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Oh, social networks how I love thee! Dr. Jimmy Schwarzkopf [of Jerusalem and a JOE] posted on Facebook [on December 21, 2009]. I clicked on the link and here I was on "Jews of Ecuador" [Web site] – the tiny South American country where I grew up, started my career, where my parents are buried, and my daughter Judy Kywi, who lives in Santa Monica, was born.

Max and Eva Wachsner, my parents, arrived in Ecuador in 1939, in one of the last vessels out of Germany, to rebuild their lives in an unknown country that enabled visa purchases. Beginnings were difficult: no money, no jobs, no language skills, but hardworking as the majority of the Jews arriving during the World War II. Around the 1960's, they owned a lamp and furniture store on 10 de agosto, one of Quito's main avenues.

Their friends were German; German was the language we spoke at home; Marlene Dietrich, Kurt Weil was the music we listened to; German dishes were served at home; Spanish was the language I spoke with my friends; Yiddish was spoken by some of the Eastern European emigrants. German-based was the Jewish community built in Quito, and German was the language they continued speaking at the Judisches Frauen Verein, old peoples' home, and the Chevra kadisha – the community activities to which my dynamic parents belonged.

I attended, as most of the Jewish kids, the American School in Quito, learned and celebrated Jewish holidays within the community, graduated and went to Fisher College in Boston, returned to Quito and started my banking career in 1970 at Citibank.

In 1978, I returned to Boston, this time Harvard Business School, where I have been returning almost yearly, attending their executive education programs. After HBS, my banking career proceeded at Banco Popular in Quito, where I married Kurt Kywi in Ecuador; I divorced him about 20 years ago, and remarried the Brazilian writer and lawyer Octavio Mello Alvarenga.

The first 18 years of my life in Quito I was tiny and quiet, and the social and political spirit born between The Doors, the women's movement, the Vietnam War, the Latin American military dictatorships, and the Latin American writers' boom, spiced up my life. From a militant of Izquierda Democrática in Ecuador, to Ecuadorian Consul General in Rio de Janeiro (1988-1992), I found my niche in my present activity working at a Brazilian not-for-profit institution, advocating market access for small organic food producers and entrepreneurs involved in environmental sustainability. German helps when attending organic fairs in Germany, being Ecuadorian enables me to understand Brazilian family farmers and the culture of the countries in which

I've been living for the last 20 years. As for faith, which was never my strongest characteristic, it so remains.