

## Sabine's Memories on Video

I was born in Weiden, Bavaria on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1921. { According to my cousin Hermann Rebitzer it was a bitter cold night}. My family tree on my father's side, both from his father and his mother, goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century

My father's family lived in Floss, a small town near Weiden, which at one time had a big Jewish population and could even support a rabbi..

My grandmother Sabine, nee Spaeth, came from Ottensoos, a small town near Nuremberg. The Jewish community seems to have originated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. One explanation of its beginnings is, that Jews went there, after being expelled from Nuremberg. Our family's history goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

I know more about my father's family, as both he and his father Jacob were interested in genealogy. The Boscowitzes may have come from Boskovice in Moravia, part of the Czech republic. It is near Brno. There used to be a sizeable Jewish community there. Daddy and I visited the small town in 1989. The synagogue was still standing, but in a very dilapidated state. There were no more Jews in town. And those in Brno mostly intermarried. We attended Friday night service in Brno. Some old men with beautiful voices got together for Friday evening service. Twice a year there are big gatherings on the days when Jews were transported to concentration camps...

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many young Jewish men and women left Floss for America, among them my grandfather's 4 brothers. All but one died at a young age Uncle Isaac married Sarah Bloch, whose father came from Floss. That is our Portland family.. Grandfather also had 3 sisters, who stayed in Germany. I was told, that my grandparents never dared tell my great grandmother, that her youngest son had died At that time she lived with her son in Weiden .and sat at the window, facing the road to the station, waiting for her youngest to return.

My mother's family, the Oppenheims, came from Ortenberg, a small town in Oberhessen. Her father Bernhard was one of 4 children. and married Fanny, nee Eulau Bernhard was born January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1849 and died in Giessen on February 22, 1922 Fanny was born July 1<sup>st</sup> 1853 in Buedingen.and died in Giessen January 25<sup>th</sup> 1922, one month before her husband and 3 days before my first birthday..We had a big photo of Fanny and Bernhard in my parents' bedroom, but I only have a photo of Bernhard as a young man., none of Fanny. They had 3 children., Kathinka, b. 1874, Theodore, b. 1878 and Johanna b.1886.. ..Kathinka was the mother of Julius Voehl , father of Ilse Ruppel. His sister Johanna (Maedi, which means little girl) married Albert Stern of Montabaur. They immigrated to New Zealand. Their children are Gertie Blumenfeld and Henry Stern. Two of Gertie's daughters live in Auckland, the youngest Irene lives in London. We met Maedi's husband Albert and his second wife Alma in Syracuse and daddy and I had a wonderful time, when we stayed with Gertie and her husband Konny in Auckland. (My mother, Maedi and Johanna (Hannah Wohlfarth) are probably named after Bernhards's mother Hannchen).

Theodore was married to Minnie Bloch. Their children Bernd and Bruno spent many summers with us in Weiden.. Bernd was one year younger than I. I saw him often, esp., when we were both in Berlin. He was sent to Auschwitz.

Bruno, who changed his name to Baruch , spent the war years in Switzerland, married

Betty (Batja) Cohen from Holland. They lived in Haifa. We were there for his funeral. Their children are Emanuel and Rachel.

I am the only child of Albert and Johanna

I did not like my name Sabine, mainly because it was not a common name..

But, there was no way I could change it. I was named in memory of my grandmother Sabine, my father's mother. She was born in Ottensoos , Feb. 11, 1851 and died in Weiden during the first World War, in 1916. My grandfather Jacob was born in Floss, Jan.10<sup>th</sup>, 1844 and died in Weiden in 1931, aged 87. He lived with my aunt Tina and uncle Gustav Rebitzer in the same house as I, but on the floor below.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most Jews from Floss, who had not left for the United States, had moved to Weiden. 1989 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the synagogue in Weiden. My grandfather was one of the founders. I remember, that some men, including my father , wore top hats on the High Holidays, other days my father was very informal and known as the bonbon" uncle, as he carried sweets for the children in his pocket.. I also remember the Passover seder, when we ate kid instead of lamb. One night, after opening the door for the prophet, Rosi's black dog Russel came in.

