

Family Background II

Excerpts from **Heinzi Tausk's** Memoirs

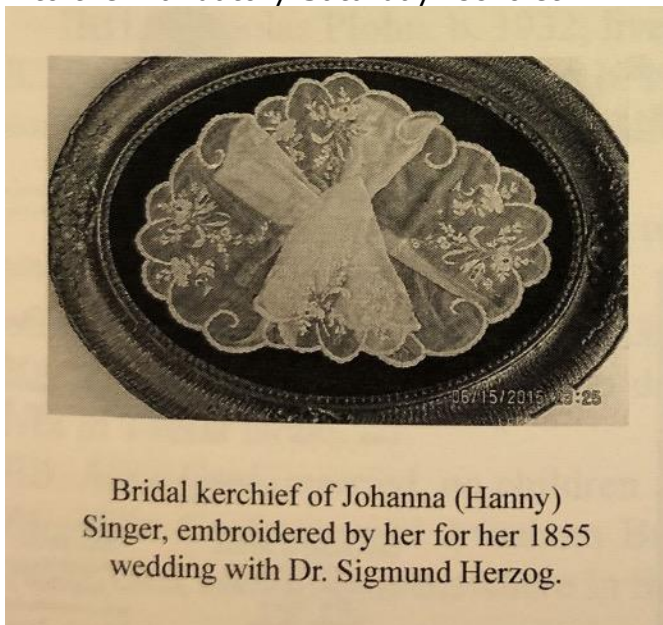
"Deep is the well of the past"

Thomas Mann, *Joseph and his brethren*

The most important Raschofsky girl - from my point of view - was Josephine, nicknamed Józsa, who became my grandmother. Born in 1868, she was educated beyond the other sisters, except perhaps Zsofi. Jozsa studied at a teacher's seminary in Budapest, and for a while taught elementary grade. I do not know how and when she met the other teacher, Ede Tauszk, and I do not know where and when they married. All I do know is that by 1890 they were living in Lugos, and she had a daughter named Elsa. That daughter died as a baby, at the age of two, and I was told that Jozsa grieved for the rest of her life following that loss. In 1894 they had a baby boy, named Eugen, who was to become my father in due time. The household of the Tauszk family must have been a humble one. The Jewish community, the employer of my grandfather in his double appointment, was of modest size, probably no more than 4-500 families. I must rely on the vague stories my father told me about his childhood home. The small house they lived in had no bathroom, probably just an outhouse and the weekly bath was taken in a tin tub with hot water poured from containers heated on the stove. In the childhood of my father, light was provided by gas lamps. Electricity was introduced to Lugos only some time in the beginning of the 20th century.

Besides my father, and for a while the orphaned Elsa Raschofsky, granny Jozsa was busy with other children too. Elementary grade Jewish children from homes in outlying villages were entrusted, against payment, to the teacher and his wife who had a good name and was carrying a kosher household. Granny Jozsa probably helped the children in their housework, the only remaining outlet for her didactic career. Otherwise she must have been busy with all the chores of a household, where water was to be carried from the well, and the heat came from the fire lit daily again and again in the stoves. The cooking was strictly kosher, which meant that meat could be served only if it was ritually slaughtered. I am sure that there was a kosher butcher in Lugos, but I suspect that buying from him would have been too much of a luxury to the Tauszk family. Instead, for most of the fall and the winter, Granny Jozsa bought every week a fattened goose. Picking the right one was a thing of pride amongst the housewives of those days. You had to be early morning out in the market, feel the belly and chest of the goose, decide about its firmness and softness, and haggle smartly about the price. The ritual slaughterer killed the goose in the prescribed manner and the rest of the work was done at home. The skin and the fatty parts were

