

Childhood Memories – The San Francisco Years

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**for Gaëtan and Magali, my beloved grandchildren,
a story of a very different childhood**

Chapter 1. My Last Christmas in Vienna

Before our Christmas celebration this year, I told you a little about Christmas in Vienna, when I was five years old: on Christmas Eve there was a feeling of excitement everywhere. That year the streets were covered in snow, and I — like most children in Vienna — wasn't allowed to see any of the preparations, but was taken on a sled ride by Frau Schneider, one of my mother's helpers. Everything felt festive, there were lights in all the windows, one could feel anticipation all around. Later, when we finally came home, I STILL had to wait! At last, a little bell tinkled and the great doors opened to a room that looked magical. It was our dining room — but how changed! There was a huge tree by the windows, covered in lighted candles; no other light, but many, many ornaments : you know a few of them because they have traveled with us over the many years and to many places. Then came the presents, all left there magically, by Santa Claus, or, in Vienna, by the "Christkindl" and after that, music and a delicious dinner, probably a goose. But what I remember most clearly, from the year I was five, was the vision of the tree.

After we had our lovely Christmas this year in your house, quite different but in some ways the same, I suddenly remembered my last Christmas in Vienna. The city had changed by then. It was in the year 1938, and bad things had happened: the terrible dictator Adolf Hitler had come with his troops and taken over Austria. We had to move from our beautiful large apartment and Omi (that is what your mother called her and how we talk about her. To me then she was "Mamilein") was planning our leaving the country where we were no longer welcome. I had to leave my school, along with the other kids who were Jewish or whose grandparents were, as mine were. They were your great-great-grandparents, and I will tell you much more about them later.

We had moved into a couple of rented rooms: I slept in a small one, Mamilein in the living room. Karoline, who had been our housekeeper, wasn't allowed to be with us any longer and I missed her terribly: she told stories and she let me help her and she was always my friend! Mamilein knew how much I loved Christmas, and she wanted to keep life as much as it used to be as she could, and she herself loved celebrating. So she planned to have a real one and she invited all the friends who were still there and, of course, my grandparents and Hillala (my aunt Hilde). My piano teacher, Professor Violin (that was REALLY his name) and Tante Sonja and Tante Jula, (all children called all grownups Tante or Onkel — aunt or uncle — in German; maybe they still do!) and some others: all were invited to a feast and were going to forget the bad things on that day.

By then I was nine years old, and of course I knew the presents didn't come from Santa Claus or the Christkindl, but from the people who loved you. And I got busy making presents for all our guests. Somehow, I found cardboard and colored paper and managed to make all sorts of objects for them so no one would be without a gift. There was a small tree, there was snow, and this time I helped to decorate instead of being pulled on a sled. There also was a long table borrowed from the owner of the apartment, and somehow a delicious meal was produced, even if it was not a goose. Everyone was happy that for once they could forget their troubles and could have a party with friends and stories and music and good food. No one spoke of anything political — that would have been dangerous in case it was overheard by neighbors! But food,

and stories, and music, those kept everyone hopeful. Less than a month later we were ready to leave Vienna. But that is another chapter.

Chapter 2. Leaving Vienna and the trip to Antwerp

It was not long after, in January, that we said goodbye to Vienna. Bits of memory come up: we are in a dingy, smokefilled office crowded with people. We waited endlessly, it seemed, I at Mamilein's side. At last she speaks to a rude man behind a window. Later the tram back to Döbling and to my grandparents. I hear Mamilein say, dejectedly, "so I guess we will have to stay here". This must be an earlier memory: by Christmas the necessary papers had been obtained and our leaving planned. From the same period, an ugly memory, already in our rented rooms: I awoke to a big policeman tramping through my little room into the bathroom. Mamilein was at the washstand with no clothes on. He shouted at her "any men here?" I think she only shook her head. The uniformed man left, perhaps with enough human feelings left to be embarrassed that he had found her naked. Much later I learned it was the 11th November, the Kristallnacht, and that we were lucky it was a simple policeman, not an SS thug. Later the same morning Professor Violin came. He came to hide from the searches. That day Jewish men were either dragged off to camps or were made to scrub streets on their knees. Was my grandfather among those? I don't know.

The next flash of memory — a poignant one: Mamilein and I are in a compartment of the standing train by the open window. On the platform outside, Opapa. The train slowly moves. Opapa has tears slowly running down his cheeks. It is my last memory of him. After 74 years I cannot picture it without crying.

The next image: a conductor — much later — checking our passports, asking with a sneer on seeing the red "J" stamped in the passports, "what does it feel like to be a Jew?" Much later we learn that Sigmund Freud had left Vienna on the same train on its previous trip! Another image: we are standing shivering on the platform at the border. Mamilein is being frisked by a woman, I at some distance by a man who also checks under the clothes of my two dolls. Our train — the Orient Express — leaves with my new galoshes but without us. We leave later, probably on a slow local train, to Antwerp. But we leave! We cross the border out of Deutschland! I can still sense the feeling of relief, the feeling of freedom, the feeling that we could say whatever we felt like! No more fearful "shshshshsh". I was only nine but I knew what it had felt like to rush into our house to avoid hearing hostile taunts on the street, and to not speak even in the house for fear of being overheard by unknown neighbors.

Antwerp! Our relatives' apartment — Mamilein unburdened and herself after the fear-filled train trip — her stories to our relatives — grapefruit at breakfast — a bookcase with my favorite children's books! I read all eight of the Kasperle series during the days in Antwerp. I walked with Annemarie, the grown daughter who took care of kids, to the market — the cobblestoned market place with huge bins of Vogerlsalat, my favorite. What has become of these kind relatives? I don't know. Later they were not heard of again.

At last, the day of our departure to the "Golden Gate"! We boarded a small ship on the river to meet our ship, the SS Argentina of the Swedish Johnson Line. When we reached the real harbor, it looked enormous. Much later we learned that it displaced 5000 tons, a very small ship as overseas freighters go. But climbing up a rope ladder to board it, it felt huge and I thought it very, very beautiful. How did Mamilein manage that ladder? I still can't imagine, but once we both were on board we looked around everywhere, walking from the deck through the inside, finding the corridor with cabins, finding our own cabin. How lucky we were! It was a cabin just for us two and I claimed my bunk-bed with my two dolls. We had a home for the coming six weeks.

Chapter 3. Aboard the SS “Argentina” and Crossing the Ocean

Soon we began exploring the ship. There was only one deck of cabins — a total of around 16, and we were soon to get to know our fellow passengers. The lower decks were all for freight and for the kitchen (“galley”), dining room, and social rooms. Outside there was an enclosure that was lined in canvas and looked like a very small house, attached to the open deck. To my delight I learned that it was a swimming pool, and that it would be filled with sea water once we were in warmer waters. Inside was another happy surprise: a small upright piano, painted grayish and red, and one I was allowed to play and practice on. How Mamilein knew that I have no idea; I think she simply assumed it, and of course she was right.

The other passengers included a family from Vancouver, the Argentina’s final destination; there were some Swedish passengers, there were a few German-speaking ones who, we learned, all were saving themselves from the Nazi terror. The only other Viennese were a mother and daughter, like Mamilein and me, except that the daughter was already about fifteen : six years older than me. She paid little attention to me but our mothers became friends and much later, in San Francisco, we all saw quite a bit of each other. The father of the Vancouver family always tried to teach me some English and was ever so pleased when he could tell me that my birthday was on the US’s greatest holiday. He mistook my “first of July” for the fourth of July!

Once we got out to sea the ship began to toss in the high waves. The weather was fierce and Mamilein disappeared in our cabin and hardly emerged for what seemed like an eternity and in fact was close to three weeks. She was always prone to motion sickness, and this was before the invention of dramamine — and with incredible worries about our future and about our closest people who were left behind, I now know that after the months of anxious anticipation she must have just collapsed: she needed time to actually realize her situation.

I have no memories about the first three weeks except flashes here and there: a shout when one could see the Azores in the distance; playing the little piano (Schumann’s “Einsame Blumen”, Beethoven’s Rondo in C major opus 52, Bach’s g minor Gavotte), writing letters to my grandparents instead of school work — I guess my mother did surface from time to time, looking very pale!.

But at last excitement: I woke up one day to hear no ship’s motors. We had gotten so used to their continual hum that the silence was startling. But more so was the view from the deck where all the passengers and some of the crew had gathered: we were in a small, beautiful harbor, countless sailboats and fishing vessels surrounding us, strange-shaped dark green hills with a very few houses sprinkled around in the distance. Land, but how different from any I had seen before! We had docked in La Guaira, the port of Caracas, the capital of Venezuela.

That day was an exciting one: we learned that our ship carried Swedish matches and that a part of our load would be moved out to the shore. We were taking on bananas instead. The crew wanted us passengers out of the way, so the Johnson Line had hired a car company to drive all of us to Caracas and to spend the day sight-seeing. I wish I could remember more than the drive with many curves up and over the hills, and the flimsy shacks that looked as if they were made of cardboard. It was in fact corrugated metal, and living there must have been dismal — a slum quarter at best. But to us everything looked strange and picturesque. I also hoped that the swimming pool on board would finally be filled, as suddenly the sea was smooth, and the weather warm — not a bit like European February! The sight-seeing is not there in my memory, but I can visualize scenes from the next ports of call, which like the Venezuelan one had matches-into-bananas unloading and loading, and trips for us passengers.

Outstandingly, I see us in Cartagena at a high fortress or castle, looking over the walls into the distance, the most beautiful brilliant flowers and vines surrounding us — exotic flowers, not like any I had ever seen. I loved the bright colors especially, red and pink and magenta — and more red!

One night I woke up. Mamilein was not in the cabin and I got up and in my nightie and bare feet went up the stairs to the very top deck where the captain usually was in his enclosure. There was a feeling of great excitement: passengers all stood at the railing, some looking out, some looking at the clear starry sky. I found Mamilein who said “you woke up at a special time. We are just going through the Panama Canal! It’s very unusual to do it at night, but just now so many ships are coming through that they have to let them go at night also”. Thank goodness I had woken up — imagine if I had missed seeing the Panama Canal, perhaps for the only time in my life!