My mother had eclampsia, when I was born and could not breast feed me. I therefore had a wet nurse, but got rickets. I was given cod liver oil and biomalt, to strengthen my bone I also had to do a lot of exercises, which probably benefited me in the long run. I also lisped and was taken to a specialist in Regensburg. With a match stick between my teeth I had to say 10 words with S at the beginning, S in the middle and S at the end of words. I only remember the ones with S at the beginning: Sand, Seife, Soda, Suppe, Serviette, Salomon, Samuel Sara, Sira, Selma .The specialist could not teach me to pronounce the letter R properly. Both daddy and you have names without this letter. .

My friend Bertl Bauml lived on the same street as I and we were friends from very early childhood. Onkel Gustav took us along on his daily walks and entertained us with bible stories, my favourite one, when Joseph met his brothers again. With my father, whom I called Papa, I went for much longer walks .and Mama took Bertl and me for walks as well...When I got older, I walked more with Rosi. I was very fond of Rosi and her husband Friedl. (Friedrich Hoffmannn).

We had both a Shoe factory and a shoe store. The factory's name: Jacob Boscowitz & Company.. The make of the shoes, mostly working boots was SALIX. Salix is the Latin name for willow Weide (Weiden) means willow.

My parents' best friends were Leo and Liesl Sterzelbach, who owned a big dry goods store together with his brother Moritz and his wife Irene. They both had very big apartments above the store and Leo and Liesl had an excellent Bohemian cook.

As teenagers we played table tennis and listened to records, mostly Chopin , in Leo and Liesl's flat.. Hewdig, the youngest daughter, was a very good friend of mine (She was 2 years, 2 months and 2 days my senior.). She was very sensitive and wrote beautifully It was through her sister Bertha Strauss, of Birmingham, married to Kossy Strauss, the son of our teacher,, that Bertl and I found jobs in Burton-on-Trent.

My father saw the danger of Naziism early on. We have a letter, written to his cousin Anselm in Portland, Ore. in February 1931, where he explains it

We Jewish children spent the first four years of our studies in a Jewish school.

Our teacher, Emanuel Strauss, was teacher, cantor , moel and shochet. I remember, when



he slaughtered chickens in the school yard during recess. Our school consisted of one large room, with each row representing a grade. Bertl and I were one grade to ourselves. 5<sup>th</sup> grade saw us in high school, the Maedchen Lyceum, run by nuns. I think I enjoyed school and always like reading, history and geography.. We made friends with the other girls. By that time Hitler was in power and we were no longer allowed to use the public swimming pool in Weiden.. We had friends, Fritz and Willy Ansbacher, who lived in Floss. We therefore cycled to Floss and from there to the Gaisweiher.. It was ideal for me, may be not for good swimmers.. The ruin Flossenburg, going back to Frederic Barbarossa's time, loomed above, blueberries and cranberries waited to be picked near by. Little could we know, that Flossenburg would become a notorious concentration camp, because of its granite quarries..

After finishing high school I spent one year in Berlin and attended a "Modezeichen" school (Fashion drawings). I remember very little about it, but enjoyed the big city, its museums and plays.

More and more Jews had the foresight to leave Germany. My parents and family did not believe, that Hitler would last. We were forced to sell the house and business to Joseph Witt, a textile millionaire, who converted our factory into his private villa. My father thought of moving to Munich, but soon after his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday he took ill and became jaundiced. We took him to Munich and he died in a hospital there on July 29<sup>th</sup> 1938, probably of pancreatitis. I then planned to become a nurse in the Jewish hospital in Cologne, but after Kristallnacht, my first thought was to leave Germany.

Both Bertl and I found jobs as maids with 2 sisters in Burton-on-Trent, Bertl with an older lady and I with the younger sister, married to a dentist.. I could not take any money with me and had to hand in Mama's jewellery and Papa's coin collection in Regensburg and on top pay a sum for fleeing the country, The Reichs Flucht Steuer.. All these happenings are very hazy in my mind. Mama and I had applied for visas to the United States, Anselm gave us the affidavits. Unfortunately, the German quota was nowhere near big enough to help people escape. Our visas did not come through till 1942, too late for Mama

It is easy to say "Why did your parents not leave earlier?" When one is 60 or like uncle Gustav almost 70 years old, can not take out money and has not close enough relatives to apply for you, what are your chances? Another thing, we were too honest and scared to try other means to get out money. We gave paintings to Friedl Hoffmann, Rosi's husband, who was a Protestant. The picture of Weiden in our living room and the pewter plates and jugs come from my house. I had trunks with dishes, cutlery, comforters and other bedding in the Free Port of Hamburg., but have no idea what happened to them. I certainly never saw them again.