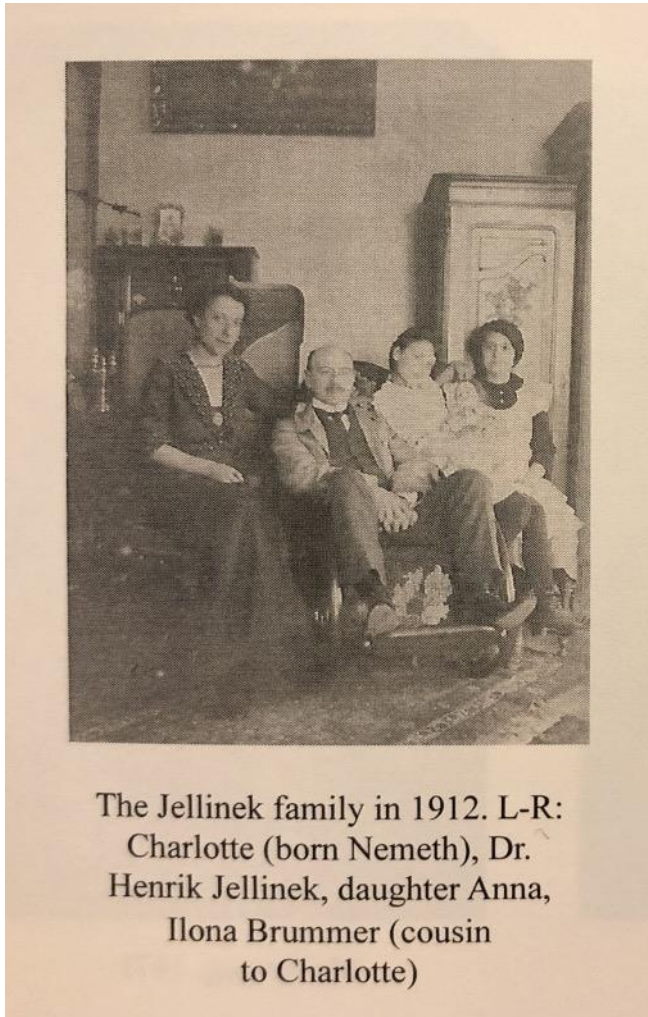
cooked in water. The resulting drippings were collected and saved in containers, used as cooking-fat during the rest of the year. What remained after this cooking was the "gribben" so typically Jewish that I have not seen or read about it in gentile households. The non-Jewish equivalent of it are the pork rinds. It was eaten in winter evenings for supper with bread and pickles. The liver was another pride-fostering byproduct in the choice of the right goose. Fattened geese had large livers, and their presence on the table was again very typical of Jewish households. I even remember hearing in my childhood that diabetes (a disease quite frequent among Jews) may be caused by eating too much goose-liver. The liver which weighed often close to two pounds (one and a half pounds was almost a must) was cooked with some cloves of garlic in its own fat. That fat was mixed with red paprika and was kept in a cold place. For a snack it was spread on slices of bread or toast. Thin wedges of the cooked liver were added to it and enjoyed on the long winter evenings. The innards of the goose became ingredients for a hearty soup, and the neck got filled with spicy stuffing. The breast meat was marinated and smoked, making for another long-lasting, sliced delicacy. The remainder of the meat was used for cooking and often found its way into the mandatory Saturday "scholet".



My recollections of Granny Jozsa are fragmentary and minimal. In my childhood, she must have been close to seventy years of age, a heavysset, pale-faced, gray-haired lady, with the typical Raschofsky features, clad mostly in old-fashioned dark clothes. She lived in Lugos until about 1933 or 1934, and I have no recollection of her house, although I must have visited her there. When she moved to Arad, she boarded for a while with aunt Riesz, who owned the neighborhood grocery store owned by us. Granny Jozsa had a sunny room, looking out onto the garden, less than

a hundred yards from our house. After a pneumonia she moved into our house and stayed with us for another year or so until a second bout of pneumonia took her away in 1935. I do remember the commotion, when Father, all clad in black, was leaving for the trip to Lugos, to have her buried next to her husband. I asked Mother about her rapport with her mother-in-law. She remembers having a cordial relationship, made somehow difficult by the sickness and pessimistic nature of my grandmother. Her constant refrain seemed to have been: "such a thing could happen only to us". There must have been a cultural gap too, besides the generational one. Mother came from a household where literary knowledge was important, and knowing foreign languages was taken for granted. Granny Jozsa, despite her early education as a teacher, had a hard life. She for sure was not on par culturally with her young

daughter-in-law, despite her fluency in German, the common language of educated Jewish people. Additionally it must have been hard on Granny, to see her son and grandchildren live in a household where no Friday evening blessing was done, the Sabbath was not observed and pork was eaten freely. All of the above must have been balanced with the proud and happy knowledge that her son is a successful citizen and has a peaceful and harmonious family life.



