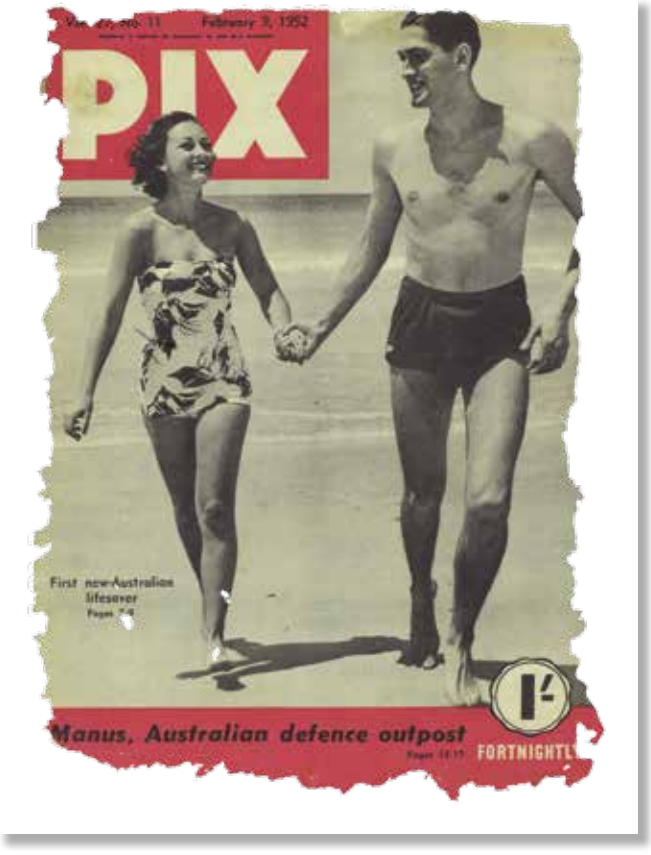
It was my friend, Howard by, who first talked me into starting my memoirs. It is largely his fault, as well, that I have dwelled upon myself for not just one, but two books that make up this tome that is my life. Because I pledged to myself that I would always keep my eye on the facts and would not be carried away with any "bull", whatsoever. I have kept the famous saying by the tennis player, John McEnroe, in mind throughout: "The older I get, the better I was."

Today, in spite of all the ill winds that circulate among businesses, I am in my seventieth year with no financial worries and am relatively healthy to boot. This results from my lifetime habit of hard work, long hours, and continual challenges as I have made sure that I am providing well for my family. Has it been worth it, what do I have to show for it besides the material comforts? Was my life a success?

So finally, I would like to see us play on the same side together, family, friends and world. After all, everyone's a mate!



EVERYONE'S A MATE

BY (AND ABOUT ONE)... FRED MAYER

EVERYONE'S A MATE

By and About One

FRED MAYER

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PREFACE

It was my friend, Howard Roby who first talked me into starting my memoirs. It is largely his fault, as well, that I have dwelled upon myself for not just one, but two books that make up this tome that is my life. Because I pledged to myself that I would always keep my eye on the facts and would not be carried away with any "bull", whatsoever, I have kept the famous saying by the tennis player, John McEnroe, in mind throughout "The older I get, the better I was."

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ONE

SHELTER IN THE DARK

SIGNIFICANT TREES

Some families can trace tall family trees, hundreds of years old. The peak of my shrub consists of my grandparents on both sides. But our history, though short, will be, I hope, of interest to my children and theirs.

My grandmother, Rose Solomon, came from Mayen on the Mosel in Germany, not far from the French border. My grandfather, Wilhelm, was born in Fehermegye, a country town in Hungary. Rose and Wilhelm met one another in Paris on the fourteenth of July in the 1890s. The young German girl danced with the handsome Hungarian fellow during the usual street festivities on this national holiday. Eventually, they married and had a child, my mother, Germaine. The three lived in Paris until Mother was about five, at which time they moved to Hungary. Rose and Wilhelm died in Portugal when they were both over ninety-years-old.

My father, Samu, was born in Budapest, Hungary, and his father, in the Ukraine – probably Odessa. The Ukraine was an area where, due to the rulings of the Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches, many pogroms existed for killing Jews long before Hitler was ever heard of. My paternal grandfather's family name was Feigelbaum, and my grandmother's surname on that side Wasserman. Both families hid their identities though because under the right-wing government in power between the two world wars, it was dangerous if one's Jewish father or grandfather were Russian or Polish.

My grandfather was conscripted into the Russian army to fight the British and French during the Crimean War. He did not have an obvious stake in the conflict and somehow managed to get into a military hospital in Bessarabia. Eventually, he escaped and went to Hungary with his wife. There he changed his name to the German MAYER, though I do not know why he did not choose one of Hungarian derivation. They produced my father, Samu, who would prove one of the strongest and most important limbs on our family tree. I never knew my paternal

grandfather, who died of prostate cancer at age seventy-nine in 1928. His wife, my grandmother, preceded him in death a few years earlier.

My father and mother met in Hungary and married there on June 20, 1922. Germaine was twenty-one, and Samu, thirty-five. My sister Rene was born on June 30, 1923, and I followed on May 19, 1929. Before he met my mother and had a family, my father served in both the Balkan War of 1910 and in the First World War. His experience in the latter proved turbulent. He entered the Austro-Hungarian Army and was sent to the Russian front in 1914, immediately after the start of the war. Since he had not completed his army training, he went in as a private, though I have no doubt he had "the stuff" of a leader. In those days and right up to the Second World War, only men who possessed matriculation certificates were eligible to become officers. They enlisted in the service of the Austro-Hungarian Army as "volunteers", were quickly promoted, and served only one year before they were released from commitment.

Lest one think less of my father, Samu, for not having his certificate, let me explain that graduation did not mean necessarily the same thing as now. While most children went to government schools, there were private institutions available. The latter conducted their own exams and automatically passed everyone who paid. These institutions served two types of clientele: children who were slow or lazy and could not pass the government exams, and men who had left school early, made money, were conscripted into the army, and had to obtain their matriculation certificates quickly so they could become privileged leaders. Since my father did not believe in the war in the first place, and had no intentions of killing anyone (he was always proud that he had never killed a single person while serving on the front lines), he did not want to be an officer – simply a private.

His tales about the war were fascinating. Recruits from Vienna and Budapest, along with others who were either Bosnian or peasants from various countries, made up his unit. The latter two groups comprised the wildest and best soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian Army. The Viennese and the Budapest soldiers were simply too civilised and intelligent to be good fighters, so all units of city regiments were supplemented with some of the really tough fellows. But even the roughest and strongest soldiers had problems sometimes. For instance, once in the Carpathian Mountains, Samu's unit attempted using a mule cart to carry ammunition up the mountains, but the four mules pulling the vehicle were so rambunctious that none of the peasants could handle them. When one man was actually trampled and injured, the sergeant, who didn't like "city boys" or Jews, named my father as replacement-driver of the ammo cart. Samu, who had never dealt directly with mules, studied them. He concluded that their problem was hunger. A hungry mule was a feisty mule. The animals had been offered only the fodder of cavalry horses, which they refused to eat. But the ever-observant Samu noticed that when the unit passed fir trees, the mules went berserk. So as a test, he began feeding them fir branches. They gorged themselves on the gourmet food of the landscape and became docile and cooperative. This taming of the mules earned my father the respect of the entire regiment

On another occasion when Samu suffered frostbite, his army doctor and friend sent him to a Budapest hospital run by nuns. He shared a room there with a young soldier who had a serious stomach injury. During the night and in great pain, the young man requested that my father get him a priest so he might confess. The nuns summoned an army priest who replied abusively to both the nuns and the patient, "Since this soldier is not dying, my sleep should not have been disturbed."

My father's revenge came the next day. The Catholic Bishop of Budapest visited the hospital, stopping at each soldier's bed. When he came to my father's side, he asked if he wanted to pray. Samu said, "No. I am a Jew; but I would like to ask a question. Is it a sin for a religious young soldier who is gravely injured but not dying to ask for confession?"

The Bishop replied, "Certainly not."

So my father told the Bishop the circumstances of the previous night. The latter went to the young soldier's side, prayed with him, took his confession, and then told my father, "Don't worry about the priest" That very day, the disagreeable priest was sent packing to the front lines. A new, more affable clergyman replaced him.

In 19I6, Samu and his regiment were positioned in a valley in Kirlibaba. All senior officers were absent behind the front lines, and the officer in charge was a young, inexperienced captain. He recognised my father as a friend of his dad's. The patrols reported that the hills encompassing the valley were filled with Russian soldiers and artillery. The officer, realising they were completely surrounded, asked for Samu's advice. After thinking it over, my father replied, "Give me a stick and a white sheet." And that was the way the whole unit surrendered and became Russian prisoners-of-war in 1916.

War propaganda had been frightening. Horror stories describing Russian treatment of its prisoners were prevalent. Fear grew amongst the captives from Samu's unit, but soon was allayed when they found a pleasant surprise where they had imagined ordeal. In fact, Samu came to love and admire the Russians, largely because they set the standard for humane and generous treatment of their prisoners during the war. Other non-Russian captors were not nearly so compassionate. For instance: it was the practice of the Russian soldiers to parade their prisoners around the town square. My father's unit traversed

the path several times so as to give the impression of MANY prisoners taken. During the repetitive hike, women drew forward, offering food to the captives and expressing hope that their sons, should they be captured, also would be looked after humanely.

Then from the town square, Samu and the others were boarded on trains that deposited them in Siberia after many long weeks. Prisoners were held there in separate camps of the Austro/Hungarian Army, the Austro/Hungarian/Czech/Bosnian Armies, and the German Army. Inclement weather and rough terrain erased the need for bars and cells, and the captives, prisoners of their harsh environment, were free to move from camp to camp, visiting one another. But food was in short supply, and the staple of the prisoners' diet was a porridge-like substance called "Kasha". Samu, however, supplemented this meagre meal nicely. While visiting a nearby Czech camp, he was invited to stay for a delicious dinner of "baked rabbit". In fact, he was so satisfied that he continued to go back each day for limitless supplies of "rabbit" cooked differently every time. One day he asked a Russian, "How is it that Russian soldiers don't eat rabbit too?"

"In this part of Siberia there are no rabbits within 500 kilometres;' he explained. "However, the Russian peasants have complained that their cats are missing. Cats from the villages near the camps. I believe the Czechs go cat-hunting every evening."

My father told me that was the most delicious "rabbit" he had ever eaten.

Stories about the contrasts between the Russians and "the rest" punctuated Samu's remembrances of the war. When the first Kerenski revolution began in Russia, the prisoners-of-war were asked to volunteer to go to European Russia to work in factories. My father saw an opportunity to better his captive condition

and elected the transfer. Siberia, with its inhospitable climate, was an easy place to leave, and life in the Russian factory would prove more interesting. One day an industrial building caught fire. The Hungarians and the Austrians tried to put out the flames… without endangering their lives or safety. The Germans, led by their sergeants, ran into the fire in an effort to put it out. A couple of them were killed. During this time, the Russian soldiers sat… watching the fire devour the building and asking the others, "What's wrong with you? Are you all idiots, or do you own shares in the factory? If not, sit down, have a smoke, and watch the spectacle of the fire."

On another occasion, one of the Russian soldiers expressed a popular profanity that, roughly translated, means, "Go and have sex with your mother." Samu hit the soldier and was arrested.

The commanding officer proclaimed, "In Germany or Austria, a Russian prisoner who hit a guard would be shot. We are not that bad. I have another idea. Follow me." He took my father to an office filled with Russian "society women" doing volunteer work for the war effort and handed him a paper and a pencil. "Keep track of the number of times these women use the phrase that upset you" he commanded.

My father, Samu, listened, counted, tallied, and realised he was wrong. The rude colloquialism was apparently a normal part of everyday conversation. He apologised to the soldier, and the matter was forgotten.

A sort of reverse monetary success enhanced the lives of prisoner/factory workers. In another significant display of humanity by the government, captive workers were granted the same hourly wages as the non-captive Russians. A now-compensated Samu used all his earnings to buy food from the canteen. When he found that the canteen also sold on credit, he used that credit for luxury items. He ran up an enormous debt. Around him, other prisoners saved their earnings and starved.

Less than a year later, as the revolution raged, the ruble lost its value, and neither the money saved by the prisoners or my father's gigantic debt was worth anything.

Smart choices continued to punctuate Samu's growth as a prisoner. When he was taken to work in one of the Russian military stores, he was surprised to see that the Russian guards were sporting bayonets. Puzzled, he inquired, "Why?"

They replied, "Mind your own business, or join us. You choose." They were cutting up the cavalry's leather saddles into square pieces and selling them at black market prices to the shoemakers in Moscow who had no leather. Samu, of course, chose to join in with the friendly guards and, henceforth, was included in their forays to the top restaurants, nightclubs, and operatic performances in the city.

Eventually, in 1917, the Communists succeeded in Russia. The Reds took over Moscow, and all prisoners-of-war were freed. My father's political views were very pragmatic. On the one hand, he longed for the old times of the Austro/Hungarian Monarchy. On the other, his sense of social justice made him a Socialist, sympathetic toward the earliest Communist ideals.

Samu chose to remain in Russia, travelling to Moscow where he found work in the Kremlin. He mixed with the political leaders of the day: Lenin, Bukharin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Trotsky, Radek, etc – all of whom were executed later by Stalin. He met another fascinating new acquaintance in Moscow – a White Russian general and political prisoner, General Brusilov – to whom he delivered meals each day. The General had his own flat and was basically well treated, though his movements were restricted. Brusilov's life had been spared because, unlike the other White officers, this one had committed no atrocities such as massacring workers and peasants. The General was bored and spoke daily with Samu in German. He was the only Russian general who came to his post from the officers' school,

and he believed all the generals on both sides were idiots. They were aristocrats: dukes, counts, lords, and princes who made up the commanding forces of the German, Austrian, Hungarian, Russian and English Armies. They had no brains, no clues as to what they were doing, and thus were responsible for the deaths of thousands of soldiers.

Samu often wondered what had happened to General Brusilov. In Hungary, we were not exposed to news of post-revolutionary Russia since the press tended to report mostly anti-Soviet propaganda about "Red atrocities" But later, in 1943 while in Kenya, I read a book about Russia after the revolution. This piece, very reassuring to my father, was written by a British political commentator and described the British armed interventions against the young Soviet state between 1917 and 1924. In 1919-1920, the British helped the Polish Army invade the Soviet Union and launch a very successful advance on Moscow. The Red Army was desperately short of officers when Trotsky, the head of it, approached Brusilov for advice. The latter offered to lead the Red troops against the Poles, and the deed was done. The Red Army destroyed the Polish invaders, stopping just short of Warsaw. This explains why Brusilov was able to live in relative comfort and freedom for the rest of his life.

Sometime after the new Communist government of Russia signed separate peace treaties with Germany and its allies at Brest-Litovsk, Samu, like most prisoners-of-war, wanted to return home to his own country, Hungary, and to his family. However, this was no simple task because of the Germans. Searching for Communists, they regularly stopped trainloads of ex-prisoners coming back from the Ukraine. In fact, there were some Communists on those trains, but most of the released captives were anti-Communist All of them shared a common goal, – returning home. The Germans, believing that if they

killed every person on the train they would get the Communists for sure, set about massacring all of them. Somehow, Samu survived his perilous journey and arrived back in Hungary in 1918, at the end of WWI.

For a few months, for the first time in Hungarian history, Hungary had a democratic government; but soon the Communists under Bela Kun took control (although they maintained it for less than a year). As an ex-prisoner-of-war, Samu had two options: he could be for the Communists, or he could be against them, in Hungary. When Admiral Horthy defeated Bela Kun's regime, the "White Terror" began. The Admiral stormed into Hungary, accompanied by the Romanian troops, and together they occupied the whole country. The army officers then commenced a reign of terror during which dissidents were murdered horribly by death squads. (Even today, some seventy years later, these tactics are employed in Latin American countries to stem the tide of dissenters.) In addition, the Hungarian Whites arrested many Jewish businessmen, naming them "Communists", so they could steal their money and possessions. Samu survived one interrogation by the Whites and, after sleeping in a different place on each of several nights so as to avoid further questioning, he opted to escape to the safety of Vienna, Austria. This was the first of many flights toward safety and freedom my father, Samu, would make as the roots of our ancestral tree spread wider.

THE MOVING BEGINS

Samu remained in Vienna until the "White Terror" receded from Hungary and then returned home. Once back in his native land, he started a successful textile business, married Germaine, and had two children, Rene and me, Fred. But for the depression of 1929 that killed the business, as it did so for many others, life moved along quite smoothly until the 1930s.

But as Samu studied the trends in European and national politics, he felt uneasy for his family and decided to leave Central Europe and migrate to Portugal. A few years prior to this, my father had sent his father (a successful jeweller who lost all his money betting) to live in Lisbon. This was an effort to stem the older man's compulsion for gambling on the horses. Portugal, it seems, was the only country without horse racing at that time, and my father hoped the migration would force a cure.

Samu, Germaine, and Rene travelled via France and Spain so that my father could have a look at Spain to see if it might be a better alternative for us than Portugal was. Spain, however, was electric with political unrest and Fascist agitation against the democratically-elected government of Spain. (A short time later, this dissatisfaction led to the bloody revolution wherein the Franco Fascists, aided by the German Nazis and the Italian Armies, eventually brought down the government and came into power.) Sensing trouble, the family moved on to Portugal.

In the meantime, I accompanied my grandmother to Germany where her family lived. We arrived there in 1933 during the early days of Hitler's power. Our relatives' home was located in a five-story building. The first three floors of the structure housed a menswear business, while the top three served as a fine, family residence. One stunning memory of my visit there is an early morning event that took place on the street in front of the store/home. "Hitler Youths" with swastika armbands swarmed everywhere, guarding the entrance to the shop and stopping customers from entering the Jewish-run business. They scribbled the word "Jude" in large, yellow letters all over the windows. Clearly, we were not safe here; and soon after the incident, we left this incendiary environment for the bitterly cold, snow-covered hills of Hamburg where we met the German ship, "General St. Martin". The vessel smashed through the ice on the frozen Elbe River with its front-mounted icebreakers, struggled to the sea, and then on to Portugal.

In Portugal, my relationship with my father, Samu, grew. I was closer to him than to anyone else, and we spent more time together than most children do with their fathers. Part of the reason for this was Samu's lack of facility with foreign languages. Though my dad was a very intelligent man who spoke Hungarian and German fluently, he had trouble learning the others. He needed an interpreter during the war years when our family moved often and engaged in various new businesses. I became that person for him, and we forged a strong relationship partly because of that useful bond. I credit my becoming a "political animal" to those days in Portugal when I, an eleven-year-old refugee, translated foreign newspapers and radio announcements for my father and the other migrants living there.

In Lisbon, my ten-year-old sister and I, age five, attended school for the first time. Since our parents spoke Hungarian and our grandparents, German, we became fluent in both languages. Nazis already ran the institution we went to; so all children were issued armbands. We were forced to listen to Hitler's recorded speeches throughout the day; and, needless to say, this learning situation was not appropriate for two Jewish youngsters. Therefore, Rene and I decided not to go back. Our parents quickly transferred us to a French school where we learned yet another language.

Rene, Samu and I were doing all right, but my mother and grandmother finally were not content in Portugal. They did not like either the country itself or its weather. In the end, we remained there just one year before returning to Budapest with its better climate and more comfortable lifestyle.

We departed Lisbon on the Italian boat "Urania", bound for Genoa, Italy, where we spent several pleasant weeks in various Italian cities before returning to Hungary. At home, Samu started

a new, small textile business, and my sister and I went off to school. Rene started high school, and I was sent to the Szent Istvan Primary, opposite the Basilika Cathedral in Budapest. Education in Hungary in 1938 was based on a European system of four primary years and eight, high school. I managed to get into the Barcsay Gymnasium, first year. It was extremely rare for Jewish children to be accepted there; however, any Jew whose father had received the decoration of the "King's Karoly Cross" was granted entry. The medal was awarded to every man who served in the front lines for more than six weeks during the war. Samu earned the "Cross" but unfortunately had thrown it away. He set about getting a replacement by visiting his birthplace in Ujpest, where the ex-commander of his division remembered him and presented him with a new one.

If I am to be honest, I must admit here and now that in spite of my father's efforts to get me into this educational institution, I did not do very well there, or in any other. It was my nature to question the authority of my teachers and to fight with my classmates. In primary school, I used to beat up a boy who was the nephew of the Nazi Prime Minister, Gombos. In high school, I continued to fight, and finally my parents were called in and told that I had been advised of my imminent dismissal should I continue my life of violent behaviour.

One could hardly wonder that I looked forward to my summer vacations with great anticipation. Our family traditionally went by boat on the Danube to visit places like Nagymaros, opposite the old castle of Visgrad. We usually rented a house there, and Samu would join us when he could. Other summers, we went to the Italian Lido, to the beaches and mountains of present-day Slovenia, or to the Austrian Alps and lakes, such as the Woerthersee in the mountains of Karintia.

Though life in Hungary was still very pleasant for us, there were ominous forebodings of the future. We learned that

in 1937, Edward, Prince of Wales (later, Duke of Windsor, and finally, King, before he abdicated) had visited Hitler with his American girlfriend, Wallace Simpson. He came to Budapest after their meeting. (A man who loved his liquor, Edward indulged himself every night with the cheapest drink in Hungary, apricot brandy. When he returned to England, he popularised this quaff.) It was quite lucky Edward abdicated because he was thought to be a "Hitler admirer" and a Nazi.

There were several occasions that affected me profoundly by demonstrating the darker side of the Hungarian government. In one instance, when the "Terror" in Hungary had moderated due to Western European protests and to the Western Europe Trade Union protest meetings, the Hungarian government attempted to show they were upholding justice by arresting an army officer. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to hanging. As a young child, I read the account in the newspaper with great interest. The accused had received the last sacraments before his execution, and his death was described in lurid detail. Photographs of the dead man's family accompanied the article. The following day I went to a soccer game with my father and his friends. We were enjoying the competition when suddenly Samu's best pal, a lawyer, pointed to one of the fans. Two rows in front of us, rooting for the opposing team, was the dead man of yesterday's news. The hanging had been merely a staged performance by the Hungarian government.

Though my family was not religious, and Samu only visited the synagogue once a year on Yom Kippur, I used to go regularly by myself. The two largest synagogues in Budapest were only a few hundred metres from one another. I liked one of them particularly well because of the Cantor's voice. In fact, I went regularly, not for religious reasons, but for the music. One Friday, I visited the temple I preferred, but found the Cantor of the

evening was a stand-in for the regular one; so I left and walked to the other synagogue. After the service, I emerged to find the whole area in turmoil. Members of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Movement (the Hungarian Nazi party) had pitched hand-grenades at the building and opened fire on the people in it with automatic weapons. The counts of the dead and injured were high.

Another sad and unnerving event occurred on a Sunday morning in 1938 when Rene and I awoke to the sound of heavy trucks rumbling by. We summoned our parents, dressed, and prepared to investigate the disturbance. Police officers, accompanied by armed soldiers, were proceeding flat-to-flat. When they knocked at our door, they inquired, "Are you Jews?" My father replied in the affirmative, and he was instructed, "Please show us the birth certificates of your mother and father." Fortunately we had papers for both of my Russian grandparents that stated they were born in Hungary. One of the officers noticed a document on the wall that was a certificate of merit, acknowledging Samu's participation in Hungarian sports and water polo. It was signed by the Head-of-State, Horthy; so the police departed without further ado. (This valuable asset hangs on my wall today, sixty years later.)

Jews who could not prove that both of their parents were born in Hungary were arrested and deported to Poland, the least tolerant and worst country for them. At the same time, new and more stringent laws were passed. One restricted the number of Jews businesses could employ; and another stated that all companies owned by Jews were required to have Christian partners. Meanwhile, Rene was accepted into the art tertiary school where "numerus clausus" applied. The latter meant that only five percent of the students who attended could be Jews. Discrimination was rampant, manifesting itself in anti-Jewish riots and physical attacks on minority students. Political heat

intensified as the Hungarian government began lining up with Hitler so that Hungary might recover the territories taken away from it after WWI by its neighbours, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia.

In March 1938, Hitler occupied Austria, where he was welcomed jubilantly by the pro-Nazi Austrian population. Cardinal lnnizer, leader of the Austrian Catholics, stood reverently on the street, his arm raised in a Hitler salute. Church bells heralded the Austrians' reception of the Nazi troops. My family was awed that one of the most cultured people of the world became barbaric in their embrace of Nazism. It is a fact that the Austrians produced more Nazi fanatics and murders than the Germans – not only because Hitler himself was an Austrian, but also because the Austrians are a very religious people, and in the beginning, the Catholic Church was an enthusiastic supporter of Nazi ideals. Within days of Hitler's occupation, atrocities against Austrian Jews began.

Budapest is only 240 km from Vienna (the distance between Sydney and Bathurst); and it was flooded with Austrian/Jewish refugees who told heart-rending tales of murder and cruelty in their homeland. Thousands of intellectual Jews: doctors, professors, and writers arrived in Hungary penniless, some of them with the letter "J"(for Jew) burned into their foreheads or cheeks. If this cruel and unfair treatment could take place in a civilised country like Austria, what could we expect in Hungary? This was the question Samu pondered, knowing the answer was critical to his family's safety. Clearly, trouble was approaching rapidly. Signs were everywhere.

Later in 1938, when Czechoslovakia was prepared to defend itself, matters grew even worse. Chamberlain went to Munich and agreed to divide that country. Germany would get the Sudeten part with its German minority, while Hungary could have the Hungarian sections. It was after the occupation

of Prague on March 15, 1939 that Samu asserted: "This is it. We're leaving. Chamberlain, Prime Minister of England, has betrayed Czechoslovakia."

So, on April 4, 1939, our family boarded a train bound to Paris via Vienna. Vienna was a newly occupied city, and when we arrived at the station, we noticed the building had been decorated with hundreds of swastika flags and enormous slogans. Banners emblazoned with EIN VOLK – EIN REICH – EIN FUHRER (ONE PEOPLE – ONE NATION – ONE LEADER) hung in festoons. We changed trains there, boarding a second one that carried SS troops bound for the French border. Samu gave the Austrian railway guard a tip, and we were installed in a luxurious first class compartment with two SS officers. My sister, Rene, was a beautiful sixteen-year old girl with lovely blond hair. Our mother, Germaine, was also fair-haired. The drunken SS officers noticed the good looks of both women; so during this part of our journey,we were forced to listen to the officers' incessant ravings about the two ladies in their compartment who typified the model for the Aryan race. Blond, blue-eyed – all of Europe should reflect this standard for the future, they proclaimed over and over.

As a kid, I thought it very funny that the SS officers praised the comeliness of the two, one hundred per cent Jewish women in front of them as the ideal for all future womankind. But to the contrary, my father did not find our situation a bit humorous and was extremely relieved when the train arrived at the French border where the SS troops debarked in Kehl. When we crossed the bridge into Strasbourg, we breathed a sigh of relief as we spotted the French "Tricolour", symbol of freedom.

We spent several days in Paris before taking an English ship, the "Highland Chieftain", from Boulogne Sur Mer to Lisbon. The trip lasted three days. My father noted the thick steel structure of the boat and predicted it would serve England

well during the next world war. His forecast proved accurate when, later, a German U-boat attacked the Highland Chieftain during the first days of WWII. The former replied by driving over the U-boat, breaking it in half.

We arrived in Lisbon on April II, 1939, and I was immediately placed in the same French school I attended during our first sojourn in Portugal. I was to learn French and hone up my Portuguese as well. After a few months, I was able to pass the primary school exams in Portuguese and entered the Camoes Portuguese High School. The stiffest punishment dealt by schools in that country for breaking the rules was a three-to-five-day suspension, and once again I tested the system by fighting. And once again, I was privileged to relieve my intense boredom by spending leisurely hours at the beach. Today, if I judge my qualities as a student in Portugal's educational system, I have to admit that I got away with murder. The reason for this success was my innate ability to spell correctly. My teachers pointed to me as an example of scholarly "excellence". "Look at this fellow, Fred" they'd coo. "A year ago he couldn't speak a work of Portuguese, and today he can out-spell the lot of you. For shame!" Because I was such a handy example, and because teachers always need such a sitting, shiny duck, they could and would ignore my infractions of the rules. Often, in fact, it took a colossal effort on my behalf to earn a suspension and my time at the beach.

In the meantime, while I bounced between formal education and the sea breezes, our family had to earn a living. After school hours, I spent most of my time with my father, attending to an enormous number of sundry businesses. For instance, in September of I939, we delivered the heavy cases of Hungarian Herz and Pick salamis that we imported to Portugal from

Hungary to the shops that sold them. We constructed car plugs that we sent to a glass factory to be sandblasted and re-painted. We made shaving cream in the kitchen that we marked "special formula". And we even had a booth at the Portuguese World Exposition. At a location near Belem, there was space reserved for all the Portuguese Colonies. Among these was a small site set aside for the Hungarian pavilion-though Hungary had never been a Portuguese Colony. It was here we sold the handmade articles we purchased from a refugee countryman who had managed to bring all of his money out of Hungary, hidden in a trunk full of wood crafts.

My mother, Germaine, supplemented our family's income by teaching French and German in school and by tutoring individual students at 6:00 a.m. before leaving for work. At one stage, she too sold stock in the shop at the Portuguese Pavilion until 3:00 am. This was hard on Mother. Before emigrating, she was quite spoiled, and for the first thirty-nine years of her life, had never cooked, – let alone hold a job. But now, she did it all. She became a very skilful chef, and years later, many Australian friends would enjoy her cuisine.

Similarly, Samu was not used to doing certain things for himself. He shaved his face with his own hand for the first time on the boat to Portugal in 1939, when he was fifty-one. In Hungary, a barber had performed that service for him every day, either at home or at one of the Turkish baths. I used to enjoy going with him and finishing the morning with a beer and hot-dogs while I watched over his grooming. There were big changes for all of us now.

At age twelve, I was proud to start my own business. I found the Portuguese bank that would give me the best rates and arranged to exchange foreign currency for all the refugees arriving in Lisbon. I also managed to get into the building where the Diario Noticias, a large newspaper, was published.

There, I sold daily necessities to the employees such as razor blades and cologne. All of these were credit transactions, and I returned on the first of every month, pay-day, to collect my money. As a bonus, I was given two free press passes to all the cinemas, theatres, and entertainment centres in town. For a time, I spent three-to-five hours a day watching the cowboy films twelve-year-old boys love and attending theatre musicals. Some performances were adult-rated; but I had credentials! As a newspaperman, I could get in anywhere.

1940 deemed us permanent residents of Portugal with identification cards and the same rights as the natives. But those were the darkest days of the war. Great Britain stood all by herself against the German onslaught. America took care of big business by supplying the Germans. And Russia remained an official ally of Deutschland. After France's collapse, refugees arrived by the tens-of-thousands, and soon Lisbon was bulging with foreigners who had no place to live. The migrants kept coming in cars riddled with bullet holes, – caused when the Luftwaffe machine-gunned the refugee-filled vehicles on the car-choked, French roads to Spain. All kinds of people came: Jews, anti-Nazi non-Jews, ordinary people, writers, entertainers, artists, and anti-Nazi politicians. But only a small number of these people had obtained permits. Few had places to live. The Portuguese government humanely decided that all migrants staying in Lisbon without permanent residency permits would have to go to Caldas da Rainha, a beautiful, summer, holiday resort. Once there, families would receive vacation homes to live in, while single people were put up in hotel rooms. American Jewish welfare committees would pay for all housing. These arrangements did not apply, of course, to permanent residents like we were.

The refugees worried that the Germans would occupy Portugal, and rumours flew, speculating about when that could

happen. The frenzy peaked one day in July of the same year when all Portuguese newspapers advised the populace to listen to Prime Minister Salazar's radio broadcast. The refugees were worried that this would be the announcement they most dreaded – Portugal's take-over by Germany.

I was sitting at an outdoor cafe on the Avenida da Liberdade. A radio was set up on one of the tables; and fifty-or-so refugees, to whom I was translating Salazar's speech, surrounded me. Though I disagree with all dictatorships, this speech, by this dictator, impressed me immensely. Salazar said:

> We are living in very grave times when most of Europe has been occupied by one power (meaning Nazi Germany, but not mentioning it by name.) However, I want to emphasize that we are the oldest ally of Great Britain, who stands alone in this gravest hour of its history. Alliances between powerful nations are not broken because of grave times. We are a poor nation with a small army; and if we are attacked, I don't know how long we can defend ourselves. But we will stand by this alliance.

This speech was greeted with surprise and relief by all who heard it.

Dr. Oliveire Salazar was an unusual dictator who came into power in an peculiar way. Not a politician at all, he worked as a professor of economics at the Coimbra University. After the overthrow of the monarchy in 1910, Portugal became a Republic. Its government was intensely unstable between 1910 and 1926. Military coups and revolutions were prevalent, though typically very little blood was shed. This unpredictable political situation made Portugal one of the poorest countries in Europe. In October 1926, General Carmona led another military takeover; and this time, after gaining power, in an unprecedented move, he summoned the obscure economics professor (Salazar) to him and requested that he undertake the active rule of Portugal, improving its economic status while he was at it. Thus, Carmona remained the titular president,

while Salazar was the working head. Salazar remained in power until his death in 1972.

Salazar did improve his country's financial circumstances, making the Portuguese escudo one of the hardest currencies in the world; but at the same time, very little improvement was made to the living standards of the ordinary people, who remained very poor. People liked him though, – partly because he did not look like other high government personnel. A common trait among all dictators, right or left, is that they parade in splendid, military uniforms covered with decorations. This was the case with Hitler, Stalin, Tito, Peron, and Mussolini. But Salazar never wore one. When the British Royal Family visited Portugal, they were photographed and filmed with President Carmona in his uniform. However, Salazar stood among minor officials, three rows behind both the King and the President, wearing a dark suit.

But in spite of all this praise, Portugal was a dictatorship that allowed no open criticism or opposition. Strict controls were exercised by a strong secret police that arrested and imprisoned anyone suspected of acting against the government or of being a Socialist or Communist sympathiser. Thousands were sent to the islands of Cape Verde on the West Coast of Africa for hard labour. (Later, in 1942 when we passed those islands on a Portuguese boat, the ship docked for over twenty-four hours, but no passengers were allowed to debark except the ones sent there by the government to serve their punishments.)

The Portuguese prison system was modeled after the Mexican one. A prisoner could choose among first, second, or third class treatments. Third was free of charge, and the incarcerated were treated accordingly. First and second classes offered more luxuries, but cost money. First, with its en-suite bathrooms and gentile treatment, was very expensive. My family had an acquaintance, Ernst Lieblich, a German/Jewish tenor

whom we met on the Italian luxury liner, "Saturnia". (I would travel again on this ship in 1956.) Ernst's brother-in-law was a very wealthy Portuguese. When Ernst arrived in Lisbon in 1940, he had an American visa, but did not take advantage of it. So he remained in Portugal illegally, was arrested, and then incarcerated in prison for several months until he migrated to the United States. In the meantime, his brother-in-law paid for first class accommodations in jail for him. Ernst had a servant to clean his grand cell; food was brought in a la carte from the finest restaurant in town; and he was allowed to come to our place for dinner. On these occasions, Ernst dined in the dining room with us, while his guard retired to the kitchen to eat with the maid. First class prisoners were not deprived of cultural stimulation either; so Ernst took in the theatre and "sold-out" shows on a regular basis.

During the first three years of the war, I remember the following major events as they were published in the Portuguese newspapers and reported on the radio:

GERMANY INVADES POLAND: September 1, 1939

BRITAIN DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY: SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

(We were on the way to the beach when we heard this. It was 10:00 a.m. Two days later, since they did not trust Chamberlain and would not join in the war effort until England had declared, France entered WWII.)

GERMANY INVADES HOLLAND AND BELGIUM: May 10, 1940

PARIS FALLS TO THE GERMANS: June 10, 1940

JAPANESE BOMB PEARL HARBOUR: December 7, 1941

(All the refugees were worried that the American Republicans only wanted to fight the Japanese and not the Germans. Therefore there was great jubilation when Hitler declared war on the USA because this meant the Americans would have no choice but to join the effort against the Germans.)

GERMANY INVADES RUSSIA: JUNE 22, 1941

(There were significant German victories early on. We heard news of terrible massacres from Poland. the Baltic States, the Ukraine, and Russia. Due to the excesses of Stalin's terror, the Russians fought very badly in the beginning, but when the Nazi's horrific acts of murder finally exceeded Stalin's, the Russians began to fight back. Eventually, winter came, and the Nazis were halted. The course of history changed when the German onslaught was stopped for the first time.)

Our everyday lives in Lisbon during our three-and-a-half year stay were not consumed entirely by the events of war. We were aware of many differences between our life there and the way it had been in Hungary. For instance, it was easy to get oranges at home, but bananas were extremely scarce. So when my father and his friends from the club soccer or water polo teams went to Spain or Italy to compete, they brought back bananas as treats for us children. On the other hand, in Portugal, the boats that traded with the African Colonies used bananas as ballast. The fruit cost practically nothing in Lisbon. A whole bunch, containing fifty to sixty pieces, sold for just a few cents. I was in Heaven! But one afternoon I came home complaining of a terrible stomachache. My mother called the doctor, who decided I was suffering from appendicitis. He checked me into the hospital for surgery. When my father came home to Germaine, distraught over the prospect of my operation, he heard her account of the doctor's advice and recalled a similar experience of his own.

In 1916 when he was housed in a prisoner-of-war camp, he experienced similar stomach pains. The prison doctor pinpointed the problem – appendicitis – and sent him to the hospital to have the angry organ removed. During the night, Samu thought better of his next-day appointment with the surgical knife and slipped out of the hospital to return to

the relative safety of the prison camp. (He died fifty-one years later with his appendix intact.)

This memory fresh in his mind, Samu began to interrogate me. "What did you eat today,?" he asked.

I replied, "We ate lunch together. You know what we had."

"What else?" he demanded. I admitted to a second lunch at my grandmother's, where I usually ate. "Well," he remarked, "Two lunches aren't normally harmful to a growing boy. What else?"

"I had a bunch of eighty bananas" I answered sheepishly. My father began the cure immediately.

"Get the Epsom salts, Germaine. Give Fred a big dose. Call the hospital, Rene. Cancel the room"

I spent the night in the bathroom and by morning was fine. Forty-three years later, I still have my appendix. Useless or not, it's all mine.

Like bananas, certain types of natural disasters were more common in Portugal than in Hungary. During one of those regular lunches at my grandmother's, when an earthquake jarred the house; I was blamed. We were at the kitchen table eating when the food and plates began jumping to the floor. "Stop it!" Grandmother shouted. "Can't you see what you're doing? Settle down". When the kitchen ceiling began falling in, she realised I was not the culprit.

My father's linguistic ability remained shaky. He tried to speak Portuguese, but with poor results. One day in particular when he needed to find a restroom, Samu entered a large store and asked directions to the "retreato", the toilet. Unfortunately, he substituted the word "retrato" for the correct "retreato" and was bemused when he was directed to the store's photo department instead of the water closet.

I continued to spend a great deal of time with Samu, protecting him from himself in these and other small ways. We were a good team and had great times together. I also felt very close to my sister, Rene. In those days, when a girl went out with a boy in the evening, she was required to have a chaperone. This job fell to me when Rene had a date, and on various occasions I played a similar role with other women.

A comely neighbour, the girlfriend of a wealthy Portuguese gentleman, who hated bullfights, professed her love for that sport. I was paid to accompany her to the contests. But as luck would have it, her attraction was not to the sport itself, but to the toreadors who fought the bulls. She spent many an evening in the dressing room of one in particular. (Eventually, she shot through with a Hungarian to whom I had introduced her.) While she socialised, I sat by myself and watched the action in the ring before me. In Portugal, unlike Spain, the bull is not killed at the end of its skirmish with the humans on the floor of the arena. The fighters wrestle it barehanded and are frequently injured. Finally, when the bull becomes tired and cranky, a couple of cows are brought in to lure the unabashedly eager animal out of the ring.

TRAVELLING TOWARD UNCERTAINTY

By 1942, finally there was hope of a victory over the Nazis. The United States had joined Britain and Russia, to fight back. My father and I engaged in serious discussions about our future. We were not keen to remain in Lisbon for a couple of reasons: my sister and I were adolescents, ages nineteen and fourteen, respectively, and the high rate of syphilis in Portugal worried Samu. Of vital importance, too, was the news that reached us about the mass murders of Jews by the Nazis. We were chagrinned that the world leaders did not lift a finger to help

people escape this most horrible death. Though Hitler began persecuting Jews immediately after he assumed power in 1933, the ultimate "solution", – to exterminate all Jews, – was only determined in 1940 after the world at large refused to offer refuge to the people Hitler wanted to exile from Europe.

In 1938, there had been an international conference in Evian to solve the refugee problem. The result was that only Holland, Belgium, and France would admit Jews. England agreed to permit entry to a few thousand children, fourteen years and under, but their parents could not accompany them. Since admitting Jews would upset the Catholic balance in their countries, the Latin American nations refused to help at all. Even Australia denied aid. Boatloads of refugees arriving in Palestine were sent back – their human cargo guaranteed certain death because the British Tories did not want to upset the Arabs. When it was suggested that the Allies bomb the single railroad track over which millions of Jews travelled to Poland to be killed, the answer was swift refusal by the Allied governments. For these reasons, we began considering our migration to Palestine, the only place Jews did not walk a path to the slaughterhouse to be killed.

Leaving Portugal for Palestine would not prove easy. There was a very small immigration quota set up by the British. And since by now all of Europe was cut off. and war raged in the Middle East as well, the only way to get to Palestine was via Africa. It was with these factors in mind that we applied for and received permission to go the Colonies first.

We boarded an old tub of a boat built by the Germans at the end of the nineteenth century. The Portuguese had captured it during WWI when they fought with the British. The small, 7000-ton vessel, still in service in 1942, was named, "Mouzinho". Our ship was painted in bright colours, – red and green, – and its flag was illuminated at night. Enormous letters spelling PORTUGAL NEUTRAL signalled belligerent

forces that we should not be attacked. However, only a few hours out of Lisbon, a German U-boat pulled alongside us, and its officers and crew spilled aboard the Mouzinho to check the documents and cargo of the vessel. Soon thereafter a British boat did the same.

Because we were travelling toward "uncertainty" and fares during the war were extremely high, we went third class in a four-berth family cabin. The boat rolled and squeaked even in the smallest swell, but after a few days, we settled in quite well for the thirty-five day trip to Lourenco Marques. Our first stop was the beautiful island, Madeira, where the Portuguese police declared foreigners could not leave the boat. But because both Rene and I could speak Portuguese perfectly, we fooled our detractors and slipped ashore anyway.

Our next port was Vincent on the Cape Verde Islands. A number of political prisoners who were being taken to the forced labour camps there were aboard our ship. But since these captives could pay for first class steerage, they had a grand time, eating and drinking non-stop as they journeyed toward prison on the islands, where they would find the climate intemperate and miserable.

After Cape Verde, we stopped at San Thome, continued further to Bissau and Bolama in Portuguese Guinea (where we encountered a tropical storm so powerful that we doubted we would make it to anchorage alive), and commenced through various ports in Angola, the largest of the Portuguese Colonies. With a population of less than five million, Angola was 1,250,000 square kilometres in size. Our first port there was San Antonio Do Zaire (Zaire today) at the mouth of the Zaire River, – gateway to the Belgian Congo: A number of young Belgians debarked here to join the Free Belgian Army that eventually fought with the Allies. At our second stop, Luanda, the capital, some Portuguese friends took us on a tour. Luanda

was cleaner than Lisbon, and its citizens had built a beautiful, modern school. The building was the pride of the town, and while the Portuguese normally suppressed the Coloureds very badly, in this school, black and white students mixed freely.

After Luanda, we continued on to Lobito, Angola, where the boat spent three days refuelling. The engine rooms were filled with coal that was carried aboard in baskets on the heads of black workers. My family was appalled by the brutality of the white overseers as they whipped the labourers to speed them up. Fortunately, we were able to get away from this oppressive scene and go to a farm in the countryside. This was our first opportunity to visit the African landscape with its tapestry of wild animals. We saw baby crocodiles no bigger than my little finger and marvelled at the variety of creatures and plants before us as we travelled along the scenic road.

This interesting interlude completed, we sailed to Mossamedes, a small, sleepy port, and then on toward our destination, Cape Town. We encountered a treacherous storm over the Atlantic that rocked our "old tub", making it crack and scream as it was tossed by the massive waves in the churning sea. In the middle of the night, the engines broke down. But after a breathlessly pregnant pause, they broke the silence again with their rhythmic banging and whining. Full-scale panic was averted.

The next morning, the sun won its battle. The seas calmed, and we sailed into beautiful Cape Town. With its backdrop of Table Mountain, Cape Town was a glorious sight! An enormous concentration of ships surrounded us as they assembled a convoy to transfer reinforcements to the East. Warships, cruisers, British naval destroyers, and troopships, including large passenger vessels converted to troop carriers, peppered the seascape. The strength and number of the English war vessels that were fighting against the Axis powers all over the world reassured us.

After Cape Town, we sailed into the Indian Ocean. It afforded us a more comfortable reception than the Atlantic had, and we arrived in Lourenco Marques without incident. Once again, we were surprised to find a small city here in Africa that was cleaner and more up-to-date than Lisbon had been. Since Laurenco Marques was nearer Johannesburg than any other South African beach or port, the area was crowded with South African vacationers. This would be our home during the ensuing year.

We rented an interim flat while we searched for suitable accommodation. No matter how little money we had, Samu always was determined that we live in a decent home. Luck was with us again, and we were offered a beautiful house/flat on the Avenida Polana within walking distance of the beach. Our luxurious home, with a forty-metre, covered, first floor balcony where we could entertain, was affordable because part of it served a commercial purpose. The ground floor operated as a meat and milk store, and we lived on the second level. Between 3:00 and 7:00 a.m., singing Africans, labouring beneath our bedrooms, loaded the delivery trucks with dairy products and meat. (Africans always sing when they do monotonous work.) But their vocalisations did not disturb our sleep. In fact, on Sundays, quite the opposite was true when there was no work and no singing at all. The silence was deafening.

Once we had a house, it was time to select a school. Since I had been to Hungarian, Portuguese, and German institutions already, we decided that I should try an English school, – one where I could learn another new language. Our selection was Professor Wilson's London Matriculation Course. The fifty boys and girls there, between the ages of six and eighteen, were divided into three groups: Portuguese children who spoke only Portuguese, English children who spoke only English, and European children who spoke four to six languages, but neither

Portuguese or English. I was the exception because I knew other languages plus Portuguese, but not English.

I enlisted in the famous school. On my first day there, the professor, equipped with an Oxford degree and impressive initials after his name, materialised before us in his black clown outfit (the square hat with the tassel and the inky gown of English colleges) and began teaching in English. This was a foreign language for seventy percent of the class, and most of us were quite lost.

A number of weeks elapsed, but by now I still could understand only a few common words. My time, however, had not been wasted entirely in the new jail because I listened carefully to the English kids around me and learned to swear adeptly.

One day, Professor Wilson ordered his black servants to do some errands. They complied as usual, but made a simple mistake while satisfying one of his demands. The Professor dragged them to the front of the class and beat them, explaining, "This is the way non-Whites should be treated."

I was incensed! This barbaric "intellectual" had affronted my political and anti-racist stances. I rose to my feet, hands clenched, and screamed, "You f ———— Fascist bastard!"

The Professor took offence at my verbal outrage and hit me. This was the first time an adult had struck me, so I jumped to my feet, kicked my aggressor in the groin, and exited the classroom. A few days later, a certificate arrived by mail at our home, stating that I had passed my "London Matriculation" with honours. Clearly, a scandal had been avoided.

Samu respected and supported my action, sighed, and asked me which institution I would like to try next. I replied carefully, "Father, since I have matriculated already at this tender age of fourteen, in a language I do not speak or understand, I do not believe I will require any more schooling".

Honestly, besides learning to read and write, I do not think I really have learned much in any school at all. I have from books, however. From age six, I have devoured their contents ravenously. During some phases, I studied all the works of particular authors systematically, and since I did not have to waste time in school, I was able to accelerate my reading regimen. I remember that a local librarian expressed her doubts that I was really reading all the books I borrowed from the library during one three-month period. I covered all of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gorky, Turgenev, Pushkin, and more, – most of the important Russians. In addition, I delved into whatever works I could get on Lenin and the other Russian revolutionaries. (The latter were very difficult to come by.)

During this period of marathon reading, I spent a short, disastrous stint, employed as a motor mechanic apprentice; but I soon realised that it would be easier for me to learn a new language than it would to change a tyre, so I gave it up. I turned instead to mixing with the English children from whom I had learned to swear so adroitly, thinking this was the best way to soak up their language. Along with these activities, making money remained an important, elusive goal.

Since luxury products were expensive in Lourenco Marques, I made arrangements with officers of Portuguese ships to bring me goods from Portugal that I could resell at a profit to shops in town. In the meantime, Rene, whose ambition was to go to medical school, studied pathology and worked in the local hospital. Like the rest of our family, she too took on a wide assortment of jobs.

Besides reading and working, though my family did not practice Judaism, I went to a synagogue in Lourenco Marques. (I had my barmitzvah in Lisbon, and enjoyed going to temple there.) In our new community, there was one synagogue and only nine Orthodox Jews. Since a Jewish service requires that ten

men over thirteen years of age be in attendance, I volunteered as the key tenth man who could fill out the field and enable the proceedings.

One of the men had a son who could have participated instead of me, but that child denied religion and its practice because he and his father had witnessed the murder of the rest of their family by the Nazis. How could he pray to a God who let this happen? But another man's son did go to the synagogue. He loved church music so much that he spent all his savings on records such as: Mass in D major, Op. 123 – "Missa Solomnis" (Beethoven); Verdi's Messa do Requiem; "Agnus Dei" (Bizet); Rossini's "Cujus animam"; and more. I, too, saved and bought records with my money. I purchased opera music, and the two of us spent our time listening and sharing music, especially on Saturday afternoons when the religious ones gathered.

Other days, I might go to the beach to swim in the shark-netted waters. The weather, while often beautiful, could be unpredictable. I recall one particular occasion when the skies snapped open and torrential rain poured down. That would prove one of the heaviest storms to ever hit the town. I was on the diving barge, twenty to thirty metres from shore, when huge waves started to heave and roll. I had real trouble making it in to the beach and then home from there. This deluge lasted until morning, damaging even the cathedral, the largest building in Lourenco Marques. Luckily, our solidly built home escaped the storm's ravages. However, guests arrived when monkeys from the picnic ground that bordered on the beach next to the Polana Hotel, picked at our doors and windows, seeking shelter from the furious weather. We found them grazing in our kitchen the next morning. (These were probably the same animals who stole our food before when we tried to picnic in the park, but could not because of the monkey thieves. The ravenous beasts took all the fruit from our baskets and then followed us home to eat the

paw paws from the trees in our gardens.) In time, the flooding in the streets abated; electricity was restored after a couple of days, and the last of the monkeys were chased out.

My father and I, as usual, spent a great deal of time together in Lourenco Marques, and we were routinely late for dinner, infuriating my mother, who had the food on the table at a prescribed time each day. We were tardy because of the long, daily political discussions Samu engaged in that leaked over into the evening hours. I was allowed to walk along and listen, and Germaine judged me equally guilty as Samu when the two of us turned up late.

During our daily forays into the streets for intellectual stimulation and company, we met quite an interesting mixture of people. Some of them comprised the group with whom we would travel to Cairo a few months later. The latter included: a Polish, Jewish couple; a Greek man who owned a hotel in Cairo; three Egyptian doctors; Prince Fouad, a cousin of the King of Egypt; and Fouad's wife. (The Prince was rather overweight, and later when we travelled by boat on the Nile, he sat on my glasses and pulverised them.)

Mozambique was an interesting place to be. It was Portuguese, neutral in the war, and housed both Italian and German embassies. However, Mozambique was not always entirely peaceful. Because of its neutrality, it served as an exchange base for diplomats of opposing sides in the war. For instance, on one occasion, the Swedish ship Gipsholm brought Allied diplomats (mostly American and British, who were stuck in Japanese occupied areas) to Mozambique to be exchanged in Lourenco Marques for Japanese diplomats,who were similarly detained in allied territories. The Portuguese authorities, thinking that middle-aged and elderly diplomats are not a threat to public

order, took no precautions to preserve the peace. They, in fact, misjudged the atavistic tendencies of opposite-side diplomats who visited the various nightclubs and restaurants and started the brawls among themselves that resulted in great damage to property and physical injury to the participants.

Peace was also interrupted during this time by the torpedoing and sinking of many ships at the entrance to Lourenco Marques's harbour. Portuguese patrol and fishing boats regularly picked up some of the survivors; but occasionally catastrophes occurred. One of the most horrible happened when a British vessel, carrying some 100 South African soldiers going home on leave and about 1000 German and Italian prisoners-of-war from North Africa, was torpedoed just off the coast. The ship's crew, soldiers, and prisoners all jumped overboard from the burning, rapidly-sinking boat. The following was described later by many as the worst shark attack in history.

Packs of hundreds of sharks, urged to frenzy by the blood in the water, attacked the victims there, severing their limbs, or simply tearing them apart. The lucky ones were brought alive into Lourenco Marques, their injuries complicated by burns sustained on the flaming ship. They were treated at the hospital, where my sister and others worked to save them. Later, Rene said she knew it was nearly unthinkable to help those Germans who were committing atrocities against Jews everywhere, but, in fact, she felt just as sorry for the injured young Germans and Italians as she did for the South Africans. Even though she had left her homeland to escape some of them, she could not discriminate against her enemies when they needed nursing care. Following their recoveries from the sinking ship in the harbour, the South Africans were repatriated, and the Germans and Italians, detained in Lourenco Marques. The uninjured soldiers formed two separate soccer teams, – one German, the other, Italian, – that took part later in the local championship.

As the sinking of British ships became epidemic, detailed stories appeared in the newspapers, reporting that German submarines regularly emerged just off the coast, stopping fishing boats and buying their catches. The fish then went to the Lourenco Marques market, where the Germans determined the selling price.

One day we received a call from the British Embassy, inviting my father and sister to a confidential meeting. They were taken to an office at the Embassy, called the "African Intelligence Operation", where they met the intelligence officer in charge, the famous Malcolm Muggeridge. My sister was then a beautiful blonde of nineteen years and my father, a distinctive looking fifty-four-year-old. Intelligence wanted to enlist Samu and Rene to help them determine how and why the dramatic increase of ship-sinking was happening. My father and sister would pose as a "sugar daddy" with his young love, Rene. Together they would frequent the nightclubs where the Germans tended to go. The headwaiter would seat them in the midst of the Germans. (He was in the pay of British Intelligence.) And since Rene and Samu both spoke German fluently, they could eavesdrop on the conversations around them and find out how the Germans knew the schedules of all British ships into and out of the harbour.

My sister spoke very good English, but Samu did not. Therefore, she translated the wishes of the British Intelligence to him. When she had finished, my father rose to his feet and shouted, "I hope the British Intelligence in Europe is not as stupid as it is in Africa, or we'll all be doomed!" When my sister calmed him down, Samu continued through clenched teeth, "Wake up, gentlemen!" The arrival and departure schedules of all British ships are published in the Portuguese papers during wartime, just as they are in peace. And there's more. The German Embassy is located at the entrance to the Lourenco Marques harbour. All the Germans need to do is station a fellow on

the balcony or at a window of that building. From there, he can radio the submarines lurking in the area that a fat, British vessel, ripe for the taking, is heading out.

The meeting ended with Malcolm Muggeridge assuring that he would take these matters under consideration and would "be in touch". We heard nothing more, but from the next day on, the arrival schedules in and out of the harbour were not published again. In addition, all British boats began arriving and departing at night when there were no clouds or moon, thus dramatically cutting down the number of casualties in the area. I very much hope that these changes were attributable to Samu's outburst in the office at the Embassy that day and contributed to the war effort against the Nazis. Two days after the meeting with Malcolm Muggeridge, we were issued our immigration permits to Palestine.

Both Luanda and Lourenco Marques had been more hygienic than Lisbon. I had always consumed enormous quantities of milk, and in Lisbon, it was sold on the streets, mixed with water and other suspicious fluids. It had to be boiled. No pasteurised milk was available. But Lourenco Marques had its own modern dairy, and pasteurisation was a requisite. Our family was grateful for our relatively good health during our three years of wandering. We had been quite lucky and only experienced a few minor infirmities, like the morning I awoke in pain with a wide belt of boils around my waist. We went to see Dr. Soeiro, a Portuguese doctor we knew. He said I was suffering from a common tropical infection. He took blood from my vein, injected it back into my arm, and told me to go to the beer factory three times a day. There I was to eat a huge hunk of yeast while I drank. So at age fourteen, I was prescribed six mugs of beer per day, – "doctor's orders". While this was an

unusual treatment, it was also an effective one; and within seven days, all the boils disappeared, – so far, for good.

In Lourenco Marques, I started to hate colonialism. Racism flourished in Africa. The Portuguese had no racial laws; and while they treated the majority of coloured people miserably by keeping them horribly oppressed, the small class of educated Blacks were accepted as absolutely equal to the white Portuguese. Coloured prisoners, who were chained by their ankles, three and four together, did public work such as road repairs. Executing heavy labour under the most brutal treatment by the guards, their only crime was that they had no money to pay "head tax". Previously, they had lived quite happily in the bush until the colonial government imposed the new tax. Since the poor people could not afford the levy, they were arrested and cast in positions as free labourers for the state. Hundreds of thousands of the Mozambique Coloureds went to South Africa to work in the gold mines where, though they were still mistreated, they were less so than before. In South Africa, while there were racial laws that became progressively worse after the Nationalists came into power in 1949, all of the Blacks were treated equally, – as inferior human beings, educated or not.

In Lourenco Marques, the head of the maternity hospital was an African doctor. The top gynaecologist was African. (Neither was allowed to touch a white person.) All professions had both black and white members. The result of the Portuguese policy toward Blacks was that while ninety-five percent of them were treated deplorably, the other five percent, the educated, were considered absolutely equal. Hence the Blacks had no leaders to fight the injustices against them because no successful revolutions are lead by lower-status, uneducated workers. As a whole, the policy against the Blacks was unfair and dishonest, but it worked for the Portuguese colonial government.

There were no problems until all the coloured nations bordering Angola and Mozambique became independent and helped "stir up" revolutions against the Portuguese. From 1961 to 1973, Portugal spent large sums of money on education and new industries in an attempt to keep African support. Politically, there was no change until the death of Salazar in 1968. Dr. Caetano, his successor, was little more than conciliatory, and in 1973, new Legislative Assemblies were elected. But this move was too limited and came too late. In 1974, when the revolution succeeded in Portugal, it became clear that country would withdraw from its Colonies.

Events then moved rapidly, and Portugal was unable to control the speed or direction of the decolonisation movement. The nationalists refused to consider anything short of independence. In Mozambique a cease-fire was negotiated after Frelimo gained the military initiative, and finally the government. Independence was arranged for the following June. Preceded by a mass exodus of Europeans, Mozambique became independent in June 1975. In Angola, the position was more complicated, partly because the white settlement there was larger, and partly because of a struggle between three separate African nationalist organisations. There were clashes throughout 1974 and 1975 among these groups, with Portugal playing a very small part. Finally, in November 1975, the Portuguese declared independence without handing over to any new government.

Unfortunately, the poor Africans' lot was not improved by this independence since the Russians, on the one hand, and the South Africans, on the other, backed different groups in both Mozambique and Angola. Tens-of-thousands were killed in bloody civil wars and some got away and went to European Portugal, causing the usual problems of unemployment for ex-Colonial Blacks in Europe.

During our year in Lourenco Marques (1942-1943), the war took a turn for the better, offering hope for a German defeat. The German forces entered Egypt, seriously endangering Alexandria and Cairo, but were stopped and defeated at El Alamein by the British Eighth Army of General Montgomery, who was aided by the Commonwealth troops. The latter force then advanced thousands of kilometres through Libya, finally linking with the American, Free French, and British troops that had landed in Algeria. This was followed by an invasion of Sicily and Italy, where Marechal Badoglio overthrew Mussolini. In most places, Italian troops joined the Allies in their fight against the Germans, and this process accelerated when the Germans started committing atrocities against their ex-allies.

In the East, things were proceeding even more dramatically. The Russian troops, who did not fight well in the beginning, became fanatical warriors after the Germans occupied a large portion of European Russia and murdered massive numbers of women and children. The biggest event was at Stalingrad, where the besiegers became the besieged. This city on the Volga River saw the most enormous battle to date, during which thousands of Russian soldiers lost their lives; but when the entire German army in this area was encircled, they capitulated. All survivors were taken prisoner, including Field Marshall Von Paulus, who was the first German Field Marshall ever to become a prisoner-of-war. Later, he began broadcasting anti-Hitler speeches that went out on Moscow airways, telling German troops to lay down their arms. Concurrent with this victory in Stalingrad, the siege of Leningrad was relieved; and for the first time, the encirclement of this city was broken.

But even though some news was encouraging, it was punctuated more and more frequently by the horror stories that came to light everyday through the radio and newspapers. Hundreds-of-thousands of civilians starved to death during

those two years of the Stalingrad/Leningrad battles. In Russia, the Germans and their allies: Croatians, Spaniards, Romanians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, and Hungarians murdered millions of unarmed citizens. The Croatians formed special "Ustacha Nazi Troops" and, aided by the Bosnian "Moslem SS Division" (recruited by the former Mufti of Jerusalem), massacred countless Serbs. Because Heydrich, head of the Gestapo (Prague), had killed thousands of Czechs, two Czechs, flyingin an English plane, parachuted from the craft and killed him. As a reprisal, the Germans murdered all of the population of Lidice, Czechoslovakia.

The only allies of the Germans who did not commit atrocities were the Italians. After Badoglio capitulated, and the Germans took over command of the Italian troops, ordering them to join the Croatians in their slaughter of the Serbs, a full division of Italian troops and officers all joined the Tito Partisans to fight against the Germans.

The news that finally convinced us to move on to Palestine was the uprising of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. The Jews, who were dying by the thousands in this terribly overcrowded part of Warsaw, managed to smuggle in a small quantity of arms. They revolted and fought against the might of the German army, which was aided by the Ukrainians and the Polish police. Naturally, though a number of German troops were killed, a full ninety-nine percent of the Jews were massacred during the rebellion. The saddest part of the story involves the portion of the Jewish population that was able to escape through the sewers to the Christian parts of the city. The Poles were fanatically religious Catholics, and even though they had been mistreated badly by the Germans they hated the Jews more. The Polish priests had spent hundreds of years infecting the minds of the Catholics with the germs of hatred for the Polish Jews. So when the Jews escaped the ghetto via the sewer system and emerged into the

Catholic populace, they were either handed over to the Germans or killed outright by those piously religious people of Warsaw. Ironically, the wheel "came around" less than two years later when the Russian army reached the suburbs of Warsaw. Just prior to this, the Poles had mounted a failed revolution against the Germans. The Russians simply waited until the Germans had massacred all the Poles. Then they occupied the city.

