Hannah Fischer

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Dr. Hanna Fischer is a woman that pursues her life's goals with great energy. She and her twin brother Rafael Erwin grew up in a very unusual family. Their father was a rabbi and their mother a journalist with close ties to the Communist Party.

That had as much of an affect on her as her two-year nursery school education with Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter, during her years as an emigrant in London. For her, the children were always the most important.

Despite studying medicine in Vienna very late, despite her high awards – in 2003 she received the Otto Glöckel Medal from the city of Vienna – she never forgot the children.

From 1986 until 2002 she took on, on a voluntary basis and with great engagement, the pedagogical direction of an aid project that aims to provide nursery school training to Sahrawi women.

- **My Family History**

Several years ago my brother and I went to the city and national archives in Bratislava, located in the old town next to city hall and the Jewish museum. The archive was very impressive. The books of birth, marriage, and death certificates are so large that they need to be brought to the tables on rolling carts. We were looking for our ancestors and found names and dates.

My grandparents on my father's side were named Wilhelm and Fanny Fischer. They were married on 27 November 1881 in Bratislava. My grandmother was born in Bratislava in 1853. Her parents were Philipp and Katharina Kärpel, née Lampel. My grandfather was born in Waag-Neustadt [*Nove Mesto nad Vahom, today Slovakia*] in 1847.

He was a private instructor and the son of Sara and Latzko Fischer, who owned a locksmith's shop. I assume my grandparents were very religious, since they pushed their son, my father, to become a rabbi. Something happened. I have never met them and my father never spoke of them. It might have something to do with the fact that my father would have rather become a gardener than a rabbi.

My grandparents had three children: Paula, Bela Max – my father, and Sigmund.

Aunt Paula was married to Heinrich Mandl. At some point during my childhood they left Bratislava for Vienna. I think my brother and I were already nine or ten years old, because I remember our mother showing us the way to their apartment and then we often went there by ourselves.

They lived in the first district near Fleischmarkt, where Uncle Heinrich was the caretaker. It was a beautiful old middle-class house; I think it was number 14 or 16. Uncle Heinrich once said he wanted to show us something and led us through the iron door to the cellar.

We walked down a lot of steps – there were numerous passageways that were braced but still intact. I would say it was at least six floors, which, as Uncle explained to us, led to St. Stephen's Cathedral. Aunt Paula was very fond of children and would always cook for us. Uncle Heinrich and Aunt Paula often went with us to The Prater [*a large public park in Vienna*] on Sundays. Since they had no children of their own, we surely enriched their lives.

In 1939 they fled to America and lived first in New York, in Brooklyn. I don't know how they fared in America. My mother and Aunt Paula still exchanged letters after the war. I don't know when they died. I was no longer in touch with them. But they did later relocate to Miami.

Uncle Sigmund was born in 1889. He lived in Bratislava. His wife was called Lea and they had three daughters: Fanny, Aranka, and Lida. The entire family – that I never once saw – was deported to the ghetto in Opole [*Poland*] in 1941 and murdered.

My father, Max Bela, was born in Bratislava on 26 June 1883 and circumcised seven days later; that comes from a document. He finished rabbinical studies in Bratislava. He served in the Austro-Hungarian Army from 1914-1918. In a document from 25 December 1923 to the director of the Jewish Community, he wrote: "In 1914 I volunteered for pastoral services in the Vienna military commando and was assigned to the pastoral care of the Red Cross' sanatoriums, which also included Community Reserve Hospital 8 [Rothschild Hospital].

Considering that I was also available to the Jewish Community at all times as deputy to the hospital spiritual director, Leon Smolensky, Vice President Dr. Gustav Kohn S.A. ordered that I be paid an ex-presidential fund of 100 krone per month for this service.

I was lauded multiple times by the military commando for my self-sacrificing work for the war, and for my outstanding contribution to military medical care, I was awarded with the war decoration the Red Cross Badge of Honour, Class II at face value…"

My grandparent's on my mother's side – Daniel and Mina Treu – lived in Hagen, a city in Germany close to Cologne. I never knew my grandfather. I know that the family was one of teachers and rabbis. However, grandfather was a merchant and owned a shop. I assume he died relatively early.

Grandmother Mina Treu was born in 1861 and spent the last months of her life with us in Vienna. She was very sick, but I didn't witness much of that. She died on 23 July 1932 in the Rothschild Hospital in the 18th district. I was seven years old. Apparently she died of cancer – many in this family die of cancer. She was buried in the Central Cemetery and I was allowed to attend her funeral. That was my first encounter with death: suddenly Grandmother was gone.

My mother, Luise, had three siblings: Frieda, Else, and Max.

Frieda was born in 1897 and was married to Bolek Goldreich. They had two children, Daniel and Martin Rafael. The family moved to Palestine in 1933, after Hitler's accession to power. Frieda died in Palestine in 1937.

Else was married to Siegmund Samuel Goldreich. She had already passed away in 1929 in Germany. Samuel and the three children – who in Israel are called Abraham Na'aman, Schlomo Hans Na'amam, and Dr. Dor Na'amam – left Germany shorty after Hitler was named chancellor, and immigrated to Palestine.

Max Treu was married to Ida Rosenfeld. They had two children: Lutz and Marianne. They also immigrated to Palestine after Hitler's takeover of power.

In 1994 my brother an I met a lot of relatives in Israel, including Joschi Zur, one of my mother's cousins – I think a second cousin – who had undertaken a research project on my mother's family and compiled an entire book. The book is on the Treu and Steinweg families. There were a lot of weddings amongst the Treus and Steinwegs. Most of the people in this family immigrated to Palestine before the Second World War or sent their children to Palestine.

My mother Lusie was born on 21 March 1889 in Hagen.

My parents met in 1923 at the 13th Zionist Congress in Karlsbad. My mother was attending the conference as a journalist and my father as a rabbi from the Vienna Jewish Community, who was responsible for religious welfare in many of Vienna's hospitals.

My mother was already 34 years old, an employed woman who had already been working for considerable time as a journalist. She was a very emancipated woman, lived in the region around Essen, so in Hagen, Drove, or even in Essen - I don't know where exactly.

She had received a college education and then completed an apprenticeship, learned stenography and typing, and afterwards became a journalist. She worked in the Rhineland and wrote mainly political articles for newspapers. At one point I saw one of my mother's certificates. Unfortunately I don't remember where that was.