It felt quite exciting: the ship was lifted from lock to lock and there didn’t seem to be much space on either side. I also got a look at the southern night sky. Much, much later, when I was in school in San Francisco, my science teacher, knowing my story, asked me to make a picture of the Southern Cross constellation. I drew some dots for stars on the board, but had no idea what I was doing. I must have been lucky however because to my surprise, Mrs. Nickelsburg said “you got it right! There is no star at the crux like there is in our familiar Northern Cross! “ Did I remember it without knowing I did? Whatever the reason, I was happy.

After the canal, after sleeping out the night, the ocean we saw was the Pacific! It lived up to the name I knew it by, “Stiller Ozean” — the still ocean — (the meaning of course is the same — but at the time I only understood it in German) because in the first days it was free from storm waves and we even saw some flying fish. The ports we were yet to visit were Mexican: I remember Acapulco, then a small fishing village. Was it from there I saw a volcano erupting in the distance? From now on there was new energy, also anxiety, among the passengers: our destination was getting close, and with it a completely new life.

The first U.S. port we docked in was San Pedro, the port for San Diego. A whole group of reporters rushed on board to interview the refugees. All I can remember from that scene is my mother’s panic after she had spoken to them. I heard her say to her friends, in the tone of voice I had not heard since Vienna, “ Oh my god, did I say too much? Did I give them any names? Did I give them my name? Will it get back to the Nazis? Will they take it out on our relatives?” Fortunately she was probably more careful than she remembered: in having passionately told the reporters about the hell she had seen developing in Germany, she must have kept quiet about her personal information.

Now we were San Francisco bound! One more scene, vivid in my memory: the night before landing was celebrated on shipboard by Captain’s Dinner. A totally festive occasion, where I was allowed to sit at the long, elegantly set table with all the passengers, the Captain in his gold-buttoned uniform at the head. Mamilein sat near the head of the table, in a mauve silk evening dress which I had never seen, I sitting next to her. There were many glasses at each place and the waiters came round in Scandinavian custom, refilling glasses as soon as they were emptied. Mamilein had always been teased by her friends that it only took a sip to make her tipsy. And now she had glass after glass on an empty stomach, having been seasick so much of the time! I was absolutely horrified to have her stand up and in her unpracticed school English make speech after speech with toasts to the ship, the ship’s company, the captain, the wonderful people who had become new friends. I tugged at her skirt to no avail — but it became obvious even to me that everyone applauded enthusiastically and absolutely adored her.

Months later I learned that indeed she had reason to thank the captain and some of the passengers. They had noticed her and had heard of her situation: that she was widowed, emigrating alone with her child, that she was arriving with the permitted sum of ten German Mark (three U.S.dollars at the time), and that that was how she was supposed to begin her new life. The German government allowed each emigrating passenger a total of \$100 to use on board ship for incidental expenses (cigarettes, tips, drinks etc). The ship's company was to return any unused sums to Germany. Noticing Mamilein, realizing her predicament, a wealthy passenger, friend of the captain, had her visit the purser who told her how they wanted to help her: she was not to use any of the \$100 and they would, at the end of the journey, give her the entire sum, while issuing fake receipts adding up to the total and turn those in to the Germans. \$100 at that period — it was still the time of the Depression — was a substantial amount and a tremendous help. Mamilein was appropriately touched and appreciative. She spent not a cent on board, and yet was — during good weather — always greeted with the best wines at her table. Her warmth, her life-affirming spirit, her charm were rewarded — as in many difficult situations throughout her life, as I was to learn later.

Chapter 4. Arrival in San Francisco and Beginning a New Life

The anecdote of our standing at the railing of the S.S.Argentina, watching our passing under the Golden Gate Bridge has been recounted often. (I was a little shocked at the bridge's color, expecting a "Goldenes Tor"; it did not take many years to make me a defender of its orange color, however, when later, after I had become a passionate San Franciscan, there was a short-lived attempt to paint it ordinary gray bridge color.) The unforgettable exclamation of Mamilein, seeing the green island Alcatraz in the blue Bay, "What a lovely island! We must go there for picnics some time!" became symbolic of her spirit: anxious about our future, desperate about the plight of her dearest people, at the same time her indomitable life affirming joy of being alive. That spirit undoubtedly had made it possible for her to go on in her most difficult times: when the man she loved most of any being, my father, died three weeks before my birth, which at that moment she did not expect — or want — to survive. When, less than a month later, by then in Vienna, the hospital nurse woke her to show her the baby, she suddenly felt there was something to live for — then that life force helped her survive. More about that time, her years in Vienna between my birth and the "Anschluss", later: now the arrival in San Francisco, California, in the United States of America. Can you imagine what that meant, in 1939? A haven, a refuge, a challenge!

I don't remember the actual landing at Pier 5, but I have a picture of suddenly being surrounded by familiar voices and a terrific feeling of excitement. The Lazars, my mother's old friends (he had been the family doctor in East Prussia), had come to meet us. They were Mamilein's only contact in this new world; they were also the reason my big brother, Ernst, had been sent to California as soon as he finished his German high school ("Gymnasium"). He was now a student in Berkeley, at the University of California. The Lazars had emigrated years earlier, at the beginning of the Nazi terror in Germany, and this contact had given my mother a destination for both his and our emigration. They met us with open arms, and soon drove us to the address where they had found rooms for us.

How strange, how different from anything we had seen, was this city, with the up and down of hills, and houses seeming flimsy and strangely shaped. The houses that now are the coveted Victorians, carefully painted in many colors, then looked shabby and gray and we seemed to see block after block of them. But before long we arrived. The house was on a hilly street with steps leading to a narrow front door. We walked up a rather gloomy staircase and into the apartment. It belonged to a refugee lady who was renting out the two front rooms. The larger of the two had a piano in it and standing on a table was a huge bowl of delicious smelling fruit — a welcome surprise from the Lazars. A strong scent of grapefruit still brings memories to me of

that fruit arrangement, with many exotic fruit I had never seen. The date was the fourth of March, a time of year when in Europe Spring still seems barely hinted at — and here we had a whole summer of fruit!

Otherwise, the atmosphere was rather dingy and a little depressing and when the Lazars left, we felt quite lost and deserted. Our landlady seemed gray and sad, and the exuberance of the farewell from the “Argentina” had faded: I sensed these feelings in Mamilein — I merely felt strange. But later on the same day, I believe, our friends returned to take us around and orient us, and, most important, drive us to Berkeley to see my brother! I awaited this anxiously — I had not seen him for what seemed like an eternity and I always had fantasies about him. He had sent me funny books from America — I remember Donald Duck cartoons in tiny square volumes — and I wanted him! I sensed on the drive that they were critical of him which bothered me — kids feel very protective of people they care about. I was also surprised at the tone I heard in their voices as we drove through what I now know is West Berkeley: when they pointed out the small “California bungalows” they said, rather condescendingly, “that is where the Negroes live”. I’m not sure why I was so struck by this that I remember it clearly to this day; much later it turned out that my brother and I completely shared the feeling that “all people are created equal!” . Could our mother’s attitude have influenced each of us?

Whatever undercurrents I sensed, we all arrived in Ernst’s student room and had an emotional reunion. To my disappointment we had to leave again before too long, but I knew that from now on we lived near each other.

Was it on another day that I was taken to “Playland at the Beach”? It was certainly soon after, and I recall our friends stopping at a coffee shop to introduce us to American food, and to acquaint me with what American kids liked to eat. I discovered that I was not yet an American kid: a Coca Cola was ordered for me and I couldn’t force it down. In fact, I STILL avoid Coca Cola! But I did enjoy meeting Siegbert Lazar’s sister Nanni who lived in a lovely house in the Richmond District. She had a boy close to me in age. He must have been in school because that day I only heard about Peter. Later we did meet and we became friends. Amazingly, by coincidence we have recently gotten in touch after so many years and are looking forward to catching up on many decades’ experiences!

One of Mamilein’s first concerns was to find out where I would go to school and to get me started there. It was almost a year since I had gone to any school: the short experience after having had to leave my Viennese public primary school in our neighborhood, the “Volksschule in der Pyrkergerasse” (it is still there!), was really unpleasant: the school the “undesirable” children had to go to was on the upstairs floor of another, far-away school. Downstairs was the regular school and of course the kids there teased the “Jewish” kids and it was even worse outside, where all sorts of taunts and nasty words were shouted at us. I guess there were no controls, so Mamilein simply kept me at home. I did get private lessons in English, from a lovely grown-up daughter of friends; by then there was hope that we would be able to emigrate. Eventually we learned that, tragically, she had no possibility of emigrating and later perished in a concentration camp.

My new American school was called “Dudley Stone School” and it was quite near, only two blocks down the hill. I guess I was quite a curiosity as some of the children in my class simply walked home with me to see what these foreigners were like. A little boy named Tommy came upstairs with me and made no move to leave again. Mamilein, surprised at such independence, asked if his mother wouldn’t miss him and if he didn’t have to go home. His forceful answer simply was “NO”. I can’t remember how we finally coaxed him out, but he must have rather liked being independent as he repeated this visit several times. My English was still very wobbly and I was totally mystified by the “Pledge of Allegiance” to the flag. But I was rather disappointed

when the teacher did not call on me during a spelling bee: I did not know the meaning of most of the words, but for some reason I knew how to spell them all. I remained good at spelling and have never quite figured out why.

Chapter 5. Getting Settled in San Francisco

Mamilein's total preoccupation then was to find a way of supporting us. The money from shipboard plus another \$100 from the generous New Yorker who had given us the affidavit that made it possible for us to enter the United States would not last long. She hoped that a wonderful letter of recommendation by her friend, the great and famous pianist Artur Schnabel, would help her get a piano teaching position. She was also planning to teach French — no one wanted to learn German at that time — but the few interviews she had, led to nothing. The next hope was to learn to bake and to sell Viennese pastries to people for parties. She had hardly ever cooked or baked before, but she had confidence that she could learn: she had often watched when Karoline or one of her predecessors had cooked and baked, and she knew that Viennese cooking was famous.

