

The Memories of Margaret (nee Robitschek) Hoenig

Taken from: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~prohel/stories/robitschek-hoenig.html>

A note from Chaz:

Margerate Hoenig is the daughter of Moritz Robitschek, a younger brother of Eman Robitschek. These two brothers were partners in M. Robitschek & Co. and their two families spent much time together. The following account reveals much about their way of life and the social circles in which they moved.

Editorial Comments: Marian and I have been going over different fragments of Granny's autobiographical sketches that she wrote at different times for different people, and probably for different reasons. Granny moved between the Czech, the German, and the English spellings of names... but doesn't that really reflect her changing landscapes throughout her life? There is quite a bit of duplication, but we wanted to let everyone read her writing without much editing because it so reflects who she was and will always be to us. The few things we edited were added in italics for easy recognition and for clarification for our children and others who might not have heard the stories first-hand from Granny. We also added the section headings, trying to make some order of what were often run-on paragraphs and to clarify which of her own grandparents Granny was referring to in her descriptions. We have both laughed and choked up many times as we went through her stories. To give you a frame of reference, we think most of this was written in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The House where I grew up

The house where I grew up was a small mansion, built in the Biedermeier time, around 1830, of solid stone; the walls were thick and it was quite impossible to draw in a nail; there were deep cool cellars and one windowless damp room with a stone floor and a vaulted ceiling which we children compared to a dungeon; we were scared to go there; it was called the "old bathroom" although I doubt that it ever served as one. It served as a storeroom. The house was very spacious, with many corridors, small cabinets, and five staircases and outside stairs; a glassed in gallery ran all along the inner front, above the courtyard. My father rebuilt the house several times. In the summer, my mother used to move the entire household "downstairs", to the so called "summer kitchen." Then we would have our meals in the "Sala" or garden room, which had a patterned stone floor and wide arched windows with deep window seats. A reconditioned billiard table served as a dining table seating about 18. In the summer we children were admitted to the dinner table, for lunch, whereas in winter we had our meals in the nursery where we also had our lessons. Adjoining to the sala was the "colonnade" where we used to play; our older cousins who spent the summer with us, and their friends performed some theatre there and we were intrigued with all the secrecy of

rehearsals to which we were not admitted; we also guessed - without really knowing what it meant - some romantic happenings.

I also recall hornbeams, robinias, European chestnuts, and sycamores, and a small grove of birch trees; in the spring there were patches of grape hyacinths and crocus under the birches. We loved that garden, or park, the long alley with its chestnut and linden trees along the wall, the two small hills, one of which we called the "Serpentine", the branch of the river flowing along; it was taboo to go near the river. As a matter of fact, many years later, the small son of our repair shop manager drowned there. In the back of the house was a corral where the old riding horse, Strotter, enjoyed his old age. Three teams of horses lived in the stables - one team used as carriage horses. I remember our dogs - the Great Dane, "Lord" was our favorite one, then came "Roland", the St. Bernard, and then all of the German Shepherds.

Between the house and the factory were the park and the fruit orchard. We children were never allowed alone beyond the gates of the orchard, but we did not have the urge to go further - for us the garden was our small empire. There were meadows with wild flowers - daisies, forget-me-nots, wild geranium, buttercups, pale and dark violets, dianthus, wild strawberries, bluebells, and wild cyclamen; in one corner there were Turks' cap lilies near a pile of rocks overgrown with moss and fern, which we called "the hero's tomb" for no special reason. And there were dry rock walls with moss and fern growing from the crevices. There was also a large kitchen garden with greenhouses, with strawberry beds and raspberry and current and gooseberry bushes; there were the hotbeds with potatoes and cucumbers and all sorts of vegetables forced to ripen out of season. It was a children's paradise - and I am convinced that we sometimes were rather trying for the gardener! In the fall, we would make a fire in the potato field and bake potatoes and corn. And sometimes in the summer we would pester our governess until she would give in and go with us to the woods, or to the edge of the shallow river at the edge of the woods where we would dig for petrefacts (artifacts) - and how proud we were when we found a piece of shale with the imprint of a fern or a snail or shell!

Sometimes we were taken for "excursions" in the carriage. At that time there were hardly any automobiles in our country. It was a great sensation when Dr. Kantor, my mother's cousin, got his first automobile. It was open, and all of the levers and shifts were on the right hand side, outside the car. Everybody would don heavy dustcoats, caps and veils; and whenever they ventured on an outing, at least one of the coachmen had to stand by with his team ready. Invariably, a messenger from one of the neighboring villages would arrive on foot or bicycle to summon help because the car got stuck. I also have some amusing memories from the time Dr. Kantor who was a medical doctor and interested in all kind of research, kept deer for experiments in a fenced-in part of the park. Sometimes a deer would jump the enclosure and threaten us as we played somewhere in the garden. We loved animals and were sorry for those poor captive deer but on the other hand, felt like heroes when they came near us.

And there are other memories of our older cousins who were kind to us - my father's many nephews were often staying at the house, as trainees in the factory. They invented all kinds of games for us, and they acted at Christmas time as Santa Claus and his helpers. They wrote plays for us and it was great fun to perform on festive occasions. And they taught us to ski, and skate, and target shooting. One of my cousins had spent time in the Mid-East, tracing a new railroad, and he told us hair-raising stories of his adventures - he must have had a colorful imagination and I can still remember some of them after almost 60 years! This children's paradise ended for me when I was sent to boarding school, at the age of 12.

My childhood

Memories of my childhood go back to my age of about three or four, when we lived in Babi near Nachod, in a large house. On the third floor I recall a very wide staircase with large landing, and the stairs to the attic as well as the view from the attic dormer windows towards the German borders. There was the road leading to Kudova, a small spa in Silesia, and there was a statue of an Austrian infantryman, as a memorial to the first Austrian soldier killed in the war of 1866. I cannot remember the rooms, only a lamp of the Tiffany kind of Art Nouveau, with a colored glass shade, hanging above the table in the living room. And I have a clear picture of the garden, which at that time seemed immense (when I visited there some twenty years later, it was actually quite small) and the peony plants; we used to play with the faded blossoms.

Later toward fall, Uncle Eman and aunt Elise and their family returned to Vienna, and my mother came home, and we settled in the big house. There was a lot to be discovered there. It was built of stone, in about 1820, and had originally been a paper mill; it had changed hands several times; one of the owners, a Hungarian German, Herr von Sabel, was very interested in trees and very knowledgeable. He bought huge trees from an arboretum in Silesia, which belonged to the Duke of Sagan. Our night watchman, Kastner, told me that in 1859, when the trainloads of trees arrived, he as a young boy was hired to help unload them. There were four varieties of Oak, strange red Maples, Filbert nut trees, with nuts in clusters, Black Walnuts, Sycamores, Robinias, various types of Birches and Elms, and lots of conifers, chestnuts, hornbeams, masses of linden trees, Japanese sophoras and Catalpas, which are really rare in Europe. It was just paradise - all the meadow full of flowers, wild cyclamen and wood lilies in the shade, a small rockery with ferns and flowers, two small hills with shrubs - one we called the play hill, and the other "the Serpentine". We did not mind at all to be always confined to the "compound" because there was always something to do, to watch. And it was so independently on its own.

