

# RUTH & FELIX

THE ILLUSTRATED MEMOIRS  
OF RUTH FRANK GELBER  
AND FELIX GELBER  
1902 - 2001

EDITED BY JONATHAN FELIX GELBER





# RUTH&FELIX

The illustrated memoirs  
of Ruth Frank Gelber  
and Felix Gelber  
1902 - 2001

Edited and annotated by Jonathan Felix Gelber  
2018

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Forward

My grandparents, Ruth Margot Frank Gelber (1910-2001) and Felix Gelber (1902-1978), left extensive hand-written memoirs. There was a note that said that Felix was asked to prepare a biography for some sort of business event around 1977, and he ended up writing out nearly 50 hand-written pages.

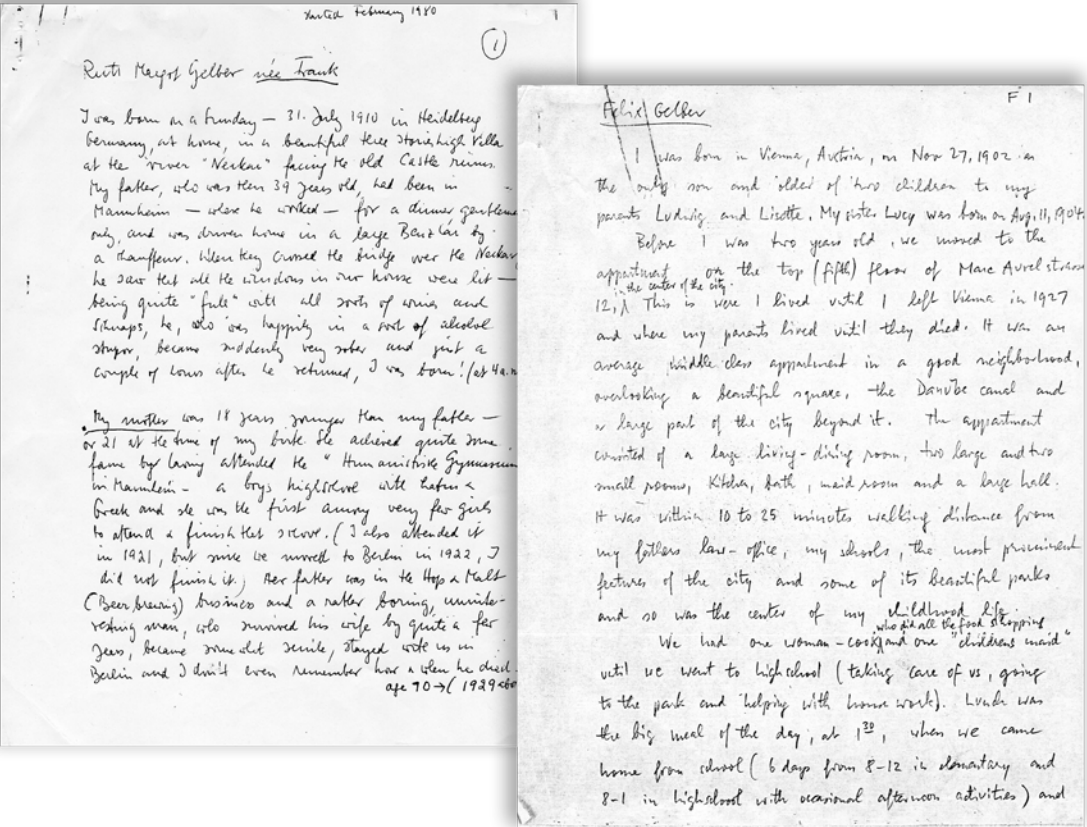
Ruth started writing her own story in 1980, returning to write more in 1989 and 1996.

I have had photo-copies of these memoirs for as long as I can remember. While I have read through them several times, it has been hard to connect with my grandparents' stories because the handwriting is difficult to read, and also because both memoirs are written as a linear stream of consciousness, full of details, digressions, and distractions.

I also have several boxes of old photographs and documents from both of my grandparents. These too are fun look at, but they are difficult appreciate without context.

In 2016, during an idle period over the holidays, I decided to try to bring my grandparents stories together: transcribing them, editing them to bring out the heart of their stories, interlining them to see how the two stories approach the same moments differently, and illustrating them with both family photos and historical photos. I researched and added historical notes to illuminate how the choices my grandparents and their families made were influenced by the day-to-day events of one of the most horrifying periods of human history.

- Jonathan Felix Gelber  
Atlanta, 2018





Marc Aurel Straße 12,Vienna



Felix and Lucy Gelber



Semmering Mountains,  
Austria



Reichenau, Austria

**Felix** I was born in Vienna, Austria on November 27, 1902 as the oldest of two children and the only son to my parents Ludwig and Lisette. My sister Lucy was born on August 11, 1904.

Before I was two years old, we moved into an apartment on the top (fifth) floor of Marc Aurel Straße 12 in the center of the city. This is where I lived until I left Vienna in 1927, and where my parents lived until they died. It was an average middle-class apartment in a good neighborhood, overlooking a beautiful square, the Danube canal, and a large part of the city beyond it. The apartment consisted of a large living-dining room, two large and two small rooms, kitchen, bath, maid’s room and a large hall.

There was an iron grill on one of the windows of our children’s room so, that we could use a large windowsill in many playful ways and look out over the city in the streets below us.

We had one woman-cook, who did all the food shopping, and one “children’s maid” until we went to high school (taking care of us, going to the park and helping with homework). Lunch was the big meal of the day, at 1:30, when we came home from school.

The apartment was walking distance from my father’s law office, my schools, and close to the city’s most prominent features and beautiful parks. Thus this apartment was the center of my childhood life.

When I was a child we would stay for more than two months each summer in rented places in the country, mostly without my father, who came visiting for the weekend if it was not too far from Vienna. Country life for us consisted mainly of playing in the woods, hikes, and usually once each vacation we would take an all-day excursion in a rented horse-drawn carriage with a horseman.

Summer vacations were spent often in the Semmering Mountains, the eastern fringe of the Alps two hours from Vienna. Rax Mountain, Reichenau, Edlach, and Weissenbach were a second home to me.

My parents usually took two-week vacation trips during the year; often separately because my father was an avid mountain climber and my mother was equally interested in Italian art.

Sundays we often took long hikes in the Wienerwald, often with just our father and his brother Josef, but frequently also joined by my mother and the other members of our families.





Markthalle Nussdorfer Straße, ca. 1908



**Felix** Vienna at that time was a glorious city, the capital of one the largest European empires, comparable only to Paris but much more beautifully located, with the Danube and the mountains located only within a few miles of the city center. Vienna was culturally unsurpassed in historical beauty, music, theater, art, architecture, medicine and science My parents were very much a part of it, and to the extent this was possible for a little boy, I absorbed this atmosphere either subconsciously or with my parents' guidance. Much of that died with the end of World War I in 1918.

There was no radio, television, or air transportation. Automobiles were just in their infancy; all transportation, except steam railroad and electric streetcar was strictly horse-drawn. Policemen were unarmed, lighting was almost exclusively gas, and heating and cooking was done with coal-fired stoves. Storage water heaters and electric refrigeration were decades away. We got our first telephone when I was about six years old: a four-digit number (3090- extension 8) in a city of 2 million people.

New inventions and discoveries were anxiously followed by the average citizen as evidence of our progress to the millennium, even before they started to profoundly affect our lifestyle. I personally remember Marconi operating an unmanned power boat by radio control (concluding by firing a gun), the sinking of the Titanic in 1912 (with the first widespread use of wireless telegraphy), and the first exhibition of aviation and aerobatics by French pilots near Vienna in 1912, shortly after Blériot had crossed the English Channel.

Vienna State Opera House



Louis Charles Joseph Blériot became world-famous for making the first fight across the English Channel in a heavier-than-air aircraft in 1909.



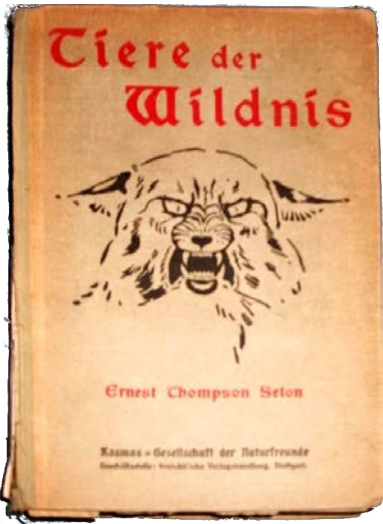
**Felix** Physically, I was not a very strong or large boy. At school, as in my later career, I was always one of the youngest, having started elementary school at less than six years of age. I was sick quite often, mostly cold, sore throat, and bronchitis with high fever, partly due to poor nutrition during the war years. At age 10, I had appendicitis that time a major operation. I had to wear a rubber pant-corset for six months afterwards.

I had very few friends. Much of my free time I spent with the boys of my large and close-knit family, particularly Carl and Ernest Winter, Robert Gelber (my uncle Adolf's son) and Hansi (now Baum) and Stephan Bauer. Robert was probably my closest friend.

Among my principal toys was the Matador, a very diversified building set of wooden blocks similar to my grandchildren's Legos. I also had a little train with a spring-driven engine. My greatest possession was a beautiful large locomotive which my parents bought from a friend of the family. We also had a swing, hung in a door frame between two rooms, which was frequently-used.

Before I started to read myself, my mother used to read to us almost daily from Anderson's and Grimm's fairy tales and similar books. I was always moved to tears (as I still am today) over the sadness of the Anderson stories.

As I grew older, I got into the habit of waking up and reading in bed every Sunday. My favorite books then were two volumes of Sven Hedin's *Von Pol Zu Pol (From Pole to Pole)*, containing the story of polar exploration (Peary, Scott, and Amundsen ), which I reread many times. I also loved Selma Lagerlof's story of Nils Holgersson's trip with the wild geese and Seton Thompson's animal stories, Greek and Norse mythology, and heroic sagas.





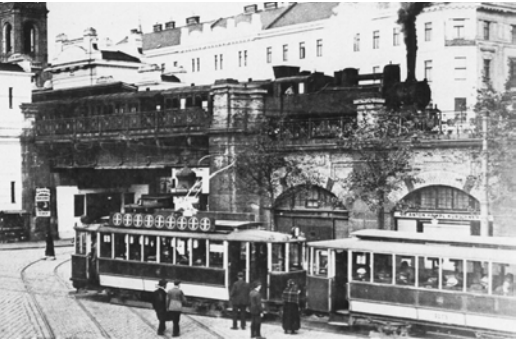
**Felix** My greatest childhood fascinations were three:

First, the electric streetcars. I was sure to become a motor man once. Of the vast Viennese streetcar system, I knew every line and every one of the many types of streetcars, to which I gave imaginary names. As I grew older, I would always stand to the left of the motorman, and I could easily have operated a streetcar myself.

Secondly, railroads, which were, of course, all steam-operated. I knew most of the types of engines and the numbering systems. Whenever we took a long trip, I would hope that a certain type of engine would drive the train. Vienna also had a kind of steam-operated metro, which ran underground along the Danube canal near our home. I spent much time standing on station openings watching the trains, trying to brave the smoke and steam of the locomotives passing just below.

Third, there was aviation. The first book I ever bought, and which I treasured for many years, was a little book with a violet cover, *The Little Aviator*, starting with balloons, and then progressing through all the famous steps of aviation to the latest airplanes. I didn't build anything myself. There were neither tools nor space at home. Model airplane kits did not exist then.

Vienna Tram and Train , ca. 1910



Wiener Stadtbahn, ca. 1920



Helmut Hirth, Early German Aviator, 1910



**Ruth** I was born at home in Heidelberg Germany on a Sunday, 31 July 1910 in a beautiful three-story villa at the river Neckar, facing the old castle ruins. My father, who was then 39 years old, had been in Mannheim, where he worked, for a business dinner (gentlemen only) and he was driven home in a large Benz car by a chauffeur. When they crossed the bridge over the Neckar, he saw that the windows in our house were lit. Being quite “full” with all sorts wine and schnapps, he, who was happy in a sort of alcohol stupor, became suddenly very sober and just a couple of hours after he returned, I was born!

I must have been quite a pretty baby and little girl. There are some nice pictures of me in Heidelberg. My baby nurse was Auntie Kratz, a young girl of about 19, who adored and protected me. There was also a huge German shepherd dog who was a real watch-dog. I loved him and played with him, but I was not afraid of dogs then like I am now!



Heidelberg, 2010. The Frank's house is on the right, marked by an arrow.  
Photo by Mark Shimazu Photography



1907 Benz Landaulet Limousine



**Ruth** My mother's maiden name was Margot Kaufmann. Her father's name was Nathan, and her mother Eugenie. She had one brother Stefan, an entrepreneur, who died from a poisonous insect bite at about 35 years of age, while he was on vacation. (This was before antibiotics).

My mother was 18 years younger than my father, or 21 at the time of my birth. She achieved quite some fame for having attended the Humanistische Gymnasium in Mannheim, a boys' high school that taught Latin and Greek, and she was the first among few girls to attend and finish this school. (I also attended it in 1921, but since we moved to Berlin in 1922, I did not finish.) Her father was in the hop and malt (beer brewing) business and a rather boring, uninteresting man, who survived his wife by quite a few years. Later in his life, somewhat senile, he stayed with us in Berlin, and I don't even remember how or when he died (at age 70 around 1929); it certainly must have been uneventful since I don't remember it.

His wife, my maternal grandmother, however, was a remarkable person. She was Austrian, and four years older than my father. One of her ancestors was a gentile, who married a Jewish wife and deserted the Army! People said that we got our blue eyes and light hair and complexions from this Aryan influence.

My grandmother, no beauty, was a very powerful, striking woman, who was very artistic and independent, had her own atelier (studio-boutique) called MURER: Mode & Reklame Kunst (Fashion and Advertising Art). She made, displayed, and sold batik material and other hand-made works of art and was very successful.

Her life with my grandfather, who went bankrupt several times, and as mentioned before, was a bore, was not very happy, so in her later years, she had a boyfriend, about 25 years younger. (This much to her credit!)

She had complained of pains in her legs and thighs, but the doctors could find anything wrong with her and thought she was hysterical! She died at age 60 (around 1927) and it was found then that she had had cancer of the bone, which had manifested itself first in her legs! We had to go to her funeral in white dresses with a broad black belt around, and somebody sang my grandmother's favorite Brahms song.



Margot Kaufman Frank

**Ruth** My father was born 10 April 1871 in Dürkheim, not far from Mannheim, a little town famous for its grapes and wine. Actually, he was from Grethen, a little village near Dürkheim, where his father had a dry goods store.

His father's' name was Bernhard and his mother's name was Therese (she died before I was born). Therese's brother was Simon Weiller, a good-looking man with white hair who had a big hardware store in Dürkheim. He had five children, Karl, Paul, Ludwig, Lene and Friedel.

Ludwig, called Ludl, was a banker He lived in Mannheim and also later in Berlin. He was very often on our house and I had a crush on him when I was 10 years old and he was then 21! He met Fritz Hellin in Mannheim and through Hellin, he met Felix, so my father first met Felix in Lugano through Ludl, and I met Felix in Berlin through Ludl.