The Jellinek family in 1912. L-R:
Charlotte (born Nemeth), Dr.
Henrik Jellinek, daughter Anna,
Ilona Brummer (cousin
to Charlotte)

My maternal grandfather was Henrik (Hungarian way of Henry) Jellinek. He was the son of Károly (Hungarian way of Carl) Jellinek and a second wife, born Pollack. I know little of my great-grandfather Carl, he lived in a small German-Hungarian village called Guttenbrunn (Hidegkút in Hungarian) in the Arad county of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Carl was the owner of a small grocery store combined with a pub, and family lore holds, that he liked to play cards with his customers in the pub. This, and possibly other non-businesslike attitudes led to insolvency. Carl Jellinek died destitute in Arad, well before the end of the century. There was a German provincial writer by the name of Müller-Guttenbrunn, who was born in that village. In his memoirs (published in the Vienna 'Deutsche Zeitung' in the years 1886-1892) he describes that poor hamlet in the second half of the 19th century. He remembers that he had problems learning in Hungarian at the school in Temesvár and that "Carl, our smart village Jew, got involved and

convinced my people to send me to Hermannstadt (to-day Sibiu in Romania) where there are German schools". Furthermore he writes about his father, who was supposed to be a smart and educated man, who traveled as far as Hermannstadt to sell the plum brandy, and who told tales about the German people there, descendants from the Sachsen. The problem with this paragraph is that Müller was a bastard child, who never knew his father. In all probability Müller substituted in his memoirs his father with the man who was supposed to be "the smartest man in the village", the village Jew.

Carl Jellinek had one surviving son with the first wife, Ignatz and four surviving children, Moritz, Jozsef, Henrik and Paula, by the second one. Ignatz and Moritz emigrated to America (USA) around the turn of the century and there are only scraps of information on them. Ignatz died impoverished, soon after World War I, and once, during the Depression, one of his daughters asked (a futile plea) for financial help from Uncle Jozsi (Jozsef). Moritz had a daughter by the name of Olga, supposedly beautiful and successful: Uncle Jozsi met her in the 1930-s on the Riviera. She was the secretary and mistress of the famous financier Kahn. There was a son, Kurt Bauer (?), but no more information is available. My Australian cousin, Jancsi (Alexander) Kalman, has a document ("Vándorkönyv" in Hungarian, that had to be owned by any itinerant worker during his learning years) with the name of Jakob Jelunek, tailor by profession. Jancsi has no knowledge of any of his ancestry, and I have presumed that this Jakob may be the father of Carl.

Jozsef Jellinek figured as Uncle Jozsi in my early childhood, and was an important figure in the life of my parents. He was a lumber-merchant, lived in Arad and faced bankruptcy before World War I. Mother recalls that as a child she heard her parents debating the matter. Henrik Jellinek wanted to offer his funds to help the older brother, while his wife was reluctant to part with all the nest-egg. Brotherly love prevailed, the more that in the past Jozsef was helpful, enabling his younger brother to finish his studies. Anyway Jozsef got back on his feet, and during the war became a rich man. In addition to owning the biggest lumberyard in Arad, he bought houses as well as other real estate. In the 1920-s subdividing a big lot for housing construction further enhanced his fortune and in 1926 he bought one of the local banks. That was the institution to which he attracted the services of my father in 1928. Uncle Jozsi had married before the turn of the century: his wife Margit was beautiful. She was a smart and active woman, she managed well the affairs of the house, and probably was not above of giving good advice even in business matters. They were childless, extending their protection to two orphaned nieces, Irene Künstler and Anna Jellinek. Irene was older than Anna, and being the niece of Aunt Margit (the real boss in the home), enjoyed a better position. Aunt Margit died in 1923 and for a while Uncle Jozsi was inconsolable. Life goes on, sometimes in 1928 he met a woman 35 years his junior, fell in love and married her. Most of the family was quite upset, they spoke about him buying the beautiful Elsa, but Jozsi did not care. He enjoyed the newfound happiness, lavished gifts on Elsa, and lived a good life; those were the years when he did a lot of traveling, and filled his house with expensive furniture and works of art. Tragedy stroke in 1934 when Elsa had an acute appendicitis, post operatively developed peritonitis and died of the complications. Uncle Jozsi was a broken man, the more that his health was declining too; he developed diabetes. By than it was a treatable disease, but frequent complications often threatened the life and well-being.