JEEP TO JUBA

Finally, we made our decision to proceed to Palestine. This would prove quite an adventurous trip that would entail our going first to Kenya, overland from there to Cairo, and then to Palestine.

Since the fighting in Africa (Abyssinia, Egypt, Eritrea) had ceased only recently, we had to acquire British military permits to leave as well as a separate document that allowed us to travel on a British ship to Kenya. We were advised that we should be ready for the next vessel that could carry passengers to British East Africa, which, in those days, consisted of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. Since Hungary had entered the war as a German ally by this time, attacking Russia and declaring war on the United States and Great Britain, we obtained a Swedish travel permit because Sweden represented "Hungarian interests" in allied territory.

Reportedly, the Hungarian declaration of war to the United States and Great Britain went something like this:

> The Hungarian Foreign minister called the British and U.S. Ambassadors to serve notice.
>
> The Ambassadors asked, "What is 'Hungary' – a kingdom or a republic?"
>
> Answer: "Kingdom"
>
> Question: "Who is your king?"
>
> Answer: "We have no king. He is in exile. We are ruled by a Regent Admiral Horthy:'
>
> Question: "Oh, an admiral. Do you have a fleet?"
>
> Answer: "No. We have not had access to the sea since 1918:'
>
> Question: "If we have the facts right, Hungary is a kingdom without a king, ruled by an admiral without a fleet or access to the sea. Now we want to know: why are you declaring war? Have you any territorial demands against Great Britain or the United States?"
>
> Answer: "No:
>
> Question: "Have you any territorial demands against other countries?"
>
> Answer: "Yes. Against Croatia, Slovakia, and Romania"
>
> Question: "Then why don't you declare war on them?"
>
> Answer: "We can't. They are our allies"

Once we had our permits to Palestine and the British military document to travel via Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, Sudan, and Egypt, we began packing our twenty-six suitcases. (When we left Hungary, we had thirty-four, but due to financial difficulties, from time to time, we sold one of the other eight and its contents. I often wished we had bartered more. Twenty-six were a terrible burden!) As migrants, we carried all our worldly possessions with us.

Finally, we received word that we were to board the British/India Line vessel, "Karagola" at noon the next day. Due to security regulations, once we were aboard the ship, all communications with shore were cut off; and we awaited departure in relative silence. Since the first night was clear, we remained in port so as to avert the danger of being sunk; but at 2:00 a.m., there was a violent downpour with torrents of rain and poor visibility. So anchors lifted, and the Karagola suddenly left Lourenco Marques.

The Karagola was a fairly small boat of about 9000 tons; but it was far superior to the antiquated Portuguese tub that had been our transportation from Portugal. This one accommodated

us in three-berth cabins. My mother and sister were in one, while Samu and I shared another with an agreeable Scottish captain who had been torpedoed twice before he boarded the Karagola to rejoin his unit in Mombassa. Our group included Prince Fouad and his wife, three Egyptian/Jewish doctors, and several others. Most of the British officers and army personnel aboard, who were sailing as passengers, came from British vessels that had been sunk off Lourenco Marques a couple of weeks before.

We travellers needed to carry life belts with us at all times, – even to the toilet and to bed. The ship was fully blacked out. All portholes were closed so that the enemy could not see light from the boat at night. Since those were the days before air conditioning, and the fans did not bring much relief from the humid African heat, we spent at least part of every night on the decks, trying to escape the oppressive heat.

The Karagola was going it alone, hoping to meet a convoy in Dar es Salaam and Mombassa. It was armed with anti-aircraft machine guns on the bridge and artillery pieces and torpedoes aft. The Royal Navy Gunners, a division made up of Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and Canadians, manned the armaments. The vessel travelled at full speed, but zigzagged to avoid submarines. In spite of this precaution, one day out of Lourenco Marques, we were fired upon. It was a lucky miss; and after the Karagola returned fire and dropped torpedoes, the German U-boat appeared to have had enough and retired without more ado. These would be the last torpedoes discharged during this trip.

Most of the polite, efficient crew on the Karagola were Indians, and the food was Anglo-Indian. I got on well with the young Commonwealth Gunners. They were all nineteen or twenty-years-old, and I was going on fifteen. By talking with them constantly, my English began improving… most of the time, that is. On one occasion, my fractured tongue resulted in an hilarious outcome.

Grammatically, all Latin-based words have the same base in Portuguese, French, and English. For example: French, termination; Portuguese, terminacao; English, termination. French, improvisation; Portuguese, improvisacao; English, improvisation. There was no entertainment on the sweltering ship at night, and due to the darkness, even reading was out. I had caught a cold, and that night we had a "sing song". When we had run out of pieces, one of the gunners said, "Fred, sing us a Hungarian selection."

I did not know how to say in English, "I have a cold and can't sing a note." But in Portuguese, "constipacao" means" cold" – the illness. So I announced, "I cannot sing because I have constipation."

Later, when I returned from the toilet, they asked, "Now can you sing?"

Our first stop on the way to Palestine was Beira. Even though Beira was in Mozambique, unlike Lourenco Marques, this port was leased to a British company, "Companhia Do Mozambique". It served as the port for the land-locked British colony, Rhodesia. Since the company's only interest was to make money from imports and exports to and from Rhodesia, the city itself was of no particular value to them. So, in contrast to Lourenco Marques, Beira was a dirty, neglected place with rampant poverty and maltreated black Africans.

I was young, politically minded, and increasingly vehement against all the Colonial powers in Africa. In weak attempts to camouflage racial discrimination, each of them gave crumbs to the Blacks while they used them so blatantly. The Portuguese offered equality to the small number of the educated; the French gave them education and made them speak French; and the English taught them soccer and rugby. I remember being in

Mombassa in I948 during the biggest soccer event of the year. Europeans, Asians, and Africans all played one another. Both the Europeans and the Asians wore regulation soccer boots. The Blacks played in bare feet and won. The oppressed danced in the streets all night.

After WWII, when the Africans rose and fought against their white oppressors, the Portuguese, French, British, and Belgians, I was entirely sympathetic to their cause. I was then, and am now, greatly disillusioned by the fact that even with independence and the passage of many years, the lot of Black Africans has not improved. On the contrary, it is worse than ever. Some are still massacred in the independent, black countries. And most of their leaders are corrupt despots who fill their Swiss bank accounts at the cost of their starving subjects, allowing them to be used in wars such as the South African Cuban conflict in Angola and Mozambique.

We left Beira under the shelter of darkness and headed for our next port, Mozambique, a small, neglected harbour near the border of Mozambique and Tanganyika. Our zigzagging of fourteen days ended as the Karagola joined a small convoy, escorted by destroyers, and heading for Mombassa where it would meld with a larger one, carrying troops to India. This fleet finally would reinforce the British troops who were fighting the Japanese. We debarked in Mombassa at Dar es Salaam. Because that city had no wharves, the ship anchored offshore, and we took motor launches the rest of the way.

During the day we wandered, finding Dar es Salaam surprisingly dean and tidy. It had belonged to the Germans before WWI, was occupied by the British in 1915, and had been incorporated into British East Africa after WWI. At night, we returned to our vessel, where sleep was illusive because of

the unbearable heat. About midnight, my friends, the gunners, sought me out on the top deck and invited me for a swim. My whole family joined us, and soon people on the other boats followed. Hundreds of us swam from boat-to-boat, stopping only when the sun came up. The exercise did us all good, and finally we lay down on the top deck of the Karagola and slept soundly in the heat of the day.

At lunchtime, our slumber was interrupted by a great commotion. Apparently a British Indian Army officer had dived overboard and was taken by a shark. Only then did we notice the plethora of ghostly predators gliding among the vessels. It was a miracle nobody had been attacked in the night's dark playground.

From Dar es Salaam we proceeded to the island of Zanzibar, a sultanate with a mixed population of Black Africans, Indians, and Arabs. My first memory there was of the spicy smells that infused the atmosphere. I was sorry our sea voyage was nearly over and realised that I would miss my new friends, the gunners. This had been the first time since I left Hungary four years before that I had the opportunity to spend time with young people. Instead of being in Samu's company most of the day, talking business or translating radio broadcasts and political articles for him and for his friends (who were three-to-four times my age), I was with my contemporaries for this brief period – a situation that would not be repeated until my arrival in Australia in 1950.

The Karagola sailed under the security of the destroyer escort and roughly a dozen other passenger and cargo vessels. Because it was expected that the Mombassa/ Bombay part of the journey would be "eventful", we spent the last two days of our trip to Mombassa preparing for trouble. There were constant drills and exercises as the gunners practiced loading, firing, and reloading the guns. Because my family debarked in Mombassa,

and the war news was blacked out, I never knew what happened to the convoy between Mombassa and Bombay. I hope they arrived safely, without incident.

We arrived in Mombassa to a sight even more awesome than the one a year before in Cape Town. Cargo boats, passenger ships, tankers, destroyers, warships, every type of vessel occupied the harbour. Once again, we were very reassured to see that, in spite of heavy losses, there were still plentiful British ships on the seas. As we watched the Karagola dock in Mombassa, little did we know that in four years, we would travel the same voyage in reverse (Mombassa, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Beira, and Lourenco Marques).

With the exception of our "mixed" group, the passengers getting off here in Mombassa were checked by British Military Security. Most of them were military personnel who were joining their units and required only a routine check. Ours, on the other hand, was a "suspicious" lot. My family possessed Swedish, stateless, travel documents issued to citizens of Hungary – a country at war against the British. Other families had Greek passports granted by a nation occupied by the Nazis. One couple, Mr. and Mrs. Blustein (Polish Jews) carried "stateless" documents. The largest group had Egyptian passports and included in their number a member of the Egyptian nobility, Prince Fouad, who would be heavily scrutinised. Recently, due to the pro-Nazi tendencies of the Egyptian king, British tanks had knocked down the gates of the Royal Palace in Cairo and gave the chief tenant an ultimatum. Either he toed the line or else. In a way, Prince Fouad was a political refugee like the rest of us because before the war, Moslem religious fanatics shot him in the face for marrying a Spanish Catholic. After the loss of his eye, Prince Fouad left Egypt and went to live in Spain. Now, due to the uncertainty in Europe, he was returning to his native land.

The British officers checking these documents sent our group's papers to "higher-ups"; and while we awaited clearance, we were treated in a very civilised manner. Instead of their locking us up, they "invited" us on a picnic and sightseeing tour. We were taken by jeep to a beach outside Mombassa where we swam, ate, watched the wild animals, and enjoyed the scenery. But that night, we had a new problem. There was "no room in the inn", so to speak, so our British officer / guides arranged for us to sleep on board the Karagola with our luggage before proceeding to Nairobi on the following day.

We were told our documents had been processed and we could continue… soon. My family still owned one valuable possession – a Leica camera – that was sealed by the authorities until our arrival in Cairo. In addition, we all had to be inoculated against yellow fever, sleeping sickness, and other diseases before venturing further. To this end, we were taken to an army hospital where a line of people waited for their shots. When the male army nurse began giving the inoculations, my sister, Rene, argued that we would not participate unless the nurse used fresh needles each time. The three doctors in our group backed her up; but the nurse refused, and a boisterous argument ensued. The commotion drew the medical officer in charge out of his office to investigate. He agreed with Rene, and new medical, preventative measures were observed – perhaps from that day on – in Mombassa.

Duly inoculated, we returned to the Karagola where an odd incident occurred that night, No matter how broke he was, Samu always tipped when a tip was warranted. The Indian stewards aboard the boat definitely deserved a bonus and received one from our family. We requested a cabin for the night and were accommodated very cordially. On the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Blustein, who never offered a gratuity, were told, "Sorry. No cabins available." They were forced to sleep in the lounge.

The next day the officers assigned to look after us provided jeeps for our transportation to the train station. There was a special one for our suitcases and arrangements made for their transfer to Nairobi. For once we had the luxury of not having to worry about them. Before the train departed, we were invited to the beach once again. Afterward, as we showered, Samu said, "They are nearly all Jews!" We had not known that in English-speaking countries, non-Jews were circumcised. In Europe, only Jews were. And under the Germans, circumcising a male child meant a death sentence for him.

Finally, we left Mombassa. It would be the beginning of a fantastic trip!

Only a few hours out of Mombassa's sultriness, we could see the white, snow-covered peak of the highest mountain in Africa, Mt. Kilimanjaro (just under 6000 metres), high in the distance. As the train ascended toward Nairobi, which is over 200 metres above sea level, the weather began cooling. In those days, there was no shortage of wild animals, and we sat glued to the windows, watching the enormous variety of wildlife. Herds of zebras, giraffes, elephants, and an occasional lion dotted the landscape; and our train was forced to stop a number of times to give way to elephants on the track.

We arrived in Nairobi the next day, where our first concern was to locate accommodation at a reasonable rate. We were pleasantly surprised to find that there were people waiting for us. They were Nairobi residents – English Jews. Somehow they learned there were Jews on the train who were travelling to Palestine. They booked us in the "Norfolk Hotel", one of the top-notch establishments in town, at a significantly reduced price. The impressive stone structure was a "special" hotel with reception area, lounges, bars and dining rooms. The guest rooms

were individual bungalows made up of two bedrooms, two toilets, and two bathrooms.

Nairobi is situated just under the equator and has a beautiful climate – dry heat during the day; cold, when the sun sets. At night, all rooms were heated. We would remain here for two weeks, arranging our schedules and booking the passage for the rest of our trip.

On the first night, we slept with the windows open. My sister woke me in the middle of the night, at the same time as Germaine woke Samu. "There are two people in the room!" the women cried in unison. My father and I grabbed blankets; and we each targeted an intruder, stalked, and threw covers over him. We kicked and punched our captives, eliciting inhuman screams from both. The women turned on the lights to better survey our prey. Moments later, sleepy and relieved, we opened the door, allowing the escape of the two, large monkeys.

The next day Rene and I walked around town window-shopping. Rene fantasised that she would buy several of the items we saw and asked me what I would like. I replied, "You're mad! We have almost no money."

"Leave that to me." she assured.

Rene stayed home the following day, drawing fashion designs. She worked about twenty hours, and the next morning, wrote down all of the names of the clothing shops and dressmakers she could find in the phone book. Then she made appointments to see them. At each location, she presented her drawings as illustrations of the "latest Paris fashions" – out just before the Germans occupied that city. She suggested a price of five-to-ten pounds apiece, sold sixty or seventy of them, and ended the financially successful day with five hundred pounds in her pocket. This was a considerable amount of money in those days. Rene spent half on gifts for all of us and gave the other half to Samu to supplement our travel budget.

In addition to these monies, we were able to get more by selling six suitcases and their contents to an Indian shop. We were now down to twenty – still too many. We got permission from the government to remove the seal on the Leica and spent the remaining days in Nairobi relaxing, knowing that our immediate financial problems were solved.

My sister was very friendly with one of the Egyptian doctors, Dr Salama, a specialist in his thirties who spoke with our parents, explaining that his intentions toward Rene were honourable. He had met her in Lourenco Marques, was in love with her, and would like to marry her. There was only one problem with this match. Dr. Salama's appearance. He was blond, and Rene disliked blond men. I do not know where this aversion came from, but I suspect it may have begun when the blond Nazis beat up the Jews at the Budapest Art School. Also, there had been the uncomfortable train trip through Germany with the SS officers. Whatever the cause, Rene felt a real aversion to light-haired people throughout her life. (Later when she married and moved to South Africa, she went so far as to dye her own hair auburn, denying that she was blond-haired.) When my sister realised Dr. Salama's affections were serious, she ignored him for the rest of the trip and became interested in a dark Copt fellow instead.

We left Nairobi by train, passing the small town called "Equator", which, as its name suggests, is situated right at the equator. We stopped in another town and were taken by jeep to a port on Lake Victoria where we secured accommodations in a small hotel that catered to people vacationing on the lake. That night we enjoyed watching the African tribal dances until early morning.

The Africans in Kenya belong mainly to two tribes: the Masai, who own cattle and get their nourishment by cutting into the veins of the live animals and drinking their blood; and the second tribe, the Kikuyus, who a few years after we were there, started the Mau-Mau uprising, killing many Whites, who then reciprocated. Eventually, when Kenya gained its independence, Jomo Kenyata, the Mau-Mau leader, became the first president of the independent Kenya.

On the following day, we embarked on a comfortable steamer for a couple of pleasant days on the Lake. Jeeps met us onshore and transported us to Kyoga, Uganda, where we stayed in an Indian-run hotel. When we were served our first meal there, a delicious looking fish, everyone stuck into it with great enthusiasm – everybody but us, that is. As we took our first bites, my mother stopped us, warning, "This tastes like the chemical the staff uses to kill mosquitoes. Don't eat another bite:' None of the rest of us had noticed the unusual flavour, but knowing how Germaine was, we obeyed in mid-chew.

Several hours later, moans and screams awakened us. The whole fish-eating crowd had stomach poisoning. The three doctors, themselves doubled up in pain, vomited and had diarrhoea in concert with the rest. Only the Mayer family remained healthy. We collected medicines for everyone and did our best to nurse the ill throughout the night. The following morning, a sorry-looking group climbed back on the boat and disappeared into its interior. The Mayer family shared the dining room alone that evening.

Throughout my description of our life in Africa, I have mentioned Indians from time-to-time. In those days, prior to the partition of India in 1947-1948, there were no Pakistanis. Whether Hindu or Moslem, they were grouped under one name, "Indian".

In the Portuguese Colonies, the tradesmen, watchmakers, tailors, and small businessmen were nearly all Indian; and in the British Colonies, the same was true. In addition to these, a high percentage of the lower public servants were also Indian. The Blacks harboured resentment against them, and they were encouraged in this by the old colonial rulers' tenet of: "Divida et Impera" (Divide and conquer). This was the style of the Romans two thousand years before and assumed that if one could turn one tribe or group against another, both would be easier to rule. Often this style of government brought tragic results as it did in Rwanda, where the Belgians ruled by the same principle, promoting a lasting hatred between the Tutsis and the Hutus. (Five years later when we lived in South Africa, the Blacks were incited to rage by the Whites in Durban who spread rumours that an Indian had killed a black girl. As a result, the Zulu crowds went on a rampage, killing over one hundred Indians. After a couple of days spent murdering Indians and ransacking their shops while the white police stood by, the police themselves began shooting Blacks.)

After Uganda had already gained its independence and Idi Amin became President, he expelled all Indians from Uganda. Years later when he was overthrown, the new regime, seeing the chaos around itself, called the Indians back. Some returned; others did not.

After the short voyages on the Ugandan lakes, we began a number of river trips up the Nile, through the length of Sudan (the largest country in Africa), and on to Egypt. Our first leg kept us in Uganda, and from there, we went by jeep to Juba (Sudan) on a trip that was estimated to take seven-to-nine hours. Since the road was not a proper one, but a narrow dirt path, our travel was fascinating, but uncomfortable. There were thirty-four people in our group who would catch the steamer in Juba.

The first five jeeps contained six persons plus a driver; and the last one carried four. We shared a vehicle with the Blusteins, who had attached themselves to us due to their difficulties with languages. They only spoke Polish and Yiddish, neither of which the Africans or the British could understand.

Not long after leaving the boat, our jeep broke down. The next one was not far behind, and when it came upon us, we hailed the vehicle down and crammed my mother, sister, and Mrs. Blustein into its crowded interior. We three men remained behind with the enfeebled jeep. The only traffic on the dusty, god-forsaken road through the African bush was sporadic at best. There might be a very few cars along this route every two weeks when a Nile steamer departed from Juba, pushing up to Kosti (Sudan). But this river journey took eight days, so we knew our chances of being picked up were slim. Therefore, we resigned ourselves to waiting for one of our jeeps to return for us.

The heat was blistering, and we had only one bottle of water. Suddenly, we spied an enormous cloud of dust approaching. To our joy, it turned out to be the tabletop truck that carried our group's luggage. Because the cabin had room for only one person, the driver, the three of us made ourselves as comfortable and safe as possible among the suitcases on top. To say it was a bumpy ride would be an understatement. The pothole-dappled road frequently catapulted the truck into the air sideways as the unrelenting heat pressed down upon our bodies. The good news was that we were on our way, for a short distance, that is.

Without warning, the vehicle began to smoke. The radiator was empty. We had no water to drink – let alone fluid to fill the tank. Somewhat depressed by the graveness of our situation, we focused our minds toward a solution. I had a brainstorm and suggested that the driver and the others urinate into the radiator. Voila! The truck started. Now, in addition to the heat, dust, and

bumps, another irritant was added to our hostile environment – the smell of boiling urine.

After an hour, the radiator was empty again, and the dehydrating passengers had nothing more to offer. The driver just shrugged his shoulders and said, "No piss; truck no go." Then he sat down in the shade and closed his eyes. Defeated, we did the same.

But unexpectedly we were stirred to motion by a distant roar of voices, drums, and the singing that accompanies Blacks' dancing. We bolted up and began loping through the bush toward the sound of the commotion. The drums and voices grew louder as we arrived at a clearing. A small village with huts and a regulation-size soccer field stood on the open ground before us. A game was in progress, and men, women, and children watched it, cheering the players on. The full complement were nearly or entirely naked, watchers and players alike. The players wore red or blue ribbons to establish team identities and all competed in bare feet. Feathers decorated the referee's hair. This was perhaps the most primitive part of Africa, but the field was F.I.F.A. with regulation soccer ball and goals. (After this, nobody could ever convince me that soccer is not the most popular game in the world.)

We were well received by athletes and fans alike. Fortunately, our driver managed a bit of our hosts' dialect, but none was willing to address the problem of our empty radiator until the game against the neighbouring village had finished. Water was in very short supply there, and we were afraid to drink it anyway because of the possibility of contracting typhoid. Therefore, we felt delighted when the locals offered us coconuts with holes punched in them so the milk could drain through. The rejuvenating offering quenched our thirst. We had no option, apparently, but to sit under a tree and barrack for the home team. As the game heated up, the drumbeats on both sides of the field grew more frenzied until they peaked with the home team's winning goal.

Finally, it was all over, and the victors could listen to an explanation of our problem. Since the drought there was very bad, the tribe refused to give or sell us any of their water. I felt I had no other choice. I asked them to urinate into our radiator.

With the whole of the village following us back to the truck, and the drums beating a steady accompaniment, the tribe surrounded the vehicle and, one by one, each added to the fluid level in the radiator until it was totally full. We offered a one pound note in payment that they refused because they had never see one before. Fortunately, the driver was prepared, pocketed the note, and replaced it in his own palm with a handful of penny pieces that our hosts took with pleasure. At last, to the waning symphony of the drums, we left our new friends in the heat and dust of the day.

As it got darker, cooler, and smellier, hoards of mosquitoes attacked us. This was malaria and yellow fever country, but apparently the quinine and inoculations did their tricks, because we all remained healthy. The rest of our group were relieved to see us about midnight when we arrived in Juba, a small village on the Nile, where the only event of note was the arrival and departure of the "Kosti" every fifteen or sixteen days. All we wanted was to drink.

The next morning, we all felt none-the-worse for our experiences of the previous day, and we were anxious to begin our travels on the Kosti. The Nile steamer was a large, comfortable vessel for Whites only. Blacks rode on a barge, towed behind the ship, where they had no protection from the weather, sun, or insects. There were cabins on the Kosti, but due to the extreme heat, they were not used for sleeping. On the top deck, though, were beds with curtains for privacy and mosquito netting to keep the vengeful insects away. The eight days on the steamer were unforgettable. We felt like we were travelling back in time.

Sudan can be divided into two parts. Blacks who practice simple, primitive religions or have converted to Christianity inhabit the southern one. The northern section is home to black Africans and Arabs – most of whom are Moslem. The northerners have always tried to rule the poorer southerners. As an idealistic, young left-winger, I naturally attributed this division to the colonial "divide and conquer" philosophy.

In most places, the Nile was thick with vegetation – especially papyrus plants. Special equipment on the front of the Kosti cut a swath for our passage through the compact growth, disturbing the thousands of colourful birds that took to the air as we passed. The river was dense with crocodiles, and the British officers amused themselves by sitting on the decks, picking them off one-by-one with their guns. The carcasses of the dead either were left to rot in the sun, or if we were near a native village, they were collected by villagers in boats to be skinned and eaten. The skins were laid out in the sun to dry and later sold for a pittance to the Arab traders. They, in turn, sent them to the cities where they were manufactured into expensive shoes, handbags and belts.

The Nile was home also to hippopotami. These massive, lazy, prehistoric monsters basked in family groups in the water. The presence of herds of elephants was announced in advance by the swarms of white birds that followed them and took nourishment from the animals' mouths. As I lay in my chaise on the deck, reading or playing chess with the several available partners, I could watch a most incredible travelogue about the flora and fauna of the southern Sudan roll, frame after frame, in front of me.

We stopped at some of the native villages, where the boat took on cargo and fresh fruit for the passengers. We went ashore to stretch our legs and to study the ways of life of these people who lived in the most primitive of conditions.

At one of the larger villages, a young English man came aboard. He was the District Commissioner – probably just out of school – who was well-meaning and polite, but absolutely ignorant of the local population's habits or language. He was accompanied by a Sudanese police officer (obviously in charge) who could barely communicate with the District Commissioner because the latter spoke only English. The Englishman asked, "Would any of you (men only, of course) like to go to a Moslem religious festival in the village?" Some of us, including Samu went; and fortunately, so did some of the Egyptian members of our group.

The festival went wild as hundreds of men, oblivious to everything else around them, performed a sort of dervish dance, completely unaware of their surroundings, until they fell from exhaustion. What we were witnessing was a combination of religious practices and Black African customs. The District Commissioner grew extremely nervous. Meanwhile, our Egyptian mates conversed in Arabic with the village elders and returned to reassure him that the elders had invited all of us for coffee. This should be interpreted as a sign of friendship and hospitality, they explained. We were in no danger. Feeling relaxed, we had our coffee and stayed until the early morning hours, eating sheep meat with our hands and enjoying the ambience.

As we sailed away, elephants, hippopotami, and crocodiles lined the shore, as did the natives. Some of the villagers were tall, fit, beautiful, and completely naked. Others, the Moslems, were covered head-to-toe in heavy clothing.

After we docked the next time, we took a train from there to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, where we remained for three nights. Of course, we went sightseeing, visiting Omdurman where the Sudanese defeated the British and General Gordon was killed in the nineteenth century. Khartoum was hotter than any place we had been so far, and a sandstorm added to the

inclement weather. We walked the streets, interested in everything, until my mother sat down on the pavement, started to cry, and said she could go no further. We took her seriously and returned to the hotel where we had cold drinks as we sat under the large fans that spun fresh air into our stifling atmosphere.

Samu and I had decided that in spite of our dwindling monies, we would stop in Luxor and see the Tombs of the Kings, the Valley of the Dead, Karnak, Thebes, and other Egyptian antiquities. There was a man about my father's age in our group who we met in Lourenco Marques – a quiet, modest, Greek individual who never bragged about himself My mother had invited him for dinner often, and he always thanked her profusely and exclaimed how pleasant it was to dine with a family. When the war began, he had been stranded in Europe and now was returning to his home, Egypt. When we mentioned that we would like to shop in Luxor, he said, "I have friends in the hotel industry. I'll get you good deals in both Luxor and Cairo. Let me go and make some calls."

A short time later, he returned with the names of lodgings in both cities, saying, "You are booked at very reasonable rates. When you get to Cairo, go to this hotel, and you will be fine" He offered something else as well that made our stay in Luxor a luxurious one. He told us to leave most of our suitcases with him, and he would have them waiting at our hotel in Cairo. He apologised that he could not meet us there personally because he would be in Alexandria and Port Said on business.

Our plans completed for Luxor and Cairo, we continued on to Kosti; and one more short boat trip later, we boarded the train to the Egyptian border. At Wadi Haifa, another Nile steamer took us to El Shellal, a two-and-a-half day journey. This was before the Aswan dam was built, and this area was just

as primitive as the Nile through the Sudan had been – replete with crocodiles and other wildlife. In El Shallal, we boarded the Luxor / Cairo train.

When we arrived at the first hotel our Greek friend booked for us, we were surprised at its high quality and lack of expense. We attributed the later to the shortage of tourists during the war years. Next morning we began organising our sightseeing. We hired a guide, Ahmed, who could arrange for the mules that would carry us into the Valley of Kings and to our other destinations. (Ahmed spoke German, so Samu could converse with him.)

We crossed the Nile on a large sailboat and headed off on mules toward our tourists' adventures. We travelled on mule-back for five or six days, taking picnic lunches from the hotel with us. Since none of us had ridden before, when we climbed down from our mounts at night, we found ourselves nearly disabled. We saw the tomb of Tutankhamen – a discovery made only twenty-one years earlier in 1922 by two British archaeologists, Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon. The tomb was 3,300 years old and held the sarcophagus of the King. While most others had been robbed, his was left intact. All the burial monuments were covered with hieroglyphics on the inside, from which historians deciphered the one-hundred-fifty-year history of this period of ancient Egypt. (A French army officer under Napoleon was the first to learn what the symbols meant.) We learned a great deal and hated to leave, but it was time.

At the Luxor railway station, thousands of people poured onto the train. Even the roof was full. We gave the conductor a pound, and he opened an eight-seat compartment (reserved

for Moslem women) and locked us in it for our comfortable ride to Cairo. We easily found the hotel our friend had organised. "Five stars" this time! We were ushered to the top floor where our three-bedroom / three-bath suite awaited our arrival. Our suitcases joined us there. We felt an immediate financial crisis as our eyes searched the grandeur of our surroundings. How could we pay for all of this?

Rene and I went down to the desk to ask the price – prepared to say the reservation had been a mistake. We were told the daily rate was a mere five pounds, including meals at the hotel's restaurant. The receptionist assured us that if this fee were too hefty, it could be reduced. In contrast to Luxor, where hotels were empty, Cairo was brimming with people needing accommodations. This was the headquarters of the Allied Military for the whole of the Middle East, and rooms were at a premium. How could we get such a great rate – less than the price of a normal hotel breakfast?

Later, Dr. Katz, one of our past travelling companions, brought tickets for us to the Palestine (now Israeli) Symphony Orchestra. He laughed heartily when we told him our story about the hotel. He knew about it already since he and our Greek friend knew each other. It seems that the modest man who accommodated us so well owned many hotels; and the reason he was not in Cairo when we were, was that he was travelling around Egypt inspecting them.

I was very excited to use Dr. Katz's tickets since I listened to classical music all the time, but had never been to a live symphony concert. The orchestra had a "bug" name because a few years earlier, Arturo Toscanini conducted it as a guest conductor and gave it a "big wrap". But enthusiastic as I was, and as good as the concert sounded, the week of mule and train rides took its toll. All four of us fell asleep before the music ended.

Our week in Cairo was busy and interesting as we visited the great Mosque (in our bare feet, naturally), went to Giza to

see the Sphinx, and rode camels in the desert. We also climbed the narrow tunnels inside the Great Pyramid, squeezing our way to the top. The ceilings of the tombs are very low, suggesting the small stature of the Egyptians. With the exception of my mother, who was very tiny, we had to bend low during the whole of our climb. By the time we got back down, we were quite sore and somewhat disappointed that, in contrast to the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, the walls here were bare of hieroglyphics. After we visited the tourist attractions with Doctor Katz, it was time to depart on another train to Palestine, the final destination in this particular journey.

PALESTINE: A VERY SCARY PLACE

Passing from Egypt into Palestine, we were required to change trains at Gaza, a totally Arab area. Both the British and Arab constables of the Palestine police checked our documents, studied them meticulously, and bombarded us with stupid questions in an unfriendly tone of voice. While the grilling ensued, they allowed my mother to get off the train to check our luggage, but the rest of us could not join her. My mother was not strong enough to carry the suitcases, and the Arabs demanded more money to help her than she had on her person. So after arguing with them for some time, Germaine gave them all the cash she had, and they responded by dumping our possessions on the platform next to the "Palestine Railways" train. Finally, the police finished with us, so Samu and I loaded our belongings onto the vehicle that would carry us to Tel Aviv.

Upon our arrival there, we immediately went to the "Hotel Allenby", next to Allenby road – one of the main routes through the city. The Allenby had been recommended to us accurately as "a cheap, clean hotel". It was very basic, but unfortunately,

we could not afford anything better because we had precious little money left.

Tel Aviv was different from the other places we had been since it was under complete war restrictions. There were total black-outs: all houses had air raid shelters; and paper strips were glued across the windows to prevent the glass from splintering during explosions. A brick wall stood at the entrance to each building. Tel Aviv suffered few air raids, but the day we arrived, one occurred. We had gone to bed quite early, awoke at 7:00 the next morning, and had breakfast. Our neighbours dropped by to see if we had been frightened. We learned then that the Germans had discharged several bombs during the dark hours, killing a number of people.

The following night, my mother awakened us shouting, "The air raid sirens are on. We must run!" Terrified, we fled to the basement and discovered later that the furour had been caused by some drunken soldiers who had managed to lay their hands on some sort of siren and had set it off. (I was told these men were Australians.)

Of course, our first real items of business were finding decent accommodations and the means of earning a living. Rents were very high, and finding a place seemed difficult. Tel Aviv was an all-Jewish city, bordering Jaffa, an entirely Arab one. The best we could manage was a two bedroom flat, ground floor, with a separate small building in the yard. The latter contained the kitchen, a bathroom, and the toilet and was particularly inconvenient during the soaking rains that fell frequently. This was the poorest housing situation we had endured during our years of wandering.

Our new "home" was situated only a few hundred metres from Jaffa. This would become significant a couple of years later when the Arabs and the Jews began regular target practice at

one other. Our neighbours in the house were an Iraqi Jew, a Sabra (locally born) mother, and her three daughters: Braha, age seven; Judith, fourteen; and her most beautiful daughter, Shulamita, my fifteen-year-old new best friend.

As an idealistic young man who needed a plan, I entertained the idea of entering a Kibbutz; so I enrolled in the agricultural school of "Mikveh Israel" (a thirty-minute bus ride from Tel Aviv), where young people prepared for life in the Kibbutz. I managed everything there quite well, but for one irritant. Every fly that bred on the farm (and there were clouds of them) was drawn to my ears like iron filings to magnets. This factor was enough to drive me away from both the school and the plan. I walked back to Tel Aviv.

Next, I apprenticed myself to a zincographer, but was discouraged quickly when I remembered my failure as an apprentice automobile mechanic. Probably I was not cut out to be a tradesman. But I needed money urgently and had to find a suitable job. As it turned out, the perfect vocation was literally just around the corner.

A number of Austrian and German performers, who could not learn Hebrew, lived in Tel Aviv. Naturally, they were unable to earn money entertaining in their native tongue, German. So to make ends meet, they sold hot dogs with bread and mustard on the streets at night. Each carried a big contraption filled with boiling water that hung on his chest from a strap wrapped around his neck. Certainly some locations in town were more desirable than others were for selling the dogs, and each vendor fought for those. I recognised these people needed an organiser, and I would become that person for them.

There were eight vendors, and as their manager, I bought their supplies – meat, bread, and condiments. I had a small room in the cellar of a building on Ben Yehuda street where I made up a rotating roster so that all salesmen had an equal number of nights stationed in the good sales areas as they did in the less

profitable ones. I kept books, recording the number of hot dogs each person took, how many buns, and how much mustard. From late afternoon until well after midnight, I went from post-to-post, checking to see how many supplies were needed. Then I went back to "base", collected and brought them the required supplies, and delivered the goods. I traversed great distances by foot in these endeavorus, but the operation ran smoothly under my mantle.

While I was on the job, I met Australians for the first time. I had just given supplies to one of the actors at Mograbi, the choicest position on our hot dog route, when everyone in the area began fleeing. They shouted: "Drunk Australians! Run!" When Aussies drank to excess, they were unpredictable and destructive. People were afraid of them.

My next encounter with Australians was a closer one on the beach in Tel Aviv, where professional lifeguards with surfboards worked the area. On this day, the waves were the size that we might classify in Bondi as "good waves to catch in a medium surf". The guards decided to name conditions "dangerous", and hoisted the "Bathing Prohibited" black flag, blowing their whistles and demanding everyone come ashore. At this point, I was surfing with some English-speaking young men, seemingly English soldiers. (I found out later they were, in fact, Australians.) Since we refused to heed the lifeguards' warnings and turn in toward the beach, the latter paddled out on their boards, ordering us to comply. The Aussies responded to the lifeguards' demands by knocking them off their transportation, and we all enjoyed watching them struggle mightily to reach land. From that day on, whenever I had time, I went back to the beach and joined the Aussie soldiers for swimming and surfing.

My management of the actor/hot dog operation was successful, and several of the vendors acknowledged aloud that,

for the first time, they were organised; and instead of fighting with one another, they had become friends, thanks to my efforts. My parents, however, were worried that the working hours were not suitable for a boy who had just turned fifteen. I had been buying all the frankfurters from a small goods company, "Palmeat", owned by two German brothers, Erich and Rudi Stiel, and a Hungarian/Slovakian, Ernest Handler. (The three of them went to Australia in 1948, and I would meet them again there in the fifties.)

Rudi Stiel was a good butcher and maker of smallgoods. His brother, a lawyer from Cologne, Germany, could not practise law in Israel due to his inability to speak Hebrew. Therefore he worked with his brother at Palmeat. Although he was much older than I was, we were to become fast friends.

While Ernest Handler was an excellent businessman, his downfall was women. He loved them too much. He was born in Slovakia where his father owned a butcher business. The latter gave his son enough money to go to Palestine and start his own shop there. However, as Ernest travelled through Budapest, he felt an urge to remain there, and he did so for a year, spending all the money on women that had been earmarked for his business. He arrived in Palestine penniless and was given a job as a meat delivery person whose transportation was a bicycle. Eventually, thanks to his business acumen, he was made a partner in Palmeat. Each week when I came to the small goods store to buy my supplies, they tried to talk me into working for them. And finally, Ernest Handler had a long talk with Samu, promising shorter and more civilised working hours if I switched occupations. My father convinced me that by working during the day, I could restart my education at night school. He felt education was important still for a fifteen-year-old. So I became an employee of Palmeat, making up orders, serving customers, and fitting in wherever my new bosses needed me. Once again, I enrolled in

another educational attempt – a night course in Hebrew and English – which, once again, was doomed to failure.

Soon after I began my new job, I was labelled a "useful employee", and to prove it, my bosses doubled my wages. I had a very responsible job, opening the premises at 3:30 a.m. and leaving at 5:00 or 6:00 in the evenings. Because I worked fifteen to sixteen hours a day, I was not able to continue the class. I simply was too sleepy to concentrate by eight o'clock at night when the course began. This was my last educational "hurrah".

Meanwhile, the rest of my family worked hard too. Several factories employed Germaine. One of them was a packinghouse that bottled "Jordan Holy Water" and exported it to other countries and religious groups. My sister worked for a pathologist, Rappaport, doing the work she enjoyed. In addition, she drew illustrations for children's books. For the first time in his life, Samu became a physical labourer. Since he and my mother had difficulty learning Hebrew, no other employment was open to them. One of his jobs was working for a Hungarian Jew who was building a racecourse. Each night he came home very tired and soaked his hands, bleeding and speckled with splinters.

When the racetrack was completed, on Saturdays (our only day off from our regular jobs) Germaine and Rene worked at the ticket counter while Samu and I became ushers. But the racing venture did not last long. The owner wanted to run the bookmaking business exclusively, while the British Army was determined to set up its own betting operation. The track owner stood firm, not allowing the competition in. As a result of this impasse, one day the Military Police arrived and put up signs reading: "Out of Bounds for all Army Personnel". Because the best customers had been the Army, the racetrack began to go downhill from this day forward. Eventually, it went bankrupt and, in the process, failed to pay our final two-month's wages.

The years in Palestine were the hardest of my life. Palmeat produced the best smallgoods in town from pork and camel meat. The British authorities announced a tender for the manufacture of such products. When the results of this were disclosed, one of the companies selected was "Spinney's", a British firm; and the other one, chosen by some idiotic bureaucrat, was a small shop (the size of my current office) that produced nothing at all. The owner of the latter store, Mr. Joseph, was chosen, and suddenly he held the monopoly for the whole of Palestine.

Ernest Handler lost no time. He gave Mr. Joseph shares in Palmeat, took over his shop, and just as suddenly, the monopoly for the manufacture and sale of pork and camel products shifted to Palmeat.

Since it was wartime, there was food rationing, and I found my job offered certain advantages. First, I could have free meat. Second, thanks to the nature of my work, my father could quit his job as a labourer. Every Wednesday was wholesale distributions day, and every Wednesday, the same comedy was played out Samu turned up at the smallgoods business, saying he wanted to buy a large quantity of meat and small goods. Ernest always questioned, "Why did you not come earlier? We're all sold out"

At this point, I would interrupt: "Ernest, those cartons in the corner are reserved for my father." Samu would then load the boxes into a truck and sell them to the retail market.

Since every gram of meat sold at that time required a coupon, and we were selling far more meat than we had coupons, the latter had to be acquired. So Handler reached an agreement with the head of the Food Control on the Jaffa road. My job was to take a big envelope of money to the office of the Chief Food

Controller every Friday. In exchange for the cash, he handed me the required number of ration coupons. In his office, I witnessed the racial cooperation that was so rare then in Palestine (now Israel). The Chief Controller was an Englishman. He employed two assistants – an Arab and a Jew. Every Friday, when he counted the money openly in front of me, he took half and gave a quarter to each of his employees.

The same was true in the case of the Palestine police who were also English, Jewish, and Arabic. There was a saying that if you had problems with a law enforcement officer: "An Arab can be bought for one pound; a Jew costs five; and the English policemen are honest under ten pounds – so the minimum effective bribe for one of the latter is ten."

About this time, the Polish Ander's Army arrived in Palestine. This army, made up of Polish prisoners-of-war, was formed due to an agreement between the British and Soviet governments, and it was organised and commanded by the Polish general, Anders. Polish prisoners in Siberia were allowed to leave the Soviet Union to fight with the British army against the Germans. Ernest Handler agreed to supply this force with meat and smallgoods, and my job was arranging and executing the sales. Since a number of the officers only spoke their native language, I learned to speak it when I sold to them. (Actually, I could barter fluently and effectively, but could not carry on a conversation in that tongue.)

There were considerable numbers of Polish Jews in Ander's Army, but even though this force was fighting the Germans on the Allied side, the officers of the group persisted in their anti-Semitism. For this reason, many of the Jewish soldiers deserted to Palestine. Among them was Menahem Begin, who became the leader of the lrgun Zvai Leumi terrorist organisation and later,

Prime Minister of Israel. As a terrorist leader, he and the Stern gang orchestrated attacks on the British.

In 1944, Ander's Army was transferred to Italy, where they were employed to storm the monastery on top of Mount Casino. This was the location where the Germans halted the Allied advance toward Rome. In the process, a high percentage of the Polish officers and soldiers died.

I gave up my religion for good in 1943. I had practised it since my barmitzvah in Portugal. But working with pork and selling it to Jews had an impact on my religious beliefs. Was this not hypocrisy?

I was working up to one hundred hours a week and felt unsafe at 3:00 a.m., walking from my house near the Jaffa border to work in the factory, which was also at the boundary of the Jewish/Arab town. So when Samu and I met a Hungarian who manufactured toys, we set up a business selling his products wholesale. We also peddled books that we bought from a company that used Rene's drawings. This venture lasted for the remainder of our time in Palestine/Israel.

Once again I spent my days with my father, carrying our samples with us in heavy suitcases as we travelled by bus throughout the country. This business was dangerous, too, since buses were routinely attacked and fired upon. The scenery on both sides of the road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem described an alien, barren planet. No vegetation at all. Just rock. The hills and boulders provided a perfect haven for the Arab snipers lurking there, and we often were shot at by them. Frequently, too, the police opened our luggage, searching.

We felt tense, always. During our four years in the toy/book business, we never had a holiday. Work. Work. Work. But once in a great while, we would take a little break while on a business

trip. For instance, the Dead Sea offered Samu and I pleasant diversion on one occasion. It is the deepest spot in the world – 4000 metres. The sea was thick with chemicals; and a nearby factory extracted potassium and other minerals from it. There was no life there other than the people floating on the top – result of the high salt content. Swimming was impossible. Unaware of its chemical properties, I ran into the warm water of the Dead Sea, only to leap out again, my eyes afire.

On another occasion, we stopped at Kyriat Bialik, a settlement between Haifa and the Syrian border where my maternal grandmother's brother and his two daughters lived. I had not seen them since 1933 when I visited them in Germany. (When I last heard of them after the war, he was in his nineties and still going strong. The other sister, aside from my grandmother, was incarcerated in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. From there, she was taken to Poland and gassed.)

One more journey brought us to the fascinating Tiberias, also below sea level on Lake Kinneret, bordering Jordan. This lake was a swim-friendly place for both humans and fish. It was the spot where, according to the Bible, Christ performed his "fishing miracle".

One day in Jerusalem as we walked around the old city on a brief sightseeing venture, we got lost and found ourselves in front of the Mosque. This, after Mecca, is the holiest place in the Moslem world. Arabs in the area objected to the presence of Jews in their space and began threatening us with knives. Our winged shoes carried us back to the Jewish area in record time.

Of course, we visited the Wailing Wall (said to be the wall of the first temple), an Orthodox Jewish holy place where religious Jews prey day and night. Women write letters to God and push them into the cracks in the parapet; and at night, young people retrieve the notes and read them.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a corresponding Christian holy place. We were surprised by the heavy military squad guarding its dirty windows. Apparently, the Greek Orthodox priests could not agree about who should have the honour of washing them, so to avoid bloodshed, the British Army watched over the panes, making sure they remained filthy.

These short forays as "tourists" in Palestine were too infrequent and brief. But as all-consuming as our work seemed, it was beginning to pay off. Our children's book and toy business progressed to the point where we were able to make a living from it. We were known in the trade as "Die Langer nuit seiner Tate", which in Yiddish means "the tall one with his father".

Sam did not learn Hebrew, but could manage Yiddish. So he was able to talk with the older Polish and Russian Jews. But young people refused to speak Yiddish and insisted on Rae Irvit Hebrew only. I was comfortable with both.

One day a dark, Jewish-looking non-Jew approached us in one of the shops and asked me in perfect Hebrew if he could buy our products. His name was Ali Hal Hindi, age twenty-six, and he owned a big business in Jaffa. We visited him in the beautiful, expansive home where he lived with his four wives and twenty-three children. (In his spare time, passing as a Jew, he chased girls in Tel Aviv.) Ali became a good customer and friend, and we spent hours discussing the future of Arabs and Jews in Palestine. We were all pessimistic. When Palestine became the free, Jewish State of Israel, the Jews occupied Jaffa, and most of the Arabs there became refugees. I do not know what became of Ali.

On June 6, 1944, we went to an open-air cinema on Ben Yehuda Street. One could sit there at tables and sip cold drinks while watching a movie. I remember this particular evening

and the film we saw quite well. It was the Hollywood version of The Merry Widow with Jeanette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier. Throughout the movie, we were interrupted by noise from the streets, where thousands of happy people danced, sang, hugged, and kissed the Allied soldiers in their midst. It was D-Day. The Allies had invaded France, and the liberation of Europe commenced.

Unfortunately, like all demonstrations that began happily in Israel with the participants showing overt affection and glee, this one, too, would turn sour as the extremists took over, turning enthusiastic revelry into hurtful, anti-British display.

The hatred of the British escalated as the Allies advanced into Germany from the West, and the Russians began liberating Poland and the Eastern European countries. As more-and-more film footage of the death camps was released, Israeli youths became increasingly anti-British. They blamed the extreme pro-Arab policy of the British Tories, prior to the outbreak of WWII, for not allowing Jewish refugees into Palestine. Furthermore, they felt them responsible for sending the Jews back to German-occupied territories and certain death. (All of this was true, but the regular British soldiers could not be condemned for the errors of the politicians.)

Meanwhile, my sister was working at an army camp at Beit Nabala. She served as secretary to the officer who commanded the "Compressed Gas Depot", a technical unit which, for some reason, in the British army, was always run by South Africans. Rene eventually married her boss, Matthew Lipworth, a South African Jew. They exchanged vows in Tel Aviv and honeymooned on Cyprus. (Later, after the war, they would move there.)

By now, Palestine had become quite violent as the Irgun and Stern gangs orchestrated attacks on the British and the latter retaliated. The Arabs started their own share of trouble, and my father and I became the focus of danger as we travelled on buses, conducting business.

My first real encounter with a major gunfight occurred one night when I took a girl to the movies. As I walked home after the date, heavy shooting erupted. The Irgun had attacked a Palestinian police patrol that, of course, returned fire. Suddenly an armoured car entered the street, proceeded toward me, and began spraying the night air with machine gun fire. I threw myself to the gutter, so as to remove myself from target range, and waited for silence. How insignificant the rat-a-tat-tat of the weapon sounded compared to the thunderous booming of my heart. When the vehicle passed and turned away from me, I jumped up, offered self-congratulation for my steadiness in the face of adversity, and ran into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Schlosberg, an old couple who were the grandparents of my new brother-in-law.

We removed mattresses from their beds and moved them against the windows to stop the bullets. Then we sat, waiting for the end of the onslaught

Eventually the shooting ceased, and I ran for the safety of home, heart in my throat, knowing that as I fled, the British police were rounding up and arresting all the young people they could find on the streets. I was lucky to make it! My parents had barricaded the windows in our place with mattresses just as we had at the Schlosberg's; and we slept that night and many more on bare beds without the padding that was now used for something far more important – deflecting the bullets that could end our lives.

That night was only one of the continual reminders of the dangerous environment in which we lived. One day when Samu and I were on a bus heading toward Rishon Le Zion to meet some customers, my father, who had an uncanny feeling for such things, told me: "If there is shooting, don't hesitate. Drop to the ground." I just laughed and ignored him because this was a peaceful area. Just five minutes later,

a truck approached from the opposite direction, and the Arabs aboard it fired a round from a sub-machine gun into our vehicle, injuring several passengers. Fortunately, we were not hurt. (The trouble with these sabotages was that one could never be sure whether the attackers were Jews or Arabs since both often wore stolen British uniforms during a strike. Meanwhile, the British dressed in civilian clothes as Jews or Arabs. Everyone seemed to be in costume.)

As the war corninued, both the Western Allies and the Soviet troops in the East were busy liberating Europe. Finally in 1944, the British allowed the formation of a "Jewish Brigade" to fight as an independent unit. In May of 1945, Germany collapsed, and with that came the end of the war in Europe. Hopeful jubilation rang through the air in Tel Aviv and all other cities. Once again there was singing, dancing, and hugging of Allied soldiers on the streets; and finally, once again, anti-British demonstrations by other factions.

Peace brought a new crisis to Palestine. Survivors of the concentration camps and gas chambers who had seen their families murdered did not want to remain in Europe. The British government, due to its pro-Arab policies, refused to allow them in. This situation brought Haganah action for the first time. (To this date, the extremist Irgun or Stern gangs had undertaken most of the overt terrorist exertions of force, with Haganah abstaining from all anti-British demonstrations.)

When the British army disarmed the Jews and took away most of their guns, help came from an unexpected source. Colonel Wingate, a British army officer, saved the Jews by securing more weapons for them and by secretly training thousands of young boys and girls into a well-organised and disciplined semi-secret army, the Haganah. It had been formed

during the early days of Jewish settlement, purely to defend the settlers and to prevent their mass assassination by well-armed Arab gangs and by soldiers entering from neighbouring Arab countries for the purpose of killing Jews.

The Haganah organised ships in Europe to bring thousands of concentration camp survivors to Palestine. Some got through when many British officers, acting against explicit orders, looked the other way as the refugees landed on the beach. Sometimes, Jews, put behind wire fences in camps, were freed when those camps were attacked. Later, after they boarded the ships bound for freedom, the British arrested them and took them to Cyprus, where the survivors of the concentration camps found themselves once again behind barbed wire in barracks.

Those occurrences made the situation explosive in Palestine. Terrorist attacks became everyday events. We never knew when the shooting and explosions would erupt that were close enough to shake us at our noontime meal, or worse. The British began hanging captured terrorists, and the assaults grew worse in response. Lord Moyne, British viceroy of Egypt and the highest-ranking politician of the Middle East, was murdered in Cairo. The two members of lrgun who killed him were caught and hanged.

There was a curfew now as well. The British army imposed it after an attack on a police station in the Jaffa area. This meant that nobody was allowed on the streets, and the army, looking for guns and terrorists, conducted house-to-house searches. When a curfew lasted more than twenty-four hours, it was lifted for one hour every other day to allow people to shop for food. Samu always rushed to purchase fruits and vegetables while Germaine bought the rest of the groceries. I raced to the ice factory to retrieve the ice that would keep the perishables fresh. Since these imposed confinements were occurring more and more often, we planned our supplies quite carefully.

We bought cases of food as reserve supplies, including 24x200 gram blue tins of Australian Kraft processed cheese and Nestles condensed sweet milk. These products, used by the British army, were stolen in truckload by the Arabs and then sold cheaply in all Arab shops.

During one of these curfews, our neighbour rushed into our home, distraught that her youngest daughter had a nosebleed that would not stop. I opened the window and noticed the patrol of Scottish soldiers on the street in front of the house. The sergeant saw me looking out, pointed his gun, and ordered me to shut the window. I asked him to please come over. "I need help," I explained, and picked up the little girl so he could see her bloody face. The officer called for assistance immediately, and within five minutes, a jeep arrived, carrying two doctors who were wearing the captain's uniform of the Scottish unit. They were very friendly, helped the girl, and came back regularly to see how she was doing.

The curfew was lifted on the following day, and within five minutes, three tough-looking men came to our door and began interrogating me rudely. "Why were you talking to British soldiers?" They asked, "Why did British officers visit your home on several occasions?" I told them the latter were doctors, coming to care for a young neighbour girl with a bad nosebleed. The officers seemed satisfied with my explanation and left.

The longest curfew we experienced was in June 1946. On that day, my father and I left for the bus terminal with several extremely cumbersome suitcases of toys and bought transportation to Jerusalem. Both of us loved going to Jerusalem in the summer. Even though it was only an hour away, the climate was completely different. While Tel Aviv was hot and humid, Jerusalem, resting in the hills some distance from the sea, experienced cool breezes, even in summer. We left Tel Aviv at 7:00 a.m. Business was good that day, and by 8:30,

we were finished, having sold all of our merchandise to our first customer of the day. Instead of going straight back home, we enjoyed the moderate weather by walking to the King David Hotel, opposite the YMCA. The King David, headquarters of the British Army, was heavily sandbagged, encased in barbed wire, and guarded by soldiers with machine guns. It would have been certain suicide for anyone to attack the YMCA, but suddenly, for no apparent reason, my father had a feeling, a premonition, and insisted that we return to the bus station and take the next transport back to Tel Aviv.

Our journey home was uneventful, until halfway when we reached Latrun, at the foot of the hills. This was an all-Arab city with many Christian monasteries. (According to the Arabs, due to the plethora of European monks who came there, this was the only Arab town with blue-eyed people.) As we entered Latrun, we noticed the British tanks arid the truckloads of heavily armed soldiers who were stopping all buses, taxis, and cars. Everyone was forced to get out of his vehicle and submit to both a body search and luggage inspection. Our four empty suitcases raised suspicion, but I was able to produce documents proving that we had sold the contents. Even this three-hour interrogation and search had a humorous side. Because my father spoke neither English nor Hebrew, I volunteered to translate the questions and his answers to the British intelligence officers, and then, once more, into Hebrew for the Palestine police. I could say absolutely anything I liked in this exchange, and neither the full complement of soldiers nor Samu could understand me at any one time. Linguistic ease can be useful.

We were cleared to pass, and I asked one of the soldiers: "What's wrong"

He replied, "The King David hotel has been blown up:'

What had actually happened was that terrorists hijacked a milk van that was making a delivery, emptied the cans of milk, and filled the containers with explosives. They deposited the cans at

the hotel, and several minutes later, explosions rocked the building, killing roughly 120 of the Jews, Arabs, and British personnel who worked there. For me, this incident exemplified an act of inexcusable murder because, as far as I was concerned, no matter who perpetrated that act of violence, for whatever reason, this end – the killing of innocent Jewish and Arab civilians along with British soldiers who had nothing to do with British governmental policy – could not be justified.

When we finally arrived at the Tel Aviv bus terminal, we heard the blaring announcements over police loudspeakers. The city was sealed off, and we had half-an-hour to get home before a curfew was imposed. Because we lived quite a distance from the station, and because all cars and taxis were banned from the streets, we ran home, the four empty suitcases banging us in the knees with each stride. Several times, patrols stopped us to scrutinise our luggage, making our trip even longer.

This time the curfew lasted five days. During it, regular house-to-house searches were conducted, and intelligence officers at the emergency interrogation centres scattered around town removed the whole of the citizenry methodically from their homes, street by street, to undergo questioning. The school opposite our house was inspected, and a huge underground store of weapons, found and confiscated that did not belong to terrorist groups. Instead, they were the property of Haganah, who badly needed those arms when a year later, the Arab countries attacked the newly independent Israel from all directions. Unfortunately, the authorities made no distinction between the terrorist groups and the Haganah, so the weapons were useless to those who needed them most. To the credit of the British soldiers, very little brutality occurred. But things became a bit rougher when the ordinary army units were withdrawn and the tough "Red Beret" parachutist regiments were brought to Tel Aviv.

When this curfew ended, Samu and I had to go to Haifa by bus to conduct business. At this time, all travel in Palestine

was done by car or by bus, as opposed to trains, because the Palestinian railways, built by the Turks in the nineteenth century, were now too antiquated to use. The bus drivers were economic aristocrats. To be one, a person must hold shares in the bus company, and all profits were divided among the drivers. As a concession to the religious zealots, buses did not run on Saturdays. (In the devout area of Jerusalem, Mea Sharim, cars were stoned on the Sabbath; and in Tel Aviv, the fanatically religious tried to prevent people from going to the beach one day a week.) The only alternative to the bus for inter-city transportation was a taxi that took passengers on the multiple-hire system. Neither choice was good.

The Arabs inhabited the port section of Haifa, but Mount Carmel above it was Jewish. Because the bus had to travel via the Arab port, two problems arose. First, Arabs routinely stoned all buses; and second, an epidemic of bubonic plague had swept through the city, killing many people. Because of the threat of disease, all of us were required to get out of our vehicles so our feet and legs could be sprayed with heavy doses of DDT. This incident was one more example of the discomfort and inconveniences war caused the civilians trying to navigate safely through it.

We had some good times in Tel Aviv – mostly with friends. Shortly after the war began, the Hungarian Club, M.T.K. organised a soccer tour. My father had been president of M.T.K.'s swimming and water polo divisions at one time, and now the club was bringing thirteen players and about the same number of officials to Tel Aviv. Some were very close friends of Samu's. We spent all of our spare time in their company because they could give us firsthand accounts of the events of the war in Budapest. They offered personal accounts

of friends who survived and of those who were murdered. (Five years earlier in Lisbon, there had been a similar visit by the Hungarian water polo team. Ai: that time, Nazism was at its zenith, and the players showed their true colours. They had all known my father from the time they were juniors. Some of them, Nazis like Hazai and Homonnay, ignored us. Others: Nemeth, Bozsic, and especially Brandy came to see us for regular, friendly visits.)

This particular tour was remarkable because the M.T.K. had been banned by the Hungarian Nazis during the war and was only restarted a few months before they arrived in Tel Aviv. Among the players were Sandor, Hidegkuti, and Borzsea. They became members of the Hungarian national "Wonder Team" that beat everyone, including England (6-3) in Budapest and again (7-3) at a rematch at Wembley.

During my sojourn in Israel, my feelings about Zionism were tested and re-tested. Our time in Tel Aviv and environs was influenced greatly by both Zionism and terrorism. Then and now, fifty years later, I have mixed emotions. Herzl, a non-practising, Hungarian/Jewish journalist, who worked in Paris in the 1870s after the 1870 Prussian War (during which Germany defeated France), started Zionism as an ideology. Herzl was reporting on the "Dreyfuss" case in which Captain Dreyfuss, a French/Jewish army officer, was accused of being a German spy, was convicted, and sent to Devils' Island. (Years later, Dreyfuss was vindicated by the famous French writer and lawyer, Emil Zola, in his 'J'accuse'; and he was released.)

During the trial, anti-Jewish demonstrations erupted in Paris. These prompted Herzl to reflect that: if in France, the land of freedom, equality and fraternity, a Jew could be made a scapegoat for an army's defeat, then it could happen anywhere. (Of course, he later was proven absolutely correct.) Therefore, Jews must have their own land. And originally Herzl was willing to accept any space for the new Jewish State. Uganda was mentioned, for instance. However, when the more traditionalist Jews (especially the Polish and Russian ones led by Chaim Weizman) joined the Zionist Movement, they insisted that the only place for a Jewish State was Palestine, with the inclusion of Jerusalem. Palestine and most Arabic countries were part of the Turkish Empire at that time.

There was a very small Jewish population in Palestine then, and for the most part, they lived in Jerusalem. These were religious Jews who wished to die in the Holy City. When the Zionist movement began, they bought land in Palestine and began sending Polish and Russian Jews there. The Russian Czarist Regime had organised pogroms to persecute the latter two groups.

Herzl originally felt that the way to stop this anti-Semitism was for Jews to cease being Jews and become Christians instead. However, after he studied the history of anti-Semitism and in the Spanish Inquisition, he realised that when the anti-Semites ran out of Jews to torture and murder, they just turned on other people whose grandparents and great grandparents were Jews. This same pattern had been repeated throughout time by popes and would be again by Hitler.

In 1914, World War I broke out during which British, French, and Russian armies warred with the Turks. After the disastrous defeat of the Brits by the Turks at the Dardanelles (Anzac), the British turned their attack on the enemy to the Middle East where Lawrence of Arabia mustered the Arabs against the Turks, promising them independence for their efforts. Meanwhile, the Jewish Trumper Brigade formed to fight with the British against the Turks. Concurrently, Weizman and other Jewish scientists made special war efforts toward the British side. Weizman converted Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary,

to the idea of Palestine for the Jews, partly because a Jewish state would help in the defence of the Suez. In November 1917, the famous Balfour Declaration was made, promising to make Palestine the Jewish national homeland after the war ended. Hence, Palestine, a land that still belonged to the Turks, was given away twice – once to the Arabs by Lawrence of Arabia on behalf of the British, and again by Balfour to the Jews.

After the war, naturally all colonial promises of independence were of no value. Palestine became neither a Jewish nor Arabic state, but a British Mandate. The old colonial: "Rule and Divide" was applied successfully once again as the Arabs attacked Jewish settlements constantly during the 1920s and 1930s. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the number of Jews who attempted leaving Europe increased yearly. In those days, Hitler was so magnanimous as to say Jews could leave as long as they had somewhere to go. But, where could they? As I have stressed already, the whole world locked its doors to the refugees. To appease the Arabs, the British issued their White Paper Policy that restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine. Some of the migrants were sent by to Germany to certain death. Others could have been saved if they had been allowed to enter Palestine. As I have pointed out before, the final solution, to gas all Jews, was decided only in 1939-1940.

