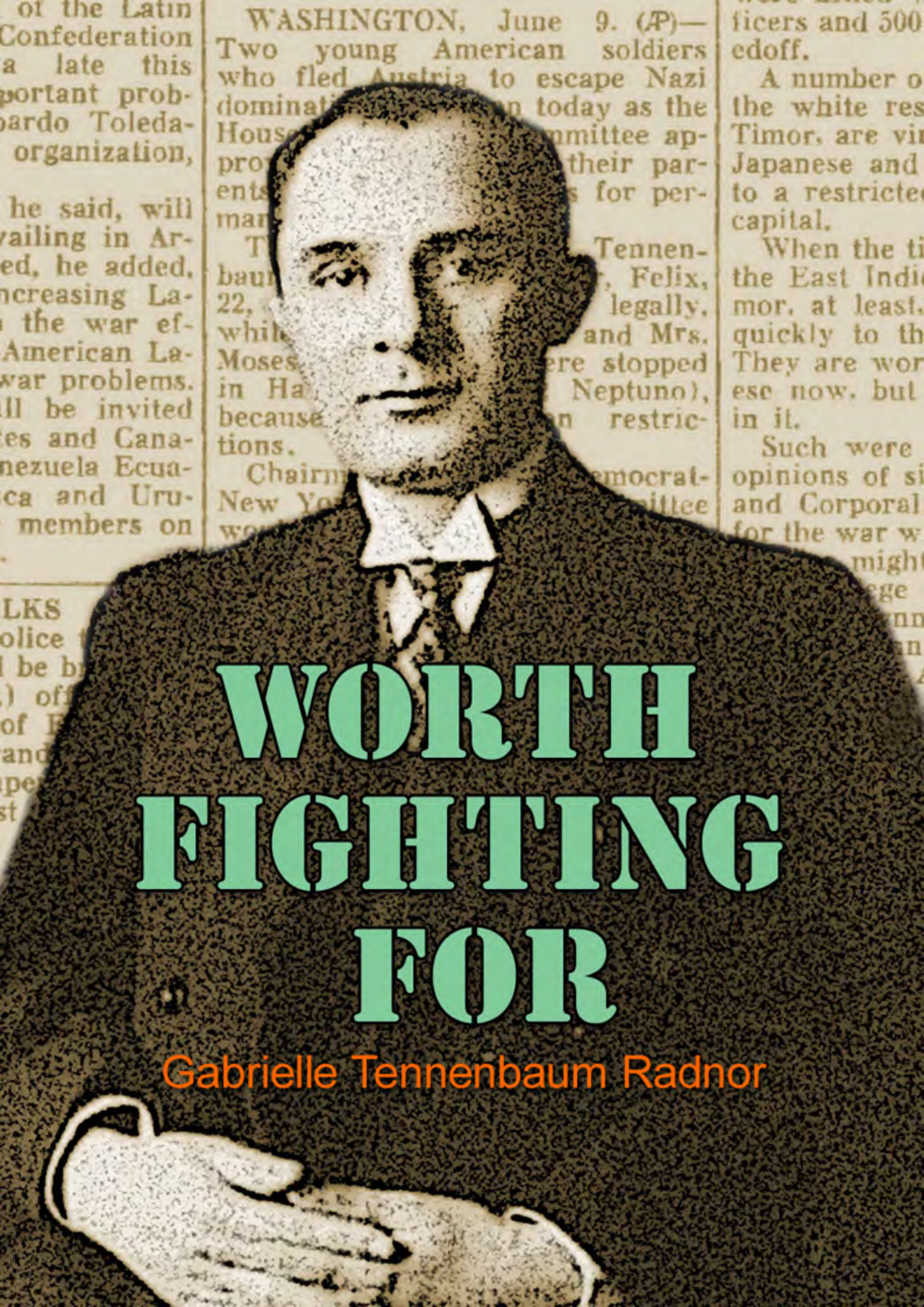

WORTH
FIGHTING
FOR
Gabrielle Tennenbaum Radnor

Gabrielle

Tennenbaum

Radnor

To mum and dad

This book is a dedication to your exceptional courage
and infrangible capacity for love.
It is my way of thanking you for all that you have done for us,
so altruistically and so graciously.

I love you

Part 1

When the world says “Give up,” Hope whispers “Try it one more time.”

Author unknown

1

My father, Herman, was born on the 14th of April 1924 to parents who were both in their early thirties at the time of his birth. It still amazes me to reflect on the fact that, as a 39 year old woman in 2013, both my paternal grandparents were born in the 1890s.

My father's parents, Sarah and Morris were born in Warsaw, Poland, but decided to make a life for themselves in Vienna, Austria, where they had their three children. My father was the middle child; his brother, Felix, was two years older (sadly now deceased) and his sister, Lilly, is two years younger. Morris was a successful jeweller, in partnership with his brother who had also moved to Vienna, and they spent their formative years living in a beautifully furnished, luxurious five-bedroom flat in the affluent 1st District of Vienna. Sarah would often spend her afternoons socialising with friends in cafes, the tasks of running the home and raising the children facilitated by the support of a live-in maid. The family would take regular holidays, delighting in the beautiful lakes and mountains in Austria and Hungary.

The children grew up in a modern orthodox Jewish household, keeping a kosher home and often enjoying traditional Friday night dinners with their aunt, uncle and cousins who lived nearby. My father fondly remembers the "convivial atmosphere" that prevailed, and the chicken soup, boiled beef, honey cake and pancakes that were his favourites. Gefilte fish (a poached mixture of ground fish) was a staple; the unfortunate carp would swim in the bath on Thursday before "getting the chop" on Friday! The family attended the Stadttempel Synagogue (also called the Seitenstettengasse Temple) every Saturday morning and on high holy days, and it was where my father and uncle had their Bar Mitzvahs; it was later to be the only one of ninety-four synagogues and prayer houses in Vienna not destroyed by the Nazis, and still stands today. Built in 1826, being a Jewish place of worship it was not permitted to be seen from public streets, so it was hidden from view by a row of houses, to which it was attached. This, ironically, saved it from destruction during

the Kristallnacht in 1938 – to destroy it would have meant also setting the houses on fire.

My father remembers his early childhood with mixed emotions. He was surrounded by loving family, including his paternal grandfather who, having lost his wife, left Poland to live with them approximately ten years before the annexation of Austria. He was a great deal more orthodox than his son, refusing to attend the same synagogue, and spending his days frequenting a 'shtiebel', typically part of someone's home allocated to prayers and religious discussions. He did not even learn German, but spoke Yiddish with family and friends. It is likely that his son's decision not to live such a strictly orthodox way of life was of some considerable disappointment to him, but such a lifestyle would have been difficult for Morris – he frequently travelled for his jewellery business, mostly to Leipzig and Berlin in Germany, as well as owning two jewellery shops in Vienna. My father recollects spending the odd Saturday afternoon in one of the shops – hidden away at the back so as not to unnerve any potential customers!

There are fond memories of playing card games and chess with his siblings, and of being the naughtiest of the three. He had a penchant for throwing items out of windows, particularly when there were visitors in their home; never did this get him into more trouble than when he discovered his uncle's false teeth and cast them into the back yard. Even reflecting on the ensuing smack and confinement to his room does not dampen his enjoyment when reminiscing about this. It was his father who was the main disciplinarian; he knew that his softer mother would not resort to the punitive measures that he no doubt deserved, but she did relate any misdemeanours to Morris upon his return home from work, so rarely did my father get away unpunished.

Despite the luxury in which they lived and the pleasant weekends spent together as a family, the shadow of anti-Semitism was cast over them from as far back as my father is able to remember. It was sometimes unspoken, but always there nonetheless. Morris had taken the decision to raise his family in an almost exclusively non-Jewish part of Vienna, choosing not to live amongst the majority of Jews who had opted for the less opulent 2nd District. Sumptuous as the 1st District may have been, living there brought daily hardship to its very small number of Jewish inhabitants who were keenly aware of malevolent feelings towards them.

The half a dozen or so Jewish children in the district's primary school (or volksschule) were singled out for punishment more than others in an already strict education system in which teachers would regularly hit children's knuckles with a ruler. As far as my father was concerned, the most odious of all the staff at the school was his geography teacher who referred to him as 'Jew Boy'; he was the only one to have left a lasting impression, not only for his unpleasant nature but also for his nationalistic attire – rarely was he seen without his leather breeches (lederhosen).

My father describes anti-Semitism as a way of life, and one to which he knew no alternative. He learned to prefer his own company, favouring being alone to enduring the taunts of children who were never chastised for tormenting their few Jewish peers; it was, in fact, my father who was punished for his occasional attempts to report the actions of these children to the school staff. His parents advised him to "make the best of the situation" and keep a low profile; he was unable to transfer to another school as at that time there was no option to leave the one to which a child had been assigned, and regardless of this, it is doubtful that the situation would have been any different elsewhere. The country was governed by the extreme right wing Engelbert Dollfuss who had taken over as chancellor in 1932, so talk against the Jews had become the norm; an integrated aspect of every-day life, well ingrained in hearts and minds by the time Nazi agents assassinated him in 1934 after which his regime continued for four years. Still, Morris and many others like him were determined not to let such hatred destroy their chances of building successful careers. He worked exceedingly hard, accomplished a great deal and built a lucrative business of which he was rightly proud.

And then, on the 12th of March 1938, "the whole world came crashing down".

2

The Anschluss (the annexation of Austria into the German Third Reich) came as a total shock. The chancellor at the time, Kurt Schuschnigg, had planned a referendum, expecting a vote in favour of Austria remaining independent. Determined to be defiant against pressure from Austrian and German Nazis, he was staunchly in favour of his country's autonomy, but this proved to be to no avail. His government was overthrown by the Austrian Nazi Party just before the referendum was due to take place; it was cancelled, power was transferred to Germany and the Anschluss was enforced by the Wehrmacht troops (Germany's armed forces from 1935 to 1945) who marched into Austria. The peace treaties established after months of negotiations at the end of World War I proved to be composed of empty words. It appeared that Germany felt the terms of the Treaty of Versailles to be so excessive that they would be ignored; the country clearly resented the territorial concessions they had been obliged to make and the 132 billion Marks that they had been asked to pay in reparations.

Empty words also came from the Allies who had pledged to uphold the terms of the Treaty; the contract should have prevented the union of Germany and Austria but France, Italy and Britain stood by, offering no military intervention, as Adolf Hitler set about his goal to create Lebensraum (living space) for German people and gain back any territory lost. The 'inferior' Slavic populations were to be exterminated, making way for ethnic Germans who, according to Nazi ideology, were the elite race and should repopulate Eastern Europe. This Aryan master race was deemed so superior that in order to maintain its purity, the eradication of all Jews, Romani and disabled people (judged to be the three most degenerate groups) was the goal, ridding society of 'inferior beings' and creating German domination. By the time the allied armies finally invaded Germany in 1945, the genocide of 11 million people, 6 million of whom were Jews, had taken place. In its entirety, World War II claimed over 60 million lives.

