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Friday May 10, 1940 was the day we were going to go to the French consulate to pick up our visas, the last step on our way to catch a US-bound ship in Genoa, Italy, and join Arthur and Raymond who were already in the US. Our belongings had been packed and were ready to be moved out of the apartment for shipment and we would spend the night with our grandparents before taking the train for Italy. When we woke up in the early morning of that memorable day the invasion of Belgium was on and the Germans were bombing Antwerp. The French consulate was closed to all, except French nationals. We were stuck. How did we land in this predicament? The story starts during World War I

New York, 1915

My father, Maurice Poser, was born in Krakow Poland in 1890. As far as we know he came to Belgium as a child sometime after 1894. He lived in Antwerp with his parents and two brothers, Sam and Lazar who were also born in Krakow in 1892 and 1894 respectively. They eventually all went into the diamond business. (My paternal grandfather, Shulem Poser, aka Bon Papa, was the first Poser to switch from the fur to the diamond business.)

Some time in 1914/15, father was sent to New York on a business trip and was stranded there by WWI. Shortly after arriving in New York and meeting his cousins Arnold and Dolly Glassheib, he was introduced to Sadye Gleitsman. She was one of eight children. She may have been born in New York, but on the other hand perhaps not.

Her date and place of birth have been a source of controversy for many years. There are at least two versions of her origins:

1. The first version is the one we lived with until very recently and is as follows. According to an official record in the form of an affidavit by a Mr Goldfuss dated 12 Dec 1928 he was present at her birth in New York on March 12, 1892. On the other hand a contemporaneous note from New York's Bureau of Records states that they have no record of her birth within a year of the alleged date of birth. What then is the reality? By her own admission Maman was about two years older than Papa who was born in 1890. In those days it was not proper for a man to marry an "older woman" and it seems that my paternal grandfather might not have approved of the marriage had he known her real age.

(2) Another version, placing the blame on her parents, has it that she had a younger sister who wanted to get married, and since it would not have been appropriate for her to marry out of sequence.

Under either circumstance it would have been logical to fudge the date of birth, hence the ploy with the affidavit. Indeed Maman was so concerned about the age difference, that one of her last requests before she died was that we make sure that the inscription on her tombstone clearly show that she was younger than my father.

Recently I have come into possession of papers, including an extract from a year 1900 Census report, sent to me by a cousin on the Gleitsman side of the family, that show that my maternal grandfather came to the US in 1891 and was followed by the rest of the family three years later. The Census report shows that Maman was born in the part of Poland that was then Austria (and not in New York as she used to claim) in

March 1889. Thus she may have been about a year older than papa, and not two or three as she sometimes thought.

After a whirlwind courtship he proposed to her presenting her with a lovely emerald cabochon. (This ring is now one of my prized possessions and will be passed down to my daughter). The marriage proposal had one condition: she would have to move to Belgium since Papa's home and business were in Antwerp and he intended to return there to live and work. She accepted, they were married on July 11, 1916 and settled in New York since they could not return to Belgium at that time because of the war. Two sons, Arthur and Raymond were born in New York in 1918 and 1920 respectively.

After five years in the US Papa became an American citizen on Sept 28, 1920

Pre-World War II Antwerp

In 1922 the time had come to return to Antwerp. There my parents bought a house on Rue Mozart, around the corner from a lovely park, *le Parc de l'Harmonie*. It is in that house that Charles was born in 1923 and I was born in 1926. We were registered at birth at the American consulate in Antwerp and were recognized as Americans. We would have been given the option to become Belgian subjects when we reached the age of either 16 or 18.