After my parents met at the congress, my mother came to Vienna and they were married on 12 November 1924.

- **My Childhood**

My brother Rafael Erwin and I were born on 27 September 1925. My mother was a petite but strong woman. For nine months she had two children in her stomach who were normal weight at birth.

That was a sensation! We were delivered by cesarean section in the 19th district, at the children's clinic in Glanzing.

My brother weighed three and a half kilos and I weight three and a quarter kilos. Today it's still rare to give birth to normal-weight twins. The scar on my mother's stomach never fully healed; we were thus always present for her. We were a pair of siblings that was hard to miss.

At first we lived in an apartment from the Vienna Jewish Community on Jagdschloss-Gasse, which I no longer remember. My father was given this apartment due to his religious welfare work in the hospital for the city of Vienna. There he looked after the Jewish patients and set up holiday and Shabbat services.

We then needed to move out of the apartment, because my father and the famous city councilor Tandler had a big argument. I don't know what it was about, but I can imagine that my father could be somewhat persistent when he thought he was right – I inherited this quality from him. We were evicted and moved into another apartment, which was also in the 13th district, on Briaghi-Gasse. The apartment had two rooms, a kitchen, and a large vestibule.

There was no bathroom and the toilet – an outhouse – was in the hall. The famous bassena [*a public fountain typical for old Viennese apartment houses*] was also located in the hall, but later water was connected to the apartment. For the conditions back then it was a good middle-class apartment, and we lived in an area that was great for children, since there was a garden we could use, which was an absolute privilege.

However, my earliest memories are not of Vienna, but of Germany. I don't know why, but my mother left my father when we were still very young. We lived in a small children's home and my mother visited us on the weekend. She needed to work to earn money.

They children's home was on the edge of a forest and I can remember the sandbox we used to play in. I also remember a living room and a good-looking man in a purple suit who visited us. I've never forgotten this purple suit and later my mother even knew who the owner of the suit was, namely a distant relative.

Apart from that I can't remember Germany and the journey there and then back again two or three years later. In Vienna my brother and I were in a *Kinderfreunde* preschool for a period of time, which was close to our apartment. It was either a children's group or else a proper preschool, but it wasn't a public one.

Across from our apartment there was a very large property from the Jewish Community, which my father managed. The only other Jewish family in our neighborhood lived in a small house on the property. They had two children: Sara – who was already a teenager and wasn't interested in us – and Numek. He was our age and we were good friends. The family fled to America after the German invasion in March 1938, and when Numek visits Vienna, he always pays me a visit.

There was a fairly old house with a garden on the property. Ever since we were little we had to pick weeds there. We didn't care too much for that, but we had a large lawn with a small slope and trees to climb. That was paradise. The entire terrain belonged to Nunek and us. In the summer Jewish children came from the 2nd and 20th districts to relax.

On Saturdays during our grade school years my brother and I always walked – it was a long march – to the temple on Eitelberger-Gasse. The temple was destroyed during the pogrom [*Kristallnacht*] in November 1938. Today there is a memorial plaque.

We had a kosher household; my mother separated milk and meat products. Because of my father it couldn't have been any other way. Ever since he was little my brother didn't adhere to it. He readily ate ham whenever he was visiting somewhere.

I didn't do this and even today don't especially like eating ham. We also observed Shabbat. My mother would light the candles, but this didn't occur as something so strictly religious. Friday evening and Saturday were the only days of the week when we had meat.

Our father brought the meat "from the city," meaning Vienna's inner districts. He didn't have guests. My father looked after the Jewish patients in the hospitals, even on Shabbat and the high holidays. Especially for Passover my mother would set up a canteen kitchen in the old house, which my parents used to provide patients with kosher food.

My brother and I always had to help, even with carrying the food. There was a Jewish old age home on Lainzer-Strasse that was located under the train. I remember my father would set up Passover evenings for the old people there. I can remember the matzo and a lot of other things.

My mother had a housekeeper who cleaned and cooked. We didn't have a nursemaid; we were self-sufficient from a very young age.

We had a very lovely childhood with a lot of freedom. We were seldom at home. We would hang onto the horse-drawn carriages that transported large blocks of ice for the old iceboxes until the driver chased us away with the whip. We would scramble up the wall at the Lainzer zoo, which was broken back then, and jump into the park.

There was a cinema on Waldvogel-Gasse, which was about ten minutes from our house. We would also go around ringing strangers' doorbells. We would either ask stupid questions or else run away.

My brother and I also ready a lot of books. They were often books for adults, like "The Tunnel" by Bernhard Kellermann. That's a novel dealing with social problems, among other things. We had books by Lion Feuchtwanger and Egon Erwin Kisch, and also by Erich Kästner, like "Emil and the Detectives," Mark Twain, and Karl May.

- **My School Years**

Our elementary school was on Speisinger-Strasse. It was the school closest to our apartment. My brother wrote poorly, he had a "heavy hand." In the first grade the teacher always pestered him horribly. I gave it a lot of a thought and I think that his situation in the first grade was the deciding factor in his dislike of school and everything related to it throughout his school years, even though he was very intelligent.

In the second grade the teacher decided she didn't want any "Jew children" in her class and we were transferred to the elementary school on Lainzer-Strasse, which was lucky because our teacher there was excellent. Together with Nunek we were the only Jewish children in the new

grade school.

We were a very normal pair of siblings. My brother was naturally stronger than me and would often hit me, and I would then seek revenge by other means. As long as we were both on one class, meaning in grade school, he would copy the assignments from me, if he even did them.

Of course if we were fighting I wouldn't let him. On one Sunday we were supposed to go to Aunt Paula and Uncle Heinrich's and go with them to the Prater. Our mother, who wanted to be sure that Rafael finished his homework beforehand, said we could only go when we finished our assignments. The result was that Rafael went with Aunt and Uncle to the Prater and I stayed at home: I had taken my mother's word seriously and there was something I hadn't done yet.

I was a star pupil and Rafael just did enough to not get left back. My father was very nice to us, but he found it terrible that his daughter and not his son was the successful one, since his demands on his son were higher than on his daughter.

He was abysmally conservative – in contrast to my mother. My mother was the one who primarily dealt with us and even wrote stories for us, like about the Gracchus Brothers; those were very advanced Roman senators at the time of the slave revolt.