I ask the reader to indulge me here while I describe my philosophy about the injustice of terrorism. I have seen much of it and have learned of substantially more from people and books. I feel that I know a considerable amount about this topic. I am against all forms of terrorism, no matter how righteous the cause. To me, the end never justifies the means. Through terrorist acts, it is mostly the innocent who are maimed and killed. Menachem Begin, leader of the Irgun, however, had no reservations about

using terror to oppose a government. He was a Polish Jew whose whole family had been exterminated by the Germans. These facts were compelling enough to induce him to employ radical violence when he saw the need.

History proved that the Tories never gave in to civilised persuasion – only to violence. Apparently injury works, but that does not make it right. All political parties make bad choices, but none is so flawed as the British Conservative one. This group could have avoided much suffering, many injustices, and even WWII.

After WWI, they, the French, and the Americans imposed a peace that caused the next world war. The Germans were required to make reparation payments that were impossible to meet. The French occupied the Ruhr area of that country, and while Germany had a democratically elected government, no quarter was given; and payments were cruelly extracted. So when Hitler came into power, he refused to come up with further monies and threatened war. No more payments were demanded from Germany.

Even the Russian Revolution would have taken a different direction had it not been for the Tories. While the Red Army was fighting the most reactionary government in Europe, The British one, landed troops in various parts of the Soviet Union. The Royal Navy bombarded Russian cities; and even the newly formed RAF flew into the bloody picture.

In 1936, General Franco, with the aid of the Germans and the Italians, started a revolt against the democratically elected government of Spain. In this instance, the Conservative government of Britain declared a policy of non-intervention, allowing Franco to kill one million Spaniards and put a pro-Nazi government in place. The Brits just never got it right.

When Mussolini attacked Abyssinia, once again the British government did nothing. This inaction caused decent Conservatives like Anthony Eden and Winston Churchill

to resign from the government. And once again, Britain sat by with Chamberlain's capitulating to Munich. While Germany rearmed and prepared to attack the world, the British parliament had no time to debate such trivial matters as Hitler's onslaught against other nations. They had more pressing matters at hand, apparently. Should, or could, King Edward marry his Mrs. Simpson?

The impact of senseless killing struck me full in the face again much later in my life when my son Robi and I, vacationing in Europe in 1995, took a detour from the autobahn between Koblenz and Koln, Germany. We spotted an exit to Mayan, so we left the highway, intending to visit the small German town that was the birthplace of my grandmother. The last time I had been there was sixty-two years before, in 1933. I remembered it as a pleasant town of 10,000 people, an old castle, and tourist buses that ferried people to and from its historic sights. We approached and searched. Where was my grandmother's house? Gone. It simply had been one of the multitudes of buildings bombed during WWII.

All of these examples of murder and mass destruction in the name of a "cause" are striking and profoundly sad. But to me, the saddest reflection on human nature is that of the maltreatment of the Jews. Though they produced scientists, doctors, actors, musicians, artists, and many of the leading minds of the world, they remained those despised "bloody Jews" to much of the world. But when in Palestine and, later, Israel, they learned to shoot and blow people up, the Jews gained the respect of everyone.

During our time in Tel Aviv, from time-to-time Samu argued with the Russian and Polish Jews, who were understandably the leaders of their population because they were the first immigrants there. They stubbornly proclaimed: "Once the British are gone, the Arabs will be no problem to deal with".

My father's reply was always: "So the Jews will kill fifty Arabs, and the Arabs will kill fifty Jews. This is no solution!" (This same problem exists in Israel today – fifty years later.)

These were some of the issues my family reflected upon while we were in Tel Aviv. And these matters clearly defined the conflicts between the humane and the inhumane that muddled my mind about Zionism. Furthermore, these were the issues that made up my mind about terrorism in its many forms. It is simply wrong.

SO, WE LEFT

We had decided by this time to immigrate to South Africa. Rene lived there with her husband and was doing all she could to secure a South African visitor's visa for us. This was not easy and took a long time due to the short-sighted politics in yet another country. This was the period just before the Nationalists won the election. General Smuts was Prime Minister after WWII ended. Countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and South America took in millions of European migrants. South Africa accepted very few Europeans, but welcomed millions of Blacks from neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Angola. These people added greatly to the force of cheap labour, but at the same time, they aggravated the political situation in South Africa. Our chances of getting there seemed slim.

Samu missed Budapest and wanted to see for himself what the situation was in Hungary. He needed to talk to the surviving members of his family and friends. (We had found out that of his sisters and brother, one sister and her daughter were still alive.) We held our traditional family conference and decided to return to Hungary.

We still owned our Swedish travel documents and could get to Rome, the nearest city with a Hungarian embassy. But an Italian travel visa was required as well, and to this end, we went to the "Honorary" Italian Consul in Jerusalem, an Arab businessman. He refused to grant the visa, saying that since we had no Hungarian documents, there was no guarantee we would be let back into our native country. We took the only other avenue open to us, and applied for a tourist visa to "cure our familial rheumatism" at the Italian spa resort, Salso Magyar. The official reviewing our request made one of his own. He would require a cheque in the amount of 1000 pounds as a guarantee that we would not remain in Italy. This was considerable money then, but we paid it since my father had no doubts that we would recover this amount later. Now we were free to return to the Hungary we had left eight years before.

While we sought a ship that could transport us to Italy at a price we could afford, we discovered a half-page ad in the English newspaper of Israel, the Palestine Post:

> Unique chance: Maiden voyage of new Italian luxury liner, "Teti". 1st, 2nd, tourist class, special low prices for inaugural voyage, two-and-one-half days direct Haifa/Genoa.

We checked the cost with a travel agent and found it was both fair and affordable. There was so little difference in price among the classes that we decided to indulge ourselves in the luxury of "first", booking a cabin for my parents and a separate one for me.

Less burdened now by our luggage – now down to three suitcases – we hired a taxi for our trip to the Port of Haifa, a modern harbour where even the largest vessels could berth. We were surprised, therefore, when we were told that the Teti was anchored several miles from shore, and we would have to take a motor launch to reach it. When we saw our vessel, we knew immediately that we had been cheated. First of all, the boat

flew a Panamanian flag, a flag of "convenience" which meant the ship was registered in Panama and displayed that country's flag; but because it fell under the maritime rules of no country but its own, it could hire any crew it wanted and was governed by no union rules.

The Teti was a tiny boat, formerly a Canadian mine sweeper of approximately 1,800 tons. A Cypriot Greek bought it for a few thousand pounds and recovered the whole amount in one trip. As we stepped onto the vessel, an officer took the cabin bookings, and all passengers, regardless of class, were then taken to the hold. The latter space had been transformed into a large dormitory with bunks three and four high. My mother began crying and Samu tried to comfort her with the reminder that this would be only a two-night journey. Surely we could survive such a minor ordeal. (We did not know then that the short trip to Genoa would take a full fourteen days on this terminally slow ship.) We were allocated a three-bunk stack; and I took the top, my mother, the middle, and Samu, the lowest. We were still anchored, but already the stench of vomit from the seasick passengers hung heavily in the close atmosphere of our communal bedroom. And compounding the nastiness of our situation still further was the fact that most of the Teti's crew were ill already and had become so well ahead of the paying guests.

One of the English-speaking passengers was able to explain the phenomenon of the wholly seasick roster of employees. Because of the civil war raging in Greece, all young Greek men were conscripted into the army, with the exception of Merchant Navy crewmen. Most of this vessel's crew were boys from the mountains of Greece who wanted to avoid the draft so desperately that they were willing to sign on with the Teti under virtually any conditions. As a result, the owner of the ship not

only hired a staff who worked for nothing, but he required each of his new employees to pay for the privilege of serving him instead of the army.

The trip was a nightmare from beginning to end. Dinner was served in three sittings since there was no space large enough to feed all of us at one time. The food was horrible, and we elected to pass it up – a practical choice given the long lines to the few toilets on board. We slept upstairs in deckchairs because of the odour of illness all around; but even with these inconveniences, the worst was yet to come.

Instead of heading toward Genoa, we found ourselves bound for Alexandria, Egypt. When we docked there, our first order of business was to go ashore to buy fruit and other healthy items to eat. However, the policeman checking our documents ruled against us saying, "Bloody Jews cannot debark". We were forced to give money to other passengers who could do our shopping for us while we remained on the boat and took advantage of the woefully dirty toilets and showers.

Our next stop was Limassol, in Cyprus, where the vessel anchored a couple of miles from land. The British had set up camps on Cyprus for thousands of illegal migrants to Israel who had been captured and were interred there. Nobody was allowed to leave the Teti at Limassol, and British Navy motor boats patrolled the area around us. Samu and I went for a swim, and others, who also needed baths, followed our example. The patrol boats rescued some of the weaker swimmers as they were caught up in the rips.

Quite unexpectedly, our conditions improved dramatically as we prepared to sail away from Cyprus. One of the British boats approached the Teti, and the military police brought aboard a young, well-built man wearing manacles and handcuffs. Once freed of his metal restraints, he uttered curses at the MPs in French. We were all interested in who this new arrival could

be, so I approached him and started a conversation in French. He seemed appreciative of my gesture since nobody else had ventured near him. He reassured me that I should not be afraid because he was no murderer or hard-core criminal, and he proceeded to prove his innocence with clippings and posters. Of the latter, his proudest was a huge Gestapo flier from Marseilles that was imprinted with his photograph. It threatened: "Anyone who harbours this wanted man will be subject to execution!" In fact, the young man's crime had been lobbing a grenade at a number of SS officers, killing several of them. He was eighteen at the time.

When the Allies liberated France, he joined the French Army and served until the end of the war. Then he became bored. He was twenty-years-old and not a Jew. But he joined the Haganah in France and helped smuggle Jews into Palestine on illegal boats. During his last trip, he fought against the British sailors, boarded one of their ships, was arrested, and removed to Cyprus. The French Consulate intervened, and he was released because of his impressive war decorations.

Today his weapon of choice was a handkerchief wrapped around a palm-full of lead that he used to threaten the Greek crew on the Teti. He told them he would not hesitate to use the metal object on their persons if they did not clean up the stinking dormitory. The poor crew was so sick that they did not care what happened to them. A quick death might prove a merciful end indeed. So the young man, recognising the futility of his position, found a hose and single-handedly cleaned the dormitory himself. He followed this act with a trip to the first officer of the ship. I do not know what he told that man, but he returned with a big grin on his face reporting: "You and your parents are free to use the officer's bathrooms whenever you wish." We became very good friends with this young man from that moment on and enjoyed our new facilities.

Our French friend aided us in other ways as well. We continued on to Beirut where I was dying to go ashore for sightseeing in the beautiful city. But once again, we were detained on the ship- this time for looking "too English". Luckily, our companion appeared French and was allowed to leave the vessel to purchase the plentiful quantities of fresh fruit and wine that would sustain all of us on our way to the next port.

In spite of our less than elaborate accommodations, humour was in the air as we sailed toward Piraeus. Our buddy, now comfortable entertaining us at someone else's expense, climbed to the top of the boat and secured a red tablecloth there that he had borrowed from the officers' dining room. When the officers glimpsed the unfurled "flag" wafting gently on high, they were incensed and hurriedly dispatched a lesser crewman to remove it. It seems the Greek police were arresting anyone suspected of leftist or Communist leanings, and our rosy banner proclaimed loudly, "Dissidents Aboard".

By the time we finally arrived at our destination, which had mysteriously changed from Genoa to Naples, we were sorely in need of a walk on terra firma. We bid our French companion adieu and decided to reward our patience on the Teti with a bit of sightseeing. Naples was in poor repair, but the areas of Italy around it were as nice as they had been before the war. We visited the ruins of Pompeii, the ever-smoking Vesuvius, and the various seashore villages. Later, in a full compartment on the train bound for Rome, we fraternised with the poor but happy Italians who created a picnic as they all donated portions of their lunches to a communal tablecloth laid down in the centre of our car. They insisted we share their meal of bread, prosciutto, cheese, and wine; so I jumped off the train to buy our supplements to the raucous feast.

In Rome, we found accommodation in a reasonably priced hotel with an unreasonable water heater. The water in both tap and shower was icy cold. But, once again, we were tourists on a limited budget and cheerfully would make do while we spent our days visiting famous sights. The Colosseum, Baths of Caracalla, Castel Sant' Angelo (Castel di Tosca), St. Peters, the Vatican, Castel Gandolfo (the summer residence of the Pope), Ostia beach with its black sand, and the Catacombs opened their gates to us on those several days. We found we could fuel our energetic sightseeing with large cheap pizzas and kaki fruit (persimmon) and managed to stretch our limited resources into extra days there.

Of all the places we visited, the Sistine Chapel, with its lovely blue colours, impressed me most. I found I did not have to be religious to appreciate its beauty; and, standing inside, I experienced an unbelievable, inexplicable sense of amazement and quiet at the same time. Of the many museums in Rome, the Vatican's was best – fact, the best in the world, to my way of thinking. It contained more mummies than the Cairo and British facilities combined. Later in our sightseeing, we discovered the effects of a huge housing shortage during our study of the Colosseum. Young Italians had found a new use for this place where 2000 years before, Christians had been thrown to the lions. Today, we trod on countless, discarded condoms as we strolled and looked up at the grandeur of the place.

I was happy that, though I did not speak Italian, I could converse with the natives quite well by mixing French and Portuguese with selected words from Italian operatic arias. (I would find the same facility useful fifty years later when I visited again.) My only disappointment was that the summer opera season had finished, and the winter one had not begun. So I was out of luck in one sense, but surely not culturally deprived in Italy. We enjoyed our

side trips out of Rome to the Tivoli Gardens, the ruins of Hadrian's Villa, the Villa d'Este, the Barberini Palace, and the gardens of the Borgias. Ours was a delightful holiday, sparked with political as well an architectural interest.

Italy's post-war years were politically disturbing. One day, a general strike was declared, and the Communist Party called on the workers to demonstrate against the USA and its allies. The sensation-seeking Italian press predicted bloodshed, and the American Army newspapers recommended that Americans and other foreigners remain sequestered at home all day. However, our family trusted the Italians, and we went for a walk to watch the demonstrations. Contrary to the presses' forecasts, the strike played out in a typically Italian way. Thousands of workers marched with red flags and slogans held high on posters. Determined, they trod beside both the police and the army in their armoured cars. There were no incidents in the colourful protest as the crowd passed the time watching, shouting, and singing in that peaceful but exuberant way that Italians do.

While walking on the banks of the Tiber, the following day (which by coincidence was Yom Kippur), we discovered an old synagogue, nestled on a narrow side street. Two members of the Papal Swiss Guard stood stiffly at the entrance. We went in. The air of anticipation was thick. Obviously, everyone there was waiting for the arrival of something or someone. Soon two limousines pulled up, and a number of Bishops, Monsignors, and high dignitaries of the Catholic Church climbed out and entered the building. They walked up to the Rabbi and Cantor, shook their hands, and then turned to the congregation, wishing them their best and blessing them. This could only happen in Italy where during the war, the priests behaved most decently. Risking and, in some cases, losing their lives, they protected and hid Jews from the Germans. Unfortunately, their example was not followed by religious leaders in other Catholic countries such as Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, and Hungary, where Priests preached

hatred against the Jews and where even the Pope did not go along with the majority in the Catholic Church. In some places, Nazi leaders were the priests. During the war years, most of the SS were Bavarians, Croatians and Austrians-all religious Catholics. If the Pope had protested against the murders of Jews, I am quite sure many of those people who carried out the executions would have thought twice about the inhumanity of their actions. (As I read my notes, I find it interesting that a large part of me – a non-believer and a non-practising Jew is devoted to Jewishness. It would be impossible to detach Judaism from life before the end of the Second World War. I can predict now, at this point in my memoirs, that there will be little in the later, Australian part of my life about my Jewish heritage.)

Soon it was time for us to leave Italy. We went to the Hungarian Embassy in Rome, explaining that we wished to visit Hungary, and we carried Swedish travel documents that had been issued to Hungarians during the war. The passport officer took one look at our papers and threw them down saying, "You do not need these documents given to stateless people. You are Hungarian citizens!" With these words, he granted us new passports from our native land.

We went by train to Trieste, a port near the Italian/Yugoslavian border. Due to the split between Tito and Stalin, the city was under duress during those days. The Yugoslavs wanted Trieste to be part of their country. There were many troops (most of them American) in and around the city, and air force planes constantly buzzed overhead. Before the war, Trieste had been a busy and prosperous port in the landlocked Hungarian/Austrian monarchy. After WWI, the Italians annexed it, and because Italy had more ports than it could use, Trieste became a sleepy, little town. It only woke up with the presence of the American troops.

We were advised that we needed no transit visa for travel via Yugoslavia to Hungary, so we boarded a railway carriage in Trieste that connected with a Yugoslavian train at the border. All of us foreigners were concentrated in one railway corridor. Two armed men guarded both entrances to it, and we were not allowed to move freely until we reached the Hungarian border. There, passport control boarded to check our "new" credentials. Immediately, one officer confiscated our papers. When we inquired as to the problem, he replied, "There is nothing wrong; but you don't need passports in Hungary. If you ever wish to leave, however, you must obtain new papers, including exit visas." Another bureaucratic reception!

BACK HOME IN POST-WAR HUNGARY: 1947

We arrived in Budapest around midnight and found nobody waiting for us. My father's surviving sister, Aunt Yeti, had met an earlier train and returned home when she found we were not on it. We took a taxi to her place, where we talked all night about the members of our family who had perished in the war. We were unspeakably touched when my aunt produced a postcard that had been thrown out of a railway wagon by Samu's brother, whose penmanship I recognised. It said: "I HOPE THIS CARD IS FOUND BY A DECENT PERSON WHO WILL POST IT TO THE ADDRESS ENCLOSED."

The simple correspondence must have been found by a kind person since it arrived at its destination – his sister's house. On it, he wrote: "I KNOW THAT WE ARE BEING TAKEN TO POLAND, PROBABLY TO AUSCHWITZ, SO THIS IS PROBABLY THE LAST TIME YOU WILL HEAR FROM US (he and his wife). GOODBYE TO YOU ALL."

Of the countries affected by the war, Hungary (and particularly Budapest) was the one in which the most Jews survived. Of the 250,000 Jewish people in Budapest, nearly 100,000 lived. Outside the city, most of them were killed. Hungary was a different case because initially it was allied to the Germans. Until 1944, it had been run by a right-wing, pro-German government that mistreated Jews, often sending them to the Russian front in labour battalions, where they were woefully mistreated, and most died. But at least they did not go to extermination camps. However, by 1944, the war was already lost for the German side. The Hungarian government decided to capitulate to the Allies; and this move brought an immediate occupation by the German army. Power was taken over by Szallasy and Father Kun, the Hungarian Cross leaders, who undertook horrible massacres on the banks of the Danube. Thousands fell lifeless from gunshot wounds, toppled into the river, and were carried away by the currents to the Black Sea. Then the Germans sent Eichmann. Eichmann initiated a reign of terror. Upon his orders, Jews were sent to Auschwitz by the trainload and murdered. Those who survived did so thanks to the efforts of the Swedish Wallenberg and to the occupation of Hungary by the Russian Red Army, which saved all those whom the Hungarian Nazis and Eichmann had no time to kill.

After Berlin, when the Russians surrounded that city and called on the Germans to surrender, the siege of Budapest reached its worst stage. The Germans agreed to capitulation, but when high-ranking Russian officers went to negotiate the contract, the Germans killed them. After this, there was no quarter given, and house-to-house fighting broke out. At the end of the bloodshed, some of our surviving friends found dead Hungarian, German, and Russian soldiers in their flats.

Aunt Yeti was very lucky. Both her second husband and her daughter survived. Since their flat had not been destroyed, they allowed us to share a bedroom there until we could find a place of our own. The home was not large, and although it had four bedrooms, one of those served as a handbag factory.

On our first morning there, too excited to sleep, we went for a walk. The destruction in Budapest was unbelievable. Ruined street followed upon ruined street. The bridges over the Danube were blown up. Only one of the several remained. The Red Army had erected "instant bridges" to serve their immediate wartime needs.

This day also brought Samu and me to the M.T.K. club, where my father met with his surviving friends. In ensuing days, we would continue getting together and sharing enormous meals with them. It was amazing to watch people consume four and five-course fare at their morning and afternoon teas. But one thing had been plentiful in Hungary during the good times. That was food. And after starving in 1944 and 1945, each individual was making up for lost provisions by ingesting every morsel he could now that peace had returned. I was touched by this scene and listened greedily to each person's own story of tragedy and miraculous, personal escape from death.

My father had worked with the Medaks when we returned to Hungary in 1934, after our first migration to Lisbon. Most of them were killed in the war, but one son survived to become a film producer of limited success. Later we would see him listed as an occasional screen credit in British movies.

Others of Samu's acquaintances included the Kisfalvi family, his closest friends. Dr. Kisfalvi was in the soccer side of the M.T.K., a lawyer, and a good pal of Dr. Riess, another attorney who became the Social Democrat Minister of Justice in the Coalition Government. My father continually urged Dr. Kisfalvi that, with his connections, he could get himself and his family out of Hungary easily. He laughed, saying,

"I never had it so good," If the Communist-run police arrested him or any of his friends, there would be no problem. They could be freed in five minutes. It just would take a simple phone call to his friend, the Minister of Justice.

Samu questioned, "What will happen when Dr. Riess is arrested?"

This, of course, is exactly what occurred; and when Dr. Kisfalvi heard the news, he had an immediate heart attack and died. At the time, I was tutoring his younger son in English and Russian. The daughter, Vera, involved in some unsolved "love triangle", would die of an overdose. (Nobody knew if it was a suicide or not, but her husband worked as a pharmacist.)

We searched for housing and finally found something in a bombed building. A lady in her forties owned a flat there. It contained five bedrooms, only two of which could be used. The others were reduced to rubble. The owner did not live on site, but occupied another property instead with her boyfriend. So we rented the centrally located, two-bedroom accommodation on Erzsebet Korut. The main difficulty with the place was that in order to gain entry to it, we were forced to climb over the bombed ruins in front, But there was no alternative. We were fortunate to find space at all.

Of course, the need for work and money loomed large, and determining a source of income was next on our agenda. Travel costs once again had consumed our financial stores. First, we attempted to recover the 300 pounds that we gave to the Italian Consul in Jerusalem for the Italian tourist visa. At the M.T.K. club, my father met an old friend, the Italian Consul General, who had held this position since before the war and was known to have helped many people. He spoke fluent Hungarian, and when Samu showed him the receipts for the money we paid in Jerusalem, he assured him that this business, as transacted by the Italian Consul there, was absolutely against Italian rules.

Therefore, he arranged to have our money sent in an airmailed, diplomatic pouch. The whole process took just three days.

We decided against the risk of "illegal trafficking" in foreign currency because this was an offence in Hungary that was punishable with jail time. Instead, we went to the National Bank to convert the lot at the official rate of forty-five forints per pound. We were quite surprised when the bank teller threw the cheques back at us, saying his institution did not convert Palestinian money. This was, in fact, very good news. Now (through M.T.K. friends) we were able to get an official letter from the bank stating that we were free to sell our pounds because the bank would not touch them.

One of my pre-war friends was Tomi Franck, who had been my sister's first boyfriend. (Later, he would turn up in Australia and open a small factory that made aboriginal souvenirs for the tourist market) Tomi and Rene used to take me fishing on the Danube with them, but I felt sorry for the fish; and when the others had caught a plentiful supply, I routinely threw them back into the water where they could swim away. Now, years later, one of Tomi's friends would buy our Palestinian cheques, accompanied by the letter from the bank. The exchange rate for this transaction was a whopping 120 forints per pound. This amount, plus some additional foreign currency that Rene sent, would pay our sea fare to Africa later on.

By now, we keenly felt that returning to Hungary had been a big mistake. We were disappointed by the displays of the ten-to-fifteen metre posters of Stalin and the moon-headed Rakoski (leader of the Hungarian Communist Party) that lined the streets where we walked and shouted the importance of the big leader cult. We knew we should leave as quickly as possible for South Africa, so when we received a telegram announcing that our immigration permits had been granted, we were delighted. But again, there were difficulties barring our quick departure. The authorities had closed the borders of Hungary to the west,

and nobody was allowed out. So finally it took us ten months, exercising connections Samu had with the sporting world, to obtain the necessary papers to emigrate.

To earn a regular living while we waited, my father renewed his contracts with the textile factories and put together a business in his old trade. Many of his friends from the past had asked him to come into partnership with them, and he replied angrily: "You are just as blind as you were in 1939 when you said 'It cannot happen here,'" All of the other Eastern countries were completely Communist. Their businesses had been taken over by their governments,and Socialism, put firmly in place. The Hungarian businessmen did not believe it would happen in Hungary, but it did, and very rapidly. Not only did these people lose everything then, but many of them also were arrested in the process. Why would these same men chance it again? That seemed foolish to Samu.

After the liberation of Hungary, the Russians allowed free elections in November of 1945, and the Small Farmers Party won a majority of the seats. The Social Democrats came second and the Communists led by the Russian, Rakes, were far behind with only seventeen percent of the votes. The Communists controlled only the Ministry of the Interior in the coalition government of the three parties. However, that was enough since through the Ministry of the Interior, they were ruling the police and could arrest anyone they did not like. Subsequently, they went after one Farmers Party member after another, accusing them of being traitors and spies – in the Stalinist way. Then they decided to take over the Socialist Democratic Party, one whose traditions dated back to the last century. They accomplished their goal by dissolving both the Social Democrats and the Communists and forming a new party called the Hungarian Workers's Party which was led by Communists along with

a few of the Social Democrats who joined them. The genuine Social Democrats were eliminated. (As a matter of principle, Samu and I joined the Social Democratic Party the day before it was dissolved.) Rakosi, the leader of the Hungarian Communists, then became the undisputed dictator of Hungary.

Living standards were low, and there was general discontent in the Eastern nations. On June 16,1953, the workers of East Berlin revolted; and this was followed by similar uprisings all over East Germany. Portraits of Stalin were burned and workers seized control of the factories. The Russians crushed the revolt and endeavoured to raise the standards of living there.

In the same month, June, there were similar, but smaller, revolts in the Czechoslovakia. In Hungary, where the economy was in a state of collapse, the new Russian leaders replaced the detested Rakosi with Imre Nagy, who believed in a gentler economic policy with greater emphasis on improved standards of living. Rakosi, dismissed as premier in 1953, had continued to control the Communist Party, and in I955, he secured Nagy's dismissal as premier. Dissent increased among the Hungarians, and they demanded Rakosi's resignation. Although the Russians dismissed Rakosi again in 1956, the opposition continued.

On October 23, 1956, Budapest erupted in rebellion. This revolt grew over a twenty-four-hour period to become a national uprising. On October 26, the Russians agreed to Nagy's becoming premier once more. He introduced a multi-party system, set up a coalition party, and withdrew Hungary from the Warsaw Pact, thus proclaiming her neutrality.

Russia and the Hungarian Communists could not stomach this. So, on November 4, the Russian Army was brought into Hungary in great force and crushed the revolt. Three thousand people were killed and countless buildings, destroyed. No Western powers involved themselves. Kadar, the new Russian nominee, restored order. Nagy was executed in 1958.

While Samu attended to his textiles, I found work of my own through a relative on my maternal grandmother's side who owned an appliance store. I sold wholesale electrical products; and by way of the same source, I was offered one thousand pair of snow goggles that the Hungarian Army had used in Russia. The Army sold them to me, and I resold them to the Ministry of Agriculture (at a good profit, of course) as "harvesting glasses for the peasants".

I also found I could make extra money with my language skills by tutoring students. Before the war, the Hungarian high schools offered German and French, but after it, the languages taught were English and Russian. It did not matter that my English was just adequate, and my Russian, non-existent. To solve this last problem, I enrolled for lessons in the Gorky Library, an institution run by the Hungarian Communists and paid for by the Russians. Anyone could get free lessons there, just as I did. And what I learned free in the afternoon, I taught the next day for good money.

In my spare time, I located several old friends who were alive and relatively well. Tomi Vertes had been important to me since we went to primary school together at age six. Tomi was a short, well-mannered kid who behaved well and was quiet – exactly my opposite. We met when our teacher invited both our mothers to school for a conference. The educator's goal was to get the mothers to encourage their sons to play together. If we did, I might liven Tomi up, and he could quiet me down. I did my part well. We put toy gun caps on train tracks and waited for the explosions; we went to the market, bought sauerkraut, and ate it in the snow; and we became lively accomplices who were seldom quiescent. Now, in 1947, Tomi, age nineteen, lived in his parents' semi-demolished flat. He had secured false papers that stated he was a Christian, born to Hungarian parents

in England. These documents saved his life. As a Christian, he had been conscripted in 1944 and assigned as a driver for the Gestapo. However, one of our schoolmates who worked with that group recognised Tomi and denounced him as a Jew. He was checked, found circumcised, and scheduled for death. When he protested vehemently that in England even non-Jews were circumcised, one of the Gestapo officers listened, believed, and decided to spare Tomi's life. Tomi and I renewed our friendship, but I could tell he was very bitter, hating everyone and everything in Hungary. Later, he would go to Israel and join the army.

I met Norbert (Kohn) Keri at the same primary school where Tomi and I went. We were all six together, but Norbert was different from us. He was the outstanding student in our class by far (though we liked him, nevertheless). His parents owned a bookstore and a library, and from the time we learned to read, we spent a great deal of time there sharing books. He was always very lucky – especially since he, his brother, and both parents survived the war. During my return to Budapest in 1947-48, Norbert and I caught up with our old friendship – sometimes spending time by ourselves, and, other times, with our families at dinner.

Norbert could get along with very little sleep. He was a student at the Medical University, a heavy weight boxer who won many titles for his school, something of a Lothario, and a fun-loving individual. Years later, I would take my whole family on a trip around the world, and we would look Norbert up. I still remember many of the tales this expert storyteller related to us.

For instance: During the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, I was active in university political movements and finally felt forced to flee to Austria and then, Canada, where I found work as a professor of pathology at Halifax University. In my absence,

the People's Court sentenced me to five years of hard labour. I became a Canadian citizen and wanted to return to Budapest to visit my parents who were getting up there in years. I left my wife and five children in Vienna because I didn't think it was safe to take them with me. I rented a Mercedes and drove to Budapest – a bit nervous, but O.K. It was good seeing my father and mother, and our reunion went well until 4:00 a.m. one morning when there was a knock at the door. I thought, "This is it; it's the police!" And it was. They were there to advise me rather sternly that my car was illegally parked. I called my wife immediately and said, "It's fine. We're safe. Bring the kids to Budapest!"

Tomi Franck was another very good friend, and even though he had been Rene's boyfriend and was several years older than I was, we got along well together – especially since our fishing days in the Danube were now just faint memories. Tomi was born a Jew. But he managed to escape with false papers more easily than the others for two reasons: both he and his parents were baptised; and he had not been circumcised. He and his father (who invented solid perfume and sold the rights to England) owned a perfume concentrate factory. Tomi remembered one particular incident that nearly made his heart stop. Russian/ Asian soldiers broke into the factory and insisted upon drinking the chemical concentrates. One of them died, and the others became deathly ill. But once again, the Russians showed their fair colours when they decreed: "This is exactly the kind of thing Mongol soldiers do. Tomi Franck is innocent!"

Of course, some of my friends and their families were not so lucky. My father's nephew had two sons. One of them, Turi, went to school with me, and the other was my sister's age. Hungarian Nazis beat the younger son and his father to death, but the mother and older child survived, The latter would go to

Norway after the 1956 revolution, become naturalised, and marry a Norwegian woman. Somewhat later, he worked as a professor at the Upsalla University in Sweden.

The Auspitz family, close friends of my parents, also suffered casualties of the war. The Nazis killed the father, but the mother and two sons survived. Both sons, approximately Rene's and my ages, worked for the AVO (the Communist Secret Police). Rene and I used to beat them up. Now, in their current line of work, both carried revolvers —— one under their armpits and one at their waists. They bragged, saying: "You and your sister will think twice about attacking us now with four guns between us."

Since it was unlikely that they were Communists, I asked them point blank, "What made you join the AVO?"

They replied in unison, "Vengeance! We arrest many ex-Nazis and members of the Arrow Cross."

Of course, Aunt Yeti and her second husband, Manci inspired our devotion by their kindness to us. They did everything they could to make our stay in Budapest tolerable, including sharing their home with us initially. The problem was their son-in-law Jeno Sved, who came from the country. He was the sole survivor of a very large family, became a Communist, and hated everybody. He resented that his wife's parents were alive while his were dead. She tried to placate him by joining the Communist Party herself and was made a lecturer of Communist ideology in the hospitals. Doctors, after a hard day's work, were forced to remain after hours, listening to her two-hour diatribes about Stalinism. One night when I was listening to the BBC, the break between Stalin and Tito was announced. We would not hear this news in Hungary for another twenty-four hours, so I took the opportunity to ask Jeno, "What is your opinion of Tito?" He waxed rhapsodic, effusing about what a great Communist Tito was. I told him, "Be careful not to say this tomorrow. Because if you do, you will be a traitor!"

I watched Jeno's face redden as he screamed, "This is a lie – a blasphemous lie!"

A few days later, the press came out against Tito, branding him a traitor to Communism, a capitalist agent, and the rest of the usual labels. Jeno Sved avoided me for over a week.

For me, mixing with old school friends and new ones from the opera crowd made this a very exciting time. One day when I was having a haircut, I noticed the young man in the chair next to me. He was conversing normally with the barber about living in Brazil – particularly, Rio de Janeiro. I interrupted him, asking if he spoke Portuguese. We looked at each other and started to laugh. He had been my sister's second boyfriend in Lisbon, where he lived from 1939-194I before he migrated to South America. Now; he, too, had returned to Hungary to see his family. Since he carried a Brazilian passport, he would have no trouble getting out again.

I asked about my pre-1939 teachers whenever I ran into someone who might know. I was pleased to hear that most of them had been hanged as war criminals. They were really a bunch of bastards! For instance, in primary school, children fell into two natural groups —— those who gave gifts to the teachers and the others whose parents were to poor to do that. My own teacher went to my father's shop at Christmas time where he received free cloth for a suit. This was obvious payola!

Sometimes the strange, greedy teachers taught equally strange subjects… strangely. One of these courses was drawing. Since I cannot draw a straight line today, nor could I then, I was at the bottom of my class in this subject. But that did not matter to my teacher when mercenary matters were at hand. He visited my parents and sold them a picture he had drawn, representing it as my work. Next day, I took a piece to class my sister, an art school student, had done and received top marks for it.

But all of these petty complaints aside, my worst trouble in school (and yet another reason to hate all people there who wielded more power than I did) occurred during the 1938-1939 Czech crisis. The Czechs were ready to fight the Germans and Hungarians, and they had a good air force. Budapest, even with old planes, was only five or six minutes from the nearest Czech airport. We had blackouts, and even my father, who was fifty years old in 1938, was called up as an air warden. Just as today people fear nuclear bombs, the dreaded weapon then was mustard gas. Gymnastics was cancelled in school and a course called "Home Defence", substituted. One day our assignment was to determine the composition of mustard gas, but instead of working on that problem, I played soccer. Naturally, this was the kiss of death, and I was called on in class to report my findings – the formula. I had no idea what the gas was made of and admitted that. The teacher called me a TRAITOR because these were grave times, and I was not taking them and my duties seriously enough.

To this abuse, I replied: "If Czech planes bombard Budapest, and I stand on the street corner reciting the composition of mustard gas, over and over, the planes won't fall out of the sky. Right?"

My parents had to come to school, of course. I was warned that one more smart remark would get me thrown out of all state institutions. Fortunately, this incident took place right before we left Hungary for Portugal.

Another loathsome characteristic of the pre-war, Hungarian educational system was that religion was a compulsory subject. Even if a child were brilliant in all subjects, the priest or minister could fail him in religion, and that would be the end of it. In 1948, the Communists reversed this stand and made religion an optional school subject; and the priests and ministers responded by urging hundreds-of-thousands to protest this "anti-God", Communist movement. When the Communists tried to explain

that this was the Western/British/French system, the clerics would not believe them. No wonder one grew to disrespect those who were put in a position to demand our rapt attention as we battled our way upstream in the turbulent Hungarian school system. No wonder I did not feel great sorrow at the rumours of their falling victim to the merciless, swinging ropes.

Twenty-four hours after arriving in Hungary in 1947, I was at the opera. My third-floor seat was incredibly inexpensive, and I was excited to attend my first live performance, Cosi Fan Tutte. The ticket I purchased allowed me in on five different nights for a series of Mozart operas, conducted by the world famous Otto Klemperer, who was residing in Budapest. The superb productions were Cosi Fan Tutte, The Marriage of Figaro, Ils Seraglio, The Magic Flute, and Don Giovanni. This series was repeated five times, and I went to all twenty-five performances.

I made friends with a large group of young opera lovers, including some conservatory students. We formed relays from Saturday morning until Sunday at 10:00 a.m. when the box office opened to sell tickets – ten days in advance. I attended the opera every night to hear the many famous singers who came to Budapest – often from Vienna. Vienna was and is one of the top opera venues in the world, and the performers came by car (240 km). They filled their vehicles with food before returning home because, in those days, there was a shortage of it in Austria.

I remember Paul Shoeffler and Erich Kunz in Don Giovanni. Shoeffler played the Don, and Kunz, Leperello. Both were unforgettable, as was Guiseppe Taddei as Rigoletto and Figaro. In addition to these big names, a number of Hungarian singers returned from the US just to look around and to work as guest

performers while they visited. Alexander Sved was Rigoletto. Ernst Dezso played Osmin. Mihaly Szekely, a basso, found his zenith in Boris Godunov, which was performed every time a VIP came from a Red country. (And they did come: including Voroshilov and Tito just before his break with Stalin.) Gabor Carelli, an exceptional tenor from the San Francisco opera, stayed a full season, singing two or three times a week. I have seen Lucia Di Lammermoor with Carelli and the Hungarian coloratura soprano, Gyurkovich, twelve times in one season. (I would remember this years later in Australia as I read Jose Carreras' autobiography in which he recalls his own role in that opera when he travelled in Hungary. He sang in his native tongue, Italian, as did Carelli and Gyurkovics.) Unfortunately, a duality of language and a shortage of tenors were two of the few flaws in the Hungarian opera. The members of the Budapest Company sang in Hungarian, while the visitors performed in their own languages. At that time, I came to the conclusion that Hungarian was the world's worst language for opera. A few years later I would change my vote to English.

In Hungary, as in Italy, when a popular aria was well-sung, the crowd applauded wildly until the singer repeated the selection. One night Carelli sang "E lucevan le stelle" (the stars were brightly shining) from Tosca six times. This tradition is not observed in other countries like Germany, Austria, England, or Australia. And he may have been in Hungary, but Otto Klemperer did not encourage the habit when Erich Kunz sang Leporello in Don Giovanni. After the "Catalogue" aria ("Nella bionda"), the crowd went berserk, demanding an encore. When Klemperer refused, the applause became so loud that the singers could not sing. At this, Klemperer shouted at the soprano, "Singen sie, verdamte hurre!" (Sing you damned whore!)

On the few nights when I did not attend the opera, I went to other concerts that also featured fantastic guest artists like Yehudi Menuhin, Jasha Heifetz, the three Oistrakhs, Isaac Stern, and others. Perhaps the most unforgettable concert I heard then was Yehudi Menuhin's violin recital at the Budapest Conservatory of Music. The official program finished around 10:00, but due to the audience's wild applause, encore followed encore. At 11:00, the management had had enough. All the lights were turned out in the auditorium. Assuming this darkness meant the end, we got up, trying to find our way in the blackness around us. Suddenly in the dark, Menuhin started playing again. Sarasate's "Gypsy Melody", punctured the inky air. More music followed, and at midnight, the lights were turned back on. The audience was asked to leave. Menuhin just smiled. Clearly, he was in a special mood and would have played more. I would hear him several additional times during my life in Australia and travels in England, but the atmosphere could never feel the same as it did on that magical night in Budapest.

The only time I felt sorry that I dropped everything for my love of the opera occurred a few years later when I was playing water polo. I remember the day Coach Schlenker, who was in the M.T.K., asked me if I could swim. When I replied in the affirmative, he suggested I come and train with the M.T.K. But I would not take him up on his offer because practice began at 6:00 p.m. and would interfere with my nights of musical performances. I remembered Coach Schlenker from the pre-1939 days when we went to the mountains on Sundays, lunched at Betyar Csarda, and afterward had a soccer game with all the top players. These were the same Hungarian athletes I would meet again later in Sydney: Momi Vadas, his brother Laci, whom we had met in Israel, the Olympic goalkeeper Brodi, who went to South Africa in 1950, but dropped dead from a heart attack, Fried Szendrodi, Cila Vecsei, and many others.

In Budapest, in spite of having to work full time, Samu and I went to a Turkish bath two or three times a week – either the big Szecsenyi on the Pest side or the smaller Rudas on the Buda. Both parts of Budapest are built over artesian wells that supply hot water to the whole area. During the Turkish occupation of Hungary, the Turks built baths on both sides of the Danube that were modernised later by the Hungarians. The Szechenyi, besides the steam room and the sauna, had a good number of pools, ranging from freezing cold to very hot. It was superb sweating in the steam and then throwing ourselves into the near-boiling pool. We moved gradually from bath to bath until we finished in the frigid one. Then we would get out and start all over again. At the end, towels, beer, hot knackwursts, and a sleep awaited us. We felt on top of the world!

At other times, we went swimming. I especially liked Margit Sziget (Margaret Island) in mid-winter when we could swim first in the indoor pool, and then glide through a tunnel to an outdoor Olympic one, surrounded by banks of snow. The water was tepid, but the air, freezing. I confess that in spite of all our problems in Budapest, I enjoyed my ten months there with friends, the opera, concerts, theatre, Turkish baths, swimming pools, Sunday soccer games, and top-notch food that included, the most beautiful goose liver. By this time, however, we were working diligently to get the new passports with their exit visas that would allow our emigration to South Africa. Once again, the M.T.K. connections were useful. We were told that Colonel Marshall, who had known Samu since he was a young boy, could help us. Colonel Marshall was an idealistic Communist who went to Spain as a teenager, joined the International Brigade, and fought against the Nazis and Franco's Fascists. In the new government, he was the right hand man of Rajk, the Minister of the Interior.

Due to Tito's problems, Rajk's and Marshall's positions were already very delicate. (As a matter of fact, soon after we left Hungary, Rajk was arrested as a traitor and western spy, convicted, and hanged. During the few days right after he was apprehended, an attempt was made to arrest Marshall as well, but he defended himself by shooting a few of his own men when his detractors came to nab him. Marshall was, nevertheless, wounded quite badly and thrown from the top of the house he lived in. His death was ruled a suicide. Eight years later, just before the 1956 revolution, Rajk was retried. The court found him innocent this time, dug him up, and gave him a national hero's funeral.) Colonel Marshall told my father and I to come to his office so he could have the necessary papers issued to us. But he warned that since he was aware he was under surveillance and his office, bugged, he would have to pretend to abuse us. He did so, calling us "capitalist bastards who want to leave Hungary and live in a capitalist country". As he chastised, he winked and issued the visas and passports.

Still, there was more red tape to our getting out. We were required to get documents from all fourteen of the suburbs in Budapest, stating that we owed no taxes to any of them. We tried, but found this last task impossible. We learned at the M.T.K. that an old water polo playing friend of Samu's (a Keseru brother) worked in one of the treasury offices. He welcomed my father and assured us that, with a day's notice, he could provide us with all fourteen of the necessary clearances. The next night, he brought the documents to the M.T.K. clubrooms. This last act cleared the way for my parents' exit from Hungary, but did not help me. Since I was now nineteen, I was subject to conscription. This was such a difficult problem that I suggested my mother and father leave for Austria, and I would follow, illegally.

The most common method of illegal exit in those days – contrary to Hollywood's descriptions of barbed wire barricades and barrages of bullets – was to pay American dollars to

a Soviet officer. He then drove the escapee, who wore a Russian uniform, to the Soviet zone of Vienna. From there it was an easy walk over to the western side. Samu vetoed this solution by saying, "We have survived the war years as a family unit, never being separated. And we will again. Either we go together or stay here together,"

Eventually, we solved this last problem through the M.T.K. as well. I was able to obtain a medical release from service in the Hungarian People's Army. The document affirmed that I had "flat feet" and wore a size forty-eight shoe. The Hungarian Army had no boots that would fit me.

Finally, the road leaving our homeland opened once again. For me, a nineteen-year-old, the next leg of our journey was just another step in the continuation of my life as a travelling man. But it was different for Samu. In spite of everything he had been through, Budapest was his home, for better or worse. Even under the difficult conditions and circumstances there, he had had good times during this return visit – better here than in any other place he had lived since the war broke out. Being in touch with his surviving friends, especially at the M.T.K., meant he could speak in his own tongue once more in a city he loved and knew very well. He was free to go to the cinema or listen to the radio and could understand both without the need of a translator. He enjoyed water polo games and soccer matches and liked being with the people who respected him and knew him from the pre-war days. In spite of the political situation in Hungary, the financial difficulties, and the ruins of a house we lived in, I am quite sure Samu would have preferred spending the remainder of his life in Budapest rather than in South Africa and later, Australia. For him to leave again was a sacrifice. His closeness to his family, however, urged him to continue travelling onward toward

the unknown in the sixth decade of his life. (Now, at nearly seventy, I can appreciate what he did because I also have wanted my entire family to surround me as I enjoy my old age. Unfortunately, in spite of a lack of financial stress and political problems in our everyday lives, the fulfilment of this wish eludes me.)

In 1948, millions of emigrants were leaving Europe, and there was heavy demand for tickets on ships. We booked an Italian vessel, the "Toscana", sailing from Venice; and while we waited to finalise this arrangement, we lived the biggest and longest farewell ever. Every day there were lunches and dinners with old friends who wanted to say goodbye. We would not see most of them again. I spent my nights at the opera, skipping the dinners, and turned up at 10:00 – usually in time for the last hugs of the evening.

During this time, I also had my first big love affair with Agi, who was fifteen. She was a beautiful girl who lived with her mother in Bencurutca in a beautiful, six-bedroom flat. Since this opulent living arrangement was not allowed under the Communists, Agi and her mother billeted a Russian major, his wife, and their daughter there. The Major was a nice person who spoke fluent German and French and was always apologetic about imposing on his landlords. I enjoyed our conversations and frequent chess games.

But many good romances end, and just before I left Hungary, Agi went to Switzerland. Since in those days a young girl did not live alone, her mother arranged for her to reside in a convent at Kastanienbaum, near Lucerne. Agi finished her schooling there and remained in Switzerland, working as a correspondent in German, French, English, and Spanish for a large company. (Later, after I moved to Australia, I would visit her many times during my copious travels abroad.) Agi was an intelligent person, originally Jewish; but living in a convent for seven years

affected her. She was influenced by the religious philosophies of the priests and nuns. For example, she once passed a slaughterhouse in her car, heard the screams of the animals as they were herded to their deaths, and became a vegetarian on the spot. Much later, when she already had a house full of dogs, someone told her that stray dogs were sold to chemical companies for experimentation. From that moment on, she began picking up homeless canines and finding them refuge in petless families. She kept files religiously on every animal she placed. At one time, the number was over 600; and on any given day, she might have forty in her own house and garden. Agi's mother, also living alone in Bellinzona, preferred a small flat of her own to sharing space in her daughter's house with all of those animals. Years later, Agi began thinking for herself once again, but hers was another life wasted by post-war conditions.

In final preparation for our trip to South Africa, we gathered our belongings, the travel visas for Austria and Italy, and our passports. We were nervous about the rapidly deteriorating political situation in Hungary and decided to leave earlier than necessary so we could spend a couple of weeks in Vienna and Italy. Because Rene and Uncle Tibi had sent currency from South Africa and Portugal, we believed we could manage if we were careful. So we booked all the necessary rail and seaway tickets to Durban via Italy and readied ourselves for whatever came next.

We boarded the train bound for Vienna, a city Samu had lived in before the war. He had been terribly disappointed in 1938 when Austria embraced Nazism with unparalleled enthusiasm. If one studies old newsreels and photographs, it is clear that Vienna went wild for Hitler. Prague was the opposite, and its people wept on the streets when the Nazis marched in.

The trip between Budapest and Vienna normally took four hours, but this time it was six because of the stringent controls at the border. Though there were very few passengers on the train, our passports were checked and rechecked many times. The undercarriage of each car was scrutinised, and finally we were allowed to proceed into the Soviet-occupied zone of Austria.

Vienna was held by four powers, much like Berlin: Britain, France, the US, and Russia. All had interests there. Though documents were checked at each juncture, we found we could travel among the various zones at will, but very slowly. We located an old, imperial-style hotel in the Soviet area and spent some time sightseeing. We enjoyed choice performances at the Statsoper and took in operettas as well. We dined in the famous Schrammel Cellars where violinists accompanied our simple meals.

From Austria we travelled to Milano, Italy. We arrived in the late afternoon and went to a recommended, moderately priced hotel. One of my ambitions in life was (and still is) to see and hear opera at La Scala. But seasons there are quite short, and though I would come to Milano several times in the future, I could never catch La Scala open; and it has remained elusive as recently as 1993. On this occasion, undaunted by my failure to access La Scala, I went to a wonderful, open-air performance of The Barber of Seville with Tito Gobbi as Figaro at a monastery. Gobbi was one of the greatest baritones ever, and I would be fortunate enough to hear him again in Johannesburg and later, Sydney.

We moved on to Venice, where I rescued a nun. We were taking in the sights on a small gondola. As the craft snaked its way through one of the city's narrow, smelly canals, a fellow passenger, a nun, stood up to take a photo, lost her balance, and plummeted into the drink. Instead of remaining in the boat and simply leaning over to pluck her out, I dived into the fetid

abyss in an act of true heroism. I can promise the reader that this one, stupid action accounted for the typhoid fever that would plague me later on.

TYPHOID FREDDY

Boarding the Toscana began ominously. During our trip to South Africa, we made a mistake that was nearly fatal for me. The South African authorities demanded a certificate of vaccination against typhoid and cholera from anyone travelling through Italy. A doctor friend of ours had issued the certificates, but not the vaccinations, saying the shots would be painful and the serum, difficult to obtain in Hungary. Up to now, we had been quite healthy. As a child of four, I had a tonsillectomy; at six or seven, scarlet fever; and during our travels, had experienced banana appendicitis in Portugal and tropical boils in Mozambique. Nothing else. During our four years in Israel, I visited the doctor twice. Once I cut my hand while working as a butcher. On another occasion, Samu and I both went to a physician together, complaining that we had to get up in the night too frequently. The doctor referred to this malady as "new arrival's disease", caused by taking advantage of dozens of wonderful oranges and grapefruit each day. (The "red jaffas" were especially delicious.) My mother had talked me into having a physical examination before we left Budapest because she thought me too thin. Our old family friend and professor of medicine, Dr. Hollander, declared I was fine and added that, in twenty years, I would wish to be thin. He was right.

Three busloads of British emigres to East Africa and Rhodesia, who could not find space on a British ship, arrived in Venice to board the Toscana. Somewhere along the way, one of the buses braked, and the other two ran into it. Fortunately,

nobody was killed, but many passengers were injured. These boarded the vessel, bandaged.

As we waited to get on the Toscana ourselves, a pickpocket stole the two thousand US dollars we were carrying. Samu had just remarked that we would have to be very careful where we kept our money because the street thieves in Poland and Italy were the worst. Subsequently, we were left with only our Italian lira, which were not worth much. Luckily, we paid our hotel bill prior to the robbery.

We climbed aboard the ship and discovered that the cabins there, though relatively expensive, were multi-bed. I negotiated with some of the crew who agreed to relinquish their three-bed cabin with bathroom to us. On the Toscana, this accommodation was the ultimate in luxury, but the expensive transaction left us with only one hundred dollars in lira. Finally, the vessel left Venice and sailed into the Mediterranean and on toward Egypt and the Suez Canal The sun was blistering, and, of course there was no air-conditioning. But because our chamber was higher in the ship, we stayed cooler than the other passengers did. The first day passed rather pleasantly with blue skies overhead, a calm sea underneath, and good food in our bellies. We relaxed, read in armchairs, and dove into the small but refreshing pool to cool off. We also made friends with the British passengers, including the Goodmans. Mally Goodman would play an important role in my life later when our boat arrived in Mombassa.

Things began to change just after we crossed the Suez into the Red Sea. Many passengers became ill and vomited violently. Because the water was calm, their discomfort seemed unusual. Even Samu, who was prone to seasickness, felt well. On the next day, we had our first two funerals at sea. The ship's doctor named the cause of death in the first instance, "heat and sunstroke". In the second, a "heart attack" was the probability. Meanwhile, as the number of sick people increased, the ship's physician

asked me to accompany him on his rounds and translate his reassurances to the Hungarian, German, and British patients. The sick bay could only hold twelve, so the ill overflowed into the rest of the ship as well.

After of couple of days, when the ailing did not get better, a Hungarian passenger, a young Dr. Horvath, warned me to be very careful. This was not heat or sunstroke, he said, but a typhoid epidemic. He had seen an abundance of cases of that disease during the war. Dr. Horvath went to the Toscana's physician and offered his help, stating that the problem clearly was typhoid. The ship's doctor refused both his help and his opinion, stating that he had enough experience to know the effects of hot weather when he saw them.

I felt perfectly well until our arrival in Massawa, the main port of Ethiopia. The heat was enervating – over fifty degrees centigrade. In those days, village shops opened early in the morning when it was cool, closed during the warmest hours, and opened again in the evening. We took advantage of the town's siesta to have a swim in an enclosed, shark-netted area. But both the air and water were sizzling. We simply could not enjoy the water, so we went to the best hotel in town, where we enjoyed a diametrical experience. The indoor fans whirred above us as we circled lazily in the pool. Meanwhile, an indulgent staff threw blocks of ice in to keep the temperature down.

Suddenly, I began experiencing sharp pains in my head and neck. We spent our remaining money on cold drinks and a meal I could not eat. I vomited and somehow managed to walk back to the ship, feeling miserable and attributing my distress to the heat. In our cabin, we put the fan on at full speed. Nothing helped, and I could not stay out of the bathroom due to my vomiting and diarrhoea. My parents summoned Dr. Horvath and another English physician who was also

a passenger. Both declared that I had the typhoid that was coursing through the ship.

People were dying every day now. I was in very bad shape, and although nobody trusted the Toscana's doctor, the two passenger physicians said he must be involved. So we called him, and listened to his vehement protests against the possibility of typhoid fever. (The reason he would not admit there was an epidemic aboard was because if he acknowledged the problem existed, the vessel would have to go into quarantine. This would cost the shipping company a great deal of money.)

Our doctor friends told the worried Samu and Germaine that the only thing they could do was pump fluids into me so I would not become dehydrated. (Today there is a simpler cure for Typhoid, but this was 1948.) I continued to vomit, and ALTHOUGH I HAVE NOT SINCE, this was enough vomiting to last me a lifetime.

Our next stop was Mogadishu in Somalia, where there was not a port for our ship to berth, so we anchored a couple of kilometres from land. Passengers and cargo were carried ashore in rowboats through impressive surf The ship's doctor and two crew members came to our cabin with a stretcher. Since my condition had deteriorated considerably, they planned to inch me onto it, lower me to the smaller craft below, and head in to the Mogadishu hospital. My parents would have to remain aboard the Toscana in the meantime. My father became very angry, threatening to punch the ship's doctor, and had to be restrained by his friends. He shouted angrily, "I will only allow you to take my son ashore in the next port, Mombassa. It is British, and I can trust it and its hospital!" The other two doctors agreed, saying that though they did not know personally about the quality of the medical care in the Somali hospital, they were quite sure I would not survive the ride in a rowboat as it pitched through the restless sea.

Albeit over twenty passengers died on the way to Mombassa, I remained alive. When our craft arrived there, the Toscana's captain flew the quarantine-free, yellow flag signifying "No Sickness Aboard". I do not know how this idiot with a couple of hundred British passengers – some of whom were very ill – expected to get away with this lie in a British port.

As the gangway was put in place, and before anyone could come aboard, my friend Mally Goodman raced down and shouted at the policeman on shore that he wanted to speak with someone from the port's health authority. So a group of physicians, led by an Indian, came aboard. For once, I could not criticise a British Colonial organisation. I am convinced by the facts, as well as by conversations I had later with the doctors in Mombassa, that my father's outburst in Mogadishu indeed saved my life.

The Mombassan health officials did a wonderful job! Every sick person on the Toscana received a thorough medical examination, and the ship was sent to quarantine on the island of Zanzibar, where about 120 passengers and a few crew members who suffered from typhoid were hospitalised. Six of us were listed in "critical" condition and taken ashore in Mombassa.

I remember being carried down the gangplank on the stretcher and put into an ambulance. The next thing I recall was waking up to screams in the middle of the night. I was not sure if I was hallucinating or if the cries were real. Later, I learned that we had been housed in an empty ward at the maternity hospital during the first night.

The next day, medical authorities reopened the Infectious Disease Hospital for Europeans about five kilometres outside Mombassa. It had been closed for years due to a lack of patients. (Because Mombassa was a British Colony, white and black inmates were segregated from one another.)

My parents also insisted on disembarking at this port. They had absolutely no money left, but they booked into a decent hotel anyway. Fortunately, one of the doctors, Dr. Fendall, with whom I became a good friend later, offered them a lift to their accommodation since they could not afford a taxi. They phoned Rene in Johannesburg and my uncle in Portugal from the phone at the hotel. Uncle Tibi sent three hundred pounds, which arrived a week later. Meanwhile, the British Union Castle Shipping Lines, that also represented Triestino Lloyd, the owners of the Toscana, agreed to pay the hotel and lend fifty pounds to Samu and Germaine against the 300 sent to Mayer c/o Union Castle. Unfortunately, the shipping line refused to turn over the money and because of their denial, put our family in a serious financial bind.

Every morning, my parents walked the six or seven kilometres to the hospital to be at my bedside. At night, they walked back again. But this slow pace ended on the third morning when an Indian stopped his car and offered them a lift. Mistaking his for a hire-car, they offered to pay. The Indian refused, laughing. He was the postmaster of Mombassa, and from that day onward, personally delivered all of our mail to the hotel. Remarkably, there were no more transportation problems. Others joined in the postman's generosity – Mrs.Fendall, a Sister at the hospital, and Mrs. Fordham, the English teacher. In fact, when Samu and Germaine wished to return to their hotel in the evenings, they always had a variety of lifts to choose among.

The six of us patients (reduced to four when two died) were cared for by considerably more than six doctors and nurses. Since there was no known cure for typhoid, physicians felt they had nothing to lose by trying any treatment they might dream up. In my case, they administered massive injections of penicillin. These did not cure the disease, but, instead, caused enormous

swellings on my arms and buttocks. I could remember this only sketchily as I floated in and out of consciousness during the first two weeks in the hospital. As I convalesced, I talked with Dr. Fendall, who tried to explain how typhoid fever worked. He said that just as many people used to die during their "recovery" periods as did during the illness itself. The reason for this was that the intestines weakened considerably during the course of the disease as the victims reached the peaks of their fevers; and later, when the patients began eating normal diets again, their bowels often perforated suddenly and painfully, causing death. I was lucky that Africa grew the one fruit ideally suited to the typhoid victim's delicate system – papaya. Nourishing, but soft enough not to damage the intestines – it was perfect. Therefore, I was put on a diet of paw paw mixed with glucose, lemon, and orange juice. I was so thin you could count the ribs protruding rudely from my sides.

I recovered in the hospital garden with the only other patient, a sixteen-year-old girl. We listened to the radio program together that described the first post-war Olympic games of 1948. And finally I was in good enough condition to begin eating proper meals. My doctors decided that although I was fit, strong, and well enough to leave my confinement, I had to remain there another ten days for "stool tests". Though cured of outward symptoms, I was still infectious.

At last I was allowed to walk out of the hospital where I had been so beautifully cared for. As I left my medical incarceration, I was assured by all the nuns and nurses that they had full confidence in my complete recovery. Their opinion was based upon scientific observation. During the worst stage of the disease, while I was lying in bed, fevered and unconscious in the steamy heat, the nurses stripped us patients and washed our naked bodies with ice. There was one part of my anatomy that always exhibited a relentless enthusiasm for life. And that was proof enough.

On the first morning of my freedom, Dr Fendall came to our hotel for breakfast, and was shocked to see that the enormous meal I was eating included a healthy portion of papaya. Apparently, most patients have no desire for paw paw after the fruit-based typhoid treatment.

Before leaving Mombassa for South Africa, we had to settle the bills for the hotel and ship. The Union Castle Line advised us that Triestino Lloyd, the owner of the Toscana, agreed to pay the costs of my parents' accommodation as well as for tourist class tickets on the next Union Castle vessel to Durban. Our only remaining sticking point was the 300 pounds sent by Uncle Tibi. Samu and I went to see the manager of the shipping line. He was not a crook, but certainly, an idiot – not unlike many of the bureaucrats sent to the Colonies. He announced that since the Italians paid for our hotel and fares to Durban, we were looking at a very complicated legal matter here. His advice was that we hire a lawyer who would talk with the Union Castle's attorney to determine whether or not we could collect the money. We replied that we would not engage a solicitor ourselves, but would instead accept the decision of his. He seemed to feel this suggestion was more than fair and rang his attorney, who arrived within ten minutes.

After hearing the. facts, the latter queried. "What's the problem? The money has already been sent to them. They should have it immediately."

Money exchanged hands, and the manager was so embarrassed that, instead of issuing tourist class tickets, he upgraded us to first. Samu and Germaine would luxuriate in a suite with a big bathroom, and I would have my own single with bath.

The next day we departed on the "Llandovery Castle" – not a migrant boat, but a very fine ship. However, excellent vessel as it was, the Llandovery Castle, all timber, was home to hoards

of cockroaches. One of the officers explained that prior to leaving England, the boat was fumigated: yet, the cockroaches refused to die. (A year or so later, this vessel was withdrawn from the South African run. Reason: cockroaches.)

Once again we said our good-byes and thanked everyone for their wonderful help and hospitality. We were headed for Durban. This would be the exact reverse of the journey we had made five years earlier on the Karagola: Mombassa, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Beira, Lourenco Marques, and Durban.

We sailed to Zanzibar and enjoyed exploring it again, noting that it had changed little since our last visit. Imagine our shock when we arrived back on our ship after our little sightseeing trip to find the 120 passengers from the Toscana who had been housed in the Zanzibar quarantine station. They were embarking once again on the same boat as we. They were all in tourist class, so I stepped down from first during much of the ensuing time, renewing the friendships forged on the Toscana. I noted one very odd thing about these people. None of them touched fish. The emigres from quarantine cleared up the mystery by explaining that the toilets at the station had been built high over the rocks, above the sea. When they sat on the stools, they could look down, far into the water. They believed they could see the fish, waiting. Waiting for them to go to the toilet so they could make a meal of it.

As opposed to Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam was a stranger city than it had been when we were there before. The government had started a nut-growing scheme, investing millions of dollars. The project was a complete failure.

