One began in 1914, when I was only 4 years old, and a few months after the war had started my family had decided to flee from Czernowitz and we went to Vienna, I can not possibly remember too much about my first 4 years in Czernowitz. My father was already in the Austrian army as an ~~Fachrich~~ ~~rich~~, in English ensign, which is one grade before Lieutenant.

I started attending elementary school in Vienna in the Favoritenstrasse in the 4th district, and continued for 2 years. I remember that we had a hard time in Vienna. I had to stand in line for coal for heating, for potatoes. We were short of everything, bread, sugar, meat, etc.

In 1918, my mother and I returned to Czernowitz, shortly before the collapse of the Austrian and German armies and the end of the war. We went, of course, back to our house. Then I finished the remaining 2 years of elementary school, and I started with gymnasium. But I left that school at the end of the second year, because I did not want to study Hebrew, which was one of the required languages, as part of the subject religion. Therefore I switched and went to the Realgymnasium. The Bukowina became at the end of World War One a part of Rumania, and Rumanian became the official language. So, at that time, I had to study 5 languages: Rumanian, German, French, English, and Latin. Latin through 8 years. When I finished the secondary school, it was the last year with the system of 8 years. The next year it was reduced to 7 years, to be more at par with the other European countries.

Then I decided to go to Vienna to attend the University. Since our business in Czernowitz was somehow connected with pharmaceutical products, and I had two uncles, who were pharmacists, Martin Sobel and his brother Philipp Sobel, I started with pharmacy. I even registered in the first year for medicine, and I took anatomy with the world-famous anatomist Professor Tandler. I was at that time an alien in my country, because since the annexion of the Bukowina by Rumania. I had become a Rumanian citizen. I was born, of course, in Austria. So, I was there practically or legally a foreigner.

Taking into consideration many points of my good-standing, they allowed me to join a political militant group, called the Schutzbund, which was the democratic militant formation in Austria. I was there as a Schutzbund - member, when a student group, called the Heimwehr, assaulted the University, and I still remember that there was a slogan: "Hahnenschwaenzler, Hahnenschwaenzler, dummer Tropf, was der Hahn am Hintern hat, das hast du auf dem Kopf." Because they had on the cap the tailfeathers of a rooster. So, in English, that means that what the rooster has on his behind, they had on their head. I was there almost 3 years.

Later, I stopped studying medicine, continued with pharmacy, but I added some subjects to make it comparable to the study of chemistry. A year before finishing, there was a deterioration of our business, and they could not support me anymore. Sometimes, while still in Vienna, to get a little more pocket-money, I shoveled snow in the streets quite often. I had then to return to Czernowitz and I discontinued my studies. This was in the year 1931. So, Carl had to stop supporting not

only me but also Else in Paris.

When I came home, I started with the military service and I had a special privilege since I was a University student, I got a reduced term service. Usually it was 2 years and more and I got the privilege of serving in the army 1 year. I was then 21 years old. I went to the hardest branch of the whole military service, called mounted mountain artillery. There I was very lucky, because I was a good skier and, after a short time, I became an instructor of my officers, who knew less than I did. I used to eat with them, I did not have to sleep in the barracks, and so.

And I finished that, and when I came home, I was released as a reserve lieutenant. I had to take a job. I did not mention that in the meantime my father had died on February 27th, 1924. He was only 48 years old, since he was born in 1876, in Lemberg. The cause of death was cancer of the pancreas. I had thought that the doctors who had treated him in Czernowitz had made a wrong diagnosis and had kept him too long there, when he had a severe jaundice. But Adolph told me that it would not have made any difference, because people with cancer of the pancreas could not be saved, at least at that time, and very rarely nowadays. Anyway, he finally went with my mother to Vienna, where Adolph had a bed prepared for him in the clinic Eiselsberg, one of the best in Vienna, and he was operated on 2 days later, but lived then only two more days. I was only 14 years old, when he died.

When I came back from military service, I took a job in a store and factory of very fine sport clothing. In our house lived a family Adler, and all the 4 sons formed a company and

I started working there and became soon the manager, the correspondent in that business, was a salesman at the same time. This went on for some time.