I grew up in a non-Jewish neighborhood. That might be why the anti-Semitism was especially noticeable. We had a lot of fun back then, but were, of course, confronted with anti-Semitism ever since we were young. But we defended ourselves.

My brother was good with his fists – very respected for his punch – and when necessary I'd throw myself into the fray. I feel that "defend yourself" – following the expression, "that which doesn't kill me, makes me stronger" – leads to the acquisition of powers of self-assertion for life.

We didn't find the Jew-baiting especially bad, because it had been part of our lives from the start. People were often taunting us with sayings like "Jud, Jud, spuck in Hut, sag der Mutter, das war gut" [*Jew, Jew, spit in the hat, tell your mother it was good*]. We also had good friends that stood by us, but there were a lot of Nazi families in the area. For example, the owners of the house, the Schindler family, were illegal Nazis.

The husband, an architect, had died, and Mrs. Schindler had three sons and a daughter. The daughter was already married, Hermann, the youngest son, was our age. If he couldn't find anyone better, he would play with us. But whenever he played with others that cursed at us, he'd curse at us along with them. He came back from Russia with a shot to the head, and then went under with alcohol.

The eldest son was an illegal Nazi. He had studied medicine, was a doctor, and never returned from the war. Max, the middle son, was 16 years old back then and also an illegal Nazi, and after the German invasion in 1938, immediately turned up in an SA uniform – on the first day already.

In 1988 I was to write an article about my childhood in Vienna for the Pedagogical Institute. I went to the house on Biraghi-Gasse. I wanted to channel the atmosphere from back then. Max was still living in his parents' apartment. He was friendly to me and seemed to enjoy seeing me. "How are you?

I can still remember your mother very clearly; she was always diligently clattering at the typewriter, and your father, he would go into the garden mornings at sunrise. Such industrious, decent people they were!" I became nauseous.

Then he complained to me how bad things were for him. Then he asked what I was doing. I told him that I was the director of College for Nursery Education in Florisdorf. "I always knew there were plenty of competent people in this Jewish family.

What is your brother doing?" I told him my brother was the director of a technical company in North America. "Well," he said, "the Jews really are going places, then." I didn't say anything and just let him speak. When I said my goodbyes, I thought, "serves him right," even though he really was a poor fellow.

In 1934 I had a series of throat infections and the doctor at the children's clinic in Glanzig sent me to convalescence. My mother had been in medical contact with the clinic since our birth; they looked after us. Glanzig had a convalescence home in Rimini in Italy.

The home had a very authoritarian structure. There were a lot of Nazi children from our social class there on convalescence, and three girls enjoyed pestering me, the Jew girl. For example, we were only allowed outdoors wearing a hat, and they always hid my hat so that I constantly had problems with the personnel who had no idea what was taking place.

One evening, after lights-out, I crept into the bed of a girl I was friends with. A nurse caught me in the act and said, in front of everyone, "now you're going into the attic with the bats." Because I was familiar with bats from where I'd been in Lainz, I wasn't sacred; I knew that they didn't to anything.

I spent that night in the hospital room and in the morning the others wondered why I was so cheerful. I told them firstly, I wasn't afraid of bats, and secondly, I had had a good night in the hospital room. From that moment forward I was the hero of the group. That also won over the three anti-Semites, since they saw that what they had learned about the Jews wasn't true.

My friend Elfi lived in a villa on Biraghi-Gasse. When Hitler came her parents forbade her to communicate with me, but we kept seeing each other in secret. Then Elfi had other friends, but her parents didn't like them at all. After the war Elfi told me that her mother had said, "I would much prefer the Jew them over them!" But then the "Jew girl" was no longer available!

My father was a handsome man with thick, black hair. For as long as I knew him – that was until he was 58 – he had a full head of black hair. People said that his hair was white upon his release after a year of imprisonment in Dachau.

He only wore "pious clothes" when he was working, otherwise you couldn't tell he was a rabbi. He definitely wasn't an orthodox rabbi; otherwise he would never have tolerated my mother's independence. An orthodox man would have never allowed that. Of course my father prayed daily, but I rarely saw him do it.

We had a very different rhythm from my father. He would wake up at 4 in the morning, then go over to the garden and work there until he left for work. When he came back from work he would

undress, eat, and go back to the garden. I don't know how he did that in winter.

My father was always in charge of our pocket money. We would save our allowance, but I don't remember what for. Once he came home, beaming. With my pocket money he had bought a rosebush and with Rafael's, a currant bush. We were eight years old and you can imagine how delighted we were not to have any more pocket money, but that we were instead the owners of rose and currant bushes. That was my father! He wasn't political, but if he had been, he would have been a monarchist. He was a conservative man and held beliefs that fit the 19th century.

My parents never went on vacation. But my mother was in Palestine in 1937 because her sister Frieda was very sick and died that same year. She spoke a lot back then about the conflict between the Palestinians and the Jews. She gave me the impression that the English had actually instigated the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, since the Jews had lived relatively peaceably with the Arabs and Christians for a long time.

There was none of this horrible hostility under the Turkish rule. The Brits had allied themselves with the Arabs and then with the Jews – and that's how things escalated. That was my mother's opinion and that's what she reported on after her first trip to Palestine. My mother wasn't a Zionist, that wouldn't have fit in with her political views, but she sympathized with a Jewish state in Palestine.

My mother continued to work as a freelance journalist after my parents' divorce. She was very politically active; she was a Communist. She had written, for example, an almost prophetical article about the National Socialists and their combat in the newspaper "Die Warhheit," which was a Communist newspaper back then.

After 1933 she published a hectograph magazine called "Die Rote Dreizehn" [*The Red Thirteen*]. There are two ore three editions of the paper in the documents archive of the Austrian Resistance. In it my mother wrote about political topics. The conflicts between, on the one hand, the Social Democrats and the Republikanischer Schutzbund [*Republican Protection League*] and, on the other hand, the Christian Social Party and the Heimwehr [*Home Guard*] lead to a civil war in February 1934.

The revolt failed, among other reasons, because the general strike called for by the Social Democratic Party had not been carried through completely. The result was many dead and wounded on both sides. Some of the leaders of the revolt were executed. The relatives of those imprisoned were often left without an income and the tellers at the magazine "Die Rote Dreizehn" collected for the families of the imprisoned reds.