In Beira, we docked at the same port, Companhia do Mozambique, as before. This was where most of my friends from the Toscana left the ship to continue their trip to Rhodesia by rail. I filled the lonely void in the company of a pleasant Cape Town girl who was travelling with her mother.

We arrived in Durban, the end of our trip by sea, and were told almost immediately that the Toscana had been visited by more cases of typhoid fever. The result was that the South African authorities banned that boat from embarking on further trips to South Africa. The ship's owners simply and quickly assigned another vessel to the Toscana's place and used the disease be-devilled one to carry passengers to Australia instead.

My brother-in-law's cousin and his wife, the Schlosbergs, picked us up at the wharf, took us sightseeing, and looked after us hospitably until the next day when we departed on the night train to Johannesburg. We shared a pleasant compartment with only one other lady. She was fine, but her nose was not. Johannesburg is about 2000 metres above sea level, and when the train started the uphill part of the journey, the visiting nose in our cubicle began to bleed. We tried to be sympathetic to her predicament, which is not an uncommon one, but the rest of us were just fine. After all, when one really got right down to it, what was this compared to typhoid fever?

Rene and her husband, Matthew, were awaiting our arrival in Johannesburg. I had not seen my sister for nearly three years and had missed her sorely. We had always been so close, and there was much I needed to know about her life in the interval since we last had seen one another. She was finally able to study medicine at the Johannesburg Wittwatersrand University, an ambition she held for many years. (Unfortunately this accomplishment would fade when fate stepped in later in Sydney. Rene had completed three years of medical school successfully, but would find that only the first of them would transfer to Australia. The other two, finished in South Africa, would not be recognised. She would have to take the other two over if she were to practice medicine in Sydney. Rene could not afford more schooling and ultimately gave up the idea.)

Initially, we rented a house in Yeoville, a suburb of Johannesburg, but since both my parents and I worked, we decided to move into the Cranbrooke Private hotel where Rene and Matthew lived. (Forty years ago, this was a luxurious, modern accommodation, but South Africans in Sydney tell me that today it is old and rundown.) There was a special dispensation for ex-servicemen, and since Matthew was one of those and also a good friend of the owner, we were all able to rent rooms at a favourable rate. The price also included all meals in the fine hotel restaurant. My parents would live on the first floor, Matthew and Rene, on the third, and I, on the sixth.

I was twenty years old and found another great advantage in our surroundings. The hotel housed dozens of seventeen-to-twenty-year-old girls. The were from the country, found life outside the city boring, and came to Johannesburg to get their BA degrees. They were living here at their parents' expense. I did not own a car, but most of my new female friends did. One in particular became a good, platonic chum. Her name was Jacqueline, and she had come to the hotel with her parents. Her father was the director of a large Belgian company. Jacqueline was engaged, and when a few months later, her fiance arrived, they married. No one believed we were "just friends" – especially when most nights I emerged from her room at 2:00 a.m. after listening to opera for hours. Those were the days when the first long-playing records were pressed, and what a grand change they were from the old seventy-eights.

At least two or three times a week, we went to hear live opera. There were some praiseworthy performances of the Johannesburg Company. I remember a German tenor, August Seidler, who sang excellently in Aida, Tannhauser, and Pagliacci. I also, recall a shocking performance of The Magic Flute in the Afrikaans. There were great guest artist concerts with Tito Gobbi, Tito Schippa, the Italian tenor who refused to sing until the people in the audience stopped smoking, and Melchior, the Danish tenor who also made some good movies with Jane Powell. The stage presentation of each opera was weak because in Johannesburg, there was no proper opera house or even a theatre in which to stage them. Cinemas, on the other hand, were luxurious and large. Most had roofs that could be opened during the feature's when the weather was pleasant. These options for entertainment helped make my stay in Johannesburg enjoyable.

Also, this city was the one in which I took up another avocation that would play a major role in my life for at least the next fifty-some years. After we had been in Johannesburg for a few days, I wanted to go for a swim. The famous Rugby Union Stadium, about ten or fifteen minutes by foot from the hotel, had an Olympic-size pool. The pool reserved two lanes for lap swimming, but the rest were crowded with people doing anything they wanted. I noticed two blokes, about five or six years older than I, preparing for a swim. I asked them, "Do you mind if I tag along?"

Without hesitation, they replied, "OK. Fine with us" They were doing three by four hundred metres and I stayed with them. When we finished, they asked me to join them for a drink. They were Jerry Goddard and Pillemer, two of the top water polo players in South Africa. Goddard was also an ace cricketer. Their eyes lit up when they heard I had just come from Hungary because they assumed that all Hungarians were really excellent water polo players. So, right then and there, they invited me to join the Ellis Park Johannesburg Municipal Swimming and Water Polo Club.

The club had four grades of play, and I was placed in the second for the following Saturday's games. Immediately after my first competition, I was moved back to the fourth level, where I should have been in the first place. There were just two problems with my water polo: Hungarian or not, I had never played this sport before in my life; and twenty years old was a bit late to start. That Saturday was the day when I first deeply regretted that

I had not accepted Coach Schlenker's offer to train with the M.T.K. team. But, in spite of these hurdles, I participated now with great enthusiasm and was promoted to the second level during the following year. And by the end of two years when I left for Sydney, I had actually played a couple of first grade games when they were short players.

Deciding to take up water polo was a very good move from a social standpoint. Every Tuesday, the club sent a card saying: You have been selected to play ___ grade for the club against ___ club at ___ pool on Saturday afternoon at ___ clock. After each of these games, the wives and girlfriends arranged dinner and drinks. Win or lose, we always had a grand time. Even though I had been in South Africa for only a brief spell, due to my new sport, I had no shortage of friends. (The same would be true in Sydney later. Through water polo, I have established many long-lasting relationships. The sport has served me well.)

Earning money became its usual high priority, and one day as Samu and Germaine strolled around the city, they noticed a sale of Hungarian, embroidered blouses at one of the large stores. They could see the asking price was far below what the garments cost in Hungary. My parents inquired about the size of the store's total stock. Two thousand pieces was the reply. Since they did not have the money to buy all 2000 outright, they established an account with the store and began selling those blouses in lots of six and twelve to other retail stores at a handsome profit.

In the meantime, I found employment at a delicatessen on Eloff Street, where I worked from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00. However, I spotted an ad in the paper: Smallgoods Factory Requires Experienced Dispatch Manager. Excellent Wages. I decided to apply. The factory called National Cold Storage was located in Doornfontein and was owned by the Levors, a German Jew

and his son. The two managers were also relatives of theirs, and so was the smallgoods expert. In the factory, the majority of the white butchers were Afrikaners (Afrikanders). The others were Blacks, including a number of Zulu. I lied about my age when the two owners and managers interviewed me, increasing it five years to twenty-five. I related my extensive experience in Israel as a smallgoods factory dispatch manager, and after a lengthy conversation, they hired me and asked that I start the next day at a rate of forty pounds a month. In those days, this was a very big wage since the average for Whites was under twenty. However, the younger Levor warned me that during the past year, fifteen different people had undertaken this position, unsuccessfully. Four weeks was the maximum time any one of them remained; so if I did not do a good job, I would be sacked with just a day's notice.

I began my new job the next morning, and within a couple of hours, I had an argument with the Afrikaner butchers. I was supervising the off-loading of a truck full of bacon, and the Blacks were singing and playing in their usual way. I urged, "Com'on please. Don't mess around. Hurry up!"

A few of them approached me and explained very politely that as a "new man" in Africa, I could not possibly know how Blacks should be treated. I should never say, "Please" but should kick them in the ass instead.

To this I replied: "I have not come to Africa just recently. I have been to most places from Cape Town to Cairo. I will speak as I wish – particularly since my job is one of responsibility, and you have nothing to do with it." After this discussion, I went to the refrigerator to check some stock and cool my temper.

I was followed by a huge, 1.95 metre Zulu named Solomon. He said, "Boss, you know everyone who has tried your job here has been sacked. Don't worry. You will do well. Leave it to me."

I noticed Solomon appeared to be a leader of sorts among the black workers, and all of them listened to him. As I took over my job, I understood the full implications of his message.

I was given twelve-to-fourteen black workers who would make up the orders that were to go to Rhodesia, Mozambique, and other points in South Africa. I had three trucks and a horse-drawn carriage for transporting the goods to the railway station. On my desk was a timetable of the trains' departures to all cities, highlighting which were the "cool" ones for carrying perishable goods. Orders must be made up in time to catch those refrigerated cars. As the orders were prepared, we packed dry ice into the cases of highly perishable products like liverwurst, frankfurters, and so forth. Then, we addressed the labels, nailed on the tops, and wrote dispatch notes.

The following morning, I began work with great trepidation at 4:00 a.m. Solomon, standing next to me, coached. "Boss, Cape Town first. The truck has to be at the station at 5:10." We filled the orders, loaded the vehicles, and so it went.

It was easy to see what had gone wrong previously with each of my predecessors in this job. Anytime a Black was pushed around or was called a "Kaffir bastard", he rebelled by changing the lids on the cases (thus sending the Cape Town orders to Rhodesia and vice versa) or by omitting the dry ice on the products that could spoil quickly. I did not run into a similar problem simply because I spoke to the black workers as one human being does to another, using the magic word " please" often.

After a mistake-free first week, Levor came down to my section to tell me that if the job continued to go as well as it had thus far, my wages next month would increase to fifty pounds. To put things in perspective, while I was getting fifty, the top black worker was receiving eight. Fifty pounds was a colossal wage in 1948. Two years later in Sydney, I would start at four pounds ten shillings per week. This equaled about twenty pounds, Australian, or fifteen pounds, South African.

When I walked to work at 3:30-4:00 a.m., the air was icy, but by the time I left in early afternoon, it was mild. I liked the climate of Johannesburg. At 2000 metres above sea level, it was never humid there. In winter, the sky was blue, the air, cool and crisp, and there was very little rain. In summer, however, when the temperatures were pleasantly warm, there were heavy thunderstorms every afternoon. Many people, especially the inadequately housed Blacks were killed by lightning. At the public swimming pools, whenever a violent tempest began, bells were rung and everybody had to leave the water. At the first signs of lightning, water polo games were stopped. Later in Sydney, I would find that these safety precautions were not universal.

In the Cranbrooke Hotel, most people held liberal, anti-nationalistic political views, as did the majority of Johannesburg residents. This was especially true of the white population with its high percentage of Jews. The Nationalist Prime Minister was Dr Malan. During World War11 he had been openly pro-Nazi and had organised sabotage groups to blow up bridges and perform other terrorist acts. In 1939 when South Africa declared war against Germany (as did all British dominions), the vote to do so was narrow in Parliament, where it passed by a margin of just two. All the National deputies were against it. Open pro-Nazi sentiment was the rule, and for the next forty years, this was the party in power. This was the group that implemented racist and apartheid laws.

There were a few bastards right under our noses in The Cranbrooke who openly exhibited the negative manifestations of these policies. For instance, we had an excellent waiter "Charlie", who opened the hotel kitchen at 3:00 a.m. to prepare it for the day's work. He always served me a full breakfast at 3:15 before I walked to National Cold Storage. One day as Charlie was serving dinner, a guest took exception to

something he said and began abusing the waiter. I stuck up for my friend, and a heated argument ensued. The hotel owner quickly restored order by withdrawing Charlie from his wait duties and confining him to the kitchen. Thus Charlie could avoid all contact with the stroppy guest.

Whites who walked the streets during darkness, as I did when I went to work, were warned never to walk on the sidewalk, but near the roadway instead- away from the buildings where a criminal could hide in the shadows. One day I noticed I was being followed. I heard footsteps, but did not see anyone. This made me quite nervous and, to a degree, frightened. After several days of this cat and mouse game, I felt determined to ferret out my pursuer; so as I turned a corner, I hid behind a gate and waited for my "tail" to reveal himself.

The steps advanced toward me, slowed, and stopped. In the darkness, I just barely could make out my stalker. It was Charlie the waiter! I asked him why he was following me, and he replied, "It is too dangerous for a white man to walk alone at this hour, so I am protecting you." I did not mind this at all, but suggested that from now on, he walk with me rather than behind.

A few days later, the hotel owner approached me, saying that the guest with whom Charlie argued had insisted that, unless the waiter were fired, he would report Charlie to the police for having been insolent to a white man. In such cases, the South African police habitually beat-up the accused and asked questions later. The hotel owner believed he had no option but to comply with the insistent guest's request, if only to keep his employee safe. His suggestion was that I try to get Charlie a job at National Cold Storage. This was no problem, and the next day my new employee started making up orders. He and Solomon became close friends. Now someone who really was headed in my direction could walk me to work everyday.

While many people were routinely cruel to Blacks, they thought twice before abusing a Zulu. They knew that the Zulu were a very proud race and there would be every chance of retaliation after an altercation. One morning, a salesman, who recently arrived in South Africa from Europe, came to work drunk. To him, Zulu were no different from other Blacks and, as such, deserved his condemnation. So he began slapping and kicking the black man. Solomon and Charlie, both of whom were heads taller than the salesman, grabbed butchers' knives and lunged toward their white prey. I interrupted them in mid-attack and took the knives away. But before I could stop him, the salesman ran to the phone and called the police, telling them: "Blacks are rioting at National Cold Storage. They're armed with knives."

Within minutes, a vanload of police arrived, leaping from their vehicle, and striking the Blacks indiscriminately with their batons. As the sergeant entered the factory, I asked him what was going on. He replied that there had been an anonymous call, reporting that the Blacks were rioting here. I acknowledged that I was in charge, had been here alone with the black workers, and had suffered no problems. Then the salesman started to blubber. "Can't you see he's drunk?" I pleaded with the sergeant. And with that, the day was saved because the word of a sober, white man held sway against that of a drunk one.

In the meantime, the Afrikaner butchers arrived at work, and when they heard about the skirmish, they labelled me the usual "Kaffir lover"; but since they were not on site when the incident began, their jibes fell on deaf ears.

Most of the time, Blacks were blamed for everything. For instance, the Afrikaner butchers always kept a couple of cases of beer in the refrigerator, bought with the money we all had contributed. We noticed that, on the average, there was one

empty bottle in there each day. Since we always threw our empties into the garbage, we knew that some unauthorised person was tapping our supply. Naturally, the Afrikaners instantly blamed the Blacks, and they intended to prove it this time. They took some empty bottles, urinated in them (filling them to the top), resealed them, and stacked them in a prominent position at the back of the refrigerator.

That day, Levor brought one of our most important customers on a tour of the premises. The two went to the refrigerator and snacked on one of our best salamis. Suddenly we heard a commotion. Both the men were spitting, sputtering and vomiting the "special" brew they had just drunk. Of course, the Blacks were blamed forthwith for the new concoction; but at least the riddle had been solved. The boss was the culprit!

When we explained to Levar why there was urine in the bottles and who was responsible, he was very angry. "I should have been warned," he ranted. But how could we have guessed that it was he knocking off a bottle of our beer each day? Finally, after the two men had disinfected their mouths, and the piss and wind abated, the humour in the situation rose to the surface; and we all had a good laugh at their expense.

In general, I found the Afrikaners agreeable people except for their politics and their handling of racial issues. They thought the way they did because they were religious folks of the Dutch Reform persuasion. The preachers of this denomination were pastors of hate, saying, "If God created the Blacks equal to the Whites, he would have made them white too." Just as Orthodox Jews wanted all public life stopped on Saturdays in Israel, the Afrikaners urged a similar observance of their Sabbath on Sundays. Fortunately, in Johannesburg they were a minority, and this practice was only adhered to in the countryside where their numbers were greater.

Since my working hours were from 3:30 a.m. to about 1:00 p.m., five days a week, theoretically, I had time for a nap in the afternoon. But usually, I went to the Cranbrooke's dining room, had lunch, drank coffee in the lounge, and then was challenged to a game of chess. If I did reach my room, I generally found some book more interesting than sleep. At night I was also too busy to slumber, so I learned to get by with very little. When I became eligible for a vacation after one year at work, I decided to stay in Johannesburg and just catch up on my rest before going on holidays. I had left instructions with the bloke who took over for me in my absence to look after Charlie and Solomon. If he did that, I guaranteed him he would have no trouble. I also asked my black friends to not hassle their temporary boss while I was away.

Alas, neither bargain was kept. Three days into my vacation, my boss rang and asked me to come in because all the orders were in disarray once more. When I met alone with my two Zulu buddies, I remonstrated with them. Their reply was: "Sorry boss. We behaved the way we were treated. Besides, we are only 'stupid, black bastards'. It is the white fellow's job to supervise us." From then on, I went in every day of my vacation for a couple of hours to see that everything was okay.

My brother-in-law Matthew was good value. He had a habit of reading everything, everywhere. If he found an old magazine, he just had to devour it. One night we were all invited to a large dinner party at one of his cousin's homes. We noticed that Matthew disappeared when dinner was served. We were all puzzled about his whereabouts until the hostess suddenly proclaimed, "I know where we can find him. I put about twenty magazines in the bathroom: That's where he'll be!" And he was, just reading that outdated material. He was the only person

I knew who had a contraption on the steering wheel of his car so he could read while driving. It was a miracle he did not kill himself or someone else.

Matthew learned nearly everything from books. Later in Australia when he decided to go to Kosciusko with Rene skiing, she suggested that since he had never tried the sport before, he might benefit from some lessons. Matthew responded by purchasing a book – How To Ski. First, he went up the mountain; then, he came down – all in the correct order the book described; next, he was loaded into the ambulance and taken to the hospital in Cooma; and finally, his two broken ankles were bandaged.

When Matthew and Rene married and went on their honeymoon to Cyprus, because he was in the army, Matthew had to carry a service revolver – even on this romantic occasion. I remember his walking into our place and asking Samu how to put the safety catch on. Though in World War I the Austro/Hungarian army issued a different type of revolver from the British Army's in WWII, my father had no trouble finding the elusive part. He took all of the bullets out for good measure because he believed no one would be safe around his son-in-law if he were carrying a loaded gun.

Matthew worked as a chemical engineer in the military. He was a skilful one and proved himself when he was in charge of the gas depot in Beit Nabala, Palestine. But he knew nothing about the army and complained to Rene that one of the soldiers was doing everything wrong and causing a great deal of damage. He confided that he did not know how to get the man to do it his way. It was Rene who finally enlightened him about army rules. She explained: "You don't have to convince this soldier. He is a soldier. You are an officer. Just order him to do what you want. He has to obey!" Matthew tried, and was delighted when the young man fell into line.

He wanted to convert me to a fan of the two most popular South African sports – cricket and rugby union – so he took me to the Australian first cricket test game in Johannesburg. The field was soggy from the heavy rains, and wickets fell without warning as they lost their grip in the mud. Both teams were out twice for under one hundred, and the Australians won by two. I believed it had been a good game and said so. But two months later, I attended the fourth test. Australia batted the first day with batsmen Morris and Moroney. No wickets fell. Australia stood at plus two hundred for zero; and I reacted with boredom and slept most of the day. I resolved to avoid cricket from then on and would relent in the future only for the one-day matches in Sydney.

Rugby union was a more interesting story, and I remember the great test at Ellis Park in 1949. The stadium was packed with 75,000 people, like sardines in a tin. At all sporting events in Johannesburg, seating for Blacks consisted of only a small enclosure. At this particular rugby union game, there were 5000 Blacks in attendance, and as was usual at international events, they were barracking for the visitors. The Whites pelted them with bottles, and if they retaliated, police unleashed their batons on them. Sadly, racism infiltrated every aspect of life here.

The opponents at the test were the New Zealand "All Blacks". (New Zealand was not allowed to bring any of their Maori players, so the traditional HAKA was not done before the game.) During the first half, New Zealand scored four times to nil. The score was twelve to nothing, but their fullback, Scott, missed all four conversion attempts. In the second half, South Africa had five penalties – without exception, converted by Gefen – and though the new Zealanders scored four tries to none, South Africa won fifteen to twelve. (In those days a try was only three points.) Though Gefen was

a very ordinary player, he was selected for his kicking ability. He became a national hero.

My brother-in-law decided that in addition to developing an appreciation for cricket and rugby union, I could not lead a full life without learning to drive. In fact, the real reason I went for my license in Johannesburg was because my boss, Levor, lent me one of his Packards so I would not have to continue walking to work. However, since I did not have a legal document that allowed me to drive it, he would not let me use the vehicle on other occasions. It was clearly time to learn, and Matthew would teach me. The lesson did not go well. Matthew felt he was capable of reading when he taught someone else to drive, as well as when he drove himself. Therefore, during my first session, he had his head in a book while I proceeded to wrap his Hudson around a tree. It was at this juncture that I decided to continue my training at a reputable driving school. So I enrolled and completed the course. The final test for licensure was twofold. The first requirement was initiated at the police grounds where I was required to reverse between sticks and other small obstacles. I had been warned in advance that everybody failed this part of the test. Miraculously, I did not, but the second was another story. During the driving examination in the city, the examiner instructed, "Turn right here. Turn left here." Suddenly he shouted a last minute order. "Turn right!" I did just that; and he did not miss a beat before he shouted through an upper lip that curled in an evil grin, "You fail! You turned the wrong way down a one-way street. Too bad. Come back in two months."

When I related this story to one of my water polo teammates, he told me that I had been an idiot. He could get me a license in one day. He took me to Krugersdorf, which was about the same distance from Johannesburg as Parramatta is from Sydney. We went to the police station, where we announced that I wanted

a driver's license. The policeman told my friend to remain there while I took the car around the block alone. If I could do that in ten minutes without incident to the car or to myself, he would give me the document I wanted. And this was exactly what I did. I was a legal driver now.

Our material life was better in Johannesburg than it had been during the past few years in Tel-Aviv and Budapest. We lived comfortably in the Cranbrooke, and we earned good wages. Nevertheless, we did not like South African politics or the government run by the neo-Nazi religious ministers of the Dutch Reform Church. Samu and I often talked about moving to Australia or Canada. We had applied for immigration permits to Australia, and an opera friend from Budapest – who migrated to Sydney- arranged the necessary accommodation guarantee. Though religious preference was not requested on the application, we were asked to state whether or not we were Jewish.

This was only four years after World War II, and such questions were uncomfortable for us. They reminded us of the Evian Conference of 1938 when the millions of Jews could have been saved if there had been countries willing to admit them. But Australia was just like the others when she stated: "We do not want to upset the Christian balance of the country."

While we were waiting for the permits and debating whether Australia was the best place to go, we were delighted to hear that Rene and Matthew were planning to move there themselves. This was the deciding factor for us. We would all go and live in the same new country, and we would leave now, in 1950.

Unfortunately, this togetherness would not last long. I spoke with Rene nearly everyday, and by then, it was apparent that her marriage was failing. Matthew was okay, but there could not have been two people more different from one another than they were.

Rene always dressed impeccably no matter where she was going. I did not care much about clothes, but compared to Matthew, even I was overdressed. Matthew had experienced a difficult childhood after both of his parents were killed in a car accident when he was very young. Though they had many relatives who might have cared for them, both Matthew and his brother were sent to boarding schools. Therefore, he had never really experienced family life. One night he was reduced to alternating hilarity and disgust when he witnessed an Englishman of about thirty years kissing both his father and mother goodnight at our hotel. He had seen me kiss my parents everyday, but I guess in my case, he attributed it to a continental aberration. But for an Englishman to show such affection, well, it was terrible. (It is my opinion that this attitude is common among children who go to boarding schools.)

Rene and Matthew were still living together when they left for Sydney a couple of months before the rest of us. We looked into booking a boat that could carry us to our new destination. There were two options. The first was an English luxury liner, the "Dominion Monarch", on which a ticket cost 550 pounds per person (1,650 for the three of us). This was an enormous amount of money in those days. The second possibility was the one we chose. It was an English cargo boat, the "Wairangi", with its twenty-five, four berth cabins and bathrooms. The cost was 100 pounds for each of us. After this expense, Samu and Germaine invested the rest of our savings in an opulent diamond ring that would be sold later and the proceeds used to start a business in Sydney.

In April of I950, we went by train to Cape Town, where we spent a couple of pleasant days at Seapoint. Then it was time to board the Wairangi. My mother and three English women got on quite well in one cabin. Samu and I shared space with two young South Africans in another. My father's snoring kept one of them awake, and he complained. But this problem worked itself out. One night I awoke near midnight to hear Samu swearing in Hungarian. I am not sure if the ranting frightened the young man or if his friend told him off, but from then on, all four of us became very friendly.

From Cape Town to Fremantle, the seas were tumultuous for ten days. My mother and I were fine as usual, but under these choppy conditions, Samu was not.

Since we were considered a cargo vessel, we did not have the priority status reserved for passenger boats at the wharves. Fremantle only could offer berths for four ships in those days, so we had to wait our turn. In the meantime, the wharfies went on strike, and we, as well as another dozen boats, waited several miles offshore until the strike ended. Fortunately, there were some agreeable young English people aboard, we all tried our hardest to make the best of our circumstances.

I spent my twenty-second birthday, May 19, 1950, bobbing around at sea off Fremantle. But finally we could dock – the strike temporarily over. We entered Fremantle, took a bus to Perth, and enjoyed the sights there. Today Perth is my second favourite city in Australia.

During our stops in the various Australian ports, I saw this country's quarantine system at work. Some of the English passengers, especially those with children, tried to take fruit ashore from the "Wairangi's" dining room so they would not have to pay for food on land. The stewards also made ham sandwiches for them. As the migrants descended the gangplank, the waiting quarantine inspectors confiscated all food and fruit. The women protested, to no avail, that the fruit was distinctly labeled "Australian". The apples read "Product of Tasmania". The problem was that the vessel itself was not Australian, and any fruit on it was therefore subject to seizure.

Our next uneventful stop was Adelaide; and we continued from there to Melbourne. At the dock the next morning, there was no off-loading of cargo since the wharfies were out again for an unspecified period of time. We did not mind those first few days when we slept aboard the Wairangi; but finally we were informed there were dozens of ships ahead of us. And even if the strike ended tomorrow, it would take weeks before our vessel could continue to Sydney. The shipping company offered to pay for train fares, so we took advantage of this proposal and went by rail to Albury on the New South Wales/Victoria border. In those days, every Australian State had a different railway track gauge, and for this reason, no train could cross from one state into another. Therefore, we changed trains at the border of N.S.W.

Some of the British passengers who did not accept the offer of rail passage made good money working in an airplane factory across the road from the wharves while they waited for the Wairangi to be offloaded. Most of the migrants laboured two eight-hour shifts, seven days a week, and ate and slept on the ship. Therefore, they did not spend a penny and were able to save the equivalent of three or four weeks' wages for every seven days they worked.

My arrival in Sydney ended an era in my life. I stopped being the "wandering Jew", travelling into the unknown. From 1950 on, I have had a home, and in the ensuing forty-eight years since, have journeyed to many places, but the travel has been different, because I now have a place – a country – to come back to.

T W O

SHELTER IN THE LIGHT

G'DAY, MATE

My life from age twenty-two has changed tremendously. Our problems during the pre-Australia days were quite different from those since. There was, however, one obvious carryover – a lack of funds. When we finally arrived in Sydney in June of 1950, my father, Samu, had fifty pounds in his pocket. I had ten.

My sister, Rene, and my brother-in-law, Matthew Lipworth, were waiting for us at the railway station. My mother, father, and I found our first accommodation at Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill in a large mansion overlooking Victoria Park. An eccentric woman owned the spacious house and lived alone in it. She rented two bedrooms and a bathroom to us, and we shared the kitchen, dining room and lounge with her. She had a player piano that, when set automatically, could perform by itself for hours. While the instrument played itself effortlessly, she pretended it was she who coaxed the tunes from it as she waved her fingers over the black and white keys. I do not know what was more irritating – her phony musicianship or her phony social standards. She lectured us ad nauseum about the "superiority" of the people who lived in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

I took a job as a dispatch clerk in a cardboard factory in Botany immediately after my arrival. This position would be the only one in my life from which I was sacked. Even though I was told after two days that I was doing a good job, I was fired after four because I committed a "cardinal sin" in the 1950s Australia. During lunch, I telephoned Samu and spoke in a foreign language – our native Hungarian. Assimilation here might prove difficult

Australia in the 1950s was a nation that lacked sophistication in its food industries. Therefore, a wide berth of development and creativity seemed available to the entrepreneur. People's eating habits were extremely simple, to put it mildly. No matter

how much money someone had, it was not possible to order a decent meal in a restaurant. Prince's in Martin Place, a number of Chinese restaurants, and the Cahils' and Sargents' chains were available. That was about it. During our last life (the one before Australia), selecting a restaurant had been easy. We just walked into one. If it were clean and full of locals, one could not go wrong. But when we followed the same agenda on Pitt Street, the results were disastrous. We perceived what appeared to be a pleasant spot opposite what is today's Hilton Hotel, walked in, and studied the menu. Our choices, it seemed, boiled down to meat pies or sausage rolls with tomato sauce, ice cream for dessert, and a cup of tea. Welcome to Sargents' woeful diner.

In Europe, chicken, duck, and calf livers are all delicacies; but in the old Australia, though Aussies ate "lamb fries" (lambs' livers), they did not touch those of other animals. Therefore one could get duck and chicken livers for sixpence a bag; and calves' liver was similarly cheap. The migrants bought all those that the Australians would not eat and enjoyed them immensely.

The old Australians were also quite provincial in their drinking habits. They called wine "plonk", and few drank it at all. (How different things are today when wine-making is one of Australia's greatest and most-sophisticated industries.) The Aussies, however, did enjoy beer, but were severely restricted as to when they could drink it in public. There was a 6:00 p.m. closing law in all pubs, so the average person finished work at 5:00, rushed to the nearest bar, and downed as many beers as possible before closing time (the "six o'clock swill"). After 6:00, the brew was sold illegally on side streets at double the daytime price.

Perhaps a small story can best express how we migrants felt about the Australian's lack of culinary good taste in the '50s. Following a small fender-bender involving two cars – one driven by an old Australian and the second by a migrant – the Aussie

driver was abusive to the other one, calling the migrant a string of ugly names. I could see the emigre was struggling to find a rude, fitting reply. Suddenly his eyes lit up and out came the sharp retort: "You bloody Australian sandwich eater."

The weekend I was sacked from my job for speaking Hungarian, Ernst Handler contacted me. He was the man I had worked for seven years earlier in Tel Aviv, when I was fourteen. In the meantime, he migrated to Australia with his partners, the Stiel brothers, and they started a small-goods factory "Meapro", which still exists today and is run by the Stiel brothers' sons. After trading stories about our lives between 1943 and 1950, Ernst asked me if I wanted to work for Meapro. Remembering the gruelling hours in Tel Aviv's Parmeat, I was not keen on the idea of another job like that one, so I rejected the offer. He then asked if I had any other ideas because his relative from Slovakia was interested in getting involved in a business.

All over New South Wales were thousands of assisted migrants who craved the European foods of their homelands. Why not open a trucking firm where vehicles full of continental food products and various other lines would visit migrant hostels and satisfy this market? I knew of one enterprising foreigner already who was making good money simply by selling lard to the Europeans who could not get used to eating food cooked in drippings.

We agreed to set up a partnership between Handler's relative (a man about fifty) and myself. Handler provided an air-conditioned, two-ton van; and I got a hawker's license from the police. Since my partner could not drive, I had to. I remembered all too well the difficulties I had experienced in obtaining a permit to drive in Johannesburg and was not looking forward to a similar ordeal again. I had one day to get a NSW driver's license and I would have to make bureaucracy work to my advantage. I climbed into the car my brother-in-law lent me.

(It was the same one I wrecked in South Africa.) And I drove ever so slowly and carefully to the Domain, where there was a station for issuing drivers licenses.

The policeman assigned to conduct my test asked: "Where do you come from?" When I told him that I had just arrived from South Africa, he said he was a New Zealander and he wished he could have been in Johannesburg to see the New Zealand -v- South African rugby union test match. When I told him I was at that game, he shouted, "Stop the car immediately. Pull over to the curb. We have to talk about rugby!" After about forty-five minutes, I inquired about my driving test. My examiner asked: "You can drive can't you?" I nodded, and the sports enthusiast issued me the driver's license on the spot.

Having a car certainly made life easier from then on. However, I have always had a physical problem that makes driving long distances difficult. Since the affliction has been present from my twenties up to this very day, I refuse to call it a symptom of "old age" as my sons do. I consider myself a good city driver, but long trips make me sleepy. My parents loved the Blue Mountains, where we often used to go in the morning and drive back again in the afternoon. Though the total distance was under 200 km., on the return trip, I always had to stop for a ten-minute nap. Forty years later, I still have the same problem.

The following day at 3:00 a.m., we filled the van with lard, hams speck, cabanossi, various types of salamis, and many other meat products. All the paper work was in order, and off we went. At our first stop, a hostel near Wallacia, we sold considerably more than we had planned to, and by 2:00 p.m., we were back in Sydney to reload for the next run. That night, exhausted, we booked into a country pub from which we would continue the next morning.

Business was steady, but I did not like my partner. All he talked about was how much money he would make with me. In the pubs at night, he pursued women interminably, but like a dog chasing its tail, never caught them. The results of his efforts were embarrassing for me, but sometimes hilarious. He did not speak English at all and thus did all his courting through sign language. The intended victims either were shocked and dismayed by his obvious, obscene gestures, or they convulsed in gales of laughter at the pitiful man's clumsy efforts.

But what I disliked about this job even more than my partner, were my customers. In those hostels, the migrants, referred to as "displaced persons", were largely Ukrainian, Croatian, Polish, Baltic and Hungarian Nazis, who were brought to Australia by the thousands at the behest of the Menzies' Government. (The post war movement began in earnest in 1947 and escalated continually thereafter.) This upset me very much. It had been only five years since the Second World War and the Holocaust. As far as the Australian Government was concerned, the emigrants were anti-Communist – hence were welcomed. I was shocked to see how freely the new residents preached their Nazi views in the Domain under the guise of free speech. They were not only tolerated, but as long as they included anti-Communist messages in their diatribes, they were encouraged to form their clubs and to propagate their Nazi ideals. (My political views by this time were Social-Democratic, but even if they were not; I could never vote Liberal. And in my forty-eight years in Australia, I have not done so.)

The Menzies' Government had only come to power a few months before our arrival. At that time, the Korean War was in full swing with General MacArthur threatening to invade China (until the most underestimated of American presidents, Truman, sacked him). Though an avid Royalist (His famous saying was:

"I adore the ground on which the Queen walks"), long after the sun had set on the British Empire, Menzies' politics did not follow the more moderate policies of the British. Instead, he whipped up an anti-Communist hysteria equal to McCarthyism in America and successfully retained his popularity by introducing the "Anti-Communist Party Dissolution Bill". It was rejected by the Australian High Court first and then wisely refused through a referendum of the Australian voters. You cannot kill a political idea by banning it. There were actually very few Communists in Australia. If Menzies had succeeded in making Communism illegal, I am convinced young people would have joined the Party by the thousands because bonding with "verboten" organisations appeals to youthful senses of adventure.

The Labour Party was lead by Doc. Evatt, a brilliant man and a Secretary of the United Nations. During the famous Petrov Affair, a Russian diplomat defected and was used by Menzies as good election propaganda. Evatt stood up in parliament and said, "I sent a telegram to the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, asking him if Petrov were a Soviet spy, and he assured me that he was not". But unfortunately for himself and Australia, Doc. Evatt developed an illness (cerebral sclerosis) at a relatively early age, and during his last years in parliament as the leader of the Labour Party, made a mess of everything.

Politically, the 50s were turbulent years. The Korean War was drawing toward the 1953 Armistice, and the Vietnamese War with France started. 1952 had seen the British and Australian atomic tests on Australian soil. In the same year, the Revolution blazed in Egypt, and Nasser came to power. In Africa, the first independent colony, Ghana (Gold Coast), elected its Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah. This was great news for me! (Unfortunately, it all turned disappointing later on.) Iran's religious fanatics seized the British oil fields, but eventually the Shah got them back with the help of the British.

Because of my dislike for both my customers and my partner, I told Handler that I was giving up the business. Since I was new to Australia, instead of travelling around the countryside to migrant hostels and in pubs, I really preferred to be in Sydney, meeting people.

At the time, all of Sydney's retail stores were advertising for staff. I felt this sort of employment would be good for me since it would bring me in contact with many people, and the stores were centrally located in the city itself. So I began looking for a position, but soon discovered the racism that existed then. When I applied for a job at various retail outlets, these are the responses I heard. Anthony Horden: "We only employ Protestants." Mark Foys: "We only employ Catholics." Farmers: "Show us your birth certificate. We only want people who were born here or in England."

I noticed a similar pattern in employment policies everywhere I went until I tried at David Jones. David Jones stated: "We employ anyone of any religion or place of birth." Clearly, morality has won out since Mark Foys, Anthony Horden, and Farmers are all out of business now, but David Jones still exists.

Based on my past experience working with food, I got a position immediately at David Jones. I was assigned to the Food Hall at the Market Street store. Before starting, I was asked, "Are you Jewish?"

I answered them, "Yes, I am."

"Okay, would you mind going to the kosher counter?" they inquired politely.

Though naturally the kosher counter served many Jewish customers, there were at least an equal number of non-Jewish expatriates who sought European-type foods there. In addition, a number of adventurous Australians were beginning to buy continental foods too. David Jones turned out to be a very

beneficial job where I met people with many helpful connections. Through them, I earned extra money, found additional work, and ultimately established a business.

In the meantime, we moved… and moved, away from our tiresome, eccentric landlady and into a series of holiday flats. The first one we rented was on Springfield Ave., Kings Cross. It was within walking distance of the city and very near my sister and her husband's apartment on Ithaca Rd., Elizabeth Bay. Their immediate neighbour was Rod Taylor, the actor, who later went to Hollywood and did very well in thriller movies. He was a friendly chap, but nearly every week, at least once, he asked for a loan of a "fiver" (five pounds), which he always repaid in two or three days. When he found out that my brother-in-law was a chemical engineer, he asked him if he could help him kill the cockroaches that infested his flat.

We had an animal control problem in our place as well. The dwelling was overrun with enormous rats; so we quickly left that accommodation to its fur inhabitants and moved into a place next to the Astra Hotel at Campbell Parade, Bondi Beach. We remained there for the next couple of years. This prolonged sojourn was difficult to achieve because the maximum time one could rent a holiday flat was twelve weeks. The reason for this time limit was that after twelve, the renter could apply to the Fair Rent Court for a payment reduction. The latter was usually granted and the price change, drastic. Naturally, the landlord stood to lose an enormous amount of money under this arrangement, so he avoided the problem by enforcing the twelve week time limit. The caretaker of the holiday flats building was a very nice Welshman, Mr. Evan, who was willing to work with us. We arranged that my father would rent the flat for twelve weeks, then my mother, and then myself After the thirty-six week programme, we could begin again in the same order. So for awhile, we were comfortably settled and only had to make the money to pay for the place.

While they were settling into our new home, my mother and sister had an offer for work from a company that "specialised in charity". The "deal" was that Germaine and Rene were to collect money for various local and international charities, and they could keep fifty percent of all the contributions they took in. I found this offer morally unconscionable when I realised that by the time the company paid its expenses, and the paid solicitors took their fifty percent, very little was left for the charities themselves. (Since then, I don't trust any collections made on "behalf of" charities.)

My sister took the high ground and found a job as a fashion advisor in a big store, Murdoch's, on Park Street. (The store does not exist anymore.) It advertised everyday in the newspaper: Women who want to dress according to the latest world fashions, come to Murdoch's and consult Madame Rene. In the meantime, my brother-in-law fell victim to an Australian confidence man who urged him into buying a button factory, promising enormous profits. It was a shame Matthew did not stick to what he knew best – chemical engineering. When Rene and my parents (all of whom knew the fashion industry) saw what kind of merchandise this factory put out, they warned him that those buttons were out of style. Nobody would buy them.

Later, after the business went broke and Matthew had lost all of his money, I would sign a bank guarantee for him at New South Wales Bank, Botany, where I continued to pay his debt – even though by then, he and Rene were divorced. I believe my brother-in-law was typical of so many university-trained people. They decide that if "uneducated" people can do well in business, then they, with their college degrees, should do better. I do not know a single professional man who has invested his money in a business outside his profession and has not lost it.

Eventually, my parents found a shop in Her Majesty's Arcade (Sydney Tower today) where they opened a company with my sister- a fashion dress boutique called "Mme. Rene". They did quite well. An English tailor made dresses; a Miss Tausz, a lady from Slovakia, and her sister did alterations (the sister died in Montefiore Homes about 1994, and Miss Tausz is still in the Montefiore); and customers came. Among them were Heather Menzies, the daughter of the Prime Minister, and Mrs. Coombes, the wife of "Nugget" Coombes (head of the Reserve Bank). Her Majesty's Arcade was just opposite David Jones, so my parents could see me whenever they wished, and I often joined them on my lunch breaks.

After working at David Jones a few days, I realised that the store was losing money to the staff who served their relatives there quite generously. My parents went to the food court regularly because it was handy, and I had made a point of introducing them to the supervisors and the head of the food department. One day, a peculiar thing happened. The sponsor of the food hall (a sort of head, shop assistant), Eric, was an ignorant, oily bastard who terrorised all of the foreign shop assistants. The latter were referred to as "New Australians". One day he picked on me, stating that I "bundied" first and put on my white coat after. By doing this, I cheated the company of two to three minutes of my work every lunchtime.

I turned around and warned him in my crankiest demeanour: "Watch out. I'm not blind. I know what's going on and what you're doing. If you don't leave me alone, I'll get the store detective onto you, and you will be in big trouble." Eric suddenly began stuttering and told me he did not mean to upset me. And from that day on, whenever he picked on someone, all I had to say was, "Eric lay off!"

He always retreated with: "Yes Fred. Whatever you say." The odd thing was that, going into the argument, I had absolutely

no idea if Eric was really doing anything wrong at all – and if he was, what that infraction might be. I simply had no clue about what it was I was threatening to reveal. My curiosity still exists today, forty-eight years later.

About two years after this incident, someone at the store apparently discovered something incriminating about Eric, who was escorted to the manager by the store detective – never to return. A couple of years later, I read in one of the newspapers that he was in court being prosecuted for stealing from one of the chain stores where he worked. An agreeable Englishman from Lancaster, Vic Otto, replaced Eric in David Jones. Vic's only problem was that very few people (migrants or Australians) understood his broad dialect. The boss, Harry Greaves, always told him, "Send me one of the reffos. They're easier to understand than you are." (While "New Australian" was the official name given to migrants born in Europe, the most popular unofficial name for one of us was "reffo".)

I worked with some interesting people in the food hall. Harry Greaves, the buyer, was a real gentleman, and although he was my boss, we became friends. Some years later when I started my import business, he was a very great help. George Finney, who ultimately replaced Harry as Buyer when Harry was promoted to Food Director, was also beneficial. Early on, in 1950, he worked with me on the counter. Since he was a couple of years younger than I was, he was a junior employee, while I was a senior. An employee began earning senior wages when he became twenty-three years old. George's wife, Shirley, also worked at David Jones in the grocery department. (Now retired in their mid-sixties, George and Shirley are a very rare couple. They had two sons and a daughter, and though they have suffered many medical and economic problems, after all of this time, they are a happy and harmonious family.)

Many Hungarian migrants were employed in the Food Hall too. These included the musician, Tommi Tycho, whose job was pushing a trolley carrying fresh goods to the counters to replace sold stock. I covered for him many times when he went for auditions at the radio stations. Robi Sardi, with whom I am still in touch, worked at my counter. His problem was language. His English was poor; so he spoke very little. Unfortunately, he understood even less. He still recounts tales to his friends about how I covered for him at work. I could tell dozens of stories myself, but will offer just a few. Robi got away with his undeveloped language skills for months. But whenever the boss, Harry Greaves, spoke to him, he just replied, "Yes sir," or "No sir." This worked surprisingly well until one day Robi came to me complaining, "I was sacked".

I went to see the boss and inquired, "Harry, why did you sack Sardi?"

He replied, "I can overlook a lot of things, but I cannot overlook it when someone refuses to do something he is told to do."

The conversation went something like this:

Harry G: "Mr. Sardi, come here, please."
Robi S: "Yes, sir."
Harry G: "Please pack some eggs."
Robi S: "No, sir."
Harry G: "You mean you refuse to pack the eggs?"
Robi S: "Yes, sir."

I explained to Harry that this was not impudence. Robi simply could not understand him. So Harry G said if Robi packed the eggs, he could stay; and Robi did so immediately.

On another occasion, I was in the storeroom. Robi was working alone at our work station. Suddenly, he rushed into the storeroom, "Please help me on the counter! I've got an absolute idiot of a customer!" I went to his aide and served the client,

who was a very polite, well-spoken Australian. When he left, I asked Robi, "What was wrong with him?"

Robi replied, "What do you mean was wrong with him? The idiot only spoke English."

One day when I returned from lunch, I heard a commotion at our workstation as two supervisors tried to pacify a screaming lady. It seems she had come to our counter and enquired of Robi, "What kind of olives do you have?"

Robi's reply was: "Madame, we have green and black olives at this counter, but you can get stuffed on that one."

Quite by coincidence, on the same day, there was a similar brawl between a customer and a shop assistant in our department. This employee was completely opposite from Robi in that he had no language problems, but was an idiot. An English Lord, he had been written about in the newspapers for having been arrested several times, – once for drunkenness and another time on a vagrancy charge for sleeping in Hyde Park. Sir Charles Jones (chairman of David Jones) got him out of jail and gave him a job in the food hall. He was a real bludger, asking everyone for loans that he never repaid. He was absolutely useless on the counter and sometimes worse than that.

The argument started when a woman tried to buy a frozen chicken. She asked if the chicken was all right since it appeared to be a non-chicken colour – blue. His Lordship replied, "Of course it's all right. You would be blue, too, if I stuck you in the freezer for a few weeks."

Eventually, the society snobs found out that there was a "real Lord" available to use as a catalyst for elevating their parties to the next most important level; so the Lord, ripe for the picking, left David Jones for this more lucrative venue. I met him some months later on Pitt Street, where he asked me immediately if I could lend him some money. He did not appear offended when I told him: "Get stuffed. You still owe me two pounds."

There was a man working in the store as a cleaning person who later became a well-known painter. All cleaners had strict instructions that no one, no matter who, was allowed through the front doors before the opening time – 9:05 a.m. One morning, Smith was washing the front door when Lady Lloyd Jones walked into the building. He stopped her, and she asked, "Don't you know who I am?"

He replied, "I don't care who you are. You can't come in until 9:05." She went to the office and had Smith sacked, but her husband, Sir Lloyd Jones, immediately rehired him, praising his employee for sticking to the rules.

Among the many stories about the food hall, I have a favourite one about myself An extremely demanding Lady Barraclough, a friend of the Jones family, shopped at the store regularly. She routinely terrorised the Food Hall staff by running to Sir Charles Lloyd Jones' office every week to complain about the various assistants.

One Friday at lunchtime, I was alone on the counter with about twenty customers waiting in line. She was the twenty-first.

From the rear of the line, she brayed, "Young man, are you serving?"

I was flat out waiting on people who were well in front of her. I replied somewhat sarcastically, "No Madame, as you can see, I have nothing to do. I am playing the piano to pass the time away."

After a few minutes that were punctuated by her heavy breathing, she took out a two-shilling piece and started to hit the glass counter with it. "I want service!" she bellowed.

By this time, I was really annoyed, so I went into the back where we had an axe that we used to open wooden crates. I put the tool on the counter and told her, "If you want to break the glass counter, use this. It will do the job far more effectively than a two-shilling piece will." After this, she shut up and waited

her turn. When it came, I asked very rudely, "What do you want?" I could not have been more impolite as I filled her order, and I knew she would complain about me to uppermost management. But, that did not happen.

The following Friday, I was a bit early returning from my lunch, so I sat in the change room and read a newspaper. The supervisor rushed in. "Mr. Mayer, please come to the counter immediately. Lady Barraclough is throwing a tantrum. She refuses to be served until she can be waited upon by the tall, polite, European clerk of last week." And that is how I got stuck with Mrs. Barraclough every Friday from that day on.

The boss (Sir Charles) invited me to his office after all, but instead of disciplining me or firing me on the spot, he congratulated me on the "wonderful job I was doing, doubling the turnover on the kosher counter". He said he was impressed, too, that I acted as the official interpreter of six languages in the store and intervened often and cheerfully whenever and wherever I was needed. Finally, he showed me a letter from Lady Barraclough, stating that among all the "rude" shop assistants who worked for him, there was only one worth his salt – me, Fred Mayer. Sir Charles continued by saying that though David Jones strictly adhered to a policy of paying award wages only, because I was doing such a wonderful job, he would make an exception. From that moment, I would receive two shillings and six pence above the award wage paid to all the other shop assistants.

The holiday flats where my parents and I lived were a mere one hundred metres from the Bondi Baths, so I joined both the Bondi Swimming Club and the North Bondi Surf Club and started to play water polo again. Some of the friends I met in these clubs forty-seven years ago are still mates today, including Doug Laing, (Pud) John Reagan, and many others.

Because of the war and our various migrations, I had not had the opportunity that most young Australians did to play regular sports. Most of them started learning and practising at early ages, without long lapses in their training programs. But now was my chance! In the surf club, I tried all the sports I could get into: water polo, surf races on Sundays, basketball, etc. In I952 after a magazine featured Ray Hookham, a surfboard-riding cab driver from North Bondi Surf Club, George Caligeros got the Pix magazine to interview me. As a result, I was featured on the front of the issue, with a three or four-page article on the inside, describing Fred Mayer as the "First New Australian Lifesaver".

Water sports assisted me as well when the opportunity arose for a relationship with a female. It was over the counter at David Jones that I met Margaret, a beautiful girl She was sixteen, going on seventeen, and I was twenty-three. She came in shopping every day from the neighbouring bank, where she worked as a junior. I complimented her on her wonderful tan, and she said she went to the beach often. Assuming, as most Australians did in those days, that most New Australians could not swim, she offered to teach me. I promptly accepted.

(I want the reader to know that I am aware of this lie I was about to participate in at that juncture. Well, not really a lie, an omission. Of course. An omission. It was similar to the exchange with the two water polo players in Johannesburg. They had made an assumption – an incorrect one, I hasten to add – that all Hungarians were good water polo players. This is exactly the assumption Margaret made in reverse, but just as erroneously. She thought all migrants could not swim. I handled each case in exactly the same way as the other one. By not confessing the limitations of my skill on the one hand, and by not confessing the magnitude of my skill, on the other, I had received two genuinely fine invitations. You see, the sin here, if there really is a sin, is merely one of omission.)

The swimming lessons were over in short order-just as my stint in level one water polo had been. In fact, the first session was the last. Margaret and I went to Watsons Bay after work and then to the pictures, where I bumped into Jimmy Allen. Jimmy and I played basketball together, and we both were in the North Bondi Surf Club. When he immediately began talking about the Surf Club races, patrols, and so forth, Margaret found me out. So while this was the end of the swimming instructions, it was the beginning of a beautiful relationship that lasted for the next five years. (I would see her in London later during my 1956-1957 world trip.)

The most common complaint migrants had against Australians was that the latter did not mix with them. But this was not my experience. I had an Australian girl friend, and most of my friends were the Australians I met through the surf, water polo, and basketball clubs. Because my mother was a skilful cook, we entertained at home often. We had native and new Australians for dinner, and they reciprocated.

I personally think that the transformation of Australia into multi-national society this century occurred with miraculously little friction. The population increased from seven million to eighteen in less than fifty years. Much credit must be given to the original Australians for the successful double assimilation that took place so quickly. When millions of people with completely different habits, lifestyles, and histories arrived on the smallest of the continents, it was not only the emigres who had to fit in with Australians, but the old Australians had to accept this enormous change as well as they adjusted to the new populace.

A little incident taught me that the so-called "racism" of Australians was not serious. I was having a few beers with some surf club and water polo boys at the old Astra hotel

when one of those insignificant, routine car accidents occurred. One car simply ran into another. One of the drivers was an Aussie, the other, a migrant who did not speak English. The crowd in the pub started to abuse the migrant, shouting, "Bloody reffos shouldn't be given licenses. They can't drive worth a hill of beans." This haranguing continued until someone noticed that the Aussie's car wore a Victorian numberplate. The attitude of the crowd changed immediately. Because the Aussie came from Victoria and the reffo was a New South Wales Welshman, the abusive crowd was suddenly on the side of the poor, stunned migrant.

While my parents and I were we were settling into our new lives quite happily, that was not the case with Rene, who did not like Sydney. She and Matthew met Sir Richard Casey (later Lord Casey), the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Menzies' government. He was setting up technical help for the newly emerging Asian nations in a vehicle called the "Colombo Plan". Matthew was offered a job working within the Plan, and he and Rene left for Colombo in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). My sister had the life there she loved, mixing with diplomats of all countries and attending international parties. Rene also made friends with local leading government officials.

When she met Raj Isar, the Acting Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, her "shaky" marriage to Matthew ended. Raj's wife had left him and moved to England. Meanwhile, Rene and Raj left Colombo for New Delhi, where racism worked in reverse. Because he had married a foreign woman, Raj was not offered any more foreign job posts. Rene loved India and was happy to remain there. She involved herself in Indian politics and journalism and committed to writing political articles in leading newspapers. After working in New Delhi for a period of time, Raj was named Home Secretary for the State of Madras.

Rene loved Raj and he, her, so they weathered the changes in their lives very well; but their union was a tremendous sacrifice for both and cost them dearly. However, they were happy, and their love lasted throughout their marriage until Rene's untimely death from cancer in Paris.

My parents took over the shop, Mme. Rene, in Sydney. Germaine ran the fashion component and Samu, the business end. This was not an easy task for a man in his mid-to-late sixties who still had problems with the English language. But they both persevered.

After his divorce from Rene, Matthew went to America, married a Canadian, and they had a daughter. (Matthew died of a heart attack the very same day as Rene died in Paris.)

It was hard for us having Rene so far away, but she did visit. When Air India began its service to Australia, its maiden voyage, of course, was filled with prominent people who were given free trips. Rene was one of them. She stayed for a month, during which we delighted ourselves in both rich and mundane conversations and with verbal pictures of all the memories we could conjure from our childhood.

About this time, I started working at elections and became friends with Joe Fitzgerald, who had been a Labour member of the Federal Parliament first, and, later, became a senator. His campaign director was Syd Einfeld, who also would become a member of Parliament and then a Minister in the NSW State Government. (Syd died recently in his late eighties. His nephew, David Einfeld, remains a friend today.) The Labour Party was going through a crisis. The Victorians were turning to the right, and the Catholic Church was exploiting the situation by doing whatever it could to break up that party.

This later resulted in the Labour Party's total dissolution and in the formation of the Democratic Labour Party, run by the Santa Maria, that kept Labour out of power until 1973.

In my spare time, I played water polo for Bondi, joining enthusiastically in everything the North Bondi Surf Club offered, and making up for my war time wanderings when I had no chance for a life like this. I was really getting into basketball as well. The outstanding player on our team was a contradiction to the stereotypic basketballer. Billy MacGuigan was very short. In fact, he was the shortest player on the team. But boy could he score! He routinely made more baskets than the rest of the team put together.

Bondi Water Polo supported two teams in the first grade. One consisted of all the old players, some of whom played in the 1948 London Olympics. They included the two Doerner brothers, Leon Ferguson, Ericson, and others. The second one was the young team reinforced by Jack Ferguson (who was on the London squad); later, Peter Bennett from Victoria; plus the younger players like Doug Laing, Ray Smee, and Keith Whitehead. The latter three played at the 1950 Empire Games in New Zealand and in the Helsinki and Melbourne Olympics. And Keith Whitehead also participated in the Rome Olympics. Others on this team were Bill Jones, Gary Taylor and, later, Col. Smee and Brian Hutchins.

In those days, the lower grades competed in different pools from the first grade, but the eight firsts played in the same pool for the most part. There were seven players and no substitutions. Though I was not a member of either of the two Bondi first grade teams, I was available to be a reserve for both of them. Since there was always someone missing, I ended up competing in first grade every week – sometimes with both teams.

The other two squads that made up the final four were Balmain and The Spit. Roger Cornforth in goals, who was also a cricketer and rugby union player, played for the Spit. He was an academic who later went to London, where he died of cancer. The other Spit players were all old Hungarian M.T.K. (my father's club) players: (Momi) Vadas, Alex Koszegi, Tibi Arvai, (Cila) Vecsei, Ruthner, Zoli Szendroi and Oscar Csuvik (now Oscar Charles). Oscar was a member of the Hungarian silver medalist team in London and was by far the best player in Australia in the 1950s. Occasionally, Elmer Szatmary, an Olympic medalist swimmer and a European record holder for the 200 meters, played with them too. Of all those Hungarians, only Vadas, Arvai, Vecsei and Csuvik are alive today.

In 1950, the grand finale came down to Bondi (the young team) and The Spit. Bob Traynor, who generally was not liked by any of the players, but especially hated by Alex Koszegi, refereed the game. In the first half, Alex was penalised, so he got dressed and walked out. However, in spite of the Spits' playing with only six players against seven on the Bondi team, the game went into four overtimes, until Bondi won. Next season, Alex Koszegi joined the Bondi Club as a coach/player. Elmer Szatmary played an occasional game – but only when they battled the Spit so that he could play against his Hungarian friends.

As the 1952 Helsinki games approached, we were all flat out raising money for the water polo team. There was no government aide then like there is today. Doug Laing even organised a party on the old ferry, the "Radar", which was considered antiquated in 1952. Oddly, today, forty-six years later, the vessel is still leased out for harbour functions.

The Olympic team travelled by boat, thirty-two days each way, to Europe and back. Bondi had three players on the team: Doug Laing, Ray Smee, and Keith Whitehead. Balmain sent two:

Teddy Pearce and Tony Fennech – now deceased. (Tony was a Maltese goalkeeper who later sang occasional parts in opera productions.) Besides the five players from Sydney, there were four Victorians on the Olympic Team: Hastie, Foster, Peter Bennett (who joined Bondi after the Olympics for one season), and Dr. Orchard. The coach was Oscar Csuvik (Charles).

During the 1952 Games, there was no TV yet in Australia. We learned the results from radio and newspapers. The Australian water polo team was eliminated after being beaten by Austria and Yugoslavia. Hungary won the gold; Yugoslavia, the silver; and Italy, bronze. This was definitely Zatopek's (Czech) Olympics. After winning gold medals in the 5,000 and 10,000 – metre races, he ran the marathon, which he had never tried before. He prevailed in it as well and commented later, "The marathon is too long and very boring."

The Hungarians dominated the women's swimming with Szoke Kato, Szekely, and Novak capturing gold in their events. Szoke Kato was an unprecedented case. Three generations of Kato women – grandmother, mother and daughter – were champions of their respective generations. The first one was married to Homonnai, holder of gold for water polo in the Berlin Olympics. Though his wife was Jewish and he played in the M.T.K. (mainly Jewish members), he became a Colonel in the army, and during World War II, was a Nazi murderer. After the war, he escaped to Brazil.

The American, Scholes, won the 100-metre freestyle, and Australian, Davies, led in the breaststroke.

(One year, Robi and I took some of the 1952 Olympians to their reunion on my boat, and we were invited to stay for the evening. Bill Phillips, who was president of the F.I.N.A. at one stage, defined the differences in team economics very well. He started at the current Australian Water Polo Team. It consisted of twenty-three or four members, including thirteen players,

a coach, two assistant coaches, masseur, doctor, psychologist, manager, and others. Then he commented, "When we went to the 1948 London Olympics, there were just seven players plus one reserve, manager, and coach on the team!" (In actuality, those last three members were all one person – Bill Phillips himself.)

Before television was brought to Australia, we were dependent upon the radio for entertainment as well as news. I especially liked the radio competitions for opera singers. The main ones in 1950-1952 were the Mobil Quest and the Sun Aria contests. Both of these were won by a young soprano, Joan Sutherland, who also sang in the Fledgling Opera Company, which offered performances in the old Her Majesty's Theatre. Some of the presentations were poor, but there were some outstanding voices on stage besides Sutherland's. John Browning, the most under-rated Australian singer of all times, played a notable Don Giovanni, and Donald Smith, an excellent tenor, sang in London's Covent Garden and later at the Sydney Opera House. Most of the performances were in English, which was an abomination! I remember a particular performance of Cosi fan tutte with a migrant, Latvian soprano singing the love duet in English. "What a happiness" sounded exactly like, "Oh, what a penis:' The poor soprano could not figure out why the audience roared with laughter.

During this time, I also continued to read voraciously and was moved profoundly by Frank Hardy's classic Power Without Glory, a book about Australian Society and the Catholic Church's interference with it. Hardy was labelled a Communist and arrested.

I was making many new friends all the time now through sports and through my mother's cooking. It felt good to be safe and

living a normal life. World politics buzzed around us as 1953 turned into a politically unstable year. Stalin died, and Khrushchev took over. Though Stalin was a bloody dictator who killed millions of his own countrymen and falsified all the original ideas of the 1917 Communist Revolution, I could never fully condemn him. After all, without him, Hitler would have won World War II, and my family and I would have died too.

In 1953, the Korean Armistice was signed, stopping the bloodshed, but defining another Cold War spot. The Vietnamese defeated the French in Dien Bien Phu in 1954, and instead of learning a valuable lesson, eventually the Americans took over the fight and the possession of the war effort for the ensuing twenty years. Australia was dragged into this futile bloodshed in the 1960-70s.

In Iran, the British ousted the religious group, "Predecessors of the Khomein". The Shah was installed then with the help of the English and the financial aid of the Americans. The world at large was stunned by the continuation of the Cold War and by McCarthyism in America. McCarthy was a demented Senator who originated the House Un-American Activities Committee. The frenzied "Red baiting" that resulted, paralysed the USA as thousands of decent, democratically-minded people were accused of being Communists. This paranoia weakened America when honest people were labelled, persecuted, and jailed. This was an unprecedented movement for the world's "greatest democracy". Charlie Chaplin and Paul Robeson, declared "dangerous" aliens, left America. Oppenheimer, the nuclear scientist, and many others who helped the USA to win the war also suffered persecution and degradation. One of McCarthy's chief aids was Nixon, who later became Vice-President and eventually, President.

Meanwhile, I continued working at David Jones, where I enjoyed the comradeship of my work mates in the milk bar (David

Jones' staff canteen) during morning tea. All my life I have loved milk and drink enormous quantities of it – generally a minimum of three or four bottles at a sitting. One day as my fellow workers and I were discussing the quantities of milk I swilled, they conned me into betting that I could consume twenty-four bottles at one sitting. Before I realised it, the amount I had taken up in bets amounted to the equivalent of thirty-five weeks' wages. Since I did not have this amount of money, I knew that, no matter what, I had no option but to quaff the twenty-four – even if it killed me.

The first twenty bottles went down fairly easily, but the last four were a terrible torture. Like the digestive system of a cow, I kept regurgitating the milk and swallowing it again. By the time I got to the twenty-fourth and last bottle, I was not only regurgitating and swallowing the milk, but also the cakes I ate with it and my breakfast before that. AH, BUT THE READER SHOULD NOTE: I NEVER ACTUALLY VOMITED AND HAVE NOT DONE SO SINCE 1948. CAME CLOSE. DIDN'T.

