

## ***My family***

*I was born Catalina Esther Rosalia Cohn Marcuson,( on November 24th.,1937, in Guayaquil, Ecuador). Cohn, my father's last name, and Marcuson, my mother's. The second and third name have some kind of familiar meaning. Esther had been in our family before, and it was also my only Jewish name, and Rosalia was the name of my great-grand mother, whose picture is in my son Igal's possession. She was supposed to have been a very intelligent person who lost her eyesight, and in spite of that was able to write (or dictate) poetry.*

*Really a very long name for such a small premature baby. Yes, I was in a hurry to see the world. My paternal grandmother, who at the time was living in Chile together with my grandfather, had come to Ecuador on a visit before I was born because she didn't want to be present during my birth. But she was wrong. I changed her plans. She left about two weeks after I was born. Actually nobody was prepared for me, not even my mother because they had told her that she had some kind of tumour. Not even my father who was a physician wanted to believe otherwise, my mother being already forty years old. But when he heard my mother saying that she didn't know that tumours moved, he and everybody else realized that it was me. And when they were starting to get acquainted with this idea, I was already born. A baby-cot was improvised with a doll's carriage and hot water bottles used as incubator, because I weighed only about 2 Kgs. They weren't even prepared for a name. The day I was born, a ship called "Santa Catalina" was in the harbour. The next day was "Santa Catalina's day" according to the calendar. The third coincidence was my mother's sister. Her name had been Kaethe, translated to Spanish: Catalina. She died on December 26, 1924, when she was 23 years old, from diabetes. She was buried in the Weissensee Cemetery in Berlin, on the 30th. Dr. Galliner was in charge of the Sermon. (He was later on the President of the Jewish Community in Berlin). She was an accountant for the firm Modellhaus Hirsch & Co. (Kronenstr. 12/13). This was the first reason why my parents didn't get married sooner. The second reason was different. My father got infected while studying medicine, in the pathology class. Actually, all his*

*class got infected from a corpse they were dissecting. But my father was so sick, they had to cut part of his left shoulder-blade bone. Finally they got married on June 30th,1927, in Berlin, Germany.*

*My father, Simon Siegbert Walter Cohn, was born in Berlin on the 1st. of January, 1899, exactly at midnight. My grandmother, Recha Cohn nee Kirschner (born on June 26th,1875 in Beuthen, Upper Silesia, and died in Llolleo, buried in Santiago, on August 24, 1961), used to tell me that while she was giving birth all alone in her room, everybody else was celebrating the coming of the new year. She threw a cup against the door, so somebody would come to assist her. When they heard the noise, my father had already been born. My father's father, Moritz Cohn, was a very lively person, with a great sense of humour. He was also very forgetful. It must have run in the family. In order not to ask all the questions, do you have your pen, or your hat, etc., he was asked by numbers. The number that was past on to posterity was the number 5 (Nummer Fünf), whenever the fly had been left open.*

*My mother, Else Sonia Cohn nee Marcuson, was born in Kattowitz, (Germany at the time), on April 9th.,1898. Her Jewish name was Sure Henne (Sarah Hannah, after her grandmother). Actually that was not the place they used to live in. They lived in Sosnowitz, but my grandmother travelled to Kattowitz to visit her very sick father, Salomon Sachs. (Born on 13.9.1840 - died in Kattowitz on 13.12.1898). She stayed at the 40 room Hotel zur Post, that belonged to him. (His clients were traveling salesmen from Germany and from abroad. It was well known for the good kitchen. They also had theatrical presentations. Salomon Sachs was active in the development of the city of Kattowitz. The streets were paved, good new schools were developed, and the choir "Meisterische Gesangsverein" was founded, my grandmother Friedl (Elfriede) being the soloist). That night, my mother was born. Her mother had told her that she had given birth in the room exactly beneath her grandfather's. He was surprised that he didn't hear a thing. It so happened that my grandmother was biting a pillow during her pains, so he wouldn't be disturbed. She bit so hard that the pillow was ruined and the room was full of feathers. My mother was the second child of five in the Marcuson family. The older one was Walter(Itzhak) (born on July 24, 1896 in Sosnowitz and died in Chile on November 16, 1954), then came Kaethe (17.12.1901 - 26.12.1924), Hans (Nissan) born on June 10, 1907(Gruenstrasse) and died*

*in Santiago on June 20, 1964, and Helene called Lucky (Taube, Yonah), on August 31, 1909 (Beatestrasse) and died in Haifa, Israel on September 16, 1976.*

*A few notes on my mother's grandfather, Salomon Sachs. He was the son of Siegmund Sachs and Fanny Hirsch. (They had another son, Louis Sachs, who married Martel (?) and they in turn had a son, Hans. Hans Sachs and his wife Meta (?) had a son, who lived in Haifa and was an Ophthalmologist). Salomon Sachs was married to Minna Wendriner (born on 17.1.1842 - 18.3.1914) and they had 8 children, they had a daughter who died in infancy from the smallpox, "schwarze pocken". Salomon had been in the Army during the 1870 war and had brought this sickness with him. My maternal grandmother had been the second child, born on 29.5.1872, in Rybnik. Ludwig (13.4.1873), Jenny (17.11.1874) who married Julius Gadiel, Martin (24.5.1877 - 8.5.1912), Max who married Meta Simmenauer (not jewish), Fritz (5.5. ?), Gertrud (Trude) (30.3.1880 - 28.3.42 in Trawniki) who married Max Kainz, Alfred (19.6. 1886 - 1966).*

*Salomon Sachs died at the end of 1898, and his widow Minna moved to Breslau, where her daughter Jenny lived. Julius and Jenny Gadiel had a daughter, Grete. They took care of the widowed Minna. They also invited their niece, my mother Else, to be with them so she could attend a good private school. She lived with her grandmother Minna (Kronprinzenstr.), but went to school with Grete. Grete was in a higher class, being a year older. Else spent two years there, and had good memories of that time. After this, she went back to her parent's house in Kattowitz.*

*Else's father, my grandfather Siegfried travelled every day from Kattowitz to Sielce-Sosnowitz, to work.*

*My mother's brother Hans was born 6 years after Kaethe. He was a pale looking frail child. They later noticed that he had a very good voice, and he also sang in the choir. I met two of his choir friends here in Israel, in Haifa: Martha Cohn Schwartz, and Erika Schuppler nee Laserstein.*

*Max and Meta Sachs had 3 children: Erich, Martin and Hans. Max was my mother's uncle. Among all his brothers and sisters, he was the one who*

got the grandfather's hotel, after the others gave up on their inheritance on his behalf.

*Trude and Max Kainz had 5 children: Hans, Kurt, Willy, Lilo and Horst. These last two were taken to the gas chambers, together with Erich Neubuerger, her non-Jewish husband, who insisted not to be separated from her, and Horst's wife and three sons.*

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*Lieselotte Kainz (Lilo, born on 5.11.1912 in Breslau) and her husband Erich Neubuerger (born on 2.7.1898 in Muenchen), lived in Schoeneberg (Landshuter Str. 9-10). They were taken on the 21. Transport on the 19.10.1942 to Riga and probably died there.*

*Horst Kainz (born on 2.4.1907 in Breslau), his wife Lieselotte Ritterband, (born on 17.3.1916 in Berlin) and their three children (Rolf Max born on 14.10.1934, Gideon born on 14.2.1940, and Mechel born on 11.3.1941, in Berlin) lived in Berlin, Charlottenburg, Gervinustr. 19a. They were all taken on the 26. Transport on the 12.1.1943 to Auschwitz to their deaths.*

*While I was checking the information I got from Yad Vashem about the above, I also found my mother's dear aunt Gertrud (Trude) on the list. Born in Kattowitz, Upper Silesia on 30.3.1880. Lived in Wilmersdorf, Spicherstr.16. She was taken on the 11. Transport to Trawniki on the 28.3.42, to her death. May they all rest in peace.*

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*Kurt und his wife Grete (Margarete Siegel) left Germany late and arrived in Guayaquil, Ecuador where we lived. My father had sent them affidavits, as he did to many other members of the family. They lived in a farm, where Kurt was the administrator. They later moved to Quito, where he worked at a textil factory and also in a pharmaceutical firm.*

*They had a daughter, Marion. They left Ecuador in 1947, and moved to New York. Marion married Seymour (Cye) Rose and had 2 children: Robert and Steve. Robert has two daughters.*

*My grandmother Elfriede got married in Kattowitz to Siegfried (Shmerl) Marcuson, on November 11th., 1894. He was born on June 19, 1868, near Kiev. His mother's maiden family-name was Migdal. He worked as an accountant and bookkeeper at a place called "Vereinigten Koenig und Laurahuetten" (Huettenmeister). They had 3000 workers. He worked there for 32 years until he received his pension, and moved to Berlin.*

*In short I will say that: Jenny was Hava Karbas's grandmother; Max mismanaged the Hotel Zur Post in Kattowitz after Salomon's death; Fritz was the uncle who saved my mother's life by helping her leave Berlin; Alfred and his wife Gunda emigrated to Australia, and their daughter Inge still lives there.*

*My sister Gerda Eveline Miriam was born in Berlin on April 3, 1929. My mother told me that she had a twisted nose (due to the forceps used during birth). She turned out to be a very beautiful child and woman. She had lovely dark hair, and the most beautiful green eyes. Such a pity she had to die so young, when she was only 46.*

*My father and his father had lived in Berlin since birth. My paternal grandmother Recha Kirschner was actually born in Beuten, Upper Silesia. She was the only child of a religious father and of Fanny, nee Neuman, his second wife (she died when my grandmother was only 9 years old). My grandmother had 3 older half-brothers and one half-sister: Max, Rose, Waldemar and Heinrich(Heini). Max and his wife Paula lived in Berlin, but we don't know what became of them during the Second World War. My father, who had done his utmost to bring all the member of the family out of Germany while living in Ecuador, sent them an affidavit so that they could travel to South America. They replied that it is very difficult for them to leave behind all their belongings such as carpets, paintings, etc. but they thanked my father anyway. This is the last we heard from them. Thanks to the Yad Vashem, I received some information to what happened to them.*

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*Max Kirschner born on the 4.3.1869, merchant, resident of Berlin, taken to Ghetto Lodz, Bleicher 32 39, died on the 6.2.1942. His wife, Paula nee*

*Bachman, born on the 7.9.1879, housewife, resident of Berlin, taken to Ghetto Lodz, Bleicher 32 39, deported on the 10.5.1942. (It doesn't say where to). May they rest in peace.*

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*I don't know if they had any children, but not long ago I found a letter sent to my grandmother from London in 1946 from a certain Warner Kirshner, addressing her as "aunt". Since her brother Waldemar was killed by a horse-drawn carriage before the war, and Heini left for Argentina many years before, I can only deduce that he was Max's son. Or he could be the son of my grandmother's cousins, I don't know. I have found an Adolf Kirschner, and the Kirschner sisters in my mother's address book, probably my paternal grandmother's cousins.*

*Maximo Bash was a cousin of Moritz Cohn (my father's father). There must have been also another cousin because I have found a small picture of somebody called Erna addressing my father as cousin. Maximo Bash married Rose Blumberg, one of 24 children of the Blumberg family. My father was often invited because there were kids of his age too. He enjoyed telling us about the farm they used to live at. Being so many, they had a maid or worker for every possible chore. The shoes, left out of the bedroom to be polished, had a number written in chalk on the sole that identified the child. One day, travelling on the train with two of them, my father being an only child couldn't imagine a life with so much family, asked if they knew the names of all of them, chronologically. They started enumerating them when suddenly one of them said: Halt, I think there was another one between them!!! They were too much even for their own brothers. The last one was born 6 weeks after the parents' 25th. wedding anniversary.*

*On April 1, 1933, my parents took my sister to buy a present for her fourth birthday. That was the day professionals weren't allowed to practice their profession any more. In Berlin books were burned, and shops were painted with slogans if they belonged to Jews. My father didn't like all this. He said that a people that burn books only bring disaster, and if he could, he would leave. When they arrived back home, they found a letter from Maximo Bash urging them to come to South America, because "Germany is not good for the Jews". My father didn't think twice, and decided on the spot to move out. He quit his job at the Jewish Clinic, (he*