At first the money-earning efforts were pretty useless. I remember her baking experiments and the wrong smells coming from the kitchen — and her disappearing in the bathroom, reappearing a long time later, her eyes very red. One time stands out: we had to deliver a torte to a home somewhere in the Avenues. We took a tram in the opposite direction, but Mamilein knew why: we went to a pastry shop she had heard of and bought a fancy torte, then went back in the right direction to deliver it. Did what she was paid even cover the price of her purchase? Or even of the burnt ingredients? I hope that incident was one of a kind! Both of us wished we would soon move from our dreary two rooms. I was very frightened by the frequent sirens of the fire engines, especially at night. The Viennese fire engines had a horn call which had taught me to recognize the interval of a fourth, even if it usually was out of tune. But these were threatening and I hoped I would not hear them in our next home.

Mamilein was sure that things would change. Meeting new people, at first mostly German refugees who had arrived some years earlier and seemed like settled Americans compared to us, helped enormously. Some remained friends, and the friendships have lasted to this day. The Lazar family invited Mamilein — Edith to everyone else — to musical evenings in their home, and music seemed to restore her hope and her innate optimism. It was there she heard and met Bernhard Abramowitsch, the wonderful pianist who was just getting established in California. She and he immediately became friends — a friendship that deepened to include his future family, and that endured for the rest of her life. After one such evening she returned completely exhilarated by the music she had heard: Bernhard had been reading Sonatas with a very gifted, very young violinist. His name was Isaac Stern.

Among her old/new friends Nanni in particular was imaginative and had initiative. She herself at that time worked in a social agency that helped new refugees, and she knew that the social workers had no agreeable place to have lunch. She knew that her friend Edith was a wonderful, enthusiastic hostess and that American lunches would be no problem. If they could only find a venue, the problem of earning might be solved. Of course Edith loved the idea and before long I got home from school one day to be told that we were moving. She — or more likely, they — had found a two-room furnished apartment with an inner door bed in an attractive smallish apartment building directly across the street from the "Eureka". The Eureka was the very social agency where Nanni worked and where she had many friends among the social workers.

Soon we were living in the apartment on the corner of Post and Scott Streets. A rented upright piano helped it feel homelike, from somewhere borrowed card tables and folding chairs appeared, and the only remaining problem was to convince Edith that Americans liked salad

leaves and mayonnaise on their sandwiches. To prove it to her, a new friend invited her to a cafeteria downtown and they sampled the choices. She was convinced!

The opening day of “Mrs.Schreier’s Lunches” was announced, no doubt posted on the walls of the “Eureka” and by word of mouth. Then, surprisingly, a shock in the mail, one that ordinarily would have made her blissfully happy: Artur Schnabel was going to give a recital in San Francisco and in the mail was a letter from him, inviting her to lunch with him and his wife Therese at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. The shock: the lunch was to be at the very time of her lunch room opening! Great consternation, as she idolized Schnabel. She quickly telephoned Nanni and told her that the opening would have to be postponed. Nanni responded sternly, saying “either you are going to be a business woman or not!” Once again, Mamilein disappeared in the bathroom and came out much later with very red eyes.

On the announced day, we had set the tables (that, in fact, remained my chore every morning before school) and sandwich fillings and breads were prepared in the small kitchen. We both stood at the window overlooking Post Street and the Eureka, kitty-corner from our building. We waited and waited — one familiar figure crossed Scott Street, and then went on across from us. And we waited some more — and more — and finally we spread some sandwiches for ourselves, although I don’t recall Mamilein eating anything. Not one customer came to Mrs.Schreier’s opening. It was a bleak day.

Eventually some compensation: the Schnabel’s invitation changed to one for tea, and that was a bonus for me: they asked Mamilein to bring her little girl along. I still remember a very gracious afternoon, with “Tante Therese” being especially kind to me. She, years earlier, must have been similarly friendly to my brother: among the countless picture postcards in our family collection is one from her addressed to him. On her lovely photograph — she was a well-known singer and this was a publicity photo — was written “Meinem lieben Ernst von Tante Therese”.

Schnabel’s San Francisco recital must have been soon after this visit. It was an evening concert, and I was allowed to come to it. I believe it was an all-Beethoven Sonata program, and at the end we went backstage with all the other well-wishers. Schnabel indicated that we should wait until the crowd was gone so we could have a little time together. At this opportunity Mamilein asked if he could suggest a teacher for me. He promptly pointed to his cousin and friend George Gruenberg, who had been asked to stay along with us. G.G. as he was called later, immediately suggested a student of his named Janet Graham. Indeed it was not long after, that I was taken to her apartment on Russian Hill for lessons.

And the lunch room? I don’t remember how it happened. I only remembered that soon the rooms were filled with people, that Mamilein was busy in the kitchen and also ran back and forth being hostess, and sometimes the lunchers helped carry food and drink. Mostly I came home from school when the people had left and there were leftovers and dishes to wash. Of course they were washed by hand! It was a time long before dishwashers, and Mamilein and I — and soon, some of the clients who became friends — all did the chores together. All I had to do after school was to clear the tables; and after a snack — I was always starving — I could go to practice on our rented upright piano.

The lessons with Miss Graham were disappointing — we were just not a good fit. When she gave me the Mozart D minor Fantasy to learn — I loved it, of course — she played it for me. I admired her playing (she probably was a fine pianist) and her reply to me “you will learn to play it as well when you are big and have pink finger nails like mine” ruined my admiration — I was not used to such jokes. The end came when she gave me the Delibes “Pizzicato Polka” to learn. I just hated that piece! So I was totally happy when my old teacher, Professor Violin, appeared in San Francisco together with his wife Valerie and their daughter Eva. They were able to

emigrate thanks to a recommendation of Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg and Violin disagreed totally on musical questions but had great respect for one another on a personal level. They remained in contact for quite some time.

Besides the Violins, countless others arrived in San Francisco. Refugees seemed to be streaming in, and they included my aunt Hilde — my beloved “Hillala”, Mamilein’s younger sister, who had cared for me most of anyone during my infancy. Much quieter and less dramatic than her sister, she had a deeply caring nature, she was dainty and dressed thoughtfully and with taste, and so helpful to anyone who needed it, that the profession she took up years later, after an unsuccessful marriage, namely practical nursing, was just right for her. But during the early days as a new refugee, she became a part of our household, a tremendous physical and emotional help. She soon found work at the “Eureka” — the social agency — and working in the clothing section, where donated clothing was sorted and dispensed, she found things for me to wear: quite necessary, as I was outgrowing the clothes I had arrived with.

Chapter 6. Another Move

Not only people streamed in: it seemed as if lift vans of furniture were overwhelming Mamilein! Where up to now we slept on the apartment's "inner door" bed and used borrowed tables and chairs, suddenly all our belongings from Vienna arrived. When Mamilein inspected them, the packed furniture, all household items not considered "valuables" — those had been removed by the German authorities — were waiting to be unpacked. Fortunately, our Bechstein Grand Piano was there. It had been chosen by Artur Schnabel for my grandparents' wedding present to my parents. Our rooms would again seem like home! But where should all the things go? The apartment was tiny. And not only did our own van arrive: Hillala had her own household, including a beautiful Bluethner Grand Piano and, overwhelming us, Uncle Bruno and Aunt Grete's belongings arrived similarly. They — my mother's brother and his wife from East Prussia — had also directed their belongings c/o Edith Schreier in San Francisco. Overwhelming was not only the amount: Mamilein was responsible for paying storage for all these things! What was she to do?

A solution presented itself when a very large flat became available just one block away, at the corner of Scott and Sutter streets. It was equally reachable from the "Eureka" and the by now regular lunch guests would have no problem finding their way there. The building — a typical San Francisco Victorian from soon after the great earthquake and fire — was in terrible shape. There was an unappetizing grocery store on the corner with an adjacent ground floor flat. The vacant upstairs one had many rooms leading off a long, narrow hallway. At its end were a kitchen on the left and a large dining room with windows looking onto Scott Street — the room where lunches would be served. I hated its look and musty smell, but I couldn't prevent our move there.

I can't remember the move; most likely it happened while I was in school — my second one since arriving: Emerson School on, I believe, Pine Street. I made a few friends there — outstandingly Jack Riesenfeld, a boy my age whose parents were German and had fled at roughly the same time we did. He played the cello, and we had a great time playing all the piano/cello duets we could find. He was the first of many cellists I was to play with later, culminating in playing with my cellist daughter Monica! Disappointingly, Jack had to move away when his dad, a physician, found a job in one of the valley towns. My other friends were two African American sisters who lived nearby. We all would go to the nearby playground where, I'm sad to admit, I liked best to build fancy structures in the sandbox, boycotting all the more active games: they were strange for me and I felt incompetent and "out of it". The other thing I remember from Emerson School was the Pledge of Allegiance: all the kids — all grades — together recited it in the schoolyard before the bell rang to go to our classrooms. I had no idea

what it meant and for myself interpreted "I pleasurely gence ...", whatever that might be. In 1939, the final "under God" had not yet been appended.

Meanwhile the ghastly flat was transformed: With lots of fresh air the musty smell went away. The floors were covered with Persian carpets, the Bechstein was in a front room, the walls had my mother's favorite pictures on them, the old-fashioned Viennese cooking utensils and her dishes were in the kitchen. Mrs. Schreier's lunch room was in business! Soon it was swarming with people. As more and more refugees arrived and went to the Eureka Social Agency for advice, they were more often than not steered to "that nice Mrs. Schreier across the street" who would no doubt offer them a good meal and maybe even give them work. The social workers themselves loved coming to the unique combination of slummy surroundings and an interior where you would find a warm welcome, delicious food (by now, Mamilein's innate cooking talents were realized and increased by experience, as well as by advice from wonderful new friends) and the European surroundings of a cultured Viennese household.

I was not aware of a gradual change. I remember practicing on the Bechstein, having my own space to play and read in, setting the tables for lunch before I went to school, finding the kitchen and dining room swarming with people when I came home. In the kitchen, my mother or aunt were often washing dishes at the sink, various of the newcomers drying them. People remembered for years the musicians, doctors, lawyers, economists, thoughtfully walking slowly around the kitchen, towel and dish in hand, wiping absent mindedly while passionately arguing about politics and the by then highly charged international situation: by now Hitler had overrun much of Europe and war seemed imminent. Everyone in our circle had close relatives and friends in danger; just how great the danger, was not yet dreamt of.

