

GERDA'S STORY

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August 1999



Grandmother and Granddaughter Dania, August 2000

My parents, Gustav and Elizabeth (nee Partos) were married in Hamburg, Germany, August 31, 1919. My paternal grandparents were Adolph and Fanny Gumpel (nee Phillips) and my maternal grandparents were Bela and Risa Partos (nee Weissmaier), both from Budapest, Hungary.

I don't know anything about my paternal great-grandparents. The only one still alive when I was a small child was my paternal grandfather's father, who was living in an old age home and whom we visited a few times with my mother, but I think I remember that more from being told later, though I believe my brother Erwin vaguely remembers him. He died before I was old enough to really remember him. My great-grandparents from my maternal grandfather's side lived in Budapest and I don't even know if they were alive when I was born. I doubt it, and we don't know anything about them. My maternal great-grandmother was the only one still living. She lived in Budapest and when I was old enough I started corresponding with her. She lived with two unmarried daughters of hers. She died when she was nearly 100 years old and I still wrote her when my daughter Katja was born. She died soon after. I never met her, but I did meet both her daughters who came to visit us in Hamburg. One was "Tante" (aunt in German) Vilma and the other Tante Ella. Much later Ella came to Ecuador, where she died; as far as I know she was the only survivor of the family in Hungary. The rest did not survive the Nazis.

From my father's side we had one great-aunt (the sister of my grandmother) living in Berlin, Tante Martha, who frequently visited us. We liked her very much; she also never married. There was also a brother of my paternal grandmother and his wife, and a brother of my grandfather and his wife,

and some cousins of my parents, all living in Hamburg. Most of them we saw only on and off, but always at the Seder at my paternal grandparents'.

My father had three brothers: Bruno, who married Berthel and had two children (Ruth and Eddy), Berthold, who married Trudel and had three children (Kurt, Felicitas and Tommy), and Sigbert, who married Hertha and had one son (Werner). They later moved to Berlin.

My mother had two sisters and two brothers. The oldest was Margit, who married Hans from whom she got divorced later. They had two children (Hans-Heinz and Inge). Then came my mother, and then Laczi, who married Hanna and had two children (Helmuth and Vera). Then came Magda; she married John and had Ilse and Gert. The youngest was Fery, who married late, after the war. His wife's name was Anni and neither one had children, both having married late in life.

My parents were married after the first world war and my brother Erwin was born August 10, 1920. I was born March 26, 1922. From the time they were married my parents lived in Hamburg, on the third floor of Heinrich Barthstrasse 8. Erwin and I were always very, very close and we still are. My mother later told us that as soon as she left us alone in a room we started to fight, but that it was never serious and only while we were quite young. As long as I can remember we never were angry at each other overnight since we always were afraid that one of us might die and then we could not make up again. For some reason we thought people only die at night. Erwin was always my "big brother" on whom I could rely totally and I used to think he knew everything. He was always an introvert and I was and still am an extrovert. Erwin could suddenly get very angry and he would start throwing

things such as erasers or other small objects at me. But he must have been very careful never to hit me and of course I knew that and took advantage of it. I immediately started screaming so that my mother would come running into the room, thinking he must have half killed me already, and she would start to scold him before finding out that it was not as bad as it sounded and very often not even his fault. Actually it was not very nice of me, but I guess these things are a woman's privilege! When I wanted something very badly from him and he did not want to do it or give it to me I just told him "Erwin, I will start screaming" and that very often did it. It was not very nice but it was effective.

Erwin and I slept in the same room until he was about 10 or 11 years old and we always played certain games with each other before falling asleep. I do remember one of our games when we were quite young: it was to pretend that Erwin was the Master of the whole world, and everybody, me included, had to do whatever he told us. I really don't know how we got these ideas, but we enjoyed it many evenings lying in bed when we were supposed to be asleep. We had, as most people did at that time, a maid in the house, but my mother always took care of us herself. She never accepted any invitation during the day, and later on, when we went to school, was always there when we came home. My parents' social life took place at night when we went to bed and the maid watched us. My mother did a lot of things with us. She took us to museums, the zoo, sledding in winter, etc. We had a marvelous childhood and could always feel very safe. That stayed with us all our lives. Our Aunt Magda and family lived very near us and Magda and my mother were very close. We grew up together with their daughter Ilse, who is only 10

months younger than I, and later with their son Gert, who is about 5 years younger. We all went to the Jewish schools and Ilse was one grade behind me.

When I was 6 years old, in first grade, I got sick. Our family doctor diagnosed appendix trouble but thought it would go away again. This went on for months and months: on and off I would get pains, then it would get better, and he always said it was nothing to worry about. Finally one afternoon I was in so much pain that I cried and cried. Luckily our family doctor was out of town and my parents called in a Professor of one of the hospitals in town. He just looked at me, had me taken at once to the hospital, and he operated me that same evening. My appendix was so infected he could not take it out because it would have burst. So they opened me up and put a tube in to drain everything out. This had to be cleaned out every day. I remember that it hurt and I was very afraid. They always sent my mother out of the room so that I would not cry and struggle too much, because when mother is there kids of course behave differently. Anyhow, when they took me home the nurse told my mother: "We did not think that she would survive!" Luckily I did, no thanks to the family doctor who was old fashioned and apparently did not know a lot. After that he was NOT our family doctor any more. Some weeks later, when I was healed up, I had to go to the hospital again, this time to have the appendix removed. I missed most of this first school year, but as I could read fluently (having a brother who was one year ahead in school I had learned with him) I did pass to second grade. My mother did have had to practice the Hebrew alphabet with me, which was the only thing I had really missed out on.

When I was 10 years old I was sent for about 10 weeks to a “Kinderheim”. This was like a sanatorium for kids, kind of a youth camp but with personnel who was schooled to take care of us. (Kinderheim literally means “home for children”). I had some illness which apparently many kids in Hamburg had; it was climate-related and had something to do with the lungs. I never felt sick, but I guess the doctor noticed it when he saw me and I was sent to “Duerrheim”, which was in the Black Forest. I still remember some of it, and I do know that I was often homesick. The thing was that we had to write home but our letters were censored. As my mother knew this and knew they might not let me send a letter complaining that I was homesick, she had told me before what I could do so that she would know if I was homesick. If all was OK I was supposed to write a comma after “dear Mutti” (that’s how we called her, it is like “Mami”), but if I was homesick I would put an exclamation mark there. Well, that was fine but then it happened that I was homesick only on and off, not all the time. Every time we were all sitting together writing our letters, I thought that I was not homesick anymore and put a comma after “dear Mutti”, but as soon as I had given the letter away I got homesick and was unhappy that now I could not let my mother know! That went on for the whole time and I think, if I remember correctly, that I never let my parents know that I was homesick. Actually everybody was very nice, we went hiking in the woods, gathered mushrooms, played games, and I am sure my homesickness was not lethal! As these 10 weeks in the camp were during the school year, we also got some schooling during these weeks.

When I was 8 years old I got dancing lessons at the “Stadttheater” in

Hamburg (the City Theater and Opera). Our teacher was an older lady or at least she seemed so to me at my age. I enjoyed that very much for about two years, until my mother decided to let me have dancing lessons for classical ballet, "toe dancing", which at that time they did not teach at the theater. My parents got a private teacher, also an older woman who had been a dancer, and she came to our house and taught me toe dancing four times a week. My mother was very handy and made all my clothing herself and made beautiful dancing costumes for me. When I was 9 years old I also started piano lessons and I enjoyed it very much and practiced every day. For me that was enjoyment, not hardship. Erwin had started piano lessons one year ahead of me but he did not like to practice and he dropped it.

When I was 10 years old we moved to a smaller but more modern apartment. It was located in Binderstrasse and was on the ground floor. We had a backyard which we enjoyed enormously, having lived up to that time on the third floor where we had balconies but of course no yard. But the apartment had only two bedrooms and Erwin and I had to sleep together again. We had already for a time each had a separate room. I very much enjoyed being in one room again; how much Erwin enjoyed it at the time I don't know. But we always had things to talk about and I am actually fairly sure it did not bother him either. When I was 11 years old Hitler came to power and that year Erwin had his Bar Mitzvah, since he turned 13 years old that August. The party was at our home, just the family, which included quite a few people. Ilse and I played piano for four hands and I also danced. I always enjoyed dancing, playing piano and acting in front of people.

With Hitler in power things began to change quite rapidly. In the very

beginning we did not feel the change that much, but soon neighbors and other people we knew did not dare or want to say hello to us anymore, kids started throwing snowballs with stones in them, people were even calling down “Jews” at us from upstairs windows (I never knew how they did know even from the second or third floor) and pretty soon we only socialized with other Jewish people. Somewhat later we were also prohibited from going to movies, theaters etc. Since we went to Jewish schools, during the winter we had school on Sundays because of course Saturdays there was no school. This made it very obvious that we were Jewish kids, and other kids did bother us, so we had to leave our books for Sunday in school on Friday, and we were also told not to walk in groups of more than two or three kids.

We only had school on Sundays during the winter months; the other months we just had somewhat longer ordinary school days to make up for Saturday. Sunday morning was always our “music time”. My father was a very good violin player and every Sunday morning we played together. We kept that up for quite a few years and I enjoyed it enormously. But dancing was still my greatest enjoyment and I certainly wanted it as a profession when I grew up. I would certainly have tried if times had been different and I would have had the possibility. As it was, there was no way. After my second year of dancing we were to perform, as done every year, the “Puppenfee” ballet at the Staatsoper. The whole ballet school was to be on stage. Some had very small parts and some of the older ones bigger roles, but everybody was in costume and it was quite exciting, especially for the very young ones. Our teacher was the first ballerina of the Staatsoper and she was Swedish and certainly no Nazi. But when she told us all what parts we would have she

left me out, I was the only one left out, although there was another Jewish girl, but she did not look Jewish at all and had blond hair and she could participate. At the time I could not understand why she left only me out, but I was too shy to ask. I went home quite upset and my mother called her and asked what happened. She apologized and told my mother that the director of the theater had told her not to dare put me on stage (I looked quite Jewish) and as the other girl did not look Jewish and nobody seemed to know it she just put her on with the others. She also suggested that, under the circumstances, it would be better for me to change dancing schools. I was of course quite unhappy about not getting on the stage and changing schools, but my mother enrolled me in a private ballet school that belonged to an older Hungarian former dancer. She was a very good teacher though extremely strict. During our breaks we were not allowed to sit or even lean against a wall. No cotton in our toe-dancing shoes to help our aching and often bleeding toes, but we learned a lot! I really liked her classes, but then came Christmas time and the yearly performance, and she also did not put me on stage. I was the only Jewish girl there. One other girl was half Jewish but did not look it and nobody knew and again she could participate but I could not. So, finally I stopped taking dancing lessons when I was about 15 years old. There were Jewish dancing schools but not for ballet dancing, only for modern dance, and I was not interested in that. Having so much family in Budapest, Hungary, my parents decided to find out if I could go there and enroll in their State Theater Ballet School which was well known as a first class school, but at that time they also already refused to take any Jews. So that was it for the time being. I certainly kept on dreaming of making a

career of dancing and one day being a real ballet dancer, but I realized that I had to postpone that.

Our parents tried to make life as normal as possible for us. We always had a lot of friends in our house, especially on weekends when my girlfriends came over, Erwin's friends, and my cousin Hans-Heinz also brought a few friends over. We usually gathered at our house, put on the gramophone and danced. Come evening my mother made a mountain of sandwiches (it was usually Sunday and the maid's day off) and they all stayed for supper. In Europe we had our main meal at noon or rather 1pm and at night we just had cold cuts and bread. My cousin Hans-Heinz was quite an attraction for my girlfriends. Whenever I had girlfriends there they asked if he would come. He was four years older than I, which at our age seemed quite "grown-up", and they all flirted with him. He liked that! He was a good dancer and everybody had fun. We had some Jewish neighbors who once told my mother they thought we had really no reason to celebrate that much, but my mother told her very bluntly that she believed that teenagers should grow up as normally as she could make it for us and have fun.

Some time back, when I was 14 years old, quite a few of my friends took lessons in ballroom dancing. As I was a good dancer I did not need lessons but every so often they had a party (we called it a "Ball") at the teachers' house. The teachers were a Jewish couple, and again I remember them as elderly but maybe they were much younger than they seemed to me at that time. Anyhow, a very good school friend, Lily Cohen, who had classes there, asked me if I wanted to go. Of course I did, and we decided that I would go together with my cousin Inge, who was Erwin's age. I was very shy at that

time and not yet dating; this was my first dance and I was a bit reluctant and did not know if I would be “up to it”. Lily told me that she would coach me in advance and teach me what to say, just as the dancing teachers had taught her, which was: When a boy asks you to dance with him he introduces himself and you tell him your name and then he says “sehr angenehm” (which means: I am delighted). Then you tell him “ganz meinerseits” (which more or less means: So am I). Well, we practiced this for quite a while. Of course the boys had to be dressed up and we girls all wore long evening dresses, which my mother had made for me. My mother left us there and she and my aunt Margit, Inge’s mother, were supposed to come for us later.

When we arrived we were greeted by the lady of the house (the teacher) and her husband (who taught together with her). They took our coats, and when they talked to us they addressed us with “Sie”, which is a formal manner of talking to somebody grown-up with whom you are not on very familiar terms. As I was quite small and did not look that grown-up, nobody had ever addressed me formally, but everybody said the familiar “Du” to me and so I felt very grown-up when these two people addressed me that way. Then the music started and whenever a boy asked me to dance and said “I am delighted” I also said “I am delighted” and that was all I ever said. I just was too shy to say anything else to a boy I did not even know. So, of course I did not get any repeat dancers and did not dance too much. My cousin Inge, though, who was older and a very pretty girl and a flirt, did dance about every dance. It did not bother me as I was not the only one, there were enough other girls who did not dance that much. Later my mother and aunt came and stayed there (they had tables and chairs for the parents who

came) and I am sure my mother was unhappier than I that I was not dancing that much. As I got older, of course, I became less shy and learned very well how to flirt with the boys and never sit out a dance.

By 1938 things were very bad in Germany. For quite some time we had not been allowed to go to the movies, theaters or restaurants. We could not have maids younger than 45 years of age when a Jewish man lived in the house. In the meantime we had moved again because my paternal grandparents wanted to live with us, and so they took a very large apartment in the “Brahmsalle” and we moved in there together. As it got harder and harder to find a good maid over 45 years old, this was easier for my grandmother. Also, doing business was already nearly impossible and it was somewhat cheaper to live together. We went through different maids, quite a few of them much older than 45 and kind of “funny”, but it worked out O. K. The apartment was quite large, with one bedroom for my grandparents, one for my parents, one for me and one for Erwin. We also had a living room and a dining room and of course a room for the maid. My grandmother never interfered in the household, she was happy if she did not have to. And she always got along marvelously with my mother. She had only four sons and considered my mother, her first daughter-in-law, as a daughter.

Then came November 9, 1938, the infamous “Kristall Nacht” (the Crystal Night), when all the windows of the Jewish stores were broken, our synagogues, were burned down, and the Jewish men were rounded up to be taken to a concentration camp. I was already finished with school and attending a full-time secretarial school (not Jewish) when I left on the morning of November 9 to go to school and passed the synagogue and saw it burning.

I returned home at once and in the meantime my aunt Berthel had already called that they had come early in the morning and taken my uncle Bruno away. My father left immediately and stayed for a few nights with Lola, a cousin of his. She was married to a non-Jew and for the time being not in danger, since in the beginning they only came for the men. Erwin was also hiding. Where Magda and John Koppel lived they had an attic and every apartment had a padlocked room there to store luggage, etc. Erwin went there to sleep and they locked him in. I would have died of fear: imagine if there would have been a fire! He never would have gotten out. I imagine he was frightened too, but he never said so. Anyhow, at least it was a fairly good hiding place and better than staying home and waiting for the Gestapo.

At this time my paternal grandmother had already died and only my grandfather lived with us. After the Kristall Nacht my parents decided that it was time to leave the country if we wanted to survive. My uncle Siegbert, my father's youngest brother, had been living for a few years in Guayaquil, Ecuador with his wife and his son Werner. We wrote to him arranged for us to get a visa from the Consul in Hamburg. Of course my father had to pay something extra, but that was not important as long as we got a visa. Naturally, we were going together with my grandfather, who had enough money to finance the whole trip, which was not cheap. First of all we had to get passage, and whatever was available would be fine. As it was we got passage on the Patria, a German boat, but they only had first class still available and that's what we took. Then my parents had to get all the papers one needed, which took some time. In the meantime my uncle Bruno got out of the concentration camp since his wife had also gotten a visa from Ecuador

for the family and at that time they still let the men go if they had a valid visa. So they left, also on the Patria, but one trip earlier than we did. We would at the time have preferred to go to the USA and had already tried that, but they had a quota system and it would have taken too long. In fact, we eventually got our US visas after being in Ecuador for a year and a half, but by then we were kind of settled and could not have afforded to move again to another country and start all over. We had to give up all our jewelry and whatever else we had in gold or silver. I remember going with Erwin to the police to give them my watch. I had gotten a gold watch from my grandparents for my sixth birthday, you can imagine how much gold a little watch contained, but still, we had to give it up. Erwin even asked if they wanted our fountain pens which had gold pen nibs, but they told us we could keep them. Anyhow, with all the papers we needed we also had to have a certificate that we had never been in jail. After my parents had all the papers, my father one day burnt old papers we did not need to take and, being quite nervous about the whole thing, by mistake he also burned that certificate. That was horrible: without it we could not leave the country. My father declared he would not go to the Gestapo again to get another one, I guess he was afraid. My uncle John, Ilse's father, said he would go and, lo and behold, he did and got another one. We were also told that before we could leave we had to pay for the return trip for all of us, so that if they did not let us land in Ecuador the boat could bring us back. That money was refundable after landing. In our case, as we wanted to take our furniture, which one could still do at that time, my parents and grandfather decided to have everything packed in "Lifts". These were huge furniture containers

that could be put in storage and then sent using the refunded money after we landed. The people who came and packed were very friendly and when they went for lunch and most of the things were already packed, they told us very pointedly: "Everything is still open, we close it after lunch, so if you want to put anything in while we are gone, you are free to do it." They probably meant it, but one could of course not be sure and if they would have looked and found anything of value which we were not allowed to take, they could just have called the Gestapo and that would have been the end for all of us. We were not allowed to take any money, just DM 10.00 for each person.

Now we went shopping for clothes. The men had white suits made for Ecuador – at that time they were in fashion there. My mother and I got clothing so that we would not have to buy things right away. The men also got a tuxedo each, as we went first class and dinner was formal with tuxedos and evening dresses.