*worked with Professor Rosin), sold a few belongings, and off he went. This was June, 1933. First to England where he tried his luck to stay there, but the English authorities didn't accept his diploma because the university where he studied "was not in their lists", even though the university (Rostock) was more than 400 years old. So, after buying a German-Spanish dictionary, he sailed to South America. His uncle was waiting for him in Valparaiso, where my father realized that he knew more Spanish than his uncle!!! And he had been living in Chile since 1885!!!*

*Meanwhile, my mother was trying to wind up their business. She and her mother-in-law were milliners; actually, my mother had learned her trade with her. (That's how she got to meet my father). It took them some time to sell their belongings. My grandfather, who at one time had owned 7 tobacco stores, didn't have them anymore, (sold one after the other, because my grandmother was very fond of organizing big parties and outings that cost a lot, according to a story I heard from my aunt Lucky), so they only had to take care of the shop situated on the Kurfuersten Damm 226, one of the important streets in Berlin, one block from the Remembrance Church (Gedaehniskirche) which was later bombed during the war, and the remainder of it still stands there.*

*My mother, my sister and my mother's parents-in-law left Berlin on January 7, 1934, in a bit of a hurry. (They sailed on the Reina del Pacifico from the port of Hamburg). My mother's maternal uncle Fritz Sachs, who worked for the Jewish Community in Berlin, heard rumours that there will be a raid during the night on the street my family lived on, so he rushed to them, and took them out in time to save their lives. My mother told me she suspected that the tip off to the Nazis had been given by a woman who disliked her very much. My parents had been members of the Berliner Aerzte Chor (Berlin physicians choir) and the conductor's (Dr. Singer) wife was jealous of my mother and had accused her of being personally interested in her husband. She was not Jewish, and she may had tipped off the Nazis because of jealousy. My mother's uncle Fritz was the one who packed my mother's belongings and sent them to Chile. At that time, you could still send things out. (I found a letter telling my mother that after the things were packed and shipped, the apartment was ransacked and pillaged). Onkel Fritz had been married to a German woman who converted to Judaism, Tante Loni. She later saved her husband and their invalid son, Horst, by hiding them throughout the war.*

*She looked too German to inspire suspicion. (Horst still lives in Berlin but unfortunately has lost his mind and has been in a home for elderly people for the last 15 years).*

*My father had meanwhile been looking for something to do in Chile while waiting for the family to arrive. He couldn't work in his profession in Chile, so he decided to look for a place for my mother to work after her arrival. And he was very lucky. A certain "Monsieur Paul" was selling his hat-shop, which included all his clientele of the Santiago aristocracy. (His wife, Grete Mostny, is a well-known archeologist, who found the Andean mummy). My father bought the shop, which was on the first floor of a building on San Antonio street, in the middle of downtown Santiago, with help of uncle Maximo Bash. My mother, sister and grandparents arrived in Chile on February 23, 1934. So, just ten days after arriving, without knowing a word of Spanish, my mother started to help the family to survive. My father had almost decided to start learning medicine again, when he heard that Chile has an agreement to interchange diplomas with Ecuador. This is (or was) the only way of getting the medical degree in 2 years, instead of 7 years. So, he set off with two of his colleagues, Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Hirsch-Mammoth, to the city of Cuenca, in the Ecuadorian Andes, where they would have to take all the examinations, including some out of their specialization, and in Spanish!!! They managed quite well, but weren't allowed to work, so my mother used to send my father money during those two years. I remember my father telling me anecdotes of that period. He had to cook for himself. He couldn't afford to spend more than the minimum, so he went to the market to buy some meat. He asked the butcher to sell him some liver, which was one of the cheapest products. He gave him a whole beef's liver!!!. They invented all kinds of recipes which helped them finish it off. They used to get a complete tongue as a give away!!! After buying liver a few times, the butcher asked him: How many dogs do you have??!!*

*After my father took all the examinations (2 or 3 a week), he had to take the one in diagnosis. He was taken to the bed of a patient and after my father examined him, he told the professors that if they continue with the treatment they are giving him, the patient will be dead by the end of the week. The professors didn't like what they thought was his arrogance, and asked my father to come back in two months time, to check the same patient. Well, my father was right, the patient was gone after a*



*week, and so was my father's Montblanc Fountain pen that my mother had given him as a farewell present. When they called my father in, the pen had disappeared. Unfortunately he had forgotten to take it with him while waiting for the professors to decide. Of course, two months later, my father passed his last examination, without any problem. Now, he decided to go back to Chile, but the authorities didn't think so. He was supposed to work for 2 years, as a compensation for the opportunity he had been given. So, my mother and my sister travelled to Ecuador, leaving my paternal grandparents behind, in Chile. But those 2 years turned out to be more than 15. During that time, and until my grandfather died in 1938, my father also supported them financially, sending them money and goods to Chile.*

*My father had moved to the port of Guayaquil, and rented a small apartment on Rumichaca street, which was actually a big patio with a small two story house at the end of it, and two small huts on the sides. All these were inhabited by new immigrants who fortunately had escaped Hitler's claws. In one of these huts lived a Zoology professor called "Herr Voegeli". ( Voegeli means "Birdie". What else in his profession!!!). He had all kinds of animals walking about in this small patio, which also had a small pond in the middle. One day, my mother was alone in the house (the upper floor of the two story building) when she heard somebody knocking at the door, and when she opened it, "Mr.Bear" was standing in front of her. Good it was a midget-bear!!! It gave her a great fright. This same bear used to sit on the Galapagos turtles and wait until they showed their heads, and bite them off. After doing this twice, he was shipped out to a far away Zoo. In another instance, the monkey that lived on the tree decided to balance himself in and out over the fence. After scaring the neighbours, his fate was the same as the bear's. One day, my father and his friend, Joachim List, decided to play a practical joke on Herr Voegeli. They took one of the ducks that used to swim in the little pond, and painted it with all kinds of colours, and presented this unusual specimen to the professor, assuring him that it was a "papageien-ente"(a parrot-duck). He couldn't believe otherwise since my father (a physician) and his friend(school principal) were serious people. He believed it to be genuine until the minute the duck decided to go for a swim!!!! Some time after this, Mr. Voegeli decided for a better home and sent (I imagine, sold) all his animals to the Santiago de Chile zoo. I don't know if he went there, too.*

*The family living downstairs were Alois Fuss, his wife and his son Wolfgang. The son and my sister became good friends. Alois's profession was carpentry and he used to repair all kinds of furniture somebody else would have thrown away. Well, nothing was thrown away by people who had almost nothing. Every time my sister did something my parents didn't much approve of, she used to say "Wolfgang hat gesagt" (Wolfgang said so). This sentence was used in my family for decades.*

*Alois's aunt lived in the other hut: Tante Emma. She had saved some of her books, and had opened a small library in her only all-purpose-room. There weren't too many books in German to rent out or buy in those days, in Guayaquil. Her place used to have that smell of old books and old people.*

*Well, this was the place I was born in.*

## Life in Ecuador I.

*When my father realized he had to stay in Ecuador for at least two more years, before getting his degree, he asked my mother to move from Chile to Ecuador. This she did in 1936, with my sister. My father rented a small but nice apartment opposite the Plaza Centenario (a big park in the middle of downtown Guayaquil). When my mother arrived, she started cleaning up the house, and it so happened that it was full of all kinds of bugs. When they complained to the landlord, he told them that they shouldn't have cleaned the floor. The reason: they shouldn't have woken up the bugs. Anyway, they didn't stay long in this apartment and moved to the house I was born in, on Rumichaca street .*

*A few months after I was born, my paternal grandfather died in Chile, so my parents invited my grandmother to come and live with us in Guayaquil. It wasn't very easy for my parents, but in those days one managed. My father had just finished installing his "consulta", when a fire broke out and almost everything was lost. He saved his microscope, the precious instrument he had brought to South America with him, from Germany. Unfortunately he didn't have insurance, so he had to start from the beginning.*

*One morning, my mother was changing my diapers, and she saw that I was getting very uneasy, so she called my father to come quickly, and good he did just that. He realised my belly-button had come out of place. Quickly, while I was already getting a purplish colour, he put a Sucre (a coin) on it and bandaged me and said to my mother: "I have saved the child". Whenever I had a discussion with him (which didn't happen very often) and wanted to tease him, I used to say: "You shouldn't have saved me".*

*We moved to a bigger apartment, in a house called "Casa Frutal" (I don't know why), in order to have more room for my grandmother. The apartment was big enough so we could rent out one of the rooms. I remember it being a long apartment, with two front rooms. One was my grandmother's and the other, my parents'. From my grandmother's room to the kitchen, I recall a long corridor with rooms on both sides, and in the middle we had our dining-room. Actually, it was not a closed room, but only three walls, in the hall, where we had our meals. The kitchen was*

*comfortably big, and beside it, there was the room for the maids. It was on the third floor, and we could go up to the roof-terrace whenever we pleased. My parents hired a maid whose name was "Germania". They asked her to choose another name if she wanted to stay with us. So she chose Rosita, her sister's name. Well, she stayed with us until we left Ecuador in 1951, and I always called her Oshi. (This is the way a two year old kid pronounces Rosita).*

*I don't remember much from this time, but I do recall getting a big red ball for my birthday from my grandmother. I must have been three. I used to roll it from my grandmother's room to the end of the corridor. The maids didn't enjoy it much, especially when the kitchen door was open.....*

*I started going to a kindergarten at the age of three. It was a very nice place. At the beginning I didn't join the other children because I was too shy. The principal asked my mother to be patient, and so after only a few months, I was one of the crowd. My father used to give me a few coins so I could buy something on the way. One day, my sister inquired what I did with the money. When I told them that I bought ice-cream, my father, thinking about the bad hygiene, told me not to buy ice-cream anymore. He kept on giving me the coins, so my sister asked me a few days later what I did with the money. I said: "I give it to my friend". "What for?" they asked. "So she can buy some ice-cream for me". My father didn't like my answer: "I told you shouldn't eat ice-cream!!!". I defended myself saying: "You just told me not to buy it...". After this, they didn't much care what I did with the money.*

*From this apartment, I have only scattered memories, because we lived there only until the beginning of 1942. I remember our dog Chichi, a German shepherd. She gave birth to 4 or 5 puppies, but started eating them. We don't know what happened to her. We had to give her away, and it so happened that somebody who owned a sausage factory needed a watch-dog. We thought this would be the best place for her. But at the end, they had to kill her because she attacked the owner and the workers. Poor Chichi.....*

*We also had a cat. She had been with us for some time and had never had kittens, until she had one, and only one. One day, my grandmother wanted to give them some milk on a plate. The cat must have*

*thought that Omi (my grandmother) was going to do something to the kitten, so she attacked Omi. If she would have been alone in the apartment, the cat would probably have killed her. She threw her to the floor, scratching her all over, and trying to get to her throat. After this, I remember Omi in bed for a few days, and the cat with the kitten relegated to the roof-terrace.*

*One day I found my mother sad, because one of her valuable porcelain plates had been broken by the maid. After a few minutes, the maid came to my mother to ask for permission to go to the market,..... to buy a new plate. She was the same maid that ate the stuffed cabbage leaves with the string that held them together. She had a very difficult time trying to fish it out from her throat.....*

*Besides the fire that gutted my father's office, we had other calamities. My father got sick. First he got scarlet fever. I remember looking into his room from the door. They didn't let me in, afraid I might get something. The curtains were drawn because the light bothered my father's blue eyes. Anyway, after this, he had a myocardial infarction (heart attack) in 1941, and another one in 1942. To make ends meet, we rented out one of the bedrooms.*