I won a handsome amount of money, but sensibly declined a repeat performance when offered the opportunity by my mates. I returned to my department, a bit green around the gills, and my boss, Harry, asked, "How long did it take to polish off all that milk?"

I replied, "The length of the usual morning break – thirty minutes."

Then he cautioned me: "Just for your information, the official morning tea lasts ten minutes."

This happened on a Wednesday, and every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. there was a 400-metre handicap-swimming race at the Bondi Baths for surf club and swimming club members. My handicap was six minutes; I always swam either a few seconds faster or a few seconds slower than that. But on this occasion,

because of the accumulated milk reserve in my guts, it took me over ten. Everyone present abused me for delaying the races, but they had no idea how awful I felt. This swim was an heroic deed – maybe the most courageous effort, if the slowest, of my sporting career. The next day I did not drink any milk, but two days later, I was back to my normal three or four bottles.

Besides milk, I also consumed enormous amounts of whipped cream. At one stage, much later, when I ate at the Cubura Steak House in Bondi Beach with my two sons three or four times a week, the owners routinely served me a soup bowl of whipped cream before dinner. This habit disgusted my sons, but undaunted by their protests, I kept it up.

[It upsets me today that fake milk products like skimmed milk, low fat milk, non-dairy substitutes, and vitamin-enriched milk are increasingly popular in both Australia and America. I cannot understand why people eat chemical food products when the natural ones are available. The worst of the lot are the substitutes for butter (margarine), for sugar (saccharine), and for coffee and tea (decaffeinated versions of both). In spite of the fact that America has removed much of the fat from its food products, this diet-ridden population gains weight. I have seen more obese people there than in any other country I have been; and I know as well that the life expectancy in the USA is much lower than it is in European countries. Unfortunately, Australia imitates America in this fake food fetish – just as it docs in everything else.]

An upset interrupted an otherwise smooth routine of work and play when the holiday flats caretaker decided to return to Wales, and the new management felt it was too risky to allow us to stay. So once again, we searched for accommodations. One of the real estate agents found a flat at No. 1 Thornton Street,

Darling Point. The small space was superbly located in the bottom portion of a two-story building. The rent was ten dollars (five pounds) a week. The only requisite to our moving in, according to the agent, was that the owner of the house, an eighty-eight-year-old man, personally interview and approve the tenants. There were plenty of would-be renters for the place, but the old boy knocked them all back.

I went to see him in the nursing home, where he was recovering from a broken leg. During our conversation, Mr. Wavrek referred constantly to those "bloody Australians". In fact, he used a considerable number of slurs to run them down. I asked him where he came from. His answer? "England." He had moved here when he was four, had been in Australia for eighty-four years, and hated all Australians. So, we Hungarians now had a permanent flat. (In retrospect, I would have done much better by getting a loan and buying a house, but my aversion to debts prevented my doing this.)

I was beginning to contemplate my long-term future seriously now, and I decided that when the time was ripe, I was going to start an import business. I needed money, connections overseas, and a thorough knowledge of Australia's very strict import restrictions and quotas. Australia felt like home by now, and I was sure I wanted to stay. But travel was still appealing, especially since I would no longer have to drag along all my earthly treasures in the many suitcases of our earlier journeys. I could simply pick-up, take a trip, and come back to the place I now called "home". Also, last but not least, I was aware of the psychological impact my father's and my closeness was having on my life and knew the time was right for a "letting go" on both sides. We would reconnect as two equal adults when the time was right. I had not travelled for five-and-a-half years, so when I had enough money saved and

had obtained an Australian passport; I paid for a first class ticket to London and back. My excitement was immense!

SETTING SAIL: 1956

On May 19, 1956 (my twenty-eighth birthday), I left Sydney on the "Arcadia". My first destination was New Delhi to visit Rene and Raj. The Arcadia scheduled the usual stops – Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Fremantle, Colombo, and Bombay. Before my departure, I bought a dinner suit because, in first class, they were worn in the evenings. On the ship, I sat at a table with a pleasant, elderly Victorian who was travelling with the leader of the Country Party, MacEwen, to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London. It turned out that Bob Menzies, the current Prime Minister, was a close friend of my new acquaintance as well. When my table partner introduced me to Sir Robert and Dame Pattv Menzies, Mrs. Menzies looked at me and said, "I think we've met before". We surely had, but I did not tell her where; and she was too polite to admit that she did not remember. Thankfully, I looked very different in a dinner suit from the way I did in the David Jones' white coat.

The famous Benno Moiseiwitsch, now a British resident, but born a Russian, also was aboard the ship with his secretary and his son, Boris, with whom I became very friendly. They had just finished their Australian tour.

There was a young, sixteen-year-old Bombay/Parsee girl as well, Maki, who was on her way home from a Melbourne boarding school. An aunt came from Bombay to act as her chaperone, but whenever she could get away from the aunt, we spent time getting to know one another. (She visited Sydney a couple of years later.)

I was enjoying this trip tremendously already and was looking forward to a new, free type of travel. I had no set itinerary for Europe, and the privilege of an Australian passport without visa requirements enabled this looseness of plan. Just before we arrived in Colombo, Ceylon, Boris Moisevich found me and told me I should not miss the con-job his father was performing on the captain of the Arcadia. Benno Moiseiwitsch, the father, did not like to fly, and whenever he could, he found a way around doing it. He was booked for a concert in Colombo that finished at 10:00 p.m. The boat was scheduled to sail at 8:00 p.m., so Benno was booked on a plane to rejoin the Arcadia in Bombay.

Benno just had to get out of this flight, so he walked up to Sir Robert Menzies and his wife and invited them to the concert as his guests. Then he approached the ship's Captain saying, "You will have to wait until after the concert to sail because you cannot leave the Prime Minister of Australia behind in Colombo." The Captain had to agree.

Though I was invited to go to the concert, I had to decline since Rene and Raj's friends were waiting for me on the dock when the Arcadia arrived at 6:00 a.m. They took me on a tour of Colombo. Following this, a Muslim couple invited me for lunch in their enormous mansion. Dr. and Mrs. Feses (Hungarians) and the DeMells were invited too. (The DeMells owned a travel agency and a large taxi company, and he was standing for Parliament as a candidate of the Trotsky Communist Party.)

When they asked what they should cook for me, I replied: "I will eat what you eat." But they disagreed, saying that the only European who could eat a "real" Ceylon curry was my sister, Rene. I took up the challenge, but was immediately sorry. By the end of the meal, my eyes, ears and nose were all crying.

When we returned to the wharf, motor launches were taking the passengers back to the Arcadia, moored about a mile from shore. We noticed all the ministers at the dock were still talking, and we came to the conclusion that they were waiting for Bob Menzies and Benno Moiseiwitsch to arrive from the concert. So we hung around, watching.

Suddenly, government cars arrived, and the ministers departed in a great flurry of activity. So did the Arcadia, without me. Our Colombo friends were able to secure a speedboat, which I used to pursue the Arcadia through the darkness. I finally caught it, and, breathless with excitement, and cheered on by the passengers, I boarded the moving vessel on a rope ladder.

After sixteen wonderful days, we arrived in Bombay, where I disembarked and was picked up at the wharf by more friends of Raj and Rene's. They followed the polite custom of India and insisted that I stay with them instead of in a hotel. An Air India hostess escorted me around Bombay the first day, and on the next, when she had a flight, Maki and her brother replaced her. I enjoyed Bombay for three or four days and was sorry when I had to leave by train for New Delhi.

I rode in a first class compartment, and on the way to the bathroom, a large, Indian gentleman, one of the ministers who knew Raj well, engaged me in conversation. He had his own cook and suite on the train and invited me for dinner. After a good sleep, the next day I arrived in New Deli and was met at the railway station by Rene and Raj.

New Delhi was hot – 48-50 degrees centigrade in the shade – but Rene loved the oppressive weather. She liked strolling in the sun while Raj and the Indians found refuge in air-conditioned rooms. I was only sorry that due to the heat wave, we did not go to Agra and the Taj Mahal. I was planning to remain in India a few weeks and then travel by sea to Europe, but I shortened my stay. As much as I enjoyed being with Raj and Rene, I valued my own health more. I fell victim to "Delhi belly", a very bad stomach, which instead of improving with time, got worse daily.

I booked the first airplane flight of my life on an Air India DC3 to Karachi. It was not a pleasant trip and, on top of that, the Pan American connection to London was delayed for two miserable days, which I spent sprinting to the loo. So after the eighteen days, I was relieved to reach London and the Cumberland Hotel at Marble Arch.

This was my first visit to London and to Margaret, who was employed here on a working holiday. We explored the city and the countryside, and I also went to a doctor about my "Delhi belly". He gave me some pills and instructed me not to eat anything until I felt well. (I eventually tired of waiting for improvement and cured myself later in Paris by going to bed and drinking a large quantity of French cognac. Next morning I awoke feeling more robust and had my first solid meal in about ten days. Since then I never travel without a bottle of cognac as I consider it a medical necessity.)

In London, I saw The Magic Flute with Joan Sutherland – not yet a coloratura – as Pamina in Covent Garden. I also took advantage of other operas, ballets, plays, and concerts at Festival Hall and at the very old and large Royal Albert Hall. During one of our trips out of London, an embarrassing but funny thing happened. We went to Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare's home. We managed to get two good seats to Othello, but in different rows. During the performance, I automatically placed my hand on the knee in the seat next to me. A hand grabbed mine, pulled it under a dress, and further up her anatomy. Since this was very much unlike my girlfriend, I was shocked until I suddenly remembered that she was sitting three rows away. Because I am a very shy person, during the intermission, I changed places with Margaret.

On a whim, I decided to go to the Edinburgh Festival, leaving London by the overnight sleeper. I met a young Portuguese engineer on the train who was staying in a beautiful house owned by an old Scottish lady. He persuaded me to come

and rent a room there too. The owner was charming and refused to charge a penny more than her normal rate, even during festival time when accommodations were at a premium. She also insisted that we both have high tea with her every afternoon and fed us so many little delicacies that we were saved the cost of a dinner every day. I already had a soft spot for the Scots, dating back to my sojourns in Africa, but the friendliness and hospitality of the old lady reinforced my love for them. In Edinburgh, I watched the Military Tattoo and went to the opera in the King Theatre, The Barber of Baghdad.

Once again I returned to London and after visiting a couple of theatres with Margaret and spending a day at the British Museum, I booked passage on the "Highland Monarch" to Portugal. This boat was the exact replica of the Highland Chieftain on which we travelled to Lisbon seventeen years earlier in 1939. (There were five Highland vessels – all exactly the same. One was sunk during the war.) This was a short, five-day trip with one stop in the Spanish town, Vigo, in the Gulf of Biscay.)

The food was nothing to rave about in tourist class, but the passengers were all young Britons, and we had a good time. Three young Scottish schoolteachers were especially enjoyable. I became friendly too with the First Engineer, a Scotsman in his fifties. I don't know why, but on all British ships, the engineers were nearly always Scots. We talked about various countries we had both visited, and about the war years. I ate nearly all my meals with him because, naturally, he dined on the best of first class fare.

A curious thing happened before our arrival in Vigo that demonstrates the unpredictability of seasickness. The Bay of Biscay can be tempestuous, but this time it was a medium sea. Many passengers were sick, but I have seen much worse conditions. My engineer friend suggested that I bring a guest to dinner since he had ordered for two, but was too sick with stomach pains, nausea, and vomiting to eat. The ship's doctor came to see

him and determined that if the man were a passenger and not a person who had spent forty years asea, he would diagnose the illness as "acute sea sickness". But given the engineer's long history, this was improbable. The doctor radioed ahead to the Vigo hospital, and an ambulance was waiting when the ship arrived. My friend was taken ashore on a stretcher and brought to hospital to be checked. We said our good- byes, and I gave him my uncle's and grandparents' phone numbers in Portugal and took note of the hospital's so that I could find out later how he was getting on.

My three Scottish friends and I went ashore for the day and had a good meal in one of the seafood restaurants. But when the girls went to the toilets, they all returned quickly, quite upset. The restaurant facilities were very clean. The only problem was that the paper dispensers only worked if a one-peseta coin was inserted. But since Spain suffered a shortage of coins, the government had issued little 2cm paper notes, worth one peseta, to take their place. We solved the problem by buying a full roll of toilet paper in the shop next door, and we shared it.

When I returned to the boat at night, to my surprise, my friend the engineer greeted me. Once he was taken off the ship, he recovered immediately. After forty years at sea, he had been seasick for the very first time in his life. Interestingly, between Vigo and Lisbon, the sea was really tumultuous, but he felt fine as we ate and drank our way there.

We arrived in Lisbon, and my grandparents and Uncle Tibi greeted me at the wharf. We had not seen each other for fourteen years, so this was a boisterous reunion, I spent several days meeting old friends and visiting familiar places. One morning, I went for a swim at the swimming pool of the Algees – Dafundo Club, where I met and formed close friendships with a number of members who came to be very special to me. (I visited Lisbon seven years ago with Simone and last year with Robi and saw them again.)

One was Fernando Madeira, who swam for Portugal in the Helsinki Olympics. If he had been an Australian, American, or from another country where swimming was supported, he would have been world-class. He was the only Portuguese athlete who could clock decent times. When the Spanish swimmers came to Lisbon, it was Madeira against all of Spain. He swam in every freestyle event from 50 to 1,500 metres, all breaststroke, backstroke, butterfly and medley events, winning a few and coming in second or third in others. After this, he played water polo for Portugal against Spain. I competed with him once. Spain loaned her top goalkeeper and best player, Guerra, to make it a good game, and we managed to win 4:3. (Quite by accident, I scored two goals.)

Another new friend, Armando Rodriguez, was a diver at the Helsinki Olympics and a member of the group of us who hung around together, going to beaches, shows, dinners, and other places day and night. None of us had much money, but we definitely had fun! Armando wrote newspaper articles during this time when Salazar was still in power; and after he played water polo for his country, Rodriguez conducted a fake newspaper interview – a set-up – addressing the following question: "Portugal, Hungary, and Australia all have small populations. Why is it that while Hungary and Australia excel in sports, Portugal is not successful at all?"

My prearranged reply was: "In Australia and Hungary, everybody can participate in sports. But in Portugal, the working classes are excluded because they cannot afford to."

I felt very sorry for my Uncle Tibi in Lisbon because his mother was a very bossy lady. (He only married after her death.) One night, my friends suggested that we ask Tibi to go out

with us. I did, and my grandmother interrupted the invitation with, "Not tonight. I am too tired." I told her she had not been asked, only Tibi.

Eventually, my uncle accompanied us and had a fine time, but we got home late – about 3:00 a.m. I was renting a room one floor above them, and Tibi told me to go ahead to bed, predicting, "Your grandmother will be very sick because I went out without her. There will be no sleep for me tonight."

I did as I was told and went down to their apartment at about 9:00 in the morning. Sure enough! In the centre of the big commotion was my grandmother, unconscious, as the doctor attempted successfully to revive her.

This dynamic forced me to think about myself. I did not want to suffer the same fate as my uncle. Though my situation was completely different, I felt a bit too bound to my parents.

Portugal was progressing toward the 1974 Revolution. I had enjoyed my stay there, but was ready to hit the road again. This time I took a long train ride through Spain to Biarritz on the Atlantic coast of France. Biarritz is a very fashionable resort with a casino and pounding surf. But because of my diminishing finances, I could not afford its luxury. However, a few kilometres from Biarritz was San Sebastian, also delightful and less expensive, where I could spend a couple of days before returning to catch the train to Paris.

I think Paris was stunningly uneventful. I remember going to the opera, where I saw one of the boring Richard Strauss compositions and then to the late show at the Lido. From Paris, I returned by train and ferry to London once again, but stayed just a few days this time. Unfortunately, my relationship with Margaret was cooling. This was my fault. The reason? Because of my parents, I had never spent enough time with her. (Old, but important business.)

My next stop was Newcastle on Tyne, the only city in England where I did not understand the language. The Geordies were beyond comprehension. I then travelled from Newcastle to Bergen, Norway on the ship, "Venus". The North Sea can be very rough, and it was. The Norwegian purser allocated cabins by nationality, so I was assigned a comfortable cabin with two young Australians, both of whom vomited all night. To escape, I spent the night in the ship's lounge. (The Scandinavian vessels are the only ones I have ever been on where the meals are not included in the fare. The reason is seasickness. Sometimes nearly all the passengers are ill.) For dinner there were only a very few of us, and at breakfast, even less. Luckily, the trip was only twenty-four hours – not enough time for all of us to fall victim to the waves.

I met a pleasant young girl on the boat, Berit, who was going home to Bergen from an English university. I enjoyed her, her family, and her town. It was a beautiful city where nearly everyone spoke English. I also met a young, English, South African fellow, John Payne, who was about my age. He was buying some Norwegian/Icelandic sweaters for himself because they were very handsome, thick, and cheap. The labels said "Made by Petersen & Dekke – Hop, Norway". I made some inquires as to where Hop was. It was very near Bergen, so I rang the factory and spoke with the sales manager, who sent a car to pick me up for a visit. Besides sweaters, the company also made "Ski Ragg" socks and "String vest" underwear. They offered me the agency for Australia a month later when I returned to Sydney. This agency was the foundation upon which I built F.Mayer Imports. I was amazed that the powers-that-be at Petersen & Dekke treated me with magnanimous hospitality even though I was completely honest when I explained that I was just starting my business.

After an enjoyable time in Bergen, I went by train to Oslo. (Before the "engineering miracle", the railway to Oslo, was built in the 1920s, people from Bergen had to take boats to get to their capital.) As usual, I found a decent room in a moderately priced hotel through the tourist office at the railway station. This was the first time I had arrived in a city where I was alone – no friends, no acquaintances from the train, and no relatives. So, I resorted to water polo. The training games were at 6:00 p.m., and I turned up, played with a group of strangers, and found new buddies immediately. One of them was Olaf, a two-metre tall fellow, who was the goalkeeper on the national team and a police lieutenant to boot. On that first night, we went out with his girlfriend and a pal of hers. We saw each other often thereafter. We spent wonderful days driving to the fjords, where the water was icy and the beauty, beyond description. On a couple of occasions, we travelled to a popular ski area, Holmen Kolbaken, where the ski jumps arc located high on the hills above Oslo. We also took in the Norway-v-Sweden soccer game, which Norway won 3:1 to the delight of the local crowd. Everywhere in the world, the keenest competition is always against the neighbouring country, and the same is true of Norway and Sweden. Typical of Scandinavia, the soccer stadium, with its 45,000 spectators, had three policemen on duty, two of whom were guarding the couple of seats in the midst of the other fans. Those were reserved for the King and the Crown Prince, who sat comfortably, without formality, with their fellow countrymen.

One night, as I walked on a street in the centre of Oslo, I could see a long line of people entering a church. Since the Scandinavians are not given to devoting much time to organised religion, I was curious and went to see what it was all about. I learned there was a concert there featuring Kirsten Flagstadt, soloist. She was the greatest Wagnerian soprano of the 1930s and 40s. Unfortunately for her, her husband had been

a Norwegian Nazi in Oslo in 1940 when the Germans invaded and occupied that country. Flagstadt, who was singing then in the Metropolitan Opera in New York, returned to Oslo to be with her husband. In 1945, he was arrested as a traitor and a war criminal and he died in jail before he could be executed. From then on, his wife was not allowed to sing in the opera because she had been married to a traitor. Regardless of her husband's crime, she had a divine voice, and the concert was superb.

The Norwegians hated and still hate the Germans vehemently. After World War I, when the German population was starving, it was the neutral Norwegians and the Dutch who took in thousands of hungry German children. They looked after them and clothed and fed them in their own homes. The children went to local schools where, naturally, they learned the languages of their hosts. When the situation improved in Germany, the children went back to their families.

When Hitler came to power, those same children, who were now of military age and spoke fluent Norwegian and Dutch, were conscripted into special army units. In 1940 when Norway and Holland were invaded, those soldiers were the first ones to be parachuted into Norway and Holland, where they later became the army of Occupation. They committed the customary Nazi atrocities for which the Norwegians and Dutch never forgave them.

I was sitting in the hotel one morning having breakfast when a man a little older than myself sat down at my table. He asked me if I spoke German, and we started a conversation. He did the same with the waitress, who replied in absolutely flawless German: " Es tut mir Furchtbar leid, aber ich spreche kein Deutsch." ("I am very sorry, but, unfortunately, I don't speak a word of German.") Later the same day, I noticed that all the friendly waitresses had become suddenly unfriendly to me.

When I asked the reason, they told me it was because I was speaking German with the fellow at my table. I explained to them that, not only was I not German, I was also a Jew who had even more reasons to dislike Germans than they did. The discord was undone.

Before World War II, nearly all Norwegians spoke fluent German, but after 1945, nearly all refused to speak it, preferring English instead. I loved Norwegians as I did all Scandinavians, but besides the people, I found the country itself very beautiful. In Oslo, I naturally visited the famous Vigeland Park that featured the statues of the Norwegian sculptor, Vigeland. He became famous in the 1930s for his life-like statues of humans of all ages and sizes. He proposed that if the Norwegian Government looked after him, he would give them all his works. The government accepted his offer, and Vigeland more than fulfilled his promise by producing works for the Oslo museum and by filling this park in the centre of the city. There was also a fifty-metre, outdoor swimming pool there that was well heated, though the temperature of the air around it was frigid. I had a good swim, all alone, as the tourists looked on.

I made a few plans for the future before leaving Oslo. Quite by accident, while walking around the park after my dip, I bumped into the English, South African friend I had met in Bergen. We arranged to meet in Vienna – without pinning ourselves down to a specific date. The plan was that we would collect our mail each day at Poste Restante at 10:00 a.m. Sooner or later, we would surely meet there. Also before leaving Oslo, I went to Stavanger, where I arranged talks with some of the fish, canned fish, and sardines producers who might prove useful in my future business.

My next country was Sweden and its capital, Stockholm, which I enjoyed partly because of the fine opera I heard there. I went nearly every night, sitting, of course, in cheap seats in the gallery. I became friendly with an usher who spoke

perfect English and German and always directed me to an unused good seat or to one of the empty boxes. The highlight of the opera season was Il Trovatore with the world famous Swedish tenor, Jussi Bjorling, singing the part of Manrico. His brother, a baritone in the Stockholm opera, sang Count Di Luna. Since I owned many of Bjorling's records, I was looking forward to this performance very much. The Royal box was full. The King, Queen, and the entire Royal Family were present. The Swedes are extremely punctual, but for some reason, the performance was delayed. My friend the usher came to see me. "Bjorling is in one of the boxes, totally drunk, and they cannot sober him up!" he exclaimed.

Finally an announcement was made that, due to the "indisposition" of Mr. Bjorling, the part of Manrico would be sung by the director of the opera house, Set Swanholm. Swanholm was a very fine tenor in the 1930s and earlv 40s, but by 1956, he had retired from singing. However, in spite of his age, sixty-six, Swanholm gave a magnificent performance – as did the rest of the cast.

In the Stockholm Opera House, the Royal box is not in the middle as it is in other traditional theatres. It is on the right side, straight above the stage. In the third act, during Manrico's "Di quella Pira", the public erupted into thunderous applause, demanding an encore of the aria. The crowd, now on its feet, included the whole Royal family. Swanholm drew his sword, stood right under the Royal box, and sang it again.

(I also saw some other fine performances, including an outstanding Aida, a concert in the courtyard of the Royal Palace, and several in the Droningholm Theatre of the Royal Palace.) I made friends in the opera house gallery with a mixture of young, European students who gave me a lesson in stretching my limited finances further. They instructed me not to spend money on breakfast, but to meet them instead in the centre of

the city at 11:30 a.m. They took me to an enormous dining room on the first floor of a building. There, we paid a modest fee for a smorgasbord that offered a huge variety of foods. Some of it was quite good, and some, average; but it was cheap. I asked, "How can they provide so much food for so little money?"

My friends replied, "This is the largest cooking school for chefs in Scandinavia. They make the food, and rather than waste it, sell it inexpensively."

One of the Italian girls, a university student, suggested that we visit Finland; so we booked tickets on the boat to Helsinki, and off we went. It was a warm, summer day when we left, with more boats peppering the harbour than I have ever seen – not even in Sydney. In Helsinki, I asked for accommodations at the tourist office and essentially was told that the city was "sold out". There was an exhibition in town, and every possible room was taken. The couple of addresses given me came up empty. I hated walking the streets with a suitcase as memories from the past flooded my mind.

Finally, I walked into a police station and stated that I was a tourist from Australia, but had no place to stay. One of the policemen suggested I bunk at his place, but a young man about my age, who was giving a statement to the police, intervened. He had been arrested and brought in for fighting with a drunk, German sailor and insisted that I come home with him. He drove us to the house where he lived with his mother, father, and brother. (They were Finns, but of the Swedish minority.) Since the brother was in the army, they said I could use his room with its en-suite bathroom for as long as I liked. When I offered to pay, I was assured I was insulting them. I was their guest. The young "brawler's" name was Rolf Wennstom, and we became good friends.

Of course, I played water polo at a swimming pool in Helsinki and found other chums I could introduce to Rolf. I was glad

I had come to Helsinki where I indulged in my love of saunas (there are more of them in Finland than there are bathrooms), play water polo, and hung around with my friends. We were a good crowd and went out every night. I only attended the opera once when I was invited to the dress rehearsal of Aida, a poorly staged event, but with the same foremost singers I had heard in Stockholm a week earlier.

It was autumn and the weather was mild. One night, however, I got a small taste of what Finnish conditions can be when they are harsh. Rolf's mother always placed a big glass of orange juice next to my bed so that I could drink it first thing in the morning. One chilly daybreak, I awakened with a heavy, eiderdown, feather comforter on top of me (put there during the night). The liquid nearby had turned to ice in the bracing night air, cracking its fragile tumbler.

When I was a young boy going to school in Hungary, I was taught that the Finns are brothers of Hungarians – similar roots, similar schools, and similar languages. The Finnish language is harsh and hard as ours is. And though from a few metres away the two sound similar, I could not understand a single word the Finns said in Finnish.

Finland was part of Imperial Russia until it gained its freedom. During the Communist Revolution, led by General Mannerheim, the Finns fought the Communists. In 1939 when the Finnish border rested very near Leningrad, the Russians demanded the Isthmus of Karelia and the Finnish territory close by. When the Finns refused to cede this area, to the surprise of the world, Russia invaded Finland. This small nation of three million people successfully resisted the might of 200 million Soviets for many months.

Once again, the Tories nearly handed victory to the Germans. Hore Belisha and Chamberlain wanted to declare war on the Soviet Union, and several British troops were dispatched. Fortunately, in the meantime, Russia won the territory they demanded from Finland, and those troops were diverted to Norway to fight the invading Germans. In March 1940, the Russians occupied the territories of Karelia and Lake Ladoga. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union to recover its lost territories in June 1941, Finland joined Germany. This proved how lucky it had been that the Russians seized Karelia and Lake Ladoga. Leningrad was surrounded and under siege for nearly three years. Besides the many killed during the fighting and the constant bombardment by artillery and planes, two million Leningrad citizens died of starvation. It was only in 1944 that the siege and encirclement of Leningrad was broken when the Soviet Army relieved the city by marching across the frozen Lake Ladoga. The Finnish Army actively helped the Germans with the siege of Leningrad, and this cost Finland dearly. After the defeat of the Germans, they were counted as enemies and had to pay dearly in reparations to Russia. However, while fighting with the Germans, they did not commit any atrocities, nor did they kill or persecute their Jews. Jews were conscripted to fight on the side of the Nazis like all other Finns.

My last country in Scandinavia was Denmark, where I spent a couple of weeks in Copenhagen. Of course, I went to the tourist office in the railway station, asking for a suitable accommodation. A young girl at the office told me she could offer such a place, but first would have to know about my morals. And could I sleep in a place with considerable outside noise? Apparently, my replies to both questions were satisfactory, and I got a room next to the "Kakadu", which today is a high-class nightclub/brothel. In those days, it was not yet so "high-class".

I spent an agreeable two weeks in Copenhagen and have been back many times since on business. But this first visit, when my budget was stretched, was the best. I went to the opera the first night, but don't remember which one. The standard in Copenhagen was not as good as in Stockholm, but the ballet was world-class. During the intermission, a good looking, fashionably-dressed, young lady walked up to me and greeted me as an old friend. I soon realised that this was a case of mistaken identity. In spite of my unmistakable accent, she mistook me for an American she had met a few days earlier. She invited me to dinner at her place after the opera. I accepted and went to her comfortable flat where I shared the rest of the evening with a number of Danish women and American men. Since such a party was beyond my budget, I had a good time once, but did not return.

The next day I found an indoor pool and turned up as usual for water polo training. I met a particularly likeable group there, including a girl who loved the ballet. I booked two tickets to a performance of the visiting Bolshoi. My only problem was that I had played water polo the night before and copped the most beautiful black eye I ever had worn. In spite of my protestations, my new friends insisted upon taking me to hospital, where I was immediately ushered into a private room as a guest of the Danish free health system. After examining my eye, the doctor said, "There is no medical cure yet for a black eye. Go home and alternately put hot and cold compresses on it."

I watched the ballet through one eye, and though my depth perception was a bit off, enjoyed it very much.

I also contacted some companies in Copenhagen that might help my future business. These included Otto Munsted's "Cremo and Oma cheese". This same company, under the name MD Foods, is still one of the biggest cheese suppliers today. (I have had a good personal friendship with every one of their export managers since my initial visit.)

Mr. Hess was the first man I met at MD in 1956. He was a Jewish Czech survivor of the concentration camps. He and his wife invited me to their home, where he raved about the humanity of the Danes, who treated him wonderfully after the war by looking after him and nursing him after his health was ravaged in the camps. His medical bills had been non-existent due to the free health services of Denmark. After he retired a few years later, a young Dane, Hans Aaskilde, succeeded Mr. Hess in his job.

I developed a close friendship with Hans and his wife many years later. He left his job when the company moved their offices to Aarhus because he had a young family and preferred staying in Copenhagen. He started his own export agency, and I bought a number of products through him, including Icelandic cheeses. After visiting him many times, suddenly I heard nothing. Later, I learned he had died of cancer.

Next in line was Dons Christensen, who came to see me for orders in Australia. I also visited him in December for a number of years as I increased the amount of business we did with this company. The company changed names many times in the forty years of business with F.Mayer Imports. It was Otto Munsteds', Omo Cheese, Cremo Cheese, Chesco, Boel Foods, and finally the present name, MD Foods, which supplies 95% of all Danish dairy exports.

In the middle of the flurry of name changes, Dons started his own company. He suffered a stroke, but recovered enough to start over in a small way. Today I buy lumpfish caviar from him and whenever possible, we do business together. (Robi and I had lunch with him 1995 when Bo Hedetoft drove us to Odense where Dons lives.)

When Dons left, Bo Hedetoft took his place and held the position until 1995 when he resigned because MD Foods moved its offices back to Copenhagen. Bo liked living in Aarhus. For many years he has visited us in Sydney. I see him in Denmark, and also yearly at every Anuga and Sial food exhibition – held alternately in Paris or Cologne.

His successor, and the current head of M D Foods, is Jens Thandrup, with whom we are also on very good terms.

In Copenhagen, I also met Esper Boel and his wife, a charming couple with a very big name in the cheese world. Esper's father was the inventor of the Danish Blue cheese. His son frequently hosted the yearly dinners in Cologne and Paris. This was another friendship that has lasted many years during my visits to Denmark and theirs to Australia. (Esper has a nephew who lives in Australia, the famous adventurer, Hans Tholstrup.) Though the rest of Esper's family all lived to their late 90s, he was younger when he died. I believe he never recovered from the loss of his son who succumbed to cancer when he was quite young.

Before his death, Mrs. Boel wrote her husband's biography. Esper was a devoted pilot, flying his own plane up to age seventy. I must confess that after hearing some hair-raising stories about his aviation adventures at that age, I turned "chicken" and managed to avoid his invitations to "go up". He turned in his license when he was seventy – after the Danish air authorities insisted he take a test before his certificate could be renewed. They were prompted to this request after Esper landed his aircraft on a beach instead of the airport.

I met many more people with whom I eventually did business on that first trip to Copenhagen. In each case, when I explained that I had no business yet, but wanted to build one, they gave me VIP treatment, taking me to dinner at choice restaurants and sending samples of cheese free of charge to Sydney.

There is a famous story about the Jews in Denmark during the Second World War. When the Germans invaded in 1940, the Danes could not resist the German Panzers. The King, contrary to the usual behaviour of other kings who fled to England during an attack, did not try to escape, but remained in Copenhagen. When the Germans insisted that all Jews wear the yellow star, the King mounted his horse, pinned a yellow star to his jacket, and rode through the streets of Copenhagen. When the Germans asked for an explanation, he stated: "All Danes are equal, irrespective of their religions." The Germans temporarily rescinded the yellow star rule.

Some months later, however, they decided to deport all Jews to the death camps in Poland. So the Danish police went from house-to-house, warning the Jews of their impending fate. In the evening, taxis picked them up, took them to the wharves, put them on fishing boats, and transported them over to the neutral Sweden. And this is the way 99% of the Danish Jews were saved.

Recently, in 1995, the Danish press published a new version of this story. The old tale had been true, but for one significant piece, eliminated somehow. The German general in command had, in fact, co-operated with the Danes, with drawing all patrols and thus helping the Danes in the evacuation of the Jews.

What a pity this type of humanitarianism only existed in Denmark.

When it was time to leave Denmark for Hamburg, Germany, one of my new Danish business friends recommended a hotel there, which he booked by telephone. It was owned by the Catholic Church and run by Catholic brothers. The train from Copenhagen ran onto a ferry for the ride to Germany. I shared my compartment on the comfortable vehicle with three

middle-aged Danes and a beautiful blond girl. Though I spent considerable time with her for the next seven days, all I really learned was that her first name was Inger; she was seventeen; and she was in her last year in school. She said she was going to visit her "uncle" in Hamburg.

The five of us went to a sumptuous smorgasbord in the boat's dining room, and were joined there by many Germans who came aboard solely for the meal with its duty-free German and Danish beers and wines. During dinner, I was amazed by the range of Inger's knowledge. No matter what we talked about at our table, she participated intelligently. She spoke English fluently, and later I would learn that her French and German were equally good. After the meal, we went back to our compartment, and as the train approached the Hamburg station, Inger asked me where I was staying. I gave her the hotel's address, but imagined this would be the end of my association with the three Danes and a smart, beautiful girl. As the train stopped, Inger jumped off, carrying her suitcase. A uniformed chauffeur approached and took her luggage. She walked behind him. As we looked for a taxi, one of my Danish travelling companions pointed to the car she was climbing into. It was a Rolls Royce, flying the flag of Argentina.

I found my hotel, registered, and went to my room, where an enormous crucifix hung ominously over the bed. Luckily, I was able to rely upon the big meal and a hot bath to lull me away from the symbol and off to a peaceful sleep.

To my surprise, the receptionist called at 8:00 a.m. to say there was a young lady waiting to see me. It was Inger. She came to my room and announced that her "uncle" had left town for some days and she would love to show me around Hamburg. I was surprised that a hotel run by the Catholic Church allowed female visitors. In the past, during my stay at the London Cumberland, the manager had come to see me when he learned that I had

a woman in my room. Fortunately, the Hamburg Catholic hotel was very liberal, and we were not disturbed.

During the next days, we went sightseeing and to the theatre, concerts, and operas at night. Inger's German was so good that even the Germans thought she was one of them. She also knew Hamburg very well. I insisted upon paying for the tickets to shows, and she seemed not to mind sitting in the cheap seats. She knew all the Italian operas, but said that she had never been to Wagners'. Therefore, I got two gallery seats to Tristan und Isolde with the full Bayreuth Festival cast. I warned her that this would require listening to five-and-a-half hours of heavy music.

As the overture began, she fell asleep on my shoulder. The long first act finished, and, she slept on. It was such a sweet sight; I did not have the heart to awaken her. The second act started, and after awhile, I, too, fell asleep, waking to the applause at the end of the second act. I wanted to get up and stretch my cramping muscles, but chose not to disturb Inger. The third act with its beautiful love duet and deaths of the lovers drew to a close. I still had Inger asleep on my shoulder, which by now was getting numb. I woke her up saying simply, "The opera is finished."

Her sleepy response was, "But you said it was a long opera!"

That was the nearest I ever came to slapping a girl. However, on the next night, we "made up" with a fantastic performance of La Traviata.

I must confess that though Tristan und Isolde is the penultimate experience for opera snobs, I have been to it five or six times in various parts of the world; but not once have I managed to stay awake for the full performance. When it comes to Wagner, I agree with Rossini, whose melodious music is the exact opposite of Wagner's. He said: "Wagner's music has glorious moments, but very boring quarter hours." I do not like

Tristan, Der Ring des Neibulungen, or Parsfal, but I do love Tannhauser and can enjoy Lohengrin, Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg, and the Rienzi overture. Der Fliegende Hollander is a memorable Wagner opera also, mostly because it is short. It only takes two-and-a-half hours as opposed to the five or six of his others.

The Hamburg Opera was new, having just opened after bombs destroyed it during the war. Outside it was not much to look at – just a block of flats. But inside, very modern – not unlike the Sydney Opera house. Its musical standard is one of the highest in the world. Inger and I also went to some concerts by the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra in the Concert Hall – quite the opposite of the Opera House. It was a very old theatre with many pillars obstructing the views from the less expensive seats.

I was bemused by the differences between the styles of the old Hall and the new Opera House and asked some young Germans if they knew why the two were so different. One of them said, "It is all the fault of the English!"

"Why?" I asked.

He replied: "During 1944, the R.A.F. Bombers flattened everything. The only undamaged building within kilometres was the old Concert Hall. They simply missed the ugly thing!"

As a guest in Hamburg, I naturally felt it essential to visit the famous "Rieperbahn-St.Paul" area of nightclubs and brothels. Even though I have been to Hamburg a number of times since 1956, the first was the most remarkable visit.

After a few days of entertainment at my expense, Inger insisted that she take me to dinner. We went to a very expensive restaurant, and the headwaiter greeted her as a long lost friend. When we finished our superb dinner, she just signed the bill and we left. We had been spending sixteen or seventeen hours a day together, but she always insisted

she go home to her "uncle's" place at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. (No aunt was ever mentioned.) The morning after the extravagant dinner, instead of her usual morning visit, I received a phone call from Inger revealing that her "uncle" had returned and she could not make it. That was the last I heard of her. Whoever she was, she remains "the mystery woman" of the most outstanding week of my trip.

Since I was alone now, I decided to look up business addresses and try to pick up some agencies. One of these was the company that supplies the herrings in sauces that F.Mayer still imports today in 1998. A book I had read by Arnold Zweig inspired me to walk around the region of Altona, where most of the canning factories were. (I think the book's title was The Axeman of Altona.) The story was about the German Communist underground's fight against Hitler and the eventual beheading of these aggressors. Arnold Zweig was the brother of the more famous Stephen Zweig, a very successful pre-1939 novelist, who passed through Lisbon on his way to Brazil during his successful attempt to escape the Nazis. In Brazil, he wrote one book about the future of that country and then committed suicide, saying that he was European and could not live anywhere but Europe. His brother, Arnold, survived the war, became a Communist, and lived in East Germany.

On my stroll through Altona, I met the owner of a German export company who dealt with a variety of products. After inviting me for dinner, he told me that his two sons (one, an architect; the other, a doctor) had no interest in his business. This fact saddened him and caused him to look outside the family for a successor to himself. He made me an offer to join his operation and to stay in Germany. Of course, I refused.

My next business stop was Frankfurt, where I remained for only one day and visited the Delacrois factory. They made (and still do) quality canned foods – especially soups (Unfortunately, the quality does not matter as much as much as the price in Australia today. We have discovered the Sydney buyers only want "rubbish soups" at low cost) From Frankfurt, I went to Munchen, attended a fine performance of Tannhauser, and afterward went to the beer hall with its traditional Oom Pah Pah band. (a questionable musical mixture in one night, I believe.)

Next morning, a short train trip brought me to Salzburg, Austria, where I booked a cruise on the Konigsee. It was a glorious, Indian summer day, and high in the mountains, the water in the beautiful lake was very inviting, but too bracing for a swim. Some young people of mixed nationalities I met on the boat joined me on the following day for a bus trip to Berchtesgaden, where Hitler's mansion stood on a peak. The building, blown up at the end of the war, lies in a mere puddle of ruins now. The view at the top of the mountains was breathtakingly magnificent, but looking down deep into both Germany and Austria gave me an uneasy feeling. Through the stunning scenery, my mind's eye could still see the spot where history's greatest murderer lived and planned the extermination of nations with his evil assistants.

I returned to Salzburg and took the early morning train to Innsbruck, another comely Austrian town, with the snowy peaks of the Hafelekar visible even from the main street of the town. I took a cablecar to the peak of the Hafelekar and still have a photo of myself, looking like an idiot, as I stood in deep snow, resplendent in suit and street shoes.

Next morning I was off to Vienna where I went to the opera for ten performances straight There was only one evening when I did not go and attended an Hungarian/Austrian

soccer match instead. After the opera, I always finished up in one of the "Schrammel Cellars". These were unique Viennese centres of "Gemutlischkeit". The wine cellars offered simple meals, good drink, and violinists who circulated among the diners, playing the music requested.

On the first night, I saw the rarely performed Palestrina by Pfitzner. Palestrina was a composer of religious music and the rather difficult subject of this opera. It was not a memorable performance; but in the Redoutensaal, a venue for masked balls during imperial times, I heard The Marriage of Figaro with a superb cast. Opera in Vienna was outstanding because I had the pleasure of seeing and listening to many of the singers I had heard eight years earlier in Budapest or, slightly later, in Vienna on my way to South Africa. Some of them included: Guissepe Taddei as Rigoletto, Erich Kunz as Leporello, and Dermotta as Octavio.

Meanwhile, the Hungarian "Wonder Team" had arrived to play against their traditional rivals, the Austrian soccer team. This was the squad that had beaten everyone with the greatest players in the history of soccer: Puskas, Hidegkuti, Bozsik, Sandor, and others. Remembering the friendships I formed with some of them during the M.T.K.'s visit to Tel Aviv ten years earlier, and then later in Budapest, I rang their hotel and spoke to both Borzseii, the centre half, and Hidegkuti. They did remember me and invited me to their hotel. Since the tickets were completely sold out for the match in the Prater, they invited me to go with the team and sit on the sidelines with the coach and manager during the game.

Hungary won 2:0, but the match was punctuated by a dramatic event. Hidegkuti started to vomit blood when an Austrian back impacted him too vigorously. He was put on a stretcher and taken to the hospital by ambulance. Fortunately, he was not gone long. A small vein had burst – nothing to get too excited about – and he turned up for dinner.

This group beat every team they encountered and had only one failure. During the 1954 World Championship, they won the game against Germany 8:3 in the first round. This one was followed by victories against all the other teams, including Brazil. But when they met Germany again in the final match, most of Hungary's top players either played hurt, or were out with injuries. After leading 2:0 at half time, they lost 2:3. We did not know at the time that this team, which had ruled world soccer for years, had just played its last game together. The Hungarian Revolution, only days away, would scatter this squad to the winds. Hungary went downhill from there as a soccer power and has not recovered to this day. Presently, every nation beats them.

One day when I picked up my mail at 10:00 a.m., I met up again with my English, South African friend – just as we had planned. He had a car, so during the day, we visited the beautiful areas around Vienna, including the wine villages like Grinzing, Wienenvald, Burg Greifenstein, and the famous spa of Baden. My friend suggested that when we were finished in Vienna, we might drive to Budapest together. I was seriously considering this offer, but instead, reached out and called someone – Agi, my old love who lived in a convent near Lucerne. She seemed anxious to see me, so I gave up Budapest for Agi.

My stay in Austria was satisfying due to the exceptional scenery, wonderful music, friendly people, and meetings with friends on the soccer team. But, in spite of all this, I could not feel warmly toward the Austrians. My brain, like a telepathic TV set, kept replaying the 1938 newsreels I had watched in the movies when the Austrian population went berserk as they greeted the Anschluss and the entry of Hitler into Austria with hysterical cries of joy. Over their excited screams, the voice of the commentator thrummed its monotonic cadence, describing these events as if he were reporting the weather. In Vienna, whenever I passed the Stephansdom, more specific footage rolled

in my mind. It was that of Cardinal Itzinger, one arm raised high in the Hitler salute, while the other waved the Swastika flag. And flickering unevenly on top of, between, and under these films was that particular one of the refugees, flooding Budapest in 1938 like they would never stop. These were the images that kept me company as the train rolled toward Switzerland. The intrusion of past-ness on my present was profound.

My first stop in Switzerland was Lucerne, a picturesque small town on a lake of the same name, cradled under the towering Mount Pilatus. Lucerne was typical of Switzerland with its narrow, cobblestone streets, slender spires and turrets, covered bridges, promenades, and plazas dominated by fountains and surrounded by frescoed houses. After finding some accommodation, I rang Agi in the convent at the other end of the lake. Since it was autumn, the number of water taxis had been reduced. I decided to skip waiting for the next one and walk instead. It was a lovely, if rather long, hike with the majestic mountains in the distance. Agi and I had a wonderful reunion. I did not mind at all when the gondola in which we were travelling to the top of Mount Pilatus broke down the next day, and we swayed in the breeze for two hours until the system was repaired.

All Swiss towns have national theatres that present performances every night. The programs alternate among opera, symphony concerts, ballet, theatre, and musical comedy. Because of this formula, towns of under 100,000 population can maintain high cultural standards. Naturally, the short distances between European cities make getting the best available performers a simpler task.

Since this visit in 1956, l have been to Switzerland over twenty times. Many people criticise the Swiss because they have remained neutral since 1815; but it is because of their neutrality that they have been able to build a prosperous country, unparalleled

in its richness by any other in Europe. One must remember that even though Switzerland is peace loving, it demands compulsory military service. Its army is devoted solely to the defence of the homeland, and to that end, the Swiss soldier is ever ready. He keeps his military gear at home, including a gas mask, rifle, and ammunition; and he attends obligatory shooting practice annually. He is ready to fight at a moment's notice as most Swiss feared would be necessary during WWII, when the country was encircled by Axis powers. The Swiss helped hundreds of men from the Allied air forces find safety and eventual freedom. The Swiss army is unique in the world.

While I vacationed in Switzerland, 1956 was entering its last quarter. An already politically eventful year was approaching full explosion. This year has already seen the anti-British terrorist acts by the Cypriot Greeks, who formed a guerilla organisation called Eoka, led by Colonel Grivas and Archbishop Makarios. There were the Alabama Civil Rights demonstrations in the USA that frequently turned violent. Additionally, anti-Soviet riots had erupted in Poland. Khrushchev attacked Stalin's policies, but this did not stop his own suppression of the Communist satellites. Hong Kong and Singapore also staged anti-British riots.

In Australia, Archbishop Mannix, SantaMaria of the Catholic Action, and renegade Labour politicians, Senator Kane and others, formed the Democratic Labour Party with the intention of destroying the Labour Party. They partially succeeded in this attempt and ultimately would keep the latter out of power until 1973.

In the world of the arts, Sir Eugene Goosens, the British conductor who was vastly helpful to Australian music and to the Sydney Symphony, had his baggage searched at Sydney airport. Customs found pornographic photographs of naked girls.

He was brought to court and the sensationalist press had a field day. Goosens went back to England, never to return to Australia. It was Australia's loss. He died in 1968 in England.

The dominant event of 1956, the Suez crisis, had begun in October while I was criss-crossing Switzerland from Lucerne to Zurich (where I saw the only Swiss opera of my life, Venus), and on to Lausanne, Geneva, and Locarno. Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, saying he needed the revenues from it to build the Aswan Dam. That move caused a great scuffle. The young Israeli army then invaded Egypt on October 29. The French and the British (probably in collusion) had been waiting for an opportunity to strike and did so on October 31 when the R.A.F. and French Air Force bombed Alexandria and Suez. The French and British parachutists joined forces with the Israelis on the ground. (President Eisenhower and the United Nations ultimately stopped these military proceedings, forcing the withdrawal of the British, French and Israelis. United Nations' forces replaced them.)

My Swiss journey finished with a one day stay in a youth hostel in Lugano, and from there I went by train to Milano, where, once again, the opera was closed. Fortunately, La Scala was not, and I managed a seat on two occasions: once for a symphony concert and again for an unforgettable performance by the world famous pianist, Arthur Rubinstein.

After a day in Venice, I continued on to Firenze, the city of Machiavelli, Dante, and the Uffizi Museum. I was a true tourist as I visited the Palazzo Vecchio, the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Giotto's Bell Tower, and the National Museum. In Firenze, there was once again no opera, but I attended some wonderful concerts that soothed my disappointment, including Nathan Milstein and Isaac Stern.

One scorching day, I took a trip to the Fiesole Hills above the city, where travellers like myself could undertake hikes fit only for goats. While visiting an old monastery, I was surprised to find a memorial to Albert Einstein in the church. I asked a priest, "How does a memorial to a Jew come to be in a Catholic Chapel?" He explained that when the chapel was damaged during the war, the Einstein family donated the money to repair it.

By the time I got to Rome, I needed to reassess my finances. Earlier, while I was in Norway, I had made my first cheese deal by ordering a small shipment of Primula cheeses that would be sent to Portugal in October. Portugal was the only country where this cheese was not represented. I knew the sensible course was to return there and make a small profit on those products.

I took a short train ride to Naples, found an acceptable hotel room, and went to the office of Triestino Lloyd to reserve passage to Lisbon on one of their vessels that went to New York via Lisbon. The very attractive travel agent suggested that I book on the "Andrea Doria". It would make an extra stop in Nice and offered free tours of the French Riviera. (Incidentally, the Andrea Doria, the largest and most luxurious Italian boat ever built, collided with the Swedish ship, Stockholm. The Andrea Doria sank, killing many passengers.)

I bought the ticket, but realised as I looked at the pamphlet later, that the saleswoman had made a mistake. The Andrea Doria went to Nice and then directly to New York; but it did not stop in Lisbon. So I purchased the ticket on the "Saturnia", a much older, 25,000 ton ship. (I had travelled on its sister ship, the "Vulcania", before the Second World War with my family.) The Saturnia would depart in eight days, which gave me plenty of time to investigate the wonderful area of Italy outside Naples: Positano, Sorrento, Pompei with its Vesuvius, and Capri.

The girl from the shipping line, Maria, remorseful for her mistake, had some free time that she devoted to making my sightseeing more companionable. We visited the famous San Carlo Opera House of Naples, but heard no opera. Later, we met two Honeymoon couples from Milano who also were staying in my hotel, and we all decided to go to Capri together.

The tourist season was over, and the boat was nearly empty as it tossed clumsily on the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, the Blue Grotto was closed due to the rough seas, but we had a fabulous time anyway. Capri is like a Moorish opera set of shiny white houses, tiny squares, and narrow, medieval alleyways hung with flowers. One takes a funicular to reach the town, which rests on top of rugged, limestone cliffs, hundreds of feet above the sea. We went to see the home (Villa San Michele) of Swedish scientist, Axel Munthe, with its wonderful view and unbelievable collection of art and furniture.

The rain was falling in torrents, so we hired a mini bus and decided to stay the night, hoping for better weather and a possibility of seeing the Blue Grotto on the following day. But the next morning the prevailing conditions were even less promising, so, worried that all boats to Naples might be cancelled due to the churning seas, we decided to return while we could. After one more memorable day, I bid good-bye to Maria and the honeymoon couples and boarded the Saturnia for the five-day trip to Lisbon, with a one-day stop in Barcelona.

During this time while I vacationed, the political world did not. Budapest erupted in rebellion on October 25, 1956. The revolt began as a peaceful demonstration by a few intellectuals, but quickly ignited into a national uprising against an oppressor and the Hungarian henchmen of that oppressor. Arms were distributed, the radio building, besieged, and a huge, metal statue

of Stalin was broken into pieces. During the next few days, Nagy introduced a multi-party system, set up a coalition government, released Cardinal Mindszenty, imprisoned since 1948 for his uncompromising attitude toward Communism, and decided to withdraw Hungary from the Warsaw Pact and to proclaim her neutrality. During those few days of liberty, tens-of-thousands of people crossed the Austrian border, finally migrating to various European countries and to Australia, Canada, the USA, and New Zealand. This was too much for the Russians and for many of the Hungarian Communists to bear. Moscow could accept the Polish Revolution because it remained under Communist control, but the Hungarian one was becoming non-Communist. On November 4, 1956, the Russian army brought an overwhelming force into Hungary: and within a few days, crushed the revolt.

The Prime Minister, Nagy, was arrested and eventually hanged (in 1958). Thereafter, the Russians installed a new nominee, Kadar, who restored order. Nagy's name was eventually rehabilitated, and he was given an important funeral. The same was true for Rajk, who had been hanged in 1949 for being a Titoist, but just before the revolution in 1956, he was dug up, his reputation, restored, and he was given a national hero's send-off.

In Egypt, when the USA and the United Nations forced the French, British, and Israeli troops to withdraw, this precipitated the resignation of British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden. The dominating event of Eden's short premiership had been the Anglo/French/Israeli intervention in Egypt. Eden's deteriorating health, resulting from the strain of fierce public criticism of his policies, combined with his political failure, led to his resignation in 1957. Macmillan (1957-1963) would replace him.

Together with Churchill and Eden, Macmillan had quit the Tory Party when the Tories allowed Mussolini a free hand to attack Abyssinia, to occupy Albania, and to allow Hitler to

take country after country, finally throwing Czechoslovakia at his mercy. Macmillan made his political comeback with Churchill, but remained Minister of Housing and Chancellor of the Exchequer as long as Churchill was around.

Macmillan was known for two things. The first was his famous speech about Africa in 1960, in which he said: "The winds of change are blowing over Africa". Events would prove him absolutely right later on. The other occurred eleven years earlier in 1945 and was more controversial. He was responsible for the repatriation of tens-of-thousands of Ukrainians, who joined the Nazis when the Germans occupied the Ukraine. Most of them were executed by the Russians, but I did not shed tears for them since they had been guards in concentrations camps, served with the SS, and perpetrated the worst possible atrocities.

As I boarded the Saturnia, I was surprised and pleased to see that the majority of the other passengers were young women, mostly Italians, with their young children. They were wives and offspring of American military personnel who, due to the gravity of the political situation, were being evacuated back to America.

I have heard people express the various levels of their enjoyment of sea travel as: "fantastic, great, good, fair, so-so, poor, bad, or terrible". These are, after all, subjective judgements based upon individuals' assessments of the quality aboard the ship. But running through the miasma of differences in food, service, and accommodations on oceanic forays, there is one common denominator – a thread of good fortune, if you will – independent of all other factors, that when present (and one can nearly count on its presence) is the only deciding one, finally, in evaluating how successful one's journey really has been. This theory is nearly mathematical in its purity, really.

Most women become sexually adventuresome on boats, dropping the inhibitions they held when they boarded the craft by the time they are just a few miles out to sea. Who knows, or cares, what is the cause of this fortuitous phenomenon. It just is. So if there is such a woman on your boat, and you are attracted to her, and she, to you, your trip will be "fantastic"!

Keeping this barometer in mind, I can say: I had five fantastic days and nights aboard the Saturnia with a one day stopover in Barcelona, where I did the usual sightseeing in the company of a shipboard friend.

When I arrived in Lisbon for the third time within six months, my grandparents, my Uncle Tibi, and a number of my Portuguese friends from the swimming dub were waiting at the wharf. Shortly thereafter, my cheese shipment arrived from Norway. I sold it for a profit and replenished my exhausted finances to some degree. I spent time trying to talk my uncle into going into cheese imports, but my grandmother, who was busily running the lives of the two men, would not allow him to do that. Meanwhile, my grandfather fell and broke three ribs while running down the stairs. Even though special editions of the newspapers reported hourly-updated events in the Hungarian Revolution, Grandmother forbade their dispersion to my laid-up, bored grandfather. Apparently he would remain bedridden, naive, bound, and fairly docile.

After a few days, I sensed the end of my trip was drawing close. I was conflicted about leaving – both anxious and concerned. I knew that because of my new business ventures in Sydney, there was little chance I would see these ageing relatives again.

By now, the Melbourne Olympics were on at home and my countrymen could watch them on television. Australia did

quite well, taking thirteen or fourteen gold medals, including: Betty Cuthbert and Shirley Strickland in Athletics; Dawn Fraser and Lorraine Crab in the I00 and 200- metre freestyle; Murray Rose (three gold medals); and John Hendricks and David Thiele, who scooped the swimming pool. The Men's 100-metre freestyle swimming finished with Hendricks winning gold, Devitt, silver, and Chapman, bronze. (Frank Beaurepair (Beaurepair tyres) was a triple Olympian and hero of a Coogee shark attack rescue. He was also elected Lord Mayor of Melbourne for this Olympic period. He dropped dead just before the Games at age sixty-five.)

In athletics, the big hero was the Russian, Kutts. The Australian Water Polo team played the three Bondi boys (Doug Laing, Ray Smee, and Keith Whithead) plus Teddi Pearce from Balmain; but they were eliminated in the first round.

A great water polo fable, invented by the Australian, American, and European sensation-seeking press, emerged. It is entitled: The Russian – Hungarian Water Polo Blood Bath. This story persists even today, forty-two years later, and is mentioned regularly at every Olympics. The tale can be validated by a good number of people who were present at the game, along with the Hungarian players, such as Karpati and Gyarmati, who played in it.

The stands were filled with thousands of Hungarian/ Australians, who used this particular game as a venue for an anti- Russian political demonstration. In the water, however, it was water polo as usual; and the players anticipated a very difficult match. They were in the finals in the Olympics, after all. It had to be a fierce one! But according to the Hungarian players who participated in this game, it was not as brutal as their games had been against Italy and Yugoslavia earlier in the Olympics.

But there was a glitch. In this match, an injury was sustained that would change history, as we knew it, forever. One of

the Hungarian players, Zador, marking one of the Russian centre forwards, was hit in the head, just above his eyebrow. This is quite a common occurrence in centre forward/centre back duels. Blood poured from the wound- not because of the seriousness of the gash, but because this part of the head bleeds very easily. The press picked up on the symbol of the "great blood bath" when Hungary won this game 4:0 and then went on to beat Yugoslavia for the gold. Russia finished with bronze.

With a sensational year nearly over, I caught another boat to England- my third trip to London in 1956. This time my financial condition dictated that I rent accommodations in a B&B in Kensington. When I checked in, the landlady asked my nationality. "Australian." I said.

Her quick reply was, "Sorry. Australians and New Zealanders have to pay an extra ten shillings. They take too many showers and use up the hot water."

I spent every night at the theatre, the Covent Garden Opera, the Ballet, or concerts at the (then) new Festival Hall or the old Albert Hall. But finally, money, or the lack of it, determined my departure. I had no option but to go to the P. 0. Lines, present my prepaid, first class voucher, and sail back to Sydney on the next vessel. This ship was the "Iberia", sister ship to the Arcadia on which I had left Sydney, May 19, 1956. The Iberia was sailing on Christmas Eve and would arrive in Sydney in early February. I was sorry to leave London. Most cities you like when you first arrive; some of them you learn to dislike later. London is the opposite. Most people dislike it at first, but it grows on you. I really admired it very much by the time I had to leave.

I sailed with a ten-pound note and a few shillings in coins in my pockets. It was snowing in Tilbury as the boat left. I had barely unpacked the toilet necessities in my cabin

when the sumptuous Christmas Eve dinner started. Due to the Suez having been bombed and blocked by sunken ships, the Iberia went via Las Palmas (Canary Islands), Cape Town, and then the Australian Ports – Fremantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney. Next morning, it was still freezing outdoors, but the boat's swimming pool was eighty-six degrees Fahrenheit (thirty, Centigrade). I decided to have a dip. The other passengers, not knowing that this pool was the warmest spot on the vessel, thought I was crazy.

As we approached the Canary Islands, the swimming pool became my financial salvation. The Social Director had organised diverse events and offered vouchers to the duty free shop for the winners. In one of the games, the winner would be the person who collected the most spoons from the thirty-six thrown into the pool for each competitor. First prize was twenty-five pounds sterling. When my turn came, my closest competitor had retrieved twenty: but since there were two more young blokes yet to dive down after me, and I needed the money badly, I decided that I had no choice but to go for all thirty-six. As I collected the spoons, pushing them into the bag, I counted, 33, 34, 35: but I could not find the thirty-sixth. My eyes felt as if they were popping out of their sockets, and my lungs were afire. But finally I found the missing utensil in one of the corners of the pool.

The Herculean effort was unnecessary after all. The second best was still twenty spoons. I won the other prizes as well that totalled free vouchers for fifty pounds. With my ten, this made sixty pounds – enough to last for bar expenses and shore excursion costs for the rest of the trip.

At Las PaLmas, our first port, I saw an unusual Spanish Christmas/New year custom. A policeman stood in the middle of the street, directing traffic. Drivers and pedestrians alike stopped to deposit bottles and parcels next to him on the ground.

By the time his shift was over, the gifts were piled higher than the policeman's shoulders.

When we continued from Las Palmas, we spent the next two uninterrupted weeks at sea until we reached Cape Town. The voyage was gorgeous, and, as usual, I made many friends onboard. One of them, an elderly, English, titled Lady was particularly friendly in that special way women are on boats. We became intimate, and I was quite carried away by my "male prowess" until I saw "my conquest" leave the cabin of the Cockney cabin steward, who boasted mercilessly about his affair with her.

After that, I generally played chess in the evenings with a Dutch diplomat, travelling with his wife and two daughters, ages twelve and sixteen. The pool attendant, an English University student, came to me one day and expressed his concern that the diplomat's younger child kept sitting on his lap and flirting with him – much like an older woman might. Did I think he could get into trouble? Since I played chess with her father, would I please do him a favour and speak to her parents?

I did as I was requested, as carefully, and as tactfully as I knew how. The father understood the problem immediately and acknowledged that this was not the first time this situation had arisen. He spoke to the attendant, saying, "If my daughter starts that hanky panky again, you should call her mother immediately."

Apparently, this sort of problem can run in families. The older girl was much shyer, but, nevertheless, felt determined to have "a real experience" on this trip. So one night, I found Helen waiting for me in my cabin.

It is very interesting how life provides coincidences to prove that the world is very small. For instance, I mentioned that on the trip to Europe on the Arcadia, I met a young, Indian/Parsee girl, Maki.

A few months after I arrived back in Sydney in 1957, she came to my city on the P.O. Vessel, Orsova, and spent six days there. Later, she returned to Bombay and met Rene at a party. She had the photos she had taken in Sydney with her and showed them to my sister. Rene looked at the snapshots and said, "That fellow you are with there in all the pictures is my brother, Fred." Maki and I still send Christmas cards to one another every year – even now, when Maki is a grandmother and I am a grandfather.

A still more bizarre incident is this one. About 1960, I got a postcard, which said, We are talking about you a lot! Love Helen and Maki. Apparently, Helen's father was transferred to India, and guess who met and became close friends. Maki and Helen!