After passing the factory yard one reached the park gates, which were always open. Then one either walked through the fruit orchard (with cherry, pear, and apple trees, and very few plum trees, and filbert shrubs - the nuts were always eaten by many squirrels). Then a long walk through the garden - passing the first hill (the play hill, with some bars, a swing, and a sand pit) along the birches - there were daffodils and scilla on the ground underneath

the birches - and a small stand of conifers and there was an opening in front of the house which was known as "minor mansion: - in contrast to the large mansion, owned by Prince Kinsky, in town. In front of the house was a rondeau, planted with pink floribunda roses (Astrid Spaeth) and beautiful Persian lilac bushes. There was Virginia creeper on the house, and wisteria on the pillars at the entrance. The park was bordered on one side by the arm of the river and on the other side by a long walk shaded by chestnut and linden trees, along an old stone wall. Behind the house was a newly planted part of the garden, with rose beds, a small wading pool, and a pergola with roses and clematis. And beyond a wall stretched the vegetable and cutting garden, the hotbeds, the green houses, the vegetable cellar, and the farm buildings. Farther out, and all around the property, were fields where we grew wheat, rye, corn, and potatoes. And the fields were surrounded by a double row of spruce.

We had a huge St. Bernard, "Roland" who was a good friend, until he got old, deaf and blind; an old horse, Strotter, who lived out his old days in a corral, and armies of cats who always stayed in the barn and obviously lived on the mice there, but never attacked the rats which had the run of the edge of the river. In the early days we did not have refrigerators. In late winter the ice was cut on one of the ponds, and the blocks were brought in and deposited in the cellar house, built underground, and accessible by stairs from the back yard. The ice blocks covered with straw usually kept until the fall; and everything to be cooled was brought down there - milk, butter, fruit, meat, preserves - there were not small storage rooms there, and it was really freezing cold there. In the back of the yard was also the washhouse. Laundry was washed every Monday. Two women would come and do the scrubbing and washing and boiling, the housemaids had to help. The laundry was rinsed in the river, spread on the "bleaching lawn" in the sun, frequently sprinkled from water cans then washed again, and hung up to dry in the sun. Then it was pressed, folded, in the huge press, and only then ironed - again a special ironing lady came to do the fine laundry and father's shirts.

We were on the outskirts of the small town, and somehow never felt that we "belonged". And we did not meet many of the town people. Both my brothers for a while attended elementary school, but at the age of nine both were taken to Vienna where they lived with aunt Lori, my father's oldest sister who had also brought up my father.

I remember the day Theo was born, and I was not happy; I had wanted a dog - and at least an older brother, but not a younger one; I had heard too often, that I had to be good, to set an example for Hans, who was younger - and now another one seemed too much. I also did not like the presence of the doctor around the house - I abhorred him, he was rough and noisy and ill-mannered, and I found him offensive.

Another trip, which remained very clear in my memory was to Abbazia, on the Adriatic; which later became Yugoslav territory. It was near Fiume, in a bay with lovely almost sub-tropic vegetation, laurel trees, and an abundance of violets and primroses along the paths. We arrived one evening very late, after

a whole day train trip from Vienna, and in the morning Fraulein Zechner pulled up the shades and called us to the window to see the ocean - and that remained undelible in my memory. My father stayed with us for a few days, and that was most exciting because he would take us for boat trips and excursions along the coast. I have faint memories of the harbor in Fiume, the piles of sulphur and of coal there, and the fisherman returning from the sea...and a trip by rowboat to the tiny harbor of Ica, and the walk back. At that time the Mayor of Vienna, Lueger, was vacationing in Abbazia; he had a slight resemblance to my father - both were tall and slim, and had white beards, but my father was so much better looking and more elegant! - And sometimes people would bow to my father and greet him, thinking that he was Lueger; but to us who were used that everybody greeted my father, back home, it seemed only natural! The weeks in Abbazia were lovely. Every morning we went down to the small rocky beach and played there with shells we found, and tried, with the Kubelik children who also were vacationing there, to catch one of those tiny lizards that were everywhere - needless to say we never caught one!

Grandmother who spoiled us always with gifts, had given me a diary, and I started entering all events in it; one of them was the fact that Hans was to start school in the fall; I had noted it in my diary, that Father had told him that he would go to school, and... “the poor child cried...”

Gerson Roubicek and Betti Faktor

Grandmother (Betti Faktor) I remember very well. Everybody loved her, not only in her village. She had been raised in a small town near Prague; her maiden name was Factor, and I knew that she had some nephews who sometimes came to visit, especially one who was a special friend of father's. Grandmother lived in a small house in Praskolesy, about 2 hours train ride from Prague, to the West. It was a special treat to visit her, and when I was allowed to ask a favor, it was always that I wanted to visit her. Next to the house were stables where she kept a cow, and chicken and ducks and geese; her old maid, Verunka, would tend to those, and I still can see her walking, with a stick in her hand, to the creek, following the flock of geese and ducks. The garden was small, but well tended, with rose and raspberry bushes, plum, apple, and pear trees. There was a gazebo, where one had one's meals, and an outhouse (and I still can see the spider webs in it!).

She raised nine children: her oldest son, **Joseph**, was very young when he left for Vienna to go to school there. Later aunt **Lori** went there. She became a hair dresser. At that time, there were no beauty parlors. Ladies had either maids who washed and set their hair, or a hair dresser would come every morning to do it. Aunt Lori had her steady customers and was on her rounds every day of the year. In between she raised her family of five, and took care of younger brothers who in the course of time were all sent to Vienna for their schooling. Her husband had a job with the Vienna Exchange, and barely made a living. In later years my father invited him to come to Chocen and to supervise the work in the reconstruction of the factory. He remained several years with us, and I remember him as a very quiet and friendly little man.

Grandmother came every winter to visit and stayed with us for several months. When my father started production in Chocen, he had hired some workers from the old village -mostly on grandmother's recommendation. Every Sunday morning, grandmother Betti would walk to the gatekeeper's lodge. A chair was ready for her. Soon, she was surrounded by all the people from the old village, who came to talk to her about their problems, their families and current events. To accompany her to these sessions was a special favor. 1908 was the year of the great celebrations for Franz Joseph's 60 years of reign. It was the year grandmother died, in December, shortly after her 81st birthday.

My maternal grandmother, Betty Kantor, came from Jicin; her family there belonged to the upper class citizens, being purveyors for the Army. Jicin had a large garrison. She came from a family of eight; they were brought up by governesses, learned languages, played the piano and traveled. Grandmother told me of her first train trip to Prague and the great excitement of this adventure. She also told me of the Prussian war, the apprehension, and how they "fled" the Prussian army, to the next village, 10 miles away... and of the Cholera epidemic following the six-week war. At that time she was 18. Grandfather and she did not match.

About Grandfather Leopold I do not know too much. I remember that he had two brothers; one of them lived in Prague and had two daughters whom we probably never met; the other, who went to Vienna, became a famous surgeon. Once my mother took me along when she went to visit him, and I was impressed by a huge grey mustache. His son later immigrated to the United States and was an obstetrician in New York.

Grandmother went first to Vienna where all her relatives lived, and later moved in with my parents; in Chocen, she had a lovely sunny room with bath and her own maid. She loved music and had a large collection of records and a huge "Master's Voice" Gramophone; her maid stood for hours next to that instrument winding it, and grandmother listened enraptured to Caruso and Melba and Slezak; but when the voices got too loud she would throw a towel across the room, from the easy chair in which she sat near the windows into the shell to muffle the noise....

Grandmother had five brothers and two sisters and many cousins; she maintained a lively correspondence with most of them. Two of her brothers were extremely successful bankers in Vienna; one had a factory for tortoise shell articles; and one was a lawyer who never married. The youngest brother had remained in Jicin where he managed the old family business of supplies for the Army. **Theodore Kantor**, the oldest brother, became a high-ranking member of the Vienna society who had many honorary positions, and maintained his own stable. I recall the elegant townhouse, with butler and valets, and lovely collections of antique furniture and porcelains. Theodore Kantor was always extremely kind to my mother. As a young girl she spent many winters in his house was introduced to society and balls, the theatre and concerts, and was given her trousseau by him.

My parents met when my father once visited relatives in Kolin. They got engaged and married a year later, in Brno (half-way between Vienna & Prague, to make it easier for those who wanted to attend) on January 23, 1898.