In my own life, much changed. While I still had lessons with Miss Graham, I had the nice experience of often visiting Bernhard Abramowitsch and his students who lived nearby on Russian Hill. They included Raymond Smullyan, equally engrossed by music and mathematics, and who became excited by discovering that my mother was the widow of Otto Schreier, whose mathematical work he had just studied and deeply admired. Another was Bernhard's cousin Emanuel Bruckman, a young actor. The three often let me listen to wonderful music, and I also went on walks with them when they would show me parts of San Francisco I — and perhaps they — did not know yet. It was during that period that Bernhard played all the Schubert Piano Sonatas in house concerts in an artistic home on Russian Hill. I was allowed to go to them all with my mother. Perhaps my deep love of Schubert was kindled at that time? Some of the movements did seem terribly long then and I fell asleep — but much of the music stayed with me. Soon, after my old teacher, Prof. Violin and his family arrived in San Francisco, my lessons with Miss Graham stopped and I continued so study with "the professor" as people liked to refer to him, until we left San Francisco a few years later.

One of my mother's new friends was Alfred Booth. Also a refugee, he had fled from Hamburg. Before 1933 he had run a communist bookshop and for this he was arrested and tortured by the Nazis as soon as they came to power. I don't know how he escaped but he was no doubt helped by his sister and brother-in-law, Ann and James Mundstock. They had emigrated to San Francisco and also became dear friends of ours. Ann had been a dancer and here had a large dancing studio where occasionally she and James gave large parties for all their friends and students. An air of sadness always could be sensed especially in Ann. I only learned later that they had lost their only child, a seven-year-old boy, to diphtheria, at that time still a dreaded killer.

Alfred Booth, now working as social worker for the avalanche of refugees, was anxious to help Mamilein. When she told him — unbeknownst to me — that she worried about me and that school took so much time that I could not practice enough, he introduced her to a wonderful woman who was head of a progressive private school. She was Josephine Duveneck, a great Quaker personality and the school was called Presidio Open Air School. Mrs Duveneck helped

the entire refugee community in many ways. At this time, still pre-war 1939, she devoted her energies to progressive education. The Peninsula School, still flourishing at the present time, had been founded by her earlier, and POAS in San Francisco was its offshoot.

I remember well Mamilein's and my visit to her in the school in late Spring 1939, well before my 10th birthday. I saw the kids in various rooms, walking around doing different interesting-looking things, little ones sitting on the floor apparently playing, a perfectly free atmosphere totally unlike any school I had ever imagined. The room we were greeted in by Mrs. Duveneck was very quiet, and she listened intently to Mamilein's story. I can still hear her voice in reply "we just need a little girl in the fourth group. You can send Irene here tomorrow morning." Mamilein began to stutter something about applications or fees but Mrs. Duveneck waved all this aside and said "Don't worry; you will help us out when we need you some time, I know." That was her style.

Chapter 7. Becoming Acclimated

Here began a new phase of my life. In the new school, I became more independent, I gained more self-confidence. Even though I asked silly questions that showed I still didn't know English very well, no one seemed surprised or teased me about it. I made new friends among my classmates, and best of all, I got used to getting around the city on my own. Our apartment was some distance from the school and I had to take two streetcars to get there (buses only came later to San Francisco). It made me feel very grown up and I never guessed that my mother heaved a sigh of relief when I arrived home safely. Sometimes it was even a little late, as I stopped with a friend to suck popsicles bought with my small amount of pocket money. And what about the extra time for practicing? I think I spent more time at school than I had formerly because I loved being there. And the practicing I did later in the afternoon was likely all the better for that.

The following summer — our first in the U.S. — marked my tenth birthday. By then my mother sensed that I was reluctant to invite other kids to our house because it was so shabby compared to some of their elegant ones. She talked with my teacher, Nuschi Plank. Nuschi was another Viennese refugee — formerly a Montessori teacher — who had been a recipient of Josephine Duveneck's largesse. She could not have worked in her own profession in public school, not being a citizen or having taken the U.S. examinations, but Mrs. Duveneck, trusting her instinct, appointed her as 4th grade teacher. Nuschi gave mother the advice to invite my schoolmates for my birthday party to our apartment. She did, we had a great time, and everyone loved the Guglhupf [for non-initiated readers, a traditional coffee cake in a fluted round shape, essential at birthdays]. And I stopped being worried about inviting friends over.

The next day, one girl whose energy and boisterousness I admired especially, ran to kids who had not been at my party, shouting "what would you do with a guglhupf, eat it or drink it or throw it away?" and when they answered with "throw it away" she shouted, still louder, "WRONG!!!". That girl was Frances Weiler — who to my great joy turned up in my life again, now as Frances Varnhagen, when I returned to the Bay Area in my last move. To my equally great sorrow, she died too soon after. Our friendship in our late years — thanks to Dominique (they worked together!) — was such a gift. We both had hoped for more shared music and talk...

That same summer, I remember being driven by one of Siegbert Lazar's brothers to his home in Walnut Creek. It was before freeways or tunnels, and was truly countryside. The house was a small bungalow in midst miles and miles of walnut groves. His wife and their daughter Ruth, several years younger than me but more americanized, waited for me and I spent a couple of weeks there for my summer vacation. I remember that it was very hot and even though we played together most of the time, I was happy to get back home to my mother, my piano and my friends. I had been a little uncomfortable as Ruth's mom warned us about playing too far from the house, telling us lurid tales of little girls having their bellies cut open by wicked men.

During the following school year, many changes occurred. The general conversation among my mother and her friends was largely about the world situation and Hitler's seemingly swallowing most of western Europe. Mamilein, as before, only ever more urgently, did all she could to make my grandparents' emigration possible. This meant, essentially, begging Americans she met to find a person of means to give them an affidavit: a document taking the responsibility for supporting them in case they were unable to do it themselves. When at last an elderly Mr. Wolovsky provided this, she was elated, sent it on to Vienna posthaste, and then was left with only the need for visas to whatever country was still accepting refugees; there they could wait until American visas would be obtained. By this arrangement, my aunt and uncle from East Prussia, Aunt Grete and Uncle Bruno, were able to stay in Trinidad temporarily. They eventually came to the U.S. when they were offered a job in Connecticut as butler and maid in a country home. I remember my mother reading from a letter of theirs about the mountains of snow around their new home. What a change from Trinidad's tropical heat! This must have been during the following winter, 1939/40.

Meanwhile the visa search for my grandparents continued, while my mother learned from their letters how living conditions had become more and more difficult: life in Vienna was clearly becoming intolerable. The pictures my grandfather sent as often as he could, tell the story: after receiving the affidavit, Opapa made a lovely watercolor of Vienna looking toward the Vienna Woods from the Inner City as a thank you to his sponsor. Mr. Wolovsky generously insisted my mother keep it for us. I now have it hanging in our home — and I show it to our guests, as much as an historical document as for its intrinsic qualities. Earlier, Opapa had sent drawings in every letter of places he had taken me to; he loved Vienna so much and did not want me to forget it. The last picture he sent — it is dated March 1942 — is a view over Vienna rooftops. It was from a garret window, in pen and ink; he no longer had pencils or paints or good paper — but his inimitable touch — he was an architect with a true artist's eye and ability — was there. This picture too is hanging here, as are all the others. I cannot look at it without remembering the circumstances.

The lunchroom, at the same time, flourished. I remember it as always crowded, often still when I came home from school. And now, additionally, word of Mrs. Schreier's cooking had gotten around and often she was asked to serve dinner to groups who came in the evening.. It meant extra income — but also much extra work! People loved coming because Edith (Mrs. Schreier) made everyone feel like her personal guest, and indeed many remained friends and came again and again. Thanksgiving was a memorable occasion: Mamilein loved all she heard about the significance of the feast, and she felt such great gratitude that we had been able to escape from the horrors of Nazi Germany and were welcomed in our new home that she really wanted to celebrate this feast with all the traditions she had heard about. But what about the turkey? Not only did she have no idea how to prepare one, but they cost much more than she possibly could spend!

A deus ex machina appeared in the form of Nushi Plank: she had won a turkey in a raffle at the cinema! She had no use for it as she was invited to the Duveneck Thanksgiving, so she offered it to Mamilein, and it was accepted delightedly. But, oh, the surprise when it was delivered: a dead bird, head, feet, and all of its feathers! At first, consternation. Then a helpful thought: her by now dear friend Trude Meyer, more practical than she, would find a solution (Trude's then-teenage daughter Gerda is still a treasured friend of mine. She and her wonderful husband Rick and we try to meet whenever we can; until recently they lived in the house Rick himself built amidst the redwoods). Trude immediately came over with her mother-in-law, Oma Hanna, who had emigrated with her and Gerda. Oma Hanna solved all practical matters and amazingly even knew how to pluck and clean a turkey. I hope the Meyers all came to the feast that followed. I only remember a large table and many, many friends, much food and my mother's

welcoming words to everyone: the sound reminded me of her speeches on board the “Argentina” so much earlier in that eventful year!

By now, the war in Europe was raging, letters took longer and longer to reach their destination, and at school we had to color in maps that showed which countries had been overrun by Hitler’s Germany: soon most of the continent was a single color, or so it seemed. Would Hitler ever be stopped? The people gathered in our Scott & Sutter flat were acutely aware of the war — all had friends and relatives there, all feared for their safety, none guessed what atrocities were soon to occur. At the same time life here had to go on, and there were only occasional reminders that not everyone welcomed us newcomers: I remember coming home once to find my mother quite distraught over a nasty telephone interruption: at that time one could have a shared telephone line for much less money. It meant that if you heard the other party speaking, you hung up and waited, hopefully not too long. On that day the other party, overhearing German being spoken, began to shout “go back where you came from, you dirty foreigners!” Of course Mamilein hung up immediately, but she was shocked out of her comfortable feeling of having a home again.