*The first time my mother took me to Rosh Hashanah services must have been when I was about 4 years old. Since the community didn't yet have a meeting house, the services were held in the house of the Czarninsky family, if I am not mistaken. The men were in a separate room from the women, and I could only peek into the men's room, when I saw them in their white garments and white hats (they looked more like chefs). My mother had to take me away because I dared to ask with a very loud voice: "What are those cooks doing there?". My mother felt embarrassed. The Czarninskys, as we used to call them lived on 9 de Octubre Avenue in the center of town. They were two brothers (a red-head, whose name I don't remember) and Alfred married to Ruth. As all immigrants, they had their problems. When the pastry shop that was located in the ground floor of the building they lived in was put up for sale, they decided to take a chance and buy it. They did so, with the condition that the owner give them the recipes of the different cakes they used to sell there. But when this good man saw the money, he forgot about the promise he had made, and so the Czarninskys were left with a shop they didn't know how to*

*manage. Ruth came running to my mother to tell her about their misfortune. My mother saw no problem at all. She gave her the easy recipes of several cakes so they could start the business. And that's the way they started the Salon Rosado. When we left Guayaquil we were given a farewell party in their premises. They continued working hard and making a fortune. They opened one supermarket after the other, and when I visited them in 1993, they had already 16. Ruth never forgot their beginnings, and she reminded me of it during my visit. Alfred Czarninsky became the Israel Consul in Guayaquil. Their daughter lives in Israel.*

*At the beginning of 1942, we moved again to the center of the city, opposite the Plaza Centenario. It was a new 4 story building. We lived in the upper floor. In the first floor apartment there was an inner patio, so that the apartments over it, were built on the outer part of the building.*

*There were two things that happened while living in this apartment. I don't remember which came first. One was the earthquake on May 13th, 1942, and the other, I fell and broke my left upper-jaw.*

*The night before the big earthquake, we were having supper. After supper, my father used to take a book to read to us aloud. That evening, he took a poetry book (I still have it) and was joking about it. He said that whenever he took that book in his hand in Chile, the earth started trembling. And so it did this time too, while he was saying it. It stopped very quickly, so we didn't make much of it. But the next evening, sitting again next to the table, it started trembling again. My father stood up in time to avoid the bookcase falling on him. I remember running to my room and trying to hold the door open, when I saw the provisional open bookcase fall, and break the wonderful porcelain my mother had saved from Germany. (The "vitrina", glass-case was supposed to be delivered the next day). All this happened in seconds, enough time for us to run to the main door and try to go down the stairs, which looked more like a dancing serpent. We got to the Plaza, where hundreds of people gathered to sleep in the open, afraid of going back to the buildings. What did my father do? He went back to the apartment, to "sleep in my own bed". Of course, we didn't get much sleep with all those people around us. My father came down in the morning, fresh, ready to go to work. Actually he went to the Clinica Serrano, a small private hospital, where one of his patients was. When he arrived there, the building had collapsed, and it*

*took them more than a day to remove the rubble. My father stayed there until he saw that his patient was safe. Not only did she survive the quake, by drinking water from a leaking pipe, but she wasn't sick anymore. She had intestinal tuberculosis, and not eating or drinking must have done the trick.*

*I used to accompany my mother to the corner shop, to buy food and other things. While she bought what she needed, I used to get some candy ("bombolinas") from the shop owner, that I ate on the bench outside the barber shop, a few steps from where my mother was. One day the candy was full of ants, so I went back to the shop and got some other candy. While I was looking if those also had ants, I didn't see a mango peel which was on the floor, and my foot went directly into it, and my teeth, into a step which led to the bench. I don't remember anything after the fall. Opposite, there was a first aid station, and there I awoke with my mouth full of blood. Of course I lost my first front teeth, and the ones that were coming out were completely crooked. It took me about two weeks of patience and pain, until I could eat a bit again. My mother gave me soup, directly into my throat, with a dropper, and later with a teaspoon. The worst was when I bumped into Mr. Constantin, our lodger. He wore those double buttoned coats, and my mouth went directly into one of the buttons. During the years following the appearance of my new teeth, I tried to straighten the front one, by pushing the tooth into position. In those days, we couldn't afford any kind of extra expenses, and having crooked teeth is not the end of the world.*

*After some time (I cannot remember how long), we moved to a first floor apartment on the corner of Chile and Aguirre, opposite the post office. This must have been around 1944 or 1945, because I remember the day when World War II ended, and we were sent home from school.*

*I usually took fresh squeezed orange juice and a sandwich to school. My grandmother was in charge of preparing the sandwich. The best treat was always a butter-and-chocolate sandwich (In those days I was supposed to gain weight). What my parents didn't know was that besides that, I used to buy a caramel-popcorn mixture, which was molded into a ball and looked horrible. The vendor offered it as "caca'e perro" (dog shit), and we children loved it. We would sometimes get peeled oranges (peeled on a machine that left the white skin on the orange) on the*

*street, with a cut on the top so that we could suck the juice out of them. Another thing we loved to eat was scraped ice stuffed in a glass, which was then taken out by the vendor's "clean" hands, and sprinkled with tamarind concentrated juice. If my father had known this.....*



## *Life in Ecuador II*

*We must have moved to our new and last address in Guayaquil, on the corner of Chile and Aguirre streets, about the year 1944. (The building doesn't exist anymore). It was opposite the Post Office. It was an apartment on a three story building, on the first floor. There were several stores on the ground floor. One of them, selling textiles, belonged to an Arab family called Bucaran. I think they wrote their name Bukharam, and it must have been the family of the former Ecuadorian President, who was known as "el loco". One of them, maybe his uncle, was always asking my sister out, actually pestering her. She used to get very upset every time this happened. I don't remember the other stores. There was a kiosk exactly under my window, where I discovered what the effect of drinking beer is. At the beginning I thought it was water flowing....., until I saw where the "water" came from. It was the kiosk owner and his friend, who used to sit there drinking beer after the work was over.*

*The apartment was nice and spacious. It had two entrances: one through the main door, directly into my father's consulting room, and the other, through the kitchen, that all of us used when my father was working. For the first time, his office and the house were in the same place. The dining room was in the center of the apartment, and the rooms around it. The dining room was separated by a wooden wall with a door, from my father's consulting room, which left a small hall used as a waiting room. Coming through the front door, first there was my father's office on the right, then my parents bedroom. The room at the corner, which connected to my parents room, was used as a living room, but sometimes as a dining room, as I'll explain later. Next to it was my bedroom, which I shared with my grandmother and my sister. It was L-shaped and divided by a curtain, so that my grandmother would have some privacy. In the inner angle of the L, there was a small bathroom, used by my grandmother. There was another bigger room next to it, which was eventually divided into two bedrooms that we called the "Clinica" , because it was rented out to patients my father treated for longer periods, and my mother cooked their diet.*

*In one occasion it was used by my mother when I was about 10 years old. She had terrible abdominal pains which I can imagine were produced by some gal bladder problem. I remember my father being very worried because he had given her some kind of medicine to ease the pain, and after two days she*

*was still sleeping. I must add that my mother was allergic to all kinds of medicines. He even called in some of his colleagues. But after she had slept it out, she was like new again. Next to that room was the bigger bathroom. As I said before, the dining room was in the middle of the apartment, and we spent mostly our time there. It was like a daily family reunion. A big map of Europe decorated the wall, and my father used to stick little flags of the different countries into it, and this, after he had read the morning newspapers. I didn't realise that he was marking the advance of the troops in Europe. Actually, I never heard anything about the horrors of the war, until many years later, and not from them. Now, I think they should have told us at least something..... Well, the dining room had a big window looking into the patio, that could also be seen from the kitchen window. Next to the back entrance, that led to the kitchen, were the maid's room and bathroom.*

*Our upstairs neighbours were "Onkel Fidi" (his real name was Federico Groepel), who lived in the apartment with his mother and niece. He (together with his cousin Roberto Levi) owned one of the biggest pharmacies in town. He had been once a very religious Jew, but the war changed that. His sister and her German husband went back to Germany to defend the "Vaterland", and they never returned. Their daughter Karin Dohme was my friend, even though she was older than me. I visited her in 1993, in Guayaquil. More about that later. (Our neighbours on the third floor were an Ecuadorian family, and one of the daughters was my sister's friend). The Groepels and the Levis owned an hacienda called "Los cuatro hermanitos" (the four little brothers), not far from Guayaquil. Once they invited a group of people for an outing at the hacienda. I was also invited, but don't remember who else was there. But what I do remember is that I helped prepare lunch. We brought everything from Guayaquil, among other things one small chicken for every person. Aya, Karin's grandmother, asked me to put some salt in the inside of the chicken, and passed me a jar with some white powder. After I had already seasoned 6 or 7 chicken, I realized that I had been putting sugar in them. Nothing could be done then, because the first chicken were already in the oven. So, some had it sweet, some had it salty.....*

*The Post Office was being built when we moved in, and it was designed according to European specifications, including a roof to protect the building against snow storms.....!!! In Guayaquil? ? ?. One day, my father sent a letter to the authorities in Madagascar in order to allow the*

*son of immigrants living in Guayaquil, to leave that island, so that he can be reunited with his parents. After waiting for an answer for many weeks, my father went to complain to the Post Office. They started looking everywhere for the letter which was supposed to have been sent weeks ago. After being unsuccessful in the search, the person in charge removed the cushion from her seat in order to be able to stand on it for further search, and what does my father see under the cushion?... The letter he posted so many weeks ago. Unfortunately, after re-posting the letter, he got a reply from Madagascar, that the young man had died from some kind of disease, while waiting for the affidavit.*

*I have all kinds of memories from this period, as I was big enough to understand what was happening. My father used to work at the Hospital in the mornings, and at home, in the afternoons. During lunch hours, our living room was changed into a dining room. My mother used to cook for the immigrants, who didn't have a proper place to prepare their meals, and also as an extra income. We had a few customers everyday. The door to my bedroom was next to the living room's. My father had installed a swing for me there. One day I decided that I wouldn't let the maid through with the food, and started swinging for a few minutes,(actually until the food got cold). My father took me down from the swing, and I got my first of two spankings, which I received gladly since I knew I had done wrong. The other time was when I spoke to my mother in a very rude way. That was it. I learned my lessons.*

*My parents were very busy. They were very active in the Jewish Community, specially taking care of the new immigrants that arrived with nothing whatsoever. No possessions or family. My parents also sent as many affidavits as they could in order to save as many family members as possible. One of them was my mother's cousin Kurt Kainz, his wife Grete, and their daughter Marion. They stayed with us for a few days, until they moved to an Hacienda my father had found him to work at. He had been a good manager before but he hadn't seen a cow in his life... Anyway, he did whatever he could to make it a success, and finally he invited us to visit them there. To reach the Hacienda we had to travel by canoe, up the river Guayas. My mother had bought herself a new girdle for the occasion. She was sitting in the middle of the canoe, which started to take on water. After some time she, always thinking about her new girdle, was completely wet. Every now and then my mother asked how much longer it will take,*

so the boat man replied: "una vueltita, no mas", (only one more little turn). He was referring to the curves of the river. Well, this sentence was incorporated into our daily usage, when something took an indefinite time. We were the guests of honour at the Hacienda; the labourers even played a football match for the occasion, barefoot, with a ball made of rags.....Early in the morning, we used to go to the cow shed, to drink the milk "al pie de la vaca" ---"at the foot of the cow". In the evening, we used to sit together in the dining room, since there was no electricity, on the Hacienda. One evening I went up to my room to get something, and when I wanted to come down, my uncle screamed to me "Don't move". I didn't move, while I heard a rattling noise. It was a very big rattlesnake that was passing through. It is probably since then that I don't like those creatures. After spending some time at the Hacienda, Kurt and Grete decided to come and live in a city, and they chose Quito. He worked for a Textile firm called Seda-Lana, until the three of them left for the U.S.A., I think, in 1948. He also worked for a pharmaceutical firm called L.I.F.E., but don't remember if it was before or after Seda-Lana.