There was, for example, a very interesting article on Mrs. Münichreiter. Münichreiter was one of the leaders of the revolt and was shot and brought, badly injured, on a gurney to the execution. There is a street in the 13th district named after him. There is also an article from my mother in which she reports on how one of the leading ladies of the Christian Welfare came to Mrs. Münichreiter and suggested she go to the church and ask for help. And Mrs. Münichreiter gave this lady a piece of her mind. My mother wrote this story very descriptively.

On 12 February 1924 we were sent home early from school, because the clashes had begun. At home we climbed a walnut tree in the garden across from the property and observed the fighting in the city.

In 1935 our home was raided. They swept the house from top to bottom and from bottom to top and arrested my mother because she had worked for the “Rote Hilfe” – those were Communists and Social Democrats that were forbidden in Austria in 1934. There was trial and the penalty was originally three months in prison.

But then a hunger strike broke out in the “Liesl” – that’s what the Viennese called the police prison in the Rossauer Barracks where my mother was sitting out her sentence. They wrongly took my mother for a ringleader and she had two stay in prison for three more months. My father visited her and didn’t reproach her. That was very big of him. Our housemaid took care of us during those six months.

After grade school, in 1935, we took our entrance exams for high school at Schuhmeier-Platz in the 16th district. You had to take an entrance exam in those days. I passed the exam with a “very good” and my brother didn’t pass. But I was turned away because of a supposed lack of places.

Those were the Dollfuss years and there were very obviously anti-Semitic. My father then said to me, “Well, then you’re going to the Chajes High School.” That was the Jewish high school on Staudinger-Gasse in the 20th district. I cried my eyes out, since I didn’t want to go to the orthodox people. I imagined it was just full of religious people with peyes [*sidelocks*] walking around.

To this my father said, “Good, then you’ll go to the lower secondary school [*Realschule*].” I didn’t want that either, but I did want to study.

Since my father was an employee of the Jewish Community, it wasn’t a problem to enroll me into the Chajes High School. I think I was the 39th student in my class. I was very happy at this school for three years.

At the Chajes School, boys and girls were taught together. We were a very good class community, had two representatives – a boy and a girl as an assistant. For two years I was voted assistant to the class speaker. The director, Viktor Kellner, was authoritarian and, because of this, not very popular.

But the teachers were wonderful, and, in part, very progressively and socially-minded. Jewish teachers, who experienced anti-Semitism in the middle schools, rejoiced when they were allowed to teach at the Chajes High School, meaning the school could really chose their teachers. Our teachers were exceptional experts and not all orthodox, as I had assumed. There were orthodox students and the religion teachers, who were orthodox.

By and large it was a normal school, except for the fact that we had Saturdays free and had to go to school on Sunday. That was very unpleasant for me, of course. Every day I made the long journey from the 13th to the 20th district. We had an hour of Hebrew every day.

Because of this additional Hebrew lesson we had class until 2PM and then also twice a week in the afternoons. On those days I got lunch money from my parents. I would only buy a dry roll with it and spend the rest on ice cream and books. When I had class in the afternoon I had a break, during which time I just prowled around, since it would have taken too long to go home. I was the only one in the class living so far away.

The Scheer family lived near the school, on Klosterneuburger-Strasse. Esther Scheer was one of my mother's political consorts and was with her in prison. Her husband was a photographer, an artist, and artistically retouched his photographs. They had a daughter who was a bit younger than me.

I often went to the Scheer's when I had class in the afternoon. They were very nice to me and also gave me something to eat. The Scheer family immigrated to America in time, then came back to Vienna after the war and opened a business at Holland-Strasse 6. The parents died in the 1950s and the daughter took over the shop. Then she married a foreigner before I lost touch with her.

I had the reputation of being a good student, so the Hebrew teacher noticed during the first semester that I couldn't do anything. I got the only failing grade of my life. That at least motivated me to study sporadically. We translated the "Chumash" [*Pentateuch*], which I also found interesting. But I never was able to get my grade past a 2 [*good*].

Dr. Stella Klein-Löw [*later a SPÖ member to the National Council*] was my Latin teacher. Her niece, Lydia, was in my class and whose case was similar to my brother's. She wasn't a good learner and was always threatened with failure. Lydia became my friend and Dr. Klein-Löw asked me to study with Lydia. Lydia improved and then really pulled through.

Dr. Klein-Löw was a wonderful teacher. For example, the class clown wrote with chalk on the lectern chair. She came into the classroom, saw it, took her tissue and wiped off the seat, showed off the tissue and said, "Look, I almost got all of that on my skirt, then I would have had to get my skirt cleaned. Is that what you wanted?" That was a great way of showing us that it wasn't really that funny.

Our math teacher was an authoritarian sort. We called him the yellow glasses-snake and had even begun writing a novel about the yellow glasses-snake. I read the first two chapters aloud to the class and they had a good laugh.

A German teacher at our school, Sonja Wachtel, later became a somewhat famous writer in Israel. She was very progressive and she taught us a lot about literature.

Our gym teacher, Ms. Löwenthal, was very sweet and very social. We went on ski trips with her. I was a good athlete, but didn't have any ski equipment. Since it was her concern that all the kids should be able to come along, she arranged the proper equipment for me.

- **During the War**

The time from March 1938 until the end of the 1938 school year is unforgettable. Those were my last months in Vienna before emigrating. A lot of students were coming to the school who had been expelled from other schools for being Jewish. At that time I think there were over 50 children in the class. The children who arrived made a deep impression on me.

They were all very depressed, because some of them didn't even know that they were Jewish. They were often from baptized families, raised Christian, and suddenly they were Jewish. I won't ever be able to forget that. The whole class looked after these children; we took them in completely. But there was already an atmosphere of dissolution; several knew they were going to emigrate. I was just a "school for the time being" for many of the students.

My Latin teacher, Dr. Klein-Löw, was able to flee to England where she worked as a maid. Lydia made it to America. Nelly Szabo, also a friend from school, also fled to America. We were in contact for a good while, but when you don't ever see each other you lose touch at some point. Many from my class were able to successfully flee, but not all. Mostly it was better-off families that made it. The poorer families often couldn't flee. Sometimes they were able to at least send their children away.

Like all Jewish children, my brother was also expelled from his school and then had to go to a "collection school" [*Sammelschule*] for Jews in the 14th district.

My father had bought and worked a piece of property near the Aspanger Airport – this airport has been around since 1912. He bought it there because it was cheap. So every weekend we went from one side of Vienna to the other, to Essling – that was a long trip.