Much later, in 1981, I was in Lucerne, Switzerland, with my youngest son, Sami. We were on the gondola (the same one that broke down in 1956 when Agi and I were on it) going up to the Pilatus, with an Indian/Parsee couple. We all talked and pulled out photographs to share with each other. And who was that in one of theirs? Why, it was Maki, for sure! When I told the lady I recognised that woman in the photo, she said, "I am best friends with Maki. My husband and I play tennis with her two or three times a week."

Our journey continued pleasantly as we reached Cape Town where I visited the old haunts from 1947-1948. Between Cape Town and Fremantle, the trip was uneventful, and I spent time taking pleasure from the company of the others aboard the ship. Among them was a well-known Australian jockey, Ron H., travelling with an English bookmaker.

Our arrival in Fremantle was less dramatic than it had been six-and-a-half years earlier when we were migrants. This time

there was no strike, so we stayed in Fremantle for twenty-four hours, went to Perth, and off again to Adelaide.

One day a good number of us, including Ron H. and the bookie, were playing "dice poker" with over a hundred pounds on the table. I threw four kings, but the next fellow got four aces and won the lot. Ron H. must have seen the disappointment on my face because after the game, he asked me if I was short money and invited me to go to the races with him in Adelaide, where he would help me win some cash. Since I had promised Helen and her parents that I would go to the Adelaide hills, I declined, but gave him twenty pounds to bet for me.

After the Adelaide excursion, we all boarded the Iberia, and I sat down with Ron H. for a drink. He started to explain all the bets he made, finally getting to the important part. He put all of the winnings from the night on the last race. That horse lost, but had it won, I would have cashed in a ticket worth 2000 pounds. I said, "Don't worry. I've never won a race. No big deal. I've only lost twenty pounds."

He replied, smiling, "It's not that bad. I still have 200 pounds for you." This was a beauty! Now I had more than enough for the last few days of partying aboard the Iberia and the stop in Melbourne (our last port before Sydney).

Though I was happy to see my parents waiting for me at wharf 13, Pyrmont, I was also sorry that the trip had ended. I would have loved a few more months aboard the Iberia. Compounding my mixed feelings of pleasure and regret was the fact that my parents had trouble recognising me. I left Sydney a slim man, but thirty days on the Iberia had changed me. I was now heavier by a lumbering two stones. I could diet my way into the next chapter of my life.

Though for the last thirty years I have gone to the Anuga (Cologne) or the Sial (Paris) every October and have punctuated the time in between with many other overseas journeys (at least fifty) to Europe, New Zealand, Asia, USA, and England during a long period of financial success, none of these trips compare to the nine months in Europe during 1956-1957. That was the best vacation of my life – in spite of having taken it with limited finances. It was the end of my travelling by sea. From then on, with the exception of half a dozen cruises, I would fly – staying in fine hotels and dining wherever and however I chose.

CONTINENTAL TUCKER

During the nine months I was away, there were many changes in Australia. An abundance of espresso coffee houses opened in Sydney; many thousands of Hungarians, who escaped Hungary during the Revolution, migrated here; and during the Melbourne Olympics, TV was introduced in Australia. TV here is the same as everywhere else, I suppose, and probably is the invention that has most changed people's lives in the last four decades. I am irritated by the latter fact because now, instead of reading books and having conversations about worthwhile topics, everyone sits bleary-eyed, watching the tube. Personally, I loathe television advertising and change channels when ads come on. If I need to shop, I avoid buying anything I have seen touted on TV. I do admit though, that for an "old man" whose formative years were pre-television, it seems a miracle that I can watch sports, live – thousands of miles from where a game is played. This aspect of television is good, I believe.

Back in Sydney, my vacation over, I started working to build up my import business. This was not easy because of the strict import restrictions. Hefty quotas were required for each order which, of course, I did not have. However, the latter could be waived if one were willing to pay the government an extra 20% of the value of the goods brought in. Since importing food products was far too competitive and expensive without a license, my first merchandise consisted of ski sweaters and mittens from Norway.

Because it would take a long time to build my business into one that could sustain me, I took a job at Conti Smallgoods Factory as a van salesman. At Conti, I met many people with whom I still have contact today. I hired some of them later like Andrew Majnik, who still works for me at age seventy-five. Tomi Bender died on an Italian Holiday four years ago while working for F.Mayer Imports. Other people I met at Conti became inspirations for me. Andrew Lederer came to Australia in 1957 after the Hungarian Revolution and worked as a butcher and smallgoods maker at Conti Goods. I picked him up every morning at 5:00 in my van and gave him a lift to work. As a butcher, Andrew got free meat, so when he and his wife rented a house at Double Bay with another couple, he supplied the meat for their meals together, and the other couple, the rest. He told me one morning on the way to work, "Once I have a couple of thousand pounds, I will start a smallgoods factory; and I will be the biggest in Australia." This sounded like bullshit to me at the time; but he did exactly that.

First, he opened a small butcher's shop on Parramatta Road, Leichhardt where he produced a few lines. Then, Presto 79. When it sold out to the Adelaide Steamship Company, Andrew received $37,000,000 from the state government to relocate his factory from Homebush (site of the 2000 Olympics).

At Conti, I was given second rate route – Newtown, Glebe, Leichhardt, and Balmain. I went out with my predecessor for the initial two weeks. He normally worked from. 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and turned over between 180 to 190 pounds per week.

While visiting our customers, each of whom was buying from eight or ten different suppliers, I discovered and employed a great "gimmick". Honest weighing. All the other salesmen waited until their customer was busy serving one of his own; and then they cheated him by misquoting the actual weight of the goods provided. However, I did not follow suit. Since most of my customers were Italian, Greek, or Lebanese and did not trust salesmen in the first place; they regularly rechecked the weights. My exceptional honesty "gimmick" worked, and within three months, I was taking in 800 pounds a week. I changed my hours too. Instead of working from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., I worked from 5:00 a.m. to 2:00 or 2:30 p.m. This gave me time to build up my import business while earning my living as a smallgoods salesman.

My days were long. After the smallgoods runs finished, I went home, had a shower, changed, and went to see people about my own business. Every night I spent two or three hours writing letters to prospective European suppliers.

My first sale of Norwegian sweaters and ragg socks was to David Jones, where I got a substantial order, payable within seven days. Because I was short four thousand pounds for the duty, I went to see the manager of the A.NZ. Bank where I kept my modest account. When he saw my written order, he agreed to give me a week's overdraft in the amount I needed. However, when the goods arrived, he reneged on our deal.

I complained about this to a Hungarian friend, Robert Sardi. He said: "No problem. I have the money. I'll lend it to you. Don't worry about it. But you should change banks because the A.NZ. management is very anti-migrant and docs this sort of thing all the time."

All the Hungarian Jews were switching to the C.B.A bank, so I did too. I got an immediate phone call from the A.NZ manager, whining, ,"That is the trouble with all New Australians. You simply can't understand us." Of course, I understood him.

He had said the loan was approved. Then he said it was not. Simple as that.

I currently was buying the import quota through Benjamin's of Chatswood, whose managing director was Arthur MacFadden, leader of the Country Party and Deputy Prime Minister. But one day a Mr. Fryda approached me at Conti. He offered me a business partnership in the Norwegian sweater deal. This would be a 50/50 partnership with his supplying the import license, paying for the imports, and so forth. I thought this was a fair offer and accepted. I went out to sell, and people ordered many sweaters. Three months later when I met with Fryda, I collected 2,800 pounds as my share of the profits (quite a substantial amount those days). However, at this juncture, "my partner" went back on his agreement and altered our arrangement mid stream. From now on, he would take 90% and I, 10%. I told him to "get stuffed" and refused to negotiate further.

As a result, he sent a very long telegram to the Norwegian manufacturer, Petersen and Dekke, telling them that his was a substantial company while Fred Mayer was only a smallgoods truck driver and a salesman with no import license and no money. The Norwegians immediately sent me copies of this telegram and their letter in reply to Fryda. In the latter, they stated that they were fully informed about Fred Mayer, knew him personally, and were satisfied with his work. They concluded by stating that they would have no further dealings with Fryda.

But Fryda did not give up easily. I got a second order from David Jones, which I immediately filled from Norway. However the buyer for D.J. was well connected with Fryda, and when the goods arrived, he cancelled the order, stating he would only accept it from Fryda. I told my story to my old boss and friend, Harry Greaves, who informed his boss, Burnard. Burnard sent me immediately to Charles Lloyd Jones' office. He remembered me from the days when I worked at the food hall in David Jones.When I showed him the signed order, which now was

marked "cancelled", he counter-signed it without pause, told me to deliver the sweaters, and to contact him if I had any trouble with the buyer. This was the end of my dealings with Fryda. Result: Fred Mayer 2 – Fryda 0.

My smallgoods days came to an end in 1958 when the afternoon papers announced that all import restrictions had been abolished. This meant I could now import cheeses and anything else I wanted.

By now, my father, Samu, was seventy and fit, but still not able to master English. My mother underwent a couple of operations, and eventually closed their shop. Samu helped me out in my new business all he could by wrapping orders of clothes for shipment to other states.

Since I no longer had the Conti Goods van, I bought a secondhand Ford Zephyr, a massive car with the most horrible steering lock. Luckily, it was very solid. Momi Vadas and I took it on a short holiday to the Gold Coast. Everything was fine until, passing into Queensland, I fell asleep at the wheel and rolled the vehicle. The auto was a wreck, but both of us survived without a scratch.

Between 1957 and 1960, there were many new developments in Australia and the world. 1957 was the year Utzon won the contract to build the Sydney Opera House. It would be sixteen years until its opening. In the music world, three great musicians died: Sibelius, Toscanini, and Benjamino Gigli.

Fidel Castro took over Cuba and is still there today.

The Rome Treaty established the basis for creating the Common Market.

Russia launched Sputnik I and provoked the speeding up of the US space program.

Keeping Labour out of office until Whitlam's victory in 1973, sixteen years later, Vince Gair ran the Democratic Labour Party with SantaMaria and the aid of the Catholic Church in Australia. This was the only time I took an active part in Australian politics. On the request of my old friend, Senator Joe Fitzgerald, Momi Vadas and I joined the Double Bay branch of the Labour Party. And with a vote of 10 to 9, we ousted the Democratic Labour Party crowd and took over the branch. Double Bay was not (and is not today) a typical Labour Party district, but all branches were important. Naturally with only ten or twelve active members in ours, positions were available to all who wanted to take them. I politely refused every offer. I was far too busy building my business. After all, there are only twenty-four hours in a day.

I went to a few of the meetings of the Party, but eventually resigned because the president and vice-president were lobbying too diligently for the Taxi-Drivers' Association. Every meeting became an airing of the grievances of the taxi Industry, and we spent all of our time making resolutions and sending them to the State government. I have nothing against taxi-drivers, but I had very little time for myself; so I quit.

Once the import restrictions lifted, I placed my first order for cheese from Denmark. Because cheeses had to be refrigerated and could not be sold from home, I rented space at Sydney Cold Stores on Harris Street, Ultimo. My first good break came once again from David Jones. Every Christmas, D.J.'s bought a considerable quantity of gift packs, including music baskets that played different tunes and were filled with cheeses, cheese boards, cheese knives, and calendars from a Swiss cheese factory, "Zingg". Zingg had an argument with their Sydney agent who told the Zingg management that they would no longer deal with them.

Zingg asked David Jones to recommend a new agent. Once again Harry Greaves proved his friendship once more when he suggested F.Mayer Imports. This alliance bought me good profits. It also brought a visit to Australia by Jean Jacques Amman, the export manager (and shareholder) of Zingg, who is still a good friend of mine. I took Jean Jacques around to visit customers, and my mother cooked his favourite dishes. He loved his food and drink.

He realised that my business address was my bedroom at No. 1 Thornton Street, and after a few days together, he said that Zingg & Co. was happy with the Christmas orders from David Jones, but they really wanted a twelve-month business. We sat down to work out an order. I was making notes on a separate piece of paper, when Amman asked me, "What are you doing?"

I replied, "I'm working out the cost."

He grabbed the paper and tore it up, blustering, "I have seen how you work. Give me an order for what you can sell – not what you can pay for. Swiss interest rates are low. We can afford to give you credit."

This was an enormous help at a time when, to put it mildly, I had no assets. Jean Jacques Amman left Zingg a few years later and formed his own export company. I believe I repaid his help many times over by buying all I could from him.)

About the time the Swiss shipment arrived, I also received one of Danish cheeses. F.Mayer Imports was really in business now with Norwegian sweaters, ragg socks, string underwear, and Swiss and Danish cheese.

Even though I was working extremely long hours, I also managed to play basketball, water polo, and swim in the surf races every Sunday. I was friendly with all the water polo players in Bondi, but I still could not get on with Alex Koszegi, the Hungarian coach. Therefore, I joined East Sydney, a second

grade team that was building its player roster so it could compete in the first grade the following season. Members of the team included Kevin Jones in goals. (He lives in Canada now and is a recently retired professor from York University.) Later Brian Allison joined us in goals along with Ken Lord and Brian Hamil. All of these men made the NSW State Team, and Hamil just missed out on the Olympics. "Top Shot" Ian MacLachlin (who did make the Olympics team) and I rounded out the squad. While we were playing second grade, some first grade teams broke up, and two association squads were formed (from second grade teams' members) that would play first grade on the first grade nights. I was selected, which meant I played second grade on Tuesdays and first on Thursdays. This was the time when I came closest to being chosen for representative teams. Two of the men responsible for picking the players, Asher Hart of Bondi and Bill Deveridge of Balmain, wanted to select me for the State side, but the others voted against it, saying that at thirty, I was too old. (In all fairness to myself, I must point out that this decision was made after those judges watched this "old man" play on both Association teams one Thursday night. Let me tell you about it.)

These were the days when water polo was played with sitting centre forwards who were marked by sitting centre backs. This made for an extremely rough duel. This particular Thursday, I played first in the first Association game against Bondi, marking my old club mate, Jack Ferguson, and stopping him from scoring. In the next game, Association 2 played Bronte. And because their centre back did not turn up, thirty-years-old or not, I played again, and lived to tell about it. This time I stopped John Thornett from scoring. [John was quite a guy. In 1960 he had a choice: he could go to the Olympics in water polo, accept a Rhodes Scholarship at University, or serve as captain of the Australian (Wallabies) Rugby Union Team.

He chose the rugby.] There was a secret about marking John in water polo, and if one knew it, as I did, John could be undone. He was a thorough gentleman, so if one marked him cleanly, he tried to be even cleaner. And that was the way to stop him.

I was very friendly with all three Thornett brothers, especially the middle one, Ken. He was a fine rugby union player, as were both of his brothers. At that time, union was a 100% amateur game. So Ken, in search of money, decided to go to England and become a rugby league player. To raise the cash to pay for his fare, he took my Norwegian sweaters to Randwick Rugby Union Club and sold at least a hundred of them. Then he went to Leeds where he became a very successful league player; and upon his return to Australia, he played for Parramatta as one of the best halves I have ever seen.

At one stage in my water polo career, Bronte became the best club team I was ever affiliated with. Since the Hungarians of the Spit were getting old, Bondi now ruled water polo in Sydney. Doug Laing told me one day that Bronte second grade had some very good players. All they needed was a coach. Marni Vadas was working at the ICA Chemical factory then, so Doug and I went to see him at his house in Matraville one night after 11:00. We convinced him to join Bronte as player/captain/coach. He did an exceptional job and brought Bronte to the top.

In 1958, my new club moved up to first grade. In our initial game, we played my old club, the unbeaten Bondi, at Ruschcuttcrs Bay. We had an excellent 2:2 draw. I earned a record in this game that has never been broken since. (And no player wants to break it!) I scored all four goals- two into Bondi's goals, and two by accident into my own team's (Kevin Jones, net).

There was always new room for competition among us guys. John Donoghoe – water polo player, surf champion, and Olympic swimmer – and John Konrads were members of the North Bondi Surf Club when an annual swim was initiated between Bondi and the Bronte Heads. We all started this first race together to determine how to handicap the future ones. Secretly, we were also quite interested in an important side competition between Donoghoe and Konrads. As we dove off the rocks at the southern end at Bondi baths, Donoghoe shot right to the front. Because I was an average swimmer, I was naturally in the middle of the bunch. After a couple of hundred metres, I was surprised to see that I was swimming next to Konrads. Since I knew how much faster he was than "middle material", I grabbed him and asked what was wrong?

His reply was: "I'm not crazy. Why would I go out there as shark bait? I'll just hang back here with the crowd. Donoghoe won by a few hundred metres… and lived to tell about it.

Many things were happening in the world in the late 1950s. In 1958-59 we had the two Latvian migrant swimmers, brother and sister, John and Ilse Konrads. They scooped the pool by winning most swimming titles.

In the Snowy Mountains, Lake Eucumbene, Australia's biggest reservoir was completed.

1958 was the year of the tragic air crash that killed the whole of the Manchester United Soccer Team (Manchester Babes).

Decentralisation and other reforms meant to raise the standard of living continued in Russia under Khrushchev although his influence was waning somewhat.

France's De Gaulle came back. And in Hungary, lmre Nagy, the Revolution's Prime Minister, was hanged. Cyprus had experienced violent unrest from the middle 50s, with the Archbishop Makarios and Colonel Griras leading the Greek Cypriots. In 1959, Cyprus moved toward independence and finally, in 1960, became so, making Makarios the first president.

In Italy, the most decent of all the Popes, John XXIII, died. Before he became Pope, Cardinal Roncolly, contrary to Vatican policy, helped to save the lives of many people during World War II. In Religion, Billy Graham brought "the Word" to masses as he preached in football stadiums and on TV. John Kennedy, first Catholic president of the United States, was elected in I960. And shortly before this, under Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, and his brother, Allen, head of the CIA, brought "brinkmanship" to a peak.

The British set up prison camps for the blacks who were fighting for independence in Kenya. One of the inmates was Jomo Kenyata, who became the first president of Kenya. In 1960, the heinous murder in Sharpeville (Johannesburg) occurred when the police killed fifty-six blacks (official figures only), and riots began in Durban.

A USA spy plane piloted by Gary Powers was shot down over the USSR. Powers was captured. Boris Pasternak wrote the masterpiece, Dr. Zhivago, that earned him the Nobel Prize and persecution in Russia.

Israel kidnapped and later hung the most heinous murderer of the World War II, Adolf Eichmann.

"My fair Lady", a musical adapted from George Bernard Shaw's play Pygmalion, was the musical event of the time.

June Bronhill sang "The Merry Widow", in an outstanding performance.

The 1960 Olympics took place in Rome. In swimming: Freestyle: IOOm-John Devitt, Gold; 400m- Murray Rose, Gold; Konrads, Bronze. Backstroke: IOOm – Thiele, Gold. Water polo: Italy, Gold; USSR, Silver; Hungary, Bronze. The Australian Water Polo Team had Dick Thomett. From the Bondi trio, only Keith Whitehead went to this Olympics because Doug Laing and Ray Smee could not afford the expense. (Different set up today!)

Soccer: Yugoslavia, Gold; Denmark, Silver; Hungary, Bronze. The Ethiopian, Bilkas, won the marathon, running barefoot.

My business was progressing nicely; however, having two completely diverse product lines – food and skiwear – made the work difficult. My father continued to help out by doing the packing, but due to my long workday, my private life suffered. Though I still managed sports, I had to give up my girlfriend, who lived too far away. I solved the problem of female companionship when I discovered that an older friend, who owned a clothing factory on Darling Point Road, also had three daughters and a son. He employed interstate and European girls in succession to look after the kids. Since those girls needed company and so did I, we provided much needed companionship for one another.

My mother loved the movies, so Samu went with her a few times a week. This left our flat empty and at my disposal until 11:30 p.m. Some of the girls I entertained there were agreeable; and others had qualities I did not like. My last girlfriend before my marriage was Marguerite, a French girl from Noumea. She was pleasant and intelligent, but fibbed a little. Though I had seen her passport and knew that she was twenty-one, she insisted that she had been a fully qualified, practising lawyer before coming to Australia.

As my business took shape, David Jones remained my most important customer for both the skiwear and the cheese. D.J. operated eight food halls in Sydney, three in Wollongong, two in Newcastle, three in Canberra, and five in Brisbane. Their central warehouse on Bourke Street, Alexandria, placed orders with F.Mayer Imports by the truckload. (What a pity that this store, so well organised and liked by its customers, has gone downhill drastically in the last few years.)

Meanwhile, my sister, Rene, lived in New Delhi with her husband Raj. Rene's love of India persisted, and her interest in politics continued to grow to the point where she decided to stand for parliament. But, unfortunately, due to a political disagreement with Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi, they eventually had to leave India and migrate to Paris. Before they left, Rene became ill. A female doctor diagnosed "twisted bowels" and performed an urgent operation from which she was not expected to recover. When she did, Raj contacted a surgeon friend of his who immediately flew from Bombay to New Delhi, performed a second operation, and saved Rene. The "twisted bowel" was actually a tubal pregnancy. Rene was an entirely healthy person until this series of events, from which she never fully recovered.

CALL ME FATHER FREDDY

The house on Thornton Street, Darling Point was sold eventually. My first meeting with the new landlord, Frank Wolstenholme, was stormy. Because we lived on the ground floor of the building, we had put grills up over our windows. One day, without even introducing himself, Wolstenholme came around and began removing them. When I objected, he said, "I bought this house. I can do anything I want with it."

A verbal battle ensued during which we finally both realised that four letter words would not solve this problem between us; so we switched tactics and sat down for drinks and a peaceful conversation at his place instead. He introduced me to his wife and three of his daughters, one of whom, Annette, would become my wife about nine months later. I was in negotiations for my first house at 3 Military Road, North Bondi at the time, so I

agreed to accept a small amount of money to move out of our flat, and the argument was settled.

Not many days after the grill incident, Frank Wolstenholme's wife asked me if I would accompany her daughter, Annette, to a party since she had no one to go with. I agreed and went to the gathering that turned out to be an hilarious affair. One must understand the history behind this event before one can appreciate the situation I was walking into.

When I played basketball for North Bondi Surf Club at the St. George competition at Kogarah, our main rival was Scarborough Park, who took their basketball very seriously. We, on the other hand, did not. To us, this was just winter exercise. Therefore, every game between North Bondi and Scarborough Park ended in a punch-up among the players.

Only a few days before the party, we had played Scarborough in the finals. Our captain called a time-out during the first quarter. To upset our opponents, we sat down in the middle of the floor, pulled out a pack of cards, and dealt. We were warned by the referee, continued our card game, and our team was banned from further competition. (The next season, we simply joined the North Sydney league, which would allow us to play.) So walking into this party where the guest list included the entire Scarborough Park basketball team was touchy, awkward, humorous, and possibly incendiary. But in spite of our recent history with the Scarborough Parkers, we had a bang-up time. They were an ace crowd at a party.

Annette and I got along quite well. Because she liked her independence, instead of staying with her family in the top flat, she moved into a room next to the garage. The garage was in our garden and in full view of the neighbours. The neighbours, all dutifully looking out for one another (as good neighbours will), noticed the budding romance in the garage, spied on it, and gossiped endlessly about it.

This relationship between Annette and me progressed rapidly, and we were married on June 20, 1963 at the registry office in Queens Square. Both sets of parents and the two witnesses, Doug Laing and Annette's friend, Margaret, were present at the wedding. We had a reception after the ceremony at the old Australia Hotel. The wedding day itself had been quite a blitz.

By this time, I was receiving regular shipments of cheese from Europe. There were no containers yet. To avoid the long delays with cargo ships, I imported all the refrigerated products on passenger vessels, which always arrived on the stipulated day. However, if the goods were offloaded at night, I had to be at the wharf with a truck to receive them. On the day of my wedding, I had goods coming in on the "Orcades" from the British P & 0 Line. The refrigerated hold with its cheeses from a number of importers was to be unloaded in the late morning. I went down to the hold and spoke to the wharfies' foreman and asked him to help get my goods off first please because I was getting married in the afternoon. He obliged me by calling out to all the wharfies, "This stupid bastard is getting married today. Get his goods off ahead of any other consignments."

My cartons were marked F.M., and we got them all off by noon with the help of my father (then seventy-five years old) and the driver. We loaded the truck, and I followed it with my station wagon to Sydney Cold Storage on Harris Street, Ultimo, where I still leased cool rooms. We offloaded the truck; I picked up a couple of urgent orders, delivered them, and returned home for a quick shower before dashing off to my wedding and reception.

We spent our wedding night at the old Australia. And the next morning, I was up at 5:00, went home, picked up my father, raced to the cold stores, loaded the station wagon to full

capacity, and started the daily deliveries – turning around to reload several times. After labouring tirelessly all day, I met Annette at the Orcades, which, empty of my cheeses now, would carry us on our honeymoon cruise.

It was a pleasant trip, stopping in Noumea, Suva (in Fiji), and on the Fijian Island, Savu Savu, where no cruise ship had ever dropped anchor before. In honour of the vessel's arrival, the natives held a splendid celebration and feast. After this short honeymoon, we returned to Sydney where we put our shoulders to the grindstone that was work.

Some months before my wedding, I had closed the deal on the house right on the golf course at 3 Military Road, North Bondi near the bus terminal. Its garage, the first warehouse of F. Mayer Imports, was completely filled with Norwegian ski sweaters, Norwegian string underwear, Norwegian ragg socks, Hungarian nylon mittens, Norwegian seal skin apres ski boots, seal skin slippers, and seal skin ornaments. In addition, it held non-refrigerated food products such as Swiss wafers. The perishable cheeses were still at Sydney Cold Stores. I visited customers, made sales, and delivered the goods. Annette helped with the deliveries, and she and my father packed the interstate parcels of skiwear together.

Once a year, I went to a convention for all suppliers and customers of ski clothing that lasted about a week and was held at various places in Australia. During these, I often joined forces with Kurt Lance of Merit Apparel for joint presentations of our products. Kurt manufactured parkas, ski suits and jackets. He was one of the very few straight and decent people in the ski trade. Besides his, I especially liked one other company. Paddy Pallin was a reliable customer. Most of the rest of the concerns on the ski side were run by back stabbers, doing whatever they must to steal each other's agencies. Many of

them went bankrupt, regardless of what they did, because their businesses were so weather dependent and their selling season, so short. Plentiful snow could mean a good, but brief season, while a warm winter meant no season at all.

We worked hard during the day at these gatherings, but nights were saved for heavy drinking. This was not my scene, so Bob Carlon, who many years later was one of my managers, and I spent the evenings swimming in the hotel pools.

On November 22, 1964 (the first anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination), my first son, Robi, was born. The baby was officially due on Annette's birthday, the twentieth, but was a little late. My wife and I had dinner out on Saturday the twenty-first. We went to bed quite late, and at about 5:00 a.m., Annette woke up, complaining that she ate too much dinner and had intermittent indigestion. I asked if she were sure it was not the baby. She explained that labour was supposed to be painful. She had no pain, only gas. But when her water broke, I insisted that we go to the old Crown Street Maternity Hospital. Annette wanted to drive, but I knew that I could never live this down when the story was retold countless times to our families and friends. I took the wheel and got us to the hospital.

The sister who booked my wife into the health facility said that because this was a first baby, it would take a long time getting here. Therefore, I might just as well go home. This was about 6:00 a.m. The drive back to the house took about ten minutes. When I got there, the phone was ringing. "Congratulations! You have a son." reported the voice on the other end.

Annette's comments were: "I don't know why women make such a fuss. He just popped out."

I retraced my steps to greet my new son. Robi was a beautiful, but small, six pound baby with thick, black hair. He looked

like one of the Beatles (the most popular pop singing group of the 60s). Samu and Germaine arrived at the hospital to welcome their grandson who, by now, was being admired by the whole staff. I left my wife and the newest "Beetle" and raced off to Rushcutters Bay to play for the NSW Maccabi team against Queensland.

By the time I returned to the hospital, my mother was very upset and immediately took me to the newborn babies' section. Behind the window, Robi looked strange. His face was twitching and distorted. I called the sister and matron who laughed at us, saying fathers and grandmothers are always worried. Nevertheless, I insisted they call the hospital doctor who took Robi away to be examined. I rang some physician friends, and they recommended two good paediatricians. When the latter tried to help, the hospital superintendent refused to let them into the hospital because sometime in the past, the two had testified against the institution in a case of negligence. Finally, I found a third doctor who was acceptable to everyone.

The experts determined that Robi had a cerebral haemorrhage. There he was, less than a day old, looking like a poor, sad echidna with tubes sticking out of his scalp everywhere. The doctor said there was a 50 / 50 chance that he would survive. If the child lived for a couple of days, he would probably recover completely without any after effects.

We spent that next seemingly endless period, helpless and worried. Finally, Robi turned the corner. He would recover fully. A few months later he became part of the import business, albeit a passive part. As we made deliveries in the station wagon, Annette drove and double-parked while I ran into shops with the merchandise. Robi lay in the back of the car, guarding the cheeses, happy as any newborn could be in a position of responsibility. No wonder that about eighteen years later, he decided to join the business.

While we were building up the business, we managed to close for two or three weeks during the Christmas holidays. We did this for many years until the company became too large and demanding. We had some wonderful holidays during those years, including a number of sea cruises to the Islands. Fiji and New Caledonia stand out.

Our early deliveries were made with the station wagon, but later, we acquired a different vehicle. My surf club mate, Pearce Biram, once an N.R.M.A. driver and then a government railway mechanic, helped me choose F.Mayer Import's first delivery carrier, a VW. Kombi van. This van was an excellent buy for 500 Pounds. It was built to hold one ton, but it rarely carried less than two. We were flat out selling cheeses and packing orders until late at night. Our garage at 3 Military Road was stretched to capacity with skiwear and the Swiss wafers (chocolate, lemon, and vanilla) that sold so well. We still stored the cheeses at the Sydney Cold Stores. Our working days felt long.

A typical bureaucratic incident illustrated the stupidity of some of the governmental departments of that time. One day when I arrived home late in the afternoon, I found a man dressed in a dark suit and tie waiting for me. He identified himself as a taxation inspector who was there to check all my sales tax records, stating that I had paid tax on only a small portion of my turnover. He was right. I had. But legally so because sales tax applies to just a small portion of my imports. These include the Swiss wafers and the seal skin gift lines. All the others – food and skiwear – are exempt from sales tax.

The taxman spent the whole of the next week at my place going through the books. When he found that everything was completely in order, he asked me, "Have you ever tried any of those chocolates?"

I said, "Yes." and opened a box for him to taste too.

Three months passed after this visit by the little man with the sweet tooth, and I received a notification from the taxation department saying that everything was in order. However, I had acknowledged to my inquisitor that I opened five boxes of chocolates that I did not declare. Now I must pay sales tax of two pounds on them. For this, a man worked a whole week!

The skiwear business was all right – especially in the early stages of my business. It was a steady, good trade, but eventually the food arm of the company by far outgrew it. Ultimately, the skiwear had to go. (The final liquidation of stock would occur when I was working on the second settlement with Annette; and it became part of the negotiation for the Portland Street house.)

Because of the ruthless people in winter sportswear, I was rather glad to escape comical and pathetic situations like the following one. I sold a good part of my annual sweater order and all of the ragg socks to Myer of Melbourne. One year, the buyer, an Austrian, phoned me saying he had resigned, and his successor would be a young woman. Upon my arrival at the Southern Cross Hotel in Melbourne, my main competitor in ragg socks greeted me, and said, "The new Myer buyer is here and wants to meet you:' (The competitor is a budding poet.)

He introduced me to quite an attractive young woman who described herself as "new" to the job. She explained that she would be very busy, so could we do business immediately? She suggested my room. After dinner, she requested the copies of my past orders with prices. I had prepared these in Sydney and turned them over to her. She said she would have the new one ready the next day. Eventually, she left, and after a few hours of sleep, I got up to prepare for the busy first day of business.

I was shaving when there was a knock on the door. She was back! She came into the bathroom, sat on the tub, and declared:

"I'm extremely ashamed about last night. Myer does not employ me. I work for a competitor, and my job was to find out what your deal is with Myer. That's why I really wanted your paperwork."

When the authentic Myer turned up I still got the order. My rule is that before slamming a competitor for doing something wrong, I ask myself this question: "Would I have done to him what he did to me?" If the reply is, "Yes." I hold no grudge. For this simple reason, I have satisfactory relationships with ninety percent of my competitors in the food business. In skiwear, it was different. I would never sink to the depths that most of them do in ninety percent of the cases.

Unfortunately, around 1966, my father's health began to deteriorate. He had cerebral sclerosis that affected his mind. It was terrible seeing the person closest to me in my thirty-eight years going through this agony and getting worse every day. One of the doctors, a Hungarian, demonstrated for me how this illness affects the mental capacity of the patient. He asked my father all kinds of questions about events from forty-to-sixty years before. "What date did World War I start? And World War II? Who was the most famous Hungarian actress in 1914? Who was the Prime Minister of Hungary in 1920?" He put forth dozens of similar questions. Samu answered them all correctly like he was a living encyclopedia. But when he was queried about the last fifteen years, he could not reply to any of them. He did not even recognise me. That hurt. But he cuddled Robi, calling him "Frici". He thought Robi was I.

When it was impossible for my mother to look after him alone any more, we took Samu to Wolper Private Hospital (the Jewish hospital in Woollahra), where we paid for a private room. My mother sat with him fifteen hours a day, and I employed a private nurse for the nights. He was in Wolper for over six months, and at least once a week we got a phone call

in the middle of the night, reporting that he had another cerebral haemorrhage and probably would not live much longer.

He had such a strong heart that he always recovered by the morning, but after each of these episodes, his mind became worse. All his life, he had been afraid of prostate cancer because his father, my grandfather, died from it. Even at this stage in his illness, he called out to have his prostate checked. I had a neurologist look at him, and he declared that part of Samu's anatomy could be likened to a twenty-year-old's.

At least two specialists visited him daily. One day, I called Dr. Greenaway, who had saved Samu in the past from "certain death" by hyperthyroidism. Dr. Greenaway was himself an old man, suffering from Parkinson's disease. He examined my father; then asked sadly, "You expect me to perform a miracle and save him like I did fifteen years ago when he had thyroid disease? I am sorry, but this time I cannot help. Stop all treatment, and let your father die with dignity. All of them who come every day and keep him alive are just using him as a source of income."

In retrospect, I know he was right Subconsciously,I probably knew it then too, but I just could not let go. So Samu would linger for another six months in the hospital.

This happened during the reign of the Liberal government (before the 1973 Whitlam government) when Labour had not yet introduced Medicare. We had only the American private healthcare system. Although my family owned the best, most expensive coverage, for which I had spent thousands of dollars over the years, the insurer paid not a cent for the hospital costs, the medical visits, or for the medicines. Nothing! The reason for this was that "chronic diseases" were exempt from any reimbursement The cost of Samu's illness was taking its toll on the finances of my expanding business.

During the same year, 1967, I bought 48 Princes Avenue, Roseberry, which became the first warehouse owned by

F.Mayer Imports. The building on the property was a disreputable shack, but the deal was expensive because of the cost of the land. When I took the contractor there, he asked me if I had a key to the shack. I answered, "No, but we're going to demolish it anyway. Let's just kick in the door." I lunged at the door, my ankle locked to deliver a gigantic wallop. We jumped away as the whole front of the dilapidated building collapsed before us. This, at least, was a financial break. Finishing the demolition took less than a day.

I was lucky with the builder I engaged to construct the new premises. He was extremely adept at his job and honest. His quote for the project had been a quarter of the others' because he had a few slack months and did not want to sack his staff. This job tided them over.

Musically, Sydney improved considerably during the 1960s. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra, with a number of imported soloists and conductors, reached a good standard with its regular concerts at the Sydney Town Hall. The Australian Ballet organised the tour of Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev. The Opera, with its performances at the old Her Majesty's Theatre, improved regularly and well. One night, Annette and I attended a performance of Othello with Umberto Borsa. We had pancakes afterward, and on the way home, a mere forty-five minutes after the performance ended, we learned over the car radio that the theatre was afire. We could hear the sirens in the distance. The building burned to the ground, forcing the Opera Company to move to an old Newtown theatre until the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973.

Some of the pre-1973 opera performances and productions were quite excellent. For instance, while the Opera Company performed at Her Majesty's, Joan Sutherland and her husband,

the conductor, Bonynge, organised a "mixed company" that visited Sydney. They asked two prices. The higher one was for the nights when the "known" names sang with Miss Sutherland. Half-price was charged when the "unknown" members of the company performed operas. The first night (high price) was Lucia di Lammermoor with Sutherland, a superb Lucia.

The second was a half-price performance of L'Elisire d'Amore. After the interval, I rushed out to the booking office in the foyer of the theatre and bought tickets to every performance that included the "unknown" tenor. His name was Luciano Pavarotti. Six months later, he would be world famous.

Besides my type of music, in the sixties, Sydney provided a stage for the Beatles, who drew record crowds and caused major traffic jams.

1964 saw the Tokyo Olympics, where the Australian swimming officials banned the greatest Australian swimmer, Dawn Frazer, for ten years (which in her case, meant life) for marching in the opening ceremony when she was supposed to rest for her event. Rested or not, she still won the gold medal in the 100-metre. She was "a bit of a lad" and proved it when she and her friends light-fingered the Olympic flag in Japan. At the same Games, Hungary took the gold in both water polo and soccer. The Ethiopian, Bilkas, won the marathon and started a trend in outstanding performances by African runners.

One hundred thirty-five people were killed in a non-Olympic soccer game in Peru. And in 1964, eighty-five sailors died during the largest peacetime tragedy in Australia when the Australian aircraft carrier, Melbourne, collided with the destroyer, Voyager, off the coast of NSW.

There were several important political events during the mid-sixties. Cardinal Mannix, the conspirator who kept Labour out of office with his machinations, died just short of his one hundredth birthday in 1964. Other famous people who died

about that same time were General MacArthur, Nehru, and Churchill, who was ninety-one.

Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment in South Africa. He would spend the next twenty-five years in jail before becoming the first Black president of the New South Africa. Jomo Kenyatta was released from a British prison to become President of what would be an independent Kenya. In America, Martin Luther King, an active voice for civil rights, was jailed and later murdered. He is remembered, among others things, for his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Brezhnev, who would rule Russia in complete stagnation for many years, displaced Khrushchev. His rule lead eventually to the collapse of Communism. Wilson of Great Britain became Prime Minister in a victory for the Labour Party.

At home, the most important event was the entry of Australia and New Zealand into the Vietnam conflict. Hundreds of Australians died for nothing. This conflict was very different from the Korean War, to which most of the Western world sent troops. Vietnam, at this stage, was an American action from which all the European countries abstained. America's only support came from Australia and New Zealand. Australia and the USA employed an odd method of conscription. It was a macabre "death lottery". The days of the year were placed in a hopper, and as they were drawn out one by one, young men who had been born on those days were forced to enter the armed forces. Just as it was in America, Vietnam was extremely controversial in Australia. Protest demonstrations and fights were regular occurrences.

Singapore seceded from Malaysia in 1965-1966, and Lee Kuan Yew cried during his speech. In just a couple of decades he had turned a dirty, malaria-ridden British Colony into a prosperous, efficient, hygienic city with the best airport and airline in the world.

In 1965, due to political controversy, Utzon, the designer and planner of Sydney Opera House, resigned over a dash with the Liberal premier of NSW. In spite of his not finishing it, this building will always be a memorial to the Danish architect.

About this time, Australia went decimal, using dollars and cents instead of pounds, shillings, and pence. We also switched to metric system as opposed to the antiquated one of yards, feet, and inches. (The US now is the only non-metric country.)

In 1966 in South Africa, Prime Minister Verwoerd was assassinated, and Vorster, Minister of Justice, succeeded him. There was an attempt to kill the Labour leader, Caldwell, in Sydney. Fortunately, Caldwell was only slightly injured. However, this attack was new to Australia, where political leaders routinely moved among the people without fear or need of protection.

During the last days of my father's life, the dark clouds of war once again enveloped the Middle East. The Arab nations, led by Egypt, threatened to invade and annihilate Israel. This led to the preventative, six-day war in which the Israeli Air Force bombed the Arab airports, destroyed their planes, and, in six days, defeated the Arab armies.

Because I was doing considerable business in Chinese foods at this time, I flew to Hong Kong and to Taiwan. While in Hong Kong, I went to Macao and to the Red Chinese border. This was at the height of the "Cultural Revolution" (the mid-60s) in China when the Red Border Guards regularly threw Mao's "little red book" to the tourists on the Portuguese side of the border. It was a small, red, plastic-covered piece entitled Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung. The Chairman was eulogised in it as the central source of all wisdom and leadership, the infallible superman, and the philosopher and poet whose works, together with Marx and Lenin, were quoted as gospel.

Upon arriving in Taipei (capital of Taiwan), everybody had to open his luggage, and the Taiwanese police confiscated all newspapers and books that they labelled "Communist". On the plane, I had been reading the life story of Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist leader of the nineteenth century. A Taiwanese officer looked at the book and said, "This name sounds like a Russian Communist's. I'll have to check the list."

I replied, "He was not exactly a Communist!. He'd be more Left than the Communists would. But since I've finished reading the book, you can keep it."

Mr. Cheng, my supplier picked me up outside customs. As we left the Taipei airport in his car, we heard a siren behind us, and the policeman in the car motioned for us to stop. We pulled over. The customs officer who had taken my book emerged from his car and said: "Kropotkin is not on the prohibited list. You may have this back."

Taiwan was called Formosa, meaning "beautiful" in Portuguese, before it became Taiwan. The Japanese occupied the country from the end of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II, when it reverted to China. In 1947, when Communism triumphed in China, Chiang Kai-shek, with the remains of his army, retreated to Taiwan, making it Nationalist China. The local population, who until recently were treated as second class citizens, were not supportive of this change.

Ever since the Nationalists took over Taiwan, Red China has tried to unite it with Red China. The USA has poured billions of dollars into reinforcing the island's defence. This was evident during my visit. The beaches along the coast were closed. Heavy military concentrations peppered the landscape with artillery, and enormous guns pointed toward the mainland.

Because Taiwan was held by the Japanese for along time and is only two hours from Tokyo by air, the Taiwanese concentrate on

Japanese tourism. Just outside the capitol, there is an area called "Peito". Here, steaming artesian wells bubble from the earth. There are scores of luxury hotels in this region of Taipei that once served as a grand-scale brothel area with tens-of-thousands of young prostitutes catering to the tourist trade. My supplier, his wife, and children took me there, where he rented a suite that had its own artesian water spa. We had a lavish banquet!

Soon after this, the government banned the brothel it had set up and declared the area a "Spa Resort". But apparently the Japanese tourists were more interested in sex than they were in the health spas, because many of those luxury hotels went bankrupt.

One day when I was in the offices of my supplier, I noticed that all the office girls were giggling. When I asked, why, I was told they just wanted to know if I had a hairy chest. Assuming I could please them, I took my shirt off, baring my chest, which is the antithesis of the Chinese, hairless variety.

Since that visit to Taiwan, the country has become one of the most prosperous Asian nations. But in spite of he big business deals between Red China and the Taiwanese, the conflict and armed preparedness continues still.

As I have written (and my family knows it only too well), my water polo playing was and is consequential to me as relaxation and exercise. My team in 1967, the Amalgamated East Sydney-Drummoyne, was doing fairly well, but had been beaten by the two uppermost squads of those days, Bronte and Balmain. Brian Hamill, who was a State player, told me one day that his barber's daughter and son-in-law were coming to Australia on their Honeymoon for two months. The son-in-law was an Olympic Yugoslav water polo player. I was quite skeptical of

the latter claim because after every Olympics, dozens of people claim to be Olympians who, in fact, have never been to the Games. We nevertheless agreed to give him a go. All four of the first grade games were played in the Balmain pool on Thursdays. On this particular day. our competition was Bronte, the leading team that year. They had beaten us convincingly in the first round, So we had nothing to lose.

Suddenly, Brian called out, "Here he comes!" And down the steps of Balmain pool, strode this enormous fellow, 2.10 metres tall (7 feet).

Mickey Withers, the Balmain/Olympic goalkeeper, turned to me and said calmly, "You can give up your doubts about that fellow. He's Mirko Sandic. He scored seven goals on me at the last Olympics."

Bronte suffered its first defeat of the season that night as Mirko scored us to victory.

I was thirty-nine during that season of 1967, but I played the best water polo of my life. Being next to Mirko helped. One day we had a practice game against the NSW State side, and Mirko asked me if I wanted to show off. He suggested that I come up with him as a second centre forward. Whenever he got the ball, he played around with it, and when the fellow marking me jumped him, he just passed the ball to me to score the point.

Mirko and I became good friends, but my father was still alive then, and due to his illness, I could not spend enough time with him and his wife, Lilliana. (However, we remain close today.) After the Olympics in Mexico City, during which Yugoslavia, led by Mirko, won the gold medal, he became manager for Yugoslav Airlines for Southeast Asia. I visited him in Singapore three or four times a year for many years, and he often made quick trips to Sydney. He also coached the State side one year and stayed at my home on Hardy Street, Dover Heights.

I have seen and have played with and against some world- class players such as Oscar Charles (Csuvik). I have watched the Hungarians: Gyarmati, Karpati, and Bolvari; the Italian, De Majestis; and the Spaniard, Estiarte. They are very good. Also during the last ten-to-fifteen years, Australia has produced some superlative players who hold their own against any team: Charles Turner, Chris Wybrow, and Andrew Kerr. But, due probably to his enormous size, Mirko Sandic was the world's best player ever.

MY FATHER, SAMU (1887-1967)

My father, Samu, died on May 30, 1967 at 8:00 a.m. with us all at his bedside. Though his death had been expected for six months, it was still a shock. It is always too soon! The last months of his life, if one could call it a life, were miserable, and I kept reminding myself afterward that, under these circumstances, death was better for him.

At times like this, I am sorry that I cannot believe in religion and envy those who can. And as I approach the critical three-score-and-ten, I am more regretful still. Getting old and not believing makes one question the futility of it all. What does it matter what a person accomplishes? Finally, whether a man is a scientist, a writer, philosopher, or financier makes no real difference. When the final bell sounds, his achievements count for nothing.

Maybe this pervasive futility is what made people from the earliest of recorded history, in every part of the world, believe or want to believe in a "God" and in "everlasting life". Lucky are those who put their faith in a "Lord".

Perhaps wanting (needing) to believe is what allowed people to turn blind eyes to priests (who supposedly exemplified the best

religion could offer) who taught their "flocks" to follow their examples – yet carried out atrocious exploitations of human beings at the same time. Throughout history, the most heinous murders, the worst injustices, and the greatest excesses have been in the name of God. For instance, the Holy Spanish Inquisition provided the basis for all of Hitler's ideas. The yellow star for the Jews, the ideas about, and the forms of persecution of them, all originated in the Catholic Church and its tenets. Even the SS troops were based on the Jesuit followers. It was not a coincidence that during the Nazi era, the most evil murderers came from Bavaria, Austria, Croatia, the Ukraine, and Poland. These were the most religious areas, and the churches ruled.

It is sad that the Moslems, whose religion was the most tolerant, today, have become fundamentalists who are as intolerant as those who follow other religions. Formerly, in Spain, where for centuries the Catholic Church murdered Jews and other non-believers, the only time there was freedom was when the Moslem Moors occupied that country. Only under them was there was no religious discrimination.

Spanish Jews such as Maimonides (Rambam), who performed brain surgery many hundred of years ago, and Spinoza, who preached the 3 x 8 hour day (8hrs work – 8hrs sleep – 8hrs relaxation) were far more advanced and humane than Christian theorists. Even in the nineteenth century, the Reverend Malthus (author of Malthus Theories) preached in England that the world was over-populated, and to please God, workers should labour about sixteen hours a day. (Are we supposed to buy that he was not suggesting the exploitation of capitalists?)

Most people who profess religion are convinced that as long as they go to church, they can play out their everyday lives however they choose. What's a little dishonesty here and there? In the Catholic Church, simple confession offers absolution from sin. When my business was small, and I knew all my customers, I had no losses from bad debts because of this simple principle I put into operation. It did not matter what religion the customer was. If he went to church, no credit!

After my father's death, my mother was in a terrible way. So, while the first warehouse of F.Mayer Imports was being built, I decided to take my family on a trip around the world. My mother needed a change, and I thought that if I took her to visit the few relatives we had left in the USA, Portugal, Hungary, Israel, and India, it would give her a stronger sense of our extended family and buoy her up a bit, Annette was also keen on going, and we would take Robi, who was thirty months old then.

So on July 20, 1967, we left Sydney on a British Airlines plane to see the world. We spent the first night in Nadi, Fiji and then flew on to Honolulu. From there, we visited Vancouver and Montreal, where we went to the Montreal Expo, 1967. It was surprising how stifling the city was in July – much hotter than Sydney gets at its worst in summer. In New York, where we stayed for two nights, we visited my mother's cousins, the Balassa family, who had been our good friends in Hungary. We continued on to Lisbon from New York, visiting Uncle Tibi and his new wife there.

Our first stop in Europe was Switzerland, where I did a little business at the Zingg cheese factory with Jean Jacques Amman. August first is a national holiday in Switzerland, and we spent it with John at his vacation home on Lake Murten. We played with his speedboat, swam, and attended a festival to mark the occasion. The bear is the emblem of the canton of Berne, so a man dressed up as a bear and worked the crowd at the festival. Robi was quite frightened by the fur character, and this scare is the only thing he remembers from the whole of the trip around the world.

I made some quick business calls in Rotterdam and later, in Copenhagen, where we spent four nights at the Richmond Hotel.

We met with Mr. Hess, the export manager of Oma cheese. In Oslo, one of the skiwear suppliers took us on some notable side trips before we continued to Bergen. I did business with the people from Petersen and Dekke in Bergen and decided to take the short flight to Stavanger, where I would meet some canned fish manufacturers.

We were all at the airport at 6:00 a.m.; but due to the windy conditions, the plane could not land. So we returned to Bergen and took a l0:00 a.m. hydrofoil instead from in front of the hotel. (We could have had an extra four hours of sleep.)

This was a terribly rushed trip, but it was good for my mother and very interesting for Annette. Robi may have faired the best of all of us. He saw the world from atop my aching shoulders as we moved from place-to-place.

In London, we met with friends from the old days in Hungary, and Annette and I went to the theatre. Then we flew to Budapest. I was asked if I wanted to fly on the Hungarian Malev or with British Airlines. Because I trusted the latter more, I elected to book with them. The plane to Hungary seemed awfully empty and I asked, why. The hostess explained that our aircraft was a "Comet 4" – an accident-prone vehicle. A number of them had experienced mechanical problems, and, yes, several had crashed.

This was my first visit to Communist Hungary since 1948, but since we all had Australian passports, there would be none of the problems of the old days. We stayed five nights at the Gellert Hotel on the Buda side. It was equipped with a fifty-metre pool and all the trimmings: artificial waves that ebbed and flowed for ten minutes of every hour, sauna, and steam room. A lift next to our rooms delivered us conveniently to the pool.

We contacted many of our old friends and relatives, including Kerry Kohn (now Norbert) and arranged a dinner at the restaurant in the Gellert for about twenty-five of my mother's and my friends

and relatives. The next night while Germaine was babysitting Robi, Annette and I attended a Hungarian folk dance and singing festival. We went by taxi, but it was a beautiful night, so at the end of the performance, I suggested we walk back to the hotel.

I insisted that I remembered my way around Budapest and, of course, became hopelessly lost, finally ending up at 2:00 a.m. in an industrial area with not a living soul in sight. Much later, a tram carrying workers came by. I hailed it, and when the vehicle passed a taxi, we got out and hired a lift to the hotel. We arrived at 4:00.

One morning I went down to the pool at 5:30 a.m., hoping to find it empty. Quite the opposite was true. Union members had been given free access to it from 5:30 to 8:00, and there were many union members in the now overcrowded pool.

There was plenty to do in Budapest. A cousin and her husband owned a rowboat with four seats. Normally, two people rowed while the other two, rode. Gentleman that I am, I allowed Annette the first opportunity to row by herself. She brought us up the Danube, which is considerable work against a strong current. Then, after a fine, leisurely lunch, I offered to oar back with the flow. I was up to the job by then.

Our next stop was Vienna, where I booked into the famous old Sacher Hotel for three nights for the sake of my mother. This was the establishment where she used to stay with my father before the war. She had many memories of Vienna.

In 1967, I was importing peeled tomatoes in tins from La Dorva in Salerno. So when we moved on to Rome, the boss's nephew came to our hotel and offered to act as our travel guide. We were surprised that even though he could not speak English (I had to interpret in my makeshift Italian), whenever he showed us famous ruins or landmarks, he turned to Annette and my mother and rendered a perfect description of them in fluent English.

When I queried this, he told me that he was a university student, paying his way through college by working as a tourist guide to English-speaking travellers. Everything he said about each attraction, he had memorised from records.

Carrying Robi on my shoulders was especially tiring in the Rome heat. We chose to visit the Catacombs, where the guides were priests who spoke in various languages. Naturally, because of Annette, we choose an English group. As usual, Robi rode my shoulders while we picked our way carefully through the darkness, the candlelight eerily illuminating the ancient skeletons and skulls around us. In the midst of "our" priest's lecture about the history of the Catacombs, Robi burst out loudly: "Dad, this is no place to bring a little baby." This bought the crowd, including the priest, to their knees as they roared with laughter.

On another day, we went to the Villa d'Este Tivoli gardens. On the way back, Robi decided he wanted to go to the toilet to have a "wee". Annette made him do it in a plastic bag and then had to hang onto it herself all the way to Rome. Sometimes a two-hour bus trip seems particularly long.

We continued on to Tel Aviv, where we spent four days in Israel. The first night, I invited Berni Wroclavski from Ramat Gav to visit. His were the games Samu and I sold along with books in 1944-45. We were strongly advised against renting a car since some of the areas were still not cleared of mines from the recent war. So we hired a taxi to Haifa, and from there, to Kiriat Bialik where my grandmother's brother and his two married daughters, Edith and Margo, lived. On the following day on our way to Jerusalem, our local taxi driver was stopped by Military Police for taking the wrong shortcut. He accidentally had driven onto a closed road that was a potential minefield.

On September eighth, we boarded an Air France flight to New Delhi, and I noticed that it had a stopover in Teheran, Iran.

The plane was full of Hebrew-speaking young and middle-aged men and women. The Shah still ruled Iran, and he overtly expressed his solidarity with the Arab countries. Therefore, I was very surprised to see all the Israelis get off there. It turned out that they were the army and air force staff and agricultural experts who were invited by the Shah to train the Iranians.

On the flight to New Delhi, remembered the bad stomach problems I had experienced when I was in India before and began worrying about Robi. It would be impossible to tell a two-and-a-half-year-old, "Don't drink the water," when he is thirsty and the thermometer reads over 40°C. Therefore, I asked one of the French airline hostesses if she would sell me a case of canned water. She said she could not sell it, but as we disembarked, she gave us two cases, containing forty-eight tins. We carried that water everywhere for Robi. This time we were lucky. None of us got the "Delhi belly".

Our plane arrived in New Delhi at 4:00 in the morning. Rene and Raj were waiting for us in evening dress. Because they could not possibly get up at 3:00 a.m. to pick us up at the airport, the two had gone to a party and then had come directly from there to get us.

We had many conversations about the important and the not so important with Rene and Raj. Rene asked Annette one question that would prove important about eight years later. "How can you live with your mother-in-law?" Annette replied: "It's very good. We have a built in babysitter, so we can go out at a moment's notice."

We flew out of New Delhi on the evening of the twelfth of September on Qantas to Hong Kong, where we stayed for two nights at the Mandarin Hotel, did some sightseeing, and shopped. Finally, we arrived home in Sydney on Friday the fifteenth of September at 8:00 a.m.

HEEEERE'S, SAMI!

After the trip, I returned to work and found that my new warehouse at No. 48 Princes Ave., Roseberry was ready. It was good moving the merchandise out of the seam-stressed garage. In the cool rooms, there was also a freezer for smoked salmon. My first employee was Bobby Bray, a Bronte Surf Club boy. (Bobby left after a couple of years when he accepted a long-awaited job as an airline steward with Qantas.) We swam and even ran together. Our hours were strange. We began work before sun-up. Annette and I invoiced while Bobby made the deliveries. That finished, we went for a run and a swim – then returned to the store. Sometimes at night we picked up the goods at the wharves if they came in.

Our hard work paid off. From this time on, the business grew rapidly, and we were forced to buy more delivery vans and expand the staff. The latter included "casuals" from the surf clubs and eventually, water polo players. (Much later, I would have so many water polo players at work that we figured out that F.Mayer Imports could have a team that could easily beat the rest of Australia in a water polo game.) Bob Carlon, a friend from City Tattersal Swimming Club left the skiwear trade, became the NSW General Manager for Kentucky Fried Chicken, and finally came aboard as General Manager. Though I handled my business well, my weakness was that I could not sack anybody. Let me illustrate.

One of my delivery vehicles was an eight-ton truck. One day it broke down, and when I took it in for repairs, I was told that the repairs would cost more than the total value of the carrier. The reason given was that the levels of oil and water in the truck had never been checked. When I asked the driver, who had come to me with good references, why he did not put oil or water in it, ever, he protested, "I didn't know you had to!"

I had another driver, an unemployed teacher, who drove our two-ton Bedford truck, and was doing a fair job. Christmas came, and I decided to close for three weeks so I could go on a cruise to the Islands with Annette and the kids. Because the van had suffered several dents, I thought this would be a good time to get it in for repairs. So I booked it into Bobby Low, Panel Beaters. My driver said he too was taking four weeks off to go to the Northern Territory, and would drop the van off so it could be fixed up while we were both away.

In January, I returned and rang Bobby Low's to arrange for the pick-up of the van. He replied, "Your driver never dropped it off. I haven't seen it at all." Assuming that my employee had, in fact, left the van and that it had been stolen before Bobby Lowe could work on it, I reported the theft to the police and the insurance company.

Sometime during the second half of February, my driver turned up, driving the by-now-very well-dented Bedford. When I asked him what happened, he answered, "I took the van to the Northern Territory with my girl friend. We slept in it and had a phenomenal time!" So much for this vehicle! The drive of a few thousand kilometres had rendered the van a write-off.

Another much more serious staff problem arose a few years later. I employed H.G. as a foreman in the warehouse. He had a key and opened around 4:00 a.m. At one point, I noticed some stock shortages, including the loss of a considerable amount of smoked salmon. Bob Carlon decided to call in the police. The Sergeant Detective's first question was: "Who is the most-trusted man you have in the storehouse?"

Both of us said, "H. G."

After a short inquisition, the detective paused and reflected aloud: "All right; with everything you've told me, I'd say there's a ninety percent chance that he's the thief. Let's concentrate

on him. It's too bad, but often it's the most-trusted employees who turn out to be the criminals." Our detective tried to get a search warrant for H.G.'s house, but the magistrate turned him down.

In the meantime, I received an anonymous phone call and immediately recognised the voice and the accent as belonging to one of H.G.'s close friends. The voice instructed: "H.G. has a three-car garage at his house. He's installed a refrigerator and some shelving in it; and that's where he stores the stuff he steals from you before he sells it himself."

I told this to the detective, who called the staff together and suggested that to make things easy, they should volunteer to have their homes searched. H.G. was the first of them to step up, saying, "I'm the foreman, and I have a key. I insist you check out my place before the others."

The officers found nothing pertinent in his home and suggested they move on to the garage. H.G. first objected, and then he confessed to his crime. The detective took possession of thousands-of-dollars worth of smoked salmon, cheeses, and Norwegian sweaters – all mine – and returned them to my warehouse.

H.G. was charged in court, found guilty, and fined only 500 dollars because this was his "first offence". The irony of the story is that H.G. had the gall to go to the Department of Labour and Industry with his solicitor and tell them that he had been "sacked without notice".

How could I possibly have fired him? He never returned to work after he confessed to robbing me blind! His solicitor suggested that we could "make this all go away" if I paid H.G.'s $500 fine. Then they would withdraw their complaint against me.

I consulted my attorney, who advised me to pay, saying, "It will cost you more than $500 if you don't settle. Just pay the man."

So here is the final scenario. H.G. was found guilty of stealing merchandise valued at tens-of-thousands from me, and I had to pay his fine. Where is the justice in the justice system? I guess it was lucky for me that the magistrate was lenient with H.G. and did not impose a heavier fine.

Unfortunately, this was not the end of the matter. The ever-so-cooperative detective came to see me, saying that he hated thieves and that I should start proceedings. H.G's house was fully paid for (probably with money from the goods he stole from me), and we should demand restitution for the "hot" properties he sold. My solicitor advised that this was a "sure thing" as long as the detective was willing to testify. Our whole case would rest on that.

I checked again to make certain that the officer of the law would, in fact, step up to bat. He affirmed, "Anything to help nail the bastard crook. Count on me. I'll be there to finger the louse." He went on to tell the lawyer to subpoena him "when the case comes up". Together, we would get him.

After nearly a year, the court case was called. My lawyer asked, "Please ring up the detective and make sure he's still willing to comply with our subpoena. We need him."

I followed instructions and was assured by the detective that he would be there to testify. He only wanted "to serve justice", and was "glad to get this thing moving". (Uh-Huh!)

Our detective received his subpoena the day before the case began – about three days after our last, reassuring conversation. Then, that same officer of the law rang me, questioning: "Who are you? And what's this subpoena about anyway? I can't remember a thing about you or this ex-employee of yours. There's nothing I can say to help you."

(Now is this, or is this not, another good case for the Royal Commission on Police Corruption?)

Be assured that not all of my employees during this period were irresponsible or crooked. For instance, I hired an extremely upright and loyal worker, Moshe, an Israeli/Catholic/Arab. He disliked H.G. from the first minute he met him and regularly threatened to beat him up. Moshe kept telling me, "You cannot trust the bastard." Why didn't I listen?

On January 20, 1969, my second son, Sami, was born. He had to work harder than Robi did to get here because he was in the breech position. Nevertheless, in spite of this complication, he emerged about one hour after Annette's admittance to the Paddington Women's Hospital. Another small baby of three kilos, Sami had a flat nose like a boxer's and red hair. He was circumcised on the eighth day. (Looking at them today, it is hard to believe that both Robi and Samii were small babies at birth.) We now had our full family of two sons. We were lucky that both have been healthier than most.

Our business reached the size where Roseberry now seemed too small, so I had to hire some cool rooms for extra storage at the back of a fruit shop in Marrickville. Eventually, I moved into larger premises on Henderson Road, Alexandria as an adjunct to the warehouse at Roseberry. Finally, when even those two together were not sufficient, I sold them and bought a larger one at Mascot. (I should never have sold any real estate at all. It would have been far smarter to get bank loans for the new property; but I am a bit stubborn when it comes to owing money to banks or to other creditors.)