And so we left on April 1, 1939 from Hamburg, five days after my 17th birthday. Most of the family was gone: Berthold was in New York, his wife and three children in Belgium, Ilse and Gert were in Belgium, Magda was in London and her husband John was still in Hamburg. Berthel and Bruno and kids were in Ecuador, Siegbert was in Ecuador. My mother's brother Laczi was still in Hamburg with his wife and two kids, as was my maternal grandmother, who at that time lived with them.

The boat was marvelous and the trip took three weeks. We first came to Antwerp, Belgium, where we stayed two days while the boat was loading freight. Of course we spent quite some time with the family and in the evening Erwin and I went out with Berthold's son Kurt, who was one year

younger than I, and with his cousin from his mother's side, who was my age or one year older. For the first time we visited a nightclub and danced. It was quite exciting for me as we could no longer do these things in Germany and when we still could I was too young. After two days and one night in Antwerp we were on our way and I got sea sick practically at once. My mother also got sea sick but not for as long as I did. The men did not get sick at all, lucky they! I stayed in my cabin in bed for a whole week. I could not eat at all and threw up all the time; it was painful. My cabin steward only shook his head and said every time he came in: "How can anybody coming from Hamburg be so sea sick?" (he meant that living so near the water I should be used to it!). Anyhow, I finally even called the ship's doctor but he could not help me either, there was nothing like Dramamine or other medication yet on the market. After one week my mother managed to get me dressed and up on deck to sit in a chair and one or two days later I was finally over it and could eat again and felt "like new". Now, the rest of the time, I had a wonderful time. We danced every night, there were a lot of young people there. About half the people were Jewish and the other half mostly Germans and of course we stayed very much apart. There were two Ecuadorian military pilots on board who had trained in Italy and we met them. Shortly after we arrived in Guayaquil one of them crashed into a house and the other one crashed somewhat later.

I don't really know how much my parents enjoyed the trip. After all, they were coming to an underdeveloped country with a language we did not know and no money. While I was sick, they met another couple who came on board in Antwerp and were from Berlin, much older than we were but somewhat

younger than my parents. They got quite friendly with them, their names were Hilde and Werner Lewin. Erwin may not have had as good a time as I did either. He was not too fond of dancing and not yet very interested in girls, but I was 17 and still felt that my parents would take care of everything and nothing could spoil these two weeks. Under other circumstances I would most probably never have traveled first class on a boat such as the Patria.

Our next landing was Panama, where my parents and we went on land the evening we arrived and “explored” the city. We somehow landed in the “red district” where all the whores were sitting in the open window of their street level apartments and it seemed quite interesting to us. I certainly had never seen anything like that. A few of them called to us to ask whether my parents wanted them to teach me the trade!!!! That really made us laugh. Next day I went again with one of the guys who wanted to sell his German quite expensive camera, and we walked through downtown and he tried to sell it but I don’t remember if he finally did or not. The next stop was Buenaventura and before we landed there some guys from the band told us that that was “nearly” as bad as Guayaquil. We went on land for a short time and could not believe it, this was the worst, it was more than “underdeveloped”! We really got upset thinking that was supposedly better than the place we were going to live, but to tell the truth, Guayaquil was much better than Buenaventura, I don’t know why those guys thought it was worse, or maybe they did not really know Guayaquil.

Shortly after we left Germany my Uncle Laczi and family left for Budapest, Hungary. He was born there and somehow managed to get a Hungarian passport again. He took his furniture and all his equipment from his

business. He was very handy and took the equipment partially apart and put money or gold or whatever it was he had into it. It was all shipped to Hungary and nobody realized it. My grandmother, who lived with them, could of course not go with them since she had only her German passport, and she moved in with my aunt Margit and her children Inge and Hans-Heinz. Margit had married a Gentile whom she divorced when Hans-Heinz was 10 or so, but before the children were born she had converted so that the children would grow up as Christians. As it was, they never did, they were half Jewish for the Nazis and though they were not put into a camp they were not fully accepted either. After the divorce Margit moved in with her mother and so they grew up without any faith but within the Jewish family. Margit of course considered herself Jewish anyhow, her conversion had been one of convenience, and at least it saved her children from a horrible fate. Margit herself finally was also taken to a concentration camp but she luckily survived. She met a man from Vienna there and they got married later. Hans-Heinz was at first in the military but was soon kicked out and put into the "Arbeitsdienst" which means forced labor. Nothing happened to Inge. She had a boyfriend who was "Aryan" but by law they could not marry as she was considered Jewish. They married after the war and already had their first child at the time. Her husband's father, divorced from his mother who lived in Hamburg, lived in Holland and had a Dutch passport and later managed to get Inge and her husband there too.

My mother's youngest brother Feri was a lawyer and had barely started to practice when the Nazis no longer let Jewish lawyers practice. He went at the time to France and studied there for two years and passed the bar exam.

By then France was not a place to stay either and he went to Budapest but never did practice law again. He was later put into a labor camp by the Germans and got quite sick there and after the war we got him to Ecuador. He later left Ecuador and went back to Europe, lived in Vienna where Margit lived at the time, and married a very nice woman (Anni). They later moved to Graz. He died relatively young and she died about one or two years later.

Back to us: We arrived in Ecuador on April 21, 1939. We had to leave the boat in Salinas, which was a small resort beach town at the time, because the ship was too big to enter the Rio Guayas and the port in Guayaquil. The Patria had to stay some distance off Salinas and we had to step into a small boat so they could get us to the beach and of course all our luggage as well. From Salinas we were supposed to go on to Guayaquil by “autocarril”, kind of a bus on rails, which would probably have taken two or three hours. When we arrived we were told that due to the rainy season the rails were flooded and the autocarril could not function and we would have to go by boat which would take about the whole night. They put us on the porch of a hotel at the beach, very primitive, and told us to sit down and wait. As I was about to sit on one of the chairs I saw that it was already taken – a big “cucaracha” (cockroach) was sitting there and I at once ceded the seat to it and did not sit down for the next couple of hours. I, who was scared of a fly, would not share a chair with a cockroach. So we waited for the fairly small boat (called a “lancha”) to come. In the meantime it got dark and when the boat came they picked us up and told us that they couldn’t get to the beach either and that they would take us, two persons at a time, to the boat. We went down to the beach and there was a dock, or rather it used

to be a dock. The dock actually was still there, but it was quite high over the water and the stairs leading down to the water were not there anymore. They had broken and had never been repaired. There we were standing and they came with a small rowboat, no seats. The first thing we saw was that they took a pail and got the water out of the boat. They had to do that after each trip: apparently the row boat had a hole. It was pitch dark, they must have had some lantern so we could see something and now we had to get down. One guy came up and one was standing in the boat. The one up above literally handed us to the one down below and so we made it. We had to squat somehow, and they rowed us to the boat and we climbed up there. After we were all there, my parents, grandfather and we two and our luggage, the boat left. It was fairly small, there were a few more people. There was one cabin which they let us have for my mother and me. There was a bed but no bedding, only the bare bed and nothing very clean. At least we sat on it. The men were on deck but there were not enough chairs, so my father and Erwin took turns all these hours. We did not arrive till next morning. It was not exactly a very happy beginning. Still, we were all so happy to be out of Germany and out of danger that we took it all in stride.

My uncle Siegbert with wife Hertha and son Werner were waiting for us on the pier. They took us to Berthel and Bruno's home first. They had rented a house, but most people lived in apartments. Later they took us to an apartment that Berthel and Bruno had found and rented for us. It was a furnished apartment, right by the river, ground floor, in a fairly miserable old house, but we knew that we would move as soon as our furniture arrived. My grandfather stayed with Berthel and Bruno for the time being until we

were settled.

At that time the windows in Guayaquil had no glass. Air conditioning did not exist yet and windows would have been too hot. We only had wooden shutters. Of course all insects could fly into the rooms, especially at night when it was dark outside and we had lights on. Every bed had a mosquito net hanging over it, otherwise they would have eaten us alive. This apartment had everything, from cockroaches to mosquitoes to all other insects that existed there. All my life I was afraid of insects and so I went to bed under the mosquito net as soon as it got dark, undressed there and stayed there until morning. Eventually I got a little bit used to it. As it was still the end of the rainy season, mosquitoes and other insects were there in abundance. There were “grillos”, crickets that could not fly long and tended to fall down on you. The streets were full of them and it looked like a carpet and made a lot of noise when the cars drove on them. If you took them in your hand and threw them forcefully on the floor, they died. My mother did that very well, but I could not ever bring myself to touch them. We did not cook in that apartment as we had no utensils and they only had coal stoves and it was not so easy to get one going. So we had our three meals at Berthel’s house. We went there every morning, walking about 15 minutes, even when it was raining. The buses were not usable for us, only the natives used them. Taxis we could hardly afford, only when it was pouring. At Berthel’s we helped her clean. She always waited for us as she was also afraid of the crickets and they were all over and even under the rugs. So my mother, our “heroine”, got rid of them first and then we cleaned house. They did not have a maid yet and all the floors had to be washed daily because of the all the insects

and ants. Every kitchen table had to have its legs standing in water and you could not leave any sugar around without having it in a tightly closed container, otherwise you had the ants all over, which happened anyhow all the time. It was not an easy beginning. It really took time to get used to all these crawling and flying things, we even once had a frog in our first apartment. We shared that apartment with the couple we had met on the boat, Hilde and Werner Lewin. He was a funny guy and could not stand the heat, so he decided to run around naked in the apartment as soon as we left in the morning. So when we came home in the evening, we always shouted thru the window: "Are you decent, Werner?" and then he took a sheet and wrapped himself in it and I must say he looked "slightly funny". I think that the apartment had four bedrooms, one for my parents, one for the couple and one each for Erwin and me, but I am not sure anymore. Maybe there were only three and Erwin and I shared one. There were two bathrooms and so we somehow could manage to stick it out until our furniture would arrive.

It took quite some time until the furniture arrived, but it finally came. We rented an apartment in one of the few cement houses (at that time most of the houses were made out of wood, which much later was no longer allowed because of fire: on and off a whole block of houses would catch fire. This apartment we also shared with a couple, though not the same one. This was a younger couple of immigrants. We were all short of money, of course, not being able to take any money out of Germany, but everybody had to manage somehow. Either they shared or rented out one or two rooms. It was not so easy to get the furniture in, they had to unpack the lifts in the street and then carry everything up. The piano was too big for the staircase and they

had to hoist it thru the window, which was very exciting for us. We really were afraid it would fall down as they had no equipment. Everything had to be done manually. But nothing had happened, and we finally had at least our own furniture and a decent apartment. The water situation at that time was not very good yet in Guayaquil: we only had water for two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. So we had to fill all kettles and pots and fill the bathtubs so we could wash ourselves and also use it for the toilets. Not what we were used to, as you can imagine, but of course there was no choice. We sold some of the furniture, which was quite easy to do, and also our good dinner dishes. My parents had a whole set of Meissen porcelain and only kept the coffee cups and plates.

Of course my parents first of all had to think about making a living. We also had to learn Spanish, but as nobody but we immigrants spoke German and hardly anybody spoke English at the time, we all learned fast, especially Erwin and I, being young enough. My father also learned quickly, but my mother took a bit more time since she stayed at home in the beginning. She took care of the house, the kitchen, and washed all our laundry early in the morning when we had water, including sheets and towels. The washing was done in a tub which she put up on two chairs in the kitchen. All the houses had a terrace on the roof and she had to carry the laundry up to hang it; it usually dried quite fast. But she had to sit there and watch it, otherwise somebody would have stolen it. Here I must insert the story of our stolen clothes, which I have not told yet. The last days on the boat we could not give anything away to have it washed, because we had to be sure to have it all packed. As soon as we arrived we asked our Uncle Siegbert what to do

with the laundry, there were my and my mother's suits and the white suits of the three men. Siegbert, who should of course have known better, told us he had a good washer woman whom he would send to us to pick it all up and wash and iron it and then return it to us. Little did we know that you could not give away that much laundry at one time! She came, picked everything up and came back after a few days and told us it had all been stolen. (Of course we learned a bit later, when we knew more about the "customs", that she was certainly one of the thieves!). Anyhow, Siegbert sent the police, who first of all asked for money which we of course gave them, but they never found anything and did not show up anymore (of course they were also part of the whole business). So that was our first lesson and not a nice one, we had bought quite a lot of clothing before leaving and they meant a lot to us, and a big part was now gone. There was nothing we could do and just had to take it as a "learning experience"!

Of course, by now my parents had to think about making a living. By law all immigrants either had to put their money into industry or into agriculture. Of course, most people did not and nobody cared, but my father, being quite "German", thought one absolutely had to go by what the law says! Bruno had already invested in a factory which made brooms. He had an Ecuadorian partner and I think they were doing quite well. For a short time Erwin had a job with them. My father invested in a liquor factory, also with an Ecuadorian partner and I started my first job there, putting labels on the bottles. Of course neither Erwin nor I made a very good salary, but every little bit helped and we had to learn Spanish before looking for a better job. My father's business did not last long, they went broke very quickly and I

am sure that the partner got away somewhat better than my father did. So my father had to look for something else. My mother for the time being was still staying home, cleaning house and cooking, going early every morning to the open market to buy food. There were no refrigerators and we all had only an icebox. The ice was delivered so that we could keep things cold, but not for longer than one day, so we had to go to the market daily. Cleaning house meant washing all the floors daily because otherwise the apartment would be infested with insects.

When we arrived there were about 800 Jewish immigrants in Guayaquil, maybe fewer, because 800 was about the maximum we ever had and some came a bit later. A Jewish Club was already established, and that was the place where we all met. But of course the newcomers could not afford to go there too often and have a soft drink or some cake and coffee, so every night we walked along the “Malecon”, the street along the Guayas River, because it was very hot and nobody went to bed very early. But on the weekend we went one evening to the Club and we each had a soft drink, that was our only luxury in the beginning, but I must say this did not last very long. The people who managed the Club left and my parents took over. It was very hard work, especially for my mother. There was a kitchen with a wood stove (which we could not even get going by ourselves), no refrigerator, only an icebox. My mother had brought from Germany a so-called “Wunderform” which translates to something like a “miracle cake pan”. In this pan one could only bake one cake at a time and so my mother had to bake most of the day, as they had about 40 people for lunch and again for dinner. Lunch in Ecuador is the main meal and is, of course, a hot meal. Dinner is also a

hot meal, nearly the same as lunch, but without the daily soup. Most of us immigrants at night ate a cold meal, which meant bread and cold cuts, but when people came to the Club they wanted a hot meal. My mother hired some help, otherwise she could not have managed. She went to the market every morning at around 5:30am and then went to the Club and worked there. There, too, there were only ice boxes with ice delivered once or twice a day, so everything had to be bought daily. In the evening, after dinner, there were always quite a few men around playing cards and they mostly stayed until 2 or 3 or 4 in the morning. So for quite some time my father and Erwin alternated staying on a lounge chair so that the guests could get cake and soft drinks, and then they locked up. That became really too hard on them because they did not get any sleep while there and had to get up again early in the morning. Erwin already had a job and my father helped my mother and so they decided to give the card players a key and they just wrote down what they consumed during the hours they were on their own and they locked up when they left.

In the meantime I got a job through another immigrant to whom my parents had rented out one of our rooms. The other couple had moved out after a while and we had rented another apartment. The job was in a store that sold fabrics and the owner was a Syrian guy, a “Turco” as they used to say in Ecuador. My Spanish was still poor but I typed dictated letters, which was not so difficult, since Spanish is a phonetically written language – it is written as pronounced. Of course the pay was not terrific, but I learned more Spanish and every little bit helped us. The guy who owned the store was a very nice, good looking guy, but in my eyes he was an “old man”; he

had children my own age. I was of course aware that he did not hire me for my know-how, and certainly expected something else from me. The guy who lived with us must have hoped to get some favor out of it from the Turco. The owner was a widower and was very correct, but after a few weeks he asked me to come on a Sunday morning because he wanted me to do some job for him. I was immediately somewhat leery and told my father to come about one hour later to see if I was through and to pick me up. And how right I was! The guy started to talk around what he wanted, somehow I think he was not quite sure how I would respond. I told him at once very firmly that all I wanted in his store was a job and if he had other ideas that was too bad and he should forget about it. I must say in his defense that he was a gentleman about it. He did not terminate me, I stayed on in the job, he never mentioned anything like it again, behaved very correctly and even invited me along for a drive with his daughters. He never said anything incorrect to me again and considering that I cost him money for work that anybody who knew Spanish could have done much better, it was nice that he let me keep the job.

I also got a second job through somebody else. There was a pharmacy in Guayaquil which belonged to somebody from Denmark or Sweden, I forgot which. Anyhow, they had quite a few girls working there, counting pills, bottling them, not in the pharmacy itself but in their lab. They were all stealing so much that they decided they had to be searched by somebody before leaving. So, every day before lunch (everything was closed for three hours because of the heat and everybody went home to eat lunch, their main meal, and get some rest), I went there and the girls went past me one by

one and I had to check that they did not carry anything in their hair and to feel whether they had anything hidden. It was not the most pleasant work where I was concerned, and even with all this they managed somehow to take things along, but it probably made it more difficult than before and it brought in some money for us.

In the meantime, one of the managers there, a German, who was always very nice to me, offered me a 4-week old shepherd puppy from a litter he had, at no charge. He apparently wanted to get rid of the puppies and Erwin and I were very enthusiastic about it and my cousin Eddy also wanted one. The guy seemed happy to get rid of two. We called ours "Timmy" because years ago I had a stuffed scotch terrier whom I had always called Timmy. My mother, who was not a great dog lover, agreed under the condition that Erwin and I take care of him and also clean up after him as long as he was not housebroken. Of course we all went to work so we left him during the day in one room and closed the door. I got up in the morning earlier than usual so I could clean up the mess he had made during the night. Whenever we were home, Erwin and/or I took him downstairs to get him housebroken. But that took a very long time, months and months, as we were not home during the day most of the time, and the poor thing probably had no clue why we sometimes went downstairs with him and other times left him at home without taking him. So it took about 9 months until he was really completely housebroken. There happened one funny episode: of course we always talked German with each other and with Timmy, so when we were downstairs, without a leash, as he was so very small in the beginning and could not run very fast, we always called out to him "Timmy komm" (which

means “Timmy, come”). One day there were two women standing on the street, natives, and we heard one telling the other one: “That dog’s name is Timmykomm”. She must have heard it quite a few times and thought it was some foreign name! In the room where we left him when he was by himself, there was one couch and during the first months he managed to “eat up” the thing so badly that we had to throw it out! So, after all, he did cost us! Another typical episode was this: One day he did his business on the stairs and as each day a street cleaner came by with his barrel and broom, my mother called him up and asked him to clean that up and when he came up she told him she would bring him some newspaper to pick the mess up with. But the guy said: “No se preocupe, con la mano no mas” (which means: “Don’t worry, I do it with my hands”) and that is what he did. We were really laughing about that a long time, and it shows how primitive the natives were at that time.