My father had attended a business academy in Vienna and found employment with a large cotton brokerage, Abeles & Co. who also owned various textiles factories; my father got his training there and in 1894 became Director of the Landsberger cotton spinning mill in Friedek, Silesia; from there he moved to Babi, near Nachod, in Bohemia, where he was made Director of the Katzau spinning mill. There my mother moved after their wedding, and there I was born a year later, and two years later, my brother Hans. In 1903 my father bought Chocen, with the financial support of **Theodore Kantor**. He became a partner in the newly formed firm of M. Robitschek & Co. or, shortly, "MRC" Uncle **Emanuel**, my father's brother, also became a partner and sales manager for the firm. The firm specialized in spinning American cotton and the product became well known for its outstanding quality.

Theodore Kantor's second son, **Hugo**, who had studied medicine, came to Chocen to be trained by my father for his part as a later partner in the firm. Hugo married **Hedi von Preiss** and they built a huge but unattractive house next to ours; it was built mainly to house their collection of oriental rugs and hunting trophies.

We children were a bit scared of Hugo, but we adored Hedi; she always had time and patience for us, taught us all kind of games, and told us about nature. In the course of years they had three children; our visits to Hedi became more scarce due to the rift between my mother and Hugo, the reason for which never became known to me.

Around 1910 my father and Hugo became interested in an object near Vienna, which was on the market. A new company was founded, with several other industrialists, among them **Otto Pick** (who later founded the large company in Vancouver) and Mr. Pollack V. Parnegg... My father then divided his time between Chocen and Schwadorf near Vienna where the new firm was seated. My parent spent the winter months in Schwadorf where they occupied one floor in a very old huge house on the main square of the village. Since at that time I was in boarding school in Dresden, I came home only for the holidays. Hans went to school in Vienna and lived with aunt Lori and Theo started elementary school in Schwadorf. It was a small village about 25 miles from Vienna, near the Danube; I have only faint memories of that place. I remember that there was somewhere an old castle, that there was a large garden with a creek, and many fruit trees, and that there was a tame stork with clipped wings. Otherwise there was not much of interest, except the exciting trips to Vienna, in an electromobile, at that time still an adventure. The factory workers were mostly recruited from near Moravia and Slovakia. Most of the women still dressed in their colorful native costumes; it was enjoyable to watch them going to church on Sunday, or the parades on Easter and Whitsuntide.

Every house owner in the village owned a cellar in the "kellerdoerfel" or "village of cellars" in the nearby vineyards. Every Sunday the entire population would, after church, march out to the cellars, bringing along their

picnic and sitting in front of their cellar. In the evening they would slowly return to their homes, usually in high spirits and singing or just tired.

In 1913, shortly before WW I started, my father and the Kantors dissolved their partnership. The Kantors exchanged their part in Chocen for my father's part in Schwadorf. Hugo's part in Chocen was taken over by uncle Emanuel's brother in law, Mavro Drach (brother of aunt Elise). Mavro Drach was my father's close friend. He came from a family who lived in Slovakia as landowners. It was said that his mother had been running the business always was a horsewhip in her hand, and that everybody had been scared of her. Mavro started in the lumber business and became one of the most influential people in the field. He owned mills and forests in Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia and Austria, and supplied all timber used on railroads and in the mines.

Mavro Drach came very seldom to Chocen, but he and my father usually spent time together in various spas, such as Karlsbad, Baden, Semmering and Kaltenleutgeben near Vienna. It was said that Drach always consulted a famous Viennese graphologist, Rafael Scherman, before closing a business deal. He would confer with a person only after having Scherman's advice about that man's character. Mavro Drach's wife was the very beautiful and very superficial Irma, and they had two sons and a very beautiful daughter who after a very unhappy marriage and various unhappy affairs committed suicide; one son died during the war, the other had one daughter Vera; in WW II he lost all his vast fortunes, came to New York where he died, almost in poverty. I remember his Vienna townhouse, which was a real showplace, with exquisite furniture, a good library, and an outstanding collection of very good old Meissen china birds. He had managed to ship part of it to the United States where it was later sold in auction at Sotheby's - far below the actual value because at the time of the auction Meissen China was not in fashion.

Quite outstanding among my childhood memories is a brief visit to Vienna at the age of ten, I think. It was an invitation by **Aunt Sida** (Sidonie Wiesner Kantor), the widow of uncle **Theodore Kantor**, grandmother Betty's brother. I remember Aunt Sida well, for me she remained, through all my life, the personification of "matriarchy". As far as I remember, she was quite tall and rather heavy, with good strong features. An invitation by her was rather a command. I was sent with my governess, Fraulein Bethge. Tante Sida's private carriage and liveried coachman waited for us at the railroad station - the trip from Chocen to Vienna took about 5 1/2 hours, and that, in itself, was an event.

The Kantors had an elegant house on the Molkerbastei in Vienna's First District. Opposite their house was one of the houses where [Beethoven](#) had lived. There were carved stone figures at the entrance. The Banking office was on the ground floor. One took the staircase up to the second floor where the living quarters were; on the landing was a small fountain with sculptures in front of a stained glass bay window. I cannot remember all the rooms but a few of them: a huge, dark dining room, also with a fountain, and a long dining table in some very dark wood. A huge drawing room and several smaller rooms, giving a very light impression, with beautiful furniture and lots of paintings; I

also recall a large collection of porcelain tiles, painted with flower designs; those were the pieces painted by applicants for painters' jobs at the Augarten porcelain factory. There must have been bedrooms on the third floor. Above that was a fourth floor; there were guest rooms, of which one was assigned to Fraulein Bethge and me, and the servant's quarters; there also lived a poor relative, Pepi Schoenfeld, who somehow impressed me - mainly by her telling my governess all the family gossip; somehow I felt all her frustration, and her being in awe of aunt Sida, of whom I was scared anyway. I also felt that aunt Sida wanted to teach me manners, and I still remember some of her advice, such as "when being introduced, the gentleman has to wait until the lady extends her hand for him to kiss..." Tickets had been provided for us; we were sent to the "urania" a kind of popular science institution, I guess; there was a lecture on the global system, which I did not understand although I was very much impressed. Then there was a kind of movie - the first I ever saw; it was some Western story, with a train being ambushed by Indians, and the attackers being pursued over the roofs of the train; that I found very exciting; there were no captions, and a man standing on one side of the screen pointed with a long stick and explained the story, very detrimental to the effect of the scene. Another day we were sent by carriage to the Prater; but we did not stop at the various attractions there, and I had trouble understanding the Viennese dialect of the coachman, who tried to explain us everything; but at least I saw that huge wheel, a Vienna landmark - and the many tents of the amusement park.

We also were sent to the Opera; at that time, children were taken only to the Ballet - I remember the one I saw then: "The Four Seasons". I was most impressed by the live horse brought on the stage. I also remember being taken to the two large museums - the Art and the Natural Science, and the Schoenbrunn Palace. A few years later, when my parents lived in Schwadorf, we went once to a beautiful exhibition in Vienna: the Adria Exhibition. That was organized in one part of the Prater. It was lovely, colorful and joyful, and we were there on a brilliant summer day; this is my best memory of Vienna, as it was then and since then never again...

Aunt Sida must have been a rather interesting person; I was too young to understand but somehow must have gotten a very strong impression. I know that my mother had great respect for her up to a certain time. Sida came from a rather poor family in Jicin and she and Theodore must have known each other since childhood; he returned to Jicin after having started out successfully on his own in Vienna. Somehow Sida and her sister must have been intellectually far above their social group. Her sister because a very well known doctor in Vienna. Sida was young when she married and came to Vienna; she developed an outstanding taste and started collecting - first it was French furniture - or probably copies - which she later gave to my parents when her own taste changed and she started collecting good Empire and special Biedermeier pieces. She also had an excellent collection of old Augarten and Meissen china, and beautiful jewelry. I still can see her before me - one evening, during my visit in Vienna; she and her daughter were ready to go to the Opera, and were standing in the large drawing room. Sida wore a chinchilla coat and **Rosl**, her

daughter, had a long white very simple dress, and a sable coat and looked beautiful.

