

CHAPTER 3  
MY GRANDPARENTS

I come now to my grandparents, the parents of my mother. As I said before, my grandfather's name was Isiel Leib Bayer, but hardly anybody knew him under that name but rather under the name Alter Bayer, and the shield over his business place in the center of the city had in golden letters the name A. BAYER. Alter was probably the name my grandmother used to call him for a long time. Many German speaking wives used that name when they called or spoke to their husbands when they were not young anymore. It is the same when Spanish speaking wives say "Viejo" to their husbands. In English it would mean "Old Man," but it is not being used. Instead the words "Big daddy" are being used, but one does not hear that often. If I remember well, on the grave stone in the cemetery in Czernowitz the name ALTER BAYER has been engraved. My grandmother's name was Susie, her maiden name Nadler.

My grandparents had 4 daughters: Auguste (called Gusta), Bertha (my mother), Rosa, and Klara.

My grandfather had a big business in the center of the city. The book which I mentioned before: "The History of the Jews in Czernowitz" shows on its cover a picture of the center of the city, called Ringplatz, with the city hall and on top of it the Austrian twoheaded eagle. This





My granparents: Alter and Susie Bayer

She was born in Jerusalem.



My grandfather Alter Bayer at about 1890.



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is the southern side of the Ringplatz. On 2 or 3 days of the week this place became a market place, where peasants from the neighboring suburbs brought their wares and displayed them on the ground on blankets, for sale, attracting an enormous number of buyers. They had brought vegetables, fruits, butter, eggs, also flowers, handwoven or embroidered materials, etc., and vendors walked about, one man for instance offering vanilla shoots, another one shoelaces and there were also money-changers and there was an enormous noise from the cries of the vendors. On the eastern side was my grandfather's store. In the booklet you can see, following page 16, part of the eastern side and next to the house with (see picture on preceding page) the name J. Traub, but not anymore in the picture, stood the house where my grandfather had his store. It was called "Spezerei and Colonialwaren-Geschäft" and in English you would call it a "grocery and colonial products" store, but it was at the same time a delicatessen store, and it was a retail as well as a wholesale store. It had a narrow entrance from the front and the first room where the customers stood, with a long counter, behind which the salesmen were, was rather narrow and long, but in the back there were many rooms where the wares were stored. And in the house where my grandfather lived, in Türkengasse 6 (Turk Street 6) there were big magazines (storage rooms) filled with wares. This was the main business because besides "Spezerei and Colonial Wares" my grandfather imported and sold bottled mineral water. For many of them he was the sole importer for the entire province of Bukowina.

In those days mineral waters were a big item. They were recommended and prescribed by doctors for all kinds of sicknesses. People who could



afford it went to Spas, like Karlsbad, Marienbad, Franzensbad etc., in Bohemia to drink the water there, also take baths. Others went to Germany where there were many Spas like Selters, Ems, Kissingen, Dürkheim, etc., others to Vichy in France. There were also many Spas in Austria, for instance Bad Hall and Gleichenberg. But people who did not have the means to travel to Spas, drank these waters at home. There were mineral waters which were taken for bronchitis and laryngitis, others for stomach and liver diseases, others for anemia, for arthritis, for arteriosclerosis, for kidney diseases, for gout, etc. Mineral waters were a big article and my grandfather had a big business with that alone.

In the store on the Ringplatz one could buy anything from sugar to flower, salt, rice, coffee, cacao, beans, peas, chocolate, candies, cheeses, sardines, smoked fish, caviar, nuts etc., in short everything for the kitchen except meat, milk, fresh fruits and vegetables. Besides there was another branch, colonial wares, and these were imported, like figs, dates, dried prunes, raisins and all other dried fruits, nuts, peanuts, almonds, carobes, aranzini (dried orange peel) also imported wines and rums.

I cannot think now of all the other things one could get in my grandfather's store. Sometimes people, usually friends of my grandfather, came into the store for a chat and to eat sandwiches there, rolls with Emmenthaler cheese or with sardines or caviar and to drink a glass of Spanish wine or rum from Jamaica. Every day cars came from far away, horse drawn cars of course, to pick up wares for transportation, most of the times also mineral waters. In the yard in the Türkengasse, big wooden crates were packed with bottles of mineral water and other wares, to be shipped by train or picked up by cars. Almost daily railway wagons



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brought bottled mineral water, 10,000 bottles each, from far away, which had to be unloaded and put on shelves in the magazines in the Türkengasse.