By the way, the guy who gave us the dog, who was a German, did not turn out to be that nice in the end. He lived in the same apartment house we did and once in a while we met him on the stairs. Not long after we got the dogs he left Ecuador. The war was already on and Ecuador had joined the Allies and all the Germans were interned unless they returned to Germany, which he apparently preferred. He probably was not very happy about the situation and before he left he met Erwin on the stairs, saluted and “bellowed” Heil Hitler! We could hardly believe it, he had always been so friendly and did not seem to be an anti-Semite, but apparently we were wrong and he blamed his having to leave on us Jews.

As soon as we got Timmy we of course needed a veterinarian to give him

his shots. We were told that there was a Jewish vet from Bessarabia and so Erwin and I went with Timmy so see Dr. Manea Sifnaghel. Our Spanish was not too good yet and his German was nil, he spoke Yiddish, Russian, Rumanian, Spanish, some French but none of these languages helped us much. Yiddish we did not really know in Germany and could hardly understand at that time, and so it was rather hard to talk with Manea. Besides, he had just burned his hand and was not in the best mood and somewhat impatient. He tried to explain something to us and somehow we managed, and when Erwin asked him how much we owed him he said: "I don't charge our Jewish people." That was very nice and welcome to us at that time, since we were all short of money. But I did hear from other Jewish immigrants that he had charged them, so I figured it must have been me! Anyhow, we still had to go back once and Erwin wanted me to go along again. As he had not been particularly friendly and did not seem very likeable to me I told Erwin to go without me. Erwin thought that was not right, since he certainly had not charged us because he had liked me, but I said that now he would not suddenly change his mind about charging us. If he liked me that was his bad luck, and I let Erwin go alone.

Evidently Manea knew what he wanted and did not give up so easily. He started coming to the Club (though he was not a card player) and we met and he started talking to me all the time and we got to know each other better. My Spanish got better quite fast with practice and before long we got engaged. As Manea came to the Club practically every night, our engagement was celebrated every night. Everybody was happy to have an occasion to have a party and we all enjoyed it. We married September 21,

1940, when I was 18 years old and Manea was 37. The marriage was only a civil one. Manea was married before and had been married by a Rabbi and never got a Jewish divorce, so we couldn't have a Jewish marriage which I, personally, would have liked better. Anyhow, just a few days before we were married I broke Manea's rib! No, it was not intentionally, the thing was that he was standing on our balcony and looking down at something and he bent way over the rail. I feared he might fall and just tried to "draw" him back and that was when it happened. So he had to go to the doctor and at that time they still bandaged broken ribs. He got his bandages which were not removable and it was certainly not the most comfortable thing for him, but that was the way we had to go on our honeymoon! Anyhow, after the justice of the peace had married us the whole Jewish community came to our apartment and celebrated. Manea had bought bottles of Pisco, which was a Peruvian liquor, on his last trip up North and everybody got drunk. Next morning we went by train to Quito for one week.

Manea was born and raised in Jotin, Bessarabia, which was Russia until the first World War and then became Rumania. (After the second World War it went back to Russia.) Manea had a brother who left Jotin quite young and went to Sao Paulo, Brazil with his wife (or maybe they married in Brazil) because otherwise he would have had to go into the Army and the Jews were treated very badly there and were afraid of that. So, when Manea got out of school his father sent him away too. He first traveled practically around the world (his parents were very well off and could afford it) and finally he ended up in Brazil. After maybe two or three years he decided to return home and they thought the Army would not draft him anymore

by that time. But as soon as he arrived they got him (he always claimed his father got white hair overnight because of that) and I think he was in the Army for one year. It was not too bad; his father, having money, could pay enough that they mostly let him go home to sleep at night and return in the morning, and nothing too bad happened to him, but he could have done without it! After that he studied law for one year in Rumania, as his parents wanted him to be a lawyer. But he never liked that and after one year decided to go into the medical field. As he was not that young anymore by then and to become a medical doctor took much longer than to become a vet because of the internship, and as he did like animals, he decided to become a vet. He studied in Pisa, Italy, where he got his degree and then emigrated to Ecuador. He was married by that time, without children, and later got divorced and his wife remarried.

In Guayaquil he had his private practice, started the veterinary faculty, and also worked at the slaughterhouse making sure that animals were healthy. He traveled quite a bit around the country to the different “haciendas” (farms where they had a lot of animals, mostly cows) and treated dogs, cats, birds, whatever people brought him. He was a very good veterinarian, he knew a lot and did surgery very well. I do think that even later, when there were other immigrant vets and later also Ecuadorians, he was the best one in the country.

Now came the time when I wanted to start cooking for us. In the beginning we still ate at the Club but soon I decided to try at home. I had never in my life even made coffee and I started with a soup. We still lived with my parents, grandfather and Erwin in a large apartment, and Erwin came home

just as the soup was done. I had just tried the soup and found that it was way too salty. So I told this to Erwin, quite worried about what to do, and Erwin thought I should add some sugar, which I did. Now it tasted way too sweet so we again added some more salt, which did not help much. When Manea came home I served the soup and he ate one spoonful, took the whole soup and emptied it in the kitchen sink and said: "Let's go eat in the Club". That's what we did and the whole thing would not have been so bad if he had not told people there why we came. Believe me, it took a long time to live that one down!

Manea spoke several languages, as I already mentioned, and being in our family and with all the immigrants, he learned German very quickly. His Spanish was perfect, he had after all come to Ecuador in 1936, before all the immigrants came, and had mostly been speaking Spanish. In the beginning we communicated in Spanish but, as I said, he learned German very fast and then we spoke German with each other. He very quickly got my parents out of the management of the Club by helping them financially to buy an agency for wholesale groceries, mostly meat, butter and sausages, made by immigrants in Quito who had opened factories there. He sold to retail stores and hotels and my mother helped in the store while he went out to all the customers and got the orders. He hired somebody who then took the merchandise around on a bicycle, a guy who had helped at the Club, by the name of Pedro, who stayed with my father for years. The merchandise came from Quito by truck with dry ice (there were no refrigerated trucks at that time, at least not in Ecuador). This business developed into a very good one, it grew quite fast and my mother could stop helping there because my father hired a very nice

immigrant lady to do her work, Hanna Humburger. It grew into a very good business and my father kept it until he and my mother came to the U.S. in 1966, at which time he gave the business to my late cousin Hans-Heinz.

A short time after we were married, Manea had to go to a hacienda in the mountains, not too far from Cuenca, and we decided that I would go along and we would take some vacation time and visit my school friend Lily Cohen. She lived on a farm in Paute, a village not far from Cuenca in the “sierra” (mountains) of Ecuador. Lily and I had become very good friends the last year before leaving Germany, as her best friend and mine had already left the country. She and her younger sister Ruth and her parents had left Germany for Ecuador shortly before we did. They lived together with Lily’s aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Land, on the farm. We had to go by train to Cuenca, which took many hours, and then from Cuenca by bus to the farm. Of course it was still quite primitive there, they had an “outhouse” without running water, but that was the way it was in the countryside. We had a very good time there. They had one or two horses and that was the first time I got on a horse. They were not exactly riding horses, but they were good enough for us to ride. Manea was a marvelous rider, he could ride just about any horse with or without a saddle, and of course he was not particularly interested in these horses. But Lily and I enjoyed it very much. Her father had been in the cavalry during the First World War and he told us and showed us how to sit and what to do on a horse. We loved these “classes” very much.

Manea then had to go to the hacienda to see after some animals there and I went along. First we went by bus and the “hacendado” (the owner of the farm) met us somewhere with horses. We had to ride up into the

mountains, a very narrow and steep road, if you could call it a road at all. The horses had to go sideways, it was already dark and it was raining and I was not overly happy about this situation. The owner himself rode a mule, they are more sure footed than horses, and he gave me his mule and took my horse. I felt a bit better after that but still not exactly “happy”. He also put a heavy “poncho” (a cloak like a blanket with a hole in the middle) over me so that I would not get too wet, and up we went, slowly, slowly and I prayed that my mule would not slip, which of course it didn’t and neither did any of the horses. Finally we arrived and was I glad! Of course we had to sleep there and the next day Manea worked on the animals and then the hacendado took us back down the same way, but it was during daylight and that was much nicer and we then returned to Lily and family. When we left to return home we decided to invite Lily to go with us and stay for a while with us in Guayaquil. This time we went by bus to Tambo, a very small village where we had to stay overnight to catch the train the next day. There was one “so-called” hotel. We looked into the rooms and called the owner, a woman who we all three decided once upon a time was in a different profession, and told her that both beds looked used! Her answer was: “The one bed was only used for one night and on the other people only sat playing cards”. Of course, that did not quite satisfy us and we insisted that we needed fresh linen for both beds. Also, Lily was afraid to sleep in a room by herself in that place and so we asked for a third bed to be put in for her. The woman agreed and said that she had to get all the sheets and bedding down in the basement and she would not go alone down there, Manea had to go with her. Considering what we thought her profession had been once upon a

time, we all hoped that she would not “rape” Manea down in the basement, but all went well. At least that’s what we thought, taking into account the short time they spent downstairs. We all three had a good laugh afterwards. Anyhow, we spent the night there all three together in one room, and in the morning Lily and I decided that the toilet we had to use at night was just “unusable”. As we had to get up very early to catch the train, we decided to go outside where the rails passed, right behind the house, and did what we had to do!! What a trip, one has to be young to enjoy a trip like that! We caught the train and arrived all in one piece in Guayaquil. I got quite motion sick and remained that way for several days. Finally my mother suggested that I might be pregnant, which I was sure was absolutely wrong and that I was still motion sick after quite a few days! This motion sickness lasted exactly nine months, which meant that our daughter, Katja, was conceived in Paute.

Lily spent a few weeks with us, she met her future husband, Heinz Wilda, thru us and they are still living happily married in Sao Paulo, Brazil. After she returned home I did go on several more trips with Manea and had to learn to sit on a horse. On all these trips we stayed on one hacienda and went from there during the day to other haciendas where Manea took care of the animals. The first time they just put me on a horse and told me not to worry, my horse would just follow the others, which it did and in a short time I learned to feel comfortable on a horse. We often rode through grass which was higher than a person on a horse, and it was all new and quite interesting to me. The horses did not go too fast on that terrain and so I could learn how to ride. As long as the other horses walked, mine walked

behind; only once, coming home to the hacienda where we stayed, my horse suddenly decided it was time to be home and started to gallop as fast as it could. I had a hard time staying in the saddle and I think Manea was more scared than I was, he thought the horse might jump over something and then I would certainly fall and maybe break my neck. But all the horse wanted was to run home and as soon as we were there it stopped and that was it. So nothing had happened but Manea looked positively “white”.

Shortly after we were married Manea was appointed by the government as Head of the Veterinary Department of the Administration in Quito. Quito is the capital of Ecuador and is situated in the Andes, about 10,000 feet high. Of course it has a very different climate than Guayaquil. I was not very happy about it, being pregnant I did not like moving away from my parents at that time, but I did not have a choice. It was a very good job and so we had to move. We took all our furniture and Timmy, our shepherd dog. Manea went first and I followed after he found an apartment and I had all the furniture crated to be sent up. At that time Fredy Abrahamson, our friend, worked in Guayaquil as a carpenter and he took care of all the crating. I did not go by train this time but by airplane, which the government paid for. The train, which we had taken before, took 16 hours, the plane took one hour. It was my first flight and I got awfully air sick. Of course there were no jets yet and no pressurized airplanes, and if you needed air you had to take it from a hose at your seat and breathe in. But I did arrive and got over that sickness very fast.

As my parents at the time still had the Club to take care of and were not home a lot, it was decided that my grandfather would stay with us for some

time. He came as soon as we got our apartment.

For a short time we rented a room at the house of a colleague of Manea's, Dr. Sonnenschein, who had a wife and two daughters. We stayed with them until our furniture arrived by train. We went to the apartment in the morning and the furniture arrived in crates and Manea, who had to go to work, sent me someone to uncrate it and help move the furniture. There I was, pregnant, in a new city, sitting on top of a wooden box, looking at all the boxes with all our things and the furniture standing around, not quite knowing where to put everything, and I did not feel especially happy! Early that afternoon Fredy Abrahamson's mother, who was living in Quito with her husband, came and helped me some, which to me was very, very helpful. She was quite motherly, I could talk to her and she promised to help me, especially if I wanted to know how to cook things. Then Manea came and we worked until evening and we stayed another few days at the house of the Sonnenscheins, until everything was in order and we had hired a maid. The beginning was difficult for me. I still had no idea about cooking and was suddenly on my own. Fredy's mother taught me quite a bit about cooking, and besides that, I bought my meat from a very nice butcher who came from Austria. I went there, told him what I wanted to make, he cut the right meat for me and then went and asked his wife how to prepare it and told me. If there was anything to be done with the meat which he could do there, he did it for me, like rolling it or cutting slices, and then I went home and tried! It took some time, but I guess I finally got it. The maid knew only how to cook Ecuadorian food and sometimes I let her cook.

One day, not too long after we moved, Manea came home and told me

that he had invited two or three guys from the Department for dinner the next day. Dinner was of course around 1pm, the main meal. They were all Ecuadorians and so I asked the maid to cook a good meal. She told me what to buy at the market and the next morning she started cooking. The two guys came and Manea had bought enough beer and he and they had some beers and the maid was cooking. 1pm came and went, 2pm came and went, and every time I went into the kitchen she said: "Just another moment!". I could not help her with that food at all and got somewhat desperate. The beer was finished and Manea went to buy some more, they drank, the maid cooked and I was near tears. It must have been about 3pm when the food was finally done. The guys were half drunk, they ate the food and I was happy when they were gone. And this was the first time I had guests!

Quito had many more immigrants than Guayaquil and life was very different there. Guayaquil always has warm weather, it is a port city and a very lively city. Everything closed down at noon for a few hours of rest, as it gets too hot to be out then, and so people went out late at night. Movies did not start until 9:30pm and people were sitting at the sidewalk cafes till very late. Quito can be quite warm and nice and sunny during the day but at night it always gets cold. And when it is a rainy day or there is no sunshine the days can be quite cool. People didn't go out at night so much, they went to movies or invited each other, but nobody was in the street at night and people went to bed much earlier than in Guayaquil. In Guayaquil the streets were always noisy the whole night long, whereas in Quito it was very, very quiet during the night and we had to get used to that. One might think that it is easier to sleep when it is quiet, but we were so used to the noise that the

quietness bothered us until we got used to it. I don't know if today some of these things have changed, I guess there are always changes everywhere, but that was the way it was at that time.

I did not have the best pregnancy. In the beginning it was fine, I gained very little weight, in fact I had an evening dress that I had brought from Germany and it still fit me perfectly in my fifth month. But about eight weeks before Katja was born I suddenly tended to faint if I did not sit down in time. I felt it coming and usually had no problem sitting down, but when I went to the market instance by myself, for instance, it happened often that the women who were sitting there on boxes selling their produce called up to me, because they saw that I did feel badly, and told me to sit down for a while on one of their boxes, which I gratefully did. It got so that I was a bit afraid to go out by myself and so, six weeks before Katja arrived, my mother came to Quito and stayed with us. The doctor who delivered her was from Czechoslovakia and was going to deliver me at home. At that time, in Quito, we did not want to go to a hospital as many women got infections in the hospitals and so we rather had our babies at home. There was a very nice immigrant woman living in Quito who was a nurse and assisted the doctor and agreed to stay with us for one whole week. Of course, if during delivery there was a problem and somebody needed surgery, the doctor had to take them to a hospital. Katja arrived November 2, 1941, early in the morning. Around midnight my water broke and my mother called the doctor and he came and stayed the whole night with me, practically holding my hand, he was really very nice. Katja was born around 7am and all went well. She had the navel cord around her neck, which the doctor could hear from her

breathing, and so he had to make a cut to hurry her out! But of course that was a minor thing and I was so happy when she had arrived and it was a girl.

At this time Erwin happened to be in Quito for business and besides that, my grandfather lived with us. As I said before, my parents still had the Club to take care of when we left Guayaquil and did not quite know what to do about my grandfather, as they were gone the whole day and evening. So Manea had proposed to take him along with us and as soon as we were settled, he came to stay with us.

Everybody was of course relieved when it was over, and a little while later Erwin was standing on the balcony when he happened to see my school friend Lily Cohen pass in the street and he very enthusiastically shouted down: “Lily, WE have a baby!!” – which she still remembers as she thought it sounded a bit funny.

My mother stayed with me another six weeks. The nurse stayed one week and my mother slept in the same room with Katja. At that time it was still thought that a baby should be fed only during the day and be “trained” to sleep the night through. So, around 1am Katja usually woke up and started crying. Nobody would ever feed a baby during the night then and so she cried until the morning, which must have grated on my mother’s nerves aside from the fact that she did not get much sleep. This took six weeks and then she slept through till morning. By the time Niko was born, 9 years later, it was understood that one feeds the baby when it is hungry and so I did of course feed him during the night when he woke up and he slept through exactly as Katja did, after six weeks. It was certainly a much better way, and nowadays

nobody would think of letting a baby cry for hours!

Before my mother left she had us hire another maid because at that time we only had one and now I needed a second one to help with the laundry and whatever was needed. I had a hard time feeding Katja; the doctor wanted me to nurse and I never had enough milk. So, before each time I nursed her I had to weigh her, then weigh her after the nursing and then prepare the quantity of milk for her that was missing. It took forever and was quite hard on me. Every bottle had to be boiled for 20 minutes after each use. I never let the maids do this because they were not reliable enough.

My grandfather Adolph Gumpel, my father's father, enjoyed staying with us and was delighted with the baby. He enjoyed Quito, walked every day downtown and back, which was quite a good walk, and he just adored Katja. He was usually not very demonstrative and I was surprised at how much he showed his love for her. I remember that one day, when I had to go out for some errand, I came home a little bit late for her feeding and he was quite upset. Katja had been crying and he told me that he had been sitting at her bedside the whole time until I arrived and had sung to her and swore that she "really liked it". She was only maybe two months old, but he was sure she enjoyed his singing.