Uncle Simon Weiller let me help him at the cash register of his hardware store, which I loved to do, and I have very pleasant memories of our visits to Dürkheim, where there was a spa, a nice restaurant, a beautiful park, and music on Sundays,. There were many lovely hikes all around, and after I met Felix, we often spent time in Dürkheim.

My father went to a private school in Dürkheim until he was 14, then he started as an apprentice in a small but well-known private bank (Ladenburg, I forget the initials) and worked his way up from fetching coffee and sandwiches, then to Süddeutsche Disconto Bank in Mannheim, then in 1922 to Disconto Bank in Berlin, until he became a director of Deutsche Bank in Berlin.

He had no formal schooling or training; he was absolutely self-made. He was brilliant with figures, even without the help of calculators or adding machines. He was on the board of directors of many big and small enterprises, and well-versed in many industries.

He was also extremely good-looking, soigné, and always immaculately-dressed. His ideal was the American bankers– he was often taken for an American.

I remember him, from my childhood point-of view, as strict, stern, and not interested in us at all. When we grew older, if we wanted something from him, we had to go with him on his daily one-hour walk through Tiergarten Park in Berlin. After we had presented our plea, question, or demand, we would have a very difficult time to find conversation subjects for the rest of the hour.



Theodor Frank





Akademisches Gymnasium, Vienna

**Felix** I took four years of elementary school in a progressive private school Schwarzwald starting at age 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, and was admitted to the Akademisches Gymnasium, one of Vienna's best high schools, in the fall of 1912.

In Austria, gymnasium-type schools were designed for students intending to go onto University. Students would graduate after eight years upon passing a difficult examination at the grade level corresponding approximately to the sophomore year in the United States. Students planning on a career in trade or commerce took four years of Buergerschule and several years of apprenticeship or study in trade schools, being ready for skilled employment at about age 18. All schools above elementary school when non-coeducational. Girls who wanted to take the compulsory four-year Buergerschule went to the Lyceum instead.

In Gymnasium we were immediately treated as grown-ups, addressed by our last name and the formal pronoun *sie* (corresponding to the French *vous*) as opposed to *du*.

The education encompassed everything from Latin, Greek, and French to history, geography, physics, mathematics, life science and literature.

Anticipating a possible engineering career, I transferred after the first four years to another Gymnasium (Real Gymnasium Innere Stadt). This was a school with greater emphasis on sciences in mathematics, and French instead Greek, as French was required for admission to the Institute of Technology.

I was an average student. We had much homework, but I always managed to hang on, even though I often had a hard time doing so.

In Gymnasium I acquired most of my interests in the general knowledge outside of my specific professional field. While much of this study was done by hours of rote, some of my instructors, specifically in physics and mathematics, were so inspiring that I owe to them much of my career.

**Ruth** My sister Ilse was also born in Heidelberg in 1912. My father had a car and chauffeur and was driven ten miles from Heidelberg to Mannheim where he worked. Because of gasoline restrictions, we soon moved to Mannheim into a large roomy apartment which belonged to the father of Albert Speer, who would later become infamous as Hitler's chief architect. During the first world war 1914-1918, we often had to go to the cellar in the middle of the night to take shelter from English and French air raids, and we shared the cellar with Albert Speer who was a teenager at the time.

My brother Hans Martin (named for Mars, the god of war!) was born during the war in 1915, and Mary Ann was born in 1919. I remember that the home across the street from our apartment was turned into a hospital for injured soldiers. My mother worked there as a volunteer and I often went there to talk with the wounded soldiers. They also kept horses in the courtyard, and I loved to watch them.



Ruth and Martin Frank, ca. 1930

Ilse, Martin, and Mary Ann Frank



**27 May , 1915**

Ludwigshafen, an industrial area across the Rhine from Mannheim is the target of the world's first strategic aerial bombardment, when french aircraft bombed a BASF plant, killing twelve.

**July-November, 1918**

More than one million people were wounded or killed in the Battle of the Somme, making it one of the bloodiest battles in human history. Fighting along the western front came as close as 100 miles west of Mannheim.

**11 November 1918**

At the end of the First World War, the west bank of the Rhine River opposite Mannheim is occupied by French soldiers.



Albert Speer with Adolf Hitler

Mannheim, City Center, 1914







Rügen



The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo



An Austrian troop train en route to the front, 1914

**Felix** I had a happy, sheltered and secure childhood. We were surrounded by loving, bright and modern parents and there was great compassion and harmony apparent between them: I cannot remember any quarrel ever. This life and childhood came to a sudden end with the outbreak of World War I.

The news of the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand, on June 28, 1914, reached us on vacation in Reichenau, near Vienna.

I will never understand why my mother, took Lucy and me to Rügen, on the Baltic Sea, which was two-days travel with a stopover in Berlin. There, we got caught in the declaration of war, first by Austria to Serbia, and then by Germany to France and Russia. I remember the excitement of our return trip to Vienna, passing through the general mobilization, seeing troop trains, the suspension of train schedules, and patriotic demonstrations.

From that time on, though not quite twelve years old, I lived a grown-up life, diminishing as fast as I could the difficulties of my youth.

My parents permitted me to read the newspapers. There was of course, no radio. From the declaration of war, until the collapse of Austria and Germany, the war dominated everything. My father was then 49 years old, so he escaped the general conscription. Those who didn't get drafted, particularly women, joined volunteer services.



Children in Vienna line up outside a war kitchen, 1917



A school for Jewish war refugee orphans in Poland, 1920

**Felix** By September 1914 the Russians had already overrun Austria's northern provinces, with their large Polish-Jewish populations, and thousands of refugees started streaming into Vienna, most of whom had lost all of their possessions. Among them were many children who had lost their parents.

At the time my mother (always closely helped by my father) founded the *Rettungs Verein* ["Rescue Association"], a private charitable organization for the rescue of the Jewish refugee children. She had been active in various other charities for many years before, but this was the first organization of her own. Eventually she helped hundreds of small children. She helped to found group homes where refugee children could live and get educated until they could be integrated into the community.

Providing food became more and more difficult; there was severe rationing or complete absence some of the most basic foods. Bread was made from ground corn, often with the addition of sawdust. Meat, milk, butter, and sugar were scarce. Much time was spent standing in line. As grew older, I made several one day round-trips down the Danube to the Hungarian border, coming back with ham and butter from the large agrarian provinces.

There was a great shortage of coal, hence heating in winter was reduced to a minimum. I remember sleeping on top of my armoire; it was warmer there, near the ceiling. We lined our shoes with newspapers for better protection against the wet snow.



**Ruth** In Mannheim I went to a private school in the apartment of the teacher, Frau Riesterer, and I liked it. We were as many girls as boys, and all on really good terms with each other.

Then I went to a girls-only junior high school, but after two years my parents decided to send me to the boys' school where they taught Latin and Greek. I had to take private lessons in Latin and math to make up for two lost years.

Eventually I went to the boys' school, called Humanistisches Gymnasium. I loved that school. In our class were 30 boys and 3 girls. Our homeroom teacher was a very liberal, progressive guy called Überle, whose wife was an actress. He considered our whole class something like a family, or even more like a commune. He maintained very strict discipline, but he also created a warm feeling of belonging and togetherness. We had a very good time together and we also learned a lot. One thing I remember vividly is when the class preformed a classical play called Oedipus in front of a live audience. My friend Heidi Henel and I played Oedipus' daughters, who didn't have to say a word, but just had to stand there near their "blinded" father, played by Heidi's older brother Klaus.



Jugendbewegung meetings in Austria and Germany, ca. 1920



**Felix** At that time, I started to become interested in naval matters, and was familiar with the navies of the world. Since then, to this day, I have retained my interest in anything connected with ships.

In 1914, I became a Boy Scout. In Europe and then, the main aim of scouting was a broad physical and mental, military-type education towards excellency and leadership of men. Fathers and other grown-ups were completely excluded. The group leaders were 17 to 22 years old and had come up through the ranks. Here for the first time, I had to recognize that I was not, and have not been afterwards, a natural leader of men. My frequent attempts for promotion were not fulfilled, and I quit after two years. I owe to them, however, my appreciation of personal honesty, discipline, endurance, and sacrifice.

In the fall of 1918, when Austria and Germany collapsed at the end of the war, I had joined Jugendbewegung [Youth Movement], an offshoot of the German Wandervogel. This was a free spontaneous, and completely unorganized group of perhaps 200 young men and women, with common interest in nature, social progress, school reform, democracy, and the fight against church and nobility.

With the overthrow of the monarchy and the dissolution of the Austrian Empire, this group found itself ideologically very close to the Social-Democrats. However, party affiliation, as well as religion, remained everybody's personal affair. Many of this group rose to very prominent positions in the Austrian government and school system. Some became communists in Russia and Hungary. In Germany, unfortunately the Wandervogel contributed heavily the ideological foundations of Nazism.

We mostly met on Sundays, in very small groups of loose friends, for long hikes and meetings with other groups. We would meet during the week for long discussions at each other's' houses, as well as concerts and lectures. It is there that I formed many of my closest friendships, such as Richard Kafka, Oscar Fisher, and other young men and women with whom I have lost contact, and whose names would mean nothing to you.



Universität Wien (University of Vienna)

Dalsland, Sweden



**Felix** In my last year in high school, I didn't attend classes in the first semester; instead I studied at home and took an examination at this semester's end. This allowed me to spend all my daytime at the University. I just walked into lectures on a variety of topics and I spent much time at the magnificent library, broadening my universal knowledge and trying to decide on my future career. The last semester of high school, however, I spent as a regular student on the advice of my father, who didn't want me to jeopardize the final examination, the *Matura* which led to graduation. The *Matura* was a week-long written examination. I passed it without difficulty and I remember going swimming with my classmates directly from school after it was all over. One of the features was an optional one-day essay on one of two themes. I chose "The Triumph of Technology".

This was in June 1919. Afterwards, I went to Sweden and spent the summer living and working on a little farm in the middle of forests and lakes in Dalsland, near the Norwegian border. I was one of a group of Austrian students who had been brought to individual families by a Swedish church organization so we could recover from the deprivations of the war. I still carry a scar on my right ankle from a carpenter's axe as a souvenir of this exciting summer spent with a simple farmer's family, many hours from the nearest railroad station.





Technische Hochschule, Wien



**Felix** In fall, I enrolled as a full-time student at the then very prominent Institute of Technology in electrical engineering, and also at the University in physics, mathematics, and philosophy. Attending two colleges full-time simultaneously could only be done by keeping the respective authorities completely in the dark.

I spent most of my time at the University and never attended any lectures at the Technische Hochschule (T.H.), the official name of the Institute of Technology.

I had, however, to attend most of the design and drafting practices and labs, which were held on several afternoons during the week. Most of my drafting work I did at home, after dinner. Then I had to get the signature of each professor, certifying my satisfactory attendance in his course at semesters end. This was not difficult because each of the classes contained 50 to 100 students.

Contrary to this, the group of students at the advanced physics courses at the University was very small. All students and the professors knew each other personally. At the University, there were no examinations until you were ready to take your PhD. Then you had to undergo a four-hour oral examination in your main field (in my case, physics), a two-hour examination in your second field (mathematics) and a another two-hour examination, compulsory for everybody, in philosophy. Before this you had to spend a better part of your last year on your thesis.

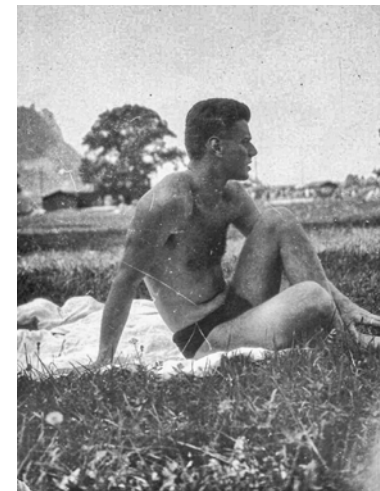
My thesis was about physiological optics, *On The Threshold Value of Sensitivity to Light*, a determination of the minimum energy able to create a visual impression in the human eye.

At the T.H., to the contrary, there were about six courses simultaneously, mostly extending over two semesters each. In order to graduate you had to take an oral examination at the end of each of them, altogether probably six per year. For each of these tests I had to study intensively for about four weeks. I developed at that time (to my later regret) an ability to master broadly an entire subject, while going into depth only to the extent necessary to pass the examination.

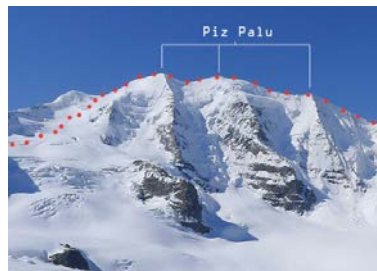
After all the individual tests, in order to obtain the M.S.e (engineering degree) there was a final written examination extending over one entire week. In my case, it involved the calculations and design of an electric power plant.

Somehow, I managed to obtain both my PhD in physics and my engineering degree after four years, in June, 1923.

The T.H. had no graduation ceremonies, but the University had a very elaborate ceremony where, among other things, you had to take an academic oath. Caps and gowns however, were unknown. So I borrowed a dark suit from my cousin, Robert Gelber for the occasion. For no good reason, I kept my examinations at the University secret from my parents, so I surprised them with the news of my graduations.



Piz Palu



A folding boat



**Felix** A group of about ten friends and I first formed an athletic club where we met in a high school gym once or twice a week. I became an excellent performer on high bars.

Swimming in the Danube required expertise, endurance, and was immensely exciting. The Danube is much larger than the Rhine, and swift, with frequent vortexes. I was fascinated by it and I spent most of my summer Sundays there.

My enchantment with the Danube became even greater when a young friend of mine acquired a folding boat. We spent many Sundays going to towns up-river by train, and then floating lazily or working our way hard against the wind, toward Vienna. Unfortunately, he committed suicide two years later (the reasons were never clear) and his parents gave me his boat

In skiing, I never got to be very good. I never had professional instruction, also, today's elaborate equipment makes it much easier than it was in an earlier time. But I loved it, and in winter I spent many weekends in the mountains. Ski lifts were barely known then. The ascent of several hours was an experience of nature and of solitude comparable in every respect to the thrill of a fast descent.

During these years, two important things happened in my private life. First, I met and became a very close friend of Paul Basch. He was about three years older than I, a graduate of the Vienna Institute of Technology and an outstanding designer of steam locomotives. He had spent several years with a prominent manufacturer of locomotives in Germany and had just returned it to Vienna to start a similar job there.

I taught him river swimming and took him out on the folding boat on the Danube. He introduced me to advanced mountain climbing first in Austria and then in Switzerland. We also went skiing together. He was an experienced mountain guide, and I owe him my life at least once on the Piz Palu in the Enghadin. I never did become good at mountain climbing, primarily because I never entirely lost my fear of complete exposure on vertical walls. This is why I never pursued climbing seriously after I left Vienna in 1927.

Secondly, I took up diving. I think I took my first dive at age 17. Not too far from the AEG factory was a huge swimming, rowing and sailing facility on one of the many arms of the Danube. It was there that a Jewish swimming club *Hakoah* trained. I went there often after work for rowing and diving, and I eventually acquired many friends among them. With their help, I gradually learned to dive from the five-meter board and then finally from the ten-meter platform.



**Ruth** Unfortunately for me, my father was promoted from his banking job in Mannheim to a much better position with the Disconto-Gesellschaft Bank (merged in 1929 into Deutsche Bank) in Berlin and we moved there, I think in 1923.