I remember traveling to Quito. In those days it was an adventure. I was woken up before dawn, given a hot lemonade to drink (so I wouldn't catch any terrible disease), and off we went to catch the boat (or ferry?) to cross the river Guayas. It carried us to Duran, on the other side of the river, where the train started its long journey to Quito. It took about 24 hours in those days. The most impressive part was in a place called La Nariz del Diablo (the devil's nose), which was the highest peak of the Andes in that region. The train had to go forwards and backwards a few times in order to take the curve up the mountain. I went with one of my parents' friends, and it was really a big adventure. We stopped at different places, where the locals offered all kinds of produce. In Milagro, the best pineapples I have ever eaten, and of course, very cheap. In Baños de Ambato, we were offered barbecued guinea-pigs. Horrible, those poor creatures....I spent some time with my family, it must have been during vacation because we, my cousin and I, didn't go to school. On Friday night we had sausages for supper. But my cousin, a friend, Vera Kamm, and I had been eating, actually competing, who can eat the most slices of bread with butter and strawberry jam. I won, having eaten about 11 slices, my cousin 10, and Vera, 7. My uncle couldn't understand why we didn't want to eat those wonderful sausages (that probably cost him a

*fortune he couldn't afford). Needless to say that we asked to be excused, and felt horrible for the next two days. Not only physically.....*

*There was always a big excitement when anybody important came to the city. During the last months of the Second World War, an American war ship came to Guayaquil, and it was during Passover. The Jewish sailors were invited to join the Jewish Community, and the youngest one was allowed to sing the Manishtana. I was not present, but all the preparations for the Seder were made in our home. I even helped prepare the "Gefillte Fish" , (not slices, but the entire fish, and eight big ones, not one). The Shohat came to our yard to kill the chickens, and supervise the cooking. For weeks I could still hear in my mind the squawking while they were slaughtered, not to mention that I wasn't able to eat chicken for months.....Anyway, the evening was a success, but after a few weeks we received the sad news that the sailor who had said the Manishtana had been killed in action.*

*My parents were not only active in the Jewish life. Their activity was even greater when my father was elected to be the president of the Jewish community. They used to go to the poor sections of the city to hand out goods, and chocolate for the children. The way to gather funds was by having fun. That is, they had an amateur theatrical group, (and also a children's group), that performed at every possible occasion, and people used to donate gifts for a raffle. Every time the money had another destination. But generally, the money was sent to "Palestina". I remember my grandmother making a big crocheted table cover, that brought the most money at the auction. I still have two small ones she made for me, with the same pattern. We all had the Keren Kayemet Blue Box, and the money was collected every few weeks. People didn't have much, but contributed for a good cause. We didn't have much either. At least my father had a profession and a job, but we didn't have the things that other families had. We didn't have a radio, or a refrigerator, or a car. The refrigerator we used was actually a big box whose opening was at the top, and its legs were inside four empty tins filled with water, so to keep the ants away. Once a week, a big ice bar would be delivered to our house, to put into this box. It must have been very difficult to keep things fresh in the tropical heat. (Many years later, my father could afford to buy a real refrigerator, and the Kelvinator occupied a place of honour in one of the corners of our dining room).*

*We couldn't even afford a short vacation. In the summer, my parents rented a house, the "Carmen Mathilde", in Playas, one of the resorts, not too far from Guayaquil. The house still stands, which is a miracle, because it was already falling apart then. The first time we went there and opened the door, we were received by tens of bats that had been living there. We, my mother, a maid and I, worked for about a week to get the place fit for humans. It had 6 bedrooms, and 4 of them were sub-let to other people, so that we would be able to pay the rent. It didn't have running water. Every morning we used to pump, by hand, the water from a big container on the second floor. The water was brought in barrels tied to a donkey and sold to us. I remember getting up early and going to the beach, which was only about 50 meters away, with my father. The Pacific Ocean is great in that part of the world. We also enjoyed the food that came out of it, and in those years was very cheap. My mother was a great cook, and did marvels out of nothing. I used to go to the market with her. The first time we went to buy meat, she realised that the butcher didn't have a clue as to how to cut out the different meat parts of the animal. My mother taught him how to do it, and from then on his income increased. He was so thankful that he reserved for my mother the fillets, which she got for almost nothing. There were a few "pensiones" (small hotels), and a big Hotel (the Humboldt), in Playas. One of the pensiones belonged to a Jewish family, the Steins. Their daughter Ruthi was my friend, and I used to spend some time with her. I met her again in Chile, and in Haifa. (More about that later). We had a great time at the Carmen Mathilde. There was a veranda in the second floor where we had a ping-pong table, and we also played Monopoly which was the great game then. We, kids, used to go strolling about, or doing nonsense like every kid our age, I imagine. I remember putting a toy mouse in the ice-box, and my mother screaming her head off when she found it. In another opportunity we put toothpaste into a sandwich, which my friend Chichi ate without even complaining!!! I think we went there for three consecutive years. My father spent the week working in Guayaquil, and only came to Playas on week-ends.*

*I enjoyed school very much. I had enjoyed three years of kindergarten, as well. I have only good memories from that period. I went to the Colegio Internacional, as did my sister before me. The principal was my father's friend, Joachim List, who was also an immigrant, his*

*father had been Jewish. He was a great teacher and principal. He married a local girl, Lola Verdesoto, and my parents were their witnesses. Their daughter Johanna was my best friend, and after she died many years later, I started writing to her sister. (More about that later). My first teacher, the one that taught me my first letters, made a great impression on me. Her method of teaching appealed to me, to the extent that I use some of her techniques when I teach English, or Spanish. This was the year 1945. I still remember the day that the war was over. We were sent home. There was a reason to celebrate. I was quite a good student. Our classes were small so we all got the attention needed. When I was in the fifth grade, we got a very young teacher, who still had pimples on his face. He used to squash them with his fingers and put them into his mouth. Just to think of it makes me feel disgusted. That is one of the reasons I stopped being interested in learning. But I reconsidered after the principal had a short and convincing conversation with me. During the school year we had three main tests, controlled by the Ministry of Education, in every subject, taken during three days. There was even a prize given out, actually a medal, for the two best students of each school in Guayaquil. Two names from each class were submitted, so a total of twelve names were written on slips of paper and put into a container. Only two names of the lucky ones were drawn. Even though my name was put in several times, I wasn't lucky enough to draw.- At the end of the school year, a commission from the Ministry of Education used to come and witness a performance, at least so I saw it. We were asked all kinds of prepared questions, in all the subjects, but everybody knew when our turn to answer would be. They were always very impressed. At the end of the sixth grade I was given the honour of asking the questions in English, instead of my teacher. I felt great. Maybe this contributed to my later work as an English teacher.*

*I spent most of the time with my grandmother (my father's mother). She even helped me with my homework even though she never learned Spanish. I loved my grandmother very much. We spent a lot of time together. Every afternoon, we would go to the promenade next to the river, the Malecón. I liked to play next to the two big metal statues of Simon Bolivar and Antonio Jose de Sucre, shaking hands. (Still there when I visited in 1993). In one opportunity I was walking with her, when we saw a beautiful car, which looked like a butterfly from the rear. When I*

said to her that it was a very nice car, she suggested we ask the owner to give it to us as a present. I told her that this was something imposible, he will never give it to us for nothing. She only said: "He can only say yes or no. Remember that it is only his 50% that is missing, we already have our 50%". This way of thinking has helped me a lot in my life. It taught me to see the full half of the glass, instead of the empty one. I also used to accompany her to her bridge sessions at a friend's house. We had made a deal. I go with her every time, and she would allow me to go to the carrousel with horses, for two rounds before that. There I learned to be a kibitzer....

My grandmother, (Omi, as I called her) used to read a Jewish Argentinean weekly newspaper called "La Semana Israelita". One day, she noticed that the owner, or director was Hardy Swarsensky. Her niece Eva Laboshin had once married a Hardy Swarsensky, and so she wrote him in order to know if he was the same person. Besides, she stated that she liked the newspaper, especially what somebody called Ben Chorin (I think) wrote. The answer came back very soon telling that it was he who had married Omi's niece, and that it was he who wrote the articles signed Ben Chorin. From then on, they had a continuous correspondence. And not only that, I started corresponding with their eldest daughter, about my age, Miryam (Eshel), to this day. The other daughter, Judith (Kabiri), lives in Jerusalem, and we are in constant contact. The last gathering with most of the members of the family, was on the 1st. of February, 2000, to celebrate Aunt Eva's 90th. birthday.

My sister was a very good student, from the beginning on. For the first six years, she studied at the Colegio Internacional. Then she continued her studies at the local school, I think it was called Colegio Nacional. She was the best student in...Spanish. She also learned French which would help her later in life. She also joined the Girl Scouts. During this period I didn't have much contact with my sister, especially because of the difference in age. When she finished High School, she left for Chile, where my aunts and uncles were living. She started studying Medicine, and she did so, until the middle of the third year, when she decided it was too much for her. This was also the time when her Petit Mal attacks came more frequently. Once she was given Atropine drops into her eyes for an examination, and after that, she was found lying on the floor. The Petit Mal started at the age of four when she had a very high fever, and the



attacks had been very mild, until then. Eveline came back to Guayaquil, and decided to work at a Swiss firm (called Richard O. Custer) whose office was opposite our house. One of the bosses was the son of the Swiss Consul to Guayaquil. My parents had been friends with him (Mr. and Mrs. Osterwalder) and his second wife. (She was the one that offered a baby carriage when I was born). My sister worked there for a year (here is when her French became useful), and then went to the U.S.A., because we were also heading that way, we thought. I must add that the Americans were not very helpful. My mother wanted to go to the States with my sister, my grandmother and me, and after settling in, my father would follow us. This was in 1950. He wanted to keep on working in Ecuador and be able to send us money while we look for jobs and schools. The plan sounded very promising, but impossible to be effective. The Americans insisted that my mother was Polish, and that there are no more visas (quotas) for Polish immigrants. Kattowitz was a German city when she was born. They wouldn't understand this. They insisted that she was Polish. She could enter the U.S.A. only together with my father, which was impossible to do. How could we survive without his financial help? Oh, well, what could we do? My sister decided that she was going to immigrate to the States anyway since she was already accepted at the Mount Sinai School of Nursing, in New York. She even got a US\$100.- entrance scholarship. But, even in her case there was a problem. Somebody at the embassy had written that my sister's skin was brown !!! It took them several weeks, to my sister's despair, to look at her and realise she was white. So what????? Wasn't she a human being???? Not by their standards, then. One of my sister's friends, of that period in New York, was Helene, who lived in Pittsfield, Mass. When she got married, she invited my sister to come to her wedding. And there she met her future husband, Albert D. Genn, D.M.D.