I don't remember that house, because we moved to another one that I remember very well on Avenue du Margrave when I was very young. We lived there until I was 7 or 8. It seemed huge at the time, but when I saw it years later on a trip to Antwerp it seemed to have shrunk. As the lean depression years hit we moved to smaller quarters, first in an apartment in a private house on Rue Albert. for one year, then in an apartment on Rue St Thomas , where papa painted the woodwork Bois de Rose, I also remember that on one occasion we locked our parents out of the house: we locked the front door, left the key in the lock and went to sleep. When our parents came home, they could not open the door and when we did not wake up when they rang the doorbell and they had to break the glass in the door to get in! Then as the economy improved we moved to a larger apartment in an apartment building Rue Sanderus, where we were living at the time of the German invasion. During a recent visit to Antwerp in 1989, we walked past all of these houses and found them still standing and in great shape as can be seen in the photographs that we took during the visit.

I had a happy, and I would say, uneventful childhood. I enjoyed a loving family and beautiful homes and and only realize in retrospect that the depression may have affected my life. I have no recollection of having felt any deprivation, even when we moved to smaller quarters. .

Charles and I had a nurse by name of Lalakes until I was about 5 years old. I think she left when Charles started school at the age of 7 in the second grade. I remember Lalakes prevailing upon Maman at that time to have his curls cut and give him a "boy's" haircut. When Charles and Joan lived in Antwerp in 1959, Lalakes had the thrill of taking to care for their son William. Joe and I also visited her in 1968 on my first trip back to Europe

Family

All of Maman's family lived in the US, so I never knew them before we arrived here. On the other hand Papa's parents, his two brothers and their families all lived in Antwerp. I never developed a close relationship with my grandparents, mainly because of a language barrier: they spoke Yiddish, German and Flemish but not French. Therefore I could only communicate with them in my limited Flemish. As far as I can remember, my grandmother, Bonne Maman, had trouble walking. She had very heavy legs and always wore long skirts to hide them. When I think about it now, I wonder how she ever made it to the women's gallery in the synagogue where Maman took me to see her on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Pesach. I also remember her prickly kisses, her characteristic "musty" smell that all old people seemed to have at the time, and receiving hard candy that she carried in her purse. My grandparents kept a kosher home and we didn't, consequently they hardly ever came to our house. Before they did, Bon Papa would call up ahead of time to make sure that we did not mix meat and dairy. In fact Charles believes that he would eat at our house only if the meal was all milchik. On Shabbat, Friday evenings, my parents and aunts and uncles went regularly to my grandparents house for what was in effect a family Oneg, with cookies, wine and tea which my grandfather drank out of a glass, holding a lump of sugar between his teeth, Russian style. Occasionally he served matjes herring with very finely chopped onions. Those were my favorite nights.

My brothers Arthur and Raymond were respectively 8 and 6 years older than I. and almost belonged to a different generation. Consequently I was a lot closer to Charles who was only two years older and it was only much later, when I had become an adult, that I developed a close relationship with my older brothers.

When Arthur was 15 years old, Papa took him along on one of his trips to the States. They lived with aunt Rose and Arthur went to high school in Brooklyn. All went well, except the time he corrected the French teacher! He was supposed to finish the school year in Brooklyn, but at the last moment he decided that he wanted to come home with Papa. After he returned he told us of his many adventures in Brooklyn and about the weird American eating habits, such as eating an after school snack consisting of a glass of milk and an apple, an unheard of combination in Europe.

In May 1938, having become dissatisfied with the economic situation in Belgium, Raymond left for the US. He was about 18 and first went to live in Brooklyn with aunt Rose, Maman's sister. Although he did not have any marketable skills, he was very resourceful and managed to find work in New York (with the help of Maman's family) even though it was not quite what he had aspired to (he would have preferred to start at the top.) A year and a half later, in Dec 1939, (after the war had already started in Europe) Arthur also left Antwerp and joined Raymond in New York where they shared an apartment. Arthur was a trained diamond girdler and found a job in the burgeoning diamond industry in NY. Raymond became a diamond polisher.