In Berlin we took a tremendous apartment in a very good neighborhood (7 or 13 Lützowplatz, Berlin-Tiergarten), with a corridor of at least 50 yards, two living rooms, a huge dining hall, seven bedrooms, and three or four bathrooms. In spite of the many bedrooms, I had to share a bedroom with my sister Ilse and we didn't get along too well.

My relationship with my parents was rather cool. My father was always very formal, his life was extremely programmed, orderly and scheduled. My mother had always projects, and was busy and not really interested in our personal lives. We always had kinderfrauen-leins for our personal (and to an extent intellectual) care. We also had three maids, one cook, one cleaning lady, one lady for washing, one for ironing, one for mending, and one for making new dresses. These ladies, of course, came to the house once a week or twice a month. There was also a barber for my father, a hairdresser for my mother (who came daily), a masseuse, a manicurist, a pedicurist, and a man who would wind all the clocks once a week.

My parents entertained a lot and my father, who loved music but didn't practice it, contributed a lot of money to artists and invited them to our home. He also was the financial advisor to the famous conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Wilhelm Furtwängler. I met many of the artists, and I maintained a friendly relationship with the cellist Gregor Piatigorsky until his death in Los Angeles a few years ago. Felix also knew Piatigorsky from Mannheim.



During the summer vacation, I usually went with my parents and siblings to Switzerland, but one summer, when I was in University, I spent in London and Oxford and I had a very good time there. I also went to Paris, at first with my mother, but then I stayed longer with a bunch of friends. My English and French became quite fluent.



Lützowplatz, Berlin-Tiergarten, Ca. 1910. The Frank family apartment, not yet built at the time of this photo, was in the block to the left,

Wilhelm Furtwängler



Gregor Piatigorsky



**Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911) was a Bohemian-born Austrian composer and conductor. He was best known during his own lifetime as one of the leading orchestral and operatic conductors of the day. He has since come to be acknowledged as among the most important late-Romantic composers, although his music was never completely accepted by the musical establishment of Vienna while he was still alive. One historian writes: "Mahler was late Romantic music's ultimate big thinker. In his own lifetime he was generally regarded as a conductor who composed on the side, producing huge, bizarre symphonies accepted only by a cult following." (Rovi Staff)

**Max Reinhardt** (1873 –1943) was an Austrian theater and film director and actor, widely considered to be the father of modern theater. From 1902 until the beginning of Nazi rule in 1933, he worked as a director at various theaters in Berlin. From 1905 to 1930 he managed the Deutsches Theater ("German Theatre") in Berlin and, in addition, the Theater in der Josefstadt in Vienna from 1924 to 1933. By employing powerful staging techniques, and harmonizing stage design, language, music and choreography, Reinhardt introduced new dimensions into German theatre. (Brigette Timmermann)



**Felix** The big cultural event of those days was Max Reinhardt. Each performance was a most unusual event, looked forward to with never-frustrated expectations. In music, Gustav Mahler held the main interest of myself and my friends. One hardship was that we mostly could afford only the *Stehparterre*, a small section in the back of the hall with standing room only.

During all this time, I continued to live at home with my parents. I don't remember ever having an argument with them: it was a harmonious coexistence. There was, however, no intimate communication between us. It was probably I who discouraged it. My father struggled hard to maintain his law practice and all the time remained the only breadwinner in the family.





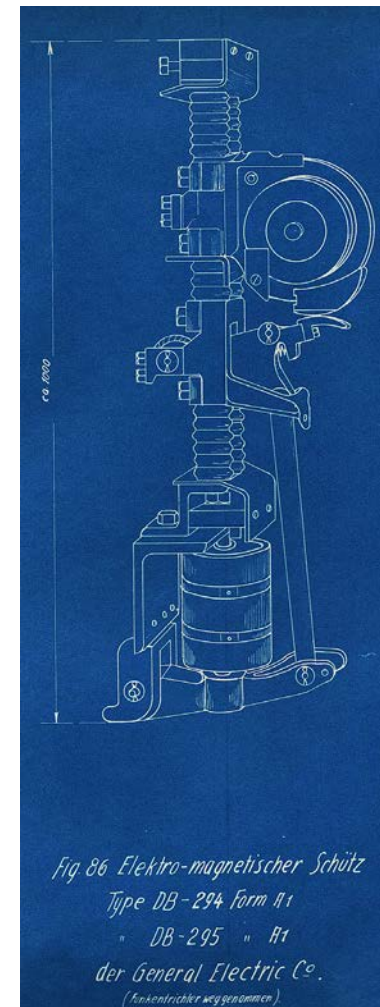
**Felix** With Lucy, I had as little contact as with my parents. She also had gone through gymnasium, the only high school of this type for girls that existed at that time. She had decided on a musical career and practiced the piano for many hours daily. This was another reason why I left the house early for the University, and rarely came home before dinner.

My father died very suddenly from pleurisy in 1931. It was a great loss to me. Though, as I may have mentioned before, we were never very intimate, my parents and I were always very close to each other. I wrote to them frequently and I am sure that I got a postcard from them every week or two. I came to Vienna, usually at Christmas-time, for long and a joyous reunion with my parents and my many Viennese friends.



**Felix** I was ready to find a job. This was, given the miserable economic conditions in Austria in 1923, a very difficult task. Through my father's influence, I finally obtained a draftsman's job at AEG, one of the three largest electrical manufacturers in Austria. Later on I was assigned to an electrical installation job as a junior electrician in their factory, about one hour streetcar's ride from town. After about one year, the rumors spread that a PhD was doing installation work down at the plant.

I was hired first for their estimating department, and later transferred to their calculating department for electrical motors. There I had my first experience with electric railroads, by being assigned to one of the most outstanding specialists in the extremely difficult and disputed design of single phase AC motors for locomotives. This business didn't hold up and I was given all kinds of other motor design jobs at which I did not do very well, and which I disliked. Eventually in July 1927, I was given notice.



One of many technical sketches that Felix had in his files



**Ruth** *In Berlin there was only one school for girls where Latin and Greek were taught. My mother tried to enroll my sister and me there before we even moved from Mannheim, but they had a numerus clausus for Jewish people and would only take us if we were baptized, so baptized we got (all four Frank children)! I was very much opposed, because I always felt Jewish and I had been taking private lessons in the Jewish religion which I enjoyed very much, but which, of course, had to be stopped. In Berlin, I even had to go through the religious procedure of being confirmed as a Lutheran at the age of 14, which I also was opposed to and hated! However, on my 21st birthday, July 31, 1931, I went to court in Berlin, all by myself, and declared that I am officially resigning from the Lutheran Faith and Lutheran Church, for which I received an official document, duly sealed and stamped.*

*After a while, we got used to Berlin and the new high school. We had a long way to walk, at least three miles each way, and though there was a streetcar, I never took it; I always walked, and it was pretty cold in winter and very hot in summer, and six days of school! I made new friends, and when I was about 16, we had social dancing lessons every Saturday evening during the winter months, in the homes of different boys and girls. I enjoyed those years very much; we were a nice crowd and I have happy memories of good and care-free times. I was always quite good in school— I didn't have to study too hard, and I felt that with my school record I deserved to enjoy myself after hours.*

JEWISH NEWS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES	<b>JEWISH DAILY BULLETIN</b>	WORLD WIDE DAILY EDITION NEW YORK N.Y.
Vol. V. Price 2 Cents.	Wednesday, December 28, 1933	Special at 10 Cents Morning of Dec. 31, No. 1235.

BERLIN, April 26—The Hitler cabinet has at last delivered the official dictum on the limitation of Jewish students in high schools and colleges. The long threatened numerus clausus, reducing Jewish attendance in the schools of higher learning according to the Jewish proportion of the population, is now made law by an edict of the Nazi cabinet. The new law provides that only one and one-half per cent of the students may be non-Aryan.

**Numerus clausus** ("closed number" in Latin) is one of many methods used to limit the number of students who may study at a university. In many cases, the goal of the *numerus clausus* is simply to limit the number of students to the maximum feasible in some particularly sought-after areas of studies. However, in some cases, *numerus clausus* policies were religious or racial quotas, both in intent and function.

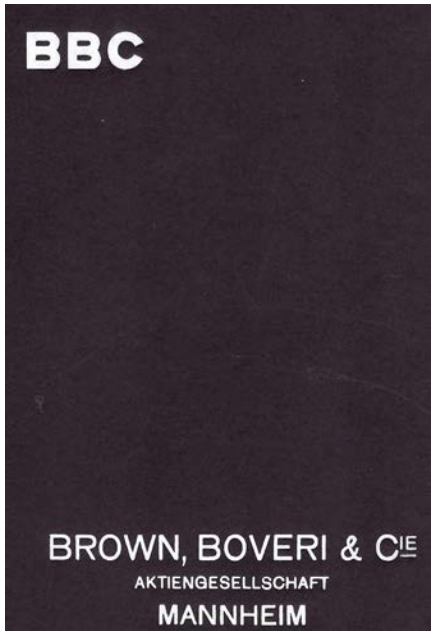


**Felix** In 1927, Austria had come close to Civil War between the Social Democrats, who held a large majority within Vienna, and the Christian Democrats, who, together with the viciously anti-Semitic German nationalists, then later Nazis, held a majority in Austria's national parliament and government. In political bodies, and also in offices and private life, followers of the two opposing parties didn't communicate with each other anymore. They were vicious debates everywhere.

### Scenes from the July Revolt of 1927 in Vienna







**Felix** Brown Boveri in Mannheim, is the third largest electro-technical concern in Germany. They were associated with Brown, Boveri & Cie (BBC) in Switzerland. When I came there, an appointment was arranged for me with the head of their railroad department, Dr. Ernst Wilchert, who was severely ill. I found him lying in semi-darkness on his couch in the attic of his home in Heidelberg during a severe thunderstorm. He hired me on the spot when he heard that I had worked for Ivan Doery, who was a well-respected and successful scientist as well as Dr. Wilchert's professional nemesis. I started work on October 1, 1927 and I never saw Dr. Wilchert again; he died one year later.

The field assigned to me was all railroads operating with DC (direct current) except for streetcars. This included most of the electric railroads outside of Germany and also all the railroads used in the mining industry. It also included diesel-eclectic locomotives, which at that time were in their infancy, and, later on, high-speed diesel-electric trains. My group never consisted of

more than a few people. We managed and negotiated all the projects, and for support we drew from the almost 100 engineers in the other groups of BBC's railroad division. Hugo Konrad was my chief assistant and a lifelong friend. After he retired, he became a member of the board of Brown Boveri.

My group was also responsible for putting our equipment into operation and to take charge in case of serious trouble. I especially remember the trial of a diesel high-speed (100 MPH) train which I ran myself (assisted, of course, by regular railroad personnel) across the better part of Germany with various hair-raising incidents along the way.

I published quite a few papers in professional journals. One of the major ones was published under the name of the Senior officer in charge of electrification for the German railroad administration.

My only disappointment was an article about railroads for a boys' magazine. This was a complete flop; it was rightfully rejected by the publishers and has remained my only venture into popular writing.

"Electrification of Local Railway Lines with High-Voltage Direct Current" by Dr. Felix Gelber

### Elektrisierung von Nebenbahnen mit hochgespanntem Gleichstrom.

Von Dr. Felix Gelber, Mannheim.

I.

Der elektrische Bahnbetrieb steht, nachdem er sich die Anerkennung seiner technischen Ueberlegenheit längst gesichert hat, mit dem Dampfbetrieb heute mehr als je im Kampf um die größere Wirtschaftlichkeit.

Die Rentabilität der Bahn beruht im wesentlichen auf der Höhe jener Beträge, die für Verzinsung und Tilgung des Anlagekapitals und jener, die für die Deckung der Förderkosten und für Personal und Erhaltung auf-

eigener Kraftwerke in solchen Fällen wirtschaftlich gerechtfertigt. Denn die große Anzahl der dauernd in Bewegung befindlichen Züge sichert einen angemessenen Belastungsausgleich, der die Voraussetzung für eine genügende Ausnutzung der installierten Leistung ist. Schließlich müßten für den Leistungsbedarf von mehreren zehntausend Kilowatt auch in bahnfremden Kraftwerken eigene große Maschinensätze aufgestellt werden.

Anders liegen jedoch die Verhältnisse bei kleineren



**Felix** All German companies did a lot of work in France, on the basis of "reparations" by Germany after World War I. We also had projects in Russia under Stalin's New Economic Program (NEP), promoting the industrialization of Russia with the help of the western powers. For the French work, I had a lovely young Swiss engineer from Geneva and a secretary who was fluent in French.

Despite my prohibitive youth, I was apparently found to be a good negotiator and I was personally well-received, particularly by our most difficult customers, especially the old Prussian head administrators of the German railroads in Berlin. Also, I spoke French fluently, and a trace of English, so I travelled much, mostly in Germany but also to France and to Russia.

I spent two weeks in Algiers in a competition and hearings for the electrification of a phosphate railroad in the Tebessa Province. We didn't have the necessary connections to get the order, but we got a substantial cash award for the best project submitted.

I went to Moscow early in 1931, and I spent one month in hearings for the electrification of the Trans-Caucasian railway from Baku to Batum. My recollections include a lack of any trace of freedom of person or thought, universal fear and suspicion, pervasive propaganda, a gigantic and inefficient bureaucracy, lack of any amenities of life, and a black market. All of this was in contrast to beautiful museums, the Bolshoi Ballet, a general urge to learn, and great skill in foreign languages. Among lighter observations: the taxi operated by two men (of whom one operated the broken down meter), technical information sent from my home office which was known to the Russian committee before it reached us, food served in the hotel on the imperial household's china, and rats coming out of the toilet.

I also took many trips to Switzerland to exchange information with our parent company in Geneva, which I often extended into short vacations.

I presented a paper in French on diesel-electric traction to the International Electro-Technical Congress in Paris in 1932, and invited my mother and sister to come with me. We spent one week on the Normandy coast afterwards. Lucy received many compliments from my French colleagues, who thought she was my "grown-up daughter."





**Felix** Life in Germany in the late 1920s was inspiring. For me, coming from Austria, it was as if a window had been opened in an oppressively sticky room. There was personal freedom, respect for others' privacy, outstanding achievements in music, art, theater and science. The Rhineland was beautiful, with great historical tradition, and close to most of the other cultural centers of Europe. All of this would change so very fast after Hitler's ascent in 1934.

I became close friends with many outstanding men and got deeply involved with many equally outstanding and unusual women in many cities.

I was close with Alexander von Muralt and his family. He comes from a very old Swiss family, and he earned his PhD in physiology and completed his study as an M.D. in Heidelberg. He later became a professor of physiology at the University of Berne, Switzerland.

My closest friend during these years was Fritz Trawnik, a colleague at Brown Boveri. He was with me when my folding boat was run over on the Rhine by a barge under tow, which we tried to board. We were both excellent swimmers and we even saved the boat. There was also Trawnik's sister-in-law in Cologne; she looked exactly like my granddaughter Alexandra will look someday.

There where the brothers Franz and Fritz Liebhold, with whom we spent many evenings after Hitler had come to power.