My father's birthday was on the 1st. of January, so we always had a big "Silvester Party" to honour my father and celebrate the New Year. One year they decided to make it a costume party. My father thought that it would be nice if there was a competition for the best costume, and the prize he would give out: a living duck. He bought the duck a few days before and left it in our yard. As usual, I was sent to bed early, but was woken up by their laughter. It so happened that he had fallen in his own trap, because my sister won the prize, after everybody

*had voted for her. She was a beautiful Spanish dancer. I still have a picture of her in that costume.*

### **Life in Ecuador III**

*The Jewish community was united. I didn't know the difference between a Sephardi or Ashkenazi, since we all belonged to a big family. But there must have been some individual hatred, since I often heard people referring to the Ost-Juden, generally Polish Jews. It didn't mean anything to us. For us, we were all Jews that for some way or another had escaped from the War. The community center, the Circulo Israelita, as it was called, was the center of Jewish activity. Every Friday evening there were religious services, which I always attended with Oma Wachtel, my friend Chichi's grandmother, a small nice lady. It was not always easy to find the tenth man, a minyan, and we didn't have a proper Rabbi, so one of the members used to conduct services. It was generally "Herr Herz", who belonged to a religious family. I don't know how we got to own the Torah Scrolls that were kept in the "Aron hakodesh". During Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur it was different. We used the big hall, the women sitting on the stage, which was used in other occasions for performances. And the men used the lower, much bigger hall. At a certain stage, the younger kids started to get some religious indoctrination, from a certain Prof. Dr. Josef Prosnitz, who also served as a Rabbi. I don't know how long he had been in Ecuador, but one night he disappeared. People said he was caught selling pornographic magazines. I didn't really know then what that was. But I knew they were not religious articles. Faith started to crumble in me. How could a religious person, who taught us to read the scriptures in Hebrew, who kissed the Bible before and after he used it, and who we looked up to, behave in such a manner? This was incomprehensible to me. I was about 10. I never liked the idea of the separation of the families during services. I very much wanted to sit with my father who could always explain things to me, and at the same time, I wanted to be with my mother and grandmother. We could hardly hear what was said in the front because everybody was talking, and sometimes you could hear laughs, some men were probably telling*

*jokes....during services!!!. I couldn't accept that. We were not religious, but we knew what respect meant. What made me think over was a big fist-fight during Yom Kipur services between two merchants (I think), disagreeing on business matters. I continued going to Friday evening services, probably because I loved to sing, even then, when I didn't even know what a choir was.*

*Besides the religious services, the Circulo Israelita was like a home for the Jews. There was a hall, arranged more or less as a living room, where people could come to talk, have a cup or coffee, or play cards or chess. The women in the community were very active. Every new immigrant got the attention needed providing help, housing or clothing, or food. Every traditional festivity was celebrated, usually with a performance for the children, by the children. Everybody cooperated. I remember being in three performances: one of them was Little Red Riding Hood, where I was the wolf. My mother had the seamstress sew me a brown outfit that covered my complete body, and on my back, some fur was sewn on, and of course I had a long tail. My face was disguised with a mask, and my hair, with brown material, as the body. It was so real, that all the kids started to cry and scream, even though some of them had seen the dress rehearsal..... The other one was a marine scene, with my cousin Marion who happened to be in Guayaquil at the time, and a younger friend Katya Shifnagel. (She later immigrated to the U.S. and became a well known physicist in California). The third performance was the story of a lady that needs to buy a present, and goes to the toy shop to get one. As you guessed, I was the lady, with a fur collar (in that heat!!). I am so choosy, nothing seems to be to my liking. At the end I am offered a closed case, which contained a beautiful little girl (Ruthi Sussman) calling "Papa, Mama", and turning. Of course, I buy her and leave the shop with her. The kids loved the performance. A few weeks later, I heard my grandmother complaining about my mother wanting to take me out in the evening for another performance for the grown ups.*

*What she didn't know, and it was kept secret to the end, was that the grown ups were going to perform the same thing, the parents taking the parts of the children. So my mother was the lady, the Indian girls (previously performed by Nicole Sussman and Miriam Grunauer) were Mrs. Sussman and Beate Grunauer, and so on. All the rehearsals were in our living room, in the evenings, and more than once was I awaked by laughter from there. It so happened that the little girl in the grown up version was my father, dressed in a pink crepe-paper dress, with a pink bow pinned to his scarce hair.....*

*As I said, we were like a big family. We used to help each other as much as we could. We bought our things from our compatriots rather than the locals, if possible. There were two brothers, the Loewensteins, who were chemists and had a shop with their own products. One prepared jellies and puddings, and the other, perfumes. My father used to call them Loewenduft (Lion's aroma), and Loewensaft (Lion's juice).*

*Other friends were Dr. Julian Hirsch, his wife Martha and their daughter Carola Aviva, who was born after 11 years of marriage. He came to Ecuador with my father, from Chile in order to get his degree. He was an ear-nose-throat specialist. Years later, their daughter, a simultaneous translator, moved to Mexico, after trying it out again in Chile, and not liking it (she was about 12 when they went to Chile). She imposed her will. The parents moved to Mexico City, which was very bad for the father's health. He had a heart problem, and that city was too high for him. He died some years ago. My mother kept the correspondence with his wife, even after his death. They had a common birthday date, April 9th. After my mother's death I kept writing to her. Her last address was in Sonora, where I imagine, she was the only Jew there. I sent her my last Rosh Hashana greetings (1999), which were answered by her daughter Carola. She had died at the end of December.*

*Then there was the Wittels family. Heinrich, Milly and their daughter Lotte (she had been living in Jerusalem and moved to Germany where she died). They started a small door-to-door sales business (kloppers as they used to be called, because they "klopped" on the doors of possible customers). For years they visited the poorer parts of the city, selling them pans and pots, and related things, and letting them pay in installments. When I was about 9 years old, they opened a small shop with the same merchandise, next to the municipal market. I decided to go and help them with the installation, I still remember their code to record the purchase prices: HELFUNSGOT (H=1; E=2; L=3, etc.). Milly said (in German) that "the dear God will forgive her for writing his name only with one T".*

*Another family I remember dearly is the Fried family. Phillip, Jenny and their son John, called Puli. He was younger than me, and we spent some time together because as a child he suffered from asthma, and visited my father professionally. They were also one of the families that spent their vacation with us in Playas (it was also called General Villamil), at the Carmen Matilde. Jenny was my first Hebrew teacher, who taught me the alphabet, which I used as a "secret language" with my friend Carmita. We used to write Spanish in Hebrew characters. The Fried family moved eventually to the United States, to Michigan. Years later I visited Jenny in Southfield, and John contacted me after he decided to publish a leaflet dedicated to the former Ecuadorians. He lives in Pennsylvania.*

*There was the Scharfstein family. Jose and Trude. By then they had only a small son, Dennis. My father used to ask him all kinds of questions, when he was about 5 years old. He was very bright, and answered promptly. But one question was too much for him: How much is five plus six. Immediately came the response: "Dollars or Sucres?". It looks like his interest in business started very early. They eventually moved to Chile, where we were in close contact. (More later).*

*One of my father's best friends was Joachim List, the schoolmaster. They used to meet in one of the local cafés, (where they tasted that wonderful Ecuadorian coffee), almost every afternoon. It was always a kind of intellectual meeting, talking about almost everything on earth. I don't know who else would join them, but I can well imagine Dr. Hirsch being with them. Herr List, besides being my schoolmaster and English teacher, was my best friend's father. Johanna was my best friend, and we always competed to be the best in class, and she always won. She even got the Premio de la Filantrópica. We were always together. When she got the mumps, I wasn't supposed to visit her. But I decided to see her anyway, so I hid under her bed cover, with her!!!!!! But I never got the mumps. After we left Ecuador, I went back years later, and stayed with them. She later moved to Germany, where she got in touch with her future husband Werner Hosenberg through a magazine. She moved to the United States, and married him and went to live in Canada. She disliked the weather very much, and at last they decided to move to Michigan, where he got a job with one of the car manufacturers. I went to visit them there, where they had a very lovely house and two dogs. Meanwhile, Joachim List and his wife had also moved to the same region. Johanna's sister Annita had married (and divorced) an American, had two kids, and moved to Michigan when her father and sister got sick. Johanna had a nasty case of cancer, and her father, heart disease. Both died years ago. Werner disappeared after Johanna died. Since then, I correspond with Annita, who finally "came out of the closet" as she puts it, and lives with Lola, her mother, and Debby, her lady friend. Debby and Annita have adopted a little girl whom they call Debianna.*

*After I finished six years of primary school at the Colegio Internacional, I entered the American School. I had studied English during my vacation, with "Fräulein Ermann". She was a very nice lady who had a hump. Besides her knowledge of English, she was one of the members of the*

*dramatic cast at the Circulo Israelita. Once they presented the life of a couple, in still pictures. My father was her "husband-to-be", so the story was told from the beginning. The first scene was my father as a baby. They ordered a big drawing from a painter, (I think her last name was Mendelsohn), and when she was supposed to deliver the drawing, she put it into a roll so it would keep the shape. When she arrived at our home (where they had the rehearsals), I heard her shouting "Ich hab' das Kind verloren!" ("I have lost the child!!!"). Fortunately, it was only the drawing, so she promptly made another one for the performance. My father and Fr. Ermann stood alternatively behind a big frame, trying not to move. She was shown first with her teddy bears, then as a tennis player, while my father dressed up as a 6 year old boy, on his first school day, with my (non-motorized) scooter, and a big bag full of candy, (as it used to be in the "old country" on the first school day), and my school bag. Later on, he put on a Tarzan-like bathing suit, showing his jungle accomplishments. The people watching laughed so loud, that my father tried not to move, but his belly did, and up and down it went. It was hilarious!!!!. I don't remember all the scenes, but for the last one, the wedding "photo", the service of the painter was used again. She had drawn a happy couple on their wedding day, without their faces, so that Fr. Ermann and my father could put their faces there. Nobody could understand why they were laughing so loudly. Later my father explained that she had been trying to put on a girdle so as to look better, forgetting that nobody but my father would see it. She was standing half dressed behind the picture!!!!.*

*Well, I was carried away.....Miss Ermann was a very good teacher, and she prepared me in order to enter the American School, where I joined the classes of the Junior High which were taught in English, only. I was very shy, and didn't want to open my mouth, afraid of making mistakes. I had good marks in my written exams, but nothing in the oral tests. One of my teachers was Inge Nussbaum (later Fischler), Chichi's sister. (Chichi, Elizabeth Nussbaum, was my best friend). After being*



*a few months in class with all those American students, I still didn't dare to say a word, until she warned me: either you talk, or you repeat the course. That I didn't want to do. I started paying more attention to what the local students said, and I realised that I could recognize their mistakes, which meant I knew a better English. That gave me the incentive to speak. In this Junior High we had classes with the students of a higher class. When I was in 8th Grade, only three of us were in the same class: Carmita Peñaherrera, Abraham Suster, and me. He was the son of a merchant, Ruben Suster, (he had a beautiful tenor voice, and was the soloist during performances). Mr. Suster had become wealthy because of his hard work, and sold among other things, clocks and watches. Well, Abraham used to bring two watches, and an alarm clock (which he set to the time of the recess) to class. The first time he did this, it sounded so loudly that even students from the other class came to see what the fuss was all about. He was crossed-eyed. I was told that later he moved to Florida, had an operation to correct his eyes, and developed into a handsome youngster.*

*Carmita has been my friend ever since. She is a very intelligent person. Her brother Roberto and she, used to get all the scholarships offered by the school. She could have learned anything she wanted, but she decided to be a secretary. She worked at the American Embassy until not long ago, when she retired. Her brother became a physician. I visited them in 1993. More on that later.*

*There were other classmates like the Hicks twins, and Frederic DeMent, Bolivar Guerrero, Eloisa Ludeño, Meche Bellolio, Crichton McCutcheon, who was Mrs. Muirragui's son (she was our English teacher), the Robson sisters (their father was a co-owner of Pepsi Cola, so they said), and many others. Mrs. Camacho was also our teacher and Girl Scout liaison person. Many names cross my mind, but they wouldn't mean a thing to somebody that hadn't known them.*

*School went on, and during my first year in this school, in music class, we sang for the first time in two voices. I was so excited about this experience, that I went home and told my great discovery to my parents. It is then that they told me about their time spent (and enjoyed) as members of the Berliner Aerzte Chor ( the Berlin Physicians choir) until they had to leave Germany. They could perfectly understand my enthusiasm.*

## **Cati Holland -- Recollections**

My father had meanwhile been looking for something to do in Chile while waiting for the family to arrive. He couldn't work in his profession in Chile, so he decided to look for a place for my mother to work after her arrival. And he was very lucky. A certain "Monsieur Paul" was selling his hat-shop, which included all his clientele of the Santiago aristocracy. (His wife, Grete Mostny, is a well-known archeologist, who found the Andean mummy). My father bought the shop, which was on the first floor of a building on San Antonio street, in the middle of downtown Santiago, with help of uncle Maximo Bash. My mother, sister and grandparents arrived in Chile on February 23, 1934. So, just ten days after arriving, without knowing a word of Spanish, my mother started to help the family to survive. My father had almost decided to start learning medicine again, when he heard that Chile has an agreement to interchange diplomas with Ecuador. This is (or was) the only way of getting the medical degree in 2 years, instead of 7 years. So, he set off with two of his colleagues, Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Hirsch-Mammoth, to the city of Cuenca, in the Ecuadorian Andes, where they would have to take all the examinations, including some out of their specialization, and in Spanish!!! They managed quite well, but weren't allowed to work, so my mother used to send my father money during those two years. I remember my father telling me anecdotes of that period. He had to cook for himself. He couldn't afford to spend more than the minimum, so he went to the market to buy some meat. He asked the butcher to sell him some liver, which was one of the cheapest products. He gave him a whole beef's liver!!! They invented all kinds of recipes which helped them finish it off. They used to get a complete tongue as a give away!!! After buying liver a few times, the butcher asked him: How many dogs do you have??!!