School

I started kindergarten in a Catholic parochial school, Notre Dame de Sion, which was literally around the corner from our house on Avenue du Margrave. I had to wear a very strict uniform with the most unpleasant starched high collar; however, it also included a very neat fur hat! Around December, when I started singing Christmas carols at home my parents took me out of the school and I did not go back until I

started elementary school Rue Lamoriniere, a girls' school. (Schools were not coed in Belgium at the time.) Actually I started school a year earlier than normal, before my sixth birthday, because my mother made a "mistake" in reporting my birth year when she registered me. She attributed the mistake to her lack of fluency in French!

She made another "mistake" later on when the school nurse, following a routine examination, sent a note home saying that I needed glasses. Maman took it as a personal insult; "What do you mean, you want my beautiful little girl to wear glasses? Never!" She had to back down a few weeks later when the nurse sent another note home saying that I would not be readmitted to school unless she took me to an ophthalmologist.

By 1940, when we left for the US I was in the equivalent of the 8th grade in a Flemish section. Antwerp was originally a bilingual city where French and Flemish were used on official business. (Flemish is to Dutch as American is to English). The situation was very much like that in the Province of Quebec with the Flemish people resenting the French speaking population very much like the French Canadians resent the anglos. At the time I started first grade the schools were bilingual, i.e. one could choose to go to French or Flemish speaking sections for one's classes. I attended the French speaking classes and as one always moved ahead as a class in elementary schools I spent those years with the same group of children. In 1938 the law was changed, making Flemish the official language of instruction in Antwerp. Kids who had already started in French were allowed to continue until graduation from either elementary or high school. However, from then on all kids starting elementary and high school had to go to Flemish classes. An exception was made for the children of foreigners, and possibly some other special cases that I am not aware of. My parents chose not to take advantage of the exemption (so I could stay with my friends) and I entered the Athenée de Jeunes Filles (Girls' High School) in September 1938. That first year in the Athenée was the first time that I had to take all my classes in Flemish.. Even though I had been able to handle Flemish conversations, mainly with the maid and shopkeepers, I had to work hard to expand my Flemish vocabulary in order to handle my schoolwork. For example, in my Latin vocabulary notebook had to keep three columns instead of the customary two, the first two for the Latin word and the Flemish translation and an extra column for the French translation. I eventually forgot most of my Flemish since leaving Belgium.

A typical program load in the 7th grade included Flemish, French, Latin, algebra and geometry, geography, history, home ec, art, music, biology and phys ed. In higher grades they added Greek, English and German as well as physics and chemistry. Of course these courses were not offered every day: the frequency of the classes went anywhere from as many as 6 periods a week for some subjects, like French, Flemish and Latin to as little as one period for Music. School started at 8 in the morning, we went home for lunch from noon till 2 pm and then stayed in school until 4 or 5 pm, depending on the day, then went home with at least a couple of hours of homework. We did this six days a week, except that we had Wednesday and Saturday afternoons off. It was much harder than US high school.

Growing Up

My best friend in Antwerp was Jacqueline Sternberg. We went through school together from first grade

until I left for the US. We would spend time together at each other's home on our Wednesday afternoons off from school. On Saturday afternoons we both went to the Y.W.C.A where we belonged to a group called Grillons (crickets) which was similar to Brownies and Girl Scouts. Despite its name, there were no religious connotations or activities. Indeed many of the kids and even some of the leaders were Jewish.

I led a very sheltered life; after all I was the baby of the family and the only girl. I never went "anywhere" alone or with a friend except to school, my friend Jacqueline's house and the YWCA. On Sundays I sometimes had to accompany my parents when they met friends for "tea" in a cafe or a *patisserie*, because I was not allowed to stay home alone when Charles was out for a Boy Scout outing or other reason. When our parents went out we stayed home by ourselves, and Charles and I had great fun together. By the time I came to the US in 1940 at the tender age of 14 I my movie viewing experience was limited to mostly Shirley Temple and Deanna Durbin movies and the like that were rated "Enfants Admis" (Children Admitted) under Belgium's very strict movie rating code that was largely controlled by the Catholic Church. Theaters showing movies rated "Enfants Non Admis" did not allow in children under 16 years of age (with or without an adult) . I never got to see Snow White in Antwerp because it was rated Enfants non Admis (the witch was too scary) nor Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times (it seemed to condone theft by poor people.)