Mama, aunt Tina and uncle Gustav moved to Nuremberg to an apartment, belonging to his sister-in-law's brother, who lived in England. Tina died in Nuremberg. Mama and cousins of my father were sent to Izbica near Lublin Gustav and his brother Moritz were sent to Theresienstadt, where they worked in the office and died of pneumonia soon after. My father's cousin Albert Spaeth was also there and even married a second wife. We met them in New York. Daddy and I visited Theresienstadt and did not realize that there was a Christian and a Jewish section. The Christians had grave stones, the Jews were cremated, but there was a memorial and meticulous records kept.

In Burton-on-Trent, a town well known for Marmite and beer, Bertl and I were fortunate to make friends. My family, the Buxtons, were very class conscious. I had to wear a blue uniform in the morning and a black one in the afternoon. My clothes were much smarter than those of my employer. Bertl had no such problems.

A Jewish family, the Gordons, invited us and other refugees for many Sunday afternoon Teas. That 's where I was introduced to "trifle". A Protestant pastor invited us to Socials and I became friends with Mary, the daughter of a high school teacher, who went on to Oxford.. Through the pastor, we also met Chris and Olive Peggs, a newly married couple from another town. People did not look kindly upon their friendship with "Germans", meaning us. We went with them to Ilam, a youth hostel in Derbyshire. I loved the Peak District. I am still in touch with Olive, or rather her daughter, as her eyesight and memory are rather weak. Olive and a lady friend came to visit us in Montreal many years ago.

As my heart was still set on becoming a nurse, I applied and was accepted at the Women's Hospital in Birmingham. I had been less than a year in Burton. You have all seen my letter of "recommendation" from Erica Buxton. I rather like it.

The Women's Hospital was not the best hospital in Birmingham. We refugees were 9 student nurses and one registered nurse. I was told, that one head nurse was a lesbian, who seems to have been upset by one of us ( not me) Having had a perfect clearance before I entered the hospital, I and all the others were demoted from A to B. We were sent to the Isle of Man, via Liverpool, where people raised their fists at the "enemy aliens", when they saw us pass on the way to the ship. The 10 of us were quartered with the Hills, who soon realized that we were certainly not enemies. Mr. Hill, a retired Londoner, was in the coast guard, keeping watch on Bradda Head and Mrs. Hill was an excellent cook. We enjoyed ourselves.

There was even a Labour Exchange, instituted by Dr. Borchard, one of the educated internees.. We exchanged our labours for goods or vice versa.

My visa to the States came through, while I was there. I was therefore prematurely released.. I went to London, but had nowhere to go, as the danger of U boats was too great to allow passenger traffic. My mother's cousins, the Wohlfahrts, uncle Issie and aunt Hanna, (the third Johanna) welcomed me. I lived with them, first on Anson, then on Heber Road and finally in Cholmley Gardens in West Hampstead. They were very religious.. Ilse, their younger daughter and one year my senior shared a big room. We became life long friends. I had various jobs, the longest as dental assistant with Dr. Alfred Braun on Wimpole Street. While there, I wanted to take lessons in Yiddish with the intention of going to refugee camps in Europe after the war was over.. I never learned Yiddish, but got to know Ruth Pomeranz, who belonged to Shomer Hazair.

They had a bayit in White Chapel.. That is, where I met Daddy. As a member of Shomer in Montreal and a Canadian soldier, he visited the bayit on his day off. Our first outing, together with others, was to the Tower of London. He sent me a beautiful letter, suggesting a future meeting, possibly to a concert. You have seen this letter. As the saying goes: The rest is history.

We got married on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1944. When the war was over, we moved to St. Albans and daddy attended Khaki University. In May 1946 I arrived in Montreal, pregnant with Allan.. Daddy conveniently came a week earlier.. We had been corresponding with the family all along, mostly with Evelyn and Gertie., daddy in Yiddish with Ma and Pa.

( I could never call them Mama and Papa). I Was Very Fortunate.

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