I remember Uncle Jozsi as a big-bellied, bald man (shaven head), with the so-called Jellinek mouth (wide mouth, thick lower lip, well shaped upper one), who smoked cigars, wore dark clothing with a thick golden chain across his stomach, and spoke curtly and authoritatively. We used to visit his home every Sunday around

noon, Father in his Sunday suit, Mother all dressed up. When the weather was bad, we went in a horse-drawn coach, and on this official visits we entered the home through the main entrance. On other occasions when we visited with Mother, we entered through the back, from the corridor where there was an entrance to the kitchen too. The Jellinek house was an expansive (and probably expensive) house in an affluent neighborhood. One entered through a white-painted wrought-iron gate, the courtyard was paved with yellow flagstones. Opposite the entrance was a low building, housing the law-offices of Willy Szalay (the husband of Irene Kuenstler), in what probably must have once been the carriage house. That carriage house, as well as the main building were ivy-covered. To the right was the impressive mansion, the ground floor inhabited by Uncle Jozsi, the first floor by the Szalay's. We entered through an elegant light-yellow glass-paneled door, and ascended the ten stairs on a thick red carpet with black margins. Another glass-paneled door lead into the large living-room. I was impressed mostly by the ornately carved black living-room set of table, settee, upholstered chairs and armchairs. In my provincial hometown this ebony furniture was definitely an exotic affair. Of the rest of the large apartment I remember only the white-tiled kitchen and the cook present there. She was a middle-aged woman who had red spots in her face. I remember overhearing that she suffered from lupus, and I mentally connected the word with the red facial blotches. The south front of the house faced a beautifully arranged, elaborate, sunken formal garden. It was so elegant, that we children were not allowed to play there.

The Szalay's had a similar apartment on the upper floor, and we visited there occasionally too. Irene K unstler, who as a young girl, had lived with Aunt Margit and Uncle Jozsi, got married during the war to an ambitious young lawyer, William Szalay (Uncle Willy). They had a daughter Gitty, born in 1919, and a son Tiby, born in 1922. The Szalay's were no kin to us, but their relation to Auntie Margit and Uncle Jozsi created a certain family closeness. There was no love lost between us and them. Mother always felt that Irene (who was older and a beautiful girl) was getting a bigger share of family love and allotments than she did. In later years Father was always turned off by the arrogance of Uncle Willy. Uncle Willy was always very elegant, forever dandified and treated everybody (except Uncle Jozsi) with condescension. My most striking memory of him is the gesture when, while expounding on a subject, he patted his forehead and announced that "there are brains here, my little fellow". My intense dislike of him stems from the occasion when I heard him telling a World War I story. He was a military judge, and he proudly revealed how he condemned to death the poor soldiers who were caught as deserters.

In 1938 King Carol of Romania, paid an official visit to Arad. On that occasion there was a steeplechase event in the fortress area, followed with a royal banquet. Father and Uncle Willy were both prominent citizens and as such invited to the events. Uncle Willy had bespoke for himself a gray cutaway, complemented with a gray top-hat and ascot, just like on pictures from the British equestrian events. Father in his striped black pants and black jacket was definitely commonplace, and he thought that Uncle Willy overdid it making himself ridiculous. The dislike between Father and Uncle Willy transcended personal relations. Szalay was the legal counsel of the bank, owned

by Uncle Jozsi and managed by Father. This created ample potential for professional divergences. Father often had long discussions with Uncle Jozsi concerning the business decisions. Occasionally these decisions were disputed by Uncle Willy. Uncle Jozsi was no fool, he realized that Szalay, vain as he may have been, is smart too. The differences often may have been more of style than substance. Compromise was often a way of ending an impasse. Another source of possible discontentment was the awareness of how Uncle Jozsi drew up his testament. Aunt Irene Szalay, the niece of his former wife, was to inherit half of the fortune (and in the years before the Second World War, the Jellinek estate would have indeed been a fortune in Arad). One quarter was due to Mother, and the other quarter was to be inherited by the Schlesinger children, also nephew and niece of Uncle Jozsi. This uneven and apparently willful sharing (although to the objective observer it appears equitable), resulted in jealousy on the part of the blood relations of Uncle Jozsi, and arrogant disdain on part of Irene and her spouse. Needless to say that by the time Uncle Jozsi passed away in 1947, there was almost nothing left from that fortune, and the Szalays managed to grab the remainder. We were partially compensated by Tiby Szalay when we emigrated to Israel in 1961, but to her dying days Mother talked nostalgically about the magnificent jewelry she was promised and never received.

