C H A P T E R 46

THE ARRIVAL OF GINNY.

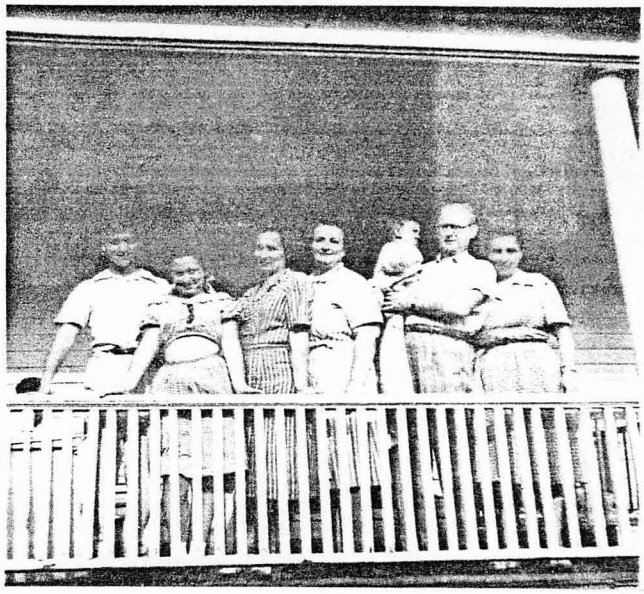
After having given all these details about me and Hedy and our children, I find it necessary to give also some details about Lisa and Paul. I had mentioned that they both had settled in Manhattan, also that they both had gotten jobs and had started to work. Once, in 1945, shortly after their arrival, Lisa surprised me with the question, whether she could have a child. It was difficult for me to answer her, as I knew her age. She was born in 1904, so she was 41 years old. I hesitated and told her that I would not like to take the responsibility, and that I would ask the chief obstetrician in the Williamsburg Maternity Hospital, where I worked, to give his opinion. That I did and he answered: "Tell her to go ahead". That I told Lisa. I knew that she had a miscarriage of an early pregnancy about 3 months before, which she ascribed to working on a certain machine, where she had to press hard with one foot. She soon became pregnant again. I recommended her to a friend, Dr. Paul Schneider, a very experienced obstetrician from Vienna, and she was then under his care. For the delivery, she was admitted to the Williamsburg Maternity Hospital, when the labor pains started. But the pains were very mild and she made slow progress. Dr. Schneider was very conservative and saw no need