As soon as the annexation took place, Morris had no option but to escape from Austria as quickly as possible; he had done business with a jeweller in Leipzig, and had been instrumental in helping to export some of the man's goods out of Germany. Knowing that he was a Jew of Polish origin, one of this individual's employees reported him to the Nazi Party who immediately sent the Gestapo (Germany's Secret State Police, headed by Heinrich Himmler) to look for him. Overnight, it had become unsafe to exist; the gloom of anti-Semitism had erupted into a hideous, demonic colossus; an omnipresent horror sending people desperately, wretchedly scrambling for their lives.

The plan was for Morris to go first. With nothing but the clothes he was wearing, some money that he was able to hide on his person and his passport, he bade farewell to the beautiful home he had worked so hard for, in the exquisite city he had come to love. Promising his loved ones that they would be reunited within a few days, and convinced that they would be safer if they travelled separately, he succeeded in making his way to a trade fair in what was then Czechoslovakia. He was then able to continue on to Paris where he was met by another of his brothers who lived there. In a tragic twist of fate, before he could arrange for his father, wife and children to follow, the Gestapo procured his address, found his home and pounded on his door with the intention of arresting him. Discovering his absence, they interrogated his family. It is almost impossible to imagine the terror they must have experienced and the bilious abhorrence of the situation they now found themselves in. Sarah was suddenly solely responsible for their safety and knowing that she was compelled to summon all her inner courage and resolution, she refused to disclose any information regarding her husband and his whereabouts. Enraged, they seized their passports and vowed that if Morris did not return within one week, they would come back and keep them all hostage.

Overcome with dread and panic, her father-in-law collapsed and he suffered a heart attack. A doctor was summoned, he issued a prescription for some medicine and my father was instructed to rush to the local pharmacy to collect it. Overwhelmed by sorrow and despair, he still knew that as a Jewish teenager, he had to do all he could to be unseen as he darted through the shadows of buildings. Hearing the footsteps of a group of Nazi youths behind him, heart thumping, he made

a desperate attempt to hide behind a wall, helplessly hoping that they would pass. They had caught sight of him, however, and recognising him, delighted at their discovery – they could do as they liked, safe in the knowledge that not only was he unable to defend himself, but that they were encouraged to take pride in the brutal assault of a Jew. They set upon him and he could do nothing but endure the attack until the louts had had their fill and continued on their way, sniggering at their accomplishment.

Buoyed by the desperation to save his beloved grandfather, he found the strength to partly crawl, partly walk to the pharmacy and then home with the prescribed pills. It was too late; his grandfather had passed away.

3

It was left to Sarah and her brother-in-law to organise the funeral as quickly as possible and to notify Morris, not only of the Gestapo's visit and the fact that neither she nor their children had passports with which to leave the country, but also of the terrible news of his father's death and the circumstances thereof. Fate had decreed that this devout man who had followed the teachings of his religion until his dying breath, this man who had been so very devoted to his family, was to make his final journey with only one of his beloved sons by his side. Hastily, with the echo of the terrifying Nazi clock hands ticking in their ears, they arranged the ceremony; it must have given Morris some comfort to know that at least his children could be there to lay their grandfather to rest.

Forcing his way through the increasing fog of grief, Morris was able to unearth two significant blessings: the first was that he was acquainted with a man who managed to obtain false Dutch passports for Sarah and their three children (although the cost of these strained his already meagre finances) and the second was that his brother who lived in Paris, was willing to take the immense risk of travelling to Austria with these passports hidden on his person. His journey was made safely, and perhaps, before he hurriedly returned to Paris, he also took the opportunity to pay his respects at his father's graveside and briefly see Vienna before its beauty was destroyed.

The only way that Sarah and her children were to have a chance of escaping without being caught, was to do so in the dead of night. Clasping their adored dog to them for a final time, they left him with neighbours who were all too happy to look after him, having been told that they were going to visit relatives and would be back the following morning. Not wanting to arouse suspicion, they left with nothing but a small amount of money, an overnight bag and some jewels that Sarah kept hidden from sight, probably in her undergarments. The children took one last look at their home, all their possessions and the only life they had ever known. All four stifled their sobs and disappeared into the night.

Their journey to the train station was fraught with panic; it would have been unnerving enough had they not looked closely at my father's passport and noticed that his date of birth was incorrect. It showed him to be eleven years old; he was already tall for his age at fourteen so the dismay at this discovery made them almost frantic with anxiety. My father felt his heart thumping as he handed his passport to the guard at the border control, crouching so as to appear shorter and watching his mother as she desperately hoped that their passports would not be recognised as false. To their great relief, the ordeal at the check point passed without incident and they were on their way to Prague, from where they were to take a plane to Paris – flying was the only way to get to France without going through Germany. Mercifully, they also succeeded in boarding without confrontation.

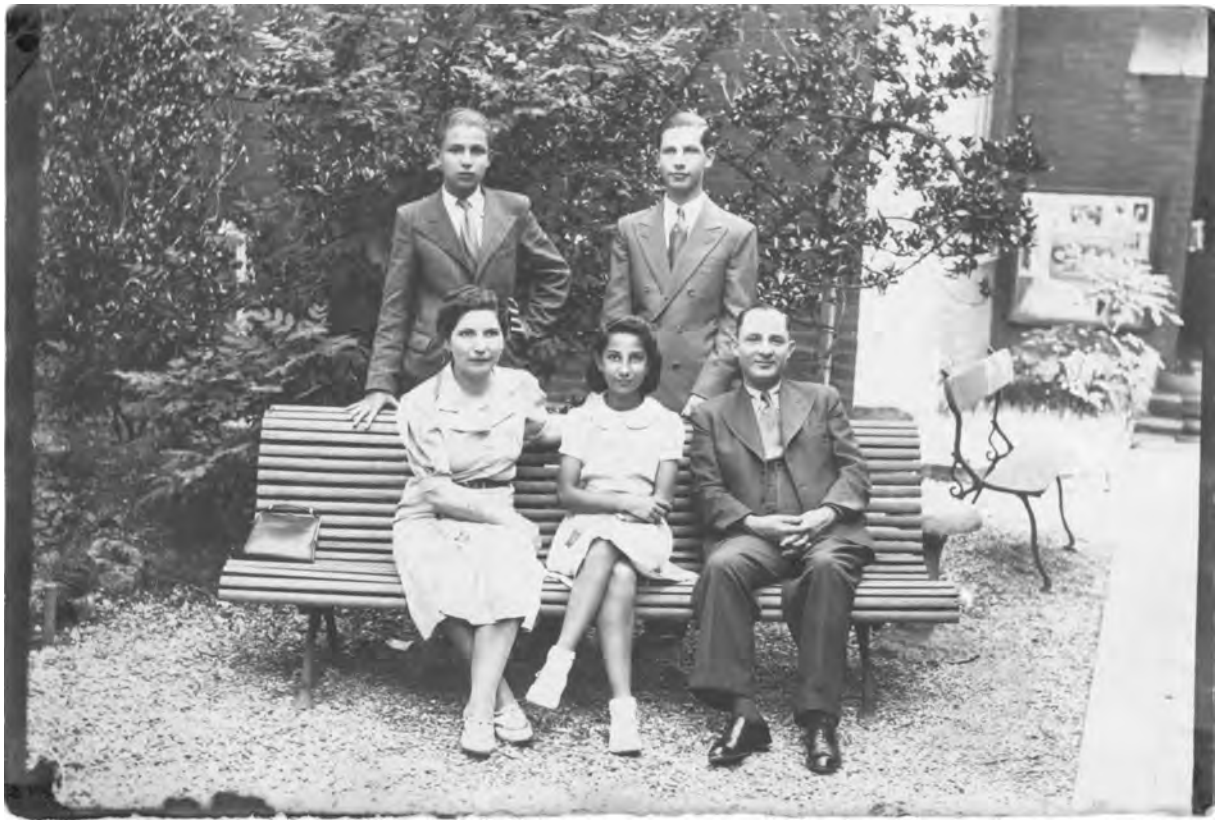
At that time, travelling by plane was not the relatively undemanding experience it is today; their cabin was not pressurised, the turbulence was scarcely bearable and all the passengers repeatedly vomited throughout the journey. They were also acutely aware that a plane flying the same route some days earlier had crashed, killing everyone on board. How wonderful it must have felt to arrive in Paris, nauseous and frail, but otherwise unharmed. So tremendously grateful were they to that unselfish, extraordinary man who had risked his life to save theirs; what a dreadful, painful irony they would reflect on at a later date, following his own son's deportation to a concentration camp where he was to subsequently perish.

4

Their delight in reuniting with Morris was short-lived; the family's plan was to get out of Europe as soon as possible and make a new life for themselves in the United States, so immediate steps had to be taken to put their plans into action. My father's uncle and cousins, with whom he had grown up in Vienna, were already living in New York having had a relatively trouble-free journey. This was most likely because, unlike Morris, his brother had not become an Austrian citizen. In a bid to join them with as little delay as they hoped was feasible, Morris and Sarah applied for visas for themselves and their children.

Whilst waiting, they had little choice but to begin a new life in France. The French authorities did not grant them permission to live in Paris; they would have liked to have been allowed to reside near Morris' other brother who lived there but were prohibited from doing so. They rented a small, provincial house in the town of Chelles, which was in the Seine-et-Marne department in the Île-de-France region of France, about 18 km from the centre of Paris. Morris would travel to Paris on a daily basis, trying to continue working in the jewellery business with the help of his brother – a task made all the more difficult by his inability to speak French.

The atmosphere in their home was fraught with tension; they were only given the right to remain in France on a monthly basis so they existed from month to month, constantly terrified that their dispensation to stay would be denied. The people around them, whilst not objecting to their presence outright, were not friendly and no efforts to socialise with them were made. The children, being young enough, learned the language relatively quickly and, when not at school, would have to act as interpreters for their parents. It was a lonely, uncertain time and although they were out of Vienna, they all still felt anxious and vulnerable, away from all that had been familiar and routine.



Herman, Felix, Lilly, Sarah and Morris in Chelles, France (1938)

In order to compartmentalise the entry system of immigrants, the United States had a quota system which divided people according to their country of birth; each quota had a certain number of people that would be allowed into the country at a given time. According to the system, therefore, my father and his siblings were in the German quota (as Austria had become part of Germany) and their parents were in the Polish one, which was oversubscribed. At the end of July 1939 the children were notified by the American consul that they could now collect their visas from the consulate. Their elation, although marred by the fact that their parents had not received theirs, was not dampened to too great an extent, as Morris and Sarah were informed that they were now at the top of their quota and would receive their visas shortly. Desperate for his children to reach American shores as soon as possible, however, Morris insisted that they leave immediately and assured them that he and Sarah would follow shortly. Sarah, however, was determined that she would not allow Lilly, the youngest and a girl, to travel with her brothers but felt that she would be better off remaining protected by her parents.

Thus, on the 17th of August 1939 my father and his brother, Felix, aged 15 and 17 respectively, left the loving arms of their parents and sister in France and made the journey from Le Havre to New York on a boat on which they were “packed in the third class like sardines”. After a distressing, uncomfortable voyage they were met by their uncle with whom they were to stay. Once again, they were in a strange country, faced with another new language to learn and customs to acclimatise to. But this time, they were without their parents and sister, in the company of a tense, agitated uncle who was already struggling to feed and clothe his own children. Despite their situation, they were somewhat consoled by the anticipation that Morris, Sarah and Lilly would soon be joining them in New York.