There was also the ubiquitous Fritz Hellin. We were never close friends, but we shared many of the experiences of our life since our earliest boyhood, without us ever having done anything to make that happen. He was the son of a client of my father. He worked in Mannheim, when I came there, and later he moved to Berlin. He is to a great extent responsible for my meeting Ruth. Later he lived in Paris, Trieste, and New York when I came there, and it is through him and that I met many people who later became my friends.

Trawnik and another colleague from Brown Boveri (who later became a rocket scientist on Werner von Braun's team) went swimming with me weekly at a closed swimming pool in Mannheim. We met there a young fellow who was a competition-class diver. We took him into our group and took up diving ourselves. I had started diving in Vienna and I did very well in all categories.

I did a lot of skiing. I also took classes in fencing and tennis but never even became average.

I traveled very much all over Europe, on business and during my vacations, particularly in France and Switzerland.

**Ruth** After I graduated from high school in 1928, I went to Berlin University. The first term I took political science, but then I switched to law. Our schooling was so much better than in the U.S. that after high school, one went right away into the chosen profession (law, medicine, education, etc.) without attending college first.

I enjoyed studying law. Since I had to study very hard, and I couldn't do it in our shared bedroom, I studied either in the attic or in one of the two living rooms in front which nobody used anyway except for parties.

The final exams from law school in 1932 were very tough. It started with a long and complicated paper, on which I had to work a lot at home.

My parents had built a beautiful country villa in the suburbs of Berlin (near Potsdam) near a lake. The place was called Baumgartenbrück and the architect was Ernst Freud, son of Sigmund Freud. He had three lively little boys, for whom I baby-sat. One is a famous painter in England now, I think his name is Lucian Freud. The other one is a member of parliament [Sir Clement Raphael Freud, UK Parliament 1973-1987].

I studied a lot in Baumgartenbrück and during this time, Felix came out to visit us with my cousin Gertrude Mayer-Frank, who he was "dating" at the time. I thought he was good-looking, but my mind was on doing my final paper and I considered his visit an unwanted intrusion! I met him later again, but I'll come back to that!

**Felix** On one of my travels in 1931, shortly before my father died, I met Ruth in Berlin. Through Fritz Hellin, I had met one of Ruth's cousins who lived in Mannheim. Later on, they both moved to Berlin. Fritz had invited me to a party at his apartment one evening when I was in Berlin and there I met her, very busily engrossed very much in her final law examinations.

One time he took me along to a visit with Ruth's family at their phantastic estate at Baumgartenbrück near Berlin. From then on Ruth and I got to know each other very slowly. We lived very far from each other. Our meeting at Fritz Hellin's was the beginning of a deep emotional experience which, after 35 years, makes most of the things mentioned here immaterial.

Ruth and I thereafter met every month or two in Berlin. Once or twice she came to Mannheim. She moved to Mannheim permanently after Hitler came to power late in 1933, to work in one of the most prestigious law firms there. She was working there, and thereafter in the offices of two manufacturing firms until we left Mannheim.



Lucian Freud, (1922-2011)



The study at Baumgartenbrück





# Baumgartenbrück

Baumgartenbrück, the Frank Family's villa, is located near Geltow, 45 miles southwest of Berlin. (52.357 N, 12.968 E)

The house was seized by the Nazis in 1939, and subsequently used as a recreation facility for officers. After the war, the house became the property of government of the Demokratische Republik, the East German Government, which used the home as an orphanage and school. It is said that part of the property was used as a small animal petting zoo. Over the next 40 years, the house was poorly maintained, and it became dilapidated, although the GDR continued to use the home as an orphanage.

After the reunification of Germany in 1990, displaced Germans whose property had been seized by the Nazi regime were given an opportunity to petition for restitution. Ruth Gelber, with the assistance of her son Robert and a local attorney, submitted an application for the repatriation of Baumgartenbrück.



The unified German government attempted to register the property as a historic property, assigning a local architect named Volker Welter the task of documenting the house's history. The courts eventually agreed to full restitution, assigning ownership of the property to heirs of the Theodor and Margot Frank. Due to the poor condition of the home, Ruth and her siblings opted to sell the property to a buyer who meticulously restored the house to its original condition.

By coincidence, Volker Welter subsequently moved to the United States to take a teaching position at the University of California in Santa Barbara, where he came to know Ruth, Robert, and Christopher Gelber. Welter published a book, *Ernst L. Freud, Architect: The Case of the Modern Bourgeois Home* (2014, Berghahn Books), which contains a section on Baumgartenbrück, and which cites these memoirs as a historical resource.



**Ruth** After the final law school paper, we had two days of written and oral exams, both very difficult. I finally passed with a B+, but I felt like I had given birth, completely drained and exhausted. I was assigned to intern at a small municipal court in a little town called Freienwalde an der Oder, about two hours from Berlin. The judge was very unfriendly to me at first: he had never had a female intern before me, but then I did a lot of good and helpful work for him and he became very friendly. In fact, he gave me better and more interesting assignments than my two male colleagues! My mother visited me sometimes and brought me good food.

Late in 1932, I returned to Berlin and I was assigned to higher courts there, taking both civil and criminal cases. I lived at home.

One evening, my cousin Ludl had dinner with us and asked me to come home with him after dinner because Felix Gelber was in Berlin on business from Mannheim, and would be stopping by his home with another friend, Fritz Hellin. I really didn't want to go but he was very insistent, so I went. We had a very nice evening, and Felix and I hit it off very well! We had one or two dates before he returned to Mannheim, and then we corresponded a lot.

When the Reichstag burned and the Nazi's came to power, I, like all the other Jewish law interns, could not continue any more. In fact, our entering the courthouse was considered "criminal trespassing"! So I decided to move to Mannheim, where Felix worked for an engineering firm, Brown Boveri. I got myself an unpaid job at a well-known law firm, where one of the partners was a good friend of my father's. After a while, I couldn't work there any more either, so I worked as a bookkeeper apprentice, first in a cigar factory, then in a tire factory, and all the time Felix and I dated and went out on dates together, and on short or longer trips.

For a couple of months our friendship cooled off a bit and we both dated other people. Years later I found a letter that Felix's mother wrote to him about this time: "Too bad that you did not find in Ruth the marriage partner which you so badly wanted, because we all are extremely fond of her!"



## 7 April, 1933

The German government issues the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums), which excludes Jews and other political opponents of the Nazis from all civil service positions. The German government also issues a new law concerning membership in the bar, which mandates the disbarment of "Non-Aryan" lawyers by September 30, 1933.

## 25 April, 1933

The German government issues the Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities, which dramatically limits the number of Jewish students attending public schools.

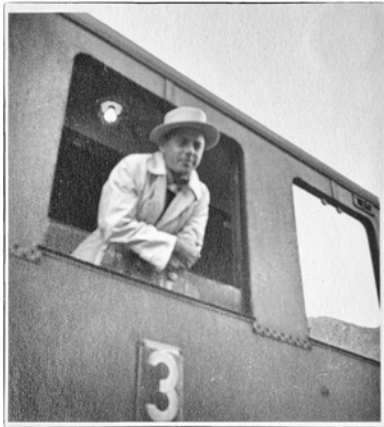
## May 1933

Dr. Theodor Frank is forced to resign from his position as director of the Deutsche Bank. He maintained a non-managerial post until 1938, when he was forced to leave the bank altogether.



**Ruth** Felix and I came together again, and when my father visited Mannheim in February 1934. We had dinner with him in one of the better hotels. My father told me that I should return to Berlin, because there was no longer any reason for me to stay in Mannheim, whereupon Felix said "Yes, there is!" I discreetly went to the ladies' room and when I returned, Felix had asked my father for his permission to marry me!

The next morning, Felix had an emergency call to go near Stuttgart to repair an electric locomotive which had gotten stuck, so he asked me to travel with him by train to Stuttgart, about 1½ hours. During this time we spoke in detail about our future (getting married, mainly) and then I rode back to Mannheim from Stuttgart by myself. Felix returned on February 27, 1934 at which time we announced our engagement to our friends, and Herta and Fritz Liebhold (brother of Franz) celebrated with us with dinner, dessert, and wine.



**Felix** I will also remember a hurried trip to the main line from Stuttgart to Munich on which one of our maintenance trains had broken down. This happened to be on the day that Ruth and I were going to be engaged to each other. Under the circumstances, we had to do it in the train from Mannheim to Stuttgart. I had to let her go home alone from there.

**Ruth** I spent a few days in Berlin with my parents. My mother was very nervous and didn't feel well. My father was about to go to Baden-Baden for a lengthy cure. Felix's mother was in Vienna, also sickly. There was no way that we could get them all together for a wedding so we decided to elope, but that wasn't quite so easy. Felix, who was born in Austria, a Catholic country which does not recognize divorce, needed a certificate to prove that he was single and had never been married before. It took a long time to get this certificate. Since we wanted to go skiing and the snow wouldn't last forever, we decided to do just that, and we asked Franz Leibhold in Mannheim to watch our mail and let us know when the certificate arrived, and then to arrange for us to get married immediately at Mannheim City Hall.

We went to Arosa, Switzerland, had good snow and so much sun that Felix got eye trouble and did not feel well. He became quite unpleasant, so much that I almost "chickened out" of the marriage. But a couple of days in a darkened room healed his eyes and he soon became his charming self again.



**Felix** Our wedding had been delayed because I couldn't obtain in time some documents I needed from Vienna, so, before the wedding ceremony, we took a honeymoon of ten days, to Arosa, Switzerland.



**Ruth** On Friday morning April 6, 1934, Franz called, saying “Tomorrow you are to be married!” We left immediately, spent the evening with good friends in Zurich, and when we got to Mannheim the next day, we immediately got married, with Franz Leibholtz (birthday March 7) and Alex von Muralt (birthday August 19) as witnesses. I mention their birthdays because René was born on March 8 and Robert on August 19!

After the very unceremonious wedding performance at Mannheim City Hall, which was concluded with “Heil Hitler”, we and our two witnesses went to a delicatessen and bought a good cold lunch, which we ate out of the paper on the balcony of Felix’s rented room at the beautiful villa of a Mrs. Geissmar in Mannheim, where Felix rented an additional room for me, which was our first living quarter for three months!



**Felix** On the morning of April 7, 1934, we got married with “Heil Hitler” at a civil ceremony in Mannheim. Because of our Jewish ancestry, our ceremony was separate from several other couples. Franz Liebhold and Alexander von Muralt were our witnesses.

After the wedding, we had sandwiches on the balcony of my apartment in Mannheim, and then tea at the Muralt’s home in Heidelberg. From there we went to Baden-Baden to announce our wedding to Ruth’s father. We stayed there at one of the best hotels. It is memorable because when we wanted to take a bath in the morning, the hot water was broken, and an entire brigade moved through our room with buckets of hot water to fill the tub, with the two of us in bed.



Mannheim City Hall



The home in Mannheim where Felix rented a room in 1934



A guest room at the Brenners Park Hotel and Spa, which would have been considered one of the finest hotels in Baden-Baden in 1934

**Ruth** Since we had no kitchen facilities in our rented rooms, a maid would bring up a tray with breakfast for us in the morning. All other meals we had to eat in restaurants. I had a small electric cooker for water only, so at least I could make coffee or tea. One time I tried to boil fresh cherries to make compote, but I forgot about it and the cooker and the cherries ended up as an inseparable charcoal mess!

To keep myself occupied, I learned how to cook in the kitchen of a Catholic maternity hospital. At this time, in 1934, they would keep women for two to three weeks in the hospital after delivery, and they would feed them with unbelievably good and rich food. One thing that impressed me was that on their big stove, a kettle with meat and bones was constantly simmering, and they made the best bouillon I ever ate! They wouldn’t take any money from me, but they accepted a donation for St. Augustine, their patron saint.

Late in the summer, Felix took me to Vienna to introduce me to his family. Of course I had met Lucy and his mother before, but there were countless uncles, cousins and aunts, and I was presented “on a platter” to all of them. I put on weight from eating so much! At that time, I also met Ben and Marianne Porges, who, though not married then, lived in Russia and were in Vienna for a visit.





## Munich Jewish Lawyer Tortured by Nazis in Concentration Camp

(Jewish Telegraphic Agency)  
INNSBRUCK, June 1—The famous Munich Jewish attorney, Dr. Loewenfeld, was so severely tortured in the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau that his survival is doubtful, it was learned today.

Dr. Loewenfeld gained many distinctions as an army officer during the War in which he served in a Bavarian regiment, where, unlike Prussia, there were no restrictions against Jewish officers.

He was arrested because he was chiefly instrumental in exposing the scandal surrounding the homosexual practices of Captain Ernst Roehm, commander of the Nazi storm troops.

## BULLETIN

Otto Schick, editor of the Berlin bureau of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, has been arrested by the Nazi authorities, according to word received here yesterday. The American State Department will

The June 2, 1933 edition of the Jewish Daily Bulletin carried the story of Theodor Frank's "retirement" along with other articles showing that the persecution of Jews was well underway 12 years prior to the fall of the Nazis.

## 1 April, 1933

Less than 3 months after coming to power in Germany, the Nazi leadership stages an economic boycott targeting Jewish-owned businesses and the offices of Jewish professionals.

Although the national boycott campaign lasted only one day and was ignored by many individual Germans who continued to shop in Jewish-owned stores and seek the services of Jewish professionals, the boycott marked the beginning of a nationwide campaign by the Nazi Party against Jews in Germany that would culminate in the Holocaust.

## German Jewish Bankers Retire (Jewish Telegraphic Agency)

BERLIN, June 1—Two prominent German Jewish bankers, Oscar Wassermann and Theodor Frank, have notified the governing board of the Deutsche Bank that they will retire at the end of the year.

Both Herr Wasserman and Herr Frank have been important figures in German banking circles, and Herr Wassermann's influence has been extended far beyond the limits of the Deutsche Bank.

## Nazi Torture

Under the initials A.M., a Jewish refugee states in the newspaper that he was arrested May 5 by the auxiliary police and tortured until unconscious as the Nazis demanded that he submit a list of Jewish communists which he was unable to supply. He was released after prolonged mistreatment and after he had been forced to sign a declaration that he was leaving Germany of his own free will.

## Police Raid Jewish Homes, Synagogue

## To Kill All German Jews If War Occurs, Nazi Warns

(Jewish Telegraphic Agency)

BERLIN, June 1—Should war occur between Germany and another Power, every German Jew would be killed, Julius Streicher, Nazi leader, told a party meeting in Nuerenberg.

He explained this warning as the best safeguard for peace because "only international Jewry wishes war. Only the Jew came out of the World War victorious and he knows no mercy. The Jew needs war again to detach the German nation from its government. Only with the solution of the Jewish problem will the German question as well as the problem of the world be solved."

## Austrian Nazis, Dollfuss Negotiations Disclosed

(Jewish Telegraphic Agency)

VIENNA, June 1—Nazi negotiations with Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss during the last few weeks, with a view to forming a Nazi coalition government for Austria, were disclosed today, startling Democratic and particularly Jewish circles which fear that the danger of sudden as-

**Felix** The ascendancy of Adolf Hitler made us emigrate to Belgium in November 1934. The end for us came slowly. We were masters of our destiny at all times, and were never in any physical danger. Real violence, arrests and deputation on a large scale started only in 1936, and also we had the advantage of being Austrian citizens. Hitler invaded Austria only in 1938.

Life, however, had become unbearable. Political fanaticism, the elimination of Jews from public positions, secret police, censorship, Nazi storm troopers, racial laws, constant political demonstrations....