During this year, while I was learning countless new things and my English became more and more natural and American, an acquaintance, recently divorced, asked Edith if she would consider renting her a room in our large apartment. The arrangement was made, she moved in with her two-year-old little girl, and as everyone seemed comfortable, I believe they stayed in the apartment as long as we did. Not only they: another refugee from Austria, a young man, rented another room, and so gradually Mamilein earned more and was able to pay her various expenses without having to borrow: she had become — for the first time in her life — self-supporting!

Chapter 8. Fifth Grade

What were all the new things I learned in my progressive school? When I had come there first, at the end of fourth grade, everyone in my room had on a smock, held a paint brush, was covered with paint spots, and was busily painting his or her desk. A surprising sight for a little girl used to sitting still amidst rows of desks, writing or listening to her teacher! I had never minded that, as I had liked my Vienna teacher, but this was an interesting change. I loved taking part and discovered what it was like to paint furniture.

Painting desks was only a small part of what was new to me. In one of the first classes this year, a science class taught by Mrs. Nickelsburg, we learned about the stars and made maps of the constellations with stick-on stars. Another memory: we learned about frogs, we took part dissecting one, and then passed the eyes around from hand to hand, all of us sitting around the large science table. I don’t remember any “yuck!”s. Mrs. Nickelsburg also took us on field trips. I remember going on a trail on Mt. Tamalpais, Mrs. N. telling us about the plants we saw. Mrs. Nickelsburg’s sister, Mrs. Arnstein, was our poetry teacher: we made lovely notebooks, covering the paper booklets we were given with glue and pretty pieces of fabric. Mrs. Arnstein read the poems to us and gave us typed copies to paste into our books. We had assignments of making up poems, and I think some pretty good ones came out of our class. By the following year we were reading epic poems and making up our own also. I remember writing one about the gold rush, with a recurring “for gold they came, for gold they came!” as the refrain.

Every day after we had our lunch we stretched out on mats on the floor and Mrs. Duveneck sat and read books to us. One, in which a whole family got caught in quicksand, was very frustrating for me: I had to stay home sick on the day when she continued the story and for some reason I never heard how it turned out — no one seemed able to tell me and I was too shy to ask what the book was. After the rest period we went outside for games and sometimes to the nearby Presidio meadow to play soccer. I was never very good at those games and felt happiest when the game was volley ball, which I liked and where I might get chosen by one of

the teams. There was also a shop period, in the school's wood and metalworking shop in the basement. I remember working at making a small table and having it get shorter and shorter, as I tried to saw the legs down to match one another. It finally ended up as a bedside table that I gave my mother for a very low bed as a Christmas present.

That Christmas, our first in America, proved that one of my worries from Vienna, before we emigrated, was unfounded: I had then to be reassured that, yes, people did have Christmas trees in the country we were going to. And sure enough, much earlier than was customary in Austria, homes and shops displayed more trees than I had ever seen. I was surprised by all the electric light on them, some even multi-colored! My mother would have none of this: in the tradition going back to her own childhood, the trees were lit by real candles and she was not going to give in to new customs. Not listening to any of the good advice from friends, even from me (I had a great fear of fires since we lived in San Francisco), she found candles and made an old-fashioned, European celebration. With our old friends from Vienna and new ones, both European and American, there was much music and good food. Of gifts I remember nothing, although I have no doubt that there was something under the tree for me and also for my brother. But the emphasis was on warm hospitality and friendship.

The remainder of the school year was much the same. In our home life, some excitement was added when Ossi arrived for a visit. Being very naive in some respects, I thought he was visiting "us" as an old family friend from Vienna. That eventually he would change our life totally only became clear a few years later. Ossi, who had turned up in Vienna when I was five, had been at our house often. When the Anschluss happened, he left Vienna as soon as he could: people with no property or valuable belongings, and who were not blacklisted, were allowed to travel with no restrictions I believe. He went by train and cross-channel boat to England where he met up with his good friend Ferdinand Rauter. "Rau", as we all called him later, was in England on tour with the Icelandic folk singer Engel Lund. They had given concerts all over Europe and also in the United States. While in Vienna, Rau had spent much time in our home, practicing there and also taking many meals with us. I absolutely adored him: he had a wonderful manner with children, he was always fun, and he gave me music to play on the piano that I was to get ready for his next visit. When he was there, there was always laughter and music — it was magical.

Now in England, and having given concerts with Gagga, as Engel Lund was known by her friends, Ferdinand Rauter was becoming a desired guest at parties and receptions in grand houses, where he always charmed his hosts and generously played the piano. When his friend Ossi — Oswald Jonas — arrived, he included him in all the socializing. At one such event, the hostess was so impressed by the two Austrian friends that she asked if there was anything she could do for them. Unhesitatingly, they replied that they had a friend and her small daughter in Vienna who were in danger of persecution by the new Nazi regime. In order to leave they needed an affidavit from someone who could vouch for them (ie, promise that they would not become burdens on the country they were emigrating to). The great lady took this request seriously. She had a wealthy brother in New York whom she immediately wrote. The brother, a Mr. Lewison, responded positively, and before long my mother received the life-saving document by mail in Vienna. How lucky we were! What wonderful friends, what caring human beings! I wish even now that I could thank them.

That the affidavit was from the United States was no accident: of course Mamilein wanted to join her son, and he had been sent to California. Ossi spent some months in England, but absolutely wanted to continue on to the United States. As a freelancing musician he could hope to make a living in either country — and there was a compelling reason to come to the United States. After a short sojourn in the East, and having begun to learn some English, he decided to try his luck in California. When he arrived in San Francisco, probably by bus, Mamilein had rented a room for him in the flat directly underneath ours. He had no obligations in the East, so

he got in touch with the musicians he knew about in the Bay Area, probably hoping to find possibilities for teaching. Language was still a big problem: his reading knowledge, I learned later, was vast, but he had a really hard time with pronunciation and being understood. I remember when he, Mamilein and I went on public transportation together, trying to sit as far away from them as I could: he freely spoke German without restraint. Of course that was extremely unpopular at the time, and I wanted to be untainted.

Chapter 9. Summer Camp and Moving Again

The following summer brought new excitement: Presidio Open Air School ran a summer camp in Mendocino County, near Clear Lake. It would have been unaffordable for us, but thanks to Mrs. Duveneck and whoever else was in charge, I was offered a free place for a three-week session. I was terribly excited to go and only worried that we would never be able to get the list of required camp—equipment together. The greatest problem was the sleeping bag! Many grocery store fronts at that time had signs up that read “shopping bags 2 cents”. Each time I passed one, I hoped against hope that sleeping bags were on sale there. Where one eventually was discovered I have no idea: was it a loan? Was it one that Hillala found among the clothing at the Eureka? Whatever the source, I was totally thrilled that I would be ready to go with the required number of T shirts, pants (blue jeans were still in the future), swim suit and — sleeping bag! That object of my dreams was a dull army brown and weighed what felt like a ton. On overnight hikes — what an adventure! — we carried these monsters on our backs, like huge long sausages which covered the lengths of our backs. But we all had them and we slept soundly, whether in our cabins or on the ground.

The camp memories are happy ones. The other kids were mostly school friends, with some newcomers as well. The counselors were all young women and men, probably students. We went on hikes (my disappointment there was the landscape: at the top of every hill I expected a view with green meadows and small villages; Austrian landscape was always in my memory. The golden hills of California were not my dream), we swam in the swimming hole in the river, we roasted marshmallows around the campfire, we sang songs, we were silly, we played ball, we made up games, we did a few crafts; it was great. On my eleventh birthday there I had a real surprise: one of my mother’s friends, of course also an Austrian refugee, had managed to buy a small old car. His name was Otto Modley, he reminded me a little of Rau, and he appeared on the morning of July 1st. Out of the rumble seat — I think that is what those cars had — he extracted FOUR Guglhupfe! Mamilein had baked one for each of the long tables we all ate at. I can think of no one else who would have done something like that. I hope I told her after I got home how everyone had loved that birthday party.

Coming home again was as exciting as leaving for camp had been. I was greeted with the news that we would soon be moving from our slummy apartment to a beautiful large house in a wonderful neighborhood. Before telling me any of the details, Mamilein took me on a streetcar ride to look at our new home. We got off on Haight Street at Buena Vista Avenue and started walking up the hill on the park side, looking at the houses on the other side. At each house I asked “is it that one?” and Mamilein, very mysteriously, always answered “not yet”. Finally, quite close to the top of the hill, we crossed the street and stopped at No. 253 — the most beautiful of houses, with a palm tree in front and climbing roses and a driveway on the side. I could hardly believe that this would be our home. You can still see it, unchanged on the outside, as beautiful now as then.

Later, when we had returned to the apartment, I learned a few of the details of our planned move, and that was really all that interested me then. Much later I heard how it all had developed: the house had been rented by a family, also Hitler refugees, who were moving to their own home.* It was now offered for sale for \$7500, but could be rented for \$75 monthly.

This sum was unaffordable for Edith Schreier, but she had a large circle of friends by then, none of whom were settled in their lives. During the weeks I spent at camp, when all this came up, she must have had many, many discussions with these friends. The plan they together worked out was that it would be a cooperative venture: she would be the renter and responsible for meals and the upkeep and each of the participants would contribute to the expenses. With all the furniture that had arrived in the lift vans, there would not be much required to furnish the house, and the dining room — a large, mirror-sided room — came with a long table and innumerable chairs, so one major problem was solved. All the tenants were going to work out details once everyone had moved to the house.

Chapter 10. The Boarding House

I don't remember the actual move, but it happened during that summer of 1940. America had not yet entered the war, but war was on everyone's mind. Edith was deeply concerned about getting visas for my grandparents. She planned in her mind how they would live in the Buena Vista house with us once they were able to leave what was then Germany. For all of us lucky ones in San Francisco, we were set to begin a new life in beautiful surroundings.