Rosl was a lovely person, but a rather unhappy one. When she was very young she got under the influence of her lady companion, who estranged her from her family. In 1912 **Rosl married Rene von Chavanne**, from whom she was divorced after WW I; he remarried and they always remained good friends.

I visited Rosl in 1930; she then lived in one of the Vienna suburbs; all her money was lost during the Franc crash in 1929, when the family business went bankrupt, and my family supported her. She still had all her charm and all her interests in literature and art. Her old maid, Victoria, still stayed with her and took care of her until she got swept away in the Hitler holocaust.

We first met on December 29, 1913. A few months before my father had spent a few weeks at a spa near Dresden, called "Weisser Hirsch". While he was there he met an old business friend, who in turned had invited a related student who attended the Dresden Technical College. My father liked the young man who was specializing in textile technology, and had some interesting discussions with him; in the course of the conversations he invited him to stop in Chocen, whenever he would have a chance, to see some new machinery my father had recently bought.

The occasion turned up when Fritz (*Bedrich Hoenig*) was at home during the Christmas holidays. His sister **Irene** was very friendly with **Anci Goldmann** in Chocen whose mother was distantly related to Fritz's father. Ancie had invited me for tea. While Irene and **Hans Hoenig** were visited with the Goldmanns, Fritz called on my father and got a tour of the factory. On my way to town (Goldmann's house was on the main square) I met my father and Fritz in the park. Although I was only fourteen, I probably looked older; at that time one wore one's hair in braids around the head, and ankle length skirts, and tailored blouses. I remember it was a lively conversation, since we both were at that time at school in Dresden (but our ways never crossed). But there were many common interests - the theatre, that art galleries, the lectures, the modern trend in German literature, the French influence on German poetry.

Two days later, I got a New Year's card and felt very grown-up! And a few days later, it meant back to school; it was my last year, I finished top class before Easter recess, and was supposed to be sent to an English boarding school in the fall. Fritz (as I learned later) had a contract with a German publishing house, to travel around the globe, to all places where textile fibers were produced - animal as well as vegetable ones. Since he had to attend military maneuvers as reserve officer he signed in on July 1, 1914 - and from the place near Prague where the maneuvers were to be held he went directly to the front, and came home for the first time in February 1917 - after having seen fighting in Serbia, Galicia and Russia. He came with Irene for a brief visit; but by then we had started writing to each other; first the official printed cards with the text (from him): I am in good health and doing very well." But at least it was a sign that he was alive...then little notes, and later on long letters.... Unfortunately they all disappeared during the German occupation. In August 1917, he was wounded, but refused to leave his post; consequently he

was made a.d.c. of the commanding Colonel (who later was promoted to General "The Red Korner", later President of the Austrian Republic). That was on the Italian front, near the Po and the Isonzo, about in the area described by Hemingway in "Farewell to Arms". In the summer of 1918, Fritz was granted a longer leave to go to Dresden for his graduation. His thesis was published by the college, and he got his Doctor's degree. Quite by accident Irene had invited me to visit the Hoenigs in Nove Mesto when Fritz came back from Dresden. That was a great surprise and we had a lovely day together. We then planned an excursion to the mountains; the three Hoenigs would meet us three in Hradec and from there we would proceed jointly to Spindelmuehle, where Anci Goldmann was with her father. Only July 12 we set out; but we had not taken into account that due to war conditions trains did not run on schedule. We missed all connections - and instead of meeting the Hoenigs in Hradec we sat it still out in Pardubice when they were already in the mountains! We finally made it to Trutnov late in the evening, had trouble to find accommodations for the night and ended up in a strange looking shack. But at least we could reach the hotel in Spindelmuehle by telephone. At dawn the next morning we hired a cab (horse and buggy) and finally reached Spindelmuehle.

We had a glorious day hiking in the mountains and on July 15 returned jointly; I found out that it was Fritz' birthday (28) and we had dinner at his parents' house, and left for Chocen on the midnight train. We had to wait for connections in Vrchlabi and went for a walk in the old small streets for that old town. The streets were paved with terribly uneven cobblestones, as I can remember, and it was utter bliss when Fritz took my arm to support me when I stumbled... and then and there we decided that once the war was over we would get engaged.

So this memorable excursion ended at that birthday dinner with a red currant fruitcake (Fritz' favorite, I was told) and two days later he stopped by when he went back to the Italian front. He had to wait for a train connection, and that was a very good excuse. From then on I had almost daily a letter - he wrote to me instead of a diary. In August he wrote that he had been assigned to a special course in Vienna - for the use of gas in warfare, and that the training was to start in September. By then my brothers were back in Vienna at school living with aunt Lora. Fritz met them when he arrived in Vienna. Now it was clear that the war would soon be ending. On October 28, the independence of Czechoslovakia and the formation of the Republic were announced. Immediately I sent a telegram to Fritz, urging him to come home, because we feared that soon the borders would be closed, and everything seemed in turmoil. My father, who a few days earlier had attended a funeral in Nachod, had returned with a bad case of influenza, which at that time had spread all over Europe, and had killed more people than the war. On October 31, early in the morning, Fritz came back. The old furrier and cap maker who had been a funny little town character, was "on duty" as national guardsman at the railway station. He approached Fritz and said, very politely (not at all as "revolutionary"), "Would [he] please kindly remove the Imperial emblem from

[his] cap?" And that was the "demobilization". On October 14, Fritz had come home for 2 days and stopped to see me; and that was when we actually got engaged. He came with a large bunch of California poppies, which were being grown in the gardens of the old castle in Nove Mesto. But the future was so uncertain, and that was one of my mother's objections. I told her that we were "ready to wait, even two years, if that were necessary..." and my mother used that as argument when we wanted to get married sooner.

It was a difficult situation. Austria (the Austro-Hungarian Empire) had been split, and borders put up. However, in Austria the resources were not evenly distributed. Bohemia and Moravia, and Silesia were the most developed provinces regarding industrialization, partly because of the natural resources but also because of the character of the population; Austria itself was left with the agricultural part of the empire, and with the mountains. Now, with all the textile industry concentrated in Bohemia it was a very difficult time and my father was worried. Fritz was looking for a job and the market was hopeless. My father discussed the situation with his silent partner, Mr. Drach, and Mr. Drach suggested that Fritz should work for the firm. In August 1919 he started, at the same time as Otto Berman, whom my father had met by chance and who was jobless, too. Fritz became my father's deputy, and Otto was in charge of the weaving mill, which had been closed down at the beginning of the war. The looms were all there, and Otto suggested that we produce shirting material, which turned out a good success. Fritz and Otto became really close friends. (*Otto is the father of Lilli Berman...aka Lilka Horner*). Meanwhile, Hans had finished high school in Vienna and in the fall of 1919 went to Zurich to study at the Eidgenoessische Hochschule. Theo switched to the Czech High School in Pardubice, which was about one hour away by fast train, so he could come home for the weekends. I still went to Prague quite frequently to attend lectures at the University, and to go to the theaters and concerts.