After my father took all the examinations (2 or 3 a week), he had to take the one in diagnosis. He was taken to the bed of a patient and after my father examined him, he told the professors that if they continue with the treatment they are giving him, the patient will be dead by the end of the week. The professors didn't like what they thought was his arrogance, and asked my father to come back in two months time, to check the same patient. Well, my father was right, the patient was gone after a week, and so was my father's Montblanc Fountain pen that my mother had given him as a farewell present. When they called my father in, the pen had disappeared. Unfortunately he had forgotten to take it with him while waiting for the professors to decide. Of course, two months later, my father passed his last examination, without any problem. Now, he decided to go back to Chile, but the authorities didn't think so. He was supposed to work for 2 years, as a compensation for the opportunity he had been given. So, my mother and my sister travelled to Ecuador, leaving my paternal grandparents behind, in Chile. But those 2 years turned out to be more than 15. During that time, and until my grandfather died in 1938, my father also supported them financially, sending them money and goods to Chile.

### Life in Ecuador IV

*I didn't have many friends, besides Carmita, Johanna, and Chichi. But I can say that I had many acquaintances from school, from the Circulo Israelita, and from the swimming pool.*

*I loved to go to the swimming pool, but I was scared of the water; so I used to cling to the ladder in the pool until my lips got purple. Nothing persuaded me to let go off the ladder, not my sister or my father. I went with my father to the pool on Sundays, where we met other Jewish friends. I also went during the week accompanied by the maid. When I was about 9, I realised that it was boring and nonsense to cling just to the ladder, and looking how other smaller kids jumped into the pool, I decided to do the same, to the maid's dismay. She was close to a stroke, the first time. I jumped a few more times to be sure that I could do it, and kept it a secret. On Sunday, when my father tried to put me slowly into the water, I very proudly told him that this was not necessary because I could jump in. Now he almost had a stroke. Anyway, after a few weeks, my father saw that I had been making quick progress, and was swimming nicely even without having had a lesson in my life. He contacted Mr. Burgos, who had given us (my sister and me) gym lessons, in order to learn how to swim properly. I made such good progress, that I even started competing at the age of 11. This hobby I continued for many years. After having lessons with Mr. Burgos for a few months, I changed the coach. His name was Cristobal Sabinovich. He was an excellent trainer, even though he himself was not a swimmer but a figure diving South American champion. He was the best trainer I ever had. I used to train with Yolanda Torres and she was my friend from the pool. After we moved to Chile, I was told that she had moved to Panama, had a car accident and couldn't swim anymore. What a shame!!!*

*I loved sports, probably the inheritance from my father. My mother had also tried some gymnastics, but for a short time. But my father loved athletics, and he tried to pass his enthusiasm on to my sister and me. Mr. Burgos came to our house twice a week. My sister tried shot put and javelin, I preferred long jump. After we learned the theory at home, we used to go to the stadium, next to the swimming pool. When I joined the Colegio Americano, that's where we went with the school for gym class. Here I also tried sprint and high jump, but I decided to stick to swimming.*

*I didn't visit many school-friends at their homes. But birthday parties were not missed out. I loved to go to Grace Constante's party because her mother used to make the most wonderful cakes, every time with another theme. It used to be a big flat cake with a scene from a story. I still remember Little Red Riding Hood, and Snow White. Later I tried to imitate it for my children, but with less success.*

*I also visited my classmates, the Avellan brothers; but mostly I spent my time at the swimming pool, joined by Miriam Grunauer (she lives in the U.S. now) or Susana Timmer (she later married an Ecuadorian, and I haven't heard from her since. Her grandfather, Herr Lieblich was a very nice man).*

*Around 1950, many of my parent's friends had left, mostly to the United States, like the Gumpels and the Koppels, who my parents spent a lot of time with. The circle had become closer, and my mother wanted to be with her brothers and sister. My maternal grandparents had died some years ago. The first time I was in Chile, was when I was about 5 years old. I went with my mother to visit the family. We went by ship. My mother went again, a few days before my grandmother died. She went by cargo-plane, which was the cheapest way to fly in those days. (She was the only "human" passenger. She was accompanied by cows and live lobsters!!!!). There was still a problem with my father's diploma. He still didn't have it officially "because he wasn't born in Ecuador". But they discovered that another doctor in this same situation got his, so they immediately started to move in order to receive it. My aunt Lucky, who had divorced my uncle Isidoro, had remarried, and her new husband Luis Grez Vargas worked at the Ministry of the Interior. He did everything he could so my father could revalidate his diploma. All the papers arrived when my parents were disappointed because of not being able to immigrate to the U.S.A.*

*We sold all our belongings, and in August 1951 we (my parents, my paternal grandmother and me) boarded the ship "Reina del Pacifico" on our way to Chile. The Jewish Community in Guayaquil gave us a big reception at the "Salon Rosado", where most of my, and my family's friends gathered. It was very painful for me, because I knew that I wouldn't see most of these wonderful friends again, especially the older ones.*

## *Life in Ecuador V*

*Before finishing the chapters on our life in Ecuador, I have to dedicate at least some of this one to my father and his "anecdotes". (In Spanish: anecdota, with the accent on the e; he pronounced it with the accent on the o: anecdÓta).*

*Every opportunity he had, he used to tell the stories of real life that had happened to him since he arrived in Ecuador. He told us about life in Cuenca at the beginning of his stay (1934), while studying for the revalidation of his degree. He (and his two friends) didn't have much money to live on, and they couldn't work, so with the scarce money my mother could afford to send him from Chile, they could somehow manage. They used to go to the market to buy meat, which in those days was very cheap. They went to buy liver (which was the cheapest), and for very little they got the whole liver, and sometimes got a tongue as a present. They ate the liver in all possible ways, even inventing their own recipes. After a few times, the butcher wondered and asked my father: "How many dogs do you have?".*

*After living there for some time, the locals started to know them, and treat them as some kind of foreign gods that could repair and do anything. Once my father was called from the church in Otavalo, a small Indian town (the cleanest people with the whitest teeth he had ever seen). They had made a big effort donating as much as they could in order to buy an organ for their church. When it finally arrived and it was erected in the church nobody could play on it. And that's where my father came in. He immediately saw what the problem was: they had stuck in the pipes in disorder. So under my father's instructions, the pipes were taken out, and later placed in correct order, and finally the right sounds were heard.*

*When he was already in Guayaquil, somebody working at the port came to my father with a problem. Whenever they received the crates, there was always a difference in weight, and was suspecting that somebody was robbing them. This started happening after they got a new precision scale. My father went to inspect it and knew what was wrong: the person, or persons, that had installed it didn't follow the instructions, they just assembled it as they went on. It so happened that one part didn't seem quite to fit in, so they had just sawed off the protruding piece!!!!*

*In another opportunity he was called to the port, the problem needed a Salomonic decision. What to do when according to the invoice you have a certain number of pigs to deliver, and on the way, so many were born, that the number doesn't correspond. Do you deliver all the pigs, or only the number stated in the invoice? I don't know what happened at the end.*

*My father also had some curious things to tell from the professional point of view. One day a desperate mother came to his consulting office, with a small son, maybe 9 years old. He had been having terrible pains on the left side of his belly.*

*As a last resort, she came to my father. He examined the boy, and sent him urgently to have an X-Ray taken, because he suspected the boy had his appendix on the left side. His mother didn't want to believe what my father was telling her. But when he said to her that if she wanted to save her son's life, she had to rush to avoid him dying, only then did she move. So, off they went to Dr. Samson to take the X-Rays, and he confirmed what my father had suspected. The boy was operated on successfully.*

*Another anecdote he used to tell us, was from his time in Berlin. One day a man came to see him with a swollen foot. My father didn't see anything special, so he wanted to compare it with the other foot. When he asked him to take the other shoe off, the patient excused himself, asking my father to let him come the next day because "he wasn't prepared". (He had washed only the swollen foot.....).*

*On another occasion, also in Berlin, a woman of about 50 came to see him with a terrible rash and fever. She was feeling terrible, and the light bothered her eyes. My father diagnosed the measles, and started immediately to phone and try to get a bed in any hospital. Since this was in the middle of the night, the people working at the hospital thought it was some kind of a joke. Whenever they asked for "the child's age", they got the same answer: 50 years old. At the end he called Prof. Rosin, who he worked with, and asked him for a personal favor: get a bed for this "50 year old child". Fortunately, Prof. Rosin believed what my father had told him.*

*In the room we had divided in two in order to receive my father's patients that needed a special diet, we had once somebody from Riobamba. I don't remember his name, but I know he was one of the Jewish immigrants. I think it was Mr. Feldman. Well, he had come to see my father because he had terrible pains in his back. They had made some X-Rays and found nothing. My father started touch-examining him which had apparently not been done before, and discovered that this man's kidneys were located further back than usual, almost on the surface under the skin of his back. He asked for some more X-Rays, this time from a different position so he could see the "profile", and there it was: the man had kidney-stones. So he put the man on a very liquid diet, until the stones got out. Whenever my mother prepared something for him he didn't like, he used to say that he couldn't eat it, because "das verbietet mir meine Religion" --- "my religion forbids it". This sentence was also introduced into our daily language, whenever we didn't want to eat something we didn't like.*

*Another time, my father treated somebody with a very high blood pressure. So he decided to put him on a "rice" diet. He came to us for lunch every day, for a month. My mother cooked a different rice recipe, every day, so not to bore him. The most incredible combinations, and no salt!!!!.*

*There was this patient from Babahoyo who used to come to Guayaquil once a month. He was a merchant and always stayed at the best hotel in town. But*



*every time he was in Guayaquil, he got a terrible rash, and asthma. After a few months, he came back, desperate, because this was happening to him also at home. My father asked him if he had made any changes in his daily life, so he told him that now he was sleeping on that wonderful mattress, like they have in the hotel in Guayaquil. My father knew the solution to his problem, and told him to throw away the mattress he had just bought, and go to a cheap hotel where they have the simple horsehair, instead of fancy polyester fillings in the mattresses. And that was the end of it.*

*Whenever my father had to visit a patient and had to take a taxi, he always took the same one, asking especially for a certain driver. When I asked him why, he told me the following story. Some time ago he was called to a patient who had had the hiccups for several days, without stopping. He used to be drunk all the time, but with the hiccups he could neither eat nor drink. By then he had lost a lot of weight, and the family was sure he was going to die (my father said they'd already bought his coffin). When my father arrived, he even promised he would stop drinking if my father could save him. If I remember correctly, he made him breath carbon dioxide at intervals, until he felt that the hiccups were getting sparser. After a few days, he got well, and he kept his promise: he never drank again. He was the taxi driver, and he made my father promise him that he would always call for him if he needed a taxi. He never accepted money for the ride. When my father told him that we were moving to Chile, he wept.*

*My father used to work with Dr. Alcívar, who also owned a clinic, called after him "Clínica Alcívar". There was this case when a worker had his hand cut off while working. Surgery in those days was not what it is today, but they were very successful: they put the hand back after a very difficult operation. It was even mentioned in the newspaper. But a terrible mistake was committed, and the patient died. He was given a blood transfusion with the wrong type of blood!!!!!!*

*Once, the income tax officials came to see my father. He used to keep his books in order, so he had nothing to be afraid of. When he showed them to the officials, they were not interested. They started asking about how many people lived in our apartment, if we owned a car, if we went on vacation, made any trips abroad, etc. After all these questions, they consulted each other and after a while told my father: "Now you can bring the books. But if what you have told us is true, your income should be at least..." and they named a sum. My father was very surprised when his books showed exactly the sum they had predicted.*