We had to transfer at Schwedenplatz; the wonderful ice-cream parlor that's still there was also around back then. Each time we received an ice cream for around 10 groschen. At the end of March 1938 my father was arrested. The neighbor of the property in Essling was a Nazi – we knew that. And this neighbor wanted our property.

My father was thus summoned and asked to sign off that he was giving his property to the neighbor. My father refused to give his signature with the argument that he had purchased the property and was on the deed, and didn't see any reason to hand it over to the neighbor. He thought that as a former front-line solider he would naturally be respected by the Nazis. The Nazis respect nothing. The arrested and interned him in the 20th district, in a school on Karajan-Gasse.

That's where Jews were collected and deported to Dachau. My father was on the so-called "Prominent Transport" to the Dachau concentration camp on 1 April 1938. Among the 150 prisoners there were well-known politicians and opponents of the National Socialist regime, as well as Christian Socialists, Monarchists, Social Democrats, Communists, and around 50-60 people of Jewish faith or background.

Starting in 1936 my mother began placing Jewish girls in England as maids as part of an organization set up in cooperation with the Jewish Community. In 1938, a few days after the German invasion, our house was searched again. This search differed from the one in 1936 because it was much more brutal. They didn't hold back slicing open our feather beads and destroying many objects. All the books were pulled out and partly torn. My brother and I were there. That was an important political education for us.

My mother put a packet of paper in my hand and sent me to the toilet. Those papers would have been dangerous for her. I tore up everything and threw it in the toilet; it was gone. So they didn't find anything that could have been really dangerous for my mother, but they did find the suitcase with all the documents for the England Action.

They confiscated the suitcase because they thought they could make a case for spying or something out of it. Those were Nazi younglings who couldn't speak English and weren't very educated anyway.

Approximately 14 days after the search my mother was summoned to the district office on Hietzinger-Brücke. She took me along because she thought the Nazis would behave a bit more moderately towards her in the presence of a child. She was afraid, since my father was already imprisoned at this time.

We went to the Superior Nazi and he shouted brutally at my mother: “The more of them you place, the better.” He behaved the way you would expect from a real Nazi. At the end he said, “And it would be best if you just take one of these permits for yourself.” My mother took this remark seriously. She immediately applied for a permit, took one of the maid positions for herself, and applied for our exit permits.

Today I am convinced that this Nazi wasn’t so malicious and wanted to give us a tip with his last remark. But since there were about two or three other SA officers present in the room, he could only do it in this brutal way. Afterwards my mother asked me to write down what I had experienced there, and somewhere I still have it.

My brother and I never saw our father again. When he was released from the concentration camp we were no longer in Austria. My father’s letters from the camp were an upsetting experience for us, since they sounded like this: Dear Liesl, dear children!

Then a large portion would be cut out and at the bottom it would say: Greetings and kisses from your father, Bela. I can’t imagine what my father could have written conscious of the fact that he was imprisoned in a concentration camp, what he wouldn’t have been allowed to write.

We sent packages to him in the concentration camp in Dachau. Maybe he wrote that he received the packages. I don’t know. But in any case it was something that very powerfully demonstrated the nature of the new regime.

When I went to school I saw Jews in the city center that had to wash the streets, I experienced the population’s reaction and took the open threats seriously. It was a clear signal for everyone that wanted to know. It wasn’t difficult to see that fleeing was necessary, even if we didn’t leave the country readily and happily. There was also a drop of melancholy and fear. Fear of what they future may bring and, of course, fear for our father. Rafael and I left for London shortly before our thirteenth birthday.

Our mother brought us to the Westbahnhof train station. I can remember, I still have this feeling very strongly within in, I knew very well back then: I am coming back! We knew our mother was coming two, three weeks after us, but we didn’t know that she sent us earlier because she was afraid the war would break out and we’d be doomed. Many children went on the Kindertransports to England without their parents and never saw them again. Luckily we weren’t as clever as we are now.

My mother dismantled the apartment but didn’t along take any furniture, only linens and such things. She distributed some of the things from our apartment amongst friends, since it was clear my father wouldn’t be allowed to enter the apartment if he got released. My mother came two or three weeks after as, after depositing a permit for my father at the English Embassy.

Maybe my father was released from Dachau because of the permit, but when he was back in Vienna – that was in July of August 1939 – the British Embassy didn't officially exist any more. Officially they were on holiday – since that was time for holidays – but they never returned, since war was foreseeable.

For some time my father stayed in Budapest illegally, but was then deported and returned to Vienna. In Vienna he lived with other Jews in a so-called "collection apartment" [*Sammelwohnung*]. Since the Jews had their apartments taken from them, many Jewish families lived together in one apartment. I think my father was in the 2nd district. In September 1940 he was able to board one of four ships attempting to reach Palestine illegally.

In the Romanian Danube port of Tulcea the passengers were relocated to three ocean steamships. Instead of the envisaged 150 passengers, there were – on the "Atlantic" for example – 18,000 fleeing passengers. The journey was very dramatic.

The crew went on strike, demanded more wages, but nevertheless, after more than three months, my father reached port at Haifa. But after a short stay in the Alith internment camp near Hafia, the British transported the refugees – who had narrowly escaped death – to Mauritius by ship.

Mauritius was horrible. The people had lost everything and knew nothing about their relatives. Many died of tropical diseases. On Mauritius my father made a piece of land arable, dug a garden, and cultivated plants he found there. He at least knew we were in England and therefore in relative safety.

In London we were picked up by the "Jewish Committee For Refugee Children" and brought to Deal. Deal is a small city on the coast near Dover. There was a children's home run by a Mr. Howard. Mr. Howard was the headmaster of a single-grade rural school.

He had a large house with a big garden. He lived in the house, which was called "The Glack," with his wife, his two children, and he took in refugee children whose parents were paying, as well as ones like us, who were sent by the committee.

He made a big difference between those children whose parents were paying and those who were from the committee. Those of us from the committee had to help around the house and in the garden; the others were relieved of this duty.

I did laundry, made beds, and occasionally helped in the kitchen; Rafael worked in the garden. That annoyed us, of course. Mr. Howard was a very authoritarian figure. He took delight in bringing us to his school in order to demonstrate how he reigned over a horde of children there. He hit children on the finger in front of us, also to show us what happens when we don't obey. Mrs. Howard was a somewhat friendlier woman, who tried to fulfill our wishes, like in terms of food, for example.