Yet again their buoyant expectations were to be crushed and their hopes turned to despair. On the 1st of September 1939, one week after they set foot on American soil, Nazi Germany invaded Poland and they were to hear the heart breaking news, so many thousands of miles away from their loved ones, that war in Europe had broken out.

5

Initially numb with fear for the safety of their parents and sister, my father and Felix forced themselves to get through each day, knowing that their only option was to hold on to their inner strength and dignity, and persist in conforming to the way of life in New York as successfully as possible. Approximately a year after arriving in the country, my father was old enough to leave school (to which he went “primarily to learn English”) and go to work, as his brother had done a year previously. He dolefully remembers his first ever job – ten hours a day of cleaning electrical fittings for an employer who was based on the other side of New York, necessitating approximately three hours of travelling each day. He was rewarded with the princely sum of $10 per week!

Herman (centre) at work in his first job in New York (1940)

As soon as he began to work, they were both able to move out of their aunt and uncle's flat, and rent another one in the same building. Although they still visited regularly, my father sombrely reflects on the loneliness he felt, which was exacerbated by seeing his relatives; being with them intensified his longing for the parents and sister he had left behind in France and cultivated a strong feeling of being an "outsider". They were able to keep in touch with Sarah, Morris and Lilly, but only by letter, and had to wait approximately three unsettling, nerve wracking weeks between posting letters and receiving replies.

Not long after they had settled into something of a routine, their equilibrium was shattered once again by a particularly low-spirited letter from Sarah revealing her to be in a heart-rending state of harrowing despair. Following the French police's investigation of Morris, their discovery that he was an Austrian citizen and their successful location of his whereabouts, they arrived at their door unannounced and ordered Morris to accompany them immediately. Sarah and Lilly's lamentable pleas were to no avail, and Morris was taken from them and detained in an internment camp in the Pyrenees.

From their home in New York, Felix and my father felt powerless. They desperately wanted to help their father and comfort their mother and sister, but they knew that apart from writing supportive letters regularly, there was nothing they could do to improve the situation their loved ones were in. The young men were aware, however, that although their parents missed them terribly, they were comforted by the knowledge that their sons were many thousands of miles away from the hands of the Nazis.

Sarah and Lilly had no idea where Morris had been taken. In a foreign country and afraid, they survived by helping to set up a committee with some fellow Austrians they encountered, whereby they provided food for each other and those in a similar situation. When the Nazis began to approach Paris, Sarah felt it was too unsafe for her and Lilly to remain so close to the city. Terrified and still having no idea where Morris had been taken, she made the decision that they would be safer in Bordeaux; the plan was to take the train to Paris and somehow, she knew not how, make their way to Bordeaux. Again, they closed the door of their home, taking nothing with them but the few belongings they were able to carry.

Once in Paris, they became aware of thousands of others, on foot and in cars, trying to escape from the Nazis. Those on foot were begging every car that passed, to let them in. Sarah and Lilly joined the heaving mass of desperate hitch hikers, and beseeched every driver they could see had enough space for them. At last, when they were almost too exhausted to take another step, a sympathetic motorist stopped and told them to get in his car. It was a blessed moment of relief and hope when they were almost overcome with heartache and despondency. At that point, they, and seemingly everyone they were surrounded by, did not care where they were going as long as they got as far as they could from Paris.

As night fell, trembling in the back of the car, they began to hear the German planes flying overhead. They could scarcely bring themselves to speak as they watched bombs landing all around them; everywhere they looked they were confronted by the devastating sight of innocent people lying dead in their cars and in the streets. The air was thick with the hideous screams of those who had lost their loved ones and the terrible, horrifying cries of the wounded. Cars were left abandoned and hysterical people were scattering in every direction.

The hours slowly passed, and with the dawning of a new day came the overpowering realisation that they had survived. How immensely fortunate they had been to have fallen into the hands of a man who was able to remain calm enough to continue driving throughout the bombardment, and how grateful they were to him, and to fate itself, for saving their lives. He informed them that he was not going to take them any further, and they got out of the car, mercifully near a train station. Numb from fatigue and from the horrors they had witnessed, they staggered to the station and thankfully managed to find a train that was headed for Bordeaux. For five days they remained on that train, becoming increasingly weak from lack of food but appreciative of every mile that took them further away from where they had been. Finally, weak, exhausted and ravenous, they arrived in Bordeaux.

6

Announcements over the public address system in the train station in Bordeaux stated repeatedly that no-one was to enter the city due to the vast number of refugees overcrowding it. Consequently, the station was overrun with confused, anxious people who were at a loss as to know what to do, and who hurried chaotically from one place to another, getting nowhere. Every exit was guarded by an armed soldier.

Sarah and Lilly wanted nothing more than to drop down in a corner in an enfeebled heap, but a determination rose from within them and they would not allow themselves, having come this far, to give up on the fight to stay alive and to find Morris. “Don’t worry,” said Lilly to her mother, “we’ll make it out of here somehow.” They thought of their cousin, Rosa, who lived relatively close by and were sure that if they did manage to escape from the station, she would be compassionate enough to give them shelter for the night. After several long hours in the station, they suddenly noticed that one of the Gendarmes was looking away from his post. “Run!” whispered Sarah and they ran as fast as their weak, tired legs would allow them to move. Once out, adrenalin pushed them forward and they did not stop until they arrived at Rosa’s door.

Then, once again the brief moment of anticipation was replaced by a flood of dismay. Rosa had already taken in a horde of people who had needed shelter; people were sleeping on every inch of floor space and Sarah and Lilly could see that there was simply no room for them. They had no choice but to swallow their disappointment and continue on their way. For several hours they dragged themselves from door to door, knocking on each one until finally, when they did not think they would be able to take another step, someone agreed to rent them a room for the night. What a wonderful feeling it was to sink into the comfort of a warm bed and rest their weary limbs.

But had they really believed that they had left the German bombardments behind? A few hours later, in the middle of the night, they

were startled awake by the sound of bombs landing all around them. Along with the other inhabitants of the building, they rushed to the cellar where they took shelter. Sleep's sweet relief had been short lived. For three nights they cowered, terrified, in the cellar as the bombs fell and as the Nazis marched into Bordeaux.

This time, there was nothing they could do but pray for a ray of light to filter into the darkness that their lives had become. Perhaps their desperate wishes were heard, because that ray of light arrived in the form of a chance encounter with a friend from Chelles whose husband had been taken at the same time as Morris and who had heard a rumour that both men were in an internment camp near Albi in the Pyrenees, near Toulouse. The three of them, with nothing to lose, decided that they would head back to the station and try and catch a train to Toulouse. With luck on their side, they arrived at the station safely and were able to board the required train.

Once in Toulouse they separated to try and find somewhere to spend the night. Once again, they found themselves knocking on one door after another, pleading for a room to sleep in. Toulouse was so overcrowded that their search was in vain and this time, as darkness approached, they simply did not have the energy to carry on. Cold and frightened, they found an empty bench and huddled together throughout the night. As the sun rose on a new day, the 11th July 1940, Sarah looked at her daughter, held her close and wished her happy birthday. Lilly had turned fourteen on a filthy bench in a town she did not know. The two embraced and allowed their tears to fall.

Meanwhile, in the internment camp, Morris' thoughts were of his wife and daughter. He had no contact with them, and desperately worried for their safety and about the vulnerable position they were in. Approximately five months after his initial detainment, he was granted a day pass and informed that failure to return by the end of the day was punishable by death. A companion who he had known from Chelles was also granted a pass, and knowing that they did not have long and could not travel far, they decided to catch a bus to nearby Toulouse, where they planned to spend the day.

Unbeknownst to him, his wife and daughter had arrived at the train station in Toulouse, having met up with their friend, intending to catch a

train to Albi. The three women waited for what seemed like hours, but the train did not arrive. Lilly insisted that they find out when the next train was due at the station, but her mother quite simply felt unable to continue on a quest that seemed increasingly unlikely to end successfully. “Please!” begged Lilly. “No,” said her mother. “We’re going, and we’ll come back tomorrow.” Lilly was insistent, however, and refused to give up on the dream of seeing her father again. Spotting the arrival of a bus not far from where they were standing, she resolved to wait until the passengers had alighted, and ask the driver how they could continue on their journey to their destination.

She stood and watched as one by one the passengers disembarked. Suddenly she wondered if she was confusing reality with imagination; briefly asked herself if her desperation to see Morris was causing her to hallucinate. No, what she was seeing was real – there he was, right in front of her, coming down the stairs of the bus with none other than the husband of the friend standing not far away, with Sarah. Their eyes met and they stood, transfixed by the sight of each other and the remarkable coincidence that had brought them together. The initial moment of shock was, however, soon replaced by panic on Morris’ part. He put his finger to his lips, motioning her to be totally silent; he was still in a state of terror from the trauma of the five months he had endured and was frightened that his wife and daughter’s safety would be jeopardised if they were all seen together. The words ‘punishable by death’ were ringing in his ears.

Out of sight of authorities at the station, the three clung to each other, but Morris and his companion were terrified of the consequences of not returning to the camp quickly, convinced that they would be hunted down and executed. This time, it was Sarah’s turn to be insistent; fate had brought them together and she was resolute with determination that they would not be separated again. Despite his fears and protestations, he allowed himself to be persuaded as he could not bring himself to leave his loved ones as he had done before. His friend however, was too frightened of the possible consequences of trying to flee, and he returned to the camp. They never heard from him or his wife again.

Morris, Sarah and Lilly found a small hotel some miles away. In this guest house they were merely an unfamiliar, insignificant family, unknown to anyone around them, and it was here that they hid for two days, panic-stricken and petrified that their whereabouts would be

discovered. Keenly aware that staying in one place for too long would put them in the greatest danger, they gathered their courage and their few belongings, and boarded a train to Marseilles in the unoccupied part of France. Arriving safely, they joined thousands of other refugees who had converged there to seek out the safe houses and escape routes offered by a city in which humanitarianism had not been extinguished. This, they hoped, would be the gateway out of France they had been longing for all those sorrowful, dispirited months.

7

In Marseilles, Lilly and Sarah felt that the time had come for them to reapply for a visa to the United States; still frightened of discovery, Morris did not accompany them to the consulate. The American consul was a kindly man who informed them that he would issue one if they brought him a French exit visa. Morris was in no position to apply for an exit visa, so they found themselves once again wondering how they were ever going to get to the country they dreamed of spending the rest of their lives in. All around them, people were paying the authorities to issue them with fake documents, and Morris and Sarah soon realised that this was the only way they were going to be able to leave France. They managed to scrape together enough money from their scant savings to purchase a counterfeit exit visa without too much difficulty, but were too frightened to risk bringing this to the consul.