The Szalays managed to leave Romania in 1946 supposedly with help from the uppermost official of the country. Uncle Willy has been a classmate of Dr. Petru Groza, who at that time was prime minister. Tongues were wagging in Arad about a possible dalliance between the exotically striking Gitty Szalay and old man Groza. Gitty was tall, slim, elegant, always fashionably dressed and her appearance was enhanced by titillating accessories. I do remember the big, sleek, stupid Russian greyhound Sasha, Gitty was walking with. Uncle Jozsi was destitute at the time, and supposedly Szalay managed to get from him the safe combinations for the cash and jewelry stashed away in Budapest and Switzerland. After they left, there was a story about Gitty becoming the girlfriend of a Mr. Abelesz, a rich businessman in Budapest. Supposedly he got her to marry his father, and the female baby born (who knows if from father Abelesz or son) had a legitimate issue. The older Abelesz's moved to Paris, and Gitty died quite young in a car accident. The rest of the family moved to New York, Uncle Willy died soon after, Aunt Irene lived to old age. Tiby is a successful lawyer in New York, he married late and has one son. I know that he manages the interests of his brother-in-law (?) now Sir Abelesz, who is one of the wealthiest men in Australia. I saw Tiby once at the funeral of Dr. Windholz, he looked the older self of the young man I remembered from Arad. He for sure had no idea of my presence. Despite common acquaintances, we reciprocally ignored our coexistence in the same city.

Paula was the only daughter of the Jellinek great-grandparents. Mother knows about an unhappy romance as a young girl - she had not enough dowry, therefore the man would not marry her. Supposedly a beautiful girl, she got married to Farkas (Wolf) Schlesinger, a widower who was a lumber-merchant too. Schlesinger had a boy from his first marriage, who died of consumption in World War I. The Aunt Paula whom I knew in my childhood, had the Jellinek mouth, was gray-haired, wrinkled and spoke with an energetic and severe voice. Her husband, Uncle Farkas, was a wizened,

kind old man, small of stature, with a lame leg. It came to me as a surprise when I found out from a newspaper item that he writes poetry. As a businessman he probably was always in the shadows of his brother-in-law, Jozsi Jellinek, and although he provided adequately for his family, he never managed to get affluent. The two children of the Schlesinger's were Kari (Carl) born in 1900 and Illy (Ilonka) born in 1904. They were first cousins of Mother, and were a presence through most of her life. Kari, a handsome, not too smart man, had a close encounter, while a young man. A sarcoma was diagnosed on his left forearm, excision was performed at a Berlin hospital, and except for a partial paralysis of his left hand he recovered completely. Both children changed their last name to Sebes. In 1929 Kari got married to a beautiful girl, who became Aunt Macza for us. They had two children, Vera and Desiderio. Everybody called the latter Öcsi. They emigrated to Israel, Macza died many years ago, Kari passed away close to his 96th birthday in February of 1996. Vera and Öcsi have their own families, we seldom met. Vera's husband worked in the Israeli diplomatic service, she is divorced, with children of her own, growing up. The children of Öcsi are now adults, his eldest daughter made a career in banking. I was told that when I met Öcsi and Vera at an Arader meeting in 1991 in Tel-Aviv, they took offense at my supposedly casual and distant attitude - I have no recollection of having been unfriendly.

Illy attended the same school as Mother, for a while they had even common friends, though they had never been close. She got married to a businessman from Cluj, by the name of Kálman. The union was financially not a blessed one, Mr. Kálman not only bankrupted himself soon after, but managed to siphon away much of Uncle Farkas's assets too. Conjugal life apparently was not happy either, Auntie Illy came back to Arad as a divorcee sometimes around 1930, with her young son Jancsi (distorted nickname from Eugen). She had an unhappy love affair with one of Arad's leading businessmen, and around 1936 married Mr. Ede Sebestyén, an undistinguished gentleman. He was a commercial agent, but not a good provider, I remember hearing that he spent most of his time in the coffeehouse, playing bridge. Aunt Illy went on to study rhythmic gymnastics. She opened her school for the children of well-to-do middle-class Arad citizens, teaching what has been something like Dalcroze aerobics. The Sebestyén's emigrated in 1963 to Israel, I remember that we welcomed them. Uncle Ede passed away soon after, Auntie Illy who was an excellent cook, managed for a while the household of the Gottesman family, owners of the Gottex bathing suit business. Around 1969 she joined her son in Australia, and luckily met Sanyi (Alexander) Frölich, originally from Arad too, a former classmate of Kari. He was a widower and more than pleased to marry Aunt Illy. It was a blessed situation: he was well taken care in his old age and she was secure, surrounded by a small, loving family. He died some ten years ago, she passed away in February of 1996. Her son, Jancsi Kálman, born in 1926, was one of the second cousins with whom we had close relations as children. He was of Eddy's age, we often played together, and I always admired his manual dexterity. He learned at the technical high school and became a technical designer. Married to another playmate of ours from early childhood, Kathy Antal, they emigrated to Australia in the early 1960's. They

are childless, retired by now, and they welcomed us heartily when we visited them in the 1980s.