## **LIFE IN ECUADOR VI**

*After finishing the previous chapter, I realised that I hadn't written anything about our daily life, and in particular, about our pets. My father loved animals, specially the ones you can keep at home. There were three parakeets, in different periods of time. They all died cruel deaths by misadventure. The first one, my parents had in Chile, before I was born. My father taught him to say: "Heil, Hitler" while raising his foot. Since the nights were very cold in winter, they used to keep him for the night, inside the unlit oven. One morning, the maid forgot about the parakeet, and lit the oven while he was still inside.....The other two we had in Ecuador. As it is custom there, the wings are shortened so that they won't fly away. The first one flew into a spring trap meant for rats.....*

*At the same time that we had our third parakeet, we had a small dog, a fox terrier called Cherie, and a cat. The three of them used to eat from the same plate. After lunch, the parakeet would sit on the dog's back, and together with the cat, they would run from the kitchen to the living room and back, a few times. My father used to take the dog for a walk every evening. I remember one time when he did just that. I was relegated to my room because I didn't want to eat the oatmeal porridge I was given for supper. I decided to throw it out of the window, hoping that no one would notice. To my bad luck, my father discovered it while walking the dog. I was not punished and I was never given porridge again.*

*I don't remember what happened to the cat. Our Cherie, (she was a female) died while giving birth to too big a puppy..... The parakeet used to sit on the window sill looking into the kitchen. One day while doing that, he tried to fly into the kitchen, but instead flew into a boiling pot of soup. The maid fished him out with her hand, while burning herself, but couldn't save the bird. His last word was "Oshi", he knew who had tried to save him.*

*There is another thing I hadn't mentioned and that is the time when my mother was sick. She had some kind of colic, I think from the gall bladder. My father gave her some pain killers, but the pain was persistent. Then, he and two colleagues decided, that a small amount of morphine would help. As a result she slept for about two days, to my father's desperation. When she awoke, she didn't have any pains, and it didn't repeat itself again. Since she didn't usually take any kind of medication, she didn't know that she was allergic to all kinds of medicines. Once she broke her arm, and my father gave her some aspirin to ease the pain, and her hands swelled and looked like "empanadas". This was not so bad. Next time she took an aspirin, the swelling was all around her neck which impeded her breathing. Fortunately the swelling went down,*

*just as my father was preparing to perform a tracheotomy. After this, my father made her promise never to take any kind of medicine.*

*As a child, and being a premature baby, I was sometimes sick. I remember having had chicken-pox. I know I never got the mumps. I was given food every few hours, in my childhood, but I didn't gain much weight. This was probably as a result of having had amoebas, and malaria. My sister used to call me "flaca" (skinny). Malaria is a nasty sickness. I had very high fever that repeated itself every two or three days, which made me shiver so hard that the bed moved. I remember my parents covering me up with a cold wet sheet, in order to get the fever down. I don't know how long I was sick; I do remember being given quinine tablets.*

*When I was about 10 years old, I fell on my nose and broke it. There wasn't much to be done besides putting a big plaster over my nose, that covered almost all my cheeks. My face was swollen and the tip of the nose was red. My classmates immediately found a nickname for me: "borracha" (drunkard) which I didn't like at all.*

*The other nuisance was my having tonsillitis very often. At the beginning, the treatment was to have the tonsils smeared with methylene blue, and getting sulphur shots every 4 hours. No penicillin at that time. The first time I got really sick, I was at the Pension Playas visiting my friend Ruthi Stein, and she wasn't allowed to come into my room in order to avoid contagion. It took me around a week to get well. I couldn't sleep too well at night, and I could hear Ruthi's father snore loudly, so that the walls trembled. Ruthi was very young when her father got sick (he had a brain tumour) and I know she nursed him until his death. This is probably the reason she became a nurse. She works in the operating theatre of the Carmel Hospital in Haifa. Now, her name is Ruthi Avni.*

*There was an event that happened when I was about 5 years old, that I cannot forget because it traumatized me for the rest of my life. We were visiting Linette Fachel, a friend of my parents, at her hacienda. We were having lunch outside and I was playing, doing nothing special, when one of her hired workers on horseback grabbed me by one arm, and pulled me onto the horse, backwards, and off he went still holding my arm firmly. I started screaming and yelling until Linette and my mother realised what was happening. They got into the farm's truck and followed the horseman. I don't know how long it took them to reach him, but for me it felt like eternity. He was going up the hill and I could see the people getting smaller and smaller. I almost fell off the horse but managed to grab its tail, which actually saved me from who-knows-what-terrible-things this man had in mind, for the horse reared up and the horseman lost control and they were able to catch him. Since then, I have a terrible aversion and fear of heights and horses. The night after that event there was a small fire caused by me. There was no electric light in*

*the hacienda, and we used candles. One was lit next to my bed, and after going to bed that night I started playing putting a plastic comb next to it. I realised that it was inflammable when my feather cover caught fire. I was lucky that the bedroom door had been left open, so that they could see what was going on in my room. They took me out of the room, and fortunately nothing happened to me.*

## **FROM ECUADOR TO CHILE 1**

*After my 13th. birthday, my parents started talking about moving away from Ecuador, especially since my sister had left for the United States. The question was --- where to go? On the one hand, my parents wanted to be with my sister, and on the other hand, my mother's family wanted us to join them in Chile. My father had had bad experiences, because he believed in people, who took advantage of him. He had written an article about malaria, and after giving the manuscript to his superior at the hospital in Guayaquil (I imagine for grammatical corrections), he never saw it again. That is, with his own signature. After some time, his article was published with the other doctor's name, and not my father's. He also encountered some anti-semitic events, and accusations, that made him decide to leave. The authorities wouldn't revalidate his diploma (in order to be able to practice in Chile) because he was not born in Ecuador, even though he had been naturalized, and was an Ecuadorian citizen. That is what he had been told for so many years, until one day he discovered that another physician, in the same position, got his diploma without any problem. The final decision came after the American Embassy in Guayaquil gave them the reason to move to Chile, as I have already explained in a previous chapter. Besides, in the U.S., my father would have had to be an intern in a hospital for two years, take the English language examinations, and stop working after two years (he would have been 55 by then). There wasn't much chance for the rest of us (my grandmother, my mother and me) to find jobs. My grandmother was 75 years old. My mother would have managed, somehow, even though she didn't speak English. But overall, our prospects in the U.S. did not look rosy. The moment my father got the approval for the diploma exchange from the Chilean authorities, he decided that the best would be to move to Chile. My mother missed her brothers and sister very much, and to unite what was left of her family was a good prospect. Her parents had already died in Chile, some years before.*

*Life hadn't been easy for my parents but they made the best of it. In Ecuador they had had their third beginning. They started building an existence in Germany, then in Chile, then in Ecuador, and now they were planning another, fourth start in Chile. In Guayaquil we rented a comfortable apartment, but didn't have too many belongings. The movables were sold so we could pay the trip for the four of us to Chile. Unfortunately, some of the nice things were stolen. I remember a beautiful cigarette box made of something that looked like alabaster, with Chinese designs in some kind of metal on top.*

*We had it on the living room table with some other things like ashtrays and other unimportant items. But the thief knew what to take.*

*We owned two pairs of silver candlesticks. My parents decided to keep the ones that had been with the family for a longer period. (My daughter Raquel got them when she married). The newer ones were nicely carved. It so happened that the priests from the Merced Church were interested in having them. My father waited until the last moment to sell them to the priests. He didn't like the idea of having the candlesticks, that had served my mother to light the Shabbat candles, in a church. Nobody else was interested in buying them, so they had to sell them to the church. We needed the money for the trip to Chile.*

*Some of our friends had moved away, mostly to the United States hoping for a better future. The Gumpel-Koppel "clan" moved to San Diego, California. Some of them had been my parent's bridge partners. My sister's friend, Ernie Klemperer, also moved to the States. After many years, and by chance, Ernie and my sister met, and realised that they were both living in the same town: Pittsfield, Mass. (More about that later).*

*The last person to occupy a room in our "clinica", was Frau Loeb, the mother of Rosi Coifman. Frau Loeb had come out of a concentration camp, and did all kinds of strange things, as a result. At night, I used to hear her (my room was next to hers) screaming and calling names. She also brushed the soles of her shoes on the window sill, trying to make them as clean as possible. Her daughter was her only consolation. Rosi also had her problems. She had two sons: Ronnie and Danny. The younger one, Danny, didn't sit or walk until he was about four, though later on he developed normally. It must have been very difficult for Rosi to take care of her mother in addition to her sons and her husband. I don't know what happened to Frau Loeb after we left. I think she went to live with her daughter and family. I have heard that Ronnie is still in Ecuador, and Danny lives in the States.*

*Our house was a happy one. I don't remember seeing my father or my mother, or my grandmother, unhappy or sad. Maybe they didn't want us to know, as they didn't tell us about the war. Or maybe, I was too young to understand. Times were difficult, and we couldn't have things other kids my age had, but we were happy with what we had. The times I liked best were those when we celebrated any event, like our birthdays, and especially my father's on the eve of the New Year. Also, marriages were held in our apartment. The Trachtenbergs had a wedding celebration at our home. They then moved to Lima, Perú, and had 7 or 8 children. Her mother, Frau Fisher also joined them. I remember having a big party in honour of Benno Weiser and his wife. He went to Israel and changed his name to Varon, and years later, he was the Israeli Ambassador to Paraguay. During his stay there, there was an explosion*

*in the Israel Embassy, with casualties. As far as I know, he is living in Boston now, doing some kind of research. He has written some books related to his and his family's life. I still have a photograph of him with my sister and Lotte Scharfstein. Lotte later started an acting career, and changed her name to Elisa Lotti. But her career didn't last long. She got married to a physician in New York, where her parents also lived.*

*My mother played the piano, and I remember us getting one, even before we had a refrigerator. She was very gifted, but played only for her and our entertainment. She had a teacher, Frau Albers. This lady was also my sister's and my teacher. She was a good teacher. She had a little daughter whom she and her husband wanted to make a great swimmer. I don't think that the girl ever made it to be one. Her parents forced her to go to the pool every single day. They abused her physically. I even remember seeing the marks of cigarette burns on her arms. Poor girl!..... After Frau Albers left (also to the U.S.), I continued my musical studies with another teacher called Fritz Prager, and after him, at the local conservatorium. There I also learned Theory and Solphege, which has helped me a lot in choir singing.*

*My mother also started taking lessons in Russian. She liked the language, which had been her father's. She had to stop after a few lessons because she was accused by some people of the Jewish Community, of being a Communist, which was a terrible lie. Anything related to Russia or Russians was a sin in those days.*

*We didn't do much for entertainment, especially because of lack of funds. My parents mostly went to the "Centro Israelita", and occasionally to the movies. My own experience had been some Disney films, like Pinocchio and Snow White. I once went to see Shirley Temple, and Laurel and Hardy, spending a whole day in a cinema, where I could see the same show again, and again for the same money. What I enjoyed most was going to a concert. I remember being at the hall at the University of Guayaquil, which was packed, listening to the performance of Claudio Arrau. I still remember what he was playing: De Falla's Ritual Fire Dance. It so happened that while he was playing, a fire broke out, on the other side of the street. We could hardly hear the piano because of the big noise made by the sirens of the fire-engines. What a coincidence!!!.*

*On another occasion, I was invited to see the performance of the Wiener Saenger Knaben (Vienna Boys' Choir). Uncle Lucho (Luis Grez Vargas), my aunt Lucky's second husband, had sent me a ticket with them. (He was some kind of impresario at the time. More about that later). I even got to talk in German to some of the boys during the intermission. It amused me to see them*

*in costumes of the previous century, and some with girl's clothes: they performed Mozart's "Bastien and Bastienne". I loved it.*