Morris decided that in Portugal it would be easier to use their false documentation to apply for a visa to the United States. So three months after arriving in Marseilles they packed their few possessions yet again and attempted to make their way to Lisbon. Their only option was to take the train to Spain and go from there. The familiar panic set in at passport control in Barcelona where the staff became suspicious of their documents and ordered them to wait until the other passengers had left. They demanded to know where they had obtained their visa. There then followed a tangled web of explanations as Morris spoke in German, Lilly translated in French and the guards made several attempts to understand her somewhat disjointed interpretation of what her father was saying. This, it transpired, was their saving grace; the staff at the border control became so exasperated following numerous attempts to comprehend what both Morris and Lilly were saying, that they threw their passports at them and waved them through. They willingly obeyed, moving as fast as they could without arising further suspicion.

Lilly still remembers the beautiful way in which Barcelona was lit up at night; a sight embedded in her memory after the years of black outs she had endured. They stayed there for two days before continuing onto

Lisbon, where their hope was to obtain the visa they needed quickly and easily, and leave for American shores. It did not take them long to apply for the required visa, and initially they waited patiently for their application to be processed. Weeks turned to months and, still, they heard nothing; no longer patient, anxiety began to prevail followed by a sense of increasing urgency. And then terror struck with the arrival of a letter they received ten months after arriving in Lisbon: They had thirty days to leave Portugal or they would be sent back to Spain, and then back to occupied France. This would mean a certain death sentence for Morris and internment in a concentration camp for Sarah and Lilly.

By this point, they would have accepted a visa to anywhere in the world as long as they could escape deportation back to France. They returned to the American consulate in Lisbon and made a final attempt to plead with the consul to issue them with one as quickly as possible. While they were there, one of the officials noticed that, over the years, Morris had accrued an impressive collection of stamps and he did not hesitate to openly admire them. Noticing his esteem of the stamps, and wanting to ingratiate himself to whomever he could, Morris thought nothing of offering them to him as a gift. The man was not impressed; he immediately located the consul and informed him that Morris had attempted to bribe him in order to obtain a visa. Despite protestations to the contrary and anguished attempts to persuade them both that he'd had no intention of partaking in bribery, Morris was permanently refused admission to the United States on the grounds of 'moral turpitude'.

They had suffered so many setbacks but after all they had been through, this was almost more than they were able to find the strength to cope with. In utter desperation, Morris contacted my father and Felix in New York and begged them to do anything they could to get them and Lilly out of Lisbon. They would not have wanted to burden the young men with such an immense responsibility but by now they simply felt that this was going to be the last feasible chance they had.

By a great fortune, my father and Felix had just the right contact in New York and with the use of every last penny of their savings, this man succeeded in obtaining a visa to Cuba for Morris, Sarah and Lilly, which was thankfully issued by the Cuban authorities in Lisbon. They were overwhelmed with relief and gratitude; finally, in July 1941 they were able to leave the horrors of Europe behind them and head for Cuba. They

spent twenty-one days on a ship – exhausted, nauseous and packed together with hundreds of other passengers, but none of this could dampen their spirits; after years of living in almost constant terror and fear for their lives, they arrived in Havana. They were nervous, they were alone and once again they were refugees in a foreign country but at long last they, along with my father and Felix, could sleep well throughout the night knowing that they were safe.

8

And so began a new life in Havana. The dream of the United States felt just that; Morris had to establish himself financially once again in yet another new town in yet another strange country. ‘Moral turpitude’ was not a charge to be taken lightly and although he was geographically closer to North America than he had ever been, it seemed further away than it had done in all the years of horror he had endured. For years he had clung on to the hope of a life of freedom in the land of his reveries; now, at least, he felt blessed to have been granted the freedom but could not hide the sadness at having been denied the land.

He was not a man to wallow in despondency and he focused on the fact that Sarah and Lilly were finally, little by little, beginning to enjoy their lives. They gradually began to become acclimatised to the hot climate and Lilly learned the language quickly, beginning to form new friendships in the school she had been enrolled in. There was a sizeable refugee colony in Havana at the time, consisting of Belgians, Austrians and Germans, amongst others and the authorities were not hostile towards Jews; it was such a relief to be safe, away from the engulfing fire of anti-Semitism. Many of the refugees were Yiddish-speaking jewellers so Morris did not take long to set himself up in the jewellery business once again, and to begin to feel more at home in this alien yet strangely familiar environment.

As soon as Lilly turned sixteen, she left school and persuaded Morris to allow her to learn to cut diamonds and work in a diamond factory that had been founded by the Belgian refugees. By this time she had many Cuban and European friends, and enjoyed the satisfaction of bringing home a monthly wage. For the most part, life for Morris, Sarah and Lilly was good but there could be no denying the shadow that was cast over their relative contentment; a constant worry hovered over them like a cloud perpetually threatening rain, like a darkness blocking out the light. My father and Felix had been enrolled into the United States army. They

had been permitted to volunteer despite being classed as ‘enemy aliens’, and were inducted in New Jersey in February 1943.

Although they were determined to fight for their adopted country, their determination to overturn the ruling that prevented their parents and sister from joining them there was of equal importance to them. They made the decision that they would do everything in their power to enable their parents and sister to leave Cuba and move to the United States; they would approach every authoritative body they could and would not stop until their mission had been accomplished. They began by setting up a meeting with United States Representative, Congressman Donald Lawrence O’Toole in Brooklyn. Perhaps as he listened to them tell their story and saw them wearing their uniforms with pride, he was touched by the courage and dedication of the two young men. Perhaps he recognised his own capacity for tenacity and perseverance reflected in their eyes. Whatever his reasons, he was sufficiently persuaded by them both to promise them that he would introduce a special bill in the United States Congress that would allow their parents and sister to be admitted to the United States regardless of any immigration restrictions that had been imposed.

To my father and Felix’s delight, he was true to his word and he immediately introduced the said emergency bill in Congress. Shortly afterwards, when my father was at Camp Bowie, a military training facility in Texas, he received the information that he and his brother had been summoned to appear at a congressional committee to tell their story. They duly attended, and recounted their tale to what transpired to be a very sympathetic committee; one of the Congressmen present, A. Leonard Allen, commented that he also had two sons who were in the army. “The least we can do for you boys is to get your parents to America,” he said. “It was amazing,” reflects my father. The bill passed through the House of Representatives and made its way to the Senate.

Having achieved so much, the young men had high hopes that their mission would be successful. My father, in the Infantry Division attached to the Eighth Army, was sent to the Far East but Felix, who was in the Intelligence Corps, was deferred from leaving the United States while the bill was pending in Congress. As they valiantly fought for their adopted country, they waited for the bill to pass through the initial committee stages before being voted on in the Senate. Then, as had happened so

many times before, they began to feel that their hopes were being crushed; the chairman of the initial committee responsible for enabling the bill to pass through it onto the next stage was none other than Senator Richard Brevard Russell, opposer of civil rights and of immigration, and outspoken supporter of white supremacy and segregation. Of all the hands that the precious bill could have fallen into, it had the terrible misfortune to have found its way to the very worst possible.

9

No amount of persuasion from congressmen or from various lawyers, no desperate pleas from Felix and my father had any influence over Senator Russell. He unyieldingly refused to allow the bill to leave his committee in order to enable the senate to vote on it. It was not often that a matter induced such outrage amongst so many. The story of these two young men who were willing to lay down their lives for a country which then rejected their parents, even reached the ears of Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt who actually wrote to the senator herself, but to no avail. Tragically, all the anticipation and expectancy had to be buried along with the bill, which so heartbreakingly could go no further and expired in the guardianship of a racist, anti-Semitic tyrant.

Despite their despondency and disillusionment the two brothers remained loyal to their adopted country and fulfilled their roles as soldiers to the very best of their ability. For three long, uninterrupted, horrific years under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, my father, along with his comrades, fought against the Japanese obeying orders to dislodge them from one island after another in New Guinea and the Philippines, by means of amphibious invasions. Initially they agonisingly struggled to obtain a foothold in New Guinea as the American forces did not have air superiority resulting in them being bombed continuously. Eventually, air superiority was gained, the Navy came to their assistance and they gathered in Netherlands New Guinea (now known as Papua and West Papua) for the invasion of the Philippines.

In July 1944 the ship that my father was on was bound for an invasion of Leyte that was postponed several times. Ordering his troops to be at the ready, and therefore not allowing them to disembark from the ship, General MacArthur ordered them to remain inside until such time as they were needed and could then leave immediately. My father clearly recollects the ninety days he was commanded to remain on board a vessel containing so few amenities that even a short journey in it would have been an ordeal. “There were no facilities whatsoever for privacy or personal hygiene,” he muses. In this atmosphere of filth, neglect and

severe deprivation, some of the men on board were unable to retain their sanity, becoming deranged and delirious in their floating inferno. Finally, they were ordered to carry out the invasion and fight their way into Leyte; one wonders at their ability to fulfil this duty after suffering such a hideous ordeal.

It is now with some bitterness that my father reflects on the invasion of the Philippines; General MacArthur, he believes, was willing to witness the appalling loss of thousands of lives so that he could take revenge on the Japanese who had previously been victorious over the United States army under his command, and retained the islands. Determined to conquer them successfully this time he sacrificed so very many young lives so that he could make his famous speech upon landing in Leyte on the 17th October 1944: “I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil.”

“The fighting was horrible,” recalls my father. To this day he finds it difficult to cope with his recollections of violence, suffering and mass loss of life; “The Japanese were the worst enemy one could imagine.” He remembers them to have been as cruel as the Germans except that they did not discriminate against Jews. It is with no relish either however, that he looks back on the loss of Japanese lives during fighting or as a result of the atomic bombs dropped on the city of Hiroshima and on the City of Nagasaki on the 6th and 9th August 1945 respectively. Finally, after years of almost indescribable torment, Emperor Hirohito announced the surrender of the Japanese Empire to the allies on the 15th August, and two weeks later the allied powers began their occupation. Japan’s official surrender on the 2nd September at long last brought World War II to a close.

Indelibly scarred by the inexpressible heinousness of the previous three years, and still only twenty-one years old, my father returned to the United States. As soon as he arrived, he was overwhelmed by a crushing desire to see his parents and sister in Cuba; seven interminable years had passed since they had last been together, and he was not prepared to wait a moment longer.

10

At the time that my father returned from Japan there was very little air traffic between the United States and Cuba, rendering it all the more challenging for him to be able to fly to Havana. Although there were no civilian flights, military planes on which members of the armed forces could travel, did fly between the two countries. Having been in the army, my father was entitled to a seat on such a plane and he succeeded in making the necessary arrangements to visit the loving family whom he had missed so constantly and so desperately during the seven traumatic years of their separation.

To imagine the merging of sentiments that he must have felt in the days before he was due to leave and during his journey there is nigh on impossible; ravaged, surely, by a heady melange of elation, exhilaration and apprehension. Would their bond be as it was? Would his parents treat him, not as the child they last saw, but as the adult he now was? What would he say to the beautiful woman his sister had become when in his mind she was still the twelve year old child he had held tightly in his arms before boarding the boat to New York? But how he longed to see them. How he yearned to bask in the comfort of his mother's warmth and to surrender to the loving embrace he had craved so ardently throughout the dark, lonely years in the Far East.