Family photo, probably from 1868.
Back Row, L-R: Hermann Hirschl,
Charne-Charlotte Herschel (born Herzka),
Hanny-Johanna Herzog (born Singer)
holding baby Sidonia Herzog. Standing:
Dr. Sigmund Herzog.
Front Row: The Herzog Children L-R:
Ida, Laura, Rosa, Jenny, Hermina
(Minna), Joseph (Pepi).

Henrik Jellinek was the youngest son of my great-grandparents. Born in 1871, he grew up when his parents were already broke, and had to overcome great difficulties to get on with high school and university studies. He managed to finish his studies with financial help from his older brother Jozsi and sheer perseverance. He got his law degree in 1894 in Budapest, but I did not find a diploma of a doctorate in law amongst the family papers. In later documents he figures as Dr. Jellinek Henrik. At that time it was customary for a young lawyer to strive for a doctorate in law or economics. I have to presume that Henrik obtained his doctorate after graduating, because he soon joined, as a junior partner, one of the prestigious law firms of Arad, the Kell offices. The little information I have on my grand parental namesake (I got my first name in honor of him) was transmitted via Mother, who knew him only in her

childhood. It seems that he was successful in his work, he advanced to partner in the law firm, had a good income and a comfortable life. In 1902 he got married to the older daughter of a lawyer from Lugos, Charlotte Németh. Jenny Blau, one of the aunts of Charlotte Németh, lived in Arad in the same building as Dr. Henrik Jellinek. Presumably she was the go-between, in those times it was customary to enter into arranged marriages. A daughter, Anna (my future mother), was born in 1903. The Jellinek's had a cozy middle-class life, a comfortable apartment, two maidservants, with an active social life and vacations abroad. In my childhood I saw a group-portrait of tennis-players of the Arad sports club, my grandfather has a racquet in his hand, is clad in white trousers, a white jacket and wears a fashionable straw hat. There is a family photograph from around 1911, portraying my grandfather as a youngish middle-aged, earnest looking bald man, with the previously described Jellinek mouth, wearing a golden pince-nez and sporting a sharply twirled mustache. He was a reserve officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Mother recalls how he explained to his wife why he will resign his commission. Any officer was required to be ready to duel with any challenger; grandfather thought this to be a dumb stance. In 1905, he participated in a major war game exercises in the swampy area of the lower Danube, in Alibunar. Apparently the exposure to the autumnal field conditions resulted in severe rheumatic disease. From than on he repeatedly sought and obtained medical attention with little improvement. It seems that one local doctor treated him with big doses of a new drug believed to be a panacea universalis. The resulting major intoxication led to the demise of my grandfather. He died in the spring of 1915 in a Viennese sanatorium. Supposedly the medical expert treating him there, told my grandmother, that he got poisoned by quacks from the provincial medical establishment: medical opinions were arrogantly formulated at that times too. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Arad. I often accompanied Mother on her visits to his grave.



Painting of Moshe Nemeth (the Hazerfresser) from ~1830.

My maternal grandmother, Charlotte Jellinek, was the older daughter of my Németh great-grandparents. They are the ancestors about whom I do have more information than on any others. The father of Charlotte was called Phoebus Németh. He was born in 1844 (I am not certain of the month) in Lugos, son of Bernhard Németh, (probably born in 1815) a tailor who suffered hand injuries in the 1848 Hungarian Revolution. As such he had difficulties exercising his trade, and the family was supported mostly with the yield of a small business, managed partly by Rosa, his wife. Bernhard died in 1880. A family portrait of the mother of Rosa Németh (born Deutsch, probably in 1820) "Muhme Tzarke", depicts an unattractive old lady, dressed in dark clothes. In 1842 Rosa became Bernhard's wife after being widowed from a first marriage to a certain Ignatz Neuerer; she lived until

1903. In those times the young children of a deceased man, stayed with the family of the man, and not his widow. There are numerous descendants from the first

marriage, Mother had composed a complex family tree, where amongst others Edward Teller is present too. We owned a painted portrait of the father of Bernhard Németh, Moishe Németh, (the Hazerfresser), a good-looking man dressed in early 19-th century garb, looking very dignified and elegant. That portrait is presently owned by Gene Tausk. The Hazerfresser supposedly was a man who lived his life fully,