Our mother had then a very small income from the house, but she could still manage. Carl could still support her with his different smaller businesses, which he had started. But gradually things got worse, and we almost lost our house. The Rumanian tax bureau was ruthless and they went after her on account of taxes. We had there several tenants, who occupied apartments, but they became gradually wise, knowing our mother, who was such a good person. They took more and more advantage of her by almost stopping gradually their payments as tenants. They knew that my mother would not take them to court. But we had to live and we had to pay taxes. And it became so bad that those people continued living in the house for nothing. "we will pay next month." And next month became next year, and they stopped paying completely. The tax bureau administration started to collect taxes from our mother by taking out our furniture. They took away the piano, the bookcases with very valuable books, they took away paintings, so that at the end we were living in an empty apartment. Fine carpets, orientals, they took also.

There came up the possibility of giving up the house to a construction consortium. They wanted to erect a 5-story building, with many apartments. For the house and the ground, which our mother sold, she received five apartments, one for herself and 4 for us 4 children. I sold my apartment and with the money I could make the journey to Argentina. Adolphs apartment was later also sold and Carl sent American money in small

amounts in letters to Lisa in Paris. Transactions through banks were not possible at that time. When they started building the house, they did not tear down the whole house. They tore down the half of the house which was at the corner, so that we could still live in our apartment, and they constructed the 5-story house up from the foundation till it was finished. Then we moved into the new part of the house, and they tore down the other half and constructed the other part of the house. This was an excellent idea and very good for us. Our mother moved into her new apartment in 1937. Then came 1938, when the Nazis invaded Austria, and that gave me the signal to leave also. The Adlers, where I had worked, had left already before for Argentina, all 4 brothers. They had been there already about one year, when I decided to follow them too.

I could not get a visa for Argentina, but I got a visa for Bolivia, and since it is a landlocked country, I had to land in Argentina, in Buenos Aires. And I was lucky that they did not retain me in the immigration hotel in Buenos Aires. I offered money to convert my Bolivian visa into an Argentinian, something like that. I don't remember exactly how it was. I was happy that they allowed me to stay, and later on they made it legal. I stayed then with the Adlers, who had already their business there. Later on, I started with other businesses on my own, with custom jewellery, with ladies hats, ladies pocketbooks, and then again with the Adlers, and I continued there for about 8 years. I started even with a theatre, called "Freie Deutsche Buehne". Then I got a representation for Italian silks, necktie silk. And finally, I started with photography.

I met Fanny when I still was with the Adlers. She came there as a customer. We decided to get married in Uruguay, went there and got married in Montevideo on January 17th, 1945, and then we stayed there as a kind of honeymoon for about two weeks. She almost became there a widow on account of a bad swimming experience. I almost drowned in the ocean in a very dangerous part, called "playa brava". We went back to Argentina, and I started with photography. I became at first a partner in an established photo studio, and then I took over myself. Later, we got an apartment by paying key-money, to become tenants, and as long as we stayed there, we were illegal tenants, and that was from 1946 to 1964.

We married in 1945, and 5 years later Hugo was born on October 26th, 1950. It was the year of the Argentinian liberator, the year of José de San Martín. There is a monument of him in New York on the southside of Central Park, also of Simon Bolívar.

My photobusiness was not very successful, since I did not have a street-front and street entrance. It was upstairs, in a very poorly maintained house. Sometimes, it rained into my studio through the ceiling. Fanny kept working all the time in the finest establishment in the field of catering, as a manager, but she was very poorly paid, and they took enormous advantage of her.

Then came the immigration into the United States, where you, Adolph, helped me, because the last years I barely could make it. I approached you and asked you for it, explaining my difficult situation, and you started right away by filling out an affidavit, and got for me also a working paper for the

metal factory of Mr. Sabin. I understand that it was an enormous job for you. I got the visa and soon we went to the United States, first I with Hugo and about half a year later Fanny also. You also prepared for me an apartment on West 24th Street, fully equipped with furniture and everything, so that we could right away go in and live there.