His parents and sister were, of course, grappling with their own emotions. Having negotiated the undulations of concern which had regularly ranged from unease to near hysteria while my father and Felix were at war, Sarah and Morris were now drained and exhausted but overcome with relief that at least one of their sons had been demobilised. After the years of panic and anxiety they were scarcely willing to believe that they were indeed about to be reunited with the child they had feared they would never see again. Their fears did mirror his; would they slot naturally into the role of parents required by a young man in his twenties? Their pulses raced and their hands trembled as they waited for him to arrive; had the chasm of time that had thrown them apart for so long created an unsealable divide?

Suddenly he was walking towards them. As they stared wordlessly at each other, any void they may have feared was effortlessly filled by the tender tears that streamed down their cheeks and seemed to wash away the pain that time had borne. Sarah slowly lifted her hand to her son's face as if to prove to herself that he really stood before her, and lovingly stared at the fine looking man he had grown into. He, in turn, held her and Morris close and breathed in the familiarity and endearment that they represented. He embraced his sister too and vowed that from that moment, he would always support and protect her in any way he could; a vow that, to this day, he has never broken.

He stayed with them in Havana for one month, during which time they shared stories of hope and of survival. They came to know each other for who they were instead of merely who they had been, and they gradually saw that the winds of change had blown and could not be returned; Morris and Sarah still believed that for them, living in the United States had been a dream that would never materialise into reality, and pleaded with my father to live with them in Cuba. Thus they learned that he would or could not change his life to that extent; by dint of circumstance he had matured into a fiercely independent young man who would live his life as he saw fit. He did, however, make a promise to them before he returned to New York. He gave them his word that their dreams of living in the States would no longer be mere reveries; he pledged that he would do everything in his power to overturn the charges made against his father and get them to New York despite the obstruction of Senator Russell's anti-Semitic tendencies.

He looked at his parents and sister as if to say "I will not let you down," and left Cuba with a burning determination to do right by a family torn apart by the ravages of injustice.

11

Not long after my father's return from Cuba, Felix was also demobilised having been stationed in the UK for the final part of his service. The two brothers enjoyed an emotional reunion in New York before Felix flew to Havana, as desperate as my father had been, to see his parents and sister again. He filled their lives with ineffable joy, rendering Sarah and Morris relieved beyond expression in the knowledge that both their sons had survived the war. To his parents' disappointment, he too did not desire a life in Cuba but he returned to the United States with the same zealous determination to right an immoral, malevolent wrong.

And then, as had happened so many times in their journey of survival, a chance encounter offered an opportunity to be cautiously optimistic that they may indeed have a realistic prospect of bringing their parents and sister to their side. My father had befriended a young man who lived relatively near the apartment that he and Felix were renting, and had told him of his parents' desire of a life in North America and the barrier that the charge of 'moral turpitude' had put in place. Moved by the plight of a family that he felt had been so resolute in the face of such terrible adversity, and wanting to be of as much support as he was able, he introduced my father and Felix to an attorney with whom he was acquainted, suggesting that he may have the necessary connections to further facilitate the success of their quest.

It is unlikely that my father could have discovered a finer confidant or that this benevolent man could have recommended a more suitable attorney for their needs. The lawyer was delighted to take on the challenge he was presented with and was indeed acquainted with precisely the most suitable man for the undertaking in question; the journey that his young clients were about to embark on would deprive them of every penny of their savings, but they were prepared for this and willingly sacrificed whatever funds they had accrued. They listened with rising hope as they were told that their legal adviser's friend was one of the directors of the Leows theatre group, parent company of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios

at the time. This director was from Georgia and fortuitously shared a passion for Georgia Tech football team with one Senator Richard Russell. Although by no means on friendly terms, he did see him at matches on a relatively regular basis during which they would exchange occasional pleasantries and observations on various team members.

Sickened by the horrors that the Holocaust had induced, as soon as he heard of Felix and my father's plight he immediately determined to do what he could to help these fellow Jews. So outraged was he when he learned of Senator Russell's act of unmitigated malice, he was barely able to look him in the eye but forced himself to cultivate a closer rapport, thereby increasing the likelihood of successfully influencing him to reverse his decision. One wonders what persuasive tactics he employed. Perhaps a particularly successful game had rendered the Senator unusually jubilant and more open to coercing techniques. Perhaps the passing of time had mellowed his animosity. Whether it was for either of these reasons, or for neither, he was miraculously, wondrously prevailed upon to re-introduce Congressman O'Toole's bill and allow it out of his committee.

My father can still recollect his inability to find the words that would adequately express his immeasurable gratitude. How could a simple 'thank you' be a sufficient offering to a man whose actions played such a hugely significant role in changing the course of our family's life? He remembers the overwhelming sensations of triumph and exaltation as the bill moved on from the initial committee stages, this time with no obstacles in its way, and continued to the senate where, with equal simplicity, it was passed. As if propelled by the momentum of a divine breeze, it swept effortlessly through every obligatory pair of hands before arriving in front of President Harry Truman who, in full agreement of all that it stood for, added his much yearned-for signature.

At long last, after nine years of almost uninterrupted adversity, the Tennenbaum family would unite in the country that Sarah, Morris and Lilly had truly believed they would only ever inhabit in their dreams. This remarkable tale of the two young Davids fearlessly tackling the mighty Goliath was an unprecedented accomplishment. "You have achieved a miracle," commented the American Consul in Havana, and indeed they had.

Finally, in early December 1946 the two brothers welcomed their loved ones to New York. They clung to each other, unwilling to let go, and deeply inhaled the precious scent of victory.

oldiers Win Fight to Get Family, War Refugees in Cuba, Into U. S. A.

By Evelyn Shelley
PM's Bureau

WASHINGTON, June 10.—Felix Tennenbaum, 22, and his brother, Herman, 19, refugees both, are sight-seeing today as old-hearted as any uniformed men on furlough. Their long struggle to cut through bewildering red tape and override immigration technicalities is about to succeed.

Felix and Herman appeared before the House Immigration Committee yesterday on behalf of a private bill "for the relief of Moses Tennenbaum," their exiled father, whom they have not seen for five years. The Committee promised quick action.

"This is the least we can do for you," said Rep. A. Leonard Allen (D., La.), thinking of his own two sons in the service.

The boys told the story simply. The Tennenbaums—father and mother, two sons, and the daughter—lived in Vienna, where Moses Tennenbaum, born in Poland, had a jewelry business. When Hitler came, they fled to France. The boys, who had been put in the German quota, were sent to this country, where they have lived with their uncle, Isidor Tennenbaum, at 2116 85th St., Brooklyn.

When the Nazis took Paris, Tennenbaums were sent to a concentration camp but escaped to Spain and thence to Portugal. Meanwhile, Mrs. Tennenbaum and Lili joined the refugees on long trail out of France, struggled along for six days under bombing. And Mrs. Tennenbaum lost their remaining wealth, $15,000 in diamonds she had in her purse.

When the Tennenbaums were reunited in Lisbon, the father was told unless he got a transit visa at once he would be returned to occupied France. Tennenbaum now placed his hopes in the U. S. Consulate.

A member of the staff, who interpreted Tennenbaum's German, showed great interest in Tennenbaum's American stamps on letters from the boys. Tennenbaum therefore brought his stamp collection to show him, and when the interpreter praised it Tennenbaum gave it to him. He was confounded later to learn his visa was refused on the grounds of "moral turpitude" because he had "bribed" the interpreter with his stamp collection.

Later the Tennenbaums were sent to Cuba to a shipload of exiles.

Felix and Herman have weathered the five years away from their parents together. When Felix was drafted, Herman volunteered, and both were sent to the same camp. Later Felix was sent to camp in Maryland, Herman to Virginia, their first separation.

RKERS BOARD TO MEET HERE SHORTLY

XICO CITY, June 9. (AP.)—Executive Board of the Latin-rican Workers Confederation met in Havana late this th to study "important problem." Vicente Lombardo Toledano, President of the organization, ...ong the topics, he said, will be situation prevailing in Argentina. Also discussed, he added, be plans for increasing Latin contribution to the war effort, bases for Latin-American Latin, and post-war problems. ...representatives will be invited o the United States and Canada and also from Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica and Uruguay, which have no members on Executive Board.

POLICE TALKS

...larting June 15, police talks on ne prevention will be broadcast ...r CMZ, 11260 Kc.) Official ra- of the Ministry of Education, ...ajor Alcazo Miranda of the ...ct Police will supervise these ...ks, to be broadcast daily from ...1 p. m. to 2:45 p. m.

Be United Soon; Dickstein Helps

WASHINGTON, June 9. (AP.)—Two young American soldiers who fled Austria to escape Nazi domination looked on today as the House Immigration Committee approved a bill to admit their parents to the United States for permanent residence.

The youths, Hermino Tennenbaum, 19, and his brother, Felix, 22, entered this country legally, while their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Moses Tennenbaum, were stopped in Havana, Cuba (352 Neptuno), because of immigration restrictions.

Chairman Dickstein (Democrat-New York) said the committee would request quick Congressional action on the bill, hoping to unite the family in the United States before the boys enter combat service.

The parents came originally from Poland, going later to Austria where the two sons were born. The brothers reside in New York City. Felix is stationed at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, and Herman at Camp Lee, Virginia.

killed some 5,100 Japs, the loss of 26 of their ...killed or wounded. Dur... five months, only three... were killed while 20 ... officers and 500 soldiers ... cutoff.

A number of Portuguese ... the white residents of ... Timor, are virtual pris... Japanese and are con... to a restricted sector ... capital.

When the time came ... the East Indies, the ... must, at least, are ... quickly to the aids ... They are working wi... we now. But their ha... in it.

Such were the ... opinions of signaler ... and Corporal John ... for the war which ... mandos, might have ... their college cricket ... laurels. Wynne-Jones ... ager of the Australia... Press.

They went to Port... last November, joini... units which had been ... enemy and pinning ... final invasion force.

(Continúa en la página ULTIMA) —(Continúa en la pág. DOS)—

DE REGRESO A EUROPA, A COMBATIR

SALE DE CUBA HACIA EUROPA, UN JOVEN QUE SE PROPONE VENGARSE

"Nos hicieron salir de Viena a todos los de la familia y ahora contribuiré a hacerlos pagar sus crímenes".

—Por Pedro Vega Sánchez, del staff de EL CRISOL—

OFRECIENDO un hermoso ejemplo de amor a la causa aliada, los esposos Tennenbaum despidieron con un banquete a su hijo el soldado norteamericano Felix Tennenbaum, que ya embarcó hacia el frente de batalla.

"Estamos orgullosos de nuestros hijos—dijo conmigo la emocionada la señora Tennenbaum— Herman ya se encuentra combatiendo en Nueva Guinea contra los japoneses y Felix dentro de poco días se enfrentara con el enemigo. Tenemos fe en que regresarán a nuestro lado dentro de un futuro no muy lejano, para volver a reunirnos y celebrar juntos la victoria de las armas aliadas".