This is a condensed description of my grandfather's business. How he created and managed such an enormous business is still a mystery to me. Everything was well organized and he had a lot of help, 6 experienced salesmen and 2 apprentices, standing behind the counter, weighing and packing the orders, writing out the bills, and my grandfather was sitting in the corner next to the entrance door, taking the money and giving the change.

At noontime, my mother came to take his place, so that he could go home to have his lunch. There were two women in the house, a cook and a maid. They had to take care not only of my grandmother and grandfather but also of the salesmen who came in shifts of 2 or 3 for lunch and then again in the evening for dinner. These 6 salesmen, and the 2 apprentices also lived in our house, where they had a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  room apartment. They were all bachelors and came from other towns. They stayed on for years in my grandfather's business till they finally left to open up their own stores. I remember one of them especially, whose name was Max Schreier, who had a book with the texts of songs of the operettas, which were played in those days, most of them by Franz Lehár, Leo Fall, Emmerich Kalman and of course Johann Strauss, and also of operas. We used to sing them together. Besides the salesmen there was a bookkeeper, who came once or twice a week, to keep the books in order. There was also a man who besides cleaning the sidewalk and the yard, had to carry the merchandise, mostly mineral water, in a big pushcart to different customers. Instead of a tip, the customers



gave him most of the time a strong alcoholic drink, and he was most of the time drunk. His name was Metro and he spoke only Ruthenian.

My grandfather was a hard worker. He got up early to open the store and came home in the evening for dinner after 8 o'clock. Saturdays and Sundays the store was closed. On Saturdays he went, of course, to the Temple, very often with me and my brother, and we sat there next to him in the 3rd row. He was always walking straight erect with a black cane with an ivory handle, which he often held straight up like a saber. He had a short grayish-white beard and mustache. Once a year, he went on vacation for a month or so, always to Marienbad in Bohemia. There was sometimes also King Edward VII of England there, and my grandfather looked so much like Edward VII that people thought he was the king. He also travelled once or twice a year to Galatz in Romania, where boats came from far-away countries through the Mediterranean and the Black Sea with merchandise like peanuts, almonds, carobs, dates, figs, etc. and where he bought his supplies for his store. He always brought us some gifts from there, Halvah, Rahat (Turkish honey), also Granat apples which looked more or less like oranges and had inside a lot of very sweet red berries, which we children liked very much. Often he received telegrams with offers of merchandise from Marseille where there was a kind of "bourse" or stock market for colonial wares.

The Jewish holidays were kept quite strictly in our house, Easter, the New Year and Yom Kippur, and my mother knew the rules quite well, but when it came to fasting, she gave us to eat downstairs in the laundry room. My grandfather seemed to have known it, but he closed the eyes and did not say anything. On these holidays, we went with him to the Temple, he with a high top hat, and it was not easy for us to sit there quietly for many hours. We had a teacher for the Hebrew language, who



came once a week, a Mister Rosenblüth, but he was very old and we never learned the meaning of the Hebrew words. While we were reading, he often fell asleep, which pleased us very much.

My grandfather was a wellknown and respected man, beloved by everybody. He was considered a very rich man. Each of his 4 daughters got 10,000 gulden as dowry. He was very charitable, was the founder and honorary member of many humanitarian organizations. He was good natured and loved his family. He was a very educated man, and loved music. There was a phonograph in the house, with a big horn. The round disks, as we use them now, were not invented yet. Instead, there were round hollow cylinders about 5 inches high and about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, made from a wax-like material, which were put over a metal cylinder, which was called "Walze," rotating and an arm with a metal needle was put on the wax cylinder when it was played. We had in the house a great number of such cylinders, mostly of classical music and especially operas by Verdi and others. I am mentioning that to show that, if we inherited love and great interest for music, it came not only from my father's side, but also from my grandfather's and my mother's side. He was very interested in politics, and I heard him often talk about the "world crisis," which worried him very much, also heard him often mention the name of President Taft, from whom he expected very much. He had a kind of diploma with his picture, hanging framed on the wall, given to him in honor of the 25 years Jubilee as "Censor of the Austrian-Hungarian Bank."

I know that he loved me very much and that I often had to crawl into his bed, and he used to stroke me and tell me stories, till I fell asleep.