By this time, Ossi had returned to the East Coast, where for the present he had more teaching possibilities. My uncle and aunt were able to end their work as butler and maid in Connecticut and to afford the trip to San Francisco. They found an apartment not far from us and soon were able to support themselves: Uncle Bruno, who in East Prussia had owned the family home and a country estate, and was proprietor of a flourishing dry goods store, here did not have the means to go into business but worked downtown as elevator operator in one of the large department stores. He kept his sense of humor and often told anecdotes about his new metier. Aunt Grete, like Hilde (Hillala), worked for the Eureka. Hilde for the time being lived with us in the Buena Vista house. The Violin family were dispersed: Valerie (Mrs. Violin) worked as maid in a Pacific Heights mansion. She told, somewhat wryly, about serving visiting musicians at dinner who had been her guests in Vienna. Eva, their adult daughter, began a new life in Los Angeles.

Among the new friends who lived with us were Erwin and Else Reisner. They had first come to New York from Vienna, but then were urged to continue on to San Francisco by old friends — psychiatrists from Vienna — who offered Else a job. Erwin, an economist, would have to prepare for another profession wherever they lived and he eventually worked for a government agency. When they came to the lunchroom soon after settling in San Francisco, it seemed providential: Else and Edith immediately formed a warm bond of friendship. It attests to Edith's immense powers of persuasion that she could convince the Reisners to give up their first private apartment in this country to share a "cooperative" house. Edith credited Else's aversion to cooking to her considering the idea, and she was thrilled when they decided to join the group of new inhabitants of 253 Buena Vista Avenue.

Who else lived in the house with us? I recall great excitement when Bernhard Abramowitsch moved in after his future wife, Eva, had arrived by boat from Hamburg. They were to live in two attic rooms, one spacious enough for his grand piano. The special excitement was due to that piano. One day I came home from school to find it dangling outside the back of the house by a thick rope. The piano movers had found that the only way to move the instrument to the top floor was by hoisting the instrument up from outside. The nasty surprise of a large, active wasp's nest above the first floor balcony interrupted the entire procedure, and the piano had to spend the night on the parking area behind the house. I imagine it was covered in blankets; it appeared to survive in good shape until wasp nest removers, with what looked like baskets around their heads, smoked out the wasps and the piano movers could complete their task. It attests to Bernhard's calm, philosophical temperament that he took his treasured piano's ordeal in stride. The very next day he was at work, practicing for a concert.

On the second floor, the one on which the Reisners had two rooms, was a large central room. Here lived Mrs. Fischer, the elderly mother of a German (refugee, of course) psychiatrist. She was a kind lady who soon decided to help my mother with various kitchen chores: one of the several young men who I believe lived on the lower floor, was diabetic and Mrs. Fischer, always referring to him as "mein Herr", took on the responsibility of always preparing grated raw vegetables for him. At that time, long before cuisinarts, this meant real work with a hand grater, and Edith appreciated her help no end.

The other large room on the second floor overlooking Buena Vista Park was a coveted one: the only room with its own bathroom. Known as "das Elefantenzimmer", it had a chandelier surrounded by dark green elephants. It had a series of different tenants of which I remember best the last, a Viennese bachelor, Mr. Renner, who I believe was the only tenant who owned a car. As several others, he remained a friend for years. He never tired of teasing my mother for her lack of business sense, but he did also give her useful advice in monetary matters.

Directly beneath the Elephant Room, on the first floor, was a beautiful, large living room. One of two, the other, on the opposite side of the central hall, led to the large dining room. It was in this one that our Bechstein stood and where most of our social life took place. Here I went to practice right after school, when the house was fairly quiet, and my playing did not seem to bother anyone. Two tenants' reactions to it have stuck in my memory however: during the following year, I believe, the Abramowitsches moved into their own house and their attic rooms were rented by an artist, Meta Cohn Hendel, and her aged mother. Meta loved music and often recalled later that her moving in was made special by my practicing the Chopin E major Etude, opus 10 no.3, one of her favorite pieces! She took that as a good omen. A not so happy memory is of a Mr. Bressler moving in to the front room just while I was learning the Schumann Papillons. He came rushing in, looking quite distraught, and asked me to stop playing that piece. I learned later that he had suffered from mental illness and associated Schumann with losing his mind. I did not mind playing other composers instead: I found the Papillons very hard to love at that stage, so I happily obliged him.

By now the setup at 253 Buena Vista Ave. was definitely that of a boarding house. The "cooperative" idea must have been lost as so many new people joined in and were happy to pay whatever they were able to in exchange for room and two meals daily. That the atmosphere resembled a very large family (including the occasional spat and some emotional scenes) was due to Edith's approach of treating everyone like a personal friend and creating the illusion of a house party. The only drawback, as far as she was concerned, was that she had to do most of the work! As far as I was concerned, I missed having privacy and resented having to share my mother with so many competitors for her attention. In retrospect, I realize this undoubtedly helped my becoming independent and developing self reliance. Years later, when she felt I was getting too independent, she would say "I only have myself to blame for your going your own way!" Thank goodness she let me!

There were quite a few other boarders I remember: various younger women, some of them also German refugees as well as several Americans. I remember them but not where their rooms were. Certainly every space that could be used as bedroom was filled so that when we moved in, the little breakfast room next to the dining room and near the kitchen was the only one left for me. It had a pull-out studio couch, which I shared for sleeping with my mother. There was no closet, so I suppose our clothes were kept behind the kitchen in a small storage area which also had a toilet and a wash basin. As to the rooms of the other tenants, there must have been several smaller ones on the upper floors that I have forgotten. I did get moved around as new and different boarders came and went. My favorite space was actually half a room: it was one that had to be passed through on the way from the upstairs hall to the Reisner's suite of two

rooms. My half was defined by a curtain attached to the ceiling. As Else Reisner, especially, was my absolute favorite among the boarders, it was a comfort for me to know her nearby. She was always interested in what I was doing, I shared my favorite books with her, and her understanding when at times I felt misunderstood and angry gave me real support: she knew exactly how to calm me. Undoubtedly her having studied with Maria Montessori as a young woman, and having for some time assisted in a Montessori school in Vienna, gave her special empathy for children. But there was an affinity between us that blossomed decades later and lasted for the rest of her life. I still miss her! That Monica and she had a separate but equally close friendship, that she “adopted” both Dana and Dominique (at very different times!) enthusiastically is more than is usually meant by the term “family friend”.

The semi-basement room, much like English “lower ground floor” rooms, was beautifully carpeted and fitted with wall space to hold pictures. It had been used as an art gallery at one time and now became a bed/sitting room. The first inhabitant, I think, was a young Japanese man named Fuji who worked for my mother — a so-called house boy. He cleaned and washed dishes. Later, after war had been declared and the dreadful policy of interning Japanese people inland had been enforced, he disappeared. We never discovered his whereabouts and only hoped that he was safe. After he left I often had to do the dishes — quite a chore for so many diners! Of course my mother hired various occasional helpers. I recall a German lady, a Mrs. Dresdner, who often worked in the kitchen and undoubtedly cleaned as well, but after Fuji there never was any regular live-in help. Later there was a regular house cleaner who came several times a week.

Chapter 11. Learning to Cook

Recently a friend asked me how Edith learned to cook for so many people when in her European life she had never cooked at all. For it was true that even with the hired help and various volunteering friends, the main work was hers. I often saw her carrying heavy bags of groceries, on weekends I often went shopping with her, and it did not occur to me that a tremendous amount of planning must have gone into all this. Breakfast for so many people — well, yes, they did not all come at the same time — and they wanted different things. But dinner! It was served at the same time daily, after everyone's working day was over. Huge quantities were always prepared, and I imagine that she just had a love for people and food and a talent for hospitality.

As Edith's reputation for delicious food in a unique environment grew, there were frequent calls from a variety of people who brought their guests to this unusual house for a Viennese dinner. This was served in the music room, where space was made for a pull-out table. Many of these visitors came repeatedly and some became friends. I was usually the server, always in the dining room, but occasionally also for the special guests. Of these I remember particularly Dr. and Mrs. Alan Scott, a charming and warmhearted older couple. Dr. Scott was an orthodontist who after seeing my partly wonky teeth offered to straighten them — with absolutely no charge! Although this was still Depression time, it was nonetheless an extremely generous offer, accepted by my mother with delight and relief. I have no doubt that from then on they were invited to many a dinner with never a penny charged.

Shopping — rather, bringing the heavy bags up Buena Vista Hill, became a little easier when a Russian emigre with a car started a small business: for five cents he drove passengers from Haight Street and Buena Vista up the hill as far as they needed to go. What a relief! Edith made use of this mode of transportation daily, I imagine. Nonetheless, she must have felt exhausted at times and wished for some relief.

One weekend just such an opportunity came along. Edith's good friend Alfred Booth was by this time married to a social worker who worked with delinquent children. The Booths had to bring a young girl, a few years older than me, from San Francisco to a home in Santa Barbara. As they had a car large enough for us all they suggested to Edith that she find a substitute for the boarding house chores for the weekend and come along, bringing me as well. We would see the beautiful Pacific coast on the way, we would see a new part of California, and — what was best — we would spend a night in a hotel! Edith was ecstatic — a weekend with no duties, with no demanding boarders, with time to sleep in and to soak, undisturbed, in a bath — it sounded like Paradise to her and when it actually happened as planned we both were happy. I have no idea when this excursion took place except that it was after months of uninterrupted boarding-house life but during the school year. The night in Santa Barbara probably was the first since arriving in the U.S. that Edith felt free from cares and she relished every minute of it.

Chapter 12. A School Holiday

There was one other interruption during the boarding house years when Edith had to find a substitute to cook and care for the boarders, and this time for an entire week. It was in the following winter during a school holiday, when Mrs. Duveneck asked her if she would come to cook for my class; we had been invited to spend a week learning to ski. The lodge we all were to stay in was in Soda Springs and belonged to one of the teachers. I was rather apprehensive about having my mother along in this entirely American environment — she was so very different from everyone else's mother! But it turned out happily as she had more empathy than I had credited her with; she did not come in to our bunk room, where all kids stayed together, to say goodnight to me. And they were all happy with her good food and cheerful manner. What a relief!