—(Continúa en la página CINCO)—

ATACADA A TIROS LA ESPOSA DE UN ATTACHE AMERICANO

CHICAGO, enero 13. — (U.P.). —La señora Frank, esposa de Frank Starr Williams, ex-tercer secretario de la Embajada de los Estados Unidos en Teherán, fue herida gravemente de un tiro en la frente esta noche cuando disparado por una mujer no identificada, en el Hotel Drake. La agresora disparó tres veces contra la víctima. La orden Williams, había regresado recientemente a los Estados Unidos a bordo del buque de intercambio "Gripsholm".

SALE DE CUBA HACIA . . .

Las Camisas de Sport del momento

3.25 y 4.

Fin de Siglo

Herman Tennenbaum, hermano de Felix, que desde hace tres meses se encuentra peleando con el ejército estadounidense contra los japoneses en Nueva Guinea.

LOS FEMENINOS

CON LA MISMA o MENOR costilla, en FIN DE Ud. compra siempre los MEJORES y MAS NUEVOS

HERM

TU TIENES DI... PE...

A pesar del corto tiempo que he pasado entre los cubanos, puedo asegurarte que estoy me han conquistado por su hospitalidad y trato cordial, considerando en mi opinión a la mujer cubana, como una de las más bellas y simpáticas de cuantas he conocido. En el futuro, cuando la actual situación anormal creada por la guerra termine, uno de mis más caros anhelos sería poder volver a esta tierra, donde he gozado tanto en tan poco tiempo.

—La comida que esta noche me han ofrecido mis padres y amigos a modo de despedida, antes de partir para la guerra, me ha emocionado enormemente, y puede estar seguro que donde quiera que me halle combatiendo al enemigo la recordaré profundamente.

Cuando estas líneas sean leídas, Tennenbaum se encontrará ya en su campamento, en Washington, dispuesto a partir hacia cualquier frente de batalla, a combatir al enemigo, como antes nos dijera, a salvar y riesgo.

EL CRISOL hace votos por el éxito de Félix Tennenbaum como luchador de la democracia en el frente, deseándole a un mismo tiempo el feliz regreso al lado de los suyos.

ATACADA UNA... DEL PA...

WASHINGTON, ...

El Departamento ... que la aviación ... arrebase algu... Tarawa y Truk, ... ele, en las Carolin...

Privates Tennenbaum Go to

Washington

Toto Tamburinos Elfenbeinturm

Herman and Felix's battle to bring their parents to the United States attracted worldwide press attention. Here are some articles from American, Cuban and German newspapers

Part 2

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

Confucius

12

Jubilant as they were to be together as a family again, it cannot be said that the transition for Morris, Sarah and Lilly was without difficulty. Morris had, to some extent, enjoyed associating with his fellow Europeans in Cuba with whom he also did business on a regular basis, and Sarah and Lilly had established some close friendships (they did, in fact, remain in touch with several of these friends for many years to come and some eventually immigrated to the United States as well). Lilly describes the three of them as being “bewildered and overjoyed to be in New York”; after the much slower pace of life in Havana, it must have been something of a shock to be surrounded by such commotion and tumult on a daily basis, particularly as they did not speak English, but there was no denying that they also delighted in the atmosphere that enveloped them.

It did not take long for Lilly to find employment; she was offered a job at the French Steamship Company, where her knowledge of European languages proved invaluable. Morris’ success was somewhat more gradual, but having worked as a jewellery dealer for so many years, he naturally gravitated towards the most lucrative path and eventually successfully established himself in 47th Street. Known as the Diamond District, it is home to over two thousand businesses relating to diamonds and fine jewellery, and Morris was proud to play his small part in the area’s prosperity. This was quite an achievement for a man who arrived in North America in his fifties having spent the majority of his adult life re-building his income in one country after another, after another.

Morris at work in 47th Street, New York (1950)

While they were settling into their new lives, my father discovered that an administrative error had been made by the United States army; his name had been added to the wrong list when he had initially volunteered. It transpired that he was supposed to have been sent to Europe where his

fluency of German would have been far more useful than it was in the Far East. He reflected on the abominable scenes that three years of fighting against the Japanese had engraved in his mind's eye, and on the valuable contribution he could have made elsewhere if the oversight had not occurred. Having discovered the blunder, the War Department's powers that be decided that he could still be of great use working for the Intelligence Service and issued him with a request to go to Germany.

It was not an easy decision for my father, having recently been reunited with his parents and sister, but it was "a chance to take care of old wounds" and to do what he could to help bring some members of the Nazi Party to justice. Thus at the beginning of 1947 with a combination of great sadness at parting from his family again and swelling determination to do what he could for a higher cause, he left New York and took up residency in a flat in Darmstadt – a town in the southern part of the Rhine Main Area of Germany. The city was known for its pioneering anti-Semitism; it was the first to have forced the closure of Jewish shops in 1933 for 'endangering communal order and tranquility' and later deported 3000 Jews to concentration camps where the majority perished.

Intent on helping as much as possible, my father and the other recruits were allocated the task of listening to telephone conversations of various officials and suspected war criminals. On the basis of the conversations they overheard they were to write reports and arrest those on whom they were able to discover strong criminal evidence. My father sneers wryly as he remembers the ease with which evidence was accrued; they denied all knowledge of concentration camps but readily denounced each other, explaining in detail how their neighbours or associates were involved in the Nazi Party. The American authorities requested as much information as possible about Konrad Adenauer, the first post-war Chancellor of Germany, but none of the many conversations that were listened to revealed a Nazi past or any other detrimental declarations.

The members of the Intelligence Service arrested several minor to middle league Nazis but my father sighs bitterly as he reflects on the fact that it "was all a waste of time". The Cold War had begun and the United States authorities were preoccupied with the Communists and the East Germans, and therefore were only interested in the capture of more senior members of the Nazi Party. The criminals who had been arrested were either given excessively short or suspended sentences, or were

simply permitted to remain unpunished. After one year he concluded that there was little point in putting his all into a mission that resulted in him being continually disheartened and frustrated with the authorities' lack of cooperation.

Appalled, despondent and discouraged he returned to New York, seething with resentment at the dishonourable decisions made throughout his year in Darmstadt.

13

Upon his return to New York, my father moved into the flat that his parents and siblings were already sharing, in 106th Street in Manhattan, and they began to acclimatise once again to life as a family together. He decided to follow in Morris' footsteps and become a jeweller, primarily dealing in antiques. His eye for detail, instinctive ability to gravitate towards items he could sell for a sizeable profit and excellent negotiating skills all contributed to the makings of a successful business. Within a few months he and one of his associates elected to form a partnership; he was initially concerned about the man's tendency towards melancholy and discontentment, hoping that it would not have an effect on their dealings, but he had also become a close friend, so unwilling to jeopardise this, he continued with the plans to form a joint enterprise.

It transpired that the experience was one that would teach him to be guided by his intuition and would instil in him the discipline to separate business and friendship. His German partner was plagued by the horrors of his past and regularly struggled to differentiate between his tormenting hallucinations and the reality that surrounded him. Unwilling or unable to accept well-meaning support from those close to him, including his wife with whom he consequently had an unhappy, turbulent relationship, he tragically committed suicide approximately one year after establishing the professional partnership. Apart from the financial consequences that my father was compelled to contend with, he was left disconsolate and wondered if any actions on his part could have prevented such catastrophic circumstances. At heart, he knew that he could never have single-handedly liberated a man from such severe mental illness, but an element of guilt stayed with him nonetheless and it took a long time for him to recover from the incident.

Not long afterwards, he formed another partnership, this time with Felix, who had also opted to go into the jewellery business. Felix's forte lay primarily in selling, so my father would make regular trips to Europe where he would buy the jewellery and ship it back to New York. He enjoyed the travelling immensely and quickly established that his most

successful and frequent purchases were from the Hatton Garden area of London, the UK's equivalent of 47th Street. Not only was his time in London the most lucrative, but he also began to develop an attachment to the city, taking great pleasure in the unusual benefit of large, tranquil, beautifully landscaped parks in close proximity to the bustling, vibrant centre of town.

For the first time since any of them could remember, life fell into an untroubled routine. The three men became familiar and at ease with many of the other jewellery dealers in 47th Street, a large number of whom came from similar European backgrounds, and my father continued to enjoy travelling, particularly to London. Lilly excelled at her job and gathered a wide circle of friends, and Sarah settled well, contentedly watching her family thrive. And so the years passed.

In 1952 Lilly met the gentle, courteous man who was to become her husband a year later. Reuben Lewis (originally Shutz) was born in Lithuania and had quite remarkably maintained his dignity and courtliness despite the inconceivable atrocities he had experienced during the Holocaust; unimaginably, he had survived three concentration camps but had heartbreakingly lost almost every member of his family. He nonetheless entered the state of marriage with a wealth of affection to bestow upon his bride and has remained an eminently devoted and doting husband for the past sixty years. It was not long after their nuptials that Felix met Evelyn, a captivating, glamorous New Yorker who fascinated and enchanted him. They subsequently wed and sustained a happy marriage until Felix sadly lost his battle against brain cancer in 1996.

In the 1950s my father was delighted for his siblings' contentment and overjoyed to be an uncle when Lilly gave birth to a daughter, Rosanne and Evelyn to a son, David. He treasured his times with them but was far too attached to the freedoms and benefits of bachelorhood to consider the idea of long-term commitment. His lifestyle was of considerable concern to his parents who wanted him to settle down as Lilly and Felix had done, but he relished the liberty of independence and the lack of obligation to a spouse. He was relieved that Sarah and Morris had grandchildren to distract them from worries about his future, and even more so when Rosanne became a sister to Jack, and David a brother to Steven.

He vowed that he would not settle down unless someone truly extraordinary came into his life, and that if this did not happen before his fortieth birthday, he would remain unwed until the end of his days.

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Although Lilly loved the excitement and energy of New York, she loathed the long, cold winters and felt that a warmer climate and slower pace of life would be more suitable for her, Rosanne and Jack. Reuben did not disagree, so in 1959 they moved to a spacious bungalow on the bank of a river in Miami, Florida. This was the first time that Sarah had been obliged to endure a significant distance from her beloved daughter, and despite fully appreciating Lilly's reasons for relocating, she found the arrangement profoundly difficult to adjust to. Her sorrow was eased, however, by Lilly's undeniable happiness in her new surroundings and by the beneficial out-door life that the children were now able to lead.

In the July after their relocation, Sarah and Morris flew to Miami to stay with them. The journey was tiring and Morris, who did not have the energy of his former years, found it to be a strenuous undertaking. His fatigued, devitalised condition was, no doubt, due in part to his refusal to attempt to put an end to his habit of smoking at least thirty cigarettes per day. His weakness upon arriving in Miami cast a shadow over the thrill of seeing the new house that he and Sarah had heard so much about, and provoked immense concern on the part of the family members who surrounded him. Lilly urged him to rest, but when he began to experience severe chest pains an ambulance was called and he was hospitalised immediately. Sarah contacted my father and Felix, and tearfully informed them of the distressing circumstances; shocked and anxious they booked seats on the first flight they could, but the familiar feeling of helplessness at being so far from their loved ones at a time of need settled uneasily in the pits of their stomachs.