Yet what we saw turned to be only a shadow of things to come.

A Fascist rally in Vienna in 1936



**Ruth** Felix knew that he could not stay with his employer, Brown Boveri, in Mannheim any more. He would have liked to work at their headquarters in Switzerland, but that didn't work out. Through his friend Fritz Hellin, he became interested in some enterprises headed by his classmate Franz Kind, and my father also began to do business with Kind. When Kind's associates decided to build an oil refinery in Antwerp, Belgium, Felix was hired as technical director.



**Felix** During my visits to Berlin, I met again my old friend and brilliant high school classmate Franz Kind (once again, as with so many things in my life, though Fritz Hellin). His father had a large chemical factory near Prague. Franz had studied chemistry and was now a prominent oil industrialist in Berlin. He had determined that rather than bringing finished petroleum products to Europe, as was commonly done, it was more economical to import crude oil and then refine it at the destination. As a business venture he was forming a team to construct an oil refinery in Antwerp, easily the most strategic location (after Rotterdam) in Europe. He asked me whether I wanted to help him build this refinery, and then become its technical manager. I accepted.

My resignation from Brown Boveri was accepted incredibly at first, and then with understanding. It had never occurred to most of them that I was Jewish. The Swiss parent company presented me with an offer to open an office in Tel Aviv, which I declined, but I agreed to remain as a consultant for the Mannheim company for a transition period.

Before leaving we both took private lessons in Dutch and in accounting. This outstanding accounting course became our only formal training in a field which would be of great importance to us both later on.

We left for Berlin in the summer of 1934, where I spent time at Franz Kind's petroleum laboratory to familiarize myself with my new field. We stayed with Ruth's parents in Berlin, and at their fabulous estate Baumgartenbrück near Potsdam, where we celebrated their silver anniversary with them.

We then went to Vienna so Ruth could meet my family, and from there went on to Antwerp with a short stop-over and goodbye in Mannheim.





**Ruth** We moved from Mannheim to Antwerp in the fall of 1934. We stayed for quite a while in a hotel. I wasn't too happy about it as I was hoping to have my own apartment and, most of all, a kitchen. I decided that our first hot meal should consist of boiled beef and bouillon, which Felix loved.

As it turned out, I was pregnant with Robert when we finally found an apartment. Being pregnant, I was quite sick for a while, and on the day we moved, I was unable to stand for more than a few minutes, to say nothing of cooking a meal. Fortunately, the maid who cleaned our hotel room had her day off. She helped us

move and cooked our boiled beef dinner that night, so that this wish of mine was fulfilled! The apartment had a crazy arrangement, consisting of the second and third floor of a remodeled narrow, one-family house. The landlord and his wife, M. & Mme. Van Rhymeslbergle lived in the first floor. On the second floor, the kitchen and bathroom were practically together, with a thin partition wall in-between, and a den adjoining. The den became Robert and his nurse's room. The third floor consisted of our bedroom, a living room, and a dining room, so we had to go up and down all the time, which was good exercise for me.



**Felix** We arrived in Antwerp late on a sad, cold and rainy winter night. For a short moment only, Ruth cried.

The first several months we stayed at the city's best (in spite of bed bugs) and only large hotel, the Century near the Gare Centrale. Once Robert's arrival approached, we rented part of a furnished private home in the suburbs.



Photos of the Redeventza Belge refinery in Antwerp, from Felix's files.

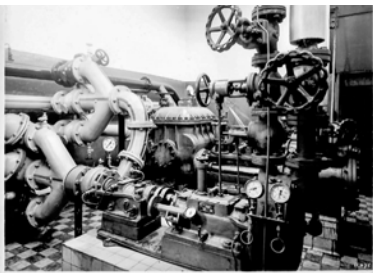
**Felix** Our company's name was Redeventza Belge, S.A. for the Raffinage de Pétrôle, so-named after a Roumanian oil company Rede-ventza which Franz Kind's company had brought in as a 50% shareholder. Ruth's father invested in a portion of Kind's 50% share of the venture.

Our future company had a small construction office in town, and before long, the chantier [construction site], a vast area of landfill by the river Scheldt, had the rudiments of what would become our future refinery.

The layout and design work was done in our Antwerp office by a British consulting firm with a young outstanding self-made engineer (a real cockney!) as resident superintendent. We then bought the equipment and machinery and did most of the construction with our own excellent work force. Our primary language became French, and English for most of our communications on the site and in the office. I never learned English in school, nor had I ever been to England before, so it must be there that I picked up most of my knowledge of the language without any conscious effort in a very short time.

At first, the company had very few influential friends. The refinery was going to be the biggest in Belgium (10,000 tons of crude oil per month). We were employing hundreds of our own and subcontractors' men, and spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on Belgian-made material, yet we still had to renew our residence permits monthly.

During the war, the refinery was occupied by the Germans and out of operation, with all instruments and vital parts of the machinery dismantled and hidden by our loyal workers. After the war, an English group subsequently acquired the refinery, and entirely re-built it in another location. We were quite satisfied at that time to receive about \$10,000 [\$180,000 in 2018 dollars] for Ruth's father's share of the business.





**Ruth** *I started working for the refinery, helping to set up a bookkeeping system, designing and furnishing the cafeteria, and hiring people. I had a bet going with Dr. Kind about who would deliver first: me, with my baby, or him, with the inauguration of the refinery. I won by about a month when Robert Theodore Gelber was born on August 19, 1935, a Monday! While I was in a not-too-clean hospital for ten days, the people from the refinery visited me to consult with me about the cafeteria and the bookkeeping.*

*When I came home, we had a nice baby nurse from Heidelberg, referred through a friend of Felix, Arnie Noll, who was a pediatrician connected to the University there. I think the nurse's first name was Heisel, and she was very efficient and helpful.*



**Felix** In the meantime, Ruth became pregnant with Robert. This didn't prevent her from working with us very hard, particularly on the development of our accounting system and the design of our three-story office building. She became a close friend to many of our workmen and staff. Robert's and the refinery's completion developed eventually into a very tight race. The refinery won by a day or two.

On the morning of August 19, 1935, Ruth thought she had eaten too many peaches the evening before, but we decided just in case to go to the hospital. Robert arrived around noon while I had taken time off for a haircut, an unthinkable mistake.

**Ruth** *The years after Robert's birth were pretty difficult for us in Belgium. Felix had a lot of problems at the oil refinery with personnel, raw materials (crude oil), technical issues, and a fire on the site. It was very hard to make friends with Belgians and we mostly had refugee friends as guests.*



**Felix** Work at the refinery continued to dominate our life. We had brought together an excellent and loyal staff- chief engineer, assistant engineers, foreman and crew, as well as a competent sales and administrative staff. Franz Kind was the managing director, and I was in charge of engineering and production.

The plant operated 24 hours a day with a short monthly shut-down for maintenance. There were many nights with problems or trouble, particularly in the early days. It was then that Ruth started to answer all phone calls, as she does to this day, thus allowing me to collect my wits and helping me to get going to the plant.



**Ruth** Felix's mother [Lisette] had been visiting us before Robert's birth but we didn't want her to be with us for the delivery, which upset her quite a bit, so we asked her to come again soon after Robert was born. She came in November 1935, and she was delighted to see her first grandson, but she was very critical about the way nurse Heisel and I took care of him. Among other things, I took him with me in the car for shopping and even to the Café to meet friends!

About the time of her visit we decided to look for larger quarters and we were inspecting apartments and houses for rent. One Sunday, she came with us, also Fritz Ullmann, who was visiting us too. We went to an empty house with a huge entrance hall which, instead of a regular ceiling, had a glass-tile kind of skylight.

Felix and I were looking at the ground floor, while Ullmann and mother Lisette went exploring upstairs. The glass tile ceiling upstairs had an entrance and they thought it was safe for walking on. Lisette went first and crashed through. The tiles were just ordinary glass and she fell through onto the hard entrance hall floor.

She was in pain and about to pass out and her last words were "I don't want to be a cripple." She lapsed into a coma with lasted a week until she died on December 8, 1935. She had so many fractures and internal injuries that one couldn't do anything about it. The official cause of death was kidney failure.

We knew that she had wanted to be cremated, but in Belgium this could be done only if the deceased had left hand-written instructions to this effect, and she hadn't, so Felix and Lucy took her to Holland where she was cremated. Felix then took her to Vienna for burial. Since she had always lived and worked in the Jewish Community and many of her friends were Jewish, and since cremation is not recognized by orthodox Jewry, they put her urn in a coffin and had a regular funeral, where she was buried next to her husband in the Vienna Jewish Cemetery.

**Felix** Ruth's parents and my mother visited with us several times. One Sunday in November 1935, a tragedy struck. My mother and our friends, the Ullmann's, were with us when we looked at a home to buy. My mother stepped on a transom in the attic, broke through, and was brought to a hospital with heavy injuries. She fell in a coma during the night, never regained consciousness, and died from uremia one week later.

I will never forgive myself for not having been with her during her last conscious hours, and for not having encouraged her when several times, in the days before, she tried to tell me about her premonition of death. She left a letter to my sister and me which she had written several days before.

Lisette Winter Gelber



A skylight similar to the one that Lisette fell through in Antwerp.



**Ruth** Lucy, who had lived in Berlin, where she got her Ph.D. and worked, moved to Belgium and established herself in Bruxelles, where she made the acquaintance of Mr. Verbist, a prominent educator and Belgian cabinet member who was active in the Catholic Centrum political party. He helped her greatly in her career and they became close friends until his death.

But we travelled quite a bit. I even went back to Berlin in 1936 with little Robert and our maid Valentine. We stayed with my parents in a smaller apartment to which they had moved (Wielandstraße 25-26, Berlin-Charlottenburg). I tried to buy as much as I could, since we still had some money in Germany which we officially could not take out. It was very hard for me to find things to buy and I found out that I was not born to be a big spender.



Lucy Gelber

**Felix** We had brought with us from Germany the most phantastic Austrian convertible, comparable to the fanciest Mercedes Benz. In it, we made many beautiful trips, mostly to France, Holland and Switzerland. We did a lot of mountaineering and skiing.

In every respect, we now felt to have settled down. We soon thereafter rented a beautiful apartment in one of the best residential sections of Antwerp. We returned to Germany to buy most of our furniture and household goods, getting the rest from Ruth's parents' house at Baumgartenbrück . We also brought back Lucy's Bösendorfer piano from Vienna.

Life was insecure, but very exciting, and the work was an overwhelming challenge, which left me no opportunity to worry. We formed part of a colony of foreigners, all hardworking and successful, many of whom were, or had been, in the same situation as ourselves.



Ruth and Felix drove an Austrian-made 1934 limited-edition Steyr Touring Cabriolet. During the Second World War, Steyr manufactured weapons, tanks and trucks for the Nazi military. The CEO of Steyr pioneered the idea of using concentration camp slave labor to increase productivity, introducing the Nazis to industrial logistics to streamline the movement and processing of prisoners.





**Ruth** Felix and I spent the summer of 1937 on the French Riviera, which we loved. We had a wonderful time in Juan-les-Pins, where little René was conceived. Late in the fall of that year, I was in Berlin with my parents for the last time. They intended to move to Bruxelles, counting on me to help them with the moving. When my mother found out that I was pregnant and wouldn't be available to help them move, she was furious, and she said that I did it on purpose in order not to help her! In the spring of 1938 they moved to Bruxelles, where they took a beautiful, elegant apartment on Avenue Louise.

My father often came to Antwerp to visit us and he loved to play with Robert. One winter he invited Robert and me to St. Mortiz, Switzerland, and we stayed with him at Chantarella, a hotel above the village, near beautiful skiing areas. Robert didn't get used to the altitude, and he woke up every morning at six, was restless, and difficult to handle. My father hired a baby-sitter for a few hours each day, so that I could enjoy a little skiing.



Juan-les-Pins, France



Avenue Louise, Bruxelles



**Ruth** On March 8, 1938, René was born so fast that they couldn't give me any anesthetics, so I had natural childbirth without being prepared for it. It was very painful and I remember that I said very loudly to myself "Plus Jamais!" ("Never again!"), which became, as history proves, a fact!

Fortunately, we got Schwester "Sister" Marta, a very well-trained, experienced baby-nurse from Switzerland. I hired her with the help of another nurse whom I had met in our Antwerp park where I went every day with Robert.

At the time of René's birth, March 1938, Hitler invaded Austria, which I read in the newspaper while in the hospital. When I told this to Robert years later, when he was around 7 years old, he said "I didn't know that they had newspapers back then!"

Right after I came home from the hospital, we had a stream of visitors and house-guests who had fled Austria: the Porges, Oskar Fischel, Richard Kafka, Jack Elner....

Our apartment became a welcome meeting place for other refugees. We were happy whenever we could be of help and show our hospitality.



Nazi tanks entering Vienna



"Do you agree with the reunification of Austria with the German Reich that was enacted on 13 March 1938, and do you vote for the party of our leader Adolf Hitler?"

The large circle is labelled "Yes", the smaller "No".





**Ruth** While I was in the hospital with René, Felix had gone to the American Consulate and registered all four of us for immigration. Unfortunately, he neglected to register Lucy, who said later she couldn't have moved to the States anyway because she felt so settled in Bruxelles. As it turned out, she went through terrible times during the war and it was greatly through the influence and interference of Mr. Verbist that she survived.

Since we had applied for American immigration visas, we decided to set sail for New York first, and then make the arrangements to go to Winnipeg from there.

We left Antwerp with Robert, René, Schwester Marta, and 24 pieces of luggage in mid-July 1939, on a boat of the Holland-American [actually Red Star] Line called Pennland. We went directly from our apartment to the Antwerp docks to board. A lot of friends met us at the boat, including Fritz and Reit Ullmann.

Our boat trip from Antwerp was very rough. We all, including Schwester Marta, were quite seasick, but we had to take care of Robert, almost 4, and René, almost 1½.

Lucy and my sister Mary Ann subsequently packed our dishes, linen, furniture and piano. When the war started on September 1, 1939 and the stuff couldn't be shipped anymore, she put it into storage in Antwerp where it survived the war. It arrived an excellent condition at 949 S. Muirfield Road in Los Angeles in the fall of 1946.