Amazing to me was that on the way up to the Sierra Nevada, on a bus, some of my schoolmates were totally excited to see snow, for the first time in their lives! I was thrilled to see snow again after a long time and I couldn't wait to feel it and play in it. But skiing was another matter: the skis at that time were heavy, unwieldy wooden ones that had to be waxed for ages before one could attach them to one's boots. On our first attempt at getting to a nearby slope I was the last in line on the track and soon fell into a deep trough around one of the redwood giants, my skis crossed. I didn't manage to free myself until my classmates and teacher returned, when they had to extricate me. Fortunately the later outings went better — even though I never became a real skier. Still, the entire trip left happy memories; certain scents of wet woolen socks, thick wax and hot chocolate still bring back the memory of walking, skis left standing in the snow, into the upper floor window of the lodge; the snow was that high!

The skiing trip took place during the momentous year 1941, some time after New Year's. I was getting close to being 12, I had more responsibilities both at home and at school, and I was practicing seriously. I remember gradually getting "on top of" Beethoven's Sonata in Eb Major, opus 27 No.1. I loved the second movement especially, but the challenge of the last kept me at the piano for hours — it was exhilarating to gradually get the feeling that I could get it all up to tempo and make it exciting. I had a chance to play it for an audience early in the summer: a family in Palo Alto with a daughter my age had gotten in touch with Mrs. Duveneck to ask if she knew any refugee child who would be suitable to stay with them for several weeks during the summer vacation. They had much older daughters, but their youngest, Julianne, would be alone and they hoped to have her become friends with a girl of a different background. My mother thought this sounded like a great vacation for me, so it was all arranged.

On the appointed day Mrs. Mears (much later I learned that they were a prominent Stanford University family) and Julianne came to pick me up at 253 Buena Vista Ave. in their car. On the way to their home in Stanford we were to stop at Julianne's piano teacher's house for her

student recital and they hoped I would play along with the other pupils. I was really happy to do that, and everybody was surprised that I sprang an entire Beethoven Sonata on them. I enjoyed playing there — and also later, when I played much more than I had expected to at the Mears house on a beautiful Steinway.

That happened due to an unfortunate accident. After we had reached their home, a spacious Peninsula family house, Julianne wanted to try me out on her favorite outdoor games. We played a little baseball and luckily I happened to hit the ball with the bat she gave me. I don't remember what else I was tested in but it must have been pretty bad as I only recall her saying "well, you've proved to be best at baseball". Next we went to a nearby playground and she suggested swinging on the rings. I had never done that before and very soon fell and sprained my ankle rather badly. I didn't admit it to anyone, but I actually was quite relieved not to have to show my inability at sports. Instead I spent the time playing the piano, my pedaling foot up on a stool, I read lots of books, and Julianne and I played board games. Poor Julianne! She was certainly friendly but she must have been sorely disappointed in her summer visitor. We did have some great days at the beach in their summer cottage, where there were many games for the wet, cold days, and where beachcombing was exciting and rewarding. I had never seen so many shells, sanddollars and the like. But at last I guess everyone was relieved when my visit was over — although they certainly didn't make me feel that.

Chapter 13. World War II Begins

Back at 253 Buena Vista life went on as before but I could feel the general anxiety about world events. In particular, Mamilein was more and more concerned about my grandparents' plight as their ever more desperate-sounding letters arrived. Even my grandmother, who had hesitated for so long because of ill health, now wanted nothing but to escape the increasing terror. They had long since been forced to move from their house, designed by my grandfather, in the Krottenbachstrasse, first to a flat shared with other families, still located in Vienna's "noble" outskirts. From that, they had to move again, to ever more cramped quarters. Finally they were assigned a single room in the Leopoldstadt, Vienna's 2nd district, which centuries earlier had been the Jewish ghetto. It now served that ignoble purpose again. Every letter, of course, was intercepted and read by the Nazi authorities, but it did not take much imagination to understand what the words meant. I was never told any details — Mamilein had always tried to protect me from bad news — but it was obvious that she was in a panic about obtaining the necessary funds to obtain visas for their emigration. The affidavit from the generous man who had issued it would be essential for my grandparents to actually enter the United States. But no more emigrants were being admitted at this time. Cuba was the only country accepting refugees, and the visas cost \$1000 each. That meant \$2000! What miracle could produce such a sum?

I have no idea about the time frame but it must have been during the Fall of that year that a Jewish welfare agency actually loaned the necessary \$2000, free of interest, to my mother. She acquired the visas as quickly as only possible — how, I can't guess — and wired them to Architekt Theodor Schreier and his wife, Frau Anni Schreier in Vienna. The relief at having done so faded quickly, alas: the visas arrived at their destination the day war was declared. The borders were sealed from that moment on. Their fate was sealed as well. Eventually, as we only learned after the war, they were deported to the concentration camp "Theresienstadt" where my grandmother died after two weeks, my grandfather several months later.

A more personal account of their last days came years later, when Mamilein and I visited Vienna for the first time after the war. The old lady who had lived with us in Vienna, "Tante Julia", had been deported to Theresienstadt as well, and she survived those years. Seeing her after all that had happened was indescribably moving. She told us of seeing my grandfather again in Theresienstadt, and of being at his side when he died. With tears she told me that with his last

words he blessed me. How I wish I had known him when I was older! His blessing means so much to me; it requires no religion to feel the lasting power of such love. Heartbreaking as the end of my grandparents' life was, unimaginable the preceding suffering, we still had the somehow reassuring knowledge that they had been spared the infinitely worse fate of my grandfather's two brothers, and of the uncounted others who were killed in the extermination camps. At the time we were in San Francisco, these events were still in the future and we still clung to the hope that we would see each other again.

Both Dana and I remember well the morning of December 7, 1941, when newsboys were running through the streets shouting "EXTRA EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!" The newspapers they were holding had the huge headline, WAR! It was very exciting and no one knew exactly what it meant. We soon learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, with many, many sailors killed. War with Japan was immediately declared. Most people also knew that America would now join Great Britain in the war against Hitler Germany. I recently read a superb book called "Citizens of London" about three great Americans and their role in England. Their description of the nearly desperate situation in England and the amazing stamina and bravery among the entire population during the Blitzkrieg with its daily bombardments of London is unforgettable. That the reaction to the news of Pearl Harbor brought jubilation there, as it meant that at last Britain would be joined by America as its ally and that finally the chance to slay the German dragon was at hand, is not surprising. President Roosevelt would not have had the support of the American people for a war against what were called the "Axis" powers (Germany with its allies Japan and Italy) without a provocation. The attack on the American fleet in Pearl Harbor was just such an event. From that moment on, America was changed forever.

In the boarding house there were suddenly two factions: of course everyone supported the war wholeheartedly and wished for nothing more than the defeat of the Hitler regime. But with the infinite wisdom of political authorities, the refugees who had fled from Germany were now considered "enemy aliens", while those who came from Austria — officially Hitler's first victim — were considered "friendly aliens". Never mind that all of them would have been equally persecuted in Germany! However, the "enemy aliens" had to observe a curfew, and be in the house by 8pm, whereas the friendly aliens were allowed to go where and when they wanted. This caused hilarity but also very hostile feelings, I imagine especially if there were good movies or concerts or parties going on. I don't remember how long these rules were in effect or if some official saw through this nonsense and was able to stop it. But I clearly recall angry or at least annoyed looks among some of the boarders when others took advantage of their freedom.

Other changes happened gradually. As the ship industry — specifically building warships — took place in the great shipyards around the San Francisco Bay, many of our friends and acquaintances took jobs there, along with the thousands of workers who streamed in to the area from other parts of the country where they had been out of work. I have a clear picture in my mind of my teacher, the pianist Moriz Violin, on one of the ferry boats between San Francisco and Sausalito, working as ticket collector. Years later, Dana heard from one of his professors at Berkeley that he had worked in the shipyards. The war effort erased class differences.

We learned about much of this from my brother, who was always keenly aware of social changes and whose political and social awareness were a passion. He had earlier had good friends who were members of the Communist Party (in the 1930's a sign of being an idealist) and he participated, without joining the Party, by lending his car to them for driving to Party meetings. Later, when the Soviet Union was considered our enemy instead of the wartime ally it had been, he was never permitted to become an American citizen due to that connection. This made much of his life difficult: working in a profession that someone of his extraordinary intelligence and education deserved was out of reach for an "enemy alien" (in contrast to me,

born in Vienna, with a Viennese father, he was born and raised in Germany). He never overcame his bitterness although much of his personal life was fulfilling, with a good marriage and two wonderful adopted daughters, my nieces Diane and Sherry.

All this was in the future. During the boarding house years, Ernst was a student in Berkeley, and he often came to visit with friends who were invariably interesting and unusual. I also liked going to visit him in Berkeley, especially enjoying taking the “Key Route” train from the terminal in San Francisco to University and Shattuck in Berkeley. How strange that now I often take that identical route underground, on BART! I can still hear the train conductor announcing the stop “Alcatraz and Adeline”, which sounded so exotic to me then, and now is a familiar intersection.

Chapter 14. Developing Changes and some Anecdotes

During this school year there were major changes: the name of our school was changed, much to my relief, from "Presidio Open Air School" to "Presidio Hill School" — which, amazingly, still continues, in the same building, somewhat enlarged. We kids were happy because, with the old name, we had often been asked if we were recovering from tuberculosis. It was impossible to explain, if we indeed knew this, that "Open Air" was meant metaphorically to indicate open minds by the school's founders.

A more basic change occurred when Josephine Duveneck decided to leave the school in order to devote herself to helping Japanese families resettle inland, where they would not be forced to live in isolated camps. I believe she also helped many refugees by letting them live on her beautiful property in the Los Altos Hills, "Hidden Villa Ranch"; * she altogether used her energies to work with newcomers and to take an active role in the work of the Friends Service Committee. The new director of the school was a Mr Fenn and although I can visualize him, I remember nothing else about him. My class teacher in this, my last year at Presidio Hill, was a tall, energetic Miss Clark. I liked her because she gave us interesting assignments and expected us to do our best. In English class we had to write a composition as homework every day. It could be a single paragraph, but had to be well-presented and with perfect grammar. Another enjoyable activity was shop, where we were allowed to work with metal and a soldering iron. I remember a copper ashtray with curled feet that gave me much trouble but ended being a great success in the boarding house.