I had a hard time in the beginning with my job, since I could not speak English. That was a big obstacle. My boss spoke to me and I did not understand him. He gave me assignments and I did not know what to do. And so, after a few months, I left that job. I could do it, since Fanny had arrived here and had started to work.

I started to look in newspapers for opportunities for work. My idea was that I would do best as a teacher, because I had some pupils in Argentina, whom I was teaching German and others Spanish. I had as pupils people who were at a very high level, like ambassadors, doctors, engineers, etc. I was very lucky here in getting my position, because I still did not know much English. I found the advertisement in a paper. There were positions offered in New Jersey, but also the one in Long Island, as a teacher for Spanish. I had an interview there, to which you, Adolph, took me, with a Mr. Stone, which lasted almost 2 hours. You went first inside with me, spoke for me in English to Mr. Stone, and I started to talk to him Spanish right away. At the end of the interview he decided to hire me. I won in that interview against 42 certified teachers. I didn't even have any credentials with me at that time, but I had written a resume of my experiences, a so-called curriculum vitae, which showed that I had a good education, that I had some ex-

perience in teaching, and he hired me. We had to move to Long Island and lived in a garden apartment for one year, and then we decided to buy a house, which was a good idea. You, Adolph, could not see it, how, without any capital for a downpayment, I could do it. I got a very good buy, where I did not need a big downpayment, and I got a nice house there.

I started in that school to teach German, then I added Spanish, then I was teaching only Spanish, then I had to add again German, and now I am teaching mainly Italian. I have every day 3 classes in Italian and 2 in Spanish.

In the meantime, Fanny worked all the time as a dressmaker, doing alterations, and also upholstery. Hugo, in the meantime, grew up. When we came here, he had a very hard time. He did not speak English either and he had to attend a public Junior High School, where they placed him one grade lower, and we could not discuss this matter in the right way with his guidance councillor, because we were new here, we didn't know how much a person may speak up, or not to agree, so we thought that what they told us, we had to buy, take it as they say it. He had a very, very hard time, and the other pupils were very rough. When we came to Kings Park, of course, it changed and when he graduated, he went to Suffolk County Community College. His English had improved greatly, when he finished High School and he spoke fluently almost without a foreign accent.

Then the time of the draft came, and he said before they draft me, he will go to the reserves. From all the reserves he picked the hardest branch, the marines. He had a terribly hard time in Parris Island, in the Boot Camp. The Boot Camp is the basic drill training camp, where many young people had

already, on account of extreme exaggerated, hard requirement of the master sargents and drill instructors. He was a tiny boy, he is still slender, but he survived. The reserve lasts for 5 or 6 years. Just last month, in December, he went for the last time to the marines. He had to go first every month for a weekend for drills, and every summer for a 2-week maneuver drill, very often to the desert in California. Last summer, when he was there, the temperature was 140 degrees. Sometimes, he had to go to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina for these two weeks. Before he went to the marines, he was already in college. But then he interrupted his college and went to the marines. The training took altogether 9 months. When he came back from the camp, he continued his college studies. He had started with the Community College, and continued then at the State University at Stony Brook, where he finished after staying another two years. so that he had 4 years of college. Then he got his certification as a Math teacher for the secondary level. When he started to look for a job, the enrollment in the schools in Long Island began to decrease. Many teachers were laid off. So, he took some additional courses in computer science, and he was lucky to get a pretty good job with the Computer Center of the First National City Bank in New York.

He made once a project in a team of three, and was very praised by the president of the company. They gave him 500 dollars as a bonus at the end of the year. He works there on computers. He feeds them, he corrects mistakes etc. He teaches them languages they should use. They receive and answer messages in different languages. He spends every day between 4 and 5 hours only for travelling, which is very hard. He is there

now already 3 or 4 years, and he has a pretty good salary. He got married and has a very nice wife. Her maiden name was Rosemary Lynch. He was 21 and he is now 26 years old. They have a 1 year old boy, whom they named Christopher John.

Before they got married, he bought a house in Center^{each}, Long Island, with our help and the help of Fanny's brother Guido, who died last year in Italy. He was a general in the Italian army.