Form 50-101  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

List 7

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

ALL ALIENS arriving at a port of continental United States from a foreign port or a port of the insular possessions of the United States, and all aliens arriving at a port of said insular possessions from a foreign port, a port of continental United States, or a port of the insular possessions of the United States. This (light blue) sheet is for the listing of

S. S. "PENNLAND" Passengers sailing from ANTWERP, JULY 22, 1939

1 No. on List	2 HEAD-TAX STATUS (This column for use of Government officials only)	3 NAME IN FULL		4 Age		5 Sex	6 Married or single	7 Calling or occupation	8 Able to—			9 Nationality, Country of which citizen or subject	10 † Race or people	11 Place of birth		12 Immigration Visa, Passport Visa, or Entry Permit number		13 Issued		14 Data concerning verifications of landings, etc. (This column for use of Government officials only)	15 * Last permanent residence	
		Family name	Given name	Yrs.	Mos.				Real	Read what language (or if converse failed, as what passed)	Write			Country	City or town, State, Province or District	Place	Date	Country	City or town, State, Province or District			
21		KRUH	OSIAS	62		M	M	CHEMIST	YES	GERMAN	YES	GERMAN	HEBREW	POLAND	MOROSOLKI	QIV 6133	VIENNA	4.5.39			GERMANY	VIENNA
22		KRUH	JENNY	62		F	M	H'WIFE	YES	GERMAN	YES	GERMAN	HEBREW	POLAND	CZORTKOV	QIV 6132	VIENNA	4.5.39			GERMANY	VIENNA
23		MIESER	LEOPOLDINE	26		F	M	MERCHANT	YES	GERMAN	YES	GERMAN	GERMAN	GERMANY	VIENNA	QIV 1334	VIENNA	7.7.39			GERMANY	VIENNA
24	UNDER 18	MIESER	PETER	1	2	M	S	NONE	NO	NO	NO	GERMAN	GERMAN	GERMANY	VIENNA	QIV 1335	VIENNA	7.7.39			GERMANY	VIENNA
25		KELLER	MARTA	26		F	S	DOMESTIC	YES	GERMAN	YES	SWITZERLAND	GERMAN	SWITZERLAND	KREUZLINGEN	QIV 1181	ANTWERP	7.13.39			BELGIUM	ANTWERP
26		GELBER	FELIX	36		M	M	MECHANICAL ENGINEER	YES	GERMAN	YES	WITHOUT	HEBREW	GERMANY	VIENNA	QIV 1969	ANTWERP	7.13.39			BELGIUM	ANTWERP
27		GELBER	RUTH	29		F	M	H'WIFE	YES	GERMAN	YES	WITHOUT	HEBREW	GERMANY	HEIDELBERG	QIV 1970	ANTWERP	7.13.39			BELGIUM	ANTWERP
28	UNDER 18	GELBER	ROBERT	3		M	S	NONE	NO	FRENCH	NO	WITHOUT	HEBREW	BELGIUM	ANTWERP	QIV 1971	ANTWERP	7.13.39			BELGIUM	ANTWERP
29	UNDER 18	GELBER	RENE	1	5	M	S	NONE	NO	NO	NO	WITHOUT	HEBREW	BELGIUM	ANTWERP	QIV 1972	ANTWERP	7.13.39			BELGIUM	ANTWERP
30		BENKOC	ANTON	25		M	S	EMPLOYEE	YES	GERMAN	YES	CZ/SLOVAKIA	SLOVAKIA	ITALY	TOLMIN	QIV 1328	ZAGREB	7.17.39			CZ/SLOVAKIA	PELJEJA

CANCELLED LINES 9, 10, 11 & 12, DAVID & MARIA, ROTHSCHILD DID NOT SAIL, VIKTOR & ROSA HANBER BEN MAN / 12, LINES 6 & 7, THE PURSER

Total passengers . . . . .  
U. S. citizens . . . . .  
Aliens . . . . .

\* For the purpose of this listing, the residence within the meaning of this act shall be the actual or intended residence of one year or more.  
† List of names will be found on the back of this sheet.

16 No. on List	17 The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came, or if none there, then in country of which a citizen or subject.	18 Final destination (Indicate future permanent residence) Foreign country City or town	19 In U. S. A., its territories or possessions State City or town	20 By whom was passage paid? (Whether due paid to any person, whether or not relative, whether paid by alien, whether paid by other person, or by the government.) Whether having a ticket to each final destination	21 Whether ever before in the United States, and if so, when and where? (Last residence only) If Yes— Year or period of years Where? Date of last departure	22 Whether going to join a relative or friend; state name and complete address, and if relative, exact relationship	23 Purpose of coming to United States	24 Whether a polygamist	25 Whether an anarchist	26 Whether a member of a subversive organization	27 Whether a member of a revolutionary organization	28 Whether a member of a secret society	29 Whether a member of a political party	30 Whether a member of a religious organization	31 Whether a member of a labor organization	32 Condition of health, mental and physical	33 Deformed or crippled. Nature, length of time, and cause	34 Height Feet Inches
25	MOTHER MARIANNE KELLER 17, ILGENSTR KREUZLINGEN SWITZERL.	ILL CHICAGO	NO	MYSELF	YES NO		FRIEND FRANZ LIEBHOLD 308 E 79 STR N.Y.	NO	ALW	YES NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	GOOD	NO	5 8
26	FATHER IN LAW DR. TH. FRANK 244 AVE LOUISE BRUSSELS BELG.	ILL CHICAGO	NO	MYSELF	YES NO		FRIEND FRANZ LIEBHOLD 308 E 79 STR N.Y.	NO	ALW	YES NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	GOOD	NO	5 9
27	FATHER DO	ILL CHICAGO	NO	HUSBAND	YES NO		DO	NO	ALW	YES NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	GOOD	NO	5 9
28	GRAND FATHER DO	ILL CHICAGO	NO	FATHER	NO NO		DO	NO	ALW	YES NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	GOOD	NO	3
29	DO	ILL CHICAGO	NO	FATHER	NO NO		DO	NO	ALW	YES NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	GOOD	NO	2 6



**Ruth** My mother and father lived in France after Hitler. They first came from Berlin to Bruxelles in 1936 or 1937, and after we left Belgium in 1939, they moved to Cannes in the south of France with Mary Ann, my younger sister.

We had arranged for entrance visas and ship passage to Cuba for both my parents and Mary Ann, but Mary Ann went alone because my mother did not want my father, who was not feeling too well at that time, to endure the unpleasantness of a rough sea voyage.

The consequence was that Mary Ann made it safely to Cuba and subsequently to the U.S., but my mother was deported from Cannes to a concentration camp and later Auschwitz, where she perished.



**September 1942**

In 1942, Margot Frank was arrested under unknown circumstances. Some family sources state that she was kidnapped by the gestapo in Nice while her husband was in the hospital, others that she was arrested in Cannes, or that the couple had been captured on a trip to the north of France. What is certain is that after her initial imprisonment at Camp Drancy, Mrs. Frank was transported with convoy number 27 to Auschwitz on 2 September 1942. The convoy of about 1,000 people reached the concentration camp on 4 September. 113 people were selected for forced labor while the others, including Mrs. Frank, were sent to the gas chambers. [Volker M. Welter, Ernst L. Freud Architect, 2012]

**Ruth** My Father was very “German” in his attitude to the Fatherland, and though he had a good deal of his money outside Germany already, he brought it back after a plea from Hitler to do so. The result was that he had very little money in his last years and he had to trade his valuable paintings (by Maurice de Vlaminck and Maurice Utrillo, among others) for a sandwich.

My father lived through many hardships, first alone (they didn’t take Jewish old people to camps!) then along with his dame de compagnie, Marcelle Gentelli.

In his later years, after my mother disappeared, my father became very mellow and human– he enjoyed jokes and little stories, and was fun to be with.

He died of natural causes while on vacation in Zurich in 1953. My sister Ilse was with him when he died, and he was buried in Mannheim Germany, where his name is engraved together with his parents’ names.

My father could have come to Los Angeles after my mother was taken away from him, but he was afraid it would be too hard for him to get used to a new environment, to be with lively grandchildren, and to give up his cherished daily routine which formed the basis of his existence and survival. I visited him once in Nice, I think in 1948 or 1949, and I had a very good time with him. He left us a letter in which he expressed the hope that his four children would never quarrel and live in harmony with each other, a wish which, unfortunately, was not fulfilled!



While Utrillo and de Vlaminck may not have the name recognition of other french impressionists, their work hangs in major museums and commands high prices at art auctions. We do not know which paintings Theodor traded away, but these examples of recent sales give some context:



Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955) Le Maquis de Montmartre, 1931. Sold at auction in 2014 for \$655,504



Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958) Paysage de Banlieue, 1905. Sold at auction in 2011 for \$22.5 million.



Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955) La rue de l'Eperon et rue de la Coutellerie à Pontoise, 1914. Sold in 1995 for \$505,000,



# Europe After the War

None of the places that Ruth and Felix had called home in Europe would have been safe during the war. In addition to the persecution and extermination of Jews by the Nazis, all of these cities saw intense fighting, bombing, destruction and heavy civilian casualties.

**Right Top:** American soldiers fighting in the streets of Mannheim in March 1945  
**Right Center:** Russian soldiers fighting in the streets of Vienna in April 1945. 20% of Vienna's buildings were destroyed or heavily damaged during the war.

**Right Bottom:** After the Germans were driven out of Antwerp in February of 1945 by American and Canadian Forces, the Germans retaliated with a series of rocket attacks into Antwerp's city center.

**Below:** As the headquarters of the Nazi regime, Berlin was the target of an estimated 70,000 tons of allied bombs. About a third of Berlin's buildings were destroyed. The building shown here is 13 Lützowplatz, in 1945. The Frank family apartment would have been next door to the right of this building.

Berlin



Mannheim



Vienna



Antwerp



**Ruth** Our Boat from Antwerp arrived in New York in July of 1939.

*Felix, through connections of my father and acquaintances of his own, had gotten an offer to help build a sugar refinery in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada from a Mr. Herbert Flegenheimer, who was from Stuttgart, but lived in Mannheim for a while, and turned out to be the husband of Manfred's first cousin Lene. In New York, Felix met Dr. Flegenheimer to talk about details of his work in Winnipeg and to set the date for us to go there. But the war in Europe started and we were suddenly enemy aliens, and we could not go into Canada anymore.*

*So we decided to try our luck on our own, and we moved on to Chicago, where we had very good friends, Dr. Felix and Annie Basch. He is a pediatrician, and both of them are from Vienna. There was also Felix's cousin, Bertha Spitzer, also a pediatrician. There were other friends of Felix's mother, Americans, very prominent in the Jewish community, who would have helped Felix find a job. But it was still terribly hot in September and we decided not to stay in the city where it is extremely hot in the summer and very cold in the winter.*

*So Felix went to Detroit where another good friend Bundy Lorre (Peter Lorre's brother)*

*was in the car business, and we bought a 1937 Dodge for \$400. We left Schwester Marta and the kids under the supervision of my cousin Bertha and Dr. Basch, and we drove out west. It was a beautiful trip, including Yellowstone and other parks, with stops in Spokane, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and many stops in-between. We had friends in all these cities, but it was raining too much in the Pacific Northwest and we didn't like San Francisco too much, so we went on to Los Angeles, which had the most beautiful weather in the beginning of October.*

*After one week we rented 412 S. Orange Drive, a furnished house with three bedrooms one bathroom for \$89 a month. Schwester Marta, poor soul, took the train from Chicago— two days and three nights—with two restless children, and arrived in Los Angeles, exhausted, sometime in October 1939.*

*Schwester Marta left soon after we settled in Los Angeles in order to marry a Swiss man, 20 years her senior, whom she had met on the boat coming over from Antwerp. She lives now in New Jersey in a lovely little bungalow, has three married children and a number of grandchildren. I am in close contact with her and visited her in the summer of 1985.*

Manitoba Sugar Company plant in Winnipeg, under construction (1940)





**Ruth** I joined the Council of Jewish women soon after we settled in Los Angeles. I heard about Council through Felix's mother Lisette a very long time ago; she got acquainted with their activities in Chicago where she visited with friends after her husband's death in 1932. I met many young women at Council and I started social intercourse right away. I think about four weeks after the children arrived in Los Angeles, we had 18 people at the house for an after-dinner get together. We also met many people through Walter and Paula Williams. Walter was a gynecologist whom I saw soon after our arrival in Los Angeles, and he invited us to his house.

We had a household helper named Ella Lenhart. Ella stayed with us during the week, but went home on weekends. She was quite a character, and she stayed with us for a long time.

Felix had several jobs, always improving himself a little bit. First, Felix found a job as a draftsman for \$0.90 an hour. After that he worked in the oil refinery business, but he had to stay in Santa Maria during the week, coming home for weekends. Then he got a good job in a factory manufacturing furnaces and had a chance of getting put in charge of it, but the boss's son-in-law got the job and Felix quit.

949 S. Muirfield Road, Los Angeles



**Ruth** When Hans Schwartz, whom Felix knew from Vienna through his cousin Paul Gelber, came to Los Angeles, Hans wanted to go into the food business. He had been director of the largest bakery in Vienna.

So Felix and Hans started with buying a juice company called Vita-Fresh. They changed the name to Daisy Fresh and manufactured fresh juices— carrot, celery, parsley, watercress— and they also sold canned juices such as tomato, pineapple, apple, and papaya. They delivered it to homes through salesmen, like milkmen! They also sold out of the front of the factory at 8327 Santa Monica Blvd. in Los Angeles.

Henry Lewis joined the company during the war and added the selling and buying of businesses, and the company did very well. A salad bar, sandwiches, and later a whole restaurant business was added. Ernie Block, who had gone to school with Felix, joined as a driver and general factotum. Hans Schwartz, though still a partner, went into the wholesale fruit and vegetable business and through connections, acquired a factoring and accounts receivable business. Hans's wife, May, and I also worked very hard in both the juice and the wholesale business.

After Hans' sudden death at age 59, Felix took over his portion of the factoring business, called Produce Clearings. In 1966 the company was was bought by the United California Bank, where Felix became a Vice President, before he retired. I took care of Daisy Fresh together with Steve Scott (Hans' oldest son), which didn't work out too well, and we finally sold Daisy Fresh to Henry Lewis, who moved the entire operation to Visalia, three hours north. Daisy Fresh still existed at the time of Henry's death in 1983. I don't know what became of it afterwards.

**Factoring** is a transaction in which a business sells its invoices, or receivables, at a discount to a third-party financial company known as a "factor." The factor then collects payment on those invoices from the business's customers. Factoring is known in some industries as "accounts receivable financing." The main reason that companies choose to factor is that they want to receive cash quickly on their receivables, rather than waiting the 30 to 60 days it often takes a customer to pay. Factoring allows companies to smooth out their cash flow, which makes it easier for them buy more raw materials, pay employees, and pay other business expenses.





**Ruth** Anyway, after I did not work anymore at Daisy Fresh, I concentrated more on my volunteer work at the Council of Jewish Women, where had always been very active, even while I was working at Daisy Fresh. Among other things, I was in charge of their services to the foreign-born, and later to senior citizens, which became a new and very intense movement. I also was president of one of the Council's divisions for two terms.

Through my connections with the senior citizens' movement, I learned of a scholarship to get a Master's Degree in gerontology at UCLA, for which I applied, and was accepted. I started at UCLA in September 1966 "on probation", which meant that I had to prove that I still could study properly after the 33 years that had elapsed since I graduated from law school in Germany. The probation conditions were that I had to maintain a B average and take at least one undergraduate course. I took a social psychology with an excellent professor, H. Kelly. I learned very much there for my future role, and I got only A's and B's in my first quarter, so that I was taken off probation for my second quarter.

Incidentally, shortly before my first midterms, Robert and René, both living out of town at the end of 1966, came in to Los Angeles at the same time and I took care of them, room and board, while going to UCLA every day, and studying late into the night for midterms.

Felix helped me very much with my homework, especially statistics, where I had a very confused teacher who also wrote a confused textbook which we had to use, even though Felix had to decipher what the teacher really meant! He encouraged me in my dark moments, helped around the home, and made it easy for me. During summer recess I went to USC for credits. They had just started at their school of gerontology. I took courses from the best-known experts in the field, with whom I became personally acquainted. In December 1967, just over one year after I started, I got my MPH—Masters in Public Health—on the very same day that Felix came back from his extended trip to the Orient—Philippines, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong—for the bank.