In the children's home there was also a dance class, which Mr. Howard organized with the dance director for the local youth. Because more boys than girls came, we girls from the home also had to go to the class. We didn't want to, we were still too young. But the worst was when Mr. Howard would do us the "honor" and ask us to dance. He was a heavy pipe-smoker and stank of smoke, so I have the worst memories of dancing with him. That cast out any desire to dance for the rest of my life.

My brother never had any English lessons in school in Vienna. I had had three years of English and could communicate. My brother, who in England took on his second name, Erwin, because instead of Rafael he was always called Ralf, which annoyed him, didn't speak for two months. He spoke German, but didn't say a single English word. After two months he spoke perfect English.

Exactly at this point we started going to the "Central School," the main school in town. My brother went to the boys' school and I went to the girls' school. The English school system in those days was arranged so that they taught much less in the girls' school than in the boys' school.

For example, girls didn't learn any algebra in Math, whereas Erwin was plagued with algebra. But I was able to help him, since I had learned well in Vienna. My German and History teacher, Miss Billings, took an interest in me and took me under her wing. She gave me books and I still have one from her today. She made my stay there more bearable, since we were really unhappy in that house.

Our mother was in London, but she worked in a household and couldn't visit us. We of course complained to her in our letters, but it didn't do anything, she couldn't have us with her; it would have been impossible.

On our thirteenth birthday my brother came to me and said, "So, Hannah, we're 13 now, I'm not going to hit you anymore."

After a year, our stay in Deal came to a dramatic end. One day my brother had to help out in the garden again and something happened that didn't satisfy Mr. Howard, so he took him to task. Mr. Howard was furious and slapped my brother. We weren't used to anything like that.

Mr. Howard was a small man and my brother, rather large and strong, hit him back. In the end this was very fortunate, since it was the reason we were sent very quickly to London. However, it was also the end of our life together, since Rafael went to a home for boys and I to a home for girls. Of course my mother spent her free afternoons with us. She would pick us up from the homes, we'd get something to eat or go for a walk in the park, and then she'd bring us back.

It was easy for us children to learn English, but for older people, like my mother, it was a problem. Once, for example, my mother, my brother and I went out on the street. My mother could speak a little English and had learned more in the meantime, but we could speak it much better.

We annoyed her with curse words and she wanted us to stop and said with full conviction, "Oh, pipe up!" That, of course, added to our amusement, since it should have been "Pipe down!" The so-called Emigranto developed among immigrants. That was a mix of German and English.

Mrs. Dr. Gellner, a German, the director of the girls' home in London, had a mentally disabled son. Michael couldn't go to school. I became friends with him and began to tutor him. That was the beginning of my pedagogical career. I decided to work with children professionally after having given up my actual wish of becoming a doctor on account of the emigration.

After I passed the entrance exams for a public school in Bristol – the Badminton School for Girls – and left London, I gave Michael over to my former Latin teacher from Vienna, Mrs. Dr. Klein, who saved herself in 1939 by becoming a maid in London, and she continued to support him. In 1946

she went back to Vienna and became a grammar school teacher and a high school principal in Floridsdorf.

She was a member of the SPÖ [*Social Democratic Party of Austria*] party delegation, a member of the SPÖ central committee, a member of the SPÖ district board of the SPÖ Viennna/Leopoldstadt, was the spokesperson of schools in the parliament, and I remained friends with her until her death in 1986.

These public schools are not actually public, but rather very expensive schools for the children of the well-off. My school was a renowned and very progressive school. There were several immigrants there, of whom I was initially the youngest. We had many opportunities to play sports; there was a swimming pool, tennis courts, hockey fields, and much more. When the bombings of Bristol became dangerous, the school was evacuated to a former hotel on the north coast of Devonshire, in Lynmouth, a small fishing town.

The area was very wild and very beautiful. I remember that the hotel was near the coast. We could look down at the sea, and the slope to the sea was covered in rhododendron bushes. I've never seen anything like it since – a giant sea of rhododendrons. We took a lot of walks there. The walks were organized so that a student from an upper grade was responsible for a group of three to five students from a lower grade. We talked a lot of politics, for example about Hess, who flew to England back then.

On Sundays there was either church or a Quaker meeting. The Quakers gathered in a large room and didn't pray; instead someone would propose a topic. If it worked they would take it up and talk about it. It always degenerated into political discussions, which naturally was not the intention of the organizer. I would go either to the Quaker meetings or for a walk. There was nothing for Jews since there were too few Jewish pupils.

At the beginning of 1941 I had finished my exams and left school with the Cambridge School Certificate. If you attained a certain grade point average you would additionally receive the London School Certificate and could study in Cambridge as well as in London. In 1946 the Ministry of Education in Vienna recognized my credentials.

My brother was in the boys' home and went to school for another year. Afterwards he began an apprenticeship as a precision mechanic in a large factory in London. The part of the factory he worked in was evacuated after Cheltenham and he stayed there for a fairly long time.

He went to evening classes and became an engineer. Afterwards he worked his way up to director in a small factory in Wales. The war was already over. In London he married Rosslyn, the daughter of a Jewish toy manufacturer and afterwards worked in her father's factory.

They had two sons, Lorenz and Robert. They visited me once in Vienna after the war. We went out to eat in the Rathauskeller. For a year after I gave the Rathauskeller a wide birth. Even now, decades later, if I go past there I always have to think of the fuss those two small boys made there.

In the 1950s my brother and his family immigrated to Canada – close to Toronto. They had two more children, Tamara and Jonathan, and he took over the representation of a large firm that dealt in lathes. He had less to do with production and more to do with the organization of service and

purchases, imports and exports.

The marriage fell apart, his wife left him, but his children stayed with him. Later he married Marion, a Canadian. She wasn't Jewish and had a son, Matthew. This marriage also fell apart. He lives with his third wife, Neisa, who is Jewish, in the USA, in Miami.

My brother has a very large Jewish circle of friends in Miami, but he isn't religious and only goes to the synagogue for concerts. He has contact with the Jewish Community, but is surely an atheist. His children are married to Jews and non-Jews.

After her work as a maid, my mother worked as a hospital chef. That was better than serving in a household. She could even do it, since she had often led a sort of canteen kitchen in Vienna during the Jewish holidays. After two years – she was already over fifty and the work was physically tough – she got an office position. She rented a small apartment while she was working in the office. I stayed with her there in London after successfully finishing school.