There was nothing anyone could do. The two men arrived in Miami to the news that Morris had suffered a fatal heart attack. Distraught that they had been denied the opportunity to be by his side to comfort him as he took his final breaths, they desperately tried to find the strength to console their tormented, grief-stricken mother and sister. To some extent they felt that fate had determined that, like the turning of a sadistic wheel,

history had repeated itself; just as Morris had been condemned to the sorrow of being apart from his father when he had passed away, they would have to live with the same regret. The family was together, at least, to be with him as he made his last journey and was buried in a cemetery in Miami.

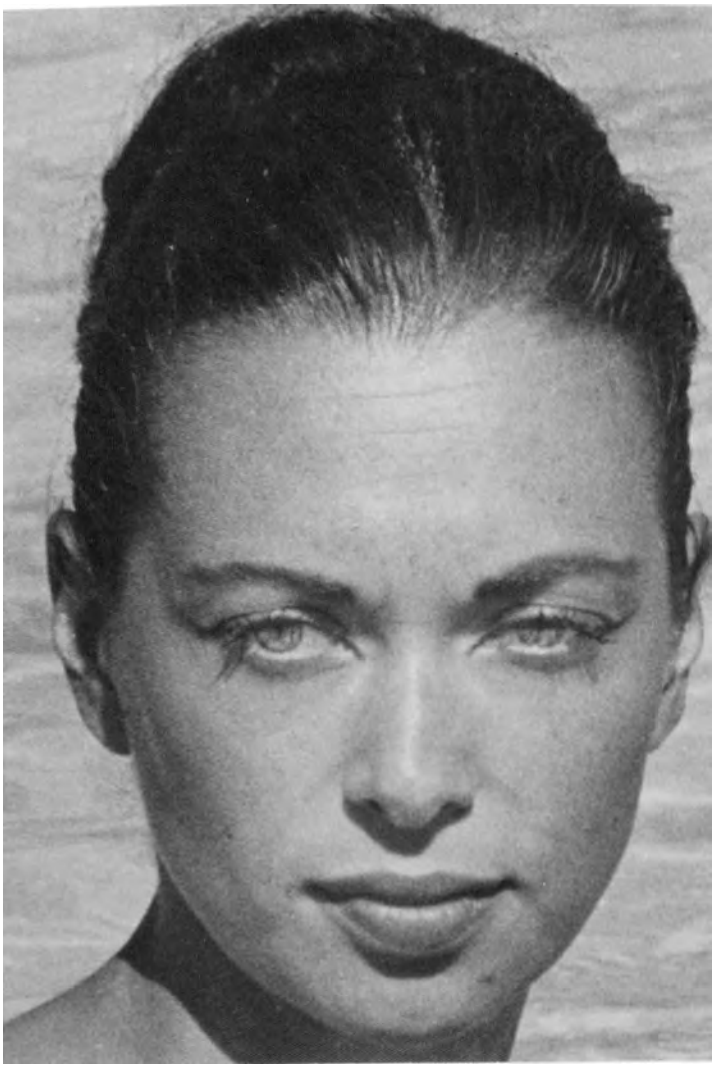
Sarah and her sons returned to New York but without Morris she felt unable to cope in such an impersonal, hectic metropolis. Felix was largely occupied with work and family life, and my father now spent the vast majority of his time in a rented flat in London, so neither were surprised when she announced her desire to move to Miami to be near Lilly and enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle. A flat was found for her, and despite the grief that would continue to live within her at the loss of her husband when he was just sixty-four years old, and her inability to share her latter years with him, she adapted to her new environment happily enough and took great pleasure in living near her daughter. Three years later when Lilly and Reuben announced they were expecting their third child, she was thrilled to have an event to look forward to and enthusiastically welcomed their son, Mark, to the family.

My father's bachelorhood still worried his mother and siblings but he was adamant that he did not want to be pressurised into settling down. In late 1963, when he was thirty-nine, a family friend insisted on handing him a slip of paper containing the name and telephone number of a lady she was acquainted with. Assuring him that she was certain he would find her both charming and attractive, she beseeched him to contact her. "You never have to see Barbara again if you don't get on," she urged. Steadfastly opposed to the notion of a blind date, he expressed his appreciation for her concern and promptly wedged the irritating document into the back if his wallet. If he hoped that his well-meaning friend would forget about her matchmaking attempt, he was most certainly mistaken. Eventually, towards the end of January 1964 during a two-week return trip to New York, after several months of devising various excuses, he succumbed to the pressure he was under and dialled the number.

"Herman Tennenbaum?" queried the recipient of the call who had, by this point, forgotten that she had been advised to expect to hear from him. He reminded her who had given him her number and she briefly asked herself if she should even go on a date with a man who had taken so

long to contact her, particularly one with such a bizarre name. With two such unenthusiastic parties, it was a wonder that the date ever took place. My father's diary was already full of other social engagements, and in an effort to squeeze in what he considered to be a favour to a friend without interfering with his other arrangements, he offered to pick her up at 10pm and take her out for a drink on the way home from one such rendezvous. "I'd rather make it earlier," she said. So grudgingly he agreed to call for her at 7pm, resentful at the disruption this would cause.

On the evening of the 28th of January, he rang the doorbell of the small flat in which she lived. The door opened and there stood the most magnificently beautiful woman he had ever seen.



Barbara (1963)

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It seemed like several moments passed before either of them could speak. He stood, mesmerised by her auburn mane, slim but voluptuous figure and alluring green eyes; she was enchanted by his “lovely face” and the gentleness he exuded. She commented later that “it was the first time the dog didn’t bark when a stranger came to the door”. She finally found her voice and almost reluctantly, he thought, invited him in to meet her parents. He could see immediately why she had appeared to hesitate; her mother introduced herself but glared at him icily while her father lingered behind his wife somewhat meekly. It did not take long to ascertain that this was not a congenial environment.

As soon as they left the building, the awkwardness of minutes earlier was all but forgotten; it was as if they had known each other for years. My father’s all-important social life slipped away into insignificance as they sat in a local wine bar, sipping drinks, their eyes on nothing but each other. They talked until the early hours of the morning and counted the minutes until they could see each other for a second time. Two days later he took her out again and, by the end of the evening, was even more enraptured; not just by her exquisite looks but by the spellbinding, intriguing blend of immense inner strength and endearing vulnerability that he could sense lay just beneath her ravishing façade. His thoughts turned to the wrath he had detected in her mother when she had met him, and the apparent feebleness that her father had emanated. What sort of upbringing, he wondered, riveted, had this fascinating creature endured?

Her father had spent the majority of her childhood convinced that he would make his fortune somehow, somewhere, if he travelled far enough; he was quite prepared to sacrifice family stability to find the elusive pot of gold. He insisted that they rent out their home in California and try to find success elsewhere. Consequently his wife and only child were hauled from state to state; month after month, year after year. Occasionally enrolled in schools, but more often educated in whatever

hotel or rented flat they were in by private tutors when they could be found, his daughter was denied the rights to be carefree, sociable and secure that a child deserves. Of course, he never found the greener grass or the more plentiful opportunities and eventually, when he had exhausted himself and his long-suffering family, he conceded defeat, sold the house in California and moved to a small rented flat in New York. By this time his daughter was nineteen years old and far from finally having the chance to pursue her own dreams, she found herself compelled to be the main breadwinner, and had no choice but to pass on the majority of her earnings to her parents.

Her mother, trapped in a loveless marriage, felt her bitterness and resentment increase with each passing year. Rather than seek comfort and companionship from her daughter, the pitiful child became the focus for her fury at the circumstances she was in; she convinced both herself and her little girl that motherhood had imprisoned her in miserable matrimony and that her child's existence was responsible for her torment. This did not stop her from hoping that her daughter would be the key to the door of a better life, and she spent the little money they had on many years of acting and singing lessons for her; she would concentrate on trying to mould her into the famous actress that she had always longed to be. Dreams of the bright lights of Broadway did not, however, put food in their mouths and when they moved to New York, despite the years of preparation for stardom, she was forced to concede that the nineteen year old would be put to better use going out to work. Determined, still, to get the most out of her, she switched her ambitions to finding the wealthiest husband she could for her; one who was certain to ensure that his mother-in-law was financially well looked after as well.

She took an instant dislike to any man that her daughter met without her intervention, convinced that she would be entirely incapable of selecting a suitable match without her involvement. Consequently, men, and there were many who were initially in awe of the beauty they saw, were scared away before their interest grew any further. Too terrified of her mother's rage to confront her, and convinced into believing that she was nothing without her, the young woman did as she was told. But as the years passed, and as she matured and blossomed into her mid-twenties and beyond, there stirred in her the beginnings of the realisation of her own self-worth, and with that, the recognition of the terrible injustices she had

been subjected to throughout her life. Indignation and hurt began to swell from deep within her, and an understanding that she deserved a better life emerged from the insecurities of her youth.

It was at the age of thirty-one that she opened the door to my father and knew, before any words were spoken, that she was staring into the face of her destiny. On their third date, in an intimate Italian restaurant, with the tenderness of sentimental background music caressing the ambience that surrounded them, he asked her if she would go to Europe with him. She knew that the idea of her as a single woman travelling around Europe with a man, would be too much for her mother to bear, and with sadness in her heart she explained as much to him. “Then marry me.” The words tumbled from the man who had been a confirmed bachelor days earlier. She barely breathed as she stared back at him and knew that nothing had ever felt so perfectly right. “Yes. I will.” This was her chance of happiness and she was not going to let it pass.

The following few days were a blur of wonder and excitement. They arranged to marry in a registry office on Wednesday the 5th of February, just eight days after they had first met, and two months before my father’s fortieth birthday. They then planned to honeymoon in Miami where they would have a religious ceremony in the synagogue that Sarah belonged to. My father phoned his sister to inform her of the proceedings and ask her if she would make the necessary arrangements with the synagogue. “What?!!” His future wife could hear the shriek from the other side of the room. She, then, told her father who was less surprised than she thought he might be, but nonetheless refused to be with her when she wed. She asked him to inform her mother after the ceremony had taken place; she could not face her anger now and knew that she would try to stop them. Felix was asked to be a witness, but assumed that it was all a joke and was nowhere to be seen at the allotted time; an unsuspecting colleague from 47th Street was then recruited for the role and was dragged to the registry office, mumbling in confusion.

It was at once the most insane yet splendid act of their lives. They affirmed their vows with absolute conviction and knew, without the slightest doubt in their minds, that they had made the right decision. There would be difficult times ahead, but together they would find the strength to cope with whatever challenges stood in their way.

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Barbara and Herman on their honeymoon in Miami (1964)

And so my parents' lives together began. My mother left for Miami tingling with excited anticipation at a future she could now look forward to, but unable to fully escape from the burden of guilt that had been laid at her feet by her mother who had been incandescent with rage at what she had done. She desperately tried not to think of the ill that had been wished upon her marriage and of the comeuppance that she was certain awaited her at every corner.