**Ruth** I tried very hard to find a job with a hospital or public health facility where I could work with old people, but I was told that I was "before the time", that there is no niche yet to fit in a graduate in the discipline of gerontology. Eventually, I was hired by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation as a recreation specialist for senior citizens, and by the Los Angeles Unified School District as an adult education teacher (in continuing education) for their gerontology department. Both jobs were part-time without any fringe benefits and rather low pay, but with a lot of prestige. It also involved being member of many committees and meetings.

I became secretary-treasurer of the Affiliated Committee on Aging of Los Angeles County, a volunteer job which I still hold today long after my retirement.

I also helped to write a grant for RSVP—Retired Senior Volunteer Program—at the Westside Jewish Community Center, and I was their permanent secretary until the program was discontinued at the center, and transferred to a Los Angeles City organization. I received many write-ups in newsletters and some local papers, and a lot of awards and plaques. I was well known as a gerontologist in the community.

I retired around 1979, after proposition 13 eliminated my department at County Parks and Recreation, but I continued to do a lot of volunteer work, and I still do today.





**Ruth** Just when I started a big new project early in 1970, Robert's three children plus Marie Odille (their au pair) arrived in Los Angeles from Paris, while Robert and his wife Darcy toured around the world. I hired a nurse to help Marie Odille and Felix take care of Christopher (age 6), Lisette (age 4), and Jonathan (age 1 ½). Marie Odille started dating right away, and was not much help. She left pretty soon after that. Robert and Darcy had bought their Bel Air home in the summer of 1969, when they were visiting Los Angeles and renting an apartment in Manhattan Beach. Felix and I went often to the empty house. There were only two wooden dining room chairs and an old refrigerator. We enjoyed sitting on the terrace looking at the green around us and sometimes eating a nice brown-bag lunch.



I forgot to mention that Felix and I went to two different places in Europe from 1964 to 1969 mostly to visit Robert and his family in Paris. Once, after a beautiful holiday at Lake O'Hara in Alberta, Canada, we flew to Paris! We also spent a nice summer high in the mountains in the Canadian Rockies near Mount Assiniboine, where we rode horses, and we hiked over 15 miles. This was in 1972. I mention it because that is when Felix became several times out of breath. Neither one of us became alarmed about it. The second time where his breathlessness was worse was in Mammoth in September 1973 where he had to sit down sometimes to regain his breath.



**Ruth** We went for several years with Robert's family to Mammoth Lakes after Labor Day and we always had a wonderful time. The grandchildren would take turns staying in our cabin, and once we stayed a bit longer with Christopher, who was a good hiker.

Felix and I traveled almost every year to see René. When he was in Thailand we only went once, in 1972. We combined it with a trip to Japan, Bali, Singapore, and Hong Kong. It was very interesting, but we decided that once we saw and a new a bit about the Orient, we actually preferred the mountains, and that we would rather go to Switzerland.

René and Jeanne returned with Matt and Alex to the states in 1972. First they lived in Brooklyn, then they moved to Columbia, Maryland, and later to Ellicott City, Maryland where they bought a big house that Felix loved. He made some nice drawings of the home, the garden, and the shed. And he loved the horses and horseback riding. In fact, he went horseback riding in Los Angeles once a month before he died, and he was so happy that he continue to do so after of his heart attack.





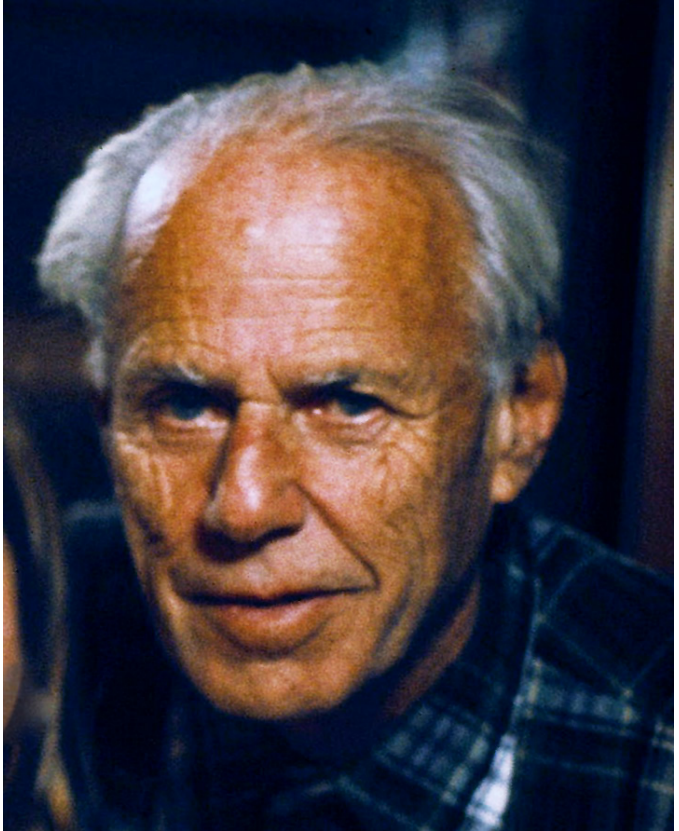
**Ruth** Felix began to have heart trouble in 1973, and he was prescribed medication. Around Christmas 1973, Lucy came for the first time to visit us in Los Angeles. When Felix picked her up at the airport and walked down that long corridor, he had to stop several times to take nitroglycerin, and he was admitted to Kaiser Hospital. He had a heart attack in the hospital on the next day, while Lucy and I were visiting him.

Unfortunately, they over-medicated him and in January he had a respiratory arrest which slowed his recovery. But recover he did, and on April 7, 1974 on our 40th anniversary, René, Jeanne, Matt, and Alex came, and we all celebrated at the Bel Air Hotel. It was wonderful, and we were all so happy that Felix could be with us again.

Felix and I soon took up our normal life again. He painted, and was active at SCORE (Senior Corps for Retired Executives) and the Jewish Free Loan Association Board of Directors. We traveled, entertained, and swam a lot.

We spent our summer holiday in 1978 in the Canadian Rockies where Felix hiked with me every day without any difficulties. The rain that we had a lot of the time didn't bother him, and he wasn't out of breath. He really was in good shape.

A week before he died we drove past the hospital where our friend had been for a long time as a stroke patient. "I never want to be crippled like he was" Felix said, reminding me of what his mother said before she died. Sunday night before he died, we danced at the Century Plaza Hotel. The occasion was a Jewish fund-raising event, the same night that Christopher got stranded on account of a burning bus on the way home from Lake Arrowhead or Big Bear! Felix died on Wednesday, November 15, 1978, while debarking from Jay Skinner's sailboat in the company of Jay and Ben Porges.







**Ruth** *I have a photo where Felix walks ahead of me, upright and strong looking, while I am in back of him bent leaning on a stick!*





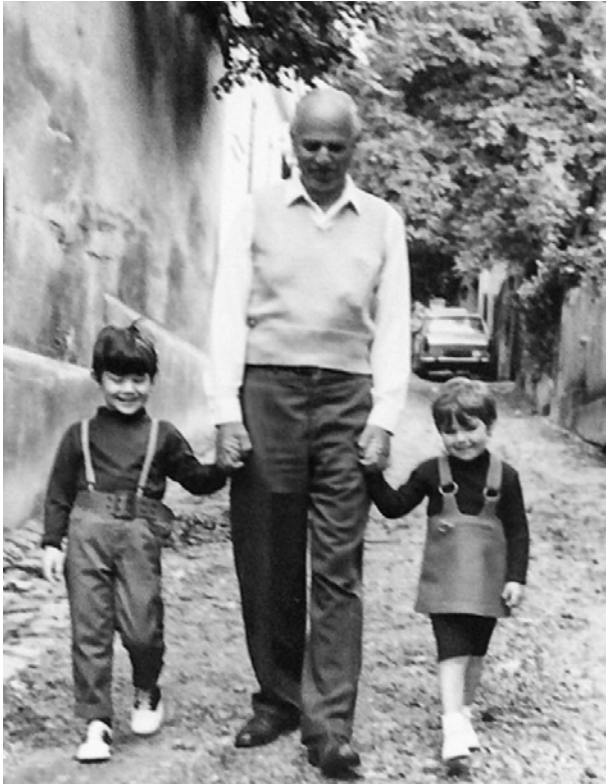
**Ruth** Felix was a wonderful grandfather. The last grandchild he knew was Nicholas. Danny was conceived the month Felix died in November 1978, and Lizzie was born in January 1982.

When I studied gerontology, It was taught that there are several types of grandparents: strict, uninterested, not wanting to admit to being a grandparent, playful and caring. Felix definitely was the “caring” type. I am not sure the grandchildren, with the exception of Christopher and Lisette, will be able to remember him, I am sure that he will influence them without their knowing it! [Editor's note: I was ten years old when my grandfather Felix died. We were very close and I remember him very well and very fondly.]

Robert & Darcy, René & Jeanne, and the grandchildren were a tremendous support for me. Darcy arranged a beautiful memorial party to which René came.

In April 1979, I flew with Jonathan to New York, first to visit Kurt and Eva Winter in Scarsdale, then on to visit the René Gelbers in Ellicott City, MD. Jonathan and I drove with all René's family to see Williamsburg, Virginia, which was the best medicine for me at this time. I also must say that my friends were wonderful too.

I also practiced what I have preached to my senior citizen students many times: that it is of no use to sit at home and feel sorry for yourself. That if you want to go on living, you must be active again, outgoing and showing initiative. I tried my best to keep active in my work, I invited my friends to go to restaurants, and I planned my first trip alone to Europe. In May 1979, I flew to London (Ilse), Brussels (Lucy), San Rafael (The Porges), Nice (Marcelle Gentilly), Milano (Felix's cousin Friedel), and Switzerland (the Ullmanns and the von Muralts).



**Ruth** I returned to Los Angeles on 4 July 1979 and the next day Ali Rogers invited me to dinner that Sunday. I didn't want to go on account of jet lag but she insisted and so I went! That's when I met with Manfred again. Felix and I had met him two or three times before, the last time in June 1978 at Ilse Lamm's 75th birthday party where we were even sitting at the same table! I saw Manfred then, in 1979, several times at Dora's (Manfred's sister) or Ali's. Everyone was talking about a nice movie with Laurence Olivier called A Little Romance which neither I nor Manfred had seen, so we made a date to see it. He invited me for dinner, and that was our first date, followed by more. I visited him in New York and he returned to visit me in Los Angeles, and then I flew to New York in February 1980 to help him move.

Manfred and I have a good and happy arrangement. We both know how difficult it is to live alone after having been happily married, and how satisfactory good companionship is, and how the so-called “sunset years” are easier to deal with if you have a partner.

We agree on some things and disagree on even more. We have different attitudes and interests in many areas, yet we are both adult enough to realize that facing life together is more important and rewarding.

We have taken nice trips together. Apart from going to New York, New Jersey and Maryland, we have travelled to Hawaii, Switzerland (twice), England, Norway, Nova Scotia, Colorado, the Canadian Rockies, New England, The Laurentians, Charleston, and Savannah. Manfred was a great help and support when I was hospitalized in 1981 (with a bleeding ulcer), in 1983 (for a hip replacement), and in 1988 (with a bleeding ulcer and subsequent surgery).

We both enjoy being members of PLATO: the Perpetual Learning and Teaching Organization at UCLA, where we have a rotating study group among peers once a week, with lectures by UCLA professors twice a month, and some social events. The organization consists of retired or semi-retired professional or business people. We both are enjoying this activity very much and have met many interesting and congenial people.





**Ruth (April 1989)** *If I look at my life today at the age of 79, I have to confess that life hasn't always been easy! As an adolescent in Berlin I felt excluded from many activities where Jews were excluded. I could not finish my legal education on account of Hitler and when people normally start their adult life and career, we had to emigrate, not once, but twice.*

*Though I never felt hungry or poor it was still a struggle to start in a new country all over again, the second time with two small children. But we were lucky— hard work helped— and now I feel I have learned to relax and enjoy life without pressure, to take it easy. I wish I could have shared with Felix and my entire life after we got married. I think of him often and how much he would enjoy the grandchildren, admire and/or criticize Robert & Darcy and René & Jeanne and hopefully be happy with me!*



**Ruth (March, 1996)** *In January 1995, Manfred started having health problems, requiring many doctors and tests. He didn't eat very much, slept most of the time, and he was admitted to the hospital in May 1995. After two weeks, he moved into a nursing home, and he died in November 1995, after very hard and painful struggle. His sister Dora preceded him in death on her 92nd birthday in 1994 after being incapacitated for a year due to a stroke. Manfred left a big mess, in his belongings, financial matters, and correspondences. He had signed up for every sweepstakes, and ordered books and magazines which he never read, and it took me, with help, three months to clean up the mess.*

*Now I am alone again, but I am never bored, nor do I feel lonely. I go out a lot with friends, my family, and Manfred's family, who have adopted me fully and have been very nice to me. I have started to go to PLATO events again. Robert and Darcy intend to move to Santa Barbara next year, and I am thinking seriously of joining a very nice retirement community there, very close to their home, called Casa Dorinda.*

*In the meantime, I am planning two trips: to Atlanta, New Jersey, and Scarsdale New York, and to England, Belgium and Jonathan and Molly's wedding in North Carolina on May 26, 1996.*

*I am very happy and pleased with my eight grandchildren in their success in schools and professions. I hope they all will be happy to and continue to give me joy. I also appreciate the love of my sons and their wives and I am a lucky person!*



Ruth and Mary Ann (center) with family at Ruth's 87th Birthday celebration in 1997.

Casa Dorinda, Ruth's retirement community in Montecito, California





**Postscript** In May, 1996 Ruth traveled to North Carolina for the wedding of her grandson Jonathan and his wife Molly, where she spent time together with Robert, René, their wives Darcy and Jeanne, and all of her grandchildren.

In 1997, Ruth left 949 S. Murifield Rd., her home of 52 years, and moved into Casa Dorinda, a wonderful retirement community in Montecito, California. Casa Dorinda was close to the home of Robert and Darcy, and Robert visited her almost every day. She also saw them frequently for meals at their home, or at one of Santa Barbara's many restaurants. She also enjoyed regular visits from René, Jeanne, and her eight grandchildren.

Ruth was very happy with her life at Casa Dorinda. She was very popular and made many new friends. Julia Child lived there during the winter months, and loved speaking French with Ruth. Casa Dorinda had many residents who lived living very active and independent lives, and Ruth was comfortable in their company. She kept her car and drove around Santa Barbara with confidence. She participated in many of the activities, including museum visits, theater and movie outings, concerts and lectures.

Though she had a full kitchen in her one-bedroom apartment, she took most of her lunches and dinners in the very attractive main dining room, where she enjoyed excellent food and stimulating company. She adapted quickly and completely to the freedom she found after the responsibilities of maintaining a home and caring for the ailing Manfred.

In 1997, Ruth's extended family and friends came to to celebrate her 87th birthday.

In 1998 she attended the wedding of her grandson Christopher and Teri in Los Angeles. In 2000, Ruth's extended family and friends again came to celebrate her 90th birthday.

During these years, Ruth began experiencing weakness in her heart and lungs, in addition to melanoma from a spot on her ankle. By early 2001, she had slowed down considerably, and she and her doctor agreed it would be best for her to move from her private apartment into the neighboring care facility. She was happy to have a corner room on the second floor, looking out over trees and gardens. He was able to move some of her own furniture fronto her room, and her granddaughter Lisette helped her organize her affairs and papers (including the manuscript and photos upon which this work is based.)