A survey of my father's life requires a few remarks about his parents as far as my memory reaches. Actually I know very little about their background. My grandfather, **Gerson**, obviously grew up in the Pilsen areas; we only knew that his mother's maiden name was **Pitra**; that he made his living by purchasing iron rods which he distributed among blacksmiths who made various sizes of nails for him which he sold to the village shops. He bought a small house in Praskolesy, a small village near Horovice, east of Pilsen. In the 1840's he married **Betty (Barbara) Faktor**, who had grown up in a village not far from Prague. They were a happy couple. In 1867 Gerson traveled to Germany and for this trip he needed a travel document which was issued to him - a copy is still here. The family was very popular in the community, and known as very hospitable. I remember to have heard that once when the grandfather had been ill, my father sent him a crate of French Cognac; whoever came to the house was offered a glass of that and the peasants loved it - and there were more and more people visiting, and the Cognac was served to all until someone told the generous host how expensive French Cognac was even then - and then the flow of Cognac stopped in the Robitschek house... Grandfather died at the age of almost 80 in 1896 or 97. Grandmother stayed in her house with her

youngest daughter, Rosa, who got married in 1904, and then with her devoted servant, Veronika. It was a small house, with a strip of garden with roses in front, and a back yard and garden, with a gazebo, fruit trees and bushes in the back. There was also a barn and a chicken house. The rooms were very small, with low ceilings, and very cozy.

Grandmother Betti...*(Both of Granny's grandmothers were named Betti; The ending 'i' in Betti Faktor's spelling was changed when we saw her gravestone in Praskolesy; her maternal grandmother was Betty Kantor, whose name spelling we could not confirm but left as Granny wrote it in her original descriptions, with a 'y' at the end.)*... Grandmother Betti was a lovely very wise and patient lady; she loved people, and considered the whole village population as her children; they all came to her with their worries and their aches, and she gave advice and paid attention to all; she knew remedies for all illnesses and in serious cases would persuade the people to see a doctor. When I once visited the village, many years after her death to see her grave, many people came to talk to me eager to tell me how she was missed. I remember the place well - the short main street, with one butcher shop, one bakery, one small general store, the baroque church, the creek - I loved to visit there when grandmother was alive - and whenever I was asked for a special wish, I would beg to be allowed to visit grandmother. I remember the view of the ruins of an old castle, Tocnik, and the morning walk with Veronika who took her ducklings every morning for a swim in the creek and let me carry her willow branch, which she used as stick to keep the ducks in line. I also recall the awe of using the outhouse - there was of course no plumbing in those villages!

Grandmother loved to have her grandchildren visiting in the summer and we loved to listen to her stories, when her own children had been small - how my father got lost once returning home from high school in Horovice, in the dark in some swamps, and how she went out to search for him. Or how **Uncle Rudolph**, her youngest son, once ran away with the gypsies. When grandmother grew old, her children persuaded her to spend the winter months with them; she divided her time among them, but spent most of it with us. Everybody adored her. She taught me to knit and to embroider; I actually hated to do it - but instruction from her made it pleasant for me - and I think that I like to do it now, in my old age, because of my memories of her...

When grandmother's oldest daughter, **Aunt Lori**, got married in Vienna, one after the other of the sons followed her; and on after the other lived with her and her husband, and attended higher schools in Vienna; when the four oldest had finished their schooling and started out on their own, it was my father's turn. He was then fourteen, and he stayed with Aunt Lori to his 18th year, when he finished school and got his first job. That was in 1880, when he started to work for a cotton broker, Abeles & Co., in Vienna. He must have been very bright and successful from the start; before long he was assigned to the firm's factory and after a couple of years found a position as Director of a spinning mill in Silesia, then a Province at the Galician border. Studying at night, he improved his knowledge and soon became an expert in his field of cotton spinning. He also learned to understand the workers and their

requirements and always had a very good relationship with his subordinates and colleagues. He made many friends and improved his situation constantly, and got excellent offers. He changed his employment and became first manager of the Landsberger spinning mill and later worked for Hermann Pollak in Trebova, and finally for S. Katzau in Babi, near Nachod.

In 1897 he met my mother, and they got married in 1898, on January 23rd. The wedding was in Brno, to make it easier for the wedding guests who came mostly from Vienna or from Prague - Brno was exactly in the middle. In Babi, the newlyweds lived in the upper floor of a large and very lovely house, in a large garden, on the factory grounds. Babi is a very small community near the German borders. During the Prussian war in 1866, the Prussian army had invaded just there, and there was the monument for the first Austrian soldier killed in that war, visible from our windows. I remember also the whole valley quite clearly. In 1903, when I was four years old, my father bought the Chocen object (sic). That was a former flax-spinning mill, which had been closed when the linen industry was reduced. My mother's uncle, Theodore Kantor, a banker in Vienna, lent my father some capital and gave the guarantees, and father built and furnished a modern mill; the entire power plant and turbines were constructed, and it became an important member of the textile industry. The weaving mill was added later. I remember the big dinner my mother prepared for the opening day. I think it was April 5, 1904, a year before my younger brother, Theo, was born. I remember that we were permitted to see the table setting - with large bunches of violets in bowls.

My father was just as popular in Chocen as he had been wherever he lived and worked. He founded schools, the voluntary fire fighter, the nurseries for workers' children, the school food program, the Christmas celebrations for poor school children, he supported conservation and nature groups, the river fishing groups, the hatchery. Even now, when we are all far away, his grave is not abandoned. I have been told that former employees still attend it and that there are always flowers there. Father died 1933, after the removal of a kidney stone, from an infection caused during the surgery.

About the time when I was five or six years old I had my first experience of how it felt to be "in exile". That was whenever my parents parked us - my brother Hans and me - with our governess - at my grandparents. Although there we were almost smothered by love by my grandmother (and more or less ignored by my grandfather), we felt both very much fenced in and overprotected. Used to freedom within the boundaries of the Chocen house and park, we did not like to live in a town house; we missed the trees and lawns and flowers. But there are still some memories: of a large center square of the town and the Gothic Cathedral, which already at an early age I found forbiddingly severe compared to the many Baroque churches one saw so frequently in Bohemia where the influence of Fischer von Erlach and his school was so widespread. Of a public garden along the river Labe where I remember seeing some strangely green rocks. The house was on one of the main streets, which went slightly up hill. My grandmother would get up early in the morning, look out of the window; there was a shop with cheap clothes (better clothes

were always made to measure) and some of the clothes on hangers were displayed outside the store. When these displays moved in a breeze, it meant that grandmother insisted that we wear mufflers and wool caps. I still can see part of the street. A dry goods store in the corner building, a hardware store opposite with interesting farm supplies, a small stationery shop run by an elderly spinster who was always very kind and gave me my favorite picture postcards - roses painted by someone with the name of Klein - I still can see the signature, and even some of the paintings.

Even as children we felt that my grandparents did not have much to say to each other. They were so different and certainly did not match at all. Grandfather was outgoing, loved company, and was one of the founders of the local SOKOL group. In a way I think he was a failure; his brothers had been successful - one in his grain business, one as a lawyer, and one a famous surgeon in Vienna. The latter one I remember because of his immense bushy mustache. Grandfather loved to travel, and we were fascinated when he talked about his trips to the Balkan countries and mainly his interview with Nikita, the self-promoted prince of Serbia, one to a Russian grand duke; thus he established his relationship and his "Principality". He was paid by the Austrian emperor, and it was a standing joke that Nikita on the first day of every month stormed into the post office in Centinje in the Bay of Cattaro to get his payment.

My grandfather, this rather fun-loving, boisterous gentleman was married to a refined lady, who had been brought up in a patrician family, well-educated according to custom of her time. Her brothers - five of them - went to Vienna where they became wealthy bankers and lawyers. The youngest remained in Jicin and took over the family business of Army supplier. Grandmother went often to Vienna and enjoyed the Theater and mainly the opera. She was a great music lover and played the piano rather well. But she had little understanding for grandfather and his friends. When he came home he usually retired to his room and one did not see much of him, while grandmother met some of her friends for a cup of tea. Grandfather had a wholesale hardware business; and grandmother applied and got granted the distribution of tobacco and cigars and cigarettes manufactured by the State owned tobacco industry. Tobacco was since [Maria Theresia](#) times, a state owned Monopoly (like salt) and in the sales network there were distributors who then sub-distributed to the small shops (called "trafik" which sold apart from tobacco products, salt and state lottery tickets. The latter was very popular. One bet on numbers, with pennies or "Heller" up to one Crown. And the winner got at top winning one Florin (2 Crown). This system survived for a long time, and I recall, in the 1930's in Italy, still the sign "Sale e Tabacchi" over the shops.