Quite soon after Katja's arrival my grandmother Risa Partos, my mother's mother, arrived from Germany by convoy as the war was on. She arrived together with Roeschen Saenger, my cousin Eddy's grandmother, and they came via Cuba and arrived in the very North of Ecuador, the border with Colombia. Manea went up there by bus (it took some hours) and came back with them. Roeschen left the next morning for Guayaquil and my grand-

mother stayed a few days. She was, of course, also delighted with Katja. She loved children, and she at once taught me to make “Topfen Palatschinken”, which are very thin pancakes filled with hoop cheese and sugar and raisins. She showed me how to turn the large pancakes over and later I made them very often. It is a real Hungarian dessert. After some days she left for Guayaquil together with my grandfather. My parents by then had a large apartment and did not have the Club anymore. My father had started his business. He had gotten the agency for butter, meat, etc. from immigrants who had factories in Quito, the first edible butter and good meat in the country. He sold wholesale to stores and hotels and it later became a marvelous business. My mother helped him until he could afford to hire somebody and she did not have to work anymore. So, for the time being, they both worked and my grandmother took over the kitchen and everybody was happy.

After some time passed we rented a house in the same area where we had the apartment and so we had more room and also a backyard and eventually a new dog. Timmy had become sick with some skin disease before Katja was born and Manea thought that it might be catching to people and so we gave him away before Katja arrived. One of Manea’s customers, a farmer (hacendado) whose cattle he took care of, offered to take him and eventually he got better but he wanted to keep him. In the meantime we met people in Quito and made friends and stayed for four years. Then we decided to return to Guayaquil where we had, after all, our family. Manea went into private practice and also taught at the University and went daily to the slaughterhouse to examine the meat of the cattle.

After a while we seriously began to think about leaving Ecuador and

going to Brazil where Manea's brother and family lived. We thought that if we could settle there we could then get the rest of the family out there too. Manea and his brother Miguel had not seen each other in many, many years. They had not even corresponded anymore until my mother got Manea to let his brother know that he had gotten married again. So we wrote Miguel and asked him to let us know if he thought that we could make a living in Brazil. Miguel never wrote letters, he communicated only by telegrams. He did not answer questions at all, but only sent telegrams that said: "Just come here, I will take care of everything and it will be fine." We knew that he was very rich; he had, together with a brother in law, a textile factory in Sao Paulo. So we talked it over and decided to chance it and go. We sold all our furniture and things (including my piano still from Hamburg, for which I mourned a long time!) and left in August of 1946 for Sao Paulo, Brazil.

At that time it was a very long trip, it took us three days! There were no jets yet, only propeller airplanes, and they flew only during the day. We had to spend two nights in hotels. I don't remember anymore where we stayed, but I do remember how air sick I was. I was sick the whole three days, and could not eat anything. As the planes were not yet pressurized, we had to sit up to reach the oxygen. I could not even sit up and Manea was jumping back and forth between Katja and me to give us oxygen, Katja was after all only four years old and could not handle it alone. At least she did not get sick! Whenever we landed the pilot came thru the airplane to get out first and he just looked at me and shook his head! But finally we made it to Sao Paulo.

Miguel and his wife Malvine picked us up late afternoon at the airport.

At home were their three children waiting for us. Sico, the oldest son, was then 21 years old, Clara was 19 and the youngest, Julio, who was a “holy terror”, was only 9. Malvine and Miguel were very nice and let us have their bedroom (they slept that one night on a couch in the living room). They wanted us to spend the first night in their house. We were, of course, dead tired and had only slept for about two hours when they woke us up because they had invited the whole family, which was quite large. They all wanted to see Manea again and the ones who did not know him yet wanted to meet him. I was half dead and could happily have done without any of them on that first evening, but there was nothing I could do about it. So, the three of us stayed up and met the whole clan! There were grown-ups and children and, of course, Manea enjoyed them all. He had known most of them from way back, nearly all of them were Malvine’s family. I had a hard time talking with them, they spoke either Portuguese, which is certainly not the same language as Spanish, or they talked Yiddish, which I did not understand unless spoken very slowly and clearly and in which language I could not answer them. It was no problem for Manea who could talk Yiddish to them. I had learned in Ecuador to understand some of it, but not when a whole group of people started to talk all at the same time and talked fast. Then I was completely lost. I had only one thought ... a bed and sleep! But ... miraculously, I survived the evening and felt better the next morning after a good night’s sleep.

Next morning Malvine and Miguel took us and our luggage to a boarding house which was a “bed-and-breakfast”, where Miguel had rented a very large room for us. The owner was a very nice older woman and the rooms

were quite elegantly furnished. But as we could get only breakfast there, we had to go every day to Malvine and Miguel's house to have lunch and dinner there. Katja, being only four years old, was used to going to be in bed at 7pm, and now she had to stay up until late because nobody ate early in that part of the world. Besides, this family was used to letting their children stay up very late. Finally, one day I decided to take her home late in the afternoon, give her sandwiches to eat (we always had a warm lunch anyhow, that was the main meal) and put her to bed before leaving again for Miguel's for dinner. I asked the lady who owned the bed-and-breakfast if she would mind if I left Katja with her, as long as I put her to bed and waited until she was asleep. She always fell asleep nearly at once anyhow and actually never woke up during the night. The lady agreed and I gave her Malvine's phone number, in case Katja would wake up and be unhappy without us.

When we arrived at Malvine's they were very disapproving of us, that we had left the "poor little kid" all alone without any family. They did not only disapprove of that, they really never approved of Manea having married a "Jekke", which was what the East European Jews called the German Jews. Nevertheless, they were very nice to me, and Miguel and I got along very well. It was not the same with Malvine, though we were cordial with each other. She was always wanting to "mother" me (she was after all about 20 years older than I was) and I, being 24 years old, was too young to play up to her a little bit. I resented it when she treated me like a child. For instance, when I went to the beauty shop, which was only two or three blocks away from where she lived, she had already called there by the time I arrived to find out if I made it safely! At first she also started to show me how to use a telephone

(I guess she thought that Ecuador was in the deep jungle) whereas I told her that in Germany we already had phones before they even had them in Jotin, their home town. I guess that was not very nice or smart of me, but she got on my nerves (and on everybody's nerves where her family was concerned, but they did not show it). She was sometimes hard to take, always worried about everybody and everything and whenever she had guests she tried to "stuff" them with food all the time. Well, I guess I have strayed from the story. As it was, that evening was a catastrophe. Katja, who never woke up, woke up pretty soon and started crying and the lady could not get her to stop crying and go back to sleep, so she called me and we had to go home. Miguel and Malvine both treated our leaving Katja behind as child abuse and I am sure that they blamed it all on me. So, all I could do for the time being was to take Katja along again and put her to bed late. We decided to move into another place and found a place where we rented a room and got three meals. Eventually we would find an apartment and move. It was not easy to find an apartment for rent. Apartments were hard to get and people asked a lot of money just for letting you have one, you had to pay a certain sum just to be able to rent it. So, for the time being we moved into that boarding house. The owners were a very nice German couple, also older people, but they liked children and could somehow get along with them much better than the other lady. Katja liked them very much. They rented out about 4 or 5 rooms, we were all newcomers to Brazil, all Jewish though the owners were not. Now life became more normal again for Katja, she ate and slept at normal times and one of the couples there had a little girl, one year younger than Katja, with whom she could play. It was a very nice place

to stay for a while and we did not have to go to see Malvine every day.

Miguel picked Manea up every morning around 7am, he started quite early and took Manea along to the factory. Of course, that was not what Manea wanted to do, he was a veterinarian and not really interested in business. It turned out that he could not work in Brazil as a veterinarian, they did not recognize his license, which he had gotten in Italy. We did look around and visited some of the animal clinics and found one doctor who wanted to sell. He would have agreed to be available to give Manea signed prescription sheets so that he could work on his own. But that was not what Manea wanted. First of all, Miguel did not think that being a veterinarian was a real profession, for him only business was real, and we would not have had enough money to buy anything like that without his help. Miguel had repeatedly sent us wires telling us only to come and stay. We did explain that Manea might have difficulties getting licensed there but he still wired “just come” and we supposed he knew what to do about it. Then it turned out that he would rather have Manea go into business with him, at least that is what he claimed. He said right from the beginning that he wanted to let Manea have a part of the factory. As it was, times were pretty bad when we came to Brazil, a lot of big businesses went broke, but even without that situation I don't think that Miguel really thought things through. He somehow thought that if he took Manea along every day and paid our expenses, all would be fine. Manea and Miguel were strangers to each other after so many years without even having contact, and they could not really talk to each other. In fact, whenever there was a problem Manea asked me to talk to Miguel, as I could talk better to him than he could. I did like him and

he was quite nice to me, but I don't think he ever quite approved of a "German sister in law". In fact, he once told me that where he was concerned his daughter could marry nearly anybody (Jewish, of course, a non Jew was not even in his thoughts), preferably a Russian, but a Pole would do too, he would not have to have money, he would set him up, but he would never agree to her marrying a German Jew. Well, after we had already left, she later married somebody of Eastern European descent and as far as I heard he had quite some money himself.

After about one month or two we finally found a nice apartment to rent and I started keeping house. Miguel sent us all the furniture we needed as one of his brothers-in-law had a furniture factory. I enrolled Katja in a "Kindergarten" not far from where we lived; it was within walking distance. She went there for a few hours every afternoon because the morning session was already filled up. So in the morning she stayed home with me and "helped" me in the house. I went every morning to the open air market (there were no supermarkets yet, at least not in South America) and as I did not like to take Katja along, I went before it got light, around 6am, so that I was back before Manea was picked up by Miguel. Then I cleaned house and cooked and took Katja to school and later picked her up again. She enjoyed going there and they seemed to enjoy having her. When they realized that she spoke fluent Spanish and German, and also learned Portuguese very fast, they took her through all the classes and made her sing songs for them in Spanish and German. She knew quite a few children's songs and for them it was apparently something very special to speak more than one language. So they treated her like something of a "phenomenon" which she enjoyed

very much. What four-year-old does not like to be the center of attention?! Manea and I also learned Portuguese very quickly: knowing Spanish we had no difficulty learning it.

We could never go out in the evening since we could not afford a maid and could not leave Katja by herself. Manea was not happy at all, because he really did not have anything to do and Miguel financed us for the time being. We did not really think that there was any chance for Manea to make enough money to keep us going as we were used to living. After all, he was not a businessman but a veterinarian, and we had made that pretty clear to Miguel before we agreed to come. Again it fell to me to talk to Miguel. I called him and asked him to come to the apartment while Manea was in the factory. I told him that he was always talking about making Manea a partner but nothing came of it. I wanted to see a written contract if he really meant it. We did not want to be financed by him but wanted for Manea to really work and make a decent living. If he wanted to offer his brother a partnership he would have to give him a written contract. Of course, nothing came of it and we both decided we wanted to return to Ecuador. We had always thought that if we made a living in Sao Paulo we could get my parents and Erwin over there too, and that was also what they had thought and we had talked about it. Manea knew he could immediately start working again in Ecuador, that his customers would come back, as he was very well known and liked, and people knew that he was a first rate veterinarian. So, again I called Miguel to come and see me and told him that we wanted to return to Ecuador. I do think that he was somewhat relieved. His relationship with his brother was not what they both had hoped for and thought it might be.

They could not bridge the many years. For Miguel, Manea was much too “Germanized” by now and so we all decided we would go home. Miguel was nice enough to pay our expenses to return to Ecuador because we had to start all over again. We had sold all our furniture and had to buy everything new. So, after that was all settled, we packed up and happily flew home. My parents were overjoyed to have us back and Manea started his own private practice again. Katja went to Kindergarten and we all were quite content. We bought all new furniture and got an apartment in the same building where my parents lived and things were back to “normal”.

Katja was now five years old and I thought about starting her in school in May, when the school year starts in Guayaquil. By then she would have been only five and a half years old and my mother thought it would be better to wait another year, which was probably the right idea. So we did wait and when she was six and a half years old she went to first grade at the American School. She had already gone to Kindergarten there and the school taught half the day in English and half in Spanish. They got American teachers for the English classes and they came only for two years. Then they were sent back home and replaced with new ones. That way the teachers did not even learn Spanish and the kids were forced to speak English. It was a very good system that they had to give up years later because it was too expensive to always pay the flights back and forth for all the teachers.

When we came back from Sao Paulo Katja could already read quite fluently. She had picked it up from her youngest cousin Julio who was then already nine years old, watching him doing his homework. That meant that she easily could have started school early, but emotionally I think she might

not have been ready and she certainly was when we started her the following year. So she went to first grade, but being able to read so well and a very fast learner the teacher called me and told me that Katja was bored and bothering the class and we should put her into second grade. That worked out fine and so in the end she did not lose half a year but gained one back.

In the meantime we became very close friends with Ilse and Peter Holz and Kitty and Peter Janowitz, who had moved from Quito to Guayaquil. We three couples spent every evening together and we women also came together during the day. Ilse never had children and Kitty, at that time, had no children yet either. We started meeting every evening walking around and ending up in one of the outside coffee houses, where we drank something or had an ice cream. In Guayaquil there were always a lot of people on the street, be it during the day or during the evening. Every business, office, store, etc. was closed between noon and 3pm and people went home to eat their main meal and take a "siesta". During these hours the city was literally dead because it was too hot to work and for many years we had no air conditioners. Besides, even if we would have had them, nobody wanted to go out in the heat. Later in the afternoon and evening the city became very lively again. People went to bed quite late. No movie started before 9:30pm. Peter Janowitz was very often not with us. He preferred to play Bridge in our club; he was a first class bridge player and played for rather high stakes. In fact, one of his partners had a furniture factory and Peter won most of his furniture from him, and he really had beautiful furniture. But Kitty came with us and on weekends we were always all together. We usually went to a movie together and then to one of our apartments where

we danced every Saturday until the morning hours. Very often Sophie and John (Juan) Riedel joined us. They lived in the same building we lived in. They did not have children at that time either. Other friends often joined too. Later Helga and Helmuth Timmer moved to Guayaquil from Quito and they always joined us as well.

We women met many afternoons at one of the coffee houses and I took Katja along and always envied the other mothers I saw there, whose children were patiently sitting with them. Katja was never that patient! As soon as she finished her ice cream or cake (way before I did), she was not willing to sit anymore. Either I had to leave with her or she just went from table to table and stared at the people sitting there until somebody started talking to her. Then she started to tell everything: our names, address, age, what we did or did not do, nothing was safe with her, she told it all! I remember once when I was with her in Quito and coming back by train she went and sat with two young guys about two rows away and started talking with them. When I saw that I called to her in German: "Katja, please don't talk too much" and she yelled back in Spanish, though normally she always talked German to me: "You just don't want me to tell everything about the family!" The whole train started laughing and they all must have thought that our family had a lot of "dark" secrets which I did not want anybody to hear about.

When Katja was eight years old and in school most of the day, I began to feel "lonely" at home. We decided we wanted a second child and nine months later, when Katja was just nine years old, Niko was born on December 25, 1950. Shortly before he was born, my grandmother Risa became quite sick. She was 79 years old and there was nothing the doctors could do for her.

She was at home but for the last two or three days of her life she had to be in the hospital. My mother and my aunt Magda alternated being with her. She had often said during her lifetime that she did not want to become very old, but in the end, when they picked her up to get her to the hospital, she did say to me: "I would have loved to find out if you are having a boy or another girl". She never found out. She died December 23rd and was buried on the 24th. I did not go to the cemetery as everybody agreed I should not go so shortly before giving birth. So I stayed home with Katja. I did not want her to go to the cemetery either. She was very sad and upset and cried very hard when they took the coffin out. Katja had loved my grandmother very much. She could always tell beautiful stories to kids; she often invented them as she told them and all children loved her. She loved all children and children feel that of course. I was glad I was there to console Katja. That night, Manea and I went for a walk and we met Heinz and Ilse, and Heinz, who already had a car, offered to take us home. On the way he said jokingly "please don't have the baby in my car". I responded that I still had about one week to go and laughed about it. But, lo and behold, a few hours later, around 4am, I woke up and my water had broken and we had to go to the hospital. Manea woke my mother and she told my father and Erwin, who still lived with them, that she was going to the hospital with us.

When we arrived there they called my doctor who came immediately and first of all asked me what I wanted, a boy or a girl. I said "girl" because by then I thought I knew all about girls but nothing about raising a boy. So he put me in a room with pink walls. Then he talked to my mother who told him she wanted a boy since I already had a girl, whereupon he immediately had

me moved into a room with blue walls and told me: “Mother wants a boy”! They gave me a shot to induce labor and labor started soon after. They took me to the labor room and my mother was with me all the time. Niko was born at 7:10am and the doctor told us that it was a boy and said: “La abuela quería un hombre así que le traje un hombre” (grandmother wanted a boy so I got her a boy). He also told me that Niko was “largo pero flaco” (long but skinny), which he was. He had quite a lot of black hair which stood up like a brush. My mother, of course, called home and told my father and Erwin who had both been asleep. I always held it against them that they could just go back to sleep, knowing that I was in the process of giving birth!!! Men!!

About one hour later people started to visit. I still remember that the first ones were Heinz and Peter Holz, on their way to the office (at that time Heinz worked for Peter). The news traveled very fast in our community! The hospital was managed by nuns and as it was Christmas I think I had every nun in my room to congratulate me and look at the “Christmas Child”. They all told me to name him after a certain Saint (I forgot which one). They did not know anything about Judaism.

Katja came quite early with Gustav and Erwin and was delighted. She saw Niko through a glass window and came into my room and told me very seriously: “He has very intelligent eyes!” I doubt that they were even open! Anyhow, as it was customary at that time, I was in the hospital for a whole week. I had gained quite a bit of weight during this pregnancy, much more than when I had Katja, and when I got up the first time in the hospital I put on a robe, which Georgie Albers, who lived in the same apartment house,

had loaned me, as mine did not fit anymore. When I walked in the corridor I met the doctor who did all our blood work and he asked me: "Did you have a baby or are you going to have it?". I could have killed him in cold blood, I never forgot that and when many years later our niece Becky's brother was going to marry the daughter of that doctor and they came to San Diego, I told her the story. Anyhow, after he said that I looked into the mirror and started to cry! When I went home I had nothing to wear since nothing fit. I had gained 30 lbs. I had our seamstress come to the house and measure me and she made me some dresses. My doctor told me that he thought I would not lose it again and I was desperate. But three months later I had lost 20 lbs. I could use the remaining 10 lbs. very well as I had always been much too skinny.