In the summer the family would sometimes spend a couple of weeks in a hotel at the shore. From the age of 10, I spent 2-4 weeks in a YWCA camp in the Ardennes in a place called Louette St Pierre, near Namur. It was run like an American camp. We stayed in bunkhouses and ate in a dining hall, taking turns helping set and clear the tables and serving food. We had organized activities including arts and crafts, games, swimming etc...This camp was "very far" (about 50 miles) from Antwerp by the standards of the day: we first traveled two hours on a train, then were met by a bus. It was quite exciting for a child who never left the city. When we visited the place in 1976, the location was as lovely as ever and the camp was still there, essentially unchanged.

One year I went to a Y camp during Spring break (which in Belgium was known as Easter vacation and lasted two weeks). Another time, I think it was in 1938 Charles and I were sent to a children's pension at the shore in Coxyde for 10 days. Charles and Joe were friends and his mother called mine about this place and asked if she would mind if Joe went too. Maman was very pleased. She thought it would make our train trip safer to have Joe along, as he was "serious and responsible." The trip involved changing trains in Ghent. The memorable event of that vacation was the day when the three of us rented bikes and rode to the neighboring town of La Panne (where we stayed during the siege of Dunkirk). On the way back we became worried that we would exceed the 1-hour rental time, so Joe pushed me most of the way back to make me move faster. It never occurred to us that we'd just have to pay for the overtime. I don't know what dire consequences we were conjuring up.

World War II

The Warnings

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 and the next day France and Britain declared war on

Germany. A period that came to be known as the phony war in the West started on that day and lasted until the Spring of 1940 when the Germans invaded Denmark and Norway.

During that period of time my parents received many communications from the US consulate urging Americans to leave Belgium and return home. However, my parents were reluctant to leave their home in Antwerp to return to America. Maman was especially reluctant to leave, because of the good life that she was living. We lived in a nice, large apartment; mother had a live-in maid and could enjoy the luxury of afternoon teas in Antwerp's cafes and patisseries, regular bridge games and other social activities. It was unlikely that she would be able to enjoy this life style in the US, and indeed she did not. During all the years in Antwerp, Maman had returned to the US only once to visit her family. That was in 1929 when she returned to New York for her parents golden wedding anniversary. One of the reasons that she would not go back was that she hated sea travel. One time she accompanied Papa to London and was so sea sick that she suggested that he return to Antwerp, sell the house and move the whole family to London all to avoid the return trip across the English Channel. In contrast, Papa, as a naturalized citizen, had been required by law to return to the US every three years in order to retain his citizenship (this law has since been declared unconstitutional). So he went to New York every three years for a few weeks, and his return to Antwerp was always marked by gifts of some typically American gadgets and clothes.

Preparations

The political situation in Germany and the arrival of Jewish refugees did not seem to be a cause for alarm as far as I was aware of: my parents never discussed the matter in front of me. However, the American consulate had been sending letters to US citizens living in Belgium advising them of the risks of war and urging them to return to the US. Maman, the native American procrastinated.

Finally responding to consulate advice and perhaps even more so to Arthur's and Raymond's pleas, as well as to the political world situation my parents finally were ready to leave Belgium and join Arthur and Raymond in New York. Because the war in Europe had already started and in order to ensure safe passage, the State Department required Americans to travel on non-belligerent ships from a neutral port, which in our case happened to be Genoa in Italy. We had booked passage on a ship scheduled to leave from there on May 18, 1940. Friday, May 10, was the day for the movers to come and pack our belongings. Household belongings, including dishes, silver and linens were to be packed into huge wicker trunks. These and whatever furniture we were going to take with us were to be picked up by the movers on that day and taken to the port of Antwerp to be shipped directly to New York on a separate ship than the one we were taking. They never left, of course. Charles eventually found some of our belongings on the docks at the end of the war, in May or June 1945, when he visited Antwerp while in the Army. The rest had disappeared during the intervening years. He also found the silverware that had been stored in a vault at the Banque Nationale and arranged to have everything shipped to the States. During that visit to Antwerp he also discovered that Bon Papa had died of natural causes on the day that the Canadians liberated Antwerp. Bonne Maman was still alive, totally blind, living in the "nursing home" where she and Bon Papa had been hidden from the Germans by Dr Ludo van Bogaert. She died a couple of years later.