The distribution place of grandmother's was a large store with a tiny office in the back where the bookkeeper, Miss Emma, was working. Grandfather had a long lasting affair with Miss Emma, who in his old age took very good care of him; he died in his 90s in 1926. Grandmother died three years before that, of pneumonia - she was then 81.

There was always something tragic about grandmother, since she had lost her first born, Robert. I guess that he died of appendicitis; she claimed that he had come home from school, and had seen in the kitchen that cook fried doughnuts; it was Carnival time, when doughnuts were made in every household. He swiped one from the pan and ate it - and later on developed camps. Since then doughnuts were banned and never made in her house or in my mother's either.

Grandmother loved poetry and had beautifully bound volumes lying around. I got my first encounter with Heine, "Buch der Lieder" - his love poems. And memorized some of them, and to the great amusement of the family, instead of reciting nursery rhymes it was Heine's love poems because I had learned to read at an early age.

It was always with great relief that we returned home - once after an epidemic of scarlet fever which at the time without antibiotics was often deadly; another time when the house was rebuilt. That return was a wonderful surprise because then I got my own room, no longer shared with Hans and the nanny. He then had to share his room with Theo, who then had reached the age of 3.

From those time of joint nursery I recall one incident; I woke up one night because the nanny was standing on top of the table very upset; I still see her in her petticoat (I had never seen her when she was not properly dressed with skirts to the ground and the white high collar on her blouse). There was a mouse in the room, and she was scared! The next morning she complained to the head of the machine shop in the factory, Herr Weber; the Webers were her special friends. Herr Weber appeared with a cat, which was put into out nursery, to our great delight of course, the poor cat was scared and hid in a corner. No mouse appeared. The next morning, there was a terrible stench in the room. Nanny, Fraulein Zechner, suspected Hans to have misbehaved. Hans and I were jointly offended by that suspicion! Then the cat was suspected - but it had mysteriously disappeared - and the stench remained. Finally the explanation was found. Fraulein Zechner who loved plants, had been given by someone a bulb which she planted and forgot - it was in a flower pot on top of the highboy. Now it had started to sprout - it was one of those strange onions, which smelled badly while sprouting before developing into a kind of pale Amaryllis. Obviously even the mouse could not stand it because it was never seen again.

In recent times, my memories take me back to the places of my childhood and in sleepless hours I wander through the familiar landscapes and most frequently through the garden or park as it was called. I cannot guess the approximate acreage, but it always seemed very large to me - almost rectangular, it stretched from the factory yard to far back beyond the house. It was bordered on one side by an arm of the river Orlice (the Eagle River). There were two branches coming down from *the northeastern border* mountains (the Eagle Mountains) on the Silesian border. One was the "violent" one and the other the "calm" one (that was ours). George, as a small boy, would call "ours" "the well-behaved" and the other "the screaming one".

On the opposite side a long avenue ran along the park, with old linden and horse chestnut trees. Beyond were the fields. Since we grew our own wheat, rye, oats, potatoes and corn, we were quite self-supporting. There was a spacious vegetable garden with greenhouses, hot beds, cutting gardens and a fruit orchard.

During WWI part of the fields were used by the government to build a refugee camp for Galician refugee farmers who came with their horses and live stock. At one time there were about 40,000 of them. They had their own administration, hospital, theater, and gymnasium. Their number was decimated during the many epidemics - typhus, diphtheria, and later the devastating Spanish Influenza killed thousands of them. After the war the wooden constructions were razed and the fields returned to us. Later my father gave parts to employees who wanted to build their own homes, and a few new streets were laid out. As a shelter for the back yards of this new development I later planted two rows of pint trees along the fields. Since these later had to be thinned out it provided for years of Christmas trees for many families!

As I have one written before, the gardens were initially laid out and planted by a former owner, who had ordered many exotic and rare species from the nurseries in Upper Silesia. Our old night watchman, Kastner told me that at the age of 15, in 1859, he had helped on loading the trees from trains.

Upon entering the Park from the orchard, when approaching through the factory yard, the first attractive tree was a huge Catalpa, which in June was covered by masses of fragrant white blossoms. Then one walked by a small elevation which we called "play hill" because on its top was a shady square where we had all kinds of equipment and a swing. Huge linden trees provided shade. There were flowering shrubs along the path. Wigelia, Cydonia, pink and white Spiraea. My special delight was a pink Robinia overhanging the path, and lovely lilac bushes. The one went past a shady stretch of lawn, with conifers in the background; in the spring there were masses of Crocus. One the right had side were large shrubs of "golden rain" and then there was a stand of birches, the ground underneath planted with grape hyacinth, daffodils and snow drops. On the left hand side were lawns full of wild flowers; then a stand of sycamores, a group of read beeches; along the various paths were flowering shrubs of all kinds, among them Ribes argentina. There was another small hill, with a path around it which we called "the Serpentine" - near there were huge pines, black walnut trees, hazelnut trees - the like of which I never found again, anywhere - with clusters of hazelnuts, about ten or twelve to a bunch. We hardly ever tasted any, because the many squirrels were much sooner at work than we did! There were lots of wild cyclamen planted under the trees. And there was a pile of rocks - obviously Herr von Zadelder, the previous owner, had intended to make a rock garden. All kind of fascinating plants were growing in between the rocks - there was no end of discoveries! Helleborus in winter, aquilegia and Turk's head lilies, Salomons Seal, liverworth, violets, pasque flower and all kind of saxifrage and mosses and sedums... and ivy, which was something quite special.

I really always considered it a Paradise! Around the house was a formal garden, with parterres and planted in the fashion of the time- carpet like with tiny bedding plants. In spring the gardener would start, surrounded by three or four helpers, to measure with yardstick and all kind of gadgets, and then plant ageratum, lobelia, tiny begonia and all kind of red- and yellow leaved little things I really never liked it! There were lawns and, groups of white peonies, and flowering shrubs; in front of the main house was a circle of low pink floribunda roses, and a group of lilac in the center. Flowering borders along the house, with Wisteria at the entrance, and Virginia creeper covering the walls. There was an ancient ophora in the lawn- which had never bloomed- but in 1945, just a few weeks before we left our home forever, it was covered with white blossoms, like snow... Or the ground floor of the house was a large sale, with an intricate store floor, which during our childhood, served as summer dining room, with deep window seats; later it became my brother's very impressive dining room with exquisite old English furniture. At one end of that room it opened on to a covered terrace with a column-supported roof which was 'the Collonade' and on rainy days in summer served as our playroom. Our teenage cousins who regularly visited us during the summer transformed it into a stage for their attempts or theatric performances but we were considered too young to be admitted to these for them so important enterprises. Therefore we retired- Hans, my cousin Gerhard and I, under the overhanging branches of the Sophora where we started our own theatrical productions.