Lisa and Ginny

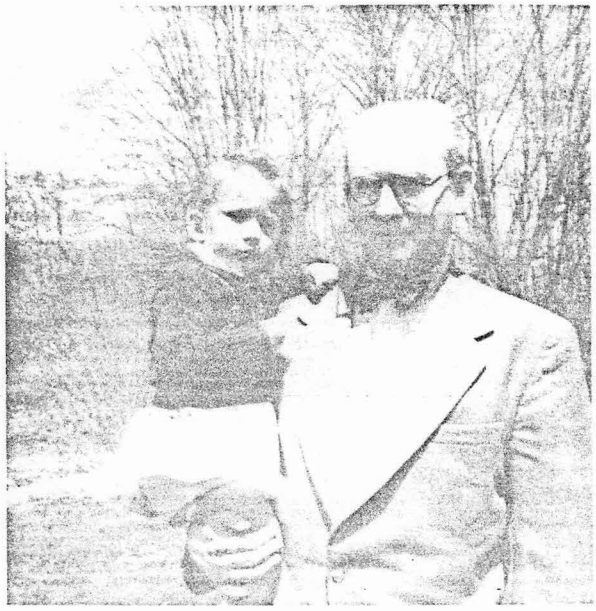
July 14, 1946

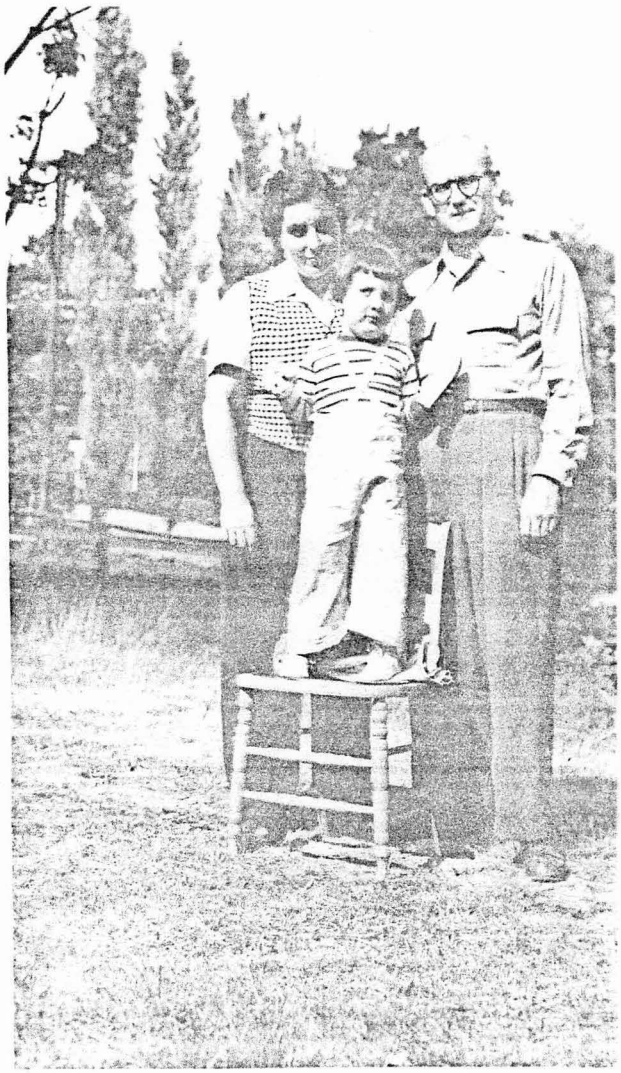
Ginny

Fleischmanns, July 13, 1947



L. to r.: Francis, Johanna, Hedy, Hansi, Ginny, Paul, and Lisa





Paul, Lisa, and Ginny

Ginny

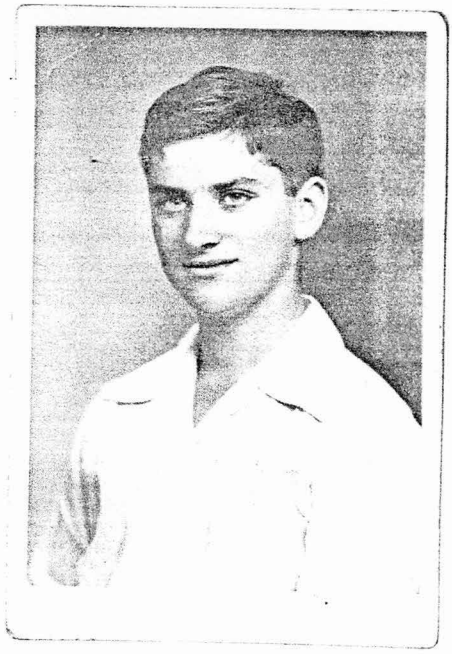
Aug. 1947

Hedy, Francis, and Johanna

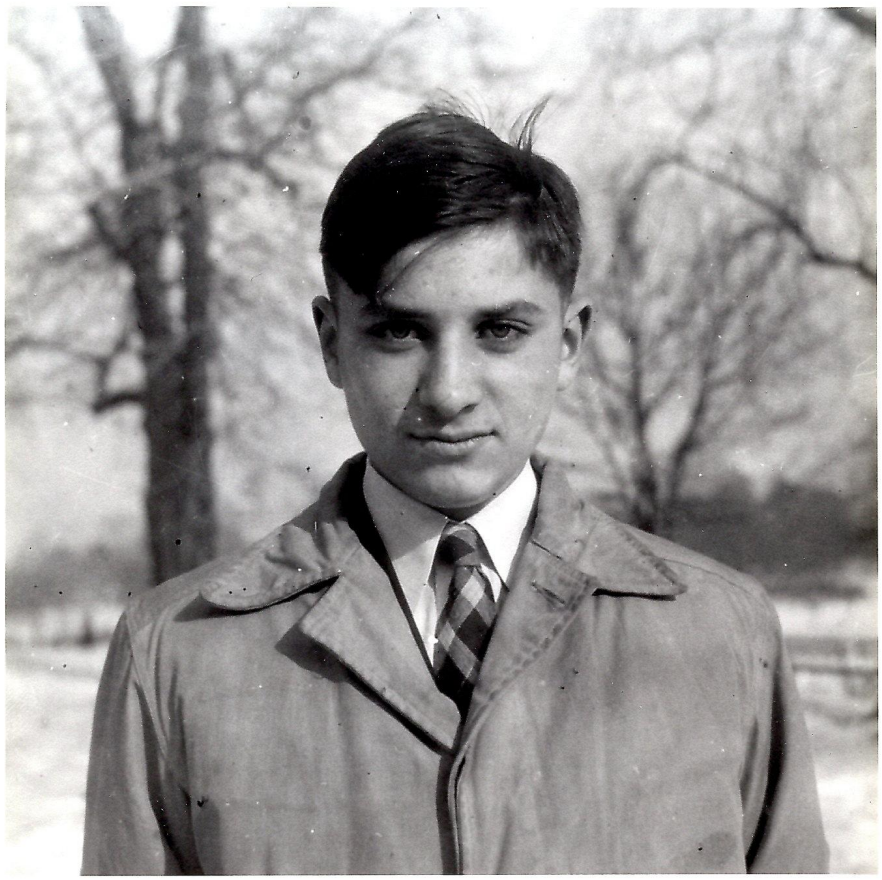
Francis

1946

Johanna



Francis



Hedy, Francis and Johanna

to do something. She was not uncomfortable, could read a book and had no sharp pains at all. On the 4th day of labor.- it was the 7th of March, 1946 - he took her into the delivery room, when she was almost ready. He finally applied a forceps and completed the delivery. But shortly afterwards, an enormous hemorrage set in, the kind of which I had never seen before. I shouted for a bottle of serum, which was brought within seconds, I found and pierced right away a vein on the arm and the flow of serum started at a rather fast rate. Before that, she was pale and almost pulseless. Dr. Schneider massaged the uterus, injected some Pituitrin into the uterus wall, and soon the hemorrhage stopped. The child, Ginnie, did not need any resuscitation, but did not cry loud, as other children usually do. Lisa, who has had for a short time ether anesthesia, soon was fully awake and happy that everything was over. I can say, without bragging, that I had saved her life, by acting fast and injecting the serum right away, when the severe hemorrhage had started. She was already in shock and any delay could have been fatal.