In the summer of 2001, her grandson Jonathan and Molly came to introduce Ruth to Lucy Gelber, the first of Ruth and Felix's eleven great-grandchildren (as of 2018).

On September 21, 2001, Ruth Frank Gelber died peacefully at the age of 91.

It had been her wish to be cremated upon her death. Her ashes were sprinkled into the ocean off the Montecito coastline.

And that was the end of her long, courageous, challenging, rich and meaningful life. Just as her husband Felix had done, she left in indelible memory and impact on her family and friends, whom she had loved so deeply, as she was loved in return.

- Robert Gelber, 2017



Ruth attending Jonathan and Molly's wedding in 1996.

Ruth with her first great grandchild, Lucy Gelber.



Ruth's 90th Birthday in 2000.





Ludwig & Lisette's Story

After completing his own story, Felix began to write about his parents in January, 1978.



Ludwig and Lisette Gelber

**Felix** My father, Dr. Ludwig Gelber was born in Podhajce (then Galicia, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now Pidhaitsi,Ukraine, USSR) in 1865 (date uncertain). His father Elias (Elie) was an administrator of an agricultural estate, in very modest circumstances. His mother Cyle died when he was four years old, so he and his two older brothers were brought up in Germany, living in an institute where they went to school, managed by a very outstanding Mr. Wolf. Little is known about his mother Cyle, not even her maiden name, nor of her or my Grandfather Elie's ancestors, nor the cause of her early death.

Ludwig's name originally was Lazar. His older brothers were Adolf (born about 1860) and Josef (about 1863). Josef vas very kind, and dearly beloved by us.

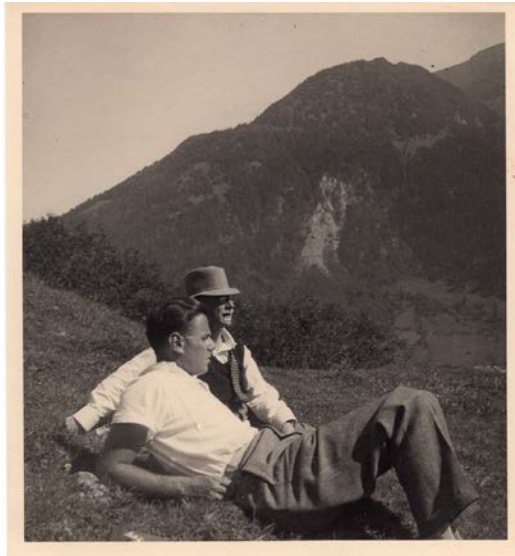
When the three brothers went to Vienna, they took their father along. After coming to Vienna, the three brothers lived apparently in most modest circumstances (allegedly they shared some suits with each other). Ludwig subsisted largely from tutoring and scholarships at law school. (I have in my files many certifications of poverty and outstanding recommendations in connection with his scholarship application.)

All three brothers went through law school at the University of Vienna. Josef and Ludwig became attorneys, while Adolf became a lecturer of literature (Shakespeare and *1001 Nights*) as well as journalist of outstanding knowledge and imagination. Their Father Elias died shortly before I was born, in 1902. Adolf died about 1923.



Josef Gelber





**Felix** Ludwig had no military service, and after finishing law school (Dr. Juris at the University of Vienna) he started practicing law immediately at a small office in Innere Stadt [City Center] Vienna.

He met my mother Lisette [Winter] through his older brother Josef who was married to her older sister Ada, and he married her on 15 October, 1900.

Ludwig was a liberal Jew and a socialist. He never went to temple, nor did he fast, but he was deeply involved in Jewish affairs as the generation of Ben Gurion or Golda Meir would be. One of his great hopes in his student years was to become a professor of law at the University of Vienna. Since he was an outstanding student, his only obstacle to this was that he would have been expected to become a catholic, and this he never would have considered.

Politically, he was a Social Democrat of great conviction and remained such after the left of the party gradually separated and became the communists (as we knew them). I don't think he was an official member of the party, but he was closely connected to its outstanding exponents and the political events of his time.

My father had his law office at Wollziele 16 (Tel. 6148 in my childhood) in what was originally probably was a large apartment on the third floor of an old house. He always practiced alone, with one young law school intern and one secretary. He handled mostly civil land cases. He gave up his criminal law practice after unsuccessfully defending unsuccessfully, under great emotional strain, a polish farmer who he considered innocent, but who was eventually executed for espionage.

Ludwig and his brother Josef had a considerable professional reputation. In his later

years, Ludwig was the attorney for, and on the board of directors of, one of the largest hotels in Karlsruhe, one of Europe's most famous spas.

Ludwig was deeply interested in music, played the piano (very often for us when, as children, we went to sleep). He loved opera and concerts (Italian opera, Schubert, and Hugo Wolf.) I don't recall much baroque music, though we still have all the Bach musical texts.

Ludwig was a passionate mountaineer and experienced mountain climber. Where he learned this, and with whom he went (except for big hikes with my mother) I don't know. Also I cannot understand why he never interested me in mountain climbing, or took me along on any of his trips. He was familiar with the difficult ascents on Rax and Schneeberg, near Vienna, and made guided ascents regularly in the Dolomites where he spent part of his summer vacation, specifically for this purpose, alone several times.

His non-professional interests were numerous and consumed all of his free time: serious reading, study, politics, music, and charity, most of it together with my mother.

His hobbies were piano and vocal recitals of highly gifted friends and at one apartment, collecting phonograph records, mostly of Italian singers. He also collected contemporary lithographs, paintings and other objects of art and handicraft.

He was about 5' 4" tall, 150 lbs, and in excellent physical shape to the end. He worked out with weights very early each morning, and went swimming regularly with a group of friends. Of serious illnesses, I remember only two cases of Spanish flu at the end of World War I, which brought him to the brink of death.



**Neurasthenia:** a condition that is characterized especially by physical and mental exhaustion usually with accompanying symptoms (such as headache and irritability), is of unknown cause but is often associated with depression or emotional stress, and is sometimes considered similar to or identical with chronic fatigue syndrome.

**Felix** He was a man of great emotions, though always tightly controlled, perhaps too much for his nervous balance. He had a great variety of interests and knowledge.

Nervously, he was not very strong. He was a man of great ambitions suffering from hardships and set-backs which he had to face since his earliest youth. The loss of a case in court was for him in the nature of a serious accident. You could describe him as a neurasthenic. His handwriting was almost illegible and outright frightening.

He suffered two very serious mental depressions which took him weeks to overcome and which interrupted his work at the end of World War I and during the big inflation of 1921. The immediate result was the almost complete loss of his live savings. He recovered from these setbacks however, and worked normally to the end of his life.

He died in 1931, at 65 years old, from pneumonia, which he contracted after returning sweated-up from a weekend mountain-climb in a drafty train. Incidentally, his estate after his death had a value of about \$15,000 [around \$240,000 in 2018 dollars], mostly clandestinely invested in US common shares in Switzerland

He took infinite pride in the achievements of his two children. To my great embarrassment, I once received, on a trial run with the general manager of a German railroad, a wire from him, telephoned by the head of-

fice to all station heads: "AM VERY PLEASED WITH MY TWO BUMS-LUDWIG."

I will never forget, while we were staring down hunger during World War I, his my frequent comment to my mother at the dinner table: "Give it to the children!"

Through our childhood, he had often little chocolates for us in his pocket. We went on long walks with him in the parks and he took us along on many of his regular Sunday hikes in the Wienerwald. I remember the atmosphere of love and care with which he surrounded all of us.

Yet, I never had a true adult relation of friendship with him. He was 37 years old when I was born in 1902, and the war years of 1914 to 1918 were a common fight for survival. Though I lived in my parent's home until I left Vienna in 1927, I had become completely independent by age 16 in 1918. I was involved in the youth movement and antagonistic to my family. I didn't share any intimacies with them. Our interest in our mutual happiness and material well-being of course never ended, but I cannot even rationalize the almost physical force which made impossible for us, or even desirable for me to break, even in those rare instances, the veil of our personal intimate privacy. This situation has become a source of great regret and an ever growing burden on me in my older years.





**Felix** Here follows the story of my beloved mother (not written yet).

Here follows the story of my beloved  
mother (Not written yet)



Lucy Gelber

Lucy Gelber, the daughter of Ludwig and Lisette Gelber and the only sibling of Felix Gelber, was born in Vienna in 1904.

Prior to the second world war Lucy was an accomplished concert pianist. After earning a Ph.D. in Music in Berlin, Lucy established herself in Bruxelles, where she made the acquaintance of Mr.Verbist, a prominent educator and member of the Belgian national cabinet. He helped her greatly in her career and they became close friends until his death.

It seems that Lucy underestimated the seriousness of the Nazi threat and she chose to remain in Bruxelles where she felt settled.

After the Nazi invasion of Belgium, Mr.Verbist placed Lucy in the care of the nuns at the Catholic Cathedral in Louvain, Belgium, where she remained in hiding throughout the war.

While in hiding, Lucy found boxes full of disheveled papers from Edith Stein, a German Jewish philosopher who had converted to Catholicism to become a nun and subsequently was arrested by the Nazis and sent to Auchwitz, where she was killed.

Lucy became the archivist of Stein's writings, editing, translating, and publishing many of her works.

After the war, Lucy remained in Brussels through last years of her life. Influenced by her time at the Cathedral in Louvain, she quietly became a Catholic and lived the pious and simple life of a lay nun, never marrying or having children.

Lucy continued her music career as a pedagogue of early childhood music education. She published many books in this field and taught both children and adults, many of whom followed her into music education.

Lucy also travelled throughout Belgium to collect and record folk music, that was on the verge of becoming lost to history. She developed theories on the classification of Belgian folk music, analyzing he structure of the songs and identifying archetypes. The composer Bela Bartok, who was undertaking similar efforts in Czechoslovakia, corresponded with Lucy.

Eventually, Lucy contributed all her folk music recordings and scholarship to the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels, which created a dedicated room to house the Lucy Gelber Collection of Belgian Folk Music.

She travelled abroad on occasion, including a trip to Rome for the canonization of Edith Stein as a saint, and a number of trips to the U.S.A. to visit Felix and his family.

Lucy continued to live in her 5th floor walk-up apartment and work very long days, well into her nineties. In her later years she was cared for by the Verbist family until her death in 2001 at the age of 96.

- Robert Gelber, 2017





Acknowledgements

This started out as a small project that quickly turned very big, ultimately taking two years to complete. I'm glad that I had a lot of people to help me, some of whom offered help directly related to this project, others with independent writing and research projects that helped me pull this project together, and, most importantly, many whose actions, kindness, and bravery helped my grandparents survive and thrive.

**Ruth and Felix Gelber**, who put pen to paper and recorded their stories and thoughts, who successfully escaped Nazi Europe, and who brought boxes of photographs across the ocean.

**Robert Gelber**, who helped me fill in the gaps, answered questions, fact-checked, took many of the photos, and provided many other photos, and wrote most of the postscript sections on Ruth and Lucy.

**Christopher Gelber**, who also helped me fill gaps, wrote most of the text about Baumgartenbrück , answered questions, and provided some of the photos and genealogical support.

**Molly McDonald** and **Henry** and **Lucy Gelber**, who helped me with the editing, and layout, and who were patient as I obsessed for two years.

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**Peter Puhvel**, who published a similar project about his grandfather's adventures in Estonia and Russia that inspired me to pursue this project

**David Brown**, who helped me with editing, design, layout, and publishing advice

All of the anonymous people of the internet who maintain archives of historical photos.

**Cousin Ludl, Fritz Hellin, Franz Kind, the Baschs, the Liebholds, the Verbists, the Ullmans, the von Muralts, Peter Lorre's brother in Chicago, Hans Schwartz, and all of the countless German-Austrian-American-Jewish emigrees** who stuck together and helped each other out again and again through one of the most difficult periods of modern history.

If any cousins, family, friends or acquaintances out there reading this have any stories, photos, or documents that might shed more light on Ruth and Felix's stories, please share them with me at [jfgelber@glowcloud.net](mailto:jfgelber@glowcloud.net)

Jonathan Felix Gelber, 2018



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| 5 Benz: benzworld.com  | 40 Bruxelles: Unknown   |
| 7 Gymnasium: Wien Geschichte Wiki (wien.gv.at)                                       | 40 Tank: German Federal Archives via Wikimedia Commons                |
| 9 Ilse, Martin & Mary Ann: Ryan Frank  | 40 Ballot:Wikimedia Commons   |
| 9 Mannheim: Kunstmuseum Hamburg  | 41 Rally:Wikimedia Commons  |
| 9 Hitler & Speer: Everett/CSU Archive via Alamy                                      | 42 Pennland: theshipslist.com   |
| 9 Ferdiinand: Wikimedia Commons  | 43 Manifest: US Dept. of Labor via.Ancestry.com                       |
| 10 Newspaper: Washington Times   | 44 Margot: Ryan Frank   |
| 10 Rügen: Zenodot.Verlagsgesellschaft gmbH , www.zeno.org - J.Wollstein, Berlin      | 44 Boxcar: Unknown  |
| 10 TroopTrain: greatwar.nl   | 45 Left: wikiart.org  |
| 11 War Kitchen: Austrian National Library  | 45 Center: Christies.com  |
| 11 Orphanage: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives.                 | 45 Right: wikiart.org   |
| 12 Jugend Top: Germanisches Nationalmuseum via Junge Freiheit                        | 46 Berlin: Haus am Lützowplatz (hal-berlin.de)                        |
| 12 Jugend Bottom: Julius Groß "Winterlager in Sächsische Schweiz in Hohnstein, 1924" | 46 Mannheim: OWI Staff Photo by Richard Boyer, Deutsches Bundesarchiv |
| 13 University: Unknown   | 46 Vienna: Getty Images   |
| 13 Dalsland: trevormoffiet via trekearth.com   | 46 Antwerp: Hist-chron.com  |
| 14 Hochschule: Peter Haas, via Wikimedia Commons                                     | 47 Sugar: Manitoba Historical Society                                 |
| 15 Piz Palu: gadanguides.com   | 48: Felix & kids: Ryan Frank  |
| 15 Boat: the-saleroom.com  | 52 Felix & Ruth (Color): Robert Gelber                                |
| 16 Margot & Theodor: Ryan Frank  | 53 Color photos: Robert Gelber  |
| 16 Lustowplatz: bilderbuch-berlin.net  | 55 All photos: Robert Gelber  |
| 16 Furtwangler: SV-Bilderdienst / Scherl   | 58 All photos: Robert Gelber  |
| 16 Piatogorsky: Getty Images   | 60 Color Photos: Robert Gelber  |
| 17 Mahler: Painting by Max Oppenheimer via Wikimedia Commons                         | 62 Wedding: New Image Studio, Raleigh NC                              |
| 17 Stage: Salzburger Festspiele  | 71 Color photo: Robert Gelber   |
| 17 Poster: European Route of Historic Theaters (thoetbit.eu)                         | 73 Sears Portrait Studio  |
- All Other Photos:** Jonathan Felix Gelber Archive
- Historical Timeline** items courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)





Schwarzwald

Pfingsten 1934

“Life hasn’t always been easy!”