Phoebus Nemeth, 1867.

he was involved in all kind of business affairs with gentile neighbors, and even had a gentile mistress. The father of the "Hazerfresser" was called "Reb Metz", substantiating the notion that he migrated to Austria from Metz (Alsatia), during the upheaval of the French Revolution. It seems that he owned another alias: Faisch of Sanktpeter; when he married a woman named Deutsch, he adopted that name as a family name for himself. He was an educated man, and he functioned as a rabbi for the local Jewish community. Most of the above are stories transmitted via my great-grandfather Phoebus Németh to Mother, there is no written documentation, although there are some family portraits and photos. Phoebus even told mother, that as a child he has seen a portrait of Reb Faisch, clad in a typical rococo garb, three cornered hat and shoe with buckles; the portrait

does not exist presently.



Ida Herzog, 1871.



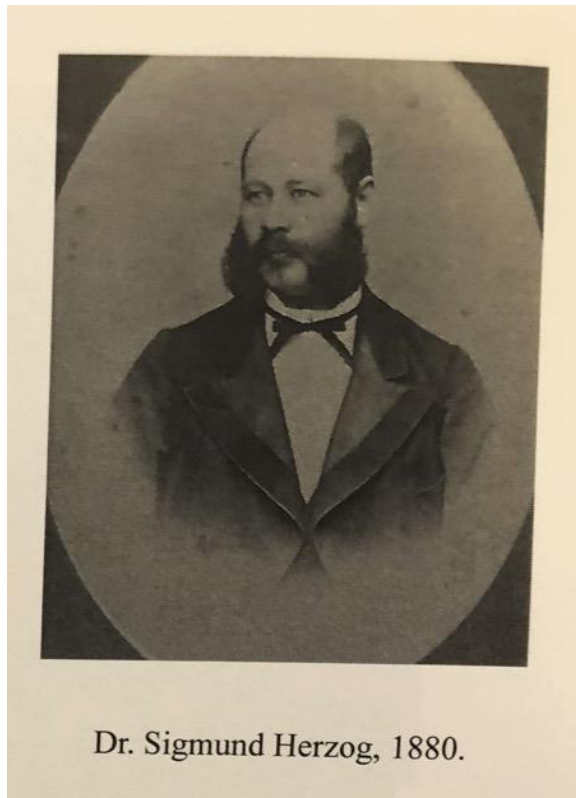
Phoebus Németh, 1900.

Phoebus did his high-school studies at the Piarist gymnasium in Szeged (a Hungarian town on the river Tisza), graduating in 1863. The schools maintained by those Catholic educator friars were always considered superior institutions. Mother does recall, that even in his old age, Phoebus was able to converse in Latin, a dead language, studied assiduously in his high school years. Phoebus enrolled in the Law School of Budapest, and graduated in 1868 (his diploma is presently owned by his great-great-grandson, Gene Tausk). We own a photograph of the law student Phoebus Németh standing in a formal uniform. It was taken on the occasion of the coronation of Emperor Franz Joseph as King of Hungary in 1867, when the law students lined the main streets of Budapest and shouted joyously "Eljen" (long live). It is difficult to gain a clear impression from that old photograph, nevertheless great-grandpa Phoebus appears to have been a good-looking young man. After graduating, he settled in 1869 as district magistrate in the frontier town of Orsova, on the Danube. For a while he was the only Jewish magistrate in the Hungarian half of the Monarchy. In 1876 he got married to Ida Herzog. During his tenure as a civil servant, he appeared to have been effective, he even got decorated with a Turkish medal after he apprehended a Turkish robber who tried to hide in the area of Orsova. I remember the ornate, beribboned medal in its velvet box, a heirloom in the possession of great-grandmother Ida.