About this time, the Czechoslovakian National Water Polo Team visited Sydney. Though I do not speak either Czech or Slovak, I could act as an interpreter because they all came from Kosice (Kassa) which is Hungarian-speaking. Our club, Drummoyne-East Sydney, went up against them. Though

it seems that I played for many clubs, this is not so. The plain fact is that I merely have outlived them. (Today, in 1998, when my playing days are nearing the end, I have participated for fifty years. This must be a record!) The facts are that I started in Bondi, where I played for six years. Then I joined East Sydney, which merged with Drummoyne. When the Drummoyne-East Sydney members became too old to play and dropped out, there were only two East Sydney ones left – Don Bogg and myself. The club then reverted back to the name of Drummoyne.

One day, just back from one of my European business trips, Nino Sydney, who competed for Manly after the Bondi club folded, suggested that I join Manly. They were arranging a team tour of New Zealand under the name the "Clovelly Devils". I enjoyed this season with Manly because in those days, there were no substitutions. The original seven players stayed in for the entire game. First through fourth grades played in the same pool on the same night, and grading rules were not rigid. I always competed on the evening when all four grades did, which meant about four hours of competition.

Our trip to New Zealand started in Auckland. We only had eight players. One of them was Phil Bower. Before we boarded our plane in Sydney, his mother and stepfather, an old friend of mine, Jack Campbell, came to me and asked quietly: "We think we have given enough pocket money to Phil, but, should he need anything, will you please see that he gets it; and we'll repay you immediately when you get back?" (This conversation only gets a mention because years later, when Robi was on the Australian under 20s team and Phil was the manager, this very conversation took place between Phil and myself.)

During our first match, one of our players was hit in the face, had several stitches, and could not play anymore. The injured athlete was "Tubby" Ward, who later became General Manager

of QANTAS. This left us with seven participants – no reserve. We were unbeaten in Auckland, Hamilton, Mata-Mata, Palmerston North and Wellington, and were billeted everywhere by local sportsmen and their families. We went to Rotorua and the South Island (playing a couple of games in Christchurch), and then finally to Mt.Cook and Queenstown, where we became just plain tourists. This was my first trip to New Zealand, and I still find it is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Since then, I have been there on several water polo tours, holidays, and often for business. (I import a considerable amount of New Zealand smoked salmon and sell quite a number of my products to customers all over the country.)

After this water polo tour, I had a holiday there with Annette and the two kids. We booked into a motel near the airport at Christchurch and had dinner with a business acquaintance that evening, racing back to our room every fifteen minutes to check on the children. Sami was about one and Robi, five, at that time. When we returned for the night, Sami was nowhere to be seen. We searched frantically and behaved as any normal parents do who have misplaced their child, and are certain they will never see him again. We found him, fast asleep under his bed.

I have always loved sea travel. When Sami was about two, we went on a Russian cruise ship for a tour of the Islands. This time I was safe from my usual complaint that I would get fat from the magnificent food on the ship because, during this journey, the meals were just not that great. Since this was a cruise ship, there were professional entertainers onboard. They, too, were second-rate. So the nights everybody enjoyed most were those when the "performers" rested, and the Russian crew presented their own programs of singing, dancing,

and balalaika playing. Without exception, we all thought that entertainment, superb.

On this trip, a volleyball contest had been arranged between the crew and the passengers. In anticipation of the big event, we tourists trained religiously until the day our team members were chosen. Ours was comprised of all young fellows in their twenties and myself, considerably older. To our squad's humiliation, the crew fielded a team of its own, consisting of overweight, middle-aged women who were the kitchen staff. They beat all the young men and the older me quite convincingly.

There were many poker machines all over ship. So Sami obtained a twenty-cent coin, climbed on a chair, put it into a machine, pulled the arm, and, won the Jackpot. For the next twenty-four hours, he spent most of his time plying the other machines with his winnings until his money was all used up. When his mother and I refused to give him more, he threw a tantrum. Naturally this happened where all kids' tantrums occur – in front of the whole world. So when other passengers enquired why such a beautiful child was sobbing uncontrollably, we explained that we had a two-year-old gambler on our hands. Suddenly, before our very eyes, the phenomenal occurred. Those ordinary passengers turned into grandparents, giving Sami all the twenty-cent pieces he would need to keep his small, gambling elbow sore and busy at the machines for the rest of the trip.

Our house at Bondi North had practically no garden, but the kids considered the golf course behind the house an extension of our property and their playground. One day Larry and Robi collected a bucket of golf balls, which they later sold to the golfers who were playing that day. When queried about where these balls came from, they admitted they found them.

They were lying all over the golf course. All they had to do was bend over and pick them up. And resell them.

In 1967, I sold that house and bought a two-story place at 79 Hardy Street, Dover Heights. This was a much nicer residence on a quiet street with large yards in front and back. At Bondi, because the golf course was next to us, there had been considerable late-night noise as people left the clubhouse at 1:00 or 2:00 a.m., often quite drunk and loud. That was the house with the bus terminal nearby as well. So when the golfer/revellers were not keeping us awake, the bus drivers were. Twenty-four hours a day, the curved road in front became itself a sound-stage for a cacophony of screeches and crude insults. Without any of these interruptions in our new home, Annette and I became utterly sleep-deprived for the first few days. How did our neighbours handle this horrible silence?

Those neighbours turned out to be extraordinary! The house on our right (the corner of Hardy and Liverpool streets) belonged to a Polish/Jewish couple. When I decided to put in a fourteen- metre pool, a cabana, and a building with a sauna, the builders said it would be much cheaper if they could go through the neighbours' yard. The elderly couple agreed without hesitation and lived with a dug-up lawn for weeks. On our other side, was the Italian Fantuzi family – Toni, Tina and their three kids. Their two sons were the same ages as Robi and Sami, and they all became fast friends. Toni, a builder and owner of a cement company, built a special door in our backyard so that we all could go back and forth between our houses. He also constructed a cantina under his home that was full of wines, cheeses, and Italian hams. Every Sunday, he and his wife held an open house there where friends gathered from early morning until very late at night.

Other neighbours were the Economous family – Michael and Tina (Greek). They owned the travel agency that we still use today. And finally, Oscar Joseph (of Lebanese origin) and his French wife rounded out our new, small community.

We were all close friends and had fine times together, especially on the weekends when we walked freely in and out of each other's houses. We ate and drank our ways through the big poker parties, where we played for cents. One night at Michael Economous' house, a couple of his acquaintances turned up well after midnight. When they asked the stakes in our poker game, they made some derogatory remarks about our "cheap, penny-ante ways" and challenged us to play poker like "real men" for "real money."

We accepted, but said, "It's late. One round only. Each person deals just once." We sent the wives and kids out, leaving just the six of us. The "guests" played like mad men, putting hundreds of dollars down on each bet. None of us regulars (Mike, Toni, Oscar, or myself) were gamblers by nature. However, on this occasion, the "visitors", with their gambling ways and loud bravado, lost, to the tune of several thousand dollars. Toni picked up the bulk of the pot, but Mike, Oscar, and I did not do too badly either.

Toni's uncle was a Catholic Monsignor in Italy who came to Australia now and then to visit his numerous relatives. On this occasion, he had received special permission from the Cardinal to celebrate Christmas Mass at Toni's house. All of us, no matter what nationality or religion, were invited.

When the mass was over, the Monsignor quickly changed into shorts and thongs and sauntered over to Robi, saying, "C'mon, Robi, you and I are going fishing." In the evening, I was speaking with one of Toni's cousins at the cantina. He told me all of them came from Udine, and I jokingly referred to a word in Italian for a particular part of the female anatomy. Every region of Italy has its own word for it.

At this, Toni's cousin shouted out to the Monsignor, "Listen, Uncle. Fred even knows our slang."

I begged him, "Please, don't embarrass me!"

He pointed to the Monsignor, laughing, "Why? He's wearing shorts – not his uniform. He's just one of us now." (This only reinforces my view, that if all nationalities treated religion as the Italians do, it would be a very different world.)

One of the biggest mistakes I ever made was that, after my divorce, I sold my house on Hardy Street. I miss those neighbours!

Of course, things changed there too. Sometime after we left, Toni died under tragic and, to me, mysterious circumstances. One Sunday afternoon the old group was eating and drinking at the cantina as usual when Toni told his wife that he was going to work to fill his car with fuel. He did not return. Next morning, his brother found Toni's body in the shower recess. Apparently, my old neighbour and friend had picked up a metal ashtray, held it to his chest, and shot himself through it with a riveting gun. There was no note. No farewell of any kind. Nothing. It was hard for me to accept that this was a suicide.

In our new neighbourhood, there was a squash centre run by a couple, Miriam and Keith. I played there with my neighbour, Eddy, his wife, Lyn, their son, Eddy jr., their daughter, Vicki, and her boyfriend. Eddy Proudfoot was not only my squash partner, but my dentist as well. I had been talked into getting a medical checkup. The result was that everything was fine, but the head x-ray showed that I had a bad infection in my mouth, and my gums were affected. Eddy sent me to a gum surgeon who, after putting me through hell, did not cure the problem. I was in terrific pain and went off to find Eddy one Sunday afternoon. He was at the surf club taking part in the usual weekend's drinking party. Eddy could not drive due to his having consumed more than "the legal limit", but he could still practice dentistry just fine. He relieved my pain and referred me to another specialist who decided the problem was my wisdom teeth, buried deep within the gums. So Eddie removed the culprits, and that was that.

We were booked to play squash afterward, but Eddy would not let me go because the extreme exercise could cause bleeding.

So we did what friends do in times of boredom; we went back to my house and finished off a bottle of scotch.

One night, several years after we moved in, Miriam, Eddy's wife, asked if Annette could do them a favour. The Dover Heights C grade squash team was short a player. They just needed Annette to fill in for the night so the team would be eligible to play in the semi-finals. Would she mind helping out? It did not matter how good she was, or was not, or even if they won. They just needed another warm body.

After work, I had my shower, got dressed, and went to watch the game. But by this time, it was over. I teased Annette: "Boy, you sure lost pretty fast."

Her prompt comeback was: "Oh, no! I won 9:0 – 9:0 – 9:0."

This overwhelming victory encouraged her to compete regularly, and soon she was playing A grade. Miriam came by to apologise. She was really sorry that she had asked Annette to substitute that night. She never guessed my wife would make the A team. I was surprised by her concern and asked, "What's wrong with A grade?"

She replied sadly, "All A grade women players get divorced." I laughed it off. There was nothing wrong with our marriage.

In the late sixties and early seventies Robi was going to Rose Bay Public. And when the time came, Annette enrolled Sami in kindergarten, which, to my surprise and amusement, turned out to be the Bondi Yeshiva. On one of our holidays during that period, we flew to Fiji, staying at the Fijian Resort, where we met Tomi and Vera Bender and their son, Peter. We hired a fishing boat and all went out to sea together.

I have known Tomi and Vera since their arrival in Australia in 1957. Tomi also sold smallgoods and worked as a salesman

for one of my competitors. When that company went bankrupt, Tomi asked me for a job. I employed him and discovered that, not only was he an excellent salesman, but also, a fine friend. He continued to work for F.Mayer Imports until 1992 when he died suddenly in Venice of a heart attack. This trip had been another of the many Christmas bonuses he earned in recognition of his high sales achievements.

A year later, Annette, the kids, and myself returned for another Fijian vacation and included a cruise this time on the "Blue Lagoon". We enjoyed "island hopping" and swimming in the warm waters of Fiji.

I really had my heart set on some mouth-watering fish in the hotel's dining room. That would not be the case, however. All of it was frozen and had been flown in. Our waiter took pity on us and invited: "If you want delectable fish, come and eat with us in our village. We catch fresh there everyday." From then on, Robi went Fijian, spending his days with the Islanders, swimming, and spearing his tucker. We joined the tribe at night in their village (about two kilometres from the hotel), where they cooked the catch over fires in a typical, native way. Fish-on-a-stick can be quite delicious.

While our lives flowed rapidly through the late 60s and early 70s as we raised our children and our business, more complicated things were happening at home and abroad. There were deaths. The writer, Somerset Maugham, whose light books, short stories, and plays I liked, died, as did Spencer Tracy, the actor.

In 1965, Dr. Evatt, leader of the Labour Party and United Nations Secretary passed away. John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, was murdered in the USA as he rode through the streets of Dallas, Texas in a motorcade. His alleged killer, Lee Harvey Oswald, was never brought to trial because he, too, was shot to death as they moved him from the Dallas jail. Later, Richard Nixon, the narcissist, would become the next-elected

President of the US. (He would not last long because of his dirty dealings in the "Watergate Affair".) Conrad Adenauer, the post-war German Chancellor, died in 1967. Throughout his tenure, he had worked hard to reconcile France and Germany. He finally achieved his goal at Britain's expense. In 1963, the Franco-German Treaty was signed, and Adenauer considered this the climax of his life's work. He was persuaded to resign and succumbed a few years later.

Che Guevara was murdered in Bolivia. He had gone there disguised as a balding, Uruguayan businessman who tried to light the fires of revolution. But the expectation was a misconceived and badly executed fiasco; and he was killed in a skirmish in October 1967.

Ronald Ryan was the last person hanged in Australia before the death penalty was abolished. Harold Holt, who was Australia's Prime Minister for only a short period after Menzies retired. During the visit by President Johnson to Australia, Holt's was the statement that became a campaign motto for Johnson in the US; "Go all the way with L.B.J." Later, on a bright, Christmas day, Holt went swimming and never returned. He was presumed dead. Some speculated that a shark attack was the most likely cause. In 1967, The Six Days war changed the Middle East's politics and Israel's position. Golda Meir would become the Israeli Prime Minister in I968.

In Greece, the Colonials established a military dictatorship that eventually led to the invasion of Cyprus by Turkey – effectively partitioning the island into two parts and causing the friction that remains there today. 1968 brought the TET Offensive in Vietnam. This was a sudden, major offensive by the Communists. The Vietcong occupied the American Embassy, attacked all the US and South Vietnamese army bases, and besieged major cities. At first they were successful, but by March, the Americans and South Vietnamese had regained the initiative. The Communists were beaten back,

but only after many soldiers from Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam, and the United States had died, 160,000 civilians had been killed, and two million refuges, made homeless. In May of 1968, the Communists agreed to negotiations with the US in Paris, where there had been massive student riots.

A mixed Sydney water polo team of mediocre players (of about my level of ability) went to Czechoslovakia to tour. Peter Waterman, who was the state goalkeeper at one stage and my teammate in Bondi, asked me if I wanted to join the team. I could not leave the business at that stage and chose not to go. In Prague, the group was billeted in a sporting complex. The day after their arrival, the Czechs revolted against the Communist rule and Russian tanks rolled into Prague. Not only did the Sydney team not play, but they found themselves captive in the building for several days.

The Olympics were in Mexico in 1968. The Yugoslavians won the gold in water polo. My friend, Mirko Sandic, was the celebrated star and was proclaimed "the world's best player" by the experts. The USSR came second, and the Hungarians, third. The Australian Team was denied funds by the Australian Swimming Union in spite of qualifying for the Games. They raised the money themselves and went to Mexico. They had already drawn to play when the Australian Swimming Association banned the team from participating.

Hungary claimed the soccer gold once again. And in swimming, Michael Wendon won both the 100 and 200-metre freestyle heats for Australia.

The Mexico Olympics will be remembered for its "Black Fist Salute" by the black US athletes who won medals.

In 1970, the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations reached their peaks in both the United States and Australia. In the US, the National Guard fired at the students of Kent State University who were staging political demonstrations against the government. Poland held anti-Communist riots.

The Boeing "jumbo jets" took to the skies. Three were blown up in Jordan as Arab terrorism began to stir the world. A rash of hijackings kept our nerves on edge.

In Portugal, Salazar died; and so did J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI. Only after his death, did the many stories emerge about how he had blackmailed leading Americans citizens for decades. In 1970, Solzhenitsyn won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He had published three novels between 1962 and 1968 for which he became famous. They were One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich, Cancer Ward, and First Circle.

1972 saw the bloody Munich Olympics at which Arab terrorists murdered several of the Israeli athletes. At the same Olympics, Mark Spitz of America won an unprecedented seven gold medals in swimming. Shane Gould took five for Australia.

The USSR won the water polo, and Hungary came in second. And for the first time, America claimed a bronze. In soccer, Poland won the gold and Hungary, silver.

In 1972, there were great political changes in Australia when Labor won the election for the first time since it lost power in 1949. Gough Whitlam became Prime Minister. In my opinion, he was the best one Australia ever elected. Unfortunately, since Labor had been out of power for so long, they had no experienced ministers. (Liberals ruled from 1949-1972. Menzies had been Prime Minister for over sixteen years and was followed by Holt, who waited too long in Menzies' shadow- much like Anthony Eden had Churchill. With the death of Holt, John Gorton was elected when Malcolm Frazer "torpedoed" him as Minister of the Army. He was a likeable rogue of a Prime Minister. The vote of confidence was a draw. His own ballot would have to decide the issue. But he refused to vote for himself, resigned, and was followed by the non-entity, MacMahon.) When the election came in 1972, Whitlam used the slogan: "It's time for a change." and he romped it in.

In spite of the problems Whitlam had with his ministers, the scandals and inefficiencies, and the Khemlany affair, Whitlam enacted more reforms than the previous three Prime Ministers mentioned. He also did more for the arts than any of his predecessors had.

In October of 1973, the Yom Kippur war began when the Israeli army, surprised by the Egyptians and Syrians, was nearly beaten. But thanks to quick help from the US, they recovered and won once again.

Between 1972 and 1974, US attention was nearly dominated by the Watergate Affair. Five men were caught tapping phones in the Washington, D.C. Watergate office building, headquarters of the Democratic Party. This was at the height of the presidential political campaign. President Nixon, involved up to his eyeballs in the nasty goings-on, stepped down from the presidency in 1974. Earlier, his Vice-president, Agnew, had to resign on charges of corruption.

The world's greatest cellist, Pablo Casals died. And the Sydney Opera House was finally born. The Queen opened it, for invited guests only, on October 20, 1973, at a special performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The next day, an all Wagner concert welcomed the public. The conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra was the Australian ex-patriot, Sir Charles MacKerras, and the Wagnerian, Swedish Soprano, Birgit Nilsson, was guest soloist. The next night the Opera commenced with Prokofiev's War and Peace.

I was present at both performances with Annette, and had been invited as well to a special concert, an acoustics check, a couple of months prior to the Opera House's opening. The "by-invitation-only" event featured Donald Smith and Elizabeth Fretwell, singing operatic arias and duets. I have been a ticket subscriber since the Sydney Opera House opened, and while Annette and I were married, had 2 x 2 tickets to every opera. I went to each first, with Annette, while my mother babysat

the kids, and second, with my mother, while Annette stayed with the kids. We also secured season tickets to the Symphony, but I let them lapse at Annette's behest. (Simone and I renewed our subscriptions to the Concert Hall later, but the seats are not as good.)

1974 saw the revolution in Portugal when General Spinola ousted the successor to Salazar, Dr. Caetano. The forty-eight-year-old dictatorship had been overthrown in a bloodless coup. In Argentina, President Peron died. His second wife, Isabel, survived him; and the saga of his first, Eva Peron ("Don't cry for me Argentina"), began.

The bloody civil war raged in Lebanon in 1975; and the dismissal of the Whitlam government took place in Australia when the drunkard, John Kerr, sacked Whitlam. (Whitlam chose Kerr as Governor-General.) Malcolm Fraser became the acting Prime Minister, elected by the Australian people. (He was Prime Minister from 1975 until 1983 when Bob Hawke was elected with a new Labour government.) Fraser was famous for two things: his saying, "Life was not meant to be easy"; and for losing his pants in a USA hotel. It must be said that after his demise as Prime Minister, he became involved in a number of progressive and humanitarian movements, including a visit to Nelson Mandela in a South African prison.

Sakharov, a nuclear physicist and one of the designers of the hydrogen bomb, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975.

The 1976 Olympics saw the African boycott of the Games. The USA ruled swimming, while the East Germans took the women's. In water polo, Hungary won the gold; Italy, the silver; and Holland, bronze. Australia nearly upset Hungary as young Charlie Turner starred on the Australian side. The score was Hungary, 9, Australia, 8.

Mao Tse-tung, who had ruled China for twenty-seven years, died at eighty-two. He was to China what both Lenin and Stalin were to Russia. Andre Malraux also succumbed.

Carter became the US President, defeating Gerald Ford (who had granted Nixon a full pardon for his part in the Watergate Affair and for about anything else the man had ever done wrong). Henry Kissinger, the secretary of State, who had managed foreign policy for eight years, went out with Ford.

Both Robi and Sami joined the SLSA's "Nippers" in the North Bondi Surf Club as soon as they could walk. They also played soccer for the Hakoah club in leagues set up according to age groups; and both took part in the club championships. Robi swam as well in the Nippers' Surf State Championships and won by a large margin. (Appropriately, he was disqualified for going around the buoys right-to-left instead of left-to-right.)

Robi had joined a swimming squad in the 70s. In 1974, when he was ten, the Sydney Maccabi selected him to swim in Perth in the 400-metre Open Championships. This was near Christmas, and I could close the business for two weeks; so we decided to all go, making it a family holiday for Annette, the two kids, and myself. Robi finished fourth in the 400-metre men's open freestyle. We were on the plane on Christmas day, 1974, when the pilot announced over the intercom that Cyclone Tracy had destroyed Darwin, leaving many people dead, injured, and homeless.

In 1976, Robi was in his last year at the Rose Bay public school sixth year. I decided to visit the US Fancy Food Exhibition in New York, and because an around-the-world fare was cheaper than a Sydney-New York-Sydney ticket, I decided to take my eldest son on a global journey before he started high school the following year.

I went to see his headmaster, asking him if it was all right to take Robi out of school for four-to-six weeks. The progressive educator replied that he would never keep a child from such an experience. This trip would be more educational for Robi than

school possibly could be. He also told me thought it would be especially good for my son because normally Robi "just did enough work to stay out of trouble". Perhaps travel would inspire him.

So we went, Robi and I. We enjoyed ourselves immensely, and we developed an extremely devoted relationship: From Hawaii, our first stop, we took the compulsory trip to Los Angeles, Disneyland, and the RKO studios.

In New York, the travel agent booked us into the Holiday Inn on Tenth Avenue, a seedy area of New York. When I ordered a taxi by phone in the evening, the night receptionist advised us not to wait on the street, but to stay in the lobby until it arrived.

The first night, we went to Lincoln Centre, where a Russian dance group provided an ambitious program. When a Jewish protest group rushed the stage and threw flour bombs, the dancers never lost a beat – just kept on performing while the police cleared the theatre of the demonstrators.

We encountered a problem at the Food Exhibition the next morning. Alcoholic drinks, as well as edibles, were exhibited and tasted here, so Robi was not allowed in because he was under age. I took him back to the hotel, where the receptionist warned him not to open the door to anyone. So Robi watched TV until I returned, with his Swiss army knife open next to him on the bed, in case he was forced to protect himself.

I spent just one day at the Exhibition and met Jean Jacques Amman (Swiss supplier and friend) and George Peitzner, my German Supplier who had an office and a car in New York.

George spent a day driving us around the city and to a restaurant that night. There was a heat wave that week in New York and a garbage strike on top of it that made the city stink to high heaven. Robi wanted to have a ride on the subway, but changed his mind when he saw the parade of policemen in civilian clothing, carrying truncheons onto the trains.

From New York, we flew to Lisbon to visit Uncle Tibi. Those were turbulent years in Portugal when the country was trying to establish a democratic system through the manoeuvering for power by the right and left wing factions. There was no fighting or bloodshed, but armoured cars and truckloads of armed soldiers patrolled tirelessly. Machine guns were positioned behind sandbags all over town. Robi was chagrinned.

One day we went to the beach at Costa Caparica where the surf was running. These were outstanding waves by Australian standards, and Robi and I dove in to bodysurf. When we came out of the water, a number of people verbally attacked me, arguing that what I did to myself was my own business, but how could I be so irresponsible as to endanger the life of a young boy? It took me a considerable time to explain that this twelve year-old swam in breakers like these all the time in Australia and that he was a better swimmer than I was.

From there, we went to Paris where Raj and Rene lived. Rene was very ill with cancer by now; but we still had a good time together nevertheless. Interestingly, during this time, the already loving relationship between Robi and me became even closer.

We also went to Holland, where I visited Nic Bruin, my supplier of Dutch cheeses. In Switzerland we saw him again with Jean-Jacques Amman, who was back from New York. We stayed at Jean's house, and he and his wife, Ursula, took Robi and me sightseeing in Switzerland and then into Austria. There, we visited the Woerle cheese factory and stayed at the little village, Hendorf. about 20 km outside Salzburg in a gorgeous area where the factory was situated. One day Jean Amman, Gerhardt Woerle, and myself went for a business drive. Robi remained in bed in the hotel with a bad case of the flu. Ursula Amman and Mrs. Woerle (Gerhardt's first wife) looked after him. (Jean Amman and I will always remember the oppressively hot, summer evening in Austria when we consumed roughly forty spritzers after dinner on the hotel terrace.)

Robi continued to convalesce as we drove back to Switzerland. Miraculously, he recovered quite abruptly when we arrived back at the Amman's house and found Hans Ruedi (their son) organising a soccer game. The now-healed Robi and I joined in for a spirited time.

Back in Sydney, we had to decide about Robi's high school. Annette favoured a private one, but though I realise that in Australia pupils in private schools take the same exams as those in government institutions, I had a natural antipathy against the private ones. This feeling originated in Hungary where private schools conducted their own, separate exams. Pupils went there for one of two reasons: they were not smart enough for government schools; or they wanted a certificate of matriculation so as to get special advantages in the army.

In the end, we decided that Robi would go to a private institution. I favoured Sydney Grammar, the only one at that time that was not run by a church group and the one that was best academically. At the other private schools, as long as parents were able to pay the exorbitant fees and if there was room, their children were accepted. Sydney Grammar was the only exception to this. It also was the single school with an admissions exam. The Rose Bay Elementary headmaster (the same one who advised me to take Robi on a round-the-world trip) warned in advance that Robi would fail the admissions test. The boy had missed several weeks of school during our trip, after al. In addition, while he seemed able to pass any oral test administered, he would not do as well on the written, where his mind tended to wander. This is exactly what happened. So Robi went to Scots College,

Bellevue Hill instead, where he was utterly miserable for two years until I transferred him to Dover Heights public school.

DISSOLUTION, DELUSION, DIVORCE, RESOLUTION

During my trips away, Annette did a good job looking after the business. (Later, I trusted Bob Carlon to do the same.) But our marriage started to deteriorate after about twelve years, and in 1977, we divorced.

Though everyone who gets divorced is convinced that the problem always lies with the other person, the truth is that 95% of the time, both parties are at fault. I believe that given the high percentage of marriages that end in divorce, maybe instead of the "Until death do us part' sort of contract at the beginning, marriages should be based on a ten-year commitment, renewable each decade. Today, some people live together without marriage and only enter into a contract when children arrive. These marriages often end as well. One thing is certain. No matter who is to blame, divorce is always a trauma that affects both adult parties and, even more so, their children.

In our case, it was unfortunate that toward the end of our marriage, Annette became friendly with a number of people I did not like. Ironically, they were mostly Hungarians. On my side, culpability could be traced to the issue of my mother who lived with us for ten years during the marriage. Annette had told Rene long ago that the arrangement was a good one, but in actuality, it is nearly impossible for two women to live under the same roof. Not even a mother and daughter can. On the other hand, ten men could co-habit. They would tell each other to "get F———!": but two women just cannot. That's all there is to it.

When differences started to arise between my mother and Annette, I bought Germaine a flat within walking distance of Hardy Street. Coincidentally, at this time, there were no problems with our marriage. The difficulties really began after my mother left.

Annette was working in the business, and one-day she said, "You can afford office staff now. I want to stop working." I agreed and engaged a girl to take her place.

At this stage, my father-in-law, who is an authentic male chauvinist, prophesied: "You will have trouble. A marriage can only work if you keep your wife busy sixteen hours a day. You are too soft on Annette, your kids, and your employees. You should run the show. You are the boss."

This theory seems to have worked in his case. He has been married for over sixty years and apparently makes most of the important decisions unilaterally. For instance, soon after this dictum to me, he sold the house he and his wife lived in and bought another without discussing either decision with his partner. He just came home one day and said they would be moving very soon. 'Start packing!' By contrast to him, I probably am too soft, but this is my nature.

One thing I have observed in my life is that in spite of all the talk about equality between the sexes, with woman screaming, "No discrimination!" the majority of them are attracted to men who practice exactly what they are fighting and preaching against. They do not respect "soft" men. (The editor wishes desperately to comment at this juncture, but will not.)

When we told Robi and Sami about the impending divorce, they put up a gallant front with happy, unalarmed faces. This was only an act, of course. One day, we could not find Robi. He had been gone for hours. In the end, when I went to the garage to get the car so that I could drive

around the neighbourhood looking for him, I found him curled up in the corner, sobbing. Sami, deep down, just did not accept the divorce and afterward, he was as equally rude to my girlfriends as he was to Annette's male companions.

We handled the end of our marriage in a civilised way, always driving to the lawyer together to draw up the agreement and, later, to the Family Court where the dissolution was decreed. (The judge told Annette she was receiving "a very generous settlement".) Because the townhouse I bought for her in Edgecliff was not ready until a few days after the courtroom proceedings, she stayed at the house on Hardy Street with the boys and me during that period. Custody was arranged so that the kids lived with her during the week and with me on weekends. Later, Robi decided to live with me full time, and Annette agreed.

My ex-wife moved out with the children on a Saturday morning at 11:00 a.m., and not more than fifteen minutes after her departure, the doorbell rang; and a friend of hers, whose kids were the same ages as ours and went to the same schools as they did, arrived. She had been "waiting" for me, it seems, and took me on the stairsteps on the way to the bedroom. Given how rotten I felt in the wake of the divorce, a romp or several with a near-nymphomaniac was just what the doctor ordered. During all those months when we met regularly, we never left the house, even for dinner.

After we both moved on, I had a number of girlfriends, including another married lady from the Royal Motor Yacht Club whose marital contract stipulated a mutual, "open marriage" for both partners. One other group of women enjoyed sharing sexual partners among themselves. I found this all very peculiar, but I must say in their defence that today,

with only one exception, all of them are still happily married twenty years later. (Perhaps human beings were not meant to be monogamous.)

After a number of flights of freedom to restore my sorrowful heart to song, I developed a friendship with "R". I met her through the Chinese wife of an Englishman who supplied Asian spices to my company. (His two sons joined his business in Australia.) The wife originally came to here to visit her old schoolmates who were all married to prominent Australian business and professional men. These Asian women had their own clever gift for defining the marital contract. They were fully capable of convincing their husbands that they (the women) were totally subservient to them. Their men bought the concept hook. line, and sinker. But in reality, these "submissive, little Asian girls' were completely in charge, leading their husbands around by their noses, further than any European girl ever had.

R's case was a bit different. She was a Malaysian/Portuguese model with a three-year-old son and was divorcing her Australian husband. We got on rather well. She had a flat in Rose Bay, and her son went to kindergarten. As our friendship developed, R said, "Let's just enjoy ourselves for now while we can. Eventually, you and Annette will get back together."

In May 1978, I was fifty years old. My two sons, Robi, thirteen and Sami, nine, organised a birthday party for me at 79 Hardy Street, Dover Heights with the help of the University water polo boys and my neighbours – especially the Fantuzzis. (Later, to my regret, I would do a stupid thing and sell this home that seemed too big for Robi and me and move into a flat.) Over 150 friends and water polo players attended. We had a giant barbecue with choice steaks, select Danish

pastries imported by F.Mayer Imports, enormous cheese plates, and nearly countless kegs of beer. It was a great celebration that finished at 6:00 a.m. Sami stayed the course and was up all night. Robi retired to the Fantuzzis's house around 1:00. The next morning, "The Tank", "Kerro" and "Inky" came with a van to pick up the empty kegs. They boasted to anyone who would listen that more beer had been consumed at this party than at all the rest combined; and remarkably, "Not one person got sick." With this last syllable, the three burst into choruses of retching and made haste to the loo.

About this time, I joined the University Team and played second grade. During a water polo training session at the Sydney University pool, I was approached by a polite player/student, George Venardos, who asked me if I could give him a part-time job because he needed money to further his studies. I employed not only George but, at other times, his brothers, Jim and Paul, as well. The three Vernardos boys, Robi, Sami, George's young girl friend, Robin (later his wife), and I became close friends in spite of our age differences. At one stage, we even played on the same team together.

Robi was still in swim training every morning and afternoon. One night, I heard his alarm go off at 12:30 a.m. When I asked him, why, his reply was: "It's such a great thrill to wake up, look at the clock, and know I have another four hours to sleep."

Shortly after the Munich Olympics, the swimming sensation, Mark Spitz, came to Sydney, giving lectures to swimming squads. He instructed: "Do what your body tells you. If you feel that you'd rather sleep than train in the morning, stay in bed." Steve Foley, Robi's friend and training partner, called out: "If I listened to your advice, I'd never train again!'

R's prediction proved correct. Annette and I got back together again, and soon we took a trip with Sami to

Honolulu, Canada, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Tijuana. We went to Vancouver first, where I had to clear up a little business matter with an exporter who had cheated me in a salmon caviar deal. Unfortunately, I was not successful in this because the fellow had gone bankrupt, and I lost my money. Nevertheless, we enjoyed Vancouver and beautiful Stanley Park before we continued on to Toronto, where I had a supplier, Lakeside Polish Cucumbers. While Annette and Sami went sightseeing, I conducted business with the Lakeside fellow. When we went out for lunch, I automatically locked the car door. My associate became quite agitated at this, saying, "This is Toronto. Nobody breaks into cars here."

I apologised, but thought to myself, "All big cities have thieves."

When we finished lunch, we returned to the car, only to find it had been broken into, and my supplier's jacket, briefcase, and radio, stolen.

Another day, I saw my old friend the water polo goalie from the East Sydney days, Kevin Jones, who worked until recently as a professor at the York University of Toronto. We were staying at the Sheraton, and he offered to drive us to Niagara Falls. I asked the assistant manager at the hotel if he would mind watching my duffel bag for a few minutes while I went to the cashier to pay our bill. He assured me, "Not at all, sir."

When I came back to pick up the bag in which I had put a movie camera, a track suit, and some change; it was gone. Stolen by the assistant manager of the Sheraton Hotel in a city that, according to my supplier, has had no thieves. Uh-huh!

We made the short drive to Niagara Falls, booked into one of the many tourist motels, and went sightseeing. Back in Toronto on the next day, we stayed at Kevin and Kay's house overnight, and in the morning, drove to Lake Muskoka where they had a nice holiday house. We spent tour or five relaxing

days hiking, swimming in the lake, and playing with Kevin's motorboat. We finished our trip by renting a car and driving through California to the Mexican border.

On another of my road trips with Annette (during our first reconciliation, I believe), we drove (Annette drove) around Germany, Switzerland, and then over to Italy to spend a few days at "Villa Bellagio" on Lake Como. Lake Como is one of the most enchanting splashes of scenery in northern Italy. Flower bedecked promenades, lemon trees and villas, parks, tunnel-like roads, clear, blue water – it is magnificent. The Bellagio was a high-class resort hotel that required a collar and tie for dinner. The service was superior, and the prices matched. So after one staggeringly expensive meal, we went to the locals and asked where they ate. They pointed at a narrow street, heading uphill. The margins of the cobblestone pathway were too close for a car. Only bicycles and donkeys could pick their ways through. We tried a dozen of the restaurants up that hill. The food and wine, at a fraction of the cost of our hotel's, were luscious.

At Villa Bellagio, I needed to place a very important business call to Sydney. I asked the hotel switchboard to make the call at about 9:00 p.m. At 3:00 a.m., they woke me, saying, "Your call is through." I had just started to talk when I was interrupted by a voice apologising in Italian, "So sorry. We're going on strike now." And the telephone went dead.

Rene's remark, though she liked Annette, "Warmed up soup, never tastes the same the second time around." kept echoing in my mind. Rene was right, and Annette and I broke up again. Later, we would make a third attempt, buying a house at 23 Portland Street, Dover Heights; but we only lasted for

a few months before splitting up once again. This time it was final.

Once again, Robi remained with me, and Sami spent half his time with Annette and the other half with me. While I was away on business trips, the Foley family, who had three sons, looked after Robi.

After my final separation from Annette, I went back to Switzerland and saw my teenage sweetheart, Agi (from the Budapest opera performance), who waited for me at the Zurich airport and drove us across to Ticino in Italian-speaking Switzerland. She had a house, but she was into her major dog phase by then, providing room and board for as many as forty at a time. So instead of going to her home after our weekend in Tincino, we went to Chiasso and stayed at the Lowenbrau hotel We drove back and forth between Italy and Switzerland every day. An intelligent woman, she worked for a Swiss company as a correspondent in six languages. I really liked Agi, but her "causes" made me crazy.

MY SISTER RENE (1923 – 1979)

Rene and Raj had lived in Paris for fifteen years, and I managed to visit them there two or three times annually before Rene died of cancer. Many times when I saw them during my trips to the Sial, I took them to functions like the Rouge/Bateau dinner. The last time I saw Rene was in March 1979.

I was playing water polo in the Sydney University pool when I was paged to the phone. Raj was looking for me frantically. He said that according to her doctors, Rene had only a few days to live. She wanted to see me before she died. Could I come?

This was a Wednesday night I booked flights immediately, but made an initial error. I planned two twenty-six-hour flights – there and back – in as many days. Luckily my friend, Mirko Sandic, who by now was the Yugoslav airline

manager for Southeast Asia, straightened me out. He came to the transit lounge, called me an idiot for arranging such a difficult schedule, took my ticket to the Singapore Airlines office, and changed it, giving me a twenty-four-hour layover in Singapore on the way home.

I spent my two days in Paris sitting next to Rene's bed in their small flat at Rue Talma, talking. The only times I left her bedside were for a three or four-hour nap at the Hotel Balzac and to have lunch with Jacques Brigout, who forced me out of the house for a bit of food and some wine.

During the mornings, Rene's mind was absolutely dear. In the afternoons, it was not so sharp; and by evening, it was totally muddled. She looked like a skeleton, her beautiful body ravaged by cancer. Raj lifted her up like a tiny baby. Where there had been breasts, now were only bones. We talked about all things important and about those that were not. We both knew it was the end. This was the final goodbye. Before I left for the airport on Sunday, we hugged for a long time.

Those two days and the ones before my father's death have been the worst periods in my life.

As I travelled to the airport, it started to snow. I was miserable and had no coat. But at the same time, I was relieved I had come to Paris. I had given myself the opportunity to share my thoughts and feelings with my sister, Rene, who was leaving us.

On the way back to Sydney, I was glad Mirko had forced the stopover in Singapore because I was depressed; and this gave me a little time to pull myself together.

Rene lived for another two months before she died in May 1979.

She had been a journalist, who wrote for various Indian papers for fifteen years, as well as a correspondent

for the Monde Diplomatique of France and the Il Giornale of Milano. Before her death, she managed to finish a book she wrote with Raj about India. The book named L'inde – Au Dela Du Mythe ET Du Mensonge (or in English, India Beyond the Myths and Lies) was published in 1979. I think they made a mistake. Rene and Raj wrote the book in English and translated it into French. The work was not a success. In my opinion, it should have been published in English because the English generally were much more interested in India then the French were.

According to her wishes, Rene was cremated, and her ashes taken eventually to India, the country she loved. I continued to visit Raj for years when I was in Paris. He made their apartment a shrine to Rene, keeping her ashes next to his bed for many years. His was a long mourning period for his wife and for their marriage that had been one of profound love.

I am very happy that finally, after many years of sadness, Raj now lives with a woman again. He met Beatrice in Paris, and they live in Rome.

While Robi and I resided on Portland Street, some interstate water polo boys stayed with us, including: Brendan Horan from New Zealand (who many years later was best man at Sami's wedding), Paul Weetin, and Julian Musprat (originally from Queensland), who played for the University and also made the Olympics. On occasion, Julian and Brenda bunked with us at the same time. Julian liked to relax. Brendan, on the other hand, was (and still is) hyperactive. Their conversations sounded like this:

Brendan: "Let's go surfing."
Julian: "Piss off!'

Brendan: "All right; let's go for a run."
Julian: "F——off!'
Brendan: "Let's go to the gym."
Julian: "Leave me alone!'
Brendan: "Well, what DO you want to do?"
Julian: "Sleep."

Contrary to all indications of personality, in the end, Julian made the Australian Team, and Brendan, just the State.

Robi, in the meantime, played water polo in addition to all other sports in school He made the Australian Schoolboys' Team, and after that, joined the University Club, where he was part of the first grade thirteen. However, because the first seven were practically the Australian first seven, the six young competitors did not get much match time, and warmed the substitute benches during every game instead. Eventually, Robi was selected for the State and Australian Sides, competing in New Zealand and the U.S.A. In 1981, when he went to California with his team and stopped for an international tournament in Honolulu on the way back, Sami and I went to Maui for a holiday and then on to Honolulu to watch Robi's games.

The following Christmas, they asked for Robi to play with the Queensland Barbarians against the various New Zealand teams and invited me to go as coach. We accepted and took Sami. Billy Brooks, a good player and a representative for the Queensland State (and previously, the Victorian), was on this squad. Our first game was in Wellington, where Billy Brooks suffered the worst broken nose I have ever seen. Most water polo players fracture their noses at some stage in their careers. I did. But Bill's nose was squashed all over his face like a smashed fruit pie. It had to be put in a plaster, so he was out for the rest of the tour. We did not have many reserves, so we decided that Bill would take over my coaching position while I joined

the team as a player.

There was also an American in our group who recently had arrived in Queensland. He claimed to have played for UCLA, the best team in the USA. We did not believe him because he was hopeless in the water. Sami, in his usual cheeky way, asked him: "Which of the top Australian players could make the UCLA team?'

The American guy replied, "None of them."

The unflappable Sami continued, "That's funny. Most of the prime Australian players were on the University's first grade side, but you wouldn't even make our third grade one."

"Coach" Billy Brooks finally levelled the final blow to the American's ego. Billy replaced him in the first seven with me, a man in his fifties, when we competed against our main opposition, the combined NZ Nth Island team.

Meanwhile, Robi was billeted with the Todd Family, who teamed against us. The Todd boy, also a rugby league player, later was on the Canberra team in Australia for many years.

On the day of the big game, both Todd (of the New Zealand team) and Robi were late arriving at the pool. They had taken a small boat out to sea to fish, capsized, and were not rescued for hours.

Sami had his own misadventure in Wellington. We went to a seafood restaurant, where my younger son complained that the oysters "tasted funny."

Robi assured him that they were fine, that New Zealand oysters just tasted "a little different from ours'. They surely did! Sami became deathly ill on the flight to Queenstown the next day. By the time the plane put down, he was practically unconscious. We carried him to a taxi and sped to the hotel, where I poured a stiff dose of brandy down his throat. Sami slept all day, but was in better condition when he woke up.

We took a couple of days off by ourselves for Christmas, enjoying Queenstown, the mountains, and shooting the rapids

in a rubber raft. Afterward, we rejoined the team in Christchurch, where my two sons had the pleasure of seeing me miss a penalty in our first game there. They were pleased because I always preach, "You have to be an idiot to miss a penalty!"

When we got home, we had to deal with the question of Sami's school. He had finished his six years of primary education. But this time, there was no tug between government or private schools. The choice was easy because he was admitted to Sydney High, a government school of very high standard.

Given my own educational record, I don't think I have the right to criticise, but I will. Sami was out of control in school. He had the time of his life there, playing poker and later going to the races with his "class master', who boasted to me at the swimming pool that Sami gave him great tips that won him money at the track. My second son also played water polo and won a School Sporting Blue, presented to him at the Balmain Leagues Club. He competed as well in rugby league for an Eastern Suburbs club, but retired early at age fourteen, after he broke his foot three times in one season and tore his Achilles tendon – all of them heroic injuries.

The world turned as usual in the late seventies, as I played out my small life in it. We lost several important people. Maria Callas and Charlie Chaplin died in 1977. The Egyptian President, Sadat, visited the Knesset in Israel, making peace after twenty-nine years of war. He later paid with his life for this brave deed when, in 1980, he was assassinated by a religious fanatic. Israel elected Menachem Begin (the Irgun, Zuad Leumi terrorist leader from our days in Palestine) Prime Minister. Spain had its first Democratic election after the death of the fascist dictator, Franco. And the Vietnamese boat people began landing in various places around the globe.

In 1978, Bob Menzies, who had held the office of Prime Minister of Australia longer than anyone else, died, as did Jomo Kenyatta. He had been a guerrilla leader against the British and became the President of Kenya after its independence. Golda Meir, ex-Prime Minister of Israel, also succumbed. The Cardinals elected the first Polish Pope.

I979 saw the Shah of Persia (now Iran) ousted. A much worse era came to the fore then in Iran when the religious fanatic, the Ayatolla Khomeini, took over. Margaret Thatcher was elected the first female Prime Minister of England and Lord Mountbatten was killed by the Irish terrorists. This was the same year the USSR invaded Afghanistan, starting the Soviet Union's "Vietnam." There would be even more serious repercussions for the Soviets than Vietnam had caused the Americans. This war contributed greatly to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union ten years later.

The Iranians had begun taking American hostages during the '70s. In 1980, President Carter of the US organised a tragic, failed attempt to rescue them. The mission was labelled a "fiasco," and it went a long way toward discrediting Carter and guaranteed that he would not win a second term in office.

Another important event this year, 1980, was the death of Tito of Yugoslavia. Though a Communist dictatorship, after fighting against the Nazis during World War II, Yugoslavia was the only Communist country whose government was not bought into power by the Soviet troops. Tito's Red Army liberated Yugoslavia on its own. They not only fought the Germans, but also stood up against Stalin. For this, Tito was "excommunicated" from the Communist nations. Though a Croat by birth, he led the fight against the Nazis. He did not subscribe to democratic ways of government, but he kept the multi-national Yugoslavia of Croats,

Serbs, Slovenes, Bosnians, Montenegrins, and Macedonians intact. Even the enormous religious differences among them did not divide a united Yugoslavian population under Tito. After his death, and lacking a strong leader, all of those differences exploded into the hate and war that lead to the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

1980 saw the Moscow Olympics boycotted by the USA and many of its allies. Most Australians went. Credit for this can be attributed to the Australian sporting and Olympic organisations and, in part, to the big push by the Fraser government. The Prime Minister himself offered money to all selected Olympians who were reluctant to go to Moscow. In the end, only the equestrian team stayed behind – along with several individual sportsmen who worked for large companies that made them choose between keeping their jobs or going to the Olympics. With this choice to attend, Australia, Greece, and England became the only nations to have competed in every modern Olympics since 1896.

The water polo was won by the Soviet Union; Yugoslavia was second; and Hungary; third.

This same year, President Carter lost his bid for election to a second term and was replaced by Ronald Reagan.

In 1981, Israel bombed Beirut, and the Middle East situation deteriorated further. Mitterand became the French president. His presidency would last fourteen years until shortly before his death in 1995.

The bombing of Israel was followed by the invasion of Lebanon by the Israeli Army in 1982, leading to more bloodshed and misery. Argentina occupied Falklands. Eventually, the British attacked in an effort to "free those islands". This was convenient for the Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, who was up for re-election. The neat little war worked its magic, and she remained in office. After a long reign marked by corruption and inefficiency, the Russian leader,

Brezhnev, died and was replaced by another sick old man, the leader of the KGB, Andropov. He lasted less than two years before he, too, succumbed. Gorbachev followed him in 1984. His leadership changed Russian history in such ways as led to the downfall of the Soviet Union.

NEW PARTNERS: SONS, WOMAN, BOAT

In 1982, Robi was eighteen years old, earned his exit certificate from high school, and now was ready to discuss his future. Well, he was nearly ready. First, he would spend a couple of months fishing and boating. I was delighted when he decided after that, he would like to come into the family business. He joined F.Mayer Imports with great enthusiasm, and he has worked there diligently ever since. His brother, Sami, made the same choice three years ago. I know many men who have worked throughout their lives to build their businesses. When they grow old and want their children to take over, the children are not interested. At least, what I took a lifetime to create will not be wasted. My sons are already heading for the helm. Other fathers complain that their kids are lazy. I think my sons work too hard, starting their days at 3:00 a.m. and continuing until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. They do it because they want to – not because they have to, like I did.

We have had a successful time of it during the last years and have afforded some toys. Robi always loved fishing and boats. So while he was still in school, I bought him a sailing boat. After that, it was a motorised run-about, which he used for tearing around Sydney Harbour. The next was "Constance", a twenty-eight foot fishing vessel. It could carry ten-to-twelve people and was fine for ocean fishing trips and for fishing competitions.

Our present pride, "Phantom", a forty-five foot, twin engine boat that I bought in 1984, followed Constance. My sons, friends, and I have had and still do get a great deal of enjoyment and pleasure from Phantom. It has gone ocean game fishing often and has served Robi well during the contests that have earned him many prizes and trophies.

Phantom is a real pleasure boat. We have an abundance of parties on it, sailing around Sydney Harbour, dropping anchor, eating and drinking, and diving overboard for swims. We usually invite twenty-to-twenty-five people aboard – overseas visitors, business associates, and local friends. There are two dates a year, written in stone, when we board our boat for sure. The first is Boxing Day when we follow the sailing boats out to the ocean at the start of the "Sydney to Hobart" race. No matter what the weather, thousands of spectator boats churn up the water, angling for a better view. The Harbour becomes quite agitated, and a good percentage of our guests get seasick on this excursion. The second traditional day on the boat is New Year's Eve. I hate the normal cocktail parties when everyone gets dressed up (only to be bloody uncomfortable) and pretends to have a good time as they sweat politely to loud music and boring conversation. I choose instead to motor out on the boat with my group of bare-footed, close friends. We drop anchor, watch the fireworks display, relax, eat, and drink. We have done this for the last twelve or thirteen years.

Once, the Phantom hosted a wedding. Our friends Robin and George Venardos filled it with about forty guests to witness their vows. I was the best man, so one of my jobs was to keep the ring safe and close at hand. I wore it on my little finger, and when it came time to hand it over, I could not get it off. There was a pregnant pause during which each guest took a turn at wrestling it from my beer-swollen paw. Finally, we unstuck it with window cleaner, and the ceremony continued. When the marriage celebrant declared the couple "husband and wife", Robi rewarded the newlyweds by playing the "Last Post" on his Scots College bugle.

We have also had two funerals aboard, scattering the ashes first, of an old friend, Doug Laing's mother, and second, those of a young friend whose father also had a boat that took my sons fishing. This fellow died tragically when he was electrocuted at work in a TV studio.

The biggest occasion we ever celebrated on Phantom was the Australia Day Bicentenary, 1988, when fifty-five raucous revellers filled the boat to capacity. We went out at 8:00 a.m. and returned to shore later to off-load some of our guests and replace them with new ones. We stayed out until 2:00 in the morning, and the day was spectacular!

Thousands of vessels, ranging from surfboards to big ocean liners, had come especially for this occasion. The Queen and Prince Phillip were here, too, watching the tall ships re-enact their arrival in the Harbour years ago. All of our guests and family enjoyed themselves immensely. We only had a little problem. There is just one bathroom onboard. A single toilet is hardly sufficient for fifty-five drinking people. The solution was a natural one. Every couple of hours, we sailed into one the bays and dove into the water for a little "swim".

All our suppliers plan their trips to coincide with the weekends so they can enjoy outings on Phantom. Some special friends have been regular visitors. Bo Hedetoft (unfortunately not with MD Foods, Denmark any more) and Jeroen De Schaaf (Bontje Kaas, Holland) are two. We also invite a good, mixed crowd. Doug Laing,

Howard Roby, John "Pud' Reagan are just of few who have permanent invitations.

A guest of particular interest to me was Albyn King of Bayernland. When he first came to Australia, Robi and I accompanied him to Adelaide, Brisbane, and Cairns, where our customer and good friend. Louis Garozzo, was the gracious host who made Albyn King's first visit to our country a memorable one. Besides taking him to Cairns and the crocodile farms, Louis bundled us all into his four-wheel-drive wagon and transported us to Port Douglas, through the rain forest, and right up to Cape Tribulation where Louis's friend, the hotel's chef, organised a luxuriant banquet for all of us. We also spent a night at Garozzo's farm, enjoying genuine Italian hospitality.

In Sydney, naturally we offered Albyn our own warm entertainment aboard Phantom. We took the usual trip around the Harbour with our regulars and dropped anchor in a scenic spot for a good meal and plenty of wine. Well-potted, we headed back to the Royal Motor Yacht Club, where the boat is moored. Suddenly a storm blew up on the harbour with accompanying thunder, lightening, hail, and turbulent winds that created menacing waves and almost completely obscured our visibility. Though we were only a few hundred metres from the wharf, we could not make it in to tie up because the gusts would have sent the lurching craft crashing against the jetty. Robi and John Bennet decided our best course was to ride out the storm in the middle of the Harbour.

John Bennett's life's work has been piloting and looking after boats, so he is an expert. He lived and slept for years on Phantom and knew the boat well. Taking his advice was the only way to go; and we were successful in this tact, weathering the storm without any damage to the craft.

The storm finished as abruptly as it had started. As we rubbed our eyes in the clearing atmosphere, we could make out

overturned boats everywhere. We bobbed up to one, a capsized, nineteen-foot skiff. The three-man crew was in the water, hanging onto the boat, waiting for a rescue craft from the club to come and save the lot. Robi asked if there was anything that we could do to help.

One of them replied, "Yes, as a matter of fact. Would you mates have some spare beer?" As we lowered the brew over the side of our boat to the three men in the drink, Albyn busied himself with his movie camera, filming the best footage of the trip – a storm in Sydney Harbour, overturned sailing boat, three sailors up to their necks in water, hanging onto their boat for dear life with their left hands, while they drank our beer with their right ones.

I experienced my most enjoyable water outing, not on Phantom, but on a friend (John Keith)'s boat, "Flight". John Bennett was taking it up to Cairns and northern Queensland for Game Fishing. Flight is larger than Phantom and has two bathrooms.

I joined the boat at Hamilton Island, where I met John "Fiji" Maclure, our hyperactive water polo goalkeeper, and we travelled from Hamilton Island to Cairns. There were five of us on the boat: John Bennett, one of his girl friends, John "Fiji" Maclure, a young fellow on his way to Cairns to work on a game fishing boat, and myself.

It was a fantastic trip! We stopped at a number of islands, dropping anchor and going ashore either in the boat's rubber dinghy, or by swimming. In some places, we saw miles of stunning, sandy beaches without a living soul besides ourselves. At Hinchinbrook, we walked through a rain forest, up a hill peppered with signs that read, "Beware of the Crocodiles", and on to a freshwater lake with a waterfall. We spent hours swimming and luxuriating in this fairytale place. We caught fish that we barbecued and washed down with wine.

On another night, we stopped in a different sort of place, Townsville, with hotels and a gambling casino. The last evening, we anchored off Dunk Island, a holiday resort, went ashore and climbed the sand dunes before leaving for Cairns the next morning. This normally would be a six or seven-hour trip in a fast boat. Today, though, the water was extremely choppy. The young deck hand was sea sick, and so was John's girlfriend. "Fiji" sat at the front of the boat, just letting the waves wash over him. When I asked him why he did not come to the bridge, his reply was, "No way! If I move, I'll vomit." So he sat in that spot for the next six hours.

Much later, we arrived in Cairns. I was booked to fly straight back to Sydney because I had a meeting arranged there with Bo Hedetoft of MD Foods, Denmark. However, the best laid plans…

Apparently, this was the beginning of the pilots' strike. Planes were not grounded, but the pilots only would fly them between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. So when I arrived at the airport for my three-hour flight to Sydney that was due to depart at twelve noon, I was told my plans would have to change. The midday flight was way overbooked, so I could catch the next one at two. In the whole scheme of things, this did not seem that bad, really; so I put the best face on it and did not complain.

But I was given a second chance to explode when the salesperson asked me for an extra $200. I asked through clenched teeth, "What for?"

Her reply was: "Sir, this plane normally would arrive in Sydney at 5:20. But because of the strike, the pilots only work until 5:00 – not long enough to get you into Sydney. Sorry about that. This flight will take you to Brisbane where you can spend the night before catching a plane tomorrow morning. Unfortunately, sir, because this Cairns/Brisbane/Sydney entails a stop-over, it will cost the extra $200." She was delivering this line to all the Sydney passengers.

I refused this arrangement on principle. It was not my fault the airline would not honour its commitment. The problem rested entirely between the pilots and upper management. Besides, on top of the $200, I would have to pay for an accommodation in Brisbane.

I asked to see the manager. By now, there was a good deal of commotion at the desk. When I explained my side to the boss, he agreed with me; and in the end, he waived the extra fee for me and for the other passengers as well who had already paid the $200.

There was also a young French couple at the Cairns Airport, arguing desperately in broken English. I had plenty of time, so I offered to interpret. They explained that they were on their honeymoon, but the husband had to start a new job on Monday in Paris. They wanted to get to Sydney to catch the Thai flight to Bangkok and then another one to Paris. I told them I knew of a direct, Cairns/Bangkok Thai flight and took them over to the QANTAS staff who were uncooperative and refused to change their tickets. Quite the opposite, however, was true at the Thai airline office, manned by one Thai lady. An hour later, the French couple were on their way to Bangkok, and a week thereafter, I received a thank-you note, saying everything had gone smoothly.

I got as far as Brisbane that day and stayed at a motel near the airport. I had good luck the next morning and got onto the first flight back to Sydney. Hundreds more did not and were stranded due to "a computer booking error". Very fine organisation, Ansett!

Until this time, I had flown regularly with Thai airlines because F.Mayer Imports was the first to import fresh, delicate,

French cheeses by air to Australia. Since I paid Thai Air enormous freight fees, I always got the cheapest airfares with them and was upgraded regularly to first class.

Eventually, other transport firms started bringing those same cheeses by sea. This method was not as good, but was much cheaper; so ultimately, we stopped using airfreight. The really negative result of this change was that by now, I was used to the comfort of flying first class and found it impossible to go back to economy. My long legs cramp and complain in steerage: therefore, I continue to opt for the luxury of business or first.

In the early 1980s, an Israeli fellow, Tzvi Rosenfeld, came to my office. He had just formed a new shipping company (Europe/ Australia), the ABC Line, and he wanted to transport my cargo from Europe. We became friends and made the deal.

Tzvi had to have his swim and sauna everyday, so whenever he came to Australia and visited my Maroubra house, he went straight to the bathroom, dropped his clothes, and sat in the sauna. One day as we swam across the bay at Bondi (he was a slow but steady swimmer), he developed a sudden respect for lightening when a thunderstorm blew up. He discovered with the first bolt, which struck perilously close to us, that he was a much faster swimmer than he had thought.

On another occasion, when I went over to Auckland to meet with him and with the New Zealand manager of the ABC, he suggested we go to one of the Auckland indoor pools for his ritual swim and sauna. His manager realised it was Sunday and said the pool had closed early. But Tzvi insisted that he must have his habitual steam bath. "Where could we go?"

The New Zealanders replied that the only place open with a sauna was one of the higher-class brothels. So we went there. The Madame refused to allow us just a sauna, insisting that Tzvi could use it only if he paid for one of the girls. He did that, and while, he steamed and sweated, the rest of us had a few

drinks at the bar, watching the "trade." We noticed that while there were some winsome young girls there, they were not in demand. Instead, twelve men waited their turn for a single woman. We were all dying to see who was so special. When we finally got a glimpse of the "mystery woman," we discovered she was a dark islander, not young, and had legs like a football player. As she emerged every half-hour saying, "Next, please," we could only imagine!.

During this same period, I was beginning to encounter competition in my own business for the Sydney market. Local companies were producing Australian Camembert and Brie's which were all of inferior quality and much more expensive that the imported were. But the "Buy Australian" campaigns helped local producers even though all of the "Australian Made" cheese factories are owned by foreigners. Of course, the local producers were helped as well because they were not affected by quarantine restrictions. For decades, fresh salmon was imported as frozen whole fish from Canada, and Norway. Local smokehouses, employing local labour, smoked these salmon and sold it to the whole Australian market. Nobody ever got sick from eating that fish. But miraculously, when Australian local "farming" of salmon started in Tasmania, suddenly the importation of all fresh salmon was prohibited for "health reasons". As result, all the local smokehouses had to close and sack their employees.

The Australian Quarantine department makes dealing with foreign smoked salmon difficult as well by demanding that the fish be hot-smoked; and smoked salmon from out of the country is only allowed in if it has been. We import enormous quantities of both New Zealand and Norwegian smoked salmon. This turn of events means that our Norwegian salmon has to be imported from Denmark because only the Danes are

willing to hot-smoke the Norwegian salmon to satisfy our quarantine requirements.

On one particular Friday, we received a visit from two quarantine officers who were called home from their golfing holiday on the report of a serious breach of the law. Let us just say that they were not happy about the interruption. That morning, we had received a container of New Zealand smoked salmon, but the Tasmanian producers of it had reported that we imported fresh salmon instead of smoked. I insisted that the quarantine officers check the whole shipment, which was, naturally, all smoked. The two government officials then turned their attention and anger to the Tasmanian producers who were the real culprits in the loss of their golf game.

(In spite of our stringent laws, I personally have found all customs health officials extremely decent and fair. They are paid to perform a job, which they do by the book; and none seems to be malicious or 'out for bear'. As long as we cooperate and don't try to cheat them, they are reasonable. The pointless mandates are not their fault.)

There are many similar stories about import restrictions on cheese. There were absolutely no limitations on cheese imports until local manufactures ventured into making cheeses other than the traditional Australian cheddars. The first attempt at tightening the noose was made by a Liberal/Country Party Health Minister, Dr. Forbes, who banned the importation of all cheese to save Australia from "brucellosis'. When someone else proved that the country that is responsible for the greatest spread of brucellosis is Australia, he had to retract the ban. At present, Australia is the world's only country that disallows the French Roquefort cheese for so-called "health reasons".

Import Quotas were eventually introduced, making the total allowed into Australia from all countries 11,000 tons. F.Mayer Imports accounts for 1,250 of this quota, so I, F. Mayer, cannot complain.

Meanwhile, I continued my enjoyment of the opera and have been delighted that the Sydney Opera House has flourished. For the most part, the standard and quality of the performances have improved, although several of the earliest productions were better than some since. One of the best from the days of yore was the initial offering of Aida. It has been presented a number of times since, but none was better than the first. Donald Smith Radames and Marylyn Richardson, both at their peaks, were the featured soloists, and they performed, not in the Opera House, where the stage is rather small, but in the larger Concert Hall.

To explain why the Concert Hall is more expansive than the Opera Hall, I have to go back forty years to the late fifties when Cahill's state Labour government decided to build the Opera House at Bennelong Point where the old tram sheds used to be. The Danish architect, Utzon, won the design for the structure, and he intended the much larger of the complexes to be the Opera House, and the smaller, the Concert Hall.