The Collonade was the official end of the Park; beyond it was the vegetable garden, with rows of lower stone walls; along those grew currants, raspberries and gooseberries, there were the strawberry beds and a poppy field - not for opium, but for the very popular poppyseeds for baking kolace and bucht. There was a hothouse and a cool glass house, and an azalea house rich also contained camellia and Hydrangea. And along the hothouse wall were fig trees and some grapevine. At the end of the kitchen garden was the vegetable cellar where the hardy vegetables were dug in sand for winter use. And in front of that was the artichoke bed. There were about 12 hot frames for forced vegetables- potatoes, peas, young carrots, and herbs, as well as early lettuce and spinach; and one violet bed exclusively for my mother because violets were her favorite flowers. She also had a large collection of cacti, and one time had a special liking for anthurium. There were many pots with Cyripedium, which was one of my favorites, and of Calla lilies, which were in great demand for bridal bouquets. Whenever a working girl in the factory got married she got Calla lilies for her bouquet. Everything was grown from seeds, and all roses were grafted "at home". In late fall two of the garden helpers would march to the woods and dig up wild rose shoots with good roots that were then layered in sand in the cool house, then grafted and put in containers, and later planted outside. Very much in favor were the "Marechal Niel" tea roses, the "Mme Druschki" and "Etoile de France". In later years we had a pergola built beyond our house in the back; it had sandstone pillars and there were roses and Clematis planted alternately, and various kinds of Ipomea. There was also, near our house (which had been built much later than my parent's old mansion)

a small pool surrounded by rose beds and a perennial border in the background. I remember vaguely a bowling alley somewhere in the back, which later disappeared and there was a stand of huge larch trees where we enjoyed sitting.

Several years ago...

Several years ago when I was in Argentina I was asked by **Trixie Kantor** whether I could remember some of the family history and stories and whether I could draw a family tree. That gave me the idea that perhaps my own grandchildren might be interested in knowing some of the background of the family; and I shall try to reconstruct whatever I have not forgotten. There may be errors in what I have to tell, but since there are no witnesses, I cannot prove what is actually true and what has been distorted in my memory. I *shall* start with my husband's family:

The Honigs

I have been told that the Hoenigs (or Honigs as they spelled their name) were descendants of a Spanish or Portuguese family by the name of Pereira, who during the Spanish Inquisition were forcibly converted to Catholicism; such converts were called "marannes". Life in Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella and their successors was hard, and the family decided to move to the Netherlands, which although belonging to the Spanish Crown had less harsh laws. The family got linked to that of the Agular (or Aguilar) and in the course of time there was an Anglican Bishop of that name in England. The family moved to Germany and later to Austria where one Hoenig was the first importer of the then discovered and introduced by Dutch explorers -tobacco. According to a book by Salz, (the title of which now escapes me) on Industry and Trade in Austria, the organizing of the tobacco trade was in the hands of one Hoenig: however, when he became successful and rich he was dismissed, and some influential nobleman managed through intrigues to be appointed in his place. However, the name Hoenig (later elevated to nobility, von Hoenigsfeld) remained connected with the Tobacco Monopoly in Austria in later centuries.

The family could be traced to Sagan, in Upper Silesia (Germany) from where one of the descendants, Salomon Hoenig, moved to Nove Mesto, just across the Prussian border, probably soon after the Napoleonic wars. He was first a tenant farmer who in the course of years became the owner of good property. For the processing of the potato crop he built a mill and refinery for spirits, which he later expanded to a liquor factory.

Salomon Hoenig had five children: **Philip**, born approximately 1860; **Berthold**, who lived later in Nove Hrad, and was a philosopher and writer; **Emil**, in Jablonec; **Jeannette**, married to Mr. Libicky, a farmer; and **Minna**, married to Alois Bacher (Malvicka's mother). All Hoenigs received an excellent education, by private tutors, and had literary and musical interests.

Philip, married in 1888 to **Helene Lilienfeld**, who was very beautiful. Many years later we were still being told about her lovely fair curls. They had three

children: The oldest was **Fritz**, your grandfather, born July 15, 1890. **Irene**, born 1894, married 1919 to **Arthur Nohel**, the widower of her cousin **Olga Libicky**. They had two children: **John**, (*dates removed*) to **Vera Weiskopf**, three children, **Richard**, **Audrey**, **Thomas**, living in the 1960-70s in Madison, Wisconsin where John [was] professor of Mathematics at the University; and **Nanny**, who died as a teenager when the family was living in Woodland, California. The third of the Honig children was **John (Honza)**, born 1897, married to **Zdenka Sehuck**(1926). They had two children: **Mitch**, (*date removed*), married to Margaret, who had four children, they are living in Wayland, Massachusetts, and **Milunka**, who, with her mother, was brought to Auschwitz and killed in the gas chamber. **John (Honza) Hoenig** died in New York in 1959. **Irene and Arthur Nohel** [*were*] living in Washington, DC.

Fritz Honig attended schools in Prague and Budejovice, and spent one year at the Technical University in Vienna from where he went to Dresden where he received his PhD in chemistry and technology. During WW I he served in the Austrian Army on all four fronts. The war had disrupted his career; he was supposed to travel abroad extensively for the purpose of writing on textile fibres and their origin, a project which would have required many years of research. He returned from the war in October 1918 and found employment at the textile factory in Chocen. On May 16, 1920, he married **Margaret Robitschek**. They lived in Chocen, and had three children: **George (Jirka)** (*date removed*); **Madeleine**, (*date removed*); and **Irene**, (*date removed*).

Fritz became a partner in the firm, later Vice President of the Textile Employers' Association, and lay judge in Labor questions. He was co-founder of the DYAS plywood factory in Uhersky Ostroh, and was well-known and respected as an outstanding expert. After the Nazi occupation the entire property was confiscated, and Fritz together with Hans Robitschek were arrested under a fictitious charge and jailed in a terrible Nazi prison. Then they were released and expelled to a small town, Holice. This happened in 1941; in 1942 the family was arrested and brought to Svatoborice concentration camp, and from there in December 1942 to Terezin camp. On September 28, 1944 Fritz was taken to Auschwitz and from there to Dachau concentration camp where he died some time in December 1944.

George and a friend had escaped in January 1940 and after many adventures in Slovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Turkey reached Beirut, then still in French hands, where he joined the French Foreign Legion. He received his training in Agde and Montpe1ier (Southern France) and after the fall of France in the summer of 1940 came to England. He became an expert in the Signal Corps and trained large numbers of enlisted men. Three weeks before the end of the war he was very seriously wounded near Dunkirk. He lived with his wife, **Jarca**, whom he married in 1947, and his two children, **Patricia** and **Alan** in Greenock, *until Jarca's untimely death in 1974*.

Madeleine, married **Charles Petru** (*dates, loc. removed*), three children; **Michael**, **Ann**, and **Anthony**. After the war Madeleine attended Charles University in Prague but her studies were interrupted by the Communist coup.

Irene (*dates, loc. removed*) married **Philip Lever**; daughters, **Janet** and **Marian**.

The Lilienfelds

It is known that around 1750 there were some ancestors by the name of **Mautner**. They had 24 children. Even in those times it was something rather exceptional. According to an often (heard) story, the couple were ordered to appear in audience before the Empress Maria Theresia who wanted to see them. Allegedly she told her husband ([Francis of Lorraine](#)) "gib's ihnen" meaning to let them have the tobacco store for the State Monopoly. Usually such stores were granted as a privilege to war veterans or to deserving retired public servants. The store, or as it was called in Austria, the "Trafik" remained in the family for two centuries. I do not know when the Lilienfelds appeared on the scene- perhaps one of the Mautner daughters married a Lilienfeld. The Trafik was still in the hands of the family when Joachim Lilienfeld married Charlotte (Mautner?), about 1860. They lived in Jicin. They had a daughter, Helene, who married Philip Hoenig, and a son, Ernst who became a doctor and lived in Budejovice and, died in the Terezin camp in 1942. Philip who in later years was blind died in 1929; Helene died in Terezin in January 1943.