According to notes from my great-aunt Ilka, in 1867, after the political settlement of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, anti-Semitism was on the rise amongst the local Hungarian ruling class. Sooner or later they objected to a Jewish magistrate and tried to have him move away. In connection with this intrigue, Phoebus had a falling-out with one of his superiors in the Department of Justice, a former school-mate of his, and sometimes around 1890 he tended his resignation. He turned to the practice of law in Lugos. Mother knew her grandfather well, she was 19 years of age when he died, and she spent some of her teen years living with her grandparents. Accordingly, she is relating that Phoebus was an agnostic, deeply skeptical of religions and clergy. In social matters he was conservative, Mother was sternly rebuked by him when around 1920 she was enthusing about the working class and communist ideas: "You are a middle class girl, you should stick to bourgeois values". He also opposed the idea of a girl pursuing higher education. Mother recalls that well after her marriage, she was shown a letter written by Phoebus to uncle Jozsi Jellinek, asking him not to support the wish of his niece (Mother) to attend the University. He had a happy disposition, liked to tell stories and share a good laugh, and often sang to the piano accompaniment of his wife, mostly operetta arias. The bookcase was filled with the German classics, the great dramas were often recited on long winter evenings with divided roles. The big Brehm, an encyclopedia of animal life, was read avidly by the grandchildren, with additional explanations from Phoebus. There was a huge, German language Old Testament, illustrated with Dorée copperplates, and exploring it was another favorite evening pastime - all this before radio or T.V. was invented. Mother does recall stories, related to her in her adult years, that in his prime Phoebus had a roving eye, his wife Ida was often crying and unhappy about rumored liaisons. The law practice of Phoebus was not a very lucrative one. Given the fact that he was

fluent in the Romanian language, many of his clients were Romanian villagers and they usually were dirt-poor, payment was often a chicken, a dozen eggs, a basket of apples, etc. At any rate he was a respected local citizen, on the board of some local institutions. He must have been an ardent and loyal supporter of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

When World War I broke out, War Bonds were floated, promising a good return and loyal investment for a good citizen. Phoebus Nemeth invested all his savings into those bonds, he even borrowed money in order to be able to participate maximally in the war effort. Luckily by that time he received a meager pension for his years as a civil servant. When the war ended with the defeat and dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, great-grandpa Phoebus was broke and impoverished. He had broken his hip in 1915, and at that time no orthopedic or surgical treatment was available, I even doubt that an X-ray machine was already existent in his provincial hometown. For an old man in his seventies, a broken hip meant long weeks of lying in bed, improper healing, a shortened lower limb and painful limping. He was incapacitated, unable to work as a lawyer and strapped in gentile poverty. In his last years Mother seldom heard his joyful singing. Phoebus Nemeth passed away in 1922, and was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Lugos.



The wife of Phoebus Ida Herzog, was born in Zemun, (present-day a suburb of Belgrade in Serbia), daughter of my great-great-grandfather Sigmund Herzog and Johanna (Hanni) Singer. Hanni, whom I knew in my childhood, was born in 1834. Her parents were Joseph Singer and Henriette (Yentl) Hertzka. Joseph was famous for his business mishaps, he was always on the verge of a big deal, which ended in

bankruptcy. His many other fiascoes generated the opinion in the family, that if Joseph Singer will build coffins, death will stop taking its toll.



Louis XVI table (Weissweiler style),
owned by the family since 1830.

Henriette (Yentl) Hertzka had a sister, Charlotte (Charne), and two brothers. One of them died young, the other converted later to Christian faith, changed his name to Szarvadi, and nothing was ever heard of him. Charlotte got married to a well to-do merchant in Petrovaradin, Hermann Hirschl. He was a prominent dweller in that Austrian border-town (today it is part of Novisad, a Serb city on the Danube), so much so that in 1827 he was accepted as citizen of the township and became an officer of the local burgher's militia. A document attesting to this, is in the possession of Mother (now in Ed's home), a cherished keepsake from the times when Jews had no last names, were not allowed to own property and were treated like vagrant gypsies. Also in Ed's home are two "miniatures", small paintings on porcelain, of Herman and his wife Charne. As a legal resident Hirschl was allowed to settle, he even could rent one of the local mansions owned by a nobleman. This was important, the houses of gentlemen sported the inscription "Salva Guardia", which meant that no soldiers can be quartered there, no requisitions can be made for the army, and the house can be entered only by permission of the county magistrate. While moving into that house the Hirschl's found in the attic a broken, small Louis XVI table (in the style of the ebeniste Weissweiler), which they repaired. This small table is since owned by our family, it is the only piece which survived the many peregrinations of my ancestors. When we emigrated to Israel in 1961, we had to leave it behind, it stayed with Mother's cousin Marika. In 1994 it was smuggled out of Romania (objects of art are not allowed to leave that country), brought to us and artfully restored. I enjoy the elegant form of that beautiful piece of furniture, and hope that the children of Ed, who will inherit it from me, will cherish it too as a family heirloom.