The many preparations for our departure had been taken care of. Charles and I had made our farewells in our respective schools on the 9th of May. All that remained was to pick up our French visas. Papa had plans in place for a stopover in Paris and we were very excited about the whole adventure.

The Invasion

I woke up to what sounded like thunder. The day was May 10th, a Friday. I thought that the movers were in the apartment. Could they be making all that noise? It was not long before I was told that the noises I was hearing were German planes bombing Antwerp. Belgium had been invaded at dawn. It was the day Papa was supposed to pick up the French visa, the last document we needed before leaving. When he went to the consulate that morning he was turned away: they were servicing French nationals only.

We spent Friday and Saturday at my grandparents'. On Sunday, as the situation grew more chaotic and the Germans pressed their advance, Papa decided that we would try to get to Italy without waiting for the French visa. Somehow he managed to hire a car with a driver to take us to the French border. Our suitcases were packed and the four of us and our luggage crowded into the small car and headed for the border.

My recollections of the "flight" are a blur. I cannot give an accurate account of where we went or whether we entered France at all before finally reaching the North Sea at La Panne. Our attempts to enter France were frustrated at every step. As I found out later, the rules for entering the country changed hourly. Some border crossings were open to French nationals only, others would also allow Belgian and Dutch nationals through but not other foreigners. Still others (but not all) would allow other nationals with valid visas in, but none would let other foreigners in without a valid visa. After trying a number of border crossings the driver finally dropped us off somewhere because he wanted to return to Antwerp.

Charles remembers going through Furnes and Ypres (now called Veurne and Yper respectively) He also remembers quite vividly that at the main border crossing into France where we ended up, everybody was allowed through except British and Americans! It is more likely that only Belgian, French and Dutch nationals were allowed in, as was Joe's experience at another crossing point. Anyway it was from there, wherever that was, that Charles remembers ending up in La Panne.

I remember individual incidents and events, but have no idea of their sequence or exactly where they occurred. I do remember travelling by train and stopping in one railroad station and papa going one way and Maman another looking for food and luckily being reunited without problem and reboarding the train before it left the station. I also remember "dining" on raw eggs!

I also remember all of us standing on the roadside in a small village as all kinds of transports were passing by and police or soldiers assigning refugees to vehicles that had space. We boarded a large truck and joined a family on their exodus. There was a large German shepherd on that truck that immediately made himself comfortable on Maman's feet. The head of the family at first looked to me like an ominous looking pirate with a black eyepatch, but he was actually very kind to his family and to us as well. We stopped overnight at a farm. The men, including Papa and Charles, spent the night in the barn. Maman and I sat on straight-back wooden chairs the whole night. What I remember best about that night were the

flies! We must have been given food either by the farm family or the owner of the truck. Charles got into trouble for playing his banjo, a fact not appreciated by papa. Charles remembers "almost getting lynched" because of his banjo playing.

After traveling perhaps for 10 days altogether from the time we left Antwerp we eventually reached La Panne, a resort on the Belgian coast a few miles East of Dunkirk, France, and moved into a small hotel.

Charles volunteered for work in the local hospital. His help was most welcome because as a boy scout he had earned his first aid merit badge. I learned recently that he had been put in charge of triage as the wounded arrived. Some responsibility for a 16 1/2 year old, but good training for the would-be physician. He would return to the hotel with blood on his socks. Naturally I was not allowed to leave Maman's side.