The big surprise came the next day, when the pediatrician, Dr. Smith, after having examined the child, called me and told me that the child had an abnormal heart. Unnecessary to say that I was extremely unhappy about it. But I decided to keep it as a secret to myself, asked also Dr. Schneider not to say anything about it to Lisa. I kept the secret for 1½ years to myself. I saw that she was a so-called blue baby, that she was slow in sitting up, in talking, in starting to walk. But she was a beautiful child, friendly, laughing, and did not cry much. Once I had to call a friend, Dr. Loewy, to their apart-

ment to cut the very short frenulum under her tongue. Ginnie was then already a few months old. He examined her, of course, was a very well known pediatrician, also from Vienna, but was informed before by me about her heart, and did not say anything about it. Later, in the street,we spoke about it. Just at that time, heart operations were being performed at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. It was the now famous Dr. Helen Taussig, who first tried these operations. She herself did not operate, but she had there an excellent surgeon, Dr. Blalock, who performed the first heart operations. These were closures of a patent ductus Botalli. Later, they operated on more serious heart defects. That was what I discussed with Dr. Loewy and we both expressed the hope that later on Ginnie would perhaps also be helped by surgery. As time went on, it became more and more apparent to Lisa and Paul that there was something wrong with Ginnie. She had difficulties to walk, used to squat all the time after a few steps. Lisa had enormous difficulties carrying her up four flights of stairs, and especially when she had gone shopping, carrying at the same time also the things she had bought.

For the summer of 1946 they went to St.James near Smithtown in Long Island, where they lived with a family Yarusso. Ginnie was then only about three months old. We visited them there twice or three times. For the next summer in 1947, we rented rooms in Fleischmanns in the Catskills, where Michael and Amelie Rosen had rented a big house near the hotel Lakamassee. It was a nice vacation and we enjoyed it very much. I came out every weekend. But besides us, many other members of our family came out and stayed there also, Hansi Hilkowicz,

later also Ita and her former husband, with a big dog, John and Stella Forster with two of their children, Lynn and Joe. There were a few more young couples with children in that house. Mr. Rosen was the only one who had a car, and he drove us for shopping into the center of the town. Francis and Johanna seemed to enjoy the vacation very much, met other young people and went together swimming in a swimming pool. I spent much time with fishing, but never caught a real good fish. There were trouts in the river, but I did not have the right equipment. Charles and Edith Gardner stayed also in Fleischmanns in a hotel and we got together quite a few times. Many of these things I remember very well, but I have the help of my photo albums, with the pictures in chronological order, which make the work easier.

It was amazing that Lisa and Paul did not notice that there was something seriously wrong with Ginnie. I saw all the time the blue lips and fingers, also the difficulty to walk, the shortness of breath, etc. She was already 1½ years old and I still kept the secret to myself. But once it happened, toward the end of the summer, that a lady, who had just come out of a store, said: "The baby had eaten blueberries." Lisa said "No", but then she started to ask me questions, and I had to reveal the truth to her. A very unpleasant task for me. I had to do it carefully, choose the words, in order not to scare them, but finally they knew it and were extremely unhappy. This was also a shock for Hedy and my children, who had not known anything up till then. I could console Lisa and Paul that she would be allright, that there was an operation, which would correct everything.

When they came back to New York after the summer, they consulted a cardiologist, who could only confirm the diagnosis. When Ginnie was three years old, they went with her to the John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. They did there all kind of examinations, but the main examination, the catheterization of the heart, could not be done, as Ginnie was not co-operating and moved her arm too much, so that they could not introduce the catheter. They gave finally up and made an appointment for the next year, when she was already four years old. The catheterization was then successful, but Dr. Taussig and other doctors could not agree, what kind of an anomaly of the heart Ginnie had, and they gave them again another appointment for a year later, when she was already five years old. It was Ginnies luck that they did not operate on her, when she was four years old, because all the children they had operated at that time did not survive the operation. One year later, they had more experience, and great many operations were successful.

It was in November 1951, after they had definitely diagnosed the condition as Tetralogy of Fallot, that they operated on her. I went, of course, to Baltimore, to see the operation. They did not do open heart surgery yet at that time, but an anastomosis, which means connection, of the right subclavian artery, which is the artery, which leads into the right arm, with a bronchial artery, which goes into the lung. Due to that operation, more blood went into the lung and received oxygen. The operation was a great success. Ginnies cheeks became pink, she breathed better, could walk better, later went to school, etc. I will give more details about Ginnie's progress later.