I was, of course, very happy now with my two children and very happy that I also had a boy now. It somehow did not seem as complicated as I had thought to raise a boy and I don't know why I thought it would be so different. Katja loved to push the baby carriage and help with Niko, but in time, not surprisingly, that helping tapered off somewhat. It was comparatively easy for us in Ecuador, we had all the maids we needed and that certainly made it easier to raise the children. I had one girl for cleaning. Later she also cooked and another helped her clean. They both were live-in maids. Every day yet another woman came to do the laundry and the ironing on alternate days. So I had all the time I wanted to take care of the baby myself. I would not have trusted anybody else with him as long as he was still so small. I also always took care of his bottles. Not only did we have to boil the milk, but the empty bottles also had to be boiled for 20 minutes after each use before

they were filled again. Anything that fell on the floor, any toy for instance, also had to be boiled because the babies put it in their mouths. The diapers had to be boiled too, but that I left to the maids. So I had time to take Niko to the park or somewhere else and spent a lot of time with him. Katja was in school and came home in the afternoon. In the meantime, Kitty also had a boy. He was born just one year before Niko and his name is Ralph. Ilse, my cousin, had her first-born, Freddy, four months before Niko was born and we spent quite a lot of time together with our babies. On Sundays, when everybody went to the Club, we usually walked them in their carriages along the Malecon (the street along the river in downtown Guayaquil, quite near the Club), and then we would end up for a short time in the Club. When the babies were a bit older but still in their carriages they often got impatient and started to cry and then we just switched them from their own carriage to the other one's and that did it. They seemed to feel they just got a new car! Years later, in San Diego, we again "managed" to have our first grandsons within a few months of each other, but this time Misha arrived first and Ilse's grandson Eric arrived a few months later. And we met again with the two babies, mostly in Seaworld where we had yearly passes and where they loved to go. They liked to see some of the shows, but mostly they liked the playground which was fairly new and really marvelous. We had lunch there and had a good time. Now we have to wait for the next generation, but I doubt that we will be able to run after them as we used to do. Still, if we make it we will certainly enjoy them!

Niko was by far not as easy a baby as Katja had been. To begin with, he got his first asthma attack when he was maybe four weeks old or even less.

Katja had been eight years old when she had her first attack but Niko was born with it. When he was about two weeks old I called the pediatrician and told him that Niko was breathing very fast. I did not recognize it as asthma. The doctor prescribed something to calm him down and slow the breathing down, also not realizing what it was. Two weeks later, when it got worse and the pediatrician came to see him, he realized that Niko had an asthma attack. He gave him a shot and he got a bad reaction from that. The doctor stayed about two hours, until Niko was over it and was breathing normally again.

Katja's room was right beside our bedroom with a connecting door. Niko's room was at the other end of the apartment. There was a fairly long hallway between our bedroom and his room. As he had frequent asthma attacks I got worried that I might not hear him during the night and so we switched the kids: Katja got Niko's room and he now slept right beside our room. We left the connecting door open and that way I heard him as soon as his breathing was not normal and often took him into our bed, to be sure that nothing happened to him. He was, after all, still a small baby and could not help himself. Of course that spoiled him from the beginning but it could not be helped. On top of that he was a miserable eater. It was nearly impossible to get any food into him as soon as he started to eat solid foods. Everybody tried to feed him, to no avail. He only ate a minimal amount and he looked it! It went so far that we would carry him to the window and we would show him something outside to distract him and when he looked we would put one spoonful of food into his mouth. It was really a chore! Finally, when he was about two years old and I had switched pediatricians, I asked the doctor

what I could do to make him eat. He gave me the advice to “farm him out” for a time, to let him go to somebody else’s for one meal. It was no use to send him to my parents, as he did not eat with my mother either. That was too much like “home” to him. At that time we were very good friends with Georgie and Hans Albers who lived in the same building on the same floor as we did. In fact, when we returned from Brazil they had rented us one bedroom until we got an apartment and our own furniture a few weeks later. My parents had no spare room since at that time my grandmother was still living with them. My paternal grandfather had passed away not very long after we returned to Guayaquil. Georgie and Hans had two children. Susi was four years younger than Katja and Peter was only a few months older than Niko. Georgie offered to take Niko every day for the midday meal, our main meal, which was around 1pm. Kids generally loved her though she was very strict with them. She only had to say something and look at them and they did what they were supposed to do. In fact, when Niko had to take some medicine he did not like he would just spit it out. I would call Georgie who gave it to him and he just swallowed it without complaint. So Niko ate there and liked the food. He even ate things which at home he claimed he absolutely hated such as, for instance, peas. He told me that Georgie cooked them quite differently and they tasted much better. So I asked Georgie what she did with them and it turned out that she did them exactly the way I did; it was just the different surroundings I guess. Also, he got along very well with Peter and liked to be with him and I was happy that he finally learned to eat normally. A few months later he ate his meals at home again and ate normal quantities and began to look much better, gaining some weight. He

always was a very handsome little boy with a lot of charm (which he got from his father) and when I walked him, even as a baby in his carriage, people always stopped and “ooohed and aaahed” over him. He has kept this charm all his life, and he knew, and still knows, how to use it. He looked exactly like his father and people always said he was a “miniature” Manea.

When Niko was about two years old I went to Playas with both children during the rainy season. We stayed at one of the hotels that belonged to one of the immigrants, Mr. Meier. It was not great but it was right on the beach. There Niko really stopped eating totally and I did not know what to do. He did not seem to be himself and I called up our pediatrician and told him that Niko was starving. He laughed and said that as long as he drinks water he won't starve, and I should wait a few more days. If by then he would not eat anything I would have to leave Playas and maybe try Quito. He thought it might be the heat or the ocean air. But whatever it was, I should not wait too long. So, after a few days we packed up and went home and then went to Quito into a “Pension” (where we got a room and three meals) that also belonged to immigrants. All their customers were immigrants. There he went back to normal and we spent the rainy season in Quito. After a few days there I realized that I was completely tied down with Niko, all I could do was run after him and so I decided to get one of the maids up there. I got Carmelina, who had been with me nearly since the time he was born and helped a lot with him. She was very nice, and would be with us for eight years. With Carmelina there I could also spend time with Katja. It was very nice there. The owners were friendly, there were always quite a few immigrants with children staying there for vacation, and Erwin and his wife

Dita had already moved to Quito.

When Niko was four years old we finally spent one winter season in Playas again, at the “Pension Hellwig”, which was owned by a very nice immigrant couple whom we knew well from Guayaquil, where they had lived formerly. They had a few rooms for rent and one common bathroom, but we were mostly the only guests there and that made it easier. We got all our meals there too and I took two rooms, one for myself and one for the kids. For part of that season and later ones we also took along Katja’s girlfriend, Hilde, and then Niko slept with me. It was not very far from the beach but too far to walk there every day and so we rented a car, a very old car, from another immigrant. The car was good enough to get the kids and me to the beach and back. We usually went to the beach at the Hotel Humboldt, which was a fairly new hotel then and very beautiful, directly at the beach but quite a distance away from where we were. Most people at that time already stayed at that hotel, but it was still a bit expensive for us so we waited another year or so and then also changed hotels.

I still remember one incident, when I left Katja and Hilde at the Humboldt and I had to do some errand. I asked them to take good care of Niko for a little while. I remember that there was some construction going on and there was a very deep, large hole, that the workers had bridged with a long narrow board. When nobody was there the two girls loved to cross over. They were quite careful and I was not worried. Of course, with little Niko in their care I was sure they would not do that but would watch him carefully. Years later Katja told me that they solved the problem easily, they just took him along! If I would have known that I would have died from shock! Well, I guess we

don't have to know everything, sometimes it is better not to! Running after Niko at that time was not easy. He was quite active and I spent most of my time running after him. After about one week I had enough and so Manea sent Carmelina out to Playas and she stayed with us the whole time. She got a room where the rest of the personnel slept and also ate with them because at that time in Ecuador you could not take a maid into the dining room and she would not have wanted to eat there either. But she ran after Niko and watched that he would not run into the water by himself, which I had to do all the time before she came. Also, I could go swimming once in while into deeper water while she watched him. Above all, I could sometimes take the girls in the evening to the hotel and Carmelina stayed with Niko. I put him to bed before we left and waited until he was asleep and then Carmelina stayed in my room with him until we returned.

The next year we were offered a very nice house in Playas for a whole year for free. George and Rosi Coifman owned a very comfortable vacation home in Playas, with two bedrooms (they had two boys), living room, kitchen and bathroom and a room and bath for the maids. They went to Chile for one year to see if they would like to move there for good (which they did not do in the end) and asked us if we wanted to use the house and take care of it. Of course we were delighted. At that time there was no running water in Playas and electricity only at certain hours and only until 12 midnight. All these houses had cisterns, they even had two, and when one was empty we called and a big water truck came and refilled it. This water was used for the toilet and bathroom. It was quite expensive and a lot of people did not flush the toilets after each use, but I decided if I had to economize it would not

be on water! Water for cooking and drinking had to be bought separately and was delivered in big bottles. The cistern water had to be pumped into the water system and they had an electrical system there, but that did not always work since the electricity was not always “on time”. So we had a boy who came daily and either got the water with the electricity or, if there was none, he would hand pump it, which was not easy and took quite a while. The laundry we sent out – there were enough women there who took in washing.

That year we spent practically every weekend in Playas and always took one of the maids (by that time we had two). We also spent the three months of school vacation there. The maids were not very keen on going and therefore I rotated them, but during vacation time I took them both. That way they were happier. One did the cleaning and one the cooking and after lunch (the main meal), while we took a “siesta”, I let them both go to the beach for about two hours. Also in the evening, after dinner, they could go out if they wanted to. I had the washer woman in Guayaquil come in additional days and she took care of the cleaning of the apartment. Manea ate at my parents’ anyhow during our absence and on weekends he came to Playas. During vacation there were always quite a few immigrants in Playas and we all got together at the beach in the morning. Some of them had houses there, but most of them rented apartments. Whoever occupied a house in the neighborhood of the Hotel Humboldt (which most of our immigrants did) had the privilege of using the hotel’s private beach. There we could also order food and drinks and we stayed until about 2pm and then went home for lunch and rest. The kids played or wandered around. It was a small village and at that time it was still perfectly safe for them. In the afternoon

we often played cards or went to the village if we had to buy something. One of our group, Anni Geiger, who had a house there, also had a car and that made her, as the only one of us that did, our official driver when we had to go to the village. If she could not do it for some reason, we could walk; it was not very far. There was not much we could buy in the village, maybe some sewing yarn or little things like that, or some food stuff, most of which we got from Guayaquil. Our husbands came on weekends and each weekend we gave them a list of what to bring. They usually stayed until Sunday night; some left early Monday morning. Anyhow, we all enjoyed Playas very much, the kids as well as the grown-ups. Many people also came to the hotel just for the weekend; my parents often did. Saturday evening there was always dancing at the Hotel Humboldt and we all had a good time. Later they even opened a Casino and that of course brought many customers.

Manea had a customer, a “hacendado” (big land owner) who had a big house in Playas and kept riding horses there. He and his family came only for the weekend, but he had a groom there to take care of the horses and to ride them. Manea knew that groom and paid him something to come to our house with three horses and take Katja and me riding for one hour every weekday and also to teach us how to ride. He was happy to earn some money but told us not to let his boss know, as he might not like it and might fire him. So, he came every day riding one horse and bringing two more for Katja and me. They were enormous horses and he always had to help us get on the horse, that is, we had to use his hands to step on and then on to the horse. He really gave us good lessons in trotting and galloping. We would ride along the beach and Katja and I both loved it. When we returned he

would always take Niko in front of him on his horse and go for a little ride. Niko just loved it.

When Katja was 15 and Niko six years old and in the first grade, I went to New York. I had gotten some restitution money (one lump sum for not having been able to finish my education), and my mother thought I should treat myself to a visit at my uncle Berthold's who lived with his wife Jeanette in New York, in Forest Hills, where they rented a very nice apartment. Manea stayed with the kids and since my parents lived in the same apartment house as we did, just one floor below us, my mother took care of everything. When Niko was about 2 years old we had all moved into a brand new apartment house. It had an elevator and the apartments were beautiful.

I had a marvelous time in New York. After living so long in Guayaquil without going out of the country, New York was overwhelming for me. It was like coming into another world. There was so much to see and Berthold and Jeanette really did everything possible to make this a great time for me. I spent four weeks with them and Jeanette showed me around. She knew New York like her living room. When, once in a while, I went somewhere on my own, she not only told me which subway to take but which number car so that I would get out right near the steps to the exit I was supposed to go to. Besides seeing the city we went to the movies, to theaters, to nightclubs, to the beach for a weekend. It was fabulous! Erwin also came on business for about one week. He had been in San Francisco, also on business, and came to New York to buy some machinery for his factory in Quito. I met him every evening at his hotel and he took me out to nightclubs, dinners and the theater. We had a great time. Then he put me into a taxi back to Forest

Hills, since he was staying in Manhattan. I have always been easily scared and was afraid to go with any taxi driver, so we always looked for an older guy. For some funny reason I always thought older guys were safer and more responsible. Even so, once I got a nice-looking older guy who had some kind of a tic and I watched him the whole time kind of shaking, but – we made it O.K. Once I got one who got lost and did not know where to go. He called in to his company a few times and still did not find the address. He asked me every five minutes: “Does this look familiar to you?” but nothing looked familiar to me, I had no idea where I was! He was nice enough to turn the meter off and finally asked another cab driver who had stopped in the street and that guy told him exactly how to go. It was not far from where we were.

Then there was the shopping! I went overboard! Everything looked so nice and seemed so inexpensive. In Ecuador we had all our dresses and the kids’ clothing made by a seamstress. There was nothing ready-made to buy. I thought it marvelous to just try on a dress and then buy it if I liked it. The people in New York could hardly understand it, they all told me they wished they could afford dresses made to order. That shows that we always want what we don’t have! Anyhow, I bought more for Katja and Niko than for me and at the end I had to buy another suitcase. At that time when you were flying you could only take about 40 lbs. for free. You had to pay overweight for anything above that, and they weighed everything. Knowing that I had to stay for a night and half a day in Miami on the way back, I decided to send one suitcase with the new things to Miami where our friend Sig Glukstad lived with his family and whom I wanted to see anyhow. As it was I still had to pay \$80.00 for the suitcase from Miami to Guayaquil, which for us was a

lot of money. With these costs the things were not “inexpensive” anymore. In fact, it made everything quite expensive!! But the kids, especially Katja, were so happy with all the things I brought that it seemed worthwhile and it was a trip I would never forget.

When I came back to Guayaquil my mother told me that they had had a hard time with Niko. He missed me so much that the first week he struggled every morning because he refused to go to school but, of course, they had to make him go. After the first week he got over it, but everybody seemed happy that I was back.

Shortly after my return we decided to send Katja to the States for her last school year. Most of our immigrant kids went to the U.S. to study after finishing high school, but some went earlier. Katja had an Ecuadorian boyfriend whom we did not particularly want in the family. We were afraid that she might marry him one day if she stayed in Ecuador. Maybe we made more out of this than it was, but I still think he took it quite seriously and his parents would have been delighted with a European daughter-in-law. The father was from the so called “high society” but the mother was not, and so they and the boy were not accepted in those circles. Anyhow, he was the reason we sent her away that early. She was not quite 16 when she left.

First of all I had to look around for a family where she could stay. Most people I wrote to wrote us back that either they already had one or more teenagers at home and that was enough for them or, if they did not have children, they did not want the responsibility. Berthold and Jeanette did not have room and the Riedels, who were already living in Minneapolis at that time, had only a son and no extra room either. Finally I thought of a friend

of my uncle Berthold's whom I met in New York (Berthold already knew him in Hamburg), and whose wife seemed to me to be quite the "motherly" type. They had two younger children, a boy and a girl, around nine years old I think, and I wrote to them. They were willing to take her for the one year until she would go to college. Of course we paid quite well for her room and board and care and we decided to send Katja to that family. Katja did not want to leave at all and it was very hard for us to force her to leave, but we definitely thought it was for the best. To be honest, Manea could very easily have been persuaded not to send her away, but this time I really put my foot down. I was afraid that things might get out of hand if she did not go at that time. When we went to the airport and the plane left I was crying so hard that Niko, six years old at that time, said to me (in Spanish of course): "Mami, it is a scandal to cry like that". Katja wrote us later that she cried all the way to Miami, which was quite a long time as she had a stop-over in Panama. Berthold and Jeanette and the couple, George and Dorothy Moses, picked her up at the airport in New York. As she told me later, then and there she told the Moses's that she would make it quite hard for them until they sent her back to us, which means that they did not have it easy with her. But on the other hand, they should have understood that she was homesick and very young. They were nice enough, I guess, but not what we had expected.

To begin with, she had to sleep with the little girl. I had taken for granted that she would have her own room and that, if they did not have another room, they would put the two young children together. She also had to share the closet with the little girl. Then, their marriage was a bad one, which of

course we did not know at all. Not only was it a bad marriage but it was very obvious to Katja and did not help to make her feel at home there. They also made her baby-sit quite often and never paid her for it until Jeanette said to them that that was unfair. Then they paid her a few times, but I don't think they did that very often. So, things were not what I had hoped for, but we had no choice but to leave her there for that one school year. She had started the 11th grade in May in Guayaquil when our school year there started, but in New York, in September, they put her into the 12th grade because they realized how advanced she was. Not only was she an outstanding student but also the schools in Ecuador at that time were more advanced than the schools in the U.S. Before she graduated Katja, who was always an "A" student, applied to four colleges for scholarships and got one from all four. She decided on Alfred University, in upstate New York. When the school year was over my mother went to New York for the graduation and then brought her back by boat for vacation.

Katja had a marvelous time on the boat. These big ships could not come to Guayaquil because the Guayas River was not deep enough to navigate. So a small motor boat was sent out to the ocean where the ship cast anchor and waited for the boat that took the passengers in. Manea and I decided to go with the boat to pick them up and we took Niko with us. We left in the afternoon. It took hours to get there – we made it sometime during the night. The cruiser was supposed to let the passengers leave between 2 and 3am. We arrived just in time and Katja and my mother came on board. Our boat had no cabins, it was not big enough for that, but at least we had enough seats. Anyhow, we were very happy to see Katja again and arrived

in Guayaquil just in time for breakfast. By then Niko, who after all was only seven years old, was very tired – in fact we were all tired. I was going to put Niko to bed but he insisted he was “not tired at all” and wanted to have breakfast with us. Of course my father was there too and so we all sat down. Niko was sitting beside me, and I can still visualize him sitting there and suddenly, from one moment to the next, he just “sagged” sideways and fell asleep. He did not even realize that we carried him to his bed. After breakfast we all went to sleep, since none of us (except for my father) had had any sleep during the night, and we all slept for a few hours.