We were in La Panne throughout the siege of Dunkirk and on the night of the final retreat. We could see long lines of British troops on the beach, carrying their rifles and walking into the sea to board an incredible array of small and large boats while they were being strafed by German planes. (This scene was dramatically depicted in the movie Mrs. Miniver). Belgium surrendered on May 28. On the night of May 31 to June 1 there was a fierce bombardment by the Germans as they prepared to take the town. They arrived the next day. Charles remembers British trucks bringing all their medical supplies that they could not take with them. to the Belgian hospital where he was working

Papa had been offered passage, for himself, to England by a British officer but luckily he refused. The day after the Germans arrived Papa and Charles went to see the German commandant. where according to Charles Papa berated the German officer in fluent German for preventing American citizens from returning home and obtained coupons that allowed him to buy gas for a rented car. Eventually he managed to locate a car and a driver for it, buy gasoline and thus we returned to Antwerp. It was early in June 1940

Back in Antwerp

Since we did not have our apartment anymore, we first moved in with my grandparents for a few days. We later moved in with Uncle Lazar (my father's youngest brother) and Aunt Lena. They were very generous, and quite literally shared their bedroom with my parents while Charles and I slept with their two children. Uncle Lazar who also was an American citizen and his family eventually made it to the US in early 1941. His other brother, Uncle Sam, who was a Belgian citizen, did not escape and perished in Auschwitz with his family.

In that early period of the occupation obtaining food was not too difficult even though we had to use rationing books. One of the highlights I remember is the day we obtained butter with our ration coupons and then, and only on that day, being allowed to slather our bread with a thick layer of butter. After that we were more Spartan in its use.

I remember returning to school for a while. The semester ended soon after our return and we left shortly thereafter

It felt strange to see German soldiers walking in pairs or alone in the streets of Antwerp, however there was no problem with them at the time: the German soldiers were very "correct." The house we lived in was on a corner facing a wide street. There must have been military billets at the end of that street because every morning a formation of German soldiers would come by marching down the center of the street singing German marching songs. We would watch, hidden, from curtained windows. I hate to admit that I found their singing very lively and enjoyable.

Final Departure

My parents never were the kind who discussed or confided plans with their children, so we were not surprised when one day in August 1940, about two months after our return, we were told that papa had made arrangements for us to leave Antwerp. He had secured four seats on a bus, driven by an Italian, going to Bordeaux. via Paris.

Charles remembers that after we returned to Antwerp, Papa had started working through the American consulate, with other Americans (probably Jews) to try to get permission to leave Belgium. In preparation for the invasion of England the Germans had declared Belgium and parts of Northern and Western France a special military zone. It was known in French as the "Zone Interdite" - the Forbidden Zone. A special permit was required to leave the zone which was quite difficult to obtain. even though the US was still considered neutral and the Germans treated Americans with kid gloves.

The permit never came - or at least we never waited for it! The way we left Antwerp is another story: when the Germans invaded Belgium, the Belgian government in its infinite wisdom, rounded up all "enemy aliens", i.e. men of military age, and transported them to Western France. Most of them were German and Austrian Jewish refugees! (non-Jewish German nationals had left the country before the invasion) Papa discovered that there was an Italian national in Antwerp, i.e. an ally of the Germans, who owned a bus and who ran a racket transporting relatives, mostly wives, of the "enemy aliens" who had been deported to France and charging an exorbitant fee to bring them back to Antwerp, in what in most instances tragically turned out to be the first step towards the death camps. This Italian had carefully bribed the German border guards and thus was allowed to travel into Occupied France with his passengers. Papa had been able to secure four seats for us on that bus and that is how we left for Bordeaux in the middle of August.

The trip proceeded uneventfully until, to our horror the driver stopped to pick up a German hitchhiker. The sight of a German soldier mounting our bus filled us with fear, however the trip continued normally to Paris. I guess having the German hitchhiker on board was extra insurance. We stayed in Paris overnight. We went to the Portuguese consulate and obtained a visa, I believe the same day. Then, armed with the Portuguese visa it was a simple matter to get a Spanish transit visa, since we were not going stay in Spain.