When Cahill's Labour government was defeated and the most corrupt of State Premiers, the Liberal, Askin, took over as head of the Liberal Country Party, he had a row with Utzon, who left Australia, never to return. Askin reversed the building's venues, and the smaller hall became the Opera and the larger one, the Symphony. The Opera House is still a wonderful complex, but it would have been much better without Askin. Furthermore, the stage machinery bought from Europe for the original opera stage could not be used for the now much smaller one. The equipment cost millions, was sold for scrap, and new implements ordered. In 1996, an Australian contemporary composer wrote an opera that was the story of the construction of the Sydney Opera. The music is nothing memorable, but one of the main arias features Premier Askin (a baritone) singing

a duet with Architect Utzon (tenor) in which the baritone bawls, "We don't need an opera house. Operas are for poofters and foreigners. You are a f——g foreign bastard."

But regardless of its beleaguered history, the Opera House is the pride of Sydney. During the twenty-four years since it opened, we have had notable productions, and also a few terrible duds – especially the ones produced lately by a young Melbourne producer, Kinsky, who has put together some of the worst renditions in the history of Australian opera. One of them is a favourite of mine, Nabucco. Some operas can be modernised, depending on the story, such as the contemporary La Boheme and Fledermaus- both highlights of the Australian opera. By contrast, in Rigoletto, Kinsky's central characters are no longer the Court of the Duque of Mantua, but the Mafia in New York. All singers appear in black suits, ties, and hats. It was terrible, simply terrible. Did not work!

On the other hand, a modern depiction of The Barber of Seville was actually much better than a similar one in Munchen, Germany. In this version, Rosina docs not appear on the balcony of the house in the first act because the house is not the set in this production. An enormous statue of a naked lady is. One of its breasts opens, and Rosina appears to sing her aria from there.

Opera videos have been made of the best performances in the world, but the experience is not the same as actually attending. No video, film, or CD can compete with the atmosphere of a live performance. Sitting in the midst of an expectant audience as the lights dim and the curtain rises, adds a feeling of nervous anticipation to the performance that one cannot experience in a chair in the living room.

I often think back to my first visit to the opera after World War II. I had listened to recordings and the wireless.

I loved opera, but due to the war years, I had never been to a live production. When the war ended and we returned to Budapest, I went to Cosi Fan Tutte, the delightful Mozart composition. There were no electronic adjuncts. Nothing was enhanced by microphones and speakers. We heard only pure voices with the symphony behind them.

People who do not like opera as much as I do, often aim their criticism at the story lines, which they deem 'senseless' or 'simple'. But I protest! Many of the plots in operas are based either upon historic truths or are dramatic depictions of literary masterpieces written by the top writers of their times. For example, if we look only at Verdi, the master of operatic composers: MacBeth, Falstaff, and Othello are all Shakespearean plays. Nothing stupid about them.

Lucia di Lammermoor, La Traviata, (La Dame Aux Camelias) and Rigoletto (Le Roi s'Amuse) were adapted from works written by Sir Walter Scott, Alexander Dumas, and Victor Hugo, respectively. In the Hugo case, the story, The King enjoys Himself, had to be changed (due to the Italian censors) from the Court of Francois I to the Duke of Mantua. Verdi's operas that were based upon historical fact generally were censored also. The Masked Ball was written just after an attempt upon Napoleon III and included in its plot a similar murder of an assassinated Italian monarch. The opera first was called Gustavo III. The name and locale were altered for the Rome opening so that Gustavo III became Richard, 'Count' of Warwick and 'Governor' of Boston. Lucrezia Borgia, Maria Stuarda, Nabucco and Tosca are all stories based upon historical fact. In Tosca, the characters were all living people during the nineteenth century fight of the Bonapartists against the power of the Pope. Nabucco deals with the occupation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Its chorus was used against the Austrian occupiers of Northern Italy during the Italians' Freedom Fight. So if these plot lines are simple, perhaps they represent, the simple truth.

Since I had taken Robi around the world with me when he was twelve, I decided to give a similar trip to Sami, age fifteen. This included a visit to the beautiful Dordorgne – Perigord area of France, known for its superb foie gras, truffles, confit, goat cheese, and plum brandy. Of course, we went to Switzerland, Germany, and then, once again, to Woerle in Hendorf, Austria with Jean Amman and Ursula. We continued into the mountains of Salzburg before heading to Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries. We had a great time! I loved seeing the world with my sons and feeling the bond between us stretch and tighten.

Bangkok was not a great stop for Sami. On the way there in the plane, he started an article in Time Magazine about Thailand. It reported that there were more cases of AIDS and other STDs in Bangkok than in any other major city in the world. So when I suggested we make like the other tourists and visit the Buddhist temples, he refused. The article had scared him so much that he refused to leave the Sheraton.

Peter Montgomery was a talented, enthusiastic water polo player who did a considerable amount to advance the cause of the sport. I met him when he was fifteen, playing fourth grade for Manly. I had joined them a few months before their New Zealand trip. Besides being a four-time Olympian and captain of the Olympic water polo team, Peter, a lawyer by profession, was also very successful in business. He bought the castle in Rose Bay with its thirty bedrooms and regularly put up water polo players there from various states and countries. Peter always made sure that the University Club won its competitions by importing players who could round out the team nicely. The first time, it was Charles Turner from south Australia. The second, was the seventeen-year-old Chris Wybrow,

who later would participate in the Los Angeles, Seoul, and Barcelona Olympics (where he captained Australia). With Chris Wybrow and Charles Turner playing, the inevitability of the dominance of both the University Club and the NSW Team as the premier state were insured. (It is a pity for water polo that the Association did away with the traditional, yearly interstate competition- the Australian Championships from which the Australian team was selected.)

When Chris first came to Sydney, he stayed at Charles Turner's home. Next, he shared a flat with Chris 'Stumpy' Harrison, another teammate. Then, like many others before him, he moved to Peter Montgomery's and worked for him as well. My two sons and I became very also joined F.Mayer Imports and is still employed with us.

During these years, there were still interstate water polo championships among all Australian states in a different capital city each year. The Grapplers Competition existed for the older players and helped raise funds for the Australian teams.

In 1983, the Championships were in Brisbane just before my young friend, Chris Wybrow, who was on the New South Wales Team, went to his first of three Olympics in Los Angeles.

Chris asked me to take his mother, who had come to Brisbane to watch her son, to the game in Chandler's pool. His mother, Simone, and I have been linked since that first encounter fourteen years ago. Ours has been a good relationship with a few hiccups, but I believe there is no such thing as a marriage or partnership without some problems. During the negotiations for the sale of the house on Portland Street, Dover Heights with a prospective buyer, he and I chatted about articles we read in that morning's paper. The owner of a well-known, large hotel had been arrested for the murder of his wife. The fe1low who was buying my house closed his eyes, as if to reflect upon the circumstances of the killing, and philosophised, "I don't think there is a man alive who has never dreamed of murdering his wife; but

this guy really did it!" I think he was exaggerating, but it was a funny comment anyway.

Between us, Simone and I have five grown-up sons with their respective wives and girlfriends. People of our disparate ages naturally formed distinct habits, separate opinions, and personal customs; but these are all variances to which both sides must adapt. I think we manage pretty well.

Two of the differences between us are our feelings about travel and boats. Simone is not a good traveller like I am. Nor does she like boats as I do. (She gets seasick.) However, she has given in to my need to wander and has come with me to Europe, the USA, Singapore, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, and Thailand. We have also toured interstate Australia and have vacationed at several holiday resorts.

Up to this point, Robi had played top grade water polo. Selected for a number of representative teams, he had travelled with them to New Zealand, Honolulu and California. But because of the amount of time Robi put into game fishing and his long hours at work, his water polo necessarily lagged behind his other interests.

As I reflect back upon my sons' sporting histories, I hope I have not been a typical "stage father". I genuinely tried not to interfere and was there most of the time because I also participated. Too many nice kids become unpopular with their peers because their fathers and mothers are too involved in their extra-curricular activities.

In 1983, Bob Hawke became Prime Minister as Labour returned to power. This time, they got it right. Learning from

their previous mistakes, they remained dominant for thirteen years, bringing with them many long-overdue reforms. In the same year; Alan Bond's boat won the America's Cup. Then, he was a national hero. In 1997, he is in prison for fraud. Arthur Koestler, whose political books I admired before, during, and after World War II, committed suicide with his wife.

The short-lived reign of Andropov finished in Russia in 1984, opening the way to Gorbachev and his reforms. 1984 also saw the Los Angeles Olympics. As revenge for the boycott of the Moscow Games by the United States, Russia and most other Communist nations did not attend those in California. This was Chris Wybrow's first Olympics as a water polo player. In the finals, the gold medal went to Yugoslavia, the silver, to the USA, and the Bronze, to Germany. Australia was fifth.

Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated in 1985. That same year, Andropov died and Gorbachev began his rise to power and finally ended the Cold War. He made initial inroads toward the latter by meeting with the US President, Reagan, and the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher. He eventually ended Communism in Russia. I always maintained that Russian Communism could not be overthrown by foreign powers, but only by the Russians themselves. This is what Gorbachev did. What a very great pity it was for both the world, but especially to Russia, that Yeltsin eventually ousted Gorbachev.

We sold Portland Street, Dover Heights, and we all lived together: Simone, Robi, Sami, and I in a rental property in Bellevue Hill. Eventually, we bought a three-story house (80 squares) on Amour Avenue, Maroubra. This was the best house of my life. (Unfortunately, as of this writing, we have moved once again.)

After Sami finished school in 1989, he came to work for F.Mayer Imports; but that was a premature decision. His real

love lay in training racehorses, so he left my company and went to Wollongong and, later, Toowoomba, Queensland where he was a horse trainer for about six years. He met his future wife there, Melanie, a jockey. Melanie and Sami both came back to Sydney in 1995 and married in 1996. When he returned, Sami was ready to join us at F.Mayer Imports, where he has been since. Fortunately, my sons get on very well, even to the point where they team up against me in arguments. They are doing a wonderful job with the business, working extremely long hours (which I try to reduce without success), and someday will inherit the business.

Robi also was married in 1996. He and his wife, Darlene, have two beautiful sons, born June 10, 1994 and May 30, 1997.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Simone and I met our friend, Tzvi Rosenfeld, in London during August of 1988. He invited us to come back to Europe for his sixtieth birthday party in Antwerp in October. (He is seven months older than I.) I refused, saying it made no sense to go home, only to return to Europe again within a couple of months. But one day at work, I had a call from the Ansett travel service asking me how and when I would like to travel to Belgium. Tzvi had paid for two tickets because he was really keen on having us at his celebration.

We decided to go and spent a couple of days in Brussels before continuing on to Antwerp. However, we almost missed the party because of the powerful storms in Belgium, Holland and England that interrupted flights and channel ferry crossings.

Tzvi was worried that we might not get there at all, but we were nearly the first guests to arrive at the hotel he had booked for his celebrants. It was a great event at which many stories were shared about the guest-of-honour. His English agent told one about an argument, during which an agitated Tzvi roared

at the agent, "Get out of here. I've had enough!" The beleaguered victim backed out of the office, only to realise as he stood outside, that he had been thrown out of his own space.

Unfortunately, my friendship with Tzvi ultimately cost me a lot of money. His shipping company went bankrupt. He did not believe it would happen, but the rest of us could see the writing on the wall. When his vessels were seized, I had eleven containers on one of them in Haifa and two in Singapore – all full of perishable cheeses.

There were roadblocks instead of help from everyone involved in this sticky situation of my missing cheese. Worst of all, were the Belgian liquidators who tried to get into the act and make money from innocent people who were already losing their shirts. Since I had $1,225,000 worth of prepaid cheese on the boats, I was lucky in the end to get it back in a saleable condition. I was fortunate, too, that one of the forwarding agents employed Roger Campbell, a conscientious, New Zealander, who worked day and night toward the release of my containers. I will always be grateful to him. However, by the time the whole mess was finished, it had cost me over $US100,000.

Having seen many bankruptcies, my conviction is that the majority arise under two primary circumstances: frequently, people with businesses recognise that declaring bankruptcy is a way to make money; and other times, bankruptcy results from poor business management. The worst part of the whole circumstance is that once bankruptcy has been declared, the unsecured creditor gets nothing because any money recovered is used to pay the expenses of the receivers and the lawyers.

After Tzvi's birthdav celebration, we decided to go to the Anuga, keeping my attendance record intact. Every year for the past thirty, I have gone to the food exhibitions held

alternately in Paris and Koln. Neither is better or worse than the other is; and each has its hurdles to jump. Paris can offer a multitude of accommodations, and for a long time, the Sial was held in Paris itself at the Porte Versailles. However, eventually the new exhibition centre was built very near the Charles de Gaulle airport. For several of the Sials, I was an official guest and was put up in the Hotel Concord Lafayette. From there, transportation was provided to the fair. This practice was stopped to save money. Therefore, in later years, I have needed to make my own arrangements. No problem. Finding a place to stay in Paris is not difficult, but transportation is. There is a Metro service to the airport; however, nearly every October during the Sial, a strike is called, and the Paris traffic becomes indescribably congested. Lately, I have circumvented the problem by staying at the Airport Hilton, which is very near the exhibition.

On the other hand, at the Anuga in Koln, transportation is not difficult, but hotel accommodations are extremely elusive. Some people book rooms in other German cities as far away as Wiesbaden, coming into Koln every morning by train. The Bavarian Dairy Association finally solved this problem by securing reservations for me at the Mundial Hotel, only an eight-to-ten minute walk across the railway bridge to the fair.

At one of the earlier Anuga exhibitions, a Sydney travel agent found us a place to stay at quite a pleasant hotel. But upon our arrival there, the receptionist laughed at Annette and me when we presented the voucher. She said, "I could fill the hotel with people to whom accommodations were sold in Sydney," We ended up in a place with no en-suites and only one bathroom and toilet to service a whole floor. When Annette went to the bathroom during the night, she came back nauseated. Not only was the bathroom filthy, but its walls had been "decorated" with dozens of used condoms. Next morning, we decided one night in this place had been enough.

On another occasion, one of our German connections, the Gundlesheim factory manager, offered us a room in a lovely, small hotel just outside Bonn where many of their company staff and customers stayed when they were in the city. In the mornings, the Gundleshcim people drove us to the Anuga, and at night, we made our own way back by train and taxi.

Many years later in 1987, when I went to the Anuga with Simone, we found a room in a clean inn about twenty kilometres from the city. The space was tiny with two single beds, set up as close together as they could be, and a postage stamp-sized bathroom. The room was so small that only one of us could get dressed at a time while the other stayed in bed. For this, we were charged 300DM. When we became friendly with the hotel owner later on, she showed me her contract. If a travel agent booked the rooms, the agent charged the customer 300DM and paid the hotel owner 50DM. Naturally, I asked her why she did not rent the rooms directly to her customers. She explained that she had to let the accommodations throughout the year, not just at food fair time, and if she did not always use the travel agents, she would be black-listed by them.

On one of my business trips to Europe, Andrew and Judy Majnik came with me.The highlight was the Rhine cruise from Basel, Switzerland to the Anuga in Koln instead of the usual train trip. During these four days, we stopped each night in a different town along the river. On this same trip, I had to interrupt a stopover in Singapore because my mother was ill.

My mother, Germaine, was a great admirer of doctors, and she took whatever they said as the literal law. So when she had a gall bladder attack during life before Australia, a Dr. Soreiro had put her on a protein-free diet (no eggs, steak, and so forth) for a few days until she felt well again. Now, thirty years later,

I received a phone call in Singapore from a nurse, reporting that Germaine was in a Sydney hospital. I flew home immediately and arrived at 6:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. A message awaited me from a doctor who requested that I phone.

"The only thing wrong with your mother is malnutrition." the physician stated authoritatively.

Apparently, my mother had followed the "gall bladder' diet each day for thirty years because whenever a doctor advised her not to eat a certain food, she assumed that order was a lifetime sentence from her healer – a man who knew everything.

In this case, the newest physician's edict was that she could leave the hospital when she ate 'everything'. So inevitably, when I went to visit her, she would be sitting up in bed, enjoying a breakfast of steak, eggs, beans, and bacon. Of course, because of her literal belief in her doctor's word, she would continue to eat "everything" from that day forward. And not remarkably, my small, skinny mother turned into a short, fat one during her eighties and nineties.

On one of our early trips to Europe, we celebrated Simone's birthday in Hamburg. We had a delectable meal with my supplier and his wife and attended the opera, Turandot, in the Hamburg Opera House. There was a heat wave in the city at that time which helped augment the landscape tremendously. The view in the park was wonderful when the office girls, seeking relief from the oppressive weather during their lunch breaks, stripped and lay in the grass.

Our last trip to Europe together was in 1990. We stayed in a hotel on the lakefront in Zurich. Unfortunately, the weather was wet and cold and the visibility, poor. We unpacked, showered, and went for a little walk around. The next day, I arranged to see one of my suppliers at his cheese factory on the border,

so we moved on (much to Simone's disappointment) without really seeing Zurich. We arrived at 8:00 p.m. that night and went to our lovely Chalet hotel by a lake.

In the morning, we took an early walk, stopping by a beautiful little church with magnificent artwork inside. An elderly couple who kept the building and graveyard in excellent condition tended the church, hundreds of years old.

The suppliers at the Bayernland Cheese factory on the Bodensee, where the border of Switzerland and Austria meet, arranged for us to stay at a health resort near them. This establishment was in the country, and unfortunately, with the exception of one day, the rain drenched us continuously. We took advantage of the single sunny day and went hiking. This was a cross-country skiing area during the winter months and was quite beautiful. We walked for roughly five hours, and, not really quite sure of our way back, we stopped an old couple at the crossroads and asked directions to the village. The gentleman looked at me, amazed. "But you are in the village," he assured. We had completed a full circle without realising it.

During this stay, we were picked up and ushered around the Bayernland Cheese factory. They have the same problems between the Union and workers as we do in Australia. For instance, even though there were small cranes at the ends of the workers' counters to pick up any cheese weighing twenty kilograms or more, nobody used them. They simply hefted the cheeses in their arms – even some of the seventy-five pound Emmenthal rounds.

As well as this being Simone's last to Europe, it marked the end of my yearly trips to the Anuga and Sial food conventions as well. We thought it was important for Robi to attend them now as he took over more of the running of our business.

The world at large had been agitated in the middle and late

eighties. Paris was quite nervous. Every shop, hotel, and restaurant was littered with armed guards who searched people entering these premises. Arab terrorists, letting off bombs indiscriminately, were causing mass panic. This is what Robi and I walked into during a trip to Paris in 1986.

In 1987, while in Kuala Lumpur with Simone, we heard the news of the stock market crash in New York. In the same year, Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen was ousted in Queensland- finally.

1988 was the year of the Brisbane Expo as well as the celebration of Australia's Bi-centenary. 1988 also saw had the Seoul Olympics (Chris's second). After the boycotts of the Moscow Games by the USA, and of the Los Angeles ones by the Communist countries, finally we were back to the Olympics "as usual" that were attended by most countries. Seoul's were the first serious "drug test" Games. In water polo, Yugoslavia was first, the USA, second, and the USSR, third. Australia's Duncan Armstrong earned his gold in the 200-metre butterfly. In the USA, Bush succeeded Reagan as President.

The fanatic, Ayatolla Khomeini, condemned Rushdie, the author, to death in 1989. Reading Rushdie's book, I came to the conclusion that had there not been the fuss made against him by the religious fanatics, his book would have been an absolute "flop". It was only the threats against Rushdie's life that made the work a "best seller".

In China, the Tiananmen Square massacre occurred, and in Australia, we experienced the fall of the big business magnates when Skase, Bond, and a few more of similar stature suffered "reversals". In Eastern Europe, history was in the making. Romania's Ceausescu and his wife were executed. Hungary opened its Austrian borders to East Germans, who used this as an escape route that took them through Hungary to Austria and, from there, to West Germany. Not long after this, the whole Communist block collapsed and the infamous Berlin wall came tumbling down. This ended an era of Communism

that had lasted from 1917 to 1989.

After 1989, history galloped along at a rapid pace as the moderates were swept aside. Gorbachev, whose Perestroika would have caused a peaceful, less painful transition from dictatorship to democracy, was kicked out This ended the reign of Communism, but introduced an era of inflation, disorder, and lawlessness instead. A small, new class of millionaires exists now in the old, Communist countries, but the majority of people are much worse off than they had been before. Under Communism there were few luxuries, but the basic necessities were available to all. Pensions were paid; and hospitals, medical services, and education, free. All this is gone now – replaced by the most appalling conditions.

For me, one of the interesting paradoxes of the fall of Communist rule (that supports my near-hatred of religion) is that under Communism, religion was spurned. Russia experienced, and accepted, seventy-two years of anti-religious propaganda when churches closed and there was no religious education for ninety-percent of the people. But in 1989, when Communism was overthrown and religious freedom, reinstated, the practice of religion just picked up from where it left off in 1917. Churches filled, and people became religious again, overnight. I have trouble understanding this phenomenon.

Before the fall of Communism we could say there were four, main governmental systems. The first, Communism, failed completely and is finished...for now. Marx never expected Communism in Russia.

This German/Jewish theoretician, son of well to do parents, went to Bonn University to study law, but worked harder at raising hell. He pursued wine, women, and song to such a degree that he ended up fighting a duel over a lady's favours. (But what can one expect from a nineteen-year-old.) In Berlin, where he finished

his studies, he became a 'subversive'. He thought he might teach, but there was not much of a market for subversive educators, so he turned to political journalism. The Communist Manifesto, Wage-labour and Capital, and Value, Price, and Profit were some of his famous short writings.

Works such as Wage-labour and Capital, which have very little practical value, remind me of 'business consultants' who ruin businesses with their theories that are not supported by practical knowledge. The most interesting part of Capital is the last part, which was not written by Marx, but by his friend and co-author, Engels. In it, he describes the future Utopian Socialist state with its eight-hour work days so workers will have time to pursue studies, entertainment, sports, and other interests. Engels and Marx expected the "Socialist Revolution" would take place in the nineteenth century's industrially advanced countries: England, Germany, and France. But instead, the revolution occurred in Russia. Surprise! This enormous country, with its millions of poor, down-trodden peasants who lived and starved in feudal conditions, entered World War I and used those millions of people as cannon fodder. Leaders led Russia, not one of whom was a worker or peasant himself.

The Communists assumed power in 1917 by promising peace to Russia's people, and then they signed the Brest-litovsk Treaty with Germany. This revolution could have gone in a different direction had the Western world not turned a blind eye to the remnants of the old, reactionary Czarist Regime, who kept fighting, undertaking mass murders, and committing countless atrocities. The Western countries, notably England, France, Japan, and, to a lesser degree, the USA, helped the discredited White Armies – even loaning troops to help them in various parts of Russia. There was Kerenski, who as a democrat, tried to resist both the Reds and Whites, but just like

Gorbachev seventy years later, his moderate forces were swept aside and annihilated.

In spite of all the above, I am convinced the Soviet Revolution would have taken a different turn if not for the death of Lenin and the rise to power of the obscure, Georgian theological student, Djugasvili (Stalin), who introduced a reign of terror, murdering even his own people. Due to this, Communism failed completely and, for the time being, ceases to exist. It still does in China, but the original theories have been obliterated, and different policies define it now. (I do not suggest that Communism will not reappear in an amended form in ten-to-twenty years.)

The second of the major systems of government is the European Democracy that operates as a "welfare state." This system is embraced by the Western European countries and is the one with which my personal sympathies lie.

Unfortunately, those countries also have very serious economic problems. High wages, long paid holidays, fully paid sick leave, free medicine, hospitals, and limitless education are all great benefits for the people under this system. However, lately the costs for these free programs are reaching astronomical heights, causing the governments higher budget deficits. Unfortunately, as laudable as all social programs are, there are always considerable numbers of people who abuse their privileges and rights. Crippling taxes, enacted to fix the deficits, reduce initiative and progress; so most of the Western European countries have started to educe, or are contemplating the reduction of, social services. There were and are considerable subsidies for farmers and industries in all the Common Market Countries, but these only widen the vicious circle of spending and subsequent tax increases.

There is also a strong economic danger that Europe, due to the high costs of these services and the deficits they incur, will loose its competitive edge against the emerging industrial

nations of Asia. Of course, all of this is under study and advisement, and I very much hope solutions can be found.

But in spite of all the problems and bickering, Europe with its Common Market and its 'dream' of becoming a United Europe has come a long way. With the exception of problems in the old Communist countries, the break up of Yugoslavia, Albania, and so forth, the only dangerous tension remaining is the eternal Greek/Turkish one. Great success will come from cooperation instead of wars among all the Western European Countries; and I am a great optimist about the future of a united Europe. I only feel very sorry that, due to my age, I will not be around to see its glorious results.

The third governmental system in use and, presently, the big winner, is the USA's. It won the Cold War decisively against the Soviets, and with that, the great enemy of the USA and its opponents in world politics ceased to exist. This was an unconditional victory for the "land of free enterprise". No nation can stand up against America's military and economic might. In spite of all the above, though I respect it's achievements, I do not admire the USA. Economic dominance comes at a very high price to this richest and most successful country. The US has the most advanced medical knowledge, but only those who can pay for it have access. Also, the US "free enterprise system" has produced mammoth companies that rule foreign countries' economies. I personally am convinced that the next major problem in the world will emerge in Latin America, which, exploited by the large American corporations, will erupt sooner or later. The mammoth companies in foreign countries should be spending some of their enormous profits to improve the living standards of their host nations.

Australia is struggling to find its own way among all of these systems. It must locate some middle ground between the welfare state and the ruthless, cruel efficiency of the USA. Australia

has a social services system that is more advanced then that of the US, but is well below that of the European countries. This results in much lower taxes here than in the European countries. (Yes, I, too, have heard myself rant and rave about high taxes. I take it with a grain of salt.) We do not have VAT (or GST, as it is called in Australia) though its advent is inevitable; and I am convinced a 'use tax' will be introduced before the year 2000.

Privatisation is a very popular concept at present in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand and America. Although I believe in private enterprise, my personal view is that public hospitals, power, water, telephones, public transport, airports, ports, and schools should all be state-owned and not privatised. Though I do not believe in nationalising them, the most abusive offenders of private enterprise are the banks, insurance companies, and lawyers. In Australia, the greatest excess is exhibited by "compulsory superannuation", which is handled by insurance companies and banks. If properly regulated, those billions would provide the government coffers plenty of money while giving bigger benefits to the people from whose earnings it is deducted.

MY MOTHER, GERMAINE (1901-1995)

My mother went to live at the Montefiore Homes in the late 1970s. She had her own private room with bathroom in the hostel section. At age eighty-five, she still continued to go by bus into the city to David Jones to buy her skin creams, presents, and whatever she needed. She still enjoyed the tearoom where she had coffee and a sandwich and then came by taxi to the office.

By the time she was eighty-nine, instead of catching a bus to the city first, she would skip David Jones and take a cab directly to our place. Every Friday, she arrived at F.Mayer Imports,

and we would take her to lunch. For her ninetieth birthday, we arranged a party and flew her brother Tibi and his girlfriend from Portugal to surprise her.

In spite of illnesses and surgery, she had a good life until her last few years when she deteriorated rapidly. My father died when she was sixty-four years old, so she was on her own for a long time. Refusing to meet other men, she declared her husband was "the prince of princes".

In 1995, she had a fall and fractured her hip. Though the operation was successful, my mother, Germaine, never recovered and finally appeared to just give up. I was called into the Montefiore one Sunday morning. She was unconscious. My friend, Dr. Howard Roby, had just returned from an overseas trip that morning, but he came immediately and made her last few hours as comfortable as possible. My mother, Germaine, died in March of 1995 when she was almost ninety-five years old.

The 1992 Barcelona Olympics, "The Friendly Games", was Chris's third Olympics. He was the captain of the Australian water polo side, and this time, without any boycotts, all the principal teams represented water polo.

Three years later, in 1995, Chris's mother, Simone, and I went to Peter Bender's wedding (our dear friend Tommy and Vera's son) in San Francisco. Because this was Simone's first trip to the USA, I also took her to Los Angeles. We spent a beautiful week at Lake Tahoe with Vera, her friend, Kathy, from Australia, and her relatives who have made their homes in America. Afterward, we stopped in Honolulu for five days, meeting up with Howard Roby, his wife, Helen, and their son, Angus.

Robi and I returned from a trip abroad in November of 1996. We travelled to Singapore, Rome, Palermo, Salerno, Lisbon, Paris, Singapore, and back home. The main reason for this journey was the Sial Food Fair; but in addition to seeing that, our customers, and suppliers, we also visited relatives as well. This would be a more relaxed occasion than most of my business trips had been.

We left Sydney on Wednesday, October 9, 1996 and arrived in Singapore that night, where we stayed at the Stanford Plaza Hotel. The next day, we met with George Ballick (an old Sydney business connection, now working for Jason's of Singapore) and a couple of buyers from the same company. (We sell quite a quantity of goods to this concern.)

Because our plane for Rome left at midnight, we had time to have dinner with George at one of the trendy Singapore waterfront restaurants. This time, we had business in the city, but I always liked stopping here anyway, preferring it to other Asian locales. I find it ideal for short layovers because one can eat and drink anything safely. It is clean, hygienic, and walking at any time of the day or night is not dangerous. The hotels are first class, and Singapore Airlines, in my opinion, is the best one. Singapore is very regulated, and people who live there call it a "fine city" because one can be fined for almost anything: for throwing away rubbish, for not flushing the urinals in the toilets, or for chewing gum, which is labelled "unhygienic". Enforcement of these rules results in one of the tidiest metropolises in the world – the only one I have seen that is totally free of graffiti.

From Singapore to Rome is a fifteen-hour flight with a one-hour stop in Zurich. We arrived in Rome at 9:00 a.m. where Mike Conte, our Italian agent, waited for us and then drove us to the nearby Holiday Inn. We arranged to meet him the next day to talk business and, in the meantime, took a taxi to some of the famous landmarks in Rome. I had been there several times previously, but Robi was only two-and-a-half years old

on his first visit He could not possibly remember much. It was an experience for him to see the magnificence of Rome for the first time. After leaving the Vatican portion of St. Peter's, we walked to the Castel Sant'Angelo where the opera Tosca is set and climbed all the steps to the top. After walking around for seven hours, my right, squashed knee hurt badly, but I continued further to meet my brother-in-law, Raj, and his girlfriend. Raj was eighty-one and in excellent condition; and Beatrice, a good fifty-two. We had dinner in a fine restaurant with excellent food and a robust red wine.Since Raj and Beatrice were friends of the restaurant owners, three different types of grappa were brought at the end of the meal as a present from the management. After an enjoyable reunion with Raj and Beatrice, both Robi and I were exhausted and fell into bed.

Next morning, Saturday, we got up early and took the hotel courtesy bus to the Forum Romano and the Colosseum where I got in free. (Because I am now over sixty-five, I am often a "freebee" at tourist attractions.) Another long walk from the Colosseum brought us to the Piazza Venezia and the vast Vittorio Emanuele Monument, Rome's most flamboyant landmark. The Palazzo Venezia is where Mussolini (Il Duce) addressed huge crowds in the square below. We continued on to the Fountain of Trevi, the Spanish Steps, and finally to the Via Veneto and to the Villa Borghese Park at the end of it. This had been another eight-hour day of sightseeing that we completed with Mike and a fine meal at Piazza Cavour.

On Sunday, we slept in a bit until Mike picked us up with his English wife, son, daughter, and her boyfriend. We drove in two cars to a countryside restaurant located on a farm. Once again we ate too much and tried to repair the damage by visiting a walled, twelfth century village atop a hill. Later, we asked to be dropped off at Raj and Beatrice's place

where we collected some of Rene's belongings and looked at photographs.

The next morning, we made the fifty-minute flight to Palermo in Sicily. This was a domestic flight, but security at the Palermo airport seemed unusually tight with Carabinieri carrying submachine guns and scent hounds restlessly traversing the terminal. But modern Sicily is a land of surprising contrasts. The traditional graciousness and nobility of the Sicilian people exists side-by-side with the atrocities and destructive influences of the Mafia.

We were picked up by our anchovy supplier and driven to his offices about fifty kilometres from Palermo. The scenery unfolding before us was stunning. We had our usual gluttonous lunch and then travelled to the ruins of an old Roman city, 100 BC, on top of a promontory with breath-taking views to the sea below. Mike Conte and the anchovy men were both young – Mike, in his mid-forties, and the other, mid-thirties. But they were not up to the hike, stopping halfway, while Robi and I continued to the peak. After more sightseeing, we experienced a hair-raising, white-knuckle blitz to the airport at speeds up to 160 km/h. to catch the 8:30 p.m. flight to Rome.

Just as we were about to leave, the take off was aborted when the pilot announced that because of the gale-force wind blowing outside, we would have to wait until the conditions improved. Meanwhile, nearly everyone on the plane got out his mobile phone to ring people up and pass the time. By 9:30 when we took off, nerves were shattered, and even the hostess joined the phone-less ones of us as we shouted at the others to: 'Turn those damn things off!"

The next day, Tuesday, we drove from Rome to Salerno with Mike. Because Robi had never been to this part of Italy, I asked Mike to arrange for a short lunch so that we could see as much as possible: Amalfi, Sorrento, Positario, Pompeii,

and perhaps, Capri. Alas, the best of plans can go astray. We left in drizzle and arrived in Salerno, 200 km. later, in a downpour. It was impossible to sightsee at all. But luckily, we were in a country where one can always resort to food. We had arrived in Italy to a cadence of electrical storms five days before and would depart in the rain again on the next one.

During my previous trips, I had noted that European airfares are astronomical compared to those in the USA or Australia. To go from Rome to Lisbon, a three-hour flight, and from there to Paris, another two, costs more than a Sydney/Europe return flight or even a round-the-world one from Sydney. So this journey with my son was expensive, but I was really enjoying myself.

We left Rome for Lisbon and were met by my Uncle Tibi and my old swimming friend, Fernando Madeira. All four of us and our luggage jammed into Fernando's car and drove off to the Tivoli Hotel.

A few years before my father's death, my mother's parents died within a few months of one another. They were both in their nineties. Shortly afterward, my Uncle Tibi (my mother's brother) married. Before this, marriage had been out of the question because of my grandmother. The reader will remember her – a woman short of stature, but large of thumb. My father had suggested often to Uncle Tibi that he migrate to Australia, but Tibi lacked the courage for that. This fear factor was compounded by the old Hungarian landlord in Sydney, Mr. Wavrek, who wrote letters to my uncle, describing what a horrible place Australia was. He frightened Tibi off. So I guess in the end, the scared man was more comfortable under the shelter of the thumb. (I do not understand what compelled Wavrek's effort to discourage my uncle from Australia. He took this secret to his grave when he died recently in Sydney at ninety-one. Simone was kind and looked after him during the last two years of his life.)

For an eighty-nine-year-old man, Uncle Tibi seemed in remarkable condition. He was able to keep up with us all day, and ate as much as Robi and I did. His only worry was that the problems with his eyesight might precipitate a fall. [Both his mother and his sister (my mother) died in their nineties after breaking their hips.]

We ate and played with Tibi and Fernando, and on our last night, Friday, Tibi, Robi and I went to the old pool where we had swum and played water polo in 1956. At 11:00 p.m., junior water polo training began. Fernando had represented Portugal in both swimming and water polo in Helsinki in 1952, and on this occasion he reminisced about the game in 1956 against Spain in which both he and I played for Portugal and won 4:3. At that time, Spain was just as weak as Portugal was: but today, Spain's team holds the gold medal from the Atlanta, 1996 Olympics. We arrived hack at the hotel well after midnight.

Fernando and Tibi picked us up the next morning to take us to the airport. We hoarded the Air France, Fokker 100 and took off for Paris. This flight was memorable for its beautiful Camembert and Brie – types banned by quarantine laws in Australia.

We arrived at the Charles De Gaulle airport at lunchtime, booked into the airport Hilton, and thirty minutes later, took the Metro to Paris. Because of the past European colonial exploitation in Africa by Portugal, England, France, and Holland, European cities are crowded today with people from those Colonies. (Many have come to Europe from other Black African nations, Vietnam, and Cambodia as well.) France now has a population from their ex-Colonies (Algiers, Morocco, and Tunisia) that is 15% Muslim. On this train ride into Paris from the airport, Robi's and my faces were the only white ones.

We walked to the Pantheon, the burial site of famous French men, including Emil Zola and Victor Hugo (appropriately

next to each other), Rousseau, and Voltaire. We continued on to Montparnasse, the old Bohemian Quarter. Its association with well-known writers, artists, and personalities from the past is still vivid in the streets. When we were both so exhausted that we could walk no more, we caught a taxi back to the Hilton.

Sunday to Wednesday was devoted to the Sial meeting and to our suppliers. We found that many of the old, profitable ones had been taken over by larger companies who tended to sack experienced business executives and replace them with university computer operators and consultants. (These people generally ruin the best companies eventually.) At night we went with out for dinner with Jeroen de Schaaf and the rest of the Bontje crowd. Once we even went to Planet Hollywood.

Robi and I had spent only one free night with one another, so we took a taxi to the La Madeleine, walked around for a couple of hours, had dinner near the Champs Elysees, and came back to the hotel. The dinner for two had cost 320 francs ($80) and the taxi to and from, 500 francs ($125).

Thursday morning, we returned to Singapore, where we stayed at the Sheraton Towers. We met again with George Ballick and Jason's people and left Saturday morning on Singapore Airlines for Sydney. As is always the case, it was nice to leave Sydney, but even more delightful to come home.

THE LAST VOMIT

Today, forty-seven years after my arrival in Australia, I am sixty-nine, and a pretty healthy one, at that. I have not been ill often, but when something was wrong with me, there was always a medical screw-up or complication of some kind. In 1950 when I arrived in Australia, it was a cool summer. In those days, there were no indoor pools in Sydney. We played water polo in shark netted, enclosed baths, such as those in Balmain, Northbridge, and Bondi. Every night we experienced

an electricity shortage, and the radio announced each hour which suburbs would be "blacked out' within the next ten minutes. These blackouts lasted from half-an-hour to an hour. When the lights went out in the middle of a water polo game, the players, cold, wet, and shivering, had to wait (sometimes in the pouring rain) until the lights came back on again and the competition could resume. This happened week after week. No wonder most of us caught colds.

Once during this period, when I took my father for a medical check-up, the Hungarian doctor, a lung specialist in Hungary and a GP in Sydney, took more interest in me than he did in my father, saying: "You don't sound very good. I want to check you out." I tried to explain that I had an ordinary cold, but he insisted upon listening to my lungs. He found nothing startling, but took a urine sample anyway, which he tested on the spot. When the urine turned green, he diagnosed me immediately. I was a "diabetic". He prescribed a weekly diet that was so strict that I could only eat an amount equivalent to a couple of breakfasts under my normal regime. He told me to come back in a few days, and he would teach me how to give myself insulin injections.

Needless to say, I was in a foul, foul mood the next day when I went back to my counter at David Jones. One of my customers, an old Austrian doctor, Dr. Walter, was concerned about me and went to my parents' shop to ask my father what was wrong. My parents replied that I had diabetes. He told them, "No way!" He could tell that much just by looking at me.

He returned to David Jones and questioned whether or not I had been given a blood test. I replied, "No. Only the urine one." Dr. Walker became very irritated and condemned any physician who would diagnose diabetes without a blood profile. He asked me if I had taken something to alleviate my cold. When I said, "Yes, a couple of aspirins." he nodded and affirmed

that they were responsible for altering my urine. The next day, I had a blood test at a pathologist's office (Dr. Orban) that confirmed I was not diabetic.

In the evening, we had dinner with Bernie and June Bloch, who lived in Balmain. Bernie ran a large GP practice there and was extremely popular. Rene and Matthew had met this South African couple, introduced us, and we all became friends. Bernie was a young doctor in London in 1948 when the Israeli War of Independence began. He volunteered and became an Israeli army doctor. June, an English nurse, went with him. In 1950, Bernie's parents and sister, Erma, migrated from Bloemfontein to Australia. The parents sold textile materials in conjunction with my father. Erma married Harry Glass, who became a High Court Judge. (He was the only Jewish Vice-Admiral during the war in the Australian Navy.) Bernie and June produced four daughters, who grew up and now all reside in different countries. Their parents, today in their seventies, live with them, alternating among their various homes.

When Bernie learned of my "diabetes", he insisted upon taking me to the hospital for another blood test. This one, too, was negative. Bernie sputtered and fumed as he explained how dangerous it was to give insulin to a person without this disease.

In the meantime, while I was discovering I was not sick after all, Samu was finding out he was. He began exhibiting some very unhealthy symptoms – weight loss, shaking, sweats. One doctor after another referred him to more physicians. We were restricted as to which ones we could consult since my father's English was poor, thus limiting his ability to describe his symptoms to anyone other than Hungarian or German- speaking doctors. Finally, one of them pronounced Samu a victim of "incurable cancer" and referred him to a Dr. Thomas Greenaway, an Australian Specialist, who could

send my father to Gloucester House at Prince Alfred Hospital where he might die more comfortably.

This dying man was not only my father; he was my closest friend. Samu was just in his sixties, and it simply was too early to lose him. Dr. Greenaway was a lovely person. I translated his questions to Samu and Samu's answers back again. After a few minutes, the physician began laughing and said, "I'm not sending your father to the hospital. You bring him back tomorrow with an empty stomach, and I'll do some tests which will confirm what I know already. I'm positive that if he takes some pills, he will recover in a few weeks." My relief was enormous! It seems the problem was an over-active thyroid gland (hyperthyroidism), and in a few weeks, he was as good as new and would remain so for another fifteen years.

My other personal medical puzzle took forty years to solve. It was, finally, in 1990, by a pacemaker. During the forty-year span leading up to the electrical device in my chest, I was persuaded three or four times to have a cardiac check-up. The results were always the same: fantastic heartbeat, low pulse rate, very fit. But when I did not exercise, I felt unwell, tired. I ran with George Daldry's group in Centennial Park. One of the members of that bunch was a doctor who regularly monitored everyone's pulse, blood pressure, recovery rate, and so forth. Finally, in 1983, when I was fifty- five, he gave me a two-hour stress test that confirmed I was quite fit for my age. But I knew that I was not the super fit, Olympic-standard sportsman the test described. However, since this physician confirmed what all the others had said, I decided not to worry further. The fact was that the more I exercised, the better I felt. For example, running from Bondi to Maroubra made me feel super. The simple explanation for this is that exercise made my pulse faster, and that had a positive effect on me.

In October I990, after returning from Paris, I played Water Polo in the Sydney University pool against Balmain. Not very far into the game, I blacked out and sank to the bottom of the pool. An old Balmain player, Maxie May, against whom I have competed for the past thirty years, pulled me out. I recovered immediately and felt fine. I wanted to continue the game, but was not allowed to. Instead, they took me to the Prince Alfred Emergency Room, where I explained that I passed out in the pool. I was given immediate cardiac attention and was advised to remain hospitalised for a twenty-four-hour check-up. They plugged me into a monitor to determine what was wrong since, according to the electrocardiogram, I had not experienced a heart attack.

This all happened at 10:00 p.m., and my son and Simone came right over to the hospital to see me. When they heard the doctors talking about my needing a pacemaker, Simone immediately called my neighbour, Dr. Jim Gialussi, for advice. He came straight away. I awakened at 2:00 a.m. to a crowd of nurses and doctors, taking my blood pressure and hovering in a general sort of way. When I asked what the big commotion was, they explained that my heart had stopped for eight seconds.

The next day, the specialists returned to report that my heart was okay for the time being, but something was the matter with one of the valves. Though eight seconds without a heartbeat is a short time when one is asleep, if the heart stops while its owner is driving a car or surfing, this short amount of time can be disastrous. I was advised that I should have a pacemaker. Fortunately, Dr. Howard Roby was there to explain to the specialists that I was quite athletic. And although I was sixty-two, I played rigorous sports daily. Instead of the normal device, I therefore would require a "super' pacemaker that could accommodate my particular heart and the heightened lifestyle I subjected it to. My new electronic equipment was approved, installed, and

has not prevented me from swimming or playing water polo and squash as often as I want.

I really believe I could count my real illnesses and the misdiagnosed ones on a single hand. In I977, I left Sydney with a cold and arrived in Paris, flu-ridden. By the time I turned up at the Anuga in Koln, Germany, I had a very sore, badly infected ear. The hotel referred me to a doctor nearby. The surgery was superbly presented with X-ray rooms and all kinds of modern equipment The doctor examined my ears, prescribed antibiotics and a painkiller, and instructed me to take two pills every couple of hours as long as the discomfort persisted.

Next day, I went to the Anuga with my friends, Jean Jacques and Ursula Amman, who noticed that I was very dopey and vague. Though I am usually quite adept at figures, I could not calculate the simplest transaction. Ursula asked me what was I taking for the ear infection, and I produced the bottle, telling her that I had taken twenty pills so far. She grabbed them out of my hand and took the remainder to the ladies' room, where she flushed the tablets down the toilet The drug was Valium, which is potent and causes significant side effects when taken in large doses. When I returned to Sydney and told my doctor friends about my experience, they would not believe that a doctor would prescribe such generous quantities of Valium. But I had the prescription to show them what one of their kind had done to me.

I have experienced several sports-related injuries, resulting in such problems as a damaged eardrum and a detached retina. And there have been some work-related ones like an ear, torn when it was nailed by a flying carton and a leg, hurt when it crashed through the rotting bed of a truck. But these have been few, and I am lucky in this regard. THE READER SHOULD NOTE: SEVEN PAGES FROM THE END OF MY SIXTY-NINTH YEAR, I STILL HAVE NOT VOMITED.

NOT SINCE BOOK ONE, THE LATE FORTIES. THIS, IS A STELLAR RECORD!

THE LAST SEVENTY, THE NEXT SEVENTY

During these last years, I have travelled on business with Robi, but I will eventually stop and defer to my sons. F.Mayer Imports continues to expand, and we have built our new 'reserve' warehouse, cool rooms, and freezers across the road from our original ones. We also have constructed a twenty-five-metre pool on site that affords us the opportunity to train without wasting our time travelling to other facilities. It does not, however, replace the surf. I love the "real" water and waves; and when conditions are favourable, I still prefer the waves breaking on the shore.

In the 1970s, the old Hungarian water polo players in Sydney, mostly from the M.T.K., initiated a reunion dinner that took place every couple of months. I did not really qualify to attend because I never participated in Hungary; and even in Sydney in the 50s, I played for Bondi while they all competed for the Spit. Nevertheless, I have gone to most of the dinners anyway and still enjoy them today. Unfortunately, time passed and a high percentage of this group have died.

Elmer Szatmary, European gold medalist in the 200-metre freestyle and water polo player, died in his forties while driving a cab. Hofer Kalpagos, a successful architect and a goalkeeper, had a heart attack while dining in a restaurant and is deceased. He was in his fifties. Ruthner also succumbed a few years ago. Alex Koszegi, a water polo fanatic, fell victim to cancer many years ago. (I did not get on with him and left the Bondi club because of that.)

Zoli Szendroi, a beautiful person who died in 1996 when he was seventy-nine, told me the following story, repeatedly. As a fourteen-year-old kid up from the country village of Szendro, he took the Hungarian sounding name, "Szendroi"", instead of his original one, "Fried", which sounded too Jewish. About 1930, he went to see my father in his shop, asking if Samu could get him into the MTK because he wanted to play water polo. The only real problem was that he could hardly swim. Samu asked the coach to take Zoli on, and Zoli learned how to swim properly, eventually becoming a fairly good player. In Australia, he made the NSW State side when he was thirty-five.

Tibi Arvai (Harvey) died quite recently – also at seventy – nine. He was always "well to do" and helped others when they came to Australia. He was a cousin of Zsa Zsa Gabor, who is the same age. (So, now we know!) At his cremation, opera music was played instead of the more traditional selections. (Incidentally, I read a few weeks ago that Zsa Zsa Gabor's ninety-eight-year-old mother died in America. The story reported that she arrived in the USA in 1939 with only $100 to her name, but it did not mention that this was the $I00 that was lent to her by my uncle and grandparents yonks ago in Lisbon and not paid back to her dying day. It just goes to show that lingering debts can kill a person.)

Fortunately, enough of us are still alive (four) from this original group to make up a dinner party. I, in my seventieth year, am the youngest.

Momi Vadas, seventy-six, suffered a stroke recently while playing golf. Fully recovered, he volunteers at the children's hospital. I have known him and his brother for over sixty years. The latter died a while ago in Israel, where we met him in the 1940s. He owned a bakery there. About a year before his death, he and his wife visited Sydney, and we took him on a harbour cruise on the Phantom.

Oscar Csuvik (Charles) is seventy-one and was a member of the 1948, Hungarian Olympic Water Polo Team that took the silver medal. Unfortunately, due to circulation problems, he is not well. Although he has had a portion of his foot amputated recently, he manages nicely.

Cila Vecsei is a healthy seventy-six.

The end of the decade is fast approaching, and last year (1997) has seen my sixty-ninth birthday as well as the arrival of my second grandson, Beau Matthew. Since I am now in my seventieth year, I should take stock of my life and plan for the remainder of it.

My sporting avocation is, and will be, a vital part of everyday existence. In 1988, I won my only FINA World Championship gold medal in the Brisbane Masters World Championship Water Polo Games. Our team included Johnny Harrison, Jeff Winterton, Paul Wettin, and Howard Roby- all over, or just over, the required age of thirty-five. Charles Turner, thirty-five, and Peter Montgomery, thirty-eight, both were still playing at their peak, world-class levels and were the stars of our team. I was just a few months past my sixtieth birthday.

I played again when I was over sixty-five in the Brisbane Masters Games, once again with Howard Roby, but this time without Charles Turner or Peter Montgomery. We made the semi-finals, but were beaten by the Russian Kazakstan team.

I was sixty-five as well when I competed in my last two first grade games. I was not in first due to my ability, but because Chris Wybrow was told just before the games that the University Team needed players. He could not find anyone else, so I had to sign up. Howard Roby and I filled in for the last game against Balmain, and surprisingly, we won. I am still playing fifth and sixth grade in I997 with Howard, Robi, and Sami. I hope to be participating still in May of '98 when I am seventy.

I am not ashamed to be in the lower grades. After all, Andrew Kerr (early forties) and Chris Wybrow (thirty-five), both ex-Olympians, are on the Cronulla third grade team.

In 1997, my sons arranged a surprise party for me, and it really was. I knew they were planning something, but not the "what" or "where". I was tricked into going to the North Bondi Surf Club on a Saturday night where 150 of my water polo and surf buddies were assembled for the fiftieth anniversary of my playing water polo. Team members from my 1950-1956 Bondi teams, the 1957 East Sydnev – Drummoyne side, and my present University one attended, The one person missing was Howard Roby, who was ministering to the sleeping sick at the hospital.

I still frequent the North Bondi Surf Club after all these years, swimming in the Sunday Handicap surf races, and still enjoying it. I have also swum in some of the Cole's Classics in the Across-the-Bay surf club swims, where I have won twice and finished a proud second two years ago in the over-sixty-five group. Unfortunately, I had to give up running and jogging because I damaged my knee playing squash. But about twelve years ago, I ran and swam in the Bronte biathlon, which consisted of a long surf swim and a fifteen-kilometre run. I received a trophy as "the winner over fifty". However humility forces me to admit that all I had to do was complete the distance because I was the only one to finish in the over-fifty age group.

I spend more of my time these days at the funerals of my friends. The death that shocked meost was "Bill" Jobling's. He died two years ago and was only fifty-two. Bill was an Anglican Priest, Professor of Aramaic/Hebrew/Arabic at Sydney University, and a world class archaeologist of religious artefacts, taking part in digs all over the Middle East. He was also a member of the North Bondi Surf Club. After an absence of

some duration, he reappeared and remembered watching me play water polo when he was a young boy. I always made a point of turning up for the surf races an hour early on Sundays so that I could talk with Bill. He was an easy man to communicate with and could speak on any subject without bringing religion into the conversation. (He made a special point of connecting with Johnny Newcombe, who, due to a birth defect, was slightly brain-damaged. It was because of swimming that he could live a normal life.)

On the day of his death, "Pud" Reagan and I chatted with Bill, who described his love of the surf club, where everyone is equal and nobody cares about what the others do for a living. This was, he said, unlike the church and the university with their full complements of jealous back-stabbers who climbed over their peers on the way to promotions. By contrast, in the surf club, everyone is a "mate."

This affirming conversation over, we started the surf race at 11:00. Bill was a couple of metres ahead of me. When we reached the buoys, he tricked us, like we all did each other, by lifting the floating anchor and tossing it a metre or so further out, making it harder for the swimmers behind him. We swam a close race to the shore that day.

Bill apologised afterward for throwing the buoy and asked if I were "cranky"?

I answered, "It takes much more than that to make me "cranky". Besides, I've been doing the same thing myself for the past forty-five years."

He then invited me to swim with him across the bay. I told him that was okay with me, but I suggested we have a little rest first. We had just finished a surf race, after all, in which both of us tried hard. He was telling me how much he loved all of this, the company, the surf, and the races. Then he sat down in the sand I teased him saying, "Bill, you need a rest? Not so fit after all?"

Bill's reply and the last words he uttered were: "I'm O.K., Fred. But everything is going so slowly." And with these words, he died.

He received immediate artificial respiration and heart massage. The intensive care workers and ambulance were on the beach within five minutes. But to no avail.

His funeral service was at his church, and after it, he was cremated. The church fairly teemed with friends, political leaders from all parties, and representatives of diverse religions: Anglican Bishops, Catholic Monsignors, Greek Orthodox Priests, and Jewish Rabbis. The religious and political leaders read many prepared eulogies. The best one, however, was the one by "old'" Charlie Christensen on behalf of the North Bondi Surf Club. He spoke without notes, from his heart. When Simone complimented him afterward, Charlie said sadly, "I didn't need notes. I just closed my eyes and saw Bill from the time he was a young boy. And the memories flowed naturally." (Since Bill's death, his daughter, Rebecca, swims every Sunday in the surf races in our group, taking her father's handicap.)

A few months ago, Col. Guthrig, who is about the same age as I am but was a much better swimmer than I was during our younger years, beat me in one of the surf races. We talked for a few minutes afterward on the beach when, in the middle of a sentence, he collapsed. We went through the same drill as we had with Bill: artificial respiration, heart massage, intensive care, and ambulance. But this time the procedures worked; and Col. Guthrig was revived. He is not allowed to swim now, but is very much alive.

Besides attending funerals, I now visit many more friends than ever before in the hospital as they undergo and recover from operations. Heart bypasses, pacemakers, and hip replacements seem more the order of the day now as new materials and devices are sewn into our bodies that did not exist when we were born.

Politically, the 1990s have seen many changes – especially in the old, Communist countries. Not all of them are for the better. Africa, my biggest disappointment, still suffers more than ever. The latest tragedy is Zaire (the old Belgian Congo). The Belgians treated their Colonies even worse than the other colonial powers did theirs. An interesting book, Heart of Darkness, written by Joseph Conrad about a hundred year ago, describes the savagery, brutality, and plundering that was played out in this "property"of King Leopold's (the Belgian Congo).

Under colonial rule, the mining companies, white farmers, and the Catholic Church ran the Congo in the name of the King. Zaire (the Belgian Congo in 1997 after the overthrow of Mobutu and now the Peoples' Republic of Congo) was and is a country rich in minerals: gold, diamonds, platinum, and others. These resources should have afforded the population of this huge country of forty-eight-to-fifty million people (nearly three times the population of Australia) a comfortable life. Instead, they live and die in the most appalling conditions.

In the early 1960s, following the "winds of change", Belgium granted independence to the Congo. It then became Zaire, with even less educated people to take over than the other African Colonies had. Their first president, Lumumba, tried to improve the lot of the terribly impoverished populace, but to do this, he wanted the mining companies to contribute some of their enormous profits toward the improvement of his peoples' living conditions. Because of this, the mining companies and the American CIA branded Lumumba a Communist and planned for his assassination.

This was accomplished through Mobutu. As a young man, Mobutu was imprisoned for stealing, but upon his release, he was conscripted into the Belgian/African Army, where he reached the highest rank an African was allowed – Sergeant.

When Zaire became independent, Mobutu was elevated to General, commanding the army of the newly independent Zaire. After assassinating Lumumba, he became President, faithfully serving the CIA and arranging for the mining companies to fight on their behalf in Angola. During those thirty-five years, Mobutu siphoned off billions of dollars for himself and increasingly exploited the population.

The new leader of Zaire recently overthrew him. The country has been renamed The Peoples' Republic of Congo. We don't know yet if the new head will improve the lot of the people or will just take over where Mobutu left off and fill his own pockets. No matter what, the mining companies will not give up easily.

Unfortunately, similar situations exist over the whole of Africa. In Nigeria, the Shell Oil Company could help the locals while still increasing profits. But instead, it is interested only in building the bottom line as quickly as possible through the greedy exploitation of the poor Africans who exchanged Colonial rule for an even worse fate. In every African country, some of the local leaders arc willing to serve foreign interests because the foreign countries offer to buy their support with both foreign and local stakes in the land.

I will pay particularly close attention to world affairs during my remaining years. I hope I will see resolutions of some of the problems that exist on a global scale. Many unanswered questions interest me. Will Russia settle down to a normal existence where democracy prevails; or will the chaos continue – ending in another dictatorship? Will the co-operation continue successfully in Europe, and will the common currency be established in 1999? Can China, an enormous country, adapt itself successfully to cooperation with rest of the world? I think and hope so.

Will the people of the Middle East overthrow the religious fanatics? Fanatics on all sides? Yes, I mean not only Muslim

ones, but also the Israelis as well. Will they learn that unless they cooperate, all they will have is bloodshed and misery? And in Africa, will the miserable, starving, exploited masses of the Dark Continent find honest leaders who genuinely will try to improve the lot of the people instead of serving the interests of European and American oil and mining companies. In spite of Latin America's being more advanced, the problems there are similar to those of Africa. What will happen?

With proper leadership in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Russia, the world's downtrodden millions could become consumers, making the whole world a place of unprecedented prosperity. But to achieve this, the backward and/or less-developed nations must rid themselves of their corrupt leaders and, yes, of religious oppression as well. (There has been no greater cause of misery than the organised religions of the world.) In addition to these changes, Europe, the USA, and Japan would have to impose morally-based restrictions on those larger companies that exploit the poor nations.

And finally, Australia. What will the scenario be here over the next ten-to-twenty years? If there are no negative external influences, I am very optimistic. Our "multicultural" nation grew from a bigoted, Anglo-Saxon, white Australia into its present state with minimum friction. To me, the old Australians deserve just as much praise for adapting themselves to the migrants as the emigres do for assimilating. Idiots like Pauline Hanson pop up everywhere, but unless there is an economic depression, she will disappear because her type of Fascism is only successful during serious, economic downturns. If Germany had not experienced a depression and been subdued by the victors of World War I, even Hitler would have disappeared. In spite of all the political friction, Australia might provide the economic model for the world. We could fall into some happy space between

the extreme private enterprise system of the capitalistic USA that chooses to skimp on social services for its people, and Europe's, that carries the burden of high taxes due to it's excess of them. (I am definitely "left of the centre" in my political views, but I must qualify my position with regard to one aspect of the social services. I am afraid I have reactionary views about unemployment. Australia supposedly has a 9% jobless rate, but any unemployed person I know who wants to work badly enough can find a job. I believe the same is true in Europe – particularly in Germany and France.)

The only dark clouds in Australia's future are our neighbours – the most onerous of which is Indonesia. Will the corruption and political dictatorship drive this country of over 200 million people into external politics? I very much hope not for the sake of my sons, their children, and all Australian people. I would not like for my family to have to search the world for new, safe shelter as mine did.

I would love to be around for the next several decades to see what happens.

When a person reaches his seventieth year, it is time to decide what to do with his future. There are many places I hope to visit and re-visit. So many things I would like to do. So many books to read. So many games to play and swims to swim. I want to continue this book for my family several years from now. Unfortunately, I have to be realistic. At my age, I will be happy to realise a fraction of these intentions. I can assure the reader I will continue never being bored, at least. O.K., I admit to a bit of weariness now and then; but I have learned to stop and rest – meaning watch a TV show (and fall asleep) or read a book (and fall asleep).

I should organise my life a little better, but extreme structure is stultifying. I have wasted a certain amount of precious time

by being too punctual and would like to recover that. Arriving a few minutes early is wasteful. On the other hand, I could not stand myself if I were late. (Robi and Sami have the same problem. It must be genetic.)

I will have to make another more serious decision soon about work. I should probably retire. Do you, dear reader, hear the sigh and feel the lingering pause in the air? My company is in good hands, but I still love being in the thick of it I am proud of having built F.Mayer Imports from a tiny, bedroom-based headquarters to its present expansive size.

I must say that many things have changed in business since I started – especially in the big corporations. I dislike some of the utter stupidity of some present-day methods. In the old days, working with large companies was simple. I figured out the best possible net price I could offer, and that was that. I might allow a discount of 2% or 3% for prompt payment, but nothing else. I knew that if I bought something for $1 and sold it for $1.20, I made 20 cents profit. Today rebates have complicated the math of doing business – 3% for this, 6% for that, 5% for, whatever. Now, if I wish to get $1.20 for a product, I have to load the price by another 20-25% so that the discounts bring it back to the amount I originally required. This practice does not yield higher profits for the large concerns. On the contrary, it keeps offices rich with people who manipulate the new, crazy math to compute the useless discounts that are added onto my price to begin with.

Another change in the business world that affects and annoys me is that quality is of no consequence anymore. All that concerns the buyer is price. My dream is that one day a food hall will open that offers goods at higher prices, but of superior quality. This will happen, but probably not in my lifetime.

Today, in spite of all the ill winds that circulate among businesses, I am in my seventieth year with no financial worries

and am relatively healthy to boot. I had a couple of physical hiccups in '97, but I hope that I am over them now. Everything points to my having a comfortable time during the latter part of my life, but I know it will not be entirely so. I sleep relatively well, but still experience the occasional night when my mind races forward and backward, assailed by doubts and worries, instead of shutting down, as it should. This results from my lifetime habit of hard work, long hours, and continual challenges as I have made sure that I am providing well for my family. Has it been worth it? What do I have to show for it besides the material comforts? Was my life a success? I cannot reply to these questions yet.

I would love to see my grandchildren grow up. How will they develop? What will they become? But perhaps this is too much to hope for at my age when my eldest grandchild is just four and the second, one year old. My sons, their wives, and my grandchildren are close – to each other and to me. There is only one cloud in this emotionally bountiful existence. The dearest people in my life are Robi, Sami, and Simone. I believe I have looked after all three well. What would make my next seventy years even happier and more satisfying than the first is ultimate familial harmony. Unfortunately, there is still too much dissonance. And in my seventieth year, groundless friction and its resultant disharmony seems a terrible waste of energy, time, and emotion.

We live in peculiar times when a parent is not allowed to criticise his children for their choices of partners (not that I would do that; I am quite happy with theirs). But this etiquette does not work in reverse. I am aware that today, offspring believe they have the right to find fault with their parents' selections. Why? I cannot help remembering my ex-father-in-law's lectures to me about being too soft on my sons, wife, and staff. If this

is true, it is too late to change my nature now. I have always wanted to do the best for my family and for the people around me. I hope my motives have been simple, straightforward, and pure. I hope my love is understood.

So finally, I would like to see us play on the same side together, family, friends, and world. After all, everyone's a mate!

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