Right after Katja’s arrival Niko got the measles and since Katja had never had them, she got them too and that was terrible. At her age, 16, it hits much harder than when kids are very young. She really had a horrible time. I still remember her telling me that she would have died had that happened in New York! I am sure she would have survived there too, but I was glad she was at home when it happened. She had it inside her throat and she had a hard time breathing. For some nights I slept with her and hardly got any sleep. She had high temperature and asked for water all the time. But eventually that also passed and once it was over we were all quite relieved and she could finally enjoy the rest of her three months of vacation. When she left for college we were crying and very sad again, but now she went to Alfred University and lived in the dorm. I did miss her terribly. Shortly after she got there she wrote us “apologizing” for not being homesick anymore. We really had to laugh, she seemed to have thought that we might feel offended and did not realize how happy we were that she finally had found her place. She also let us know that she “only” cried up to Panama on that flight!

In the meantime we stayed in Guayaquil and Kitty Janowitz and Ilse Holz and I became “inseparable”. I had told Katja, if she ever wanted to write me something which nobody else should know about, she could send it to Ilse Holz and I would get it from her without anybody knowing about it. One day Ilse told me she had received a letter from Katja and we met and I got the letter. She had met a boy in college, Andy Lakatos, an immigrant from Hungary. He and his mother had fled Hungary in 1956 after the Russians took over. They had dated and become serious about each other. She did not know how to tell this to her father since Andy was not Jewish and she was afraid that Manea would be very upset and against it. She wanted me to let her know how to handle this. I thought about it and then went to Manea and told him to just accept it and not to make any fuss about it. It was, after all, Katja’s life and she had the right to marry whomever she wanted to. Manea took it quite well and I just wrote her back that all was O.K. and that she could write anything about Andy to us, it was no “secret” anymore.

During summer vacation we wanted Katja home again. She came home and we all decided that we wanted to meet Andy. During her summer vacation the schools in Guayaquil were in session. School vacation was during the rainy season. So Katja got a job at the American School to teach during the three months of her vacation. That was the school she had attended until she left Guayaquil, so she knew many of the kids there, especially among the 12th graders she was teaching. Though I, when I taught there later, had a hard time handling those kids, she was marvelous as a teacher. I guess she just looked at them and nobody talked or disturbed the class. In fact, the Director of the school told me one day, “Katja is a born teacher”!

We all wanted to meet Andy, so we decided to send him money to come to Guayaquil. Katja helped out with her salary and she sent him the money to cover a good part of his flight. The rest he paid himself or perhaps his mother, Lilla, did. Anyhow, he came for two weeks and we celebrated their engagement. He stayed with my parents since we did not have a fourth bedroom, and everybody liked him. He was very nice, very European, well educated, and all the immigrants thought he was nice. In fact, one of our friends, Ernst Grunauer, told us: "This will be a marriage made in heaven"! He never found out how wrong he was, he had passed away by the time Katja got her divorce eight years later!

The next year they got married. I always had told Katja not to get married by age 18, as I did, so she waited until age 19! Andy was 23. We wanted the wedding to be in Guayaquil and Andy's mother also came. It was a civil wedding ceremony. Though Katja would have liked a Jewish wedding she could not have one since Andy was not Jewish. They got married a few days before we celebrated their wedding, so that Katja could get her new passport before leaving Ecuador again. Andy again stayed with my parents and Lilla stayed in our house. I think we put Niko and Katja together for that time. Katja had bought a beautiful white, short wedding dress with a veil, which she wore for the wedding celebration which we had in our house. We invited all our friends, and, of course, the whole family. We had about 40 people. We emptied our bedroom completely and put out the food there. We hired two waiters, my mother helped with the cooking, we ordered some of the food, and we had our two maids there. We put up enough tables so that everybody could sit down for dinner. First the waiters served the soup

and they also served the wine, the rest was “self service” from the buffet. We also had hired a guy who played the accordion and after dinner we put the tables aside, took up the rugs and everybody danced. It was a very successful evening, everybody had a good time. Around midnight Katja and Andy had to leave for the airport. They were flying first to Panama and Lilla went along. She then traveled on to New York the next morning and Katja and Andy boarded a boat to New York the next day. That was their honeymoon trip.

A year after the wedding they both graduated from Alfred University (Andy with a Master’s degree) and started graduate work at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where they both got grants or scholarships, whatever it was called. They both went into Physics. They got a nice little apartment not far from the University in a complex for married students. It belonged to the University. Manea went to the airport with them and I stayed with our guests and got a “crying spell”, but it passed. The main thing was that they were happy and I had to get used to the idea that Katja was now on her own and not coming home anymore for each three-month vacation.

When Niko was 11 years old, that means about one year after Katja and Andy got married, my cousin Eddy and his wife Miriam came to visit us. We had not yet met Miriam. She had lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and had met Eddy in San Diego where she was visiting. They had been in Buenos Aires and on the way back to San Diego they came to visit us. Since we had a car (which we got when Niko was two years old), I drove them around to show them Guayaquil. We had a very nice hill there where one had a very good view over the whole city. Halfway up there was a hospital for tuberculosis

patients which, as you will find out very soon, happened to be very helpful to us. We had a Hillman, an English car with manual transmission. There were no automatic cars yet in Guayaquil. We went up the hill and I showed them the view and then we drove down again. Miriam and Eddy were both sitting in the front with me (no bucket seats yet) and Niko was sitting in the back. The hill was quite steep and winding. Suddenly I realized that my brakes did not work at all. I had made one mistake: I went uphill in first gear, but going down (where one is supposed to go in the same gear as going up) I went in second. First gear would have been somewhat slower. I tried to get the car into first gear to slow it down but I could not get it in. I alerted everybody that I had no brakes and the car started rolling faster and faster. There came a curve and I saw that a station wagon was coming uphill. The winding road down ended right on a main street with a lot of traffic and quite a few buses. Just before the curve there was a fairly low wall at the edge and I decided in a split second to drive into the wall. I decided this was my only chance. I just had time to call out: "I am driving into the wall" when we hit the wall and we were really lucky that the wall held and we did not go over the wall. Eddy had instinctively put out his leg as if to brake and the leg broke. Miriam hit her head against the small front window which was open. I hit my knee on the steering wheel and Miriam and I were bleeding quite heavily. Eddy was there with a broken leg and Niko got out and was in shock. I had gotten out of the car and gotten him out and told him to lie on the ground. I did not know if he was hurt. In the meantime they had heard the crash at the hospital and the director came up there. The station wagon that I had seen coming up had stopped and was

also there. They first got Eddy out. He screamed when they moved him, as he had a bad break in his thigh bone. They put him on the back seat of the station wagon. Then they put something on Miriam's and my wounds to stop the bleeding and packed us and Niko into another car. The director of the hospital took my car keys, promised to lock the car and leave the keys at the desk of the hospital and off we all went. At the hospital they got us all out and took us to the elevator and left each one on a different floor. It was an orthopedic hospital. In the meantime the director had called Manea. I had given him our phone number, and since it was a Sunday he was at home. Manea and my parents came at once and somehow, within a very short time all of our immigrants knew about it. As was customary in Guayaquil among the immigrants, they all came to the hospital as well.

They took Eddy into a room and "hung up" his leg until the next day when they would operate on him. Miriam was on another floor getting 15 stitches on her forehead and I was getting seven stitches on my knee. Each of us had some of our friends with them. The doctor who stitched me up was very cheerful and asked me what color yarn I wanted, white or black or any other color. I think I chose white! Niko got X-rays taken of his head since he had bumped it against the roof of the car. He was put into another room and my mother stayed with him the whole time. While they stitched me up I had about five or six of our friends with me. After I was done they put me into the same room as Niko. Later that evening I counted 25 visitors and I was exhausted! Next morning the doctor told me that Niko's X-rays did not show anything that was of any concern, but he did not know if Niko had any internal bleeding that he could not see and that could be dangerous.

Sounded very encouraging! He wanted Niko to stay in bed without moving around or sitting up, in case there was anything wrong.

In Ecuador there was a law that whenever you had a car accident you were arrested until it was all cleared up and they knew whose fault it was. As the doctor knew that, he told me right away that in any case I would have to stay in the hospital until things were cleared up, otherwise I would go to prison. And lo and behold – they sent a policeman to the hospital to “guard” me! First the guy sat in my room reading Niko’s comics. After a while I “politely” requested that he sit outside of the room, which he did quite willingly, and there he went on reading Niko’s comics, which we gladly furnished him with. They changed policemen every eight hours day and night. Next day was the day I was supposed to start a new job, teaching at the American School where the new school year was just beginning. I was supposed to teach in Spanish. Since Katja was already gone and Niko was in school most of the day, I had gotten quite bored and wanted something to do. This was a nice job where I could take Niko to school and then take him home again with me. Of course now I was delayed for some time and the Director’s wife came to visit me in the hospital and said to me, when she saw the policeman: “This will be the first time that we are going to have a jail bird as a teacher”. We often had a good laugh about it. Anyhow, the guys were withdrawn after two days, as it was clear that the accident was nobody’s fault. The newspaper wrote about it and they praised me for my fast thinking of what would be the best thing to do under the circumstances. So I had my day in the paper! In fact, they came to interview me in the hospital and then they wanted to take a picture of us, which I refused. Niko

was quite upset, he absolutely thought I should say yes, he would have loved to see his picture in the paper, but I wasn't game. After about three days we were allowed to go home, but Niko still had to stay in bed without moving around. They wanted to keep him quiet for about one more week to be sure that he was O.K. I also had to stay in bed for about two more days. I was not supposed to walk yet, and so, during the day, we both were in my bedroom in my bed so that I could talk to Niko, read to him and keep him quiet. Once I got up we hired a girl to sit with him the whole day and keep him company. He was quite an active little boy and would not have stayed in bed quietly otherwise. Eddy, the poor guy, had to stay in the hospital longer. They operated on him and put a nail into his thigh and told him to see his doctor in San Diego upon his return. He certainly was the worst off of all of us. For quite some time he was on crutches and after about three years they removed the nail in San Diego.

Through this accident, since Miriam and Eddy had to stay a while longer in San Diego, Miriam and I got to know each other and we definitely got along very well. When Niko was 12, in 1963, I decided to visit Miriam and Eddy with Niko during vacation time. They had invited me and I really wanted to see what chances there were in the U.S. for Manea. Letting Katja leave had been very difficult, but letting Niko go one day too and staying behind without any children and hardly any chance that they would come back (which we did not want for them in any case) was even worse. I also wanted to go. Ilse and Heinz and Gert and Edith and their kids had all moved to San Diego already. It was a long flight to San Diego. We had to change planes in Miami and arrived there early in the morning. Instead of flying

on after two hours or so they told us that there was a delay and we would leave for San Diego in the late afternoon. I called Sig Glukstad, who had moved there from Guayaquil with his wife a few years earlier, and we spent the day with him and his wife and left again in the afternoon. As it was, by the time we were to land in Los Angeles (where we were supposed to land first), there was very bad weather and they could not land in Los Angeles or San Diego. They took us to Las Vegas and took us to a hotel; we slept for about three hours and then had to get up around 3am when they returned us to the airport. By the time we were all sitting in the airplane there was another delay, because Los Angeles was still fogged in. So we were sitting there, on the runway, for about two hours but finally did get to Los Angeles. In the meantime the plane to San Diego had left Los Angeles and we had to wait about four hours and arrived in San Diego around noon. We were dead tired. Of course, we were supposed to be there one day earlier and Miriam and Eddy had bought theater tickets for the three of us to go together with some friends. By the time we had lunch and Eddy's parents had visited and we could go to bed, I did not have much time to sleep. Fortunately I was still young enough to manage. I did not collapse. I enjoyed the theater, but when we got home I was ready to collapse and as soon as I hit the pillow I am sure I was asleep.

We had a wonderful time in San Diego. Eddy and Miriam's daughters Susan and Eve were 10 and 7 years old and the kids got along very well with Niko. Susan was especially "star struck" and admired her older cousin enormously. Miriam and I went every day to visit animal clinics in San Diego, since I wanted to find out if there would be a possibility for Manea

to work there as a veterinarian. We were not very successful. The vets were all very nice and accommodating, and showed us everything and spent time talking to us, but even if Manea could work in the hospitals he would not be able to write prescriptions and could not do surgery unless supervised by a licensed vet because his license was not recognized. One of the vets did offer employment, but the salary would have been way too low and Manea would not have been happy with the job. We also looked at pet shops but did not like that either. Then I inquired about slaughterhouses, where all the meat is examined by veterinarians, but San Diego did not have a lot of animals slaughtered and so that was out too.

We had a wonderful time anyway. We went out every evening and led a fairly “hectic” life! (Not Niko, of course, only we grown-ups.) We did things with the kids: zoo, Seaworld, Disneyland, outdoor movies. Then we also had Grunewalds and Koppels here, and Niko spent a whole day with Gert and Edith and their kids and we also got together with Ilse and Heinz and the kids. Poor Miriam! With our hectic life she lost 8lbs. while we visited, but I am sure she also enjoyed the time and we became really good friends.

From San Diego we went on to Ithaca, N.Y. to visit Katja and Andy at Cornell University. On the way we had a stop-over but we were not allowed to leave the plane, they just stopped to let out some passengers and take on some new ones. At that time they still used the stairs they rolled up to the airplane door and Niko, seeing through the window that it was snowing, ran to the stairs, scooped up a handful of snow and ran back through the airplane shouting: “Mami, Mami, snow!” The whole plane was laughing, it was the first time he saw snow and it was quite exciting for him. At Cornell

we saw quite a bit more of it!

Katja and Andy had a very nice student apartment which belonged to the University. It was a one bedroom apartment with a living room, built in kitchenette and bathroom. Of course they had no room for us and had rented a room in Ithaca, about 10 minutes by car from their apartment. The people we rented from were Greeks who had a large house and rented out three or four rooms. These rooms were on the upper floor and they had one bathroom for the renters. Besides us there was only one person in each room and they all were either students or working people. We never saw any of them and when we came home or got up, the bathroom was always unoccupied and everyone was gone. Coming from Ecuador we were not yet used to always having our own private bathroom when traveling.

Since Katja and Andy lived near the University they could not get a campus parking permit for the car and either had to walk to school or take their bicycles. So they let us have their car in the evening to go home and we kept it there and came back with it the next morning, when they had already left. Niko and I did quite a bit of sightseeing in the area and I often cooked so that Katja would not have to do that in the evening. They came home rather late in the afternoon and after dinner worked at home. At about 9:30 or 10pm they usually had a 20-minute break and after that we went home. Often I took Niko home after dinner because he got bored and Katja and Andy had no TV yet. The family with whom we stayed was nice enough to let him watch TV with them and I drove back and stayed until after Katja and Andy's break. That gave me a chance to talk to them for a while and when they started working again I drove home. Once in a while we went to

visit one of the other student couples there, but also only for 20 minutes, they were all working until late at night. Toward the end of our stay Andy and Katja went with us to see the Niagara Falls. We went over to the Canadian side, which is the nicer one. Niko and I were very impressed with the Falls, it was quite an experience for us. It was a beautiful day when we went. On and off it had still been snowing in Ithaca, but it was not too cold. It was March and spring was coming.

From there we flew to Minneapolis, where we we stayed for two weeks with Juan and Sophie Riedel, close friends from Guayaquil. They had lived in Minneapolis for some time, where Juan was Professor of Musicology at the University. (Juan was now called “John”, originally he was “Hans” but in Ecuador he was called Juan and we kept calling him that).

When we arrived in Minneapolis it was still snowing and Sophie and Juan came to the airport with warm coats for us. They drove us out to their summer house at a beautiful lake and the snow was so deep we sank in. Niko was delighted! He called the weather forecast every two or three hours and was happy when they said “snow”. Sophie and Juan had one adopted son, Claude, who was one year older than Niko. Juan took me to talk to some veterinarians at the University who told me whom to contact at the slaughterhouse. I contacted the head veterinarian there and went with Juan to talk to him and to another veterinarian. They were both very friendly. They told me that for the slaughterhouse inspection they would recognize Manea’s degree from Italy, and, though they could not guarantee a job, they told me that they had seven openings and it was as good as sure that he would be hired once we immigrated to the U.S. It would be a Federal Government

job and with that came insurance, pension plan, etc. That sounded very promising. They also told me that there would be a good chance that after not too long a time Manea would be working as supervisor, which would be even better paid and a much easier job. And so, after a wonderful vacation, we went home again and started to work on our immigration. We had spent February and part of March in the U.S. and it took us until August to have everything together.

The American Consul in Guayaquil was not very cooperative – in fact he did everything to make it hard on us. We did not need an affidavit as we immigrating with enough money. There was a certain sum you had to bring in to do that, I don't remember how much, and since we did not have enough we borrowed it from my parents and later returned it to them. The Consul either did not like people to immigrate, or he did not like Jewish people, we never found out, but he made it hard. Manea always had very high blood pressure but the consul told us not to worry, that they never took that into account. Only illnesses such as consumption, things that might be contagious or make people invalid were things to worry about. But then he suddenly said that the blood pressure was way too high and he could not give us the visa, Manea had to see a certain doctor first. That doctor happened to be one who knew Manea well and he was very nice. He managed to get the pressure down within two days and gave him the certificate that his health was now very good. There were still other things that the consul tried, but in the end he had to give us the visa and so we got ready. We sold all our furniture and whatever we did not want to take along. We took our personal things with us. Our sheets and pillow cases, blankets, towels, etc., the books

we wanted to keep, and most of my sheet music were packed and sent. And then we flew to Minneapolis where the Riedels had rented a hotel apartment for us with two bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bath, until we would decide where we wanted to live. They told us that there was a nice area in St. Paul where they had a very good public school, where many Jewish families lived, and where a high percentage of the students were Jewish.