We had dinner out in Paris and for the first time I ate rabbit (or was it a cat?) We then went on to Bordeaux with the same driver. In Bordeaux we stayed in a small inexpensive hotel and my parents spent their time making trips to the Kommandantur trying to obtain an exit visa from France. Charles and I spent our time wandering around, but certainly not sightseeing or engaging in any frivolous activity as our parents were not in the mood. Papa found out through the refugee grapevine that exit visas were easier to obtain in

Biarritz, so after two weeks or so in Bordeaux we went there. Somehow I vividly remember waiting on the station platform for the train to Biarritz. There we stayed in a pension. There was a couple with twin daughters about the same age as me, which made our stay very pleasant. Biarritz is a beautiful seaside resort and we were able to ramble on long walks. There we experienced some discomfort as one of the residents of the pension was a German soldier on Rest and Recuperation. Our diet in Biarritz seems to have been heavy on cantaloupe and string beans. By the time we left I was covered with red, blotchy hives all over, something I had to explain when I registered for school in New York. After another two weeks or so we finally received the required exit visas from the German Kommandantur. We packed our bags again, this time for the long overnight trip to Lisbon. We sat up all the way. No Pullman cars for us.

Lisbon

We reached Lisbon on a Monday night. Having spent the previous few months under black out conditions, seeing all the street lights and illuminations on was quite a startling sight. One of the first sights that Charles recalls is that of a US naval shore patrol at the railroad station, and later on an American warship anchored in the roads of Lisbon harbor in case it was needed to evacuate American citizens. We stayed in a nice hotel in the center of town, the Avenida Palace. When Joe and I went to Portugal in 1987 we found the hotel, but I did not recognize it. One funny episode I remember is Charles and I coming down to the dining room for breakfast by ourselves. We found the rolls very stale, so we hid them in our napkin on our lap and asked the waiter for more rolls. The next batch was just as hard. It was the kind of hard rolls that we were not accustomed to!

In Lisbon Papa must have wired my brothers of our arrival. All we needed now was enough money to buy tickets for the ship. I think that it was Uncle Arnold Glassheib (my mother's sister's husband) who sent us the money. Charles remembers that we could have obtained passage on an American Export Lines ship on the Wednesday after our arrival in Lisbon. However, Papa decided that we could use the relaxation of a week in Lisbon and thus we left on the following Wednesday on the ss Excalibur of the American Export Lines. (All their ships had names that started with Ex) Thus we stayed in Lisbon only ten days, a very short time compared to the time other refugees had to spend there.

I had never been at sea before. After we sailed Papa told me that I wouldn't get seasick if I just concentrated on looking at the horizon. He walked me around the deck and I felt very little discomfort. I shared a cabin with my parents, while Charles was assigned a bed in the library, which had been converted to a male dormitory. Shortly after the start of the voyage, there was a knock at the cabin door. The steward holding some articles of clothing at arms length, said: "These are your son's." Poor Charles had gotten seasick in his quarters; I guess he could not see the horizon from his bunk! He soon recovered, however. I remember that at meal times Charles and I shared one bottle of beer, but the dining steward always made sure to drain the last drops from the other bottles for us.

After nine days at sea we arrived in New York on October 5, 1940.

New York 1940

Arthur (who was still called Sylvain at the time) and Raymond met us at the dock in Jersey City. They had rented an apartment for us in the same house they were living in on Riverside Drive around West 79th Street. We probably stayed there about one month when Papa rented a larger apartment at 875 West End Avenue where we all lived together. My parents remained in that apartment until the early fifties

I met a lot of new relatives, Maman's brothers and sisters and their families. I was even taken for my first ice cream soda at the corner drug store by my cousin Milton on that first day in New York.

It was October 1940 and time for Charles and me to start school. Normally I should have gone to Julia Richmond in the East 50's. This would have involved traveling alone by bus and subway, something that was deemed out of the question for sheltered little me. Instead it was decided that I would go to the same school as Charles even though it was out of district.