The Jewish Committee told me I would have the chance for position in the home of a "madam," and that there I would learn everything you need to keep a good house. That was miles away from my vision for the future. I came away very depressed. Out on the street I ran into a friend of my mother.

She said to me, "Listen, I heard that Anna Freud opened a children's home in Hampstead and is looking for young caretakers. Why don't you go there?" I had no idea who Anna Freud was, but children, that sounded good.

So I looked in the telephone book and then went to 20 Maresfield Gardens – that was Anna Freud's address – and knocked on the door. A woman, obviously the housekeeper, opened and said in her best English, "Vat do you want?" – upon hearing which I immediately knew she wasn't from England. That was Paula Fichtl from Salzburg, who had been the Freud family's housekeeper in Vienna. Although she wasn't Jewish, she immigrated with the Freud's.

I said that I would like to speak with Miss Freud and was invited to come back the next day. The next day I was led into Anna Freud's library, which was also Sigmund Freud's library – her father. This library was a large room, fairly dark, with a few totems he had acquired. He was very interested in those sorts of things. Two ladies were sitting in the room. One was Anna Freud, a very imposing figure with very interesting eyes, wearing a long skirt and Haferlschuhe [*traditional Bavarian shoes*].

The other lady was Mrs. Burlingham, a colleague and long-time friend of Anna Freud. Anna Freud interviewed me about my family, my history, my education, and asked me why I wanted to work with children. Mrs. Burlingham was quiet and smiled at me encouragingly. After a two-hour conversation, Anna Freud said that I should go the following day to 5 Netherhall Gardens. I would be admitted as a trainee for the work with the children in the home and to learn. I could also live in a house there and would get a bit of pocket money.

The home was financed by the "Foster Parents Plan for War Children," an American foundation, and every month Anna Freud had to send a report on the work with the children, who ranged in age from infants to five-year-olds. Back then children in England were sent to school at the age of five.

For over two years I worked and learned in the home. The personnel was so organized, that every department had a leader under whom the trainees worked. The parents of most of the children didn't have a home any longer; they were killed or bombed out. These homeless children then slept in the shelter and that was a catastrophe. They were often sick, and were then collected and brought to the home.

For older children there was also a home in the countryside. The younger children were to stay in London, because, Anna Freud said, these children still need to have close contact with their families, that were sometimes still around. That was around the time when airplanes were coming every night; the children then had to sleep below in the shelter. The older children in the countryside were spared this.

I experienced a lot in these years with Anna Freud. They were – based loosely on Gorki, I'm in the habit of saying – "my universities." I learned more about children there than I did later at the university in Vienna. My mother maintained that my world was covered with diapers, since I was completely absorbed in this work.

After slightly more than two years I looked for another job, since being the youngest all the time bothered me. I was valued as a colleague, but I wanted to finally lead my own group.

First I went to a woman who had formed something of an extended family, but the methods she used weren't what I had in mind. Everything sounded good in theory, but it looked different in practice. Then I had the fortune of being able to work as a preschool teacher in the Austrian preschool at the Austrian Centre.

There I took over a group. The television journalist Toni Spira, the singer Lena Rothstein, and the mathematics professor Walter Fleischer, along with many other immigrant children, went to this preschool.

That was a fantastic group; something became of all of them. Because of their backgrounds, many were exceptionally gifted; most of them had Jewish parents. As the Germans were shelling London with V-2 rockets, the preschool was evacuated to Scotland for a year. I found Scotland very interesting; it was a different landscape and the people were very nice to us.

At that time I was already a communist; but not a member, just a candidate. I wasn't a member of the party because I wasn't accepted. I was always in a group that had a lot of discussions. Together we read and commented on the history of the CPSU. My mother criticized the party and didn't agree with many aspects of it, like, for example that they said that Tolstoy was a traitor.

She was also very critical of Stalin and thought that he had had Kirov killed. She also wasn't accepted into the party. In the Austrian Centre we worked for a long time on plans for organizing remigration to Austria and were convinced that Austria was waiting for us to return as soon as possible.

- **After the War**

My father looked for us after the war and my mother looked for him. I think my mother found him when he was still on Mauritius, since I got mail from him from Mauritius.

A few months after my return to Austrian in September 1946, my mother relocated to Palestine, to my father. He lived in Petah Tikva and already had a nursery and small shop. He had brought plants with him from Mauritius and was certainly very happy to be able to dedicate himself to this work.

I don't know exactly if that was his life's dream; we never talked about it. I also don't know if my father – after all his experiences – was still the man my mother knew. They lived together in Israel until 1952. He had his small flower shop and nursery and she worked as a translator.

After eight years I arrived to the Westbahnhof station in Vienna. It wasn't recognizable. It was totally destroyed; only some huts had been erected for customs. It looked very dismal.

First I lived with the Graber family, with whom I'd already been living during my last year in England and whose children were in the Austrian preschool. Mr. Graber was with the English Army and because of this was allocated a house on Küniglberg hill. I got a room in the souterrain.

The room was very beautiful and opened up on the garden. I went to "Kinderland" – that was the party's children's organization – and asked for work in a preschool. The said I should go to Vorarlberg, work in a factory there, and organize the FÖJ – Free Austrian Youth. I said, "No, I'm not doing that!"

That was the second time in my life that I abstained from doing something that I absolutely did not want to do. Thereupon I was assigned a preschool with a group. The house where the preschool was located belonged to a Jewish owner. When the house was returned to the owner the preschool was no more.

One day I met an acquaintance on the street who told me that she was going to a school for nursery school teachers. I wanted to do that too and went to the Vienna Youth Welfare Office. The director of the office, Anton Tesarek, was already very interested in psychoanalysis before the war.

When he heard that I had studied with Anna Freud for two years he said I should give it a try. Within two months I prepared for the exam as a guest student – officially I was an external student - and then passed the exam. In 1947 I was hired as a preschool teacher by the city of Vienna. On the side I studied pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, and English and then in 1952 did my PhD.

Even after I had finished my psychology studies I continued working as a preschool teacher. Besides which I fulfilled an old wish and studied medicine. Since I had worked through my psychology studies alongside my work as a preschool teacher, I also began my medical studies alongside work and planned to take a leave of absence sometime only at the end of my studies. But after I had learned everything that actually interested me, I ended my studies, since I didn't want to become a doctor.