First of all, though, we had to see about Manea's job. Juan Riedel went with us to see the veterinarian again and he said that they certainly wanted Manea. This was a federal job and it took about two weeks until everything was cleared and he could start working. In the meantime we had to get a car and Juan and Sophie had a neighbor who was selling his car. He was the only one who had owned it and it was in very good condition, a big Oldsmobile with about 100,000 miles on it. The price seemed very reasonable, so we bought it and I went to pick it up and took it home. Manea had to be at the slaughterhouse at either 6:30 or 7am, I don't remember exactly, but I know that he got up around 5 or 5:30am, which he did not really like very much. But he came home around 3pm and then could lie down and have a nap. I took him there every morning. It was about a 20 minute drive, and in the afternoon I picked him up again. He was still too nervous to drive himself, after all his English was nil and he could not ask for directions if he needed any. But he very quickly learned enough English to get along and we were happy he got the job. In the meantime we had met a nice couple through Juan, and the wife offered to take me apartment hunting. We drove to the area that was recommended to us and very soon found a very nice apartment. They did not take children (at that time it was quite

common and not against any law) but decided that Niko was old enough not to “bother” anybody! It was a two-bedroom apartment and so we proceeded to buy furniture and moved in. Before we moved my mother came to visit. She had been visiting Magda and John Koppel in San Diego or rather in Chula Vista (near San Diego), where they and the Grunewalds lived. On her way back to Guayaquil she came and stayed with us for about two weeks. Our things from Ecuador had also arrived and we kept them in storage until we moved in. So I started to keep house, without my two maids of course, but everything was much easier here. I did not mind not having the maids. Manea was by then getting used to driving and I did not have to drive him anymore. Niko could walk to school and I went shopping after Manea came home and I could take the car.

After a short time I started to look around for a job. I found one fast enough through an agency, at a Credit Union as a typist. Though I could speak English fairly well I was not good enough yet to look for a job as a secretary right away. I was a very fast typist and they were very happy with me and told me that I typed exactly twice as fast as the last girl. But getting there by bus was not so nice once Winter started. Minnesota has a lot of snow, it gets awfully cold, and I had to walk to the bus, stand there until it came and then walk again to the office downtown. So we looked for another used car and quite soon found a little Volkswagen “bug” which we got for a very reasonable price. Now I could drive to work and only had to walk one block from the parking lot.

In the meantime, since Niko was already 13 years old, we looked for a private teacher for him to learn for his Bar Mitzvah. He had never learned

any Hebrew in Ecuador. There was nobody to teach him in Guayaquil, and he did not know anything about religion since we never had a Rabbi in Guayaquil. The only thing our community could finally afford was a teacher from Israel for the kids when Niko was about 8 years old. He was a very nice young guy and was very good with the kids, but he was not very religious and did not teach them that much about religion. But at least, when he came, he lead a real Seder in our club. Niko got a very nice teacher in St. Paul. She was about 80 years old and he liked her. Of course it took some time for him to learn to read Hebrew. Since he turned 13 in December of 1963, we had to postpone the Bar Mitzvah and planned it for June of 1964. Mrs. Gordon, his teacher, taught him very well. Once in a while she complained to me that he did not study enough at home, and I told her to tell that to him instead of to me. But then she always answered me: "I can't, if I do he gives me a kiss and tells me – I love you Mrs. Gordon – and then I just melt!" This was familiar to me. He was born with charm and charmed all his teachers and most people all his life, and most of the time he managed to do it to me too. Anyhow, for his Bar Mitzvah my parents came and Eddy and Miriam and their daughters Susan and Eve. They wanted to celebrate with us and we were happy that they came.

We invited quite a few friends we had made by then. The Bar Mitzvah was beautiful. We had joined a conservative temple in St. Paul by that time and Niko did a marvelous job. Then we had cake and sandwiches for the whole Congregation and at night we had a dinner at a restaurant for our family and friends.

By that time Manea and I had already decided to separate after the Bar

Mitzvah. I had wanted a divorce for a long time. Our marriage did not work. We were too different and Manea finally had agreed to it. My parents were not very happy about it but this time they did not interfere. Niko was quite upset when we told him about it and did not want to stay in St. Paul. He wanted to leave until the divorce was final and so we thought about where to send him for the next school year. Luckily Ilse and Heinz Grunewald, my cousins, who lived in Chula Vista (next to San Diego) agreed to keep him for one school year and we sent him there. Their oldest son, Freddy, was only four months older than Niko in Guayaquil Ilse and I had spent quite some time together with our boys. Peggy, their daughter, is two years younger and Ralph is the youngest. I do think that Niko was quite happy there and I think it was the best we could do. I was very, very nervous at that time and this way, by the time he came back after nine months, all was finalized and Manea was already back in Guayaquil.

Manea moved into the apartment hotel where we stayed when we arrived, and I started divorce proceedings. Since we both agreed to the divorce there was no problem. It only took a few months. We had only one lawyer (who used another lawyer whom we never saw or heard of, as there had to be two lawyers) and then Manea decided to return to Guayaquil. I did talk once on the phone with his boss, and he told me that in two to three months Manea would be supervisor and have a much better and easier job, but he never really felt at home in the U.S. and he wanted to go back to Guayaquil. So he left and returned via San Diego to see Niko before leaving the country.

In the meantime, while my parents were with us, I had taken unpaid leave of absence from my job. When they left I decided not to go back there

but to take a course in shorthand (which I never really managed well) and dictaphone, which was much easier for me. I wanted to try to get a job as a secretary, but before I finished the course they told me at the school that they had a request from the 3M Company (the Minnesota Mining Co.) for a translator for technical translations. They asked me if I was interested, which I was, and so I applied at the 3M Company in their international department. I was supposed to translate all their technical instruction booklets from English into Spanish and also a few times from German into English. It was something completely new for me and sometimes I spent a few hours in a certain department to learn what all the technical terms meant. My first (trial) translation was a 50-page booklet about "Overhead Projectors" and it was very difficult for me. But they had very good technical dictionaries and I managed to do it quite well. They sent this, my first translation, to Mexico to find out if I did it right. It came back and had very few mistakes and those were only words which were used in South America but not in Mexico. As most of their booklets went to South America, that created no problem. I got the job and they kept me quite busy. I loved this work and it was definitely my favorite job.

When Niko's school year was over he came back to me. My parents were in San Diego where, in the meantime, Magda and John Koppel had also moved. My parents picked Niko up there, took him to New York to visit the World Fair and then came with him to St. Paul. I was happy to have him back and he kept me busy. He took up Judo and Karate, got a black belt in both, but he had class every evening and Saturday morning. I had to take him there by car and pick him up one hour later. Luckily it was not far from

the Riedels, so I spent some time with them until I picked him up again. It was too far to go home in between. Niko went back to his old school and things were fine.

My job with the 3M Company ended towards the end of the year. I had been there for about one year. When the Jewish Holidays came up I asked for a day off for Rosh Hashana and a day for Yom Kippur. Now, here I must mention that some Jewish people, when they heard that I worked for this company, were very astonished and told me that 3M never employed Jews. I did not believe it since they had hired me. Also, the secretary of my boss asked me one day if I was Catholic. When I said I was Jewish she said “I don’t believe it” and at the time I thought, maybe she never met one. Now in hindsight I know that she knew about their policy of not hiring Jewish people. They had only asked me where I was from, which was Germany of course, but that did not tell them anything about my religion. I got my days off for the Holidays, but right after that my boss told me that there was a change and I had to work for somebody else now. (I did realize later that he just did not want to be involved in the whole thing. At the end he made some remark that showed me that he disliked what they were doing.) Anyhow, I never felt comfortable with the next guy, I got fewer and fewer translations to do and finally he told me that they didn’t have any translations anymore and I should work on the Xerox machine (it was a big machine in a room by itself and of course it was awful, just a mechanical, boring job). I did that for a short time and found out in the meantime that they did need translations. I also got asthma attacks, the whole room had a funny smell and apparently I could not tolerate it. So I told the boss that I could not do that and he told

me to change jobs. I left and went to the Anti-Defamation League and they told me that it was very well known that the 3M Company never hired Jews. If I wanted they would approach them about my case, but they would have to give them my name and they warned me that nothing would come of it, they could not prove that they fired me for being Jewish and the Company could make it practically impossible for me to find another job, as they were quite powerful. I could not afford that and so I left and found another job. The whole thing was not a nice experience.

During summer vacations Niko wanted to visit Manea in Guayaquil. He had written him and asked him if he could come and Manea wrote back that, of course, he could come and visit. Niko had not told me that he had asked Manea and Manea did not consult me before answering. I would have told him to wait until Niko was a bit more settled in St. Paul again, but now there was nothing I could do. Manea paid for his flight ticket and off he went. He stayed the whole summer in Guayaquil, and when he came back he informed me right away that he wanted to go back to stay. Neither his father nor I wanted that to happen. Niko would certainly be much better off in the U.S. What possibilities did he have in Ecuador? I had always counted on him going to college and university here in the States. My parents having moved to San Diego, there was nobody of our family in Guayaquil any more. Niko was only 16 years old and still had two years of high school ahead of him. I fought it as long as I could. Things sometimes got quite bad between us, but finally I had to give in and let him go. He had grown up in Guayaquil and was not yet feeling at home here. But things did not work out that well there either. Manea was a very nervous person, he was also too old by then

to handle a teenager and, I am sure, Niko could more or less do whatever he wanted. Everybody who has or had teenagers at home certainly knows that they are not always easy to handle, and Manea was not well equipped for that!

Some time after Niko left I finally did decide to move to San Diego. My parents had wanted me to move as soon as they did, but I was holding out for a time. I liked St. Paul and somehow was afraid that the whole family would try to “marry me off” and that I would not be able to live my own life. I must say, though, that none of that happened and I never had reason to regret my decision to join the rest of our family here in San Diego. We were always a very close-knit family and I was happy to be where the family was. Erwin and Dita were still living in Quito, but the others were all living in San Diego already. So I came here in February of 1968 after living for five years in St. Paul.

My parents had rented a very nice apartment for me, two blocks from where they lived. It was a ground floor apartment, right at the pool, and had one bedroom, living room, kitchen and bath. I had sent my furniture, etc., by moving van and it did not take long until everything arrived. I stayed the first week or two with my parents, until the moving van came. I had arranged to have my car driven here, as it was winter and I did not want to drive all the way by myself and could not find anybody who would go with me. The car arrived about two weeks after me. I looked at once for a job and found one at “Foodmaker”, the company that owns “Jack in the Box”. This was again a translating job and when those translations were completed I stayed on as a secretary.

I met Fred through friends of my parents. I met them one day when they were playing Bridge at my parents' house and they asked me if I would mind if they gave somebody they knew my phone number. They told me that they knew him from Chicago and his wife had passed away about a year ago, and they would like to let him have my phone number, though they did not know at this point if he was interested. I told them it was O.K. with me and promptly forgot about it. About a month later I got a call from Fred and it took me quite a while until I understood who he was. I had totally forgotten about it. Also, they had pronounced his surname with German pronunciation and he pronounced it with English pronunciation and so he had to explain to me who he was. He invited me for the following Sunday afternoon when he had invited some friends over to his house. When I arrived he was still without his other guests and told me they would come a bit later, but that he had thought I might help to prepare things. He then asked me to clean strawberries and, when I started, proceeded to "show" me how to do it. He thought I did not do it right, as I did not do it the way he thought it should be done. As you can imagine, I was "elated"! Anyhow, he had invited two couples and they were very nice. Towards evening, one of the couples thought we should all come to their house and have dinner there, which we did. Next day my mother asked me what I thought about Fred. I answered "he is nothing special". I was not very impressed. (Needless to say, I changed my mind completely a bit later!). Fred called again some days later and invited me to go for dinner and we started dating. He took me to dinner, to the theater and often cooked for me. I ate very little at that time (I smoked instead of eating!) and he thought it a shame that I always left

half of my dinner on the plate. I still claim that I married him because he cooked well and I figured I wouldn't have to cook anymore! Surprise! The day we were married he declared: "I hate the kitchen" and to this day he does!

Shortly after we met I got a call from Niko. He told me that Manea had had a heart attack and he needed somebody to come to Guayaquil. I called Katja, who by then was living in Rochester, N.Y., and suggested that she go, and she agreed. She waited just until Manea was out of the hospital, so that she would be there to help him at home. Katja is very practical and knows what to do if necessary, and so, in just a few days, she managed to get a visa for Niko to come back to San Diego and sent him home to me, which was the best thing to do. Manea was not, at that point, capable of dealing with a teenager and Niko would not have had any supervision or help. As sorry as I was for Manea, who got well again, I was very glad to have Niko back with me. Before he arrived I changed apartments. They happened to have a vacancy in the same house, also on the ground floor near the pool, with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Niko still had one more year of school and shortly after arriving started his senior year. Fred suggested that he try to do that school year in half a year, since the schools in Ecuador were ahead of our schools here, and Niko did that very easily. He graduated in March, went to college here in San Diego, and lived in the dorm. Fred and I got married June 24, 1969 and I moved into his apartment. He had sold his house shortly after we met because it was in the flight line and the airplanes were too noisy for him, and he had rented a nice two-bedroom apartment. The house he sold was in Point Loma and he found the apartment not far from there. We

sold most of my furniture, packed my things, and I moved.

Niko did not last very long in college. During summer vacation he stayed with us, but then he told us one day that he got a letter, that a girlfriend he had in Guayaquil was quite sick and he just had to go and see her. Though I said “no way” (after all, it was quite expensive to fly there and come back), my father gave him the money and he went in July, promising to be back at the latest for my parents’ golden wedding anniversary on August 31. He did not come back in time and I waited and waited and then, suddenly, Manea died of a massive heart attack and again Katja went, this time for the funeral.

When Manea had returned to Ecuador from the U.S. he took over an agency of a company from Quito. Now, after Manea passed away, Niko told Katja that he wanted to stay in Guayaquil and would try to get the agency for himself. He did get it and stayed in Guayaquil. I was quite unhappy about it, but there was nothing I could say or do to make him change his mind. Some time later he wrote me that he wanted to marry the girl he had told us about and I went to the wedding. This was November 1971 and Niko was one month short of being 21 years old. The girl was the same age. Her name was Alba and she was a beauty. Her mother was Ecuadorian and her father was from Italy. She was Catholic, as most Ecuadorians are. It was a very big wedding, they had about 400 guests. The wedding took place in a church. The priest was from Belgium and kept it very neutral. He had her come in the morning by herself for confession and Niko had told him that he would never convert and would not kneel in the church. He did accept that and did not make them kneel, did not mention religion or how they should raise children. Half the church was filled with Catholics and

the other half with our Jewish immigrants (strictly divided by sides!). The bride looked beautiful. Everybody from our Jewish community came and everybody then came for dinner at the bride's parents' house. They had put the tables outside, in the garden, and they had music and dancing. During the evening the young couple left for the airport and flew to Costa Rica for their honeymoon. I flew home the next evening. The wedding was very nice, but the marriage could not last. They had nothing in common. Alba's interests besides shopping and dressing were nil and, I am sure, Niko became very quickly bored. Besides, they were too young to realize what a marriage means. Anyhow, after a year and a half the marriage ended. I went back to Guayaquil shortly after they separated. I tried to convince Niko to come back to San Diego but he would not. He liked to be in business, apparently made quite some money and lived a not very healthy life. He gambled, he drank too much and I was very unhappy to see him that way and unable to get him to return to the U.S. So I had to return without him. At that time I did not work for Foodmaker any more. I worked with my cousin Gert Koppel, who sold gold jewelry and diamonds to Mexico. I worked part time and enjoyed that work. I worked with him from 1969 to 1976.

About one year after Niko's marriage ended he got into some trouble and quite suddenly came back to San Diego. By then he was over 21 years old and his immigration papers had expired. I went to immigration and tried very hard to get him back on a permanent basis. I talked to a very nice guy whom somebody who knew him had recommended. He really tried hard, he looked into every book he could think of to come up with some solution, but he could not find or do anything. I had never thought about this problem.

I could have applied in time for an extension of his status and would very probably have been successful, but now it was too late. Niko, having been born in Ecuador, would have to wait about three years if he re-applied now. He could only stay here as a student. Even my being a citizen did not help at all. Well, that did not solve our problem. He certainly did not want to go back to college. He had been in business and been his own boss for too long, so this was no solution. We thought about the matter for some time and decided that the only solution for him was to go to Israel where, of course, he could always go as a Jew. He could work there and could become an Israeli citizen, and once he got his visa for the U.S. he could return here.

I was quite sad about it, but this was the only thing we came up with. So he went to Israel. He looked around for a while and finally landed at Kibbutz Kfar Blum, way up north, near the Golan Heights. It was a Kibbutz where a lot of people spoke English and besides, Niko learns any language very fast and nearly without accent, so that was the least problem. He has a very good ear and a gift for languages, which helps a lot.

After a short time in Kfar Blum war broke out again in Israel and I got frantic! I called him up and told him to get out and go to Europe and I would get a student visa for him and get him back here. His answer was: "My country is in a war and I can't leave now". There was nothing I could say to that. I think he never had felt at home anywhere and this was the first time he apparently did. I would not spoil that for him. He became a citizen of Israel but they did not call him for duty during the war. They had few men left in the Kibbutz and needed him there. Never having been trained as a soldier, they did not have time to train him now. So he did not have to go

to the army until after the war, which was some relief for me. After the war was over they did call him up and he only had to go for two years instead of three, as everybody in Israel does, because he was over 20 years old.

In the meantime he had met Etty Vardi, who was born and grew up in the Kibbutz. Her parents were among the founders. Her father was from Vienna and her mother from Lithuania. Niko and she had fallen in love and wanted to marry. At that time Etty was also in the army, she was 18 years old, and she, as all girls, would get out if she married. So she was in the army only for half a year. Niko was 23 at that time. Etty's parents were extremely nice to him, they accepted him totally though they knew very little about him or about his family.

Fred and I decided to go to Israel for the wedding. Actually this was the second time for me (Fred had visited there long before). We had gone to Israel and had met Fred's sister Lie and husband Paul, who resided in Argentina. My parents were supposed to come a bit later and also attend the wedding. But two or three days before the wedding my mother fell and hurt her back. She was in so much pain that it was just impossible for her to make the trip. They called us and canceled and we were really extremely sorry about that. Niko was their first grandson and they would have loved to be there. Actually my mother did not simply fall. My uncle Berthold had visited them and he somehow tripped and fell on top of my mother and that injured her disk. A freak accident! Nothing happened to him, of course, since he did not fall on a hard surface! Katja took her to a doctor who tried to help her, but later, when we were already back, he had to put her in the hospital so that she could lie absolutely flat for two weeks without getting

up at all. (That was before HMOs, and doctors could still put you into the hospital for weeks if they thought it would help!). It did help her but she never healed completely, and at her age they did not want to operate. She had to get a corset which she wore on and off. Later the pain was often gone for quite some time and she did not have to wear that thing, which she hated, but eventually the pain always came back for some time.