The Robitscheks

According to some not clearly defined sources **Gerson Robitschek** came from the Pilsen area (in Western Bohemia). Not much is known of his background, except that his mother, **Eva**, was the daughter of a certain **Pitter** or **Pitra**, who was obviously non-Jewish. **Gerson** settled in Praskolesy near Horovice in Western Bohemia, and ran a kind of wholesale business in nails, which were hand-forged by blacksmiths in the vicinity of that village. It is assumed that the family name (germanized when Gerson's sons moved to Vienna) derives from "roubik" - a gadget serving to tie the ropes around the sheaths of grain when they are stood up to dry in the field. **Gerson** married in or around 1845 to **Betti (Barbara) Faktor** whose family lived in the vicinity of Prague. They had ten children (one died in infancy):

1. **Joseph**, who moved to Vienna where he married and raised a family (two daughters and a son, all died before or during WW II).
2. **Karl**, whose children all live in South America- either single or childless; **Louise**, **Hilda**, **Arthur** (married to Frieda) and **Berta** Fraggiacomo (in Cuernavaca) .
3. **Emanuel**, married to Elise Drach, with children: **Alfred**, living in Los Angeles (with children **George**, in Los Angeles, and **Mimi Boehm**, in New York); **Margaret Kann**, in Los Angeles; three others died: **Gerhard**, in WW I, **Frieda**, married to Franz Wenger, in 1923; and **Edith**, also married to Franz Wenger, in 1929).
4. **Henrietta** (Jettie) Pollak, married one son, **Ernest**, all died in Chicago.
5. **Eleonore** Resek, whose husband died in 1906; they had 5 children: **Karla**, died in a Polish concentration camp; **Rosa Koref**, died in a Polish concentration camp; Children: **Ernest**, in Panama, married to Vally

Medlinger, no children; **Lisl Simek**, married to **Ossy Simek**, presently in Europe, one daughter, **Anita**. Marianne died in a German concentration camp; **Max**, married to **Bella Fischer**, one daughter, **Erika Meier**, in Mill Valley; **Friedl**, married to **Franzi Glueckauf**, died in Shanghai during WW II.

6. **Siegfried**, who changed his name to **Roger**, died in Paris before WW I.
7. **Moritz**, born July 19, 1862, married to **Pauline Porges** - your greatgrandparents.
8. **Rudolf**, married to **Rosa Flamm**, and later to **Eugenia Mordo**. Of his children, **Ada**, **Steffi**, **Franz** (Francois) and **Lilli**, only Lilli is still alive and married to the Italian painter, **Mario Airomi-Petti**. They live in Branford, Ontario, and have two children: **Rosetta Cazes**, with 7 children, in Toronto; and **Paolo**, in Chicago.
9. **Rosa Schwarz**, died in Auschwitz in 1944. Her only son **Egon** died in New Zealand in 1959.

Moritz Robitschek, after attending school in Vienna, became manager and later director in various textile factories, in Friedek, Trebova and finally at S. Katzau in Nachod. On January 23, 1898 he married Pauline Porges; they had three children: **Margaret**, born January 29, 1899; **Hans**, February 4, 1901, and **Theo**, May 17, 1905. In 1903 Moritz Robitschek with the financial assistance of his wife's wealthy uncle Theodor Kantor, bought a vacant former flax mill in Chocen and converted and rebuilt it as a cotton-spinning mill. Production started in April 1904. The firm enjoyed a high reputation and Moritz Robitschek held an outstanding position in the Austrian textile industry; many firms were seeking his advice and he was elected to various honorary posts.

In 1910 he and his partner, Dr. Hugo Kantor, (son of Theodor) got interested in founding another factory, in Schwadorf near Vienna. From then on Moritz Robitschek spent part of the year in Schwadorf, and had an office in Vienna. In 1913, it was decided that the partners would split.

The Robitscheks kept the Chocen part while the Kantors moved to Schwadorf. A new partner in the Chocen firm was **Moritz Drach**, a big lumber dealer in Vienna and long time friend (he was the grandfather of **Vera Hahn**, now in Great Neck). In 1920 Fritz Hoenig became a partner in the Chocen firm; in 1931 the DYAS plywood factory was founded in Uhersky Ostroh. Grandfather died in 1933 after a badly performed kidney operation.

The Porgeses

Paula Porges was born on June 16, 1874, in Kolin, daughter of Leopold and his wife Betty, born Kantor, and died in Auschwitz in 1944. Little is known of the Porges family; there were obviously three brothers of Leopold: one a doctor in Marienbad; another, also a doctor and surgeon, in Vienna; and a third, a broker at the grain exchange in Prague. The **marriage of Leopold and Betty** was an unhappy one-they did not match. Betty was very refined, well educated, and Leopold was crude, rough, liked the company of his friends in the newly founded Sokol club with whom he traveled to then little known parts of the Balkans. I remember the stories about a visit to the very backward

principality of Montenegro. In later years, grandmother Betty lived mostly in Chocen, where she died in 1923, while grandfather Leopold remained in Kolin where he died in 1926, at the age of almost 90.

The Kantors

The Kantors, family of grandmother Betty, in Jicin, were almost nobility, and at least Patricians, with higher education and more interests than most of the others. Betty's parents were Gottlieb and Flora nee Geduldiger. The family ran a business with Army supplies. Jicin was a large garrison. The founder of the firm was a man by the name of Tobias, whose grave in Jicin I still remember. **Betty's brothers and sisters** were: **Theodor**, married to **Sidonie Wiesner** (later partner of M. Robitschek), a banker in Vienna; he belonged to the best of Viennese society, and was a very elegant gentleman, member of many clubs, with a lovely town house in Vienna and an estate on a lake in Carinthia, riding horses, and a shooting lodge in the mountains. He had three sons and a daughter: **Otto**, who until recently lived in New York, with three daughters and a son; **Dr. Hugo**, the one time partner, married to **Hedi von Preyss**; he died several years ago; Hedi still lives in Buenos Aires, and has one son, **Theodor**, or 'eddy, in Buenos Aires- he was married to **Ruth Adler**, who died last year, and has a daughter, **Trixie**, and a son, **Martin**; **Eva**, unmarried, an expert and performing musician; and **Stefan**, in Australia, with one son, **Eric**. Then there was **Rosl**, married to **Count Rene de Chavannes**, died in WW II and **Stefan**, who died also in the 1940's. Another brother of Betty's was **Ludwig**, also a banker in Vienna (I know nothing of his family-there were 3 sons and one daughter). Then **Annette**, married to Mr. Brode somewhere in Northern Bohemia; **Minna**, married to Max Fleischner, in Vienna, owner of a button factory: one daughter, **Paula Lorenz**, still living in San Francisco. **Karl**, owner of a comb factory in Vienna, whose 5 children died during the Hitler regime. **Emil**, a lawyer in Vienna, unmarried, who died in 1923, and **Fritz**, married to **Rosa**, who had four children. Surviving are the children of a son, **Dr. Arthur Kantor**, who died in Australia *and* who are living in Melbourne-Milan, a barrister, and **Ruza**, married to **John Wagner**. And the grandchildren of another son, **Max**, who perished, and who are living in France.

Grandmother Betty had very strong feelings for her family; she kept in close contact with them to her old age. She told me many interesting facts from her youth- about the Prussian war in 1866, and how the family "fled" in a horse-drawn haycart to the next village at a distance of 18 km. When there was a bad epidemic of cholera, when the first railroad was open between Jicin and Prague around 1859, She was an avid reader, memorized poetry, and loved opera. Whenever she went to Vienna or Prague, she made it a point to go to the theater. She had a large collection of grammophone records, mostly operatic arias. Her record player was hand-cranked, 'His Master's Voice', and her maid was usually standing there, cranking it. And grandmother would sit in her easy chair near the window and when the voice got too loud, she would throw a towel or napkin across the room into the big opening to make it less noisy....

One of my earliest memories is when she took me to the theater in Marienbad, I think it was a performance of "Die Fledermaus" and I was promised to see a king (Edward VII) and how disappointed I was because he did not look regal at all, without purple mantle and crown, and after all, he was a fat, little man, who did not look elegant at all ---and I was so spoiled because I had such a good-looking father!