Once during dissection Israeli students were performing an autopsy at another table next to us. All of sudden one of my very nice colleagues started making anti-Semitic remarks about the group of Israelis. I listened for a while. When he claimed he could recognize a Jew from ten meters away I said that I doubted that and asked him, "did you recognize that I'm Jewish?" He was astonished! Then we talked and I asked him where he got such notions. He told me his history teacher had introduced the students to the "science of race."

Those were the teachers that were still working in the 50s. We remained friends and of course spoke about anti-Semitism and about what happened during the Nazi era. He had no idea about any of it. That was symptomatic of many Austrians back then. There were also very few Jews in Austria.

The few that there were were either our friends from immigration who weren't religious at all, or else those who had retuned from the concentration camps. The time before the Second World War was difficult for the population, and in such times they needed an enemy to blame for everything. The Jews fulfilled this function during the Nazi era.

Until 1957 I worked as a preschool teacher and then as a psychologist for the central children's home in Vienna. At the beginning of the 60s I adopted my son, Franz Anton, who was living in this children's home. He was 1 ½ years old at the time and was born on 2 March 1960 in Vienna. He works as a business clerk in Vienna.

From 1967 I taught pedagogy and English in the "College for Nursery Education." Starting in 1984 I was the director of this institute. There was no anti-Semitism there – neither amongst the teachers nor the students. But I know it still exists, it has just become subtler. The current agitations against foreigners, particularly against black people, have taken its place. Now the population has turned on them to blow off steam.

In the time between Kinderland, the nursery school, and this appointment, I received a scholarship from the Jewish Community. I haven't left the Jewish Community because I would never do that to my father and by remaining a member I am commemorating him.

Sometimes I go to temple if something is being celebrated and I've been invited. I don't go to temple for religious reasons. I had faith as a child, but the Nazi era robbed me of my faith. I really lost my faith when the Germans invaded France.

We had a French teacher who was so desperate; she began crying because all of her relatives were in France. The whole war was so horrible, so I thought, "that can't be. God would never allow this." Through my father, who had already been deported to a concentration camp in 1938, I knew that there were concentration camps. Only much later did I learn what really happened there, and I thought that if there was a God, he would have certainly put a stop to it and not looked on.

I believe the way the creation of the world is portrayed in the Bible, from the perspective of people a few thousand years ago, is superb, because, in reality, the evolution of man has played out just like that. Only it hasn't taken place in six days, rather in eras. If you take an era for every day then you realize that everything – from the Big Bang, to the formation of the earth, to the beginning of life in water, to man – really was like that.

I find it really exciting to see how people thousands of years ago – we don't know who that was – gathered knowledge. That was in the Middle East; that's where the Bible came into being. That testifies to the fact that people reflected on things, that they had imagination, and that they recognized certain connections. The capacity for thought was there and the determining factor is the development of language.

That was the only way it could all evolve. For a long time religion was actually the science of life, and so I feel indebted to religion. Since religion played and continues to play an important role in human life, and that some people in unpleasant situations also truly find comfort in religion, why should I reject it? I stand by my “being Jewish” because the Jews were persecuted and you simply can’t give in.

The State of Israel is a legitimate demand of the Jewish people. The Jewish people developed and maintained a certain identity of the centuries. And because of this identity they were and are perceived as inferior or even criminal.

I don’t think that the Jewish people differ from other people in their basic skills, only in their history and in certain attitudes that are the product of this history. And I find it legitimate that Jews established a state there, even if God’s promise means nothing to me.

But Jews have always been living there, and neither the Turks nor the English have a right to this land. In my view the Arabs and the Jews have the right to live there. I think it’s out of the question and emotionally add that this country gave my father the possibility – after all of his horrible experiences – to finally live in peace.

I think the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians didn’t have to happen. It emerged out of specific historical conditions. I am convinced that the militant parts of the Palestinians, meaning jihad and so on, still dream of destroying the state of Israel, and I am against that. I can understand neither these fundamental Palestinians nor the Jewish fundamentalists.

I find it remarkable that after a long time Sharon arrived to the partial view that the fundamentalist approach is preventing peace in the region and that you have to start somewhere. I find it remarkable that an old military man took this step; I never thought it was possible. But it goes to show that man is able to learn.

It is a catastrophe that Jewish fundamentalists are threatening to destroy the Temple Mount. I mean, there is no other way than to communicate, but as long as Arafat is there, that’s not going to happen.

I was in Israel twice. Once for a child psychology conference, in Haifa I think, and once with my brother – about ten years ago. Everything I saw affected my deeply. I met with Joss Zur there, my second cousin, who was living on a kibbutz in the Negev. Jossi spent years researching our family and put together a whole book with stories, photos, and family trees.

In addition he has an interesting hobby: the kibbutz gave offered him a small house where he has his telescope, which he uses to observe the sky. When I visited him he showed and explained everything to me and it was very exciting.

He’s married to a woman who originates from Hungary and they have children. Once I even went with him on night patrols. They had to patrol the whole night, because Arabs from nearby villages were attempting to steal cows from over the border. Jossi is absolutely for a rapprochement; he lives hear Hebron and helped an Arab village set up a public school for the children. I also traveled through the country and looked at the old cultural landmarks.

Since 1986 I've been working – together with the Volkshilfe – on a training project for Sahrawi women. The idea came to us from a delegation from the Polisario refugee camps in Western Sahara that had visited the College.

Life in the Algerian desert is very hard; children need regular meals and the women wanted help with working properly with the small children. I enjoyed helping on the project "Nursery school teacher training for the refugee camps in the Western Sahara." In 1990 the Austrian government began supporting the project. Often, especially after my retirement in 1990, I would travel (at lest 16 times) to the refugee camps for 14 days at a time.

Austria became my home again after my return. I feel at home, otherwise I wouldn't have stayed. I would have had the opportunity to go elsewhere. Today I am really happy that I am in Austria. I wouldn't like to live in America and England was never really home. I sensed anti-Semitism the entire time, but I also tried to do something about it.

Two or three years ago I received the Glöckel Medal from the city of Vienna for my pedagogical work. This medal is a sign of recognition and honor for my achievements in pedagogy. This award means a lot to me; I am really happy about that. But I wouldn't talk about that without being asked, since awards, medals, and recognitions of any kind aren't important to me. The only thing that was important to me was the work for and with the children.