The week in Miami was a whirlwind of introductions to new family members who were still reeling from shock that my father had not only finally married, but had done so to a woman he barely knew. Sarah was delighted that her son had found himself such a beautiful bride and made no secret of looking forward to becoming a grandmother again; this was a wish that her new daughter-in-law was exceedingly keen to grant her. She longed to hold her own child in her arms, and to provide it with the security, warmth and stability that had been so lacking in her own

upbringing; perhaps the birth of a baby would prompt her mother to find forgiveness in her heart and be proud of the woman her daughter had become. This was not far from her thoughts as the religious ceremony was conducted, and she was surrounded by her husband's family but none of her own.

The newlyweds returned to New York so that my mother could collect the belongings that would accompany her to London. Her parents agreed to have dinner with them in a restaurant, but it soon became apparent that the blessing and understanding that my mother coveted so earnestly was not, and never would be, forthcoming. Her mother was "very antagonistic" towards her son-in-law who was relieved that they were soon due to leave for Europe; to him it was blatantly evident that no marriage could survive under the constant glare of resentment and wrath that they would be faced with daily if they were to stay in New York. There is no doubt that the situation clouded the thrill of starting married life together in London; my mother tried to silence the condemnatory, reproachful voices that echoed in her ears, and courageously looked to the future knowing that, despite accusations that she was responsible for destroying her parents' lives, she had as much right to happiness as anyone else.

She took some time to acclimatise to the British way of life, initially finding the reserved manner of a large number of people she encountered to be somewhat stifling and unnatural. Many, in turn, had preconceptions about her behaviour and way of speaking, rendering the first few years in the UK somewhat more challenging than she had anticipated. She travelled frequently with my father and particularly enjoyed the regular business trips to Paris during which she would spend time with his relatives while he was working. They returned to Miami and New York when they could and delighted in seeing Lilly, Felix and their families. My mother visited her parents whenever they travelled to the United States, but they steadfastly continued to refuse to accept her marriage, and to behave in an aloof, bitter fashion. When her mother contracted cancer, she blamed her daughter for the rapid deterioration of her health, and she died imprinting upon her child such a tendency for self-reproach that many years passed before she was able to rid herself completely of misplaced guilt.

The weeks became months, and the months, years. My parents had all they could have wished for apart from the one desperately wanted addition to their lives that they yearned for intensely with growing despair. Their heartache at being unable to conceive became increasingly overwhelming, and eventually the diagnosis of the possibility of large fibroids in my mother's womb along with the prognosis that pregnancy may then be an impossibility, devastated them beyond measure. Initially they tried to remain hopeful but as the years passed they felt they had no choice but to come to terms with the hand that life had dealt them. They gradually began to learn to accept their fate and the fact that the pining and the tears would achieve nothing.

And then, eight months after her fortieth birthday, my mother became aware that her monthly cycle, usually regular, had not occurred as expected. She attempted to stifle her rising excitement, terrified of further disappointment, but thought it best to request that her doctor conduct a pregnancy test. She waited for the result, trembling. "Congratulations Mrs Tennenbaum…" were the only words she heard. She rushed home, repeating the words over and over again, and tried to process the staggering, wonderful revelation. My father reacted to the news by pacing across the living room several times, in stunned silence. Neither could believe that, against all the odds, a miracle had occurred.

I managed to remain in my mother's womb for seven months. On the first of March 1974 when she was forty-one years old and weeks before my father turned fifty, I was wrenched unceremoniously into the world, weighing just over three and a half pounds, after my parents only just succeeded in arriving at the University College Hospital in time for an emergency caesarean to take place. With one hip pulled completely out of its socket, I spent the first six weeks of my life in the special care baby unit. My parents gazed at me in wonder, still barely able to believe that at long last, they had the child they had longed for so desperately and agonisingly for so many years.

17

From the moment of my birth I was, and always have been the centre of my parents' world. They were overjoyed when I learned to walk, having recovered from six months in a cast to rectify my dislocated hip, and wept at school sports days when I won races, allaying any fears of lasting damage. Although gifted in athletics and creative writing, I regret to say that as I child I caused them considerable concern. I was quiet, nervous and painfully shy; I drifted anxiously through each day in a dream-like state, terrified of other children, the harsh discipline enforced at school, and generally of any time spent away from the secure cocoon of my parents' warmth.

Me (1977)

I loved the comfort of being surrounded by family; my fondest childhood memories are of our annual holidays in Miami at the end of which I would sob bitterly at the sorrow of having to leave. The only shadow cast over these was my grandmother's ever-worsening Alzheimer's Disease, which rendered her increasingly unable to communicate with her family, and to which she eventually succumbed at the age of ninety-nine.

When I was ten years old, my father decided that a better life awaited me in Israel. So we moved into a beautiful flat in Netanya, and he hoped that I would thrive and flourish in the sea air, living an outdoor life and enjoying the company of the neighbourhood children who would teach me Hebrew. To an extent, he was right; I grew in confidence somewhat and learned to speak the language fluently enough to converse effortlessly, but I made no attempt to succeed at school and it seemed that such success was not expected. I do not recall any punitive measures for not once returning a completed homework assignment to my teachers. My father continued to work in London and would travel back and forth, spending approximately two to three weeks in the flat that we had kept, and then returning to Netanya for a similar time span. My mother was rendered exceedingly melancholy by the arrangement, and after two years she refused to continue to abide such long separations from her husband; she had never settled happily in Israel and was adamant that returning to London was the best solution for us as a family unit. My father was forced to admit that he too had not adjusted fully, and with a heavy heart he agreed to sell the flat and return to London permanently. We endured one last separation before we left, however, as my mother flew to the United States to visit her father on his death bed, and at last made her peace with him. "I'm sorry," he said to her before he died. I had only met him once, and somewhat bitter that he had never expressed an interest in his only grandchild, was unable to bring myself to grieve at his passing.

Fortunately I succeeded in obtaining a place in a good school not far from where we lived, and having virtually missed out on two years of education which had encompassed the last year of primary school and the first of secondary, I resumed my learning. I waved goodbye to my mother as I entered the school grounds, tense and apprehensive, knowing that academically, I would be far behind my classmates. I sat in the corner of the classroom, frightened and ill at ease, petrified to

attempt to befriend children who had already known each other for a year; they in turn, in the most part, had little interest in a child who appeared unfriendly and unapproachable. On my third day, as I wondered if my happiness and self-assurance would grow with the passing of time, I was summoned to the headmistress' office.

"I'm afraid your mother has been run over…." She continued to speak but whatever she was saying became in an incomprehensible jumble of placations and assurances. I took nothing in, my head spinning from shock; a small part of me expected my mother to come rushing into the room in her usual manner, explaining apologetically that it was all a misunderstanding or even a joke. But it was not. She had been knocked down and run over by a rubbish truck as she was crossing Oxford Street in London's West End. Miraculously, incredibly, she had survived, but her right leg had been crushed from the knee downwards. If I was thankful for anything, it was that I had not been with her to witness the incident. Her timing could not have been worse; my father was in Israel overseeing the sale of our flat and as it was a Friday, and at that time air traffic was not permitted on the Jewish Sabbath, he had to wait until Sunday before he was able to come home. We had no other relatives in the UK. Somehow, when my mother regained consciousness and was asked by paramedics who they could contact for her, she remembered the phone number of family friends. The situation was explained to them, and they agreed to pick me up from school and look after me until my father's return.

My mother dealt with her plight with the characteristic fiery inner strength and determination that had got her through so many other dark times in her life. She steadfastly and unyieldingly refused to allow any surgeon to amputate her leg, and despite several suggestions that this would be the most viable option and the only one that would allow her to walk again, she indefatigably maintained her resolve. "You do the cutting and the sawing, and I'll do the healing," she announced to her surgeon, who, unused to such resoluteness, eventually agreed to do what he could to save her leg. Throughout the following year she braved one major operation after another, each one failing to fuse the bones that were so damaged. With each disappointment, she became increasingly determined to prove that she had made the right decision, and would not permit my father or me to slip into a state of despair. He never did buckle

under the strain and tension that we were all under, and in his unassuming, methodical way, maintained the daily routine of life as much as was possible, ensuring that I still had the stability that was so vital for a child of my age.

I remember little of the year following my mother's accident. I withdrew further into my own private world, existing through each day and brightening only in the evenings when we visited her in hospital. Finally, at the end of that long year, and as a result of the fifth surgical procedure and the last option that her surgeon could think of attempting, her bones began to fuse and she was able to begin the long road of learning to walk again. Her right leg was now two and a half inches shorter than her left, and she required specially adapted shoes before even attempting to walk, but despite all the predictions to the contrary, she made slow but continual progress. After approximately four years, she reached the point at which she would improve no further, but this was still more of an achievement than anyone had thought possible; she could walk up to approximately a mile, a little more slowly than the rest of us, but confidently none the less.

Barbara and Herman (early 1990s)

After the years of set-backs, intense pain and sheer determination, there are few words that could adequately describe how proud I was, and still am, of her. She is an inspiration to her family and indeed to anyone faced with the odds against them. In the last decade, beset by considerable deterioration in her condition, she has displayed the same immense strength of character, undergoing several problematic operations with the same meritorious courage. She is now eighty years of age and despite the restrictions brought about by a severe and incapacitating disability, she is a vibrant and extremely active woman, managing her own drama group for retired people, writing and directing all the plays and donating the profits made to a charity that helps other disabled people.

My father has proved that age is not a barrier to remaining physically active, and at the age of eighty-nine, still walks for almost ten miles every day. Also determined to thrive in the face of adversity, he underwent a triple bypass and valve replacement operation twelve years ago, and ten days later, insisted on walking home from the hospital. He still attends the London Diamond Bourse in Hatton Garden nearly every day, and is a revelatory example to many of his younger colleagues.

My parents have unremittingly provided me with unconditional love and wholehearted support, and despite all they have endured, have guided me wisely through the perils and pitfalls of life. I am happy to say that as I progressed through school, I gradually became increasingly self-confident both academically and socially, and by the time I went to university, the woefully timid, anxious child I had once been was nothing more than a buried collection of unpleasant memories. It is quite possible, in fact, that those who know me now would have some difficulty believing the descriptions of my early years.

At the age of twenty-four I married my wonderful husband, Stephen, a chartered surveyor and our greatest achievement has been to produce our two beautiful children, Benjamin (Benji) and Elisa. Nothing has given my parents more joy than to watch their grandchildren grow and learn, and to bestow upon them the wisdom borne of their own experiences. As I look into my father’s warm, gentle eyes, I see the small boy fleeing from Nazi terror, the teenage child torn from his parents’ arms, the young man fighting for his life and for justice, and I see the deep love for the children who adore him. What an extraordinary, awe-inspiring life! I think of my

mother's own, personal wars and wonder at the unbreakable spirit of a magnificent woman whose parents could so easily have destroyed her and who has defied adversity with every fibre of her being.

Barbara, Herman, Benji and Elisa (2013)

As my son prepares for his Bar Mitzvah, and reflects on what it will entail to become a man, he could not have finer examples to follow and to gain knowledge from. I thank them from the bottom of my heart and from the depths of my soul for being the most exceptional parents and grandparents that we could ever, ever have wished for.

The End