The wedding was very nice, a real Kibbutz wedding, the whole Kibbutz (about 700 people were living there) took part. An orthodox Rabbi officiated and her mother had to lead Etty seven times around the Chuppah. Then there was food for everybody and dancing. The Kibbutz was and is not orthodox, but in Israel the Rabbis, of course, are. They are the only ones who can marry anybody. The ceremony took place outside and just that day it was unbearably hot. The wedding lasted the whole day and into the evening. This was May 1974 and toward the end of the year we decided to bring Niko and Etty here to San Diego so that my parents could meet Etty and see Niko again. This was the first time in her life that Etty left Israel. Up to this time she had spent her whole life on the Kibbutz and she loved every minute she spent here with us.

We went shopping with them and it was really a pleasure just to watch her face. Any department store we went to was something she had never seen. I think she would have loved to just swoop everything up and buy it, and we bought quite a few things for them. After all, they were quite short of money on the Kibbutz. We had a marvelous time with them, Etty is a lovely girl and always laughing. She is very pretty and they were very much in love. My parents also enjoyed the time they spent with them. When they left we

bought them a Eurail Pass so that they could travel some time in Europe before returning to Israel. They went to London, Paris, and other places and had the time of their lives. Niko talked on tape about their experiences and then sent us the tapes. That was great.

Niko loved life on the Kibbutz. Everybody had to work there and they tried to give people work they liked and were good at. But everybody had to work once a month in the dining room, serving, cleaning up, etc. Of all 700 people on the Kibbutz, Niko was the only one who managed to get around that. He never worked in the dining room and nobody resented it. He just knew how to get around people! But he did work in the fields at the beginning and later the Kibbutz started to buy milk cows and he managed that and made a good business for the Kibbutz out of that. He enjoyed it very much; it was a challenge for him and he liked that.

As I said earlier, at that time I already worked with my cousin Gert. I worked about three or four times a week, about six hours a day, but it depended on how much work we had. I did enjoy working with him. He had a nice office and I did whatever came up. We worked well together and we were always quite close and so it was very pleasant. When Gert was out of town I also went to Tijuana and once a month to Mexicali. When I went to Mexicali I had to stay overnight, so Fred came with me. To Tijuana I went by myself. The customers were always very friendly and polite, and Spanish was no problem. I went to collect money from them: they all paid weekly in Tijuana, monthly in Mexicali. I worked with Gert until Katja (who earlier in 1969 had also moved to San Diego and had remarried) got pregnant. Then I decided to stop working so that I would have time for my first grandchild. I

wanted to have as much time as I liked to spend with the baby. So I stopped working August 1976 and Misha was born October 2, 1976, six weeks early. Two days before he arrived we had to go to Los Angeles for the funeral of our sister in law, Ruth, who had died of cancer. She was the wife of Fred's brother Werner. We intended to stay overnight but late that afternoon, when I called San Diego, I found out that Katja was in the hospital. It was not quite unexpected that Misha might arrive early, but this was six weeks before the due date! We flew at once to San Diego (we had flown to Los Angeles and rented a car at the airport) and arrived at the hospital around 9pm. When Katja saw me she said, very relieved: "Thank God that you are here, I could not have the baby without you here." Of course that statement was not quite true, Misha certainly would have arrived without my help, but it was nice to hear her say it. They kept her in the hospital overnight and next day decided to do a Caesarian and Misha arrived. He was tiny, 4 lb. 10 oz., but healthy. Fred, Semmy (Katja's husband) and I were three very happy people. Of course he was the most beautiful baby ever and Katja was the happiest mother we ever saw. She had waited very long for that. She had lost one baby after a few months of pregnancy and she and Semmy waited for a few years for her to become pregnant again. By the time Misha arrived she was 35 years old and very afraid that she might never have children. Of course we all were elated! They told Katja that she could take him home as soon as he weighed four and a half pounds. The first days, as every baby does, he lost some weight. Luckily her doctor was nice enough to keep her in the hospital long enough that we only had to leave him there one more night. Next day Katja and I picked him up, it was heaven for both of us!

In the meantime Katja had already hired a housekeeper, a very nice young girl from Colombia, because eventually Katja had to go back to work at the University of California. She had taken off three whole months so that she could take care of him the first three months day and night. The first two weeks I went daily to give him his bath and help her with him. She was a bit afraid to handle him, he was so very tiny. I loved every minute of it and from very early on he slept over in our house quite often and Fred and I enjoyed that very much. Naturally my parents were also very excited about their first great-grandchild. I always claimed that the first grandchild is special, but when the second arrived, she was special again! Dania arrived just 16 months later and it took a little while until she also stayed to sleep at our house. We had them over very often on weekends to give Katja and Semmy the chance to go out. This was not the only reason, though – we loved to have them and took every opportunity to get them. They had their room with two beds, first the cribs, then beds, they had their toys here and we spoiled them. That is the privilege of grandparents, the parents can then “un-spoil” them again, if they want to!

Dania was born February 14, 1978. The day was chosen on beforehand, as it was going to be a Caesarian again. I went with Katja to see her doctor and he said she could choose the day and he suggested February 14, Valentine’s Day. Everything was perfect, she arrived at the right time and Semmy and I were both in the hospital waiting for her and saw her as soon as they brought her out of the operating room. Like Misha, who was “OF COURSE” the most beautiful baby boy in the world, she was the most beautiful baby girl in the world!

At that time my father was already quite sick and he passed away exactly one week after Dania was born. He never got to see her anymore, though he knew that she had arrived. My mother did see her but could not enjoy her very long either; she passed away 10 weeks later. I still believe that she just gave up. She was not physically sick, but there was no purpose anymore for her to go on without my father. They were together 60 years and when Erwin took her to my father's grave side (she wanted to go there again shortly after his funeral) she said: "It won't be long, Guschi" (that's what she used to call him). They were both 83 when they passed away, and Erwin and I were both glad that they did not have to suffer, that they had had a very good old age, and as much as we missed them, knowing they did not have to suffer was very important to us. It took quite some time until I did not think every morning and every evening that I had to call them, because I had done that for so long now, to be sure that all was O.K. with them. We also saw them quite often and we knew they were well taken care of. Erwin and I had found a marvelous housekeeper for them who was also a very good cook, and she took over the household completely and they were quite happy with her. It did take quite some coaxing to get my father to accept having somebody in the house and having to give up for her the room where they used to play Bridge (which they could very well do in the living room) and one bath, but once he did he was very happy from the first day on. My mother was just not up to keeping house anymore and her cooking, which had always been very good, was not as good anymore either.

Though Misha and Dania are now 20 and 21 years old, we still call the room the kids occupied in our house the "children's room" and they usually

call it “our room”, and I often wish they were still young enough to sleep over! As they were so close in age, they were very, very close to each other from the beginning and that never changed. That made it easy to have them around. They were never bored when they were together. They were and still are very different from each other, and maybe that helped them get along so well. Each had something the other did not and, I believe, they kind of admired the other one for it. Dania was a very jealous little girl; as soon as Misha sat on my lap, for instance, she came too and she absolutely wanted “at least” as much attention as he got. She was a bad loser in any game when she was small, she cried when she lost and Misha hated to see her cry, so he either let her win or they did not count when they played something. They are now both grown up and are two beautiful young persons. They are both in college and apart from each other, but they always keep in touch by phone and also visit each other whenever possible, and they both always tell me that they miss the other one.

One thing when they slept over was not that great: they tended to wake up around 4:30 or 5am. At home they probably turned around and fell asleep again, but not here. They got up at once and came straight into our “double” bed, which was a bit small to accommodate four people, so usually one was between us and one on top of me. That was not bad either, but it never took more than 20 minutes and they both declared they were hungry. So, what could I do? I got up and made them breakfast and let Fred sleep. My night was over, but, being 20 years younger, it did not really bother me much. I enjoyed every minute I could spend with them. In fact, we both enjoyed them very much and Fred spent quite some time with them too. He would

take them for a walk down to the beach and then, at the end, coming back up the fairly steep street, he would have to carry one or the other. It was a very happy time for all of us. Katja and Semmy were happy and we were happy and so were the kids.

As I mentioned before, we first had cribs for them and then we got beds with a half rail and finally “grown-up” beds. Misha tended to fall out for a while; Dania never did. I always woke up when I heard him fall and went to look. He was usually lying beside the bed with either his pillow or blanket and never woke up. So I just put him back into his bed again. This went on until they were old enough to have their own social life, which means that it went on for many years and I still often miss it. No bedtime stories to read them anymore, which I always did, as Katja did at home.

In 1979 I started to do volunteer work once a week. I went to the UCSD Medical Center (at that time still the “University Hospital”) and worked as “patient liaison”. We would go around “finding” patients who either had nobody to talk to or had problems or, in my case, did not speak English, only Spanish. At that time we had a lot of them, legal and illegal. There were still quite a lot of funds available for them. The University took over the County Hospital and, in addition to private patients, they had to take all the County cases too. Many of the Mexican patients did not speak any English at all and were very happy if they found somebody who understood them. I helped to fill out documents, got them a social worker (sometimes I got one who spoke Spanish, otherwise I translated). I also translated often for the nurses and sometimes for a doctor. I always enjoyed these Tuesday mornings. In the beginning there were volunteers daily, both for the morning

and the afternoon shifts. I went from 9 to 1pm. Later we only had a handful of volunteers for this particular job and were not covered the whole day, so I usually stayed until I was done, sometimes 2pm, sometimes 3pm. I stayed with them for 17 years. This was, of course, before HMOs and patients would often stay in the hospital for a long time, for weeks and sometimes even longer. I sometimes ran errands for them, talked to their families, made phone calls, etc. The funds for the illegal Mexicans got less and less in the end and we did not have that many anymore, but there were still enough patients to keep me busy. At the end, once the HMOs started, people stayed only two or three days in the hospital, sometimes even less, and they did not need anybody to talk to or do something for them, so I did not enjoy it that much anymore. I used to work a lot in the burn station; I knew all the nurses and they told me whom to see very often, but that also changed. We had fewer nurses, many worked only part time and there began a frequent turnover so that I did not get to know them anymore. So finally I quit. Instead of volunteering we bought a computer and that kept me busy.

In 1988 Semmy passed away. He had cancer and was sick for quite some time. This was a hard time for us, especially for Katja and the kids. Misha and Dania took it quite hard when he died, it was the first time that they had to deal with death. That same year, during summer vacation, we took Misha and Dania on a four-week trip. We thought it would help them deal with all this and we very much enjoyed having them to ourselves! Actually it was Fred's idea and I, of course, was quite enthusiastic about it.

We decided to visit the National Parks and went first to Yosemite. To make it special we decided to take the train to San Francisco, that is, not

really to San Francisco but to a smaller place one or two stops after San Francisco. It was the first time they traveled by train. Our travel agent had ordered a car for us upon arrival. We arrived around 5pm and the car rental was closed! They closed at 4pm and our agent had not told them that we would arrive late. There we were with all our luggage and without a car and not knowing what to do. But...we were lucky. There was a very nice guy who apparently saw that we were a bit in trouble and he offered to take us to the airport, a small airport for private planes, I believe, to see if they had a car there. The rental there was also closed but there was a phone which we used to find out what to do. We called the 800 number of the car rental and they told us that we would have to go back by train to San Francisco where they would have a car for us at the station. The nice guy took us back to the station and we took the next train back to San Francisco. All this, of course, with luggage for four! Well, at the station we got a car and phoned the company where our agent had rented a condo for us for a week. It was getting quite late and they told us that they were closing the office but would leave the key outside of the office, told us exactly where the office was in the compound and where our condo was. So we started driving; we still had quite a way to go to Yosemite. The kids fell asleep and we arrived in the middle of the night. We found the key, found the condo and just went to bed!

Next morning Fred went to the office to find out if there was any place to get breakfast or a market to buy things to make our breakfast. They told us that the village was 12 miles away and there was nothing in between, GREAT! Well, we got showered and dressed and went to town, had breakfast,

and shopped so that we could make our own breakfast and if necessary also lunch.

We then had a great time there, enjoyed it very much, and drove a week later to Yellowstone Park and after that to Grand Teton. It was very, very nice in all the places, twice we had a condo and once a two-room, one-and-a-half bath suite at a hotel. When we went home we flew to Salt Lake City and there took the train. It was supposed to leave around 8pm and we had taken a sleeper, which was to be quite a nice experience for the children. The train was late and we went and had dinner. I don't remember what had happened, but the train did not come before 1am. We were sitting at the station and nobody knew when it would come, but it finally did! We had one compartment with two lower and two upper beds. The train was fairly empty and we had the bathroom practically to ourselves. We really slept well and the kids enjoyed it. Fred and I both decided that "once was enough"! Anyhow, we arrived well in San Diego and we traveled with them again the next two years.

In 1989 Katja and Ted got together and the kids took to Ted quite fast. He was really very good with them and we all liked him very much. The next summer Ted and Katja and the kids went to Israel while we went to Geneva, Switzerland to see Niko, Tania and Daniel. From there we went to Copenhagen, Denmark where we met Katja, Ted and Misha and Dania. Katja and Ted stayed with us for two days and then went to the northern part of Denmark where Katja had to lecture and we kept the kids. We had rented a car and drove through Denmark, stayed one week on a farm and one week at the North Sea and had a marvelous time. We visited Legoland, saw

the place where Hans Christian Andersen had lived and from there drove to Hamburg, where my cousin Helmuth and his wife Hella live. There we met Katja. Ted had to go home to work and Katja joined us. Inge, my cousin in Holland, also came for a week and stayed with Helmuth and Hella. We had marvelous days together. We showed Katja and Misha and Dania where I grew up, the different streets where we lived, the park where we played as children, the school I went to where we even could go in and see some of the rooms. This school is now used as an evening school or something like that, but the upper floor was left for photos of the Jewish school from earlier times, from the time when our parents and later we ourselves studied there. When we saw the park where my mother took us as children I had the feeling it had “shrunk”! When we were very small my mother took Erwin and me there in winter with a sled. There was, in my memory, a “mountain” where we sledded, my mother sitting with us on the sled. That mountain was a very slight little hill, not in the least a mountain, but when we were small it seemed very high to us. I must say, most things had shrunk. I remembered our school yard, where all the kids played during recess, as very large. Now that I was not only grown up but used to large spaces in the U.S. it seemed very, very small to me and I wondered how all the girls had fit in. But then, our school never did have as many kids as the schools here have, it just seemed to us that there were so very many kids.

There also happened to be in Hamburg at this time the “Summer Dom”. There always had been the Dom in Winter, Dom being a Fair with a lot of rides and a lot of food. Now they also had a Summer Dom, in the same place where it always used to be, but the Summer Dom was smaller than

the Winter Dom. We went there with Katja and the kids and they enjoyed the different rides and Katja and I ate some of the sweets I used to eat there when I was a child. It was really fun. When we were children my parents used to take us to the Dom. My father went on all the rides with us whereas my mother only took the “easy” ones, nothing like the “Matterhorn” in Disneyland. She was afraid, and so my father took us. I did not want to go on some of them either, I never was a hero, and my father took Erwin who always enjoyed all of them. In later years Erwin and I still went there, but then we went with our friends instead of our parents.

Hella and Helmuth were very nice to us, we went there every evening for supper and they really tried to make the days as nice as possible for us.

From Hamburg we had booked flights to London to stay there one week. As it happened, our flight was canceled (I think the airline had a strike) and all the passengers were put on other airlines and so we went to London via Holland. When we arrived I was missing one small suitcase with all my shoes. I have never flown in sneakers, but this time, thinking the flight was going to be quite short, I thought it was comfortable and put on my sneakers. Now I was in London without a decent pair of shoes or even a pair of sandals. The airline told us that a lot of luggage had not arrived. As all passengers were put on different flights the luggage apparently got mixed up. One day passed, another and so on and no shoes. I finally bought a pair of sandals and after four days the shoes arrived at our hotel. We had a marvelous time in London. In my opinion London is the most beautiful city to visit, there is so much to see and to do. Katja and the kids and we separated a few times as the kids had other interests than we had and we had been to London so

often and wanted to see things we had not seen before. But we also spent quite a bit of time together and after one week we flew home together. It was really a beautiful trip.

When we came back we had to finish preparations for Misha's Bar Mitzvah and Fred's 80th birthday on October 28, 1989. Misha was born October 2, 1976, and Fred was born October 26, 1909, and so we had decided to celebrate Fred's birthday with Misha's Bar Mitzvah. The invitations were printed in Misha's name and said something like: "At this same time we also want to celebrate the 80th birthday of my grandfather". The family guests were the same for both anyhow, but Fred also invited his three oldest friends: Horst Liebler, who lives in Concord, N.H. and who came without his wife Brunhild who did not want to travel anymore. He stayed with us. His old friend Jerry Stretton and wife Pearl came from Miami, and his friend Ben and wife from New York City. They have both passed away in the meantime. Also Fred's family from Los Angeles came, his brother Werner and wife Lily, Werner's daughter Rachel and husband Leo and three of her four children with family. Werner's son Gidi and wife Leslie came with their little son Eli. There were lots of Katja's friends and our friends and, of course, all the kids from Misha's class in school. It was a beautiful Bar Mitzvah at Temple Beth El, with our Rabbi Levin. Misha did a marvelous job. The rehearsal was Thursday when pictures could be taken and we had a video tape made of the whole ceremony that rehearsal day and then again of the dinner party. The party was also at the Temple and everybody, I think, enjoyed it. Semmy's brother Karl and wife Sophie came from New York with their daughter Michelle and husband Ted.

A year and a half later Dania had her Bat Mitzvah. She did not want a party like Misha's. She wanted a party just with her friends. So we had a very nice luncheon at the Temple after the ceremony for the whole family and friends. Dania also did a marvelous job. Again we had the rehearsal videotaped and pictures taken and then also had her party videotaped. The party was in the evening at the former Atlantis Restaurant. There were no grown-ups, only Katja and Ted as "chaperones", and they were mostly sitting outside. The music was, as usual, earsplitting! They had a DJ who was very good and had brought along a couple that danced for and with the kids. They were very good and got everybody to dance, which is not always easy at that age. We went out for dinner with Werner and Lily and then decided, around 10:30pm, to look in on the party. Though it was nice to look at the kids for a little while, we did not stay very long, it was just too loud for our ears. Anyhow, the kids had a great time and everybody was happy.

I guess there is nothing else to tell. I hope this gives you an idea about our life and I hope we still have many years together. And one day Misha and Dania, you might write your story down for your children and grandchildren.

TO MISHA AND DANIA

MY BIOGRAPHY

GERDA ANDERS

SAN DIEGO, AUGUST 10, 1999