*Another time, I got a ticket (again from Uncle Lucho) to listen to the Trapp family (this was the singing family whose story was told in "The Sound of Music"). This was actually the first time I had heard a choir perform. Their lovely voices are still engraved in my memory. Their smallest son was very young then, may be 14 years old, and he had already a beautiful tenor voice. It was a great performance. In another occasion, I went to listen to Adolfo Odnoposoff, who was a fine cellist. Later, I realised he was almost family: my cousin Curt Marcuson was married to his sister Nelly, a pianist. (Just a few days ago, I was listening to some old music being played at the "Kol Ha musica" music radio station, during Ram Evron's program, and the performer was Ricardo Odnoposoff. That was another brother from the same family, who played the violin. I called my cousin in Hamburg, and he told me that around 1946 Ricardo went to the United States to perform (the music I heard was from that period) and met there an Austrian noblewoman, married her and went to live in Austria. I'm not sure that Ram Evron knows those details.)*

*Besides piano lessons, I also joined the classical dance group, sponsored by the Municipality. (When I was about 4, or 5, I had lessons with a French teacher Monsieur Mauger). My teacher was Greek. Her name was Kitty Sakilarides. I missed a few lessons because my right arm had to be in a cast. (I had broken the wrist bones after Pepe Hazins kicked my arm instead of the ball while playing soccer, about two years before. I was the goal-keeper). In those days, the cast was put on layers of cotton, then crêpe paper, and on that, the plaster cast. It so happens that when I had the first cast on only a few days, I got a terrible itch inside of it, which drove me crazy. I introduced all kinds of pencils and knitting needles in order to be able to scratch myself. Finally, my father took me back to the clinic to change the cast, and we discovered that what was causing the problem was a family of ants that had nested there, of all places.....!!!!!!*

*When my parents finally decided to move to Chile, the Jewish Community gave us a big party, and everybody was there. It made me very sad to think that I wouldn't see most of these people again. Some of them, even much older than me, or even than my parents, were like old friends to me. I had known them all my life. Some were the grandparents of my closest friends. By then I was almost 14. It was August, 1951. We had to say good bye to our loyal maids, and it was especially difficult for me to part from Oshi. She had taken care of me since I was born. Even now, when I'm writing these words, the tears come into my eyes. She was so good to me. (Years later, when I visited Guayaquil, I looked for her until I found her working as a chambermaid, in one of the hotels). After making all the necessary arrangements, we sailed to Chile,*



*on the PSNC ship "Reina del Pacifico". The trip took 10 days, with a stop in Callao, Perú. The ship was in port all day, so we visited Lima. It didn't impress me very much.*

## **FROM ECUADOR TO CHILE II**

*We spent 10 days on the ship that took us to Valparaíso. The trip was boring. There were no children on board but me. It was an English ship. The food was horrible, and I didn't want to eat. Porridge for breakfast (it looked like glue), and greasy lamb with sugar and peppermint leaves for lunch, were not my cup of tea. The captain was very nice and provided me with dozens of green apples which I ate during the whole trip. I shared a cabin with my grandmother. I used to play dominoes with two elderly passengers. They showed me how to play for money, which I was not interested in. Anyway, while in Callao, we went to Lima and visited the Museum where they still keep Pizarro's head. (Disgusting!!!). We all took a bus from Callao to Lima, like in the old days, with chickens and vegetables and fruit that the locals carried with them. I suppose and hope that things have changed since then. Not even in Guayaquil did I encounter such a thing. We made a round trip through the city. The place I liked best was called La Herradura (Horseshoe).*

*When we arrived in Valparaíso, Uncle Lucho (Lucky's husband) greeted us with my father's Chilean Diploma in his hand. I don't remember if all the family was there, but I was introduced to so many people, that I was completely overwhelmed. Uncle Lucho was very kind, and tried to show me off to his family. His cousin Eugenia ("Quena") was there. Her son Patricio was a military man, and because of him, we had our first family reunion in a exclusive club. We had a wonderful meal, or was it, after 10 days of apples? Anyway, I tried to understand what people were saying to me. I thought they spoke Spanish, but I wasn't sure. They used so many new words, that I thought they weren't speaking Spanish at all. Uncle Lucho greeted me with "Hola, guachita". I thought it must be some kind of nice expression. (Guachita is a Chilean word meaning something like the solitary one, or the orphan; you use it for one sock, when you've lost the other). Then I heard Eugenia saying that Pato (her son's name was Patricio) was leaving "al tiro". I thought that she meant a place called Tiro. But so many people were using this expression, that I thought to myself it can't be a place, so many people cannot go there. When I asked what they meant, I was told that "al tiro" means immediately ("like a shot"), "tiro" being "the shot of a gun". I also learned the expression "hacer tuto" which puzzled me again. It only meant go to sleep. Later on I learned the richness of the Chilean Spanish, full of idioms, but my first encounter was desperate because I could hardly understand what people were saying. I cried all night thinking that I had come to a country where Spanish was not spoken.*

*I don't remember how and when we got to Santiago. But I know that my parents found very quickly a small apartment for us to stay. It was a*

*very nice small furnished duplex, the lower story was in the basement. The entrance was at the ground floor, as was the only bedroom. The bathroom was also on this upper floor. The windows of the bedroom looked out a side street, where local vendors used to offer their trade, usually fruit and vegetables. Bread and milk were also delivered through the bedroom window. This bedroom I shared with my grandmother. Going down the stairs, you could see that the lower floor consisted mostly of just one big room, with a very high ceiling, as high as the second story ceiling. There was a very small kitchenette where only one person could stand, but very handy because everything was next to you. In the large room, there was some dining and living room furniture, and under the stairs, there was enough space for my parents' bed. It was a small place for four people but we couldn't afford anything else. At least, it was opposite the Parque Forestal with beautiful high trees, which could be seen from the upper part of the big high windows of the big room. My mother used the big dining room table to repair hats that I used to collect from different customers (some of them from the time she had her shop), and I returned them afterwards to their owners. I remember two of them, Lily Hobsbawn, who lived in New York, but came to Chile to visit. She spent some time later in Chile, and when she decided to go back to the United States, she sold her belongings, and gave many books to my father. We bought from her a desk, and shelves, to be hung on the wall on rails (Adolfo still has it). The other customer I remember was the aunt of Mr. List, my former school headmaster in Guayaquil. I visited both these ladies at the Hotel Carrera, where my cousin Curt Marcuson used to work, though not at that time. Another acquaintance was Marga Lyon, whom my family knew since their first arrival in Chile. By this time she had become part-owner of some cinemas in Santiago, and now and then we got free tickets. One day she came to this small apartment, and since my mother wasn't in, she decided to wait. She asked me for a glass of milk while she waited. It was all the milk we had left. She drank a sip or two, and left all the rest. What a waste!!!! especially because it was meant to be used to prepare a milk soup for all of us. When I told my parents what had happened, they told me another story about this lady and a bunch of grapes, which had happened years before. It so happened that this lady had come to visit when my mother was resting in the afternoon, so she had to wait for some moments. While she was waiting, she decided to take a nibble from a large bunch of grapes that was hanging down the "parrón". This was probable the nicest, largest bunch that she had ever seen. My parents had not cut it, because it was going to be photographed for a magazine. The magazine editor had promised to pay my parents for the photo. When my mother came out, the bunch was gone. Mrs. Lyon had eaten it all.*

*My father arranged for me to join the Jewish School (Vaad Hajinuj) where a friend of his, Dr. Joel, was the principal. I joined the school*

*at the end of September, and stayed there only a few weeks. I left when I found out that I wouldn't be able to take the examinations, because I hadn't been at the school long enough. While I was there I encountered for the first time classmates, most of them Jewish, who were having both Hebrew and Yiddish lessons. One of my classmates was Ruben Maler, whom I would meet again many years later (when I revisited Chile in 1993, after living in Israel for 27 years). Another thing I always wondered was: why would a parent send a non-Jewish child to a Jewish school, but their explanation was that "we like Jews" , "this is a good school" and "it is near home". After being some time in Chile, I could fully understand it.*

*My father also helped me by taking me to the swimming pool, to see if I could find a group to continue my training. It so happened that there I met two Jewish sisters, Ruby and Carmen Monica Bonder, training for the University of Chile team. I joined them, and started my training right away. (This friendship lasted until I decided to immigrate to Israel many years later). After a few months, the Jewish members of the University team decided to join Maccabi, that at that time was called C.A.I.M. (Club Atletico Israelita Maccabi). One of the directors was Señor Keibel, the father of Dan and Aviva, two members of the youth movement Gordonia Hamaccabi, which I had joined some months earlier. When we moved to Llole, I couldn't be as active in the youth movement as I would have liked. I used to go to Santiago occasionally, in order to take part in the weekly activities. Sometimes I stayed overnight. This situation got better when I returned to Santiago. I took part in movement activities on weekdays, and occasionally at weekends. I also joined them for Summer Camp.*

*Señor Keibel was also involved in some kind of self defense training camp, which I didn't join, but I was asked to help with one of their operations. It so happened that the Chilean Nazi movement had begun to publish a weekly newspaper, which was being sold at kiosks all over the city. It was decided that we would go to the different kiosks in our neighborhood, choose three or four magazines, and then appear surprised to discover "by chance" that the Nazi paper was sold there --- and then leave without buying anything. The poor vendor, trying to make a living, saw that by having that newspaper, he wouldn't do any business. The week after that, we did the same. After that, no more Nazi newspapers were seen on the stands.*

*My father, trying to find some social relationships for me, contacted his friends, the Scharfsteins, and heard that a new group had been formed next to the Synagogue at 810 Portugal Street, to gather the Jewish youth. The initiative came from the Rabbi, Egon Loewenstein. The Scharfsteins' son Denis had just joined it, so I went there with him. I liked it from the beginning, but Denis didn't. He never went back after the first time.*

*There were all kinds of activities, mostly related to Israel, and A.D. Gordon, and the history of the yishuv, and, and, and. So many new things, most of them I didn't know what they were talking about. I was very shy and didn't dare to ask, I was ashamed of being so ignorant. One of the first things I was selected to do, was to take notes at an important meeting. I had never done a thing like that but didn't dare to say so. Fortunately, I was sitting next to Moshico (Egon Marx) who helped me out, him doing my work. Our madrich was Moshe Hasson. We had all kinds of activities, among them, we had a big Hanukah party at the Circulo Israelita, where I met my friend Liora (Loretta Simon, later Konirsch). And we have been friends ever since. (When I visited Chile with my mother when I was about 5 years old, I remember visiting the Simons. I even remember Liora and her smaller sister Ilana, who was sitting on a high chair getting her lunch or supper). Most of the people I met around this time are still my friends, some of them are still living in Chile, but they come to Israel very often. In the Movement, we were divided into different age groups. My group was called Moledet. Later this group was divided into Kvutza Hulda and Kvutza Shivat Zion. I belonged to the second one. After we moved to Llolleo, I wasn't able to take part in all the activities. Later on, when I moved to Santiago, I managed to attend the Cabalat Shabat on Friday evenings, and sometimes an additional activity in the middle of the week. On Saturdays, and Sundays, I was at home in Llolleo. Once in a while, I would invite my friends to come to Llolleo. My mother used to prepare a good meal for them. When my father heard them coming, he used to say: "Llegaron las hormigas" (the ants are coming), because they didn't leave a crumb.*

*Liora has not changed since I met her. She is the same good friend, always ready to listen or help. They used to call us the "inseparables" because we were always together. We spent our vacations together at the Jewish Summer Camp organized by the youth movement. I attended four of them. Twice in Tiltil, once in Limache, and the last time in Loncura, north of Quintero. After that, we had to decide if we wanted to go to Israel, or leave the movement. I even took a test to be able to be sent to the Machon Lemadrichei Hutzlaaretz, to be trained in Israel as a youth leader and go back to Chile. My parents didn't want me to go, unless I learn a profession first, because if I go, "I won't want to come back to Chile". All my friends had joined the CUJ (Club Universitario Judio), but by then, most of them were couples, and I was left alone, or in Egon's company, which was not bad, but I didn't want to force him to do what he didn't want to do, like taking me home after our activities. It was like imposing on him. So I left.*

*After that, a friend of mine from the University invited me to join a young Masons group, but they sounded more like revolutionaries. So, after*

*only one or two sessions, I decided that their activities weren't to my liking, and never met them again.*

*Fortunately, I was accepted at the choir of the University of Chile.*