We took the subway to George Washington High School at 192nd Street and Audubon Avenue. The registration process seemed overwhelming. I was on my own, because my parents did not get involved, as was typical in those days. I had no school records with me and I had to speak with each department head in order to establish my credits so they could place me in the appropriate grade, something that was not easy to do because of the differences in the school systems. Not being familiar with the building layout and the room numbering system I had become lost while trying to locate the departmental offices and was close to tears when I ran into Charles in the hallway. He took me in hand and led me to the lunchroom - another novelty for me (in Belgium we went home for lunch). Another strange aspect to me was the fact that ,while all the classes (except gym) were coed, the boys and girls were separated in the cafeteria.

I was placed in the 9th grade, except that for English classes I was assigned to a special section for foreigners, the rough equivalent of today's ESL (English as a Second Language) After one or two years I was reassigned to a regular an English classes at the appropriate level.

For several weeks Charles and I routinely took the subway to school: first the local from 102nd street to 96th street, then the express train to 192nd. Then one day we found ourselves in a strange station in the Bronx. All this time we had not known that there were two different trains leaving from the West 96th Street express platform! What to do? Because we didn't know what the lateness procedure was we took the train back and went home. From then on we made sure that we boarded the Van Cortland express.

American high school was much easier for me than the Athénée. and did much better than in Antwerp I became an honor student and was admitted to the Honor Society, Arista, and graduated GWHS in January 1943.

I entered Hunter College as a pre-Social Work major. Hunter was a prestigious school at the time that required very high grades for admission and was tuition free I don't know if I would have been able to go to college otherwise because Papa was not an ardent believer in higher education for girls. While in college I worked part time at the NY Public Library on 42nd street as a page in the "catacombs." Later on I worked in the credit department of Weber and Heilbroner, a very nice men's and ladies' clothing store.

After graduation I became a receptionist in the Social Service Department at St Luke's Hospital and worked my way up to social worker aide and finally to full fledged medical social worker earning the

munificent sum of \$35 a week. One of my assignments was in the VD clinic of the Dermatology and Syphilology Department, tracing our patients' sexual contacts! It would have been a shock for Maman who at one time had screened my baby-sitting jobs. At the same time I took evening courses towards a Master's degree in Social Work at Fordham University. In 1948 I was admitted to the NYU School of Social Work full time and had to choose between marriage and school.

Joe and I dated sporadically until the spring of '48 when he got his car. Until then the travel time from Newark to my house, which could take anywhere from 1 1/2 hours to three hours discouraged frequent visits. I remember New Year's Eve 1943-44 when we had a date. He had bought tickets for the Merry Widow, but I had to work from 7 to 10 pm. So Joe went alone to the first act and then picked me up at the New York Public Library on 42nd street. We saw the rest of the operetta together and then went to Times Square to watch the ball drop at midnight. It took him over three hours to get home that night. Not surprisingly I did not see him for several months after that!

He bought a car in February 1948 and was able to drive to my house in less than 45 minutes. Not only that. He was taking graduate courses at Stevens in Hoboken two evenings a week, after work and it only took him twenty minutes to drive to my house after classes at eight o'clock! We became engaged in the Summer of '48 and were married in my parents' apartment the following December. We lived in a New York hotel room on West 100 street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue until our apartment in East Paterson was ready in March '49. While in the hotel I used a one burner hot plate to prepare breakfast. A box on the windowsill was our refrigerator. One day it somehow landed in the street, but fortunately didn't hurt anyone. My parents generously provided dinner daily and on week-ends we frequently went to the Strips in Newark. Even then parking was sometimes a problem. While generally speaking it was possible to find a parking space within a few blocks, there were at least a couple times when Joe ended up parking on 86th street and taking a subway to get home from there.

I resigned from St Luke's in April 1950, four months before Lynn was born. Joe was laid off from his job two weeks later, but fortunately found another one within a week. The rest is history.