I am not sure if my first piano performance in a large hall was in this or the previous year. The occasion was a war fundraiser in Temple Emanuel. The program was mixed, including, besides my solo, a piano trio in which my teacher was the pianist, as well as other ensembles. My group included the G minor Gavotte from the G minor English Suite by Bach, a Mendelssohn Song Without Words and the Chopin C# Minor Waltz. I practiced hard before this occasion and enjoyed playing, even though beforehand I experienced my first performance-anxiety dream: I dreamt that I had thick gloves on before playing and that I asked my mother if I shouldn't take them off before the concert. That is all I remember about the occasion except that I very much liked all the pieces I played. As I played for people all the time in everyday life, doing so in public was not so different. I try to convince my students that the only way to avoid crippling stage fright, besides being well prepared, is to play frequently for friends, as a matter of course. As I, during my developing years, was more often than not around musicians who always played, it was a totally natural thing to do so — why would one play if not to share the music? Reproduced music was not in my life at that time — we had neither radio nor gramophone.

While on the subject of performances, I recall that Bernhard Abramowitsch was working hard in his upstairs studio on Roger Sessions' new Piano Sonata at this time; he was to play it at a festival at S.F.State College, I believe. I was somewhat mystified by this music but impressed by Bernhard's playing. I remember his coming home after the concert, heaving a breath of relief

and saying "I'm glad that's over!" Without an instant's hesitation old Frau Fischer, right there to greet him, concurred emphatically "So am I!"

Many other anecdotes from the boarding house years have been told and retold. My mother had planned to write them down and indeed began to do so — but somehow her notes were lost on one of her many trips. I am now perhaps the only one left who remembers either the actual event or the repeated story about it. One, the most dramatic, comes into my mind. I heard about that one the morning after it happened, as I slept soundly through the night's excitement. One new boarder at that time was the sister of George Gruenberg, the pianist, cousin of Artur Schnabel whom we had met at a Schnabel recital soon after arriving in the USA. Flora, G.G.'s sister, had had periods of deep depression and was being treated by Dr. Fischer, the psychiatrist. He felt that the beneficent atmosphere at 253 Buena Vista Avenue would be just right for her after a hospital stay.

Whether or not he was correct, Flora did not seem to agree and on that memorable night was discovered by another boarder as she was about to leave the house in her flimsy nightgown. The young woman boarder, who I guess was getting a late snack in the kitchen, tried to stop her, whereupon Flora picked up a kitchen knife and a chase around the kitchen table ensued. With the noise and, I imagine, screaming, the rest of the house awoke and amidst scuffling and confusion Flora disappeared. As I heard the story later, the police was called, two handsome policemen arrived, marvelling that one frail lady could be allowed to escape a house full of able bodied inhabitants. The policemen searched in Buena Vista Park to no avail, returned to 253 where the beautiful young woman who had frightened Flora so whispered to my mother "let's offer them coffee!" (for once, my mother did not comply). At that point someone suggested "perhaps she returned to her brother" and G.G. was telephoned. Awakened from his night's sleep he reluctantly obliged, going down to his Russian Hill apartment building's front entrance. Surprise: Flora, in flimsy nightgown, was there! She had taken her purse, hailed a late-night taxi, and gone to the place she really wanted to be — her brother's home. The policemen, perhaps entertained by having seen a crazy lot of foreigners and no corpse, left happily, the boarders and my mother went back to bed, only Dr. Fischer's judgment was tarnished by this event. As far as I know, Flora continued to live her life in the Russian Hill apartment undisturbed. Years later I met her there occasionally.

Chapter 15. Getting ready to Leave San Francisco

Seventh grade was my final school year in San Francisco. It started as all the recent ones had: at school my class teacher was the Miss Clark I described; at school and at home — in the boarding house — we were all eager to do our part for the War Effort; the use of the blackout curtains continued, shutting out the great view over the city at night, but dinner guests continued coming nonetheless. Christmas was celebrated as we were accustomed, with a beautiful tree, this year in the front living-room. The greatest surprise for me was that I got a small REAL RADIO! Since there never had been one in our home, this was truly exciting. I knew that many of my schoolmates had radios and listened to the different childrens' programs — and now I would be able to do that also! There were also wonderful musical broadcasts from New York, I knew — so it was a major event. Eventually, "The Lone Ranger" became my favorite program, and I especially liked the accompanying music, unaware that it was the William Tell Overture. For long time I believed I had made a great discovery.

A great change occurred in my life, I believe in the Spring, when my teacher, "The Professor", Moriz Violin, temporarily went to Los Angeles where Valerie, his wife, was moving to join their daughter Eva. I overheard the entire story one night when Eva came to visit us from LA, and stayed in the carpeted basement room in which at that time I slept at one end and my mother at the other. Eva and Mamilein spoke in whispers, imagining me asleep. I was wide awake

however and fascinated by their intense and very grown-up conversation. What I heard was indeed not meant for me.

My lovely Aunt Hilde — Hillala — had by this time moved in with her brother and sister-in-law, Uncle Bruno and Aunt Grete, in their large nearby flat. They rented out one other room, to a Mr. Ellison. To my great surprise, I learned that Mr. Ellison wanted to marry my aunt and that she was considering accepting his proposal. The story Eva and my mother told continued with Eva's father, my teacher Prof. Violin, who apparently had become infatuated with my aunt and was so shocked that she might marry and no longer be available at his beck and call, as she had been (completely innocently, I believe), that he threatened suicide; fortunately he tempered that to leaving for Los Angeles where he hoped to join his wife and daughter. It all struck me as weird and did not worry me too much, but when on one of the following days my mother broke the news to me that my teacher would be leaving San Francisco and I would have lessons with someone else, probably Mr. Gruenberg, I had a hard time acting surprised.

When we actually went to see Mr. Gruenberg in his Russian Hill home and studio, I found it quite exciting that now I would find my way there once a week after school. I had been used to lessons at home and I believe they were not always regular, so this would be an interesting change. The only thing at the "audition" that was truly embarrassing to me was my mother's telling Mrs. Gruenberg, who was present during the meeting, that I was always famished after school and would need a snack. When the lessons actually started, Mrs. Gruenberg always came with a tray of delicious snacks, and as Mr. Gruenberg always happily sat down and had a conversation with me as I ate, with no sign of surprise, I started to enjoy the treat. My new teacher, like Prof. Violin, had never taught a child before — perhaps he thought this was a common custom! His teaching was quite different from that of Violin, who always spent time on freeing my arm, watching that I played close to the keys and kept my hand supple, and that I always played with the appropriate expression. In Mr. Gruenberg's studio were two Baldwin Grand pianos, and often he would play along with me, to indicate how he wanted the music to sound. I did notice that at times he didn't notice when I left out some notes, but mostly he swept me along. The first piece he gave me was the Bb major Impromptu opus 142 no.3 by Schubert. It was the piece I played at the end of the school year when he had a student recital, but of course I learned much else during the time I studied with him.

By far the most consequential change in our lives came some time during the spring of that year, 1942. As in previous years, Ossi came to visit. He had by this time established himself in the East, and now had been offered a permanent position as professor in the music department of the YMCA College in Chicago, Illinois. I knew nothing of those details at the time, nor did they interest me; I merely accepted his visit as a recurring event, like the seasons. How wrong I was! I cannot remember how my mother led up to a talk she and I had; I do remember our standing in the wood-paneled front hall of 253 Buena Vista Avenue, and I can hear myself saying to her, unbelievably, "he didn't ask you to marry him, did he??" In response she merely nodded. I felt as if hit by lightning, in a blaze of emotions I still can't understand. I only recall racing up to my half-room, throwing myself down on my bed, knowing a revolution was occurring in my life, and that it was all out of my control. My poor mother must have been utterly shaken by my reaction. She and I had been extremely close always and she probably did not guess how naive I was about adult relationships. She absolutely didn't want to have any rupture in our relationship and I think she just didn't know how to handle this situation. I myself felt in a total muddle and became utterly self-conscious with both my mother and Ossi. As before this I had always been completely relaxed with him, he imagined that she had said something derogatory about him to me. Ridiculous, obviously, and it shows one of his irrational sides. But the result was that we all three were truly uncomfortable with one another for a while.

Unfortunately I remember nothing about the transition, but I must have gotten used to the idea that someone else would be joining my mother's and my life, and that we would be moving

away from San Francisco, probably before my entering eighth grade. I was not happy about the plan — I loved my school and my friends, I loved living in San Francisco and near my brother, but perhaps I sensed that my mother could not always continue working as she did. The hope I had had that one day we would live on our own, without the boarders, might actually be realized, if differently from the way I had pictured it.

During the following summer I had a chance to return to Clear Water Ranch, the Mendocino County camp run by my school. However I returned in a more responsible role: several of my schoolmates and I were invited to come during the period that a group of younger handicapped children were there. We were to help the camp counselors look after the children and help them have a positive camp experience. It was challenging and we all enjoyed having responsibilities and making friends with the younger campers and showing them some of the skills we had acquired when there last. A great experience during my last summer as a San Franciscan!

By the time I returned home, Ossi and my mother had married, and for a while, not much changed. At the end of the summer, Ossi returned to Chicago, where he was to look for an apartment for us three to live in. Never one to pass up an opportunity to see something new, he traveled East by way of New Orleans. With his irrepressible, witty sense of humor he sent Edith a post card from there saying "having a wonderful honeymoon; wish you were here!" This was the beginning of years which, in spite of ups and downs, were filled with music, friends, intellectual repartee, always punctuated by jokes, laughter and clever play on words. I have never met anyone else with such a constant flow of humor, among his many diverse qualities, as my stepfather.

After Ossi had left, Edith — my mother — tried to find someone to take over the boarding house. The boarders had become quite dependent on her, and clearly no one would run it exactly in the way she did. But eventually a Mrs. Munter from Germany, the aunt of one of the boarders, Thea Munter, volunteered. She would do it quite differently, perhaps only serving breakfast, but she and my mother did come to a satisfactory arrangement, and so we were ready to depart and once again begin a new life.