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These were usually stories about Indians, how they fought the white people and shot them with arrows, and he used to howl when he described their attacks. Once Buffalo Bill came to Czernowitz with an enormous troupe of real Indians. It was a big show, and we went there with my grandfather to the "Sturmwiese" (storm meadow) which was mostly used for military exercises and maneuvers. I remember that I was most impressed when I saw Buffalo Bill on horseback and next to him an Indian, also on horseback, galloping together very fast, and the Indian threw eggs into the air, and Buffalo Bill shot each egg in the air, and did not miss one. His real name was Cody. A few years ago we visited his grave in Cody in Colorado, and next to the grave was the Buffalo Bill museum. There were many pictures on the wall, and one of them showed him with the large group of Indians, when they were visiting Europe. It was, I think, in the year 1905 or 1907.

Of the four daughters of my grandparents, the oldest, Augusta, called Gusta, was married to a physician, Dr. Isidor Drancz, who settled later in a town, Storozynetz, near Czernowitz, as a general practitioner. They had 3 children, 2 boys, Marzell and Egon, and one girl, Isabella, called Isa, who later settled with her husband, Louis Eisinger, in England. She recently died there on May 15, 1976. The second daughter of my grandparents was my mother, Bertha, who married my father in 1891 or 1892, but had the misfortune that my father died, due to an accident, on March 6, 1897, 8 days before I was born. The third daughter of my grandparents, Rosa, married a businessman, Ignaz Siodmak, and moved to Berlin. They had 3 children, one daughter Alice, who still lives in Bucharest in Rumania, as a widow, with 2 children. The fourth daughter, Klara, mar-

\*) correction; She died in 1980, 85 years old.

ried a pharmacist, Martin Sobel, and they lived in Stryj in Galicia, later moved to Vienna and had there, together with a younger brother of my uncle, two big drugstores. They had no children. Both my aunt and her husband were later deported by the Nazis to Theresienstadt, and committed there suicide.

About my grandmother, I don't know too much although I remember her very well. I don't remember that she ever hugged and kissed me or the other children, perhaps because she did not feel well and was always in pain. I remember that I had seen her once quite excited when my grandparents and my mother were discussing something. I did not understand about what they were talking, but I found out later what it was. My mother was already a widow for many years, and there was a man who loved her, and who came often to visit us, a Mr. Druckmann. What they were discussing then was the marriage of my mother with this Mr. Druckmann, and my grandmother and maybe also my grandfather were very much against it. The reason was probably that he was an employee of the Light and Power Company of Czernowitz and that he had a small income. Also probably that he was not a businessman and that they wanted for my mother a man who would one day take over my grandfather's business. Anyway, the whole thing came to naught. My grandmother was very sick for a long time and doctors came very often to the house and examined her, mostly her liver area. We children were told that she had fallen down from a window sill and injured her liver. But I later learned that she had leukemia.



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I remember that one evening we three children were led into my grandmother's room, where she lied in bed, fully conscious, and that we went to her bed, one by one, and kissed her hand. The next morning she was dead. She had died at the age of 54. There was a big funeral and hundreds of people walked behind her coffin. After the death of my grandmother, my mother and we three children moved into the apartment of my grandfather and our apartment was rented to a Polish family.



The four sisters: Clara (top left), Rosa (top right),  
Augusta (low right), my mother (low left).





My mother as a young girl





My mother at the time of her marriage





F. Condit







These are the original pictures of my parents and the two pictures facing this page are enlarged copies of them.

Carl sent me these pictures as he supplied me with great many others. In his letter he said that the young man is perhaps our father, when he was young. How right he was. Up till then we had seen only pictures of our father with a beard and did not know what he looked like without a beard.

But later Carl sent me the picture of our mother as a young girl and now we had the proof that the young man was our father. The size of the pictures and the oval shape are exactly the same. Unfortunately, my mother's picture was removed from the cardboard and thereby slightly damaged. On the back of our father's picture is a date written in ink: '18/6 877' and the name and address of the photographer printed 'Simon Balicer, Krakow, ulica Grodzka No. 60'.

My father was born in the year 1860. So, he was 17 years old when the picture was taken in 1877. My mother was born in the year

1872. It is certain that her picture was not taken at the same time as that of my father, perhaps 10 years later, when she was 18 or 19, perhaps when they became engaged. My parents got married in 1890 or 1891.

My mother had probably visited the family of my father in Bielitz-Biala after they became engaged and on the way to Bielitz-Biala or on the return trip to Czernowitz they may have stopped in near-by Krakow where her picture was taken.

Both my mother and my father were beautiful human beings and looking at the expression of my father I see intelligence, honesty, goodness, and truthfulness. No wonder that they fell in love with each other.