

Mor Freund's Memoirs

Part 2

MY LIFE

I was born on March 1, 1880 in Serbian-Itebey. My birth certificate is at the then registry office in file number 520/1910. This was on a Monday. My father owned in Serbian-Itebey a small "general store". For reasons which I do not know, we moved in the spring of 1883 from Serbian Itebey to Kis Torak where my father again opened a small "general store" in the house of Kohn Moritz. At this time, which is 63 years ago, I vividly remember the light-yellow painted corner house in which we lived. I do not remember clearly the internal set-up of the house but what I do remember is that my bed was located in the room just behind the store. I remember a single winged toy and a "Pursi" named dog with which my brother Gyula and I used to play with. Later, this dog showed some strange signs. As a result, in order to avoid problems, my father had to shoot it. I also remember that my grandfather Freund Solomon lived with us and he often put me to sleep at night. He had an unusually large red yellow bordered handkerchief, which I loved playing with. When he wanted me to fall asleep fast, all he had to do is give me that handkerchief and I quickly fell asleep.

These small episodes are what I remember from my childhood years. I think that in this house, we lived only for a year and from there we moved into another house owned by someone named Sirbu or Sârbu who was a teacher. Again, this was a corner house and we stayed there for a year or so. In this house, my sister Selma was born on November 13, 1884. From there we moved on to Nagy Tovak onto the main street, also a corner house and there my father again opened a store in a nearby side street where there was a mill owned by a rich peasant named Secosau. On our right, also on the main street, there lived a Romanian peasant. He had a daughter, named Sevoica, a little older than I was, and I used to play with her almost daily. One day while playing with her I became angry

and I remember running into the store where I found a cane or the wooden part of a whip with which I intended to straighten out my account with Sevoica. My mother, who saw me in action, asked where am I prepared to go with that cane. "I am going to kill Sevoica" was my answer. My mother came after me and she caught up with me at Sevoica's house. In the meantime, Sevoica was so frightened that she locked herself in the house. Thus, I was not able to kill her with my cane. Poor Sevoica! I have not thought of her since, but at least through this story I have a chance to remember her name.

In Kis Tovak and Nagy Tovak [Small and Big Tovak, apparently a village], there were enough Jews to support a House of Prayer. One Friday evening, prior to the services, the attendees were outside, talking. I took advantage of this situation and entered the House of Prayer. I looked around and found the Shofar. I took it outside while blowing into it. Someone tried to take it away from me but I kept running away. All I remember that people had a good laugh about this.

Some of the businesspeople's names I still remember. For example Kassovitz Mor, Müller Samuel, Alexander Alexander, Steiner Aron etc. All these memories, looking back at the past 60 years, provide me pleasure. In 1885, one day in August, my grandfather became angry with my mother. Furiously he grabbed his cane and walked all the way to Itebey to his other kids. Since then, I have never seen him again. At that time, he was already fairly sick and indeed, after one or two months he died. I do not remember how old he was when he died but I hope that I will have another opportunity to find this out from the cemetery records in Itebey.



With my Grandma

On May 1, 1886 my parents moved to Timisoara, the largest city in the area, about 30 km. North of Itebey. [Today it is a part of Romania and it is a city of approximately 200,000 people.] My father opened a pub-like business. Its location was in what was called the "inner city" [Belvaros in Hungarian] The house was owned by someone called Moran and our apartment was there as well. In this house, we as kids had the chickenpox and our house doctor was someone named Doctor Löwenbach Jakab. My father did not see his future in this new business and within three months, he sold it. By August 1, he became employed at Deutsch Markus who had a food store. The store was located in Deutsch's own house on Hunyadi Street, now renamed Bulevardul Carol, number 56. For a year, we lived right next-door, at number 54, on the same street in a house owned by someone called Zach. My father's salary at the beginning was 40 Forint [monetary values of those days similar to the dollar in the US] per month. After a year, he opened another store on Fröbl Street in a house owned by someone called Szabo.

At the beginning of September 1886, I started school, the first grade. I went to the elementary school in Jozsefvaros [a section of town, in Timisoara.] The school is on Boulevard Berthelot. Now the building has several stories but then it was a one-story building, which was painted in a light green color. Our classroom was immediately to the right once you entered through the gate of the building. Our teacher, Ottonbay Adam also lived there. He was a very nice man and a good teacher. At the end of the first year, I walked home with an "outstanding" school certificate.

Obviously, my parents were very proud of my achievements. Only several years later I found out that my father attempted to give my teacher a silver Forint [a silver dollar], which the teacher was supposed to present to me at the grade certificate distribution ceremony. The intent was to make this as a special recognition from the school to me. However, nothing came out of this, since the teacher did not agree to this arrangement.

At the beginning of the school year of 1887/88, I was signed up to the second grade. Actually, I did not want to hear about this prospect since my friend Mincho Pista who lived in the same building as I did and was one year older, always told me how difficult the second grade is. My father could only convince me with great difficulty that this was not so. Actually, he was right since I again finished the school year with an "outstanding" grade certificate.

On January 17, 1888 at 7:30 in the morning I was awakened by a baby's cry. This was my sister Dora who was just born and I remember that I was in a hurry to go to school to announce the birth of my sister. This event made our family very happy but only to become very sad later, when during the same year on November 26, my four-year-old sister Selma died. During her last period, she was in hospital and underwent several surgeries. Evidently, without a favorable result. I remember vividly that the next day my great-grandmother Deutsch Eleonora was also buried, followed by my sister Selma's burial ceremony.

On January 30, 1889, on a Wednesday, between 9:00 and 10:00 in the morning, the school servant entered the classroom with a note that he handed to our teacher Elias Jakab. Since I sat in the first row, I saw our teacher read the note and suddenly become very pale. He made a quick announcement. Boys, please pack your stuff and go home quietly since there will not be any more school today. Prince Rudolph, the king's successor, died. All the boys in the classroom were showing vividly their excitement over the fact that there was no school for the rest of the day. I became very sad and actually went home crying. My mother, who saw me coming home in the middle of the day so upset, became frightened and concerned, perhaps something bad happened to me. Once I told her that

Prince Rudolph died, she thanked God that nothing happened to me. Since then, it stayed in the family that I mourned Prince Rudolph's death very much.

I finished grammar school in the school year of 1889/90, while the school principal Schoeffler Karoly also served as my class advisor. Right at the beginning of the school year on September 18, we had a trauma in our family again. My youngest sister Hermina died. She was the twin of my brother Gyula. She was sick for about eight days with scarlet fever before her death. I remember her as being pretty and smart.

In September 1890 I entered the "Piarista" intermediate school, in the first grade. By then my father did not own a store any more. He tried to support his family by dealing in some "grain" business. He was always concerned about ensuring that we were provided a proper education. However, for financial reasons this was not always possible. For example, my brother Gyula, at the age of 13 was sent to become a tailor apprentice. In the school year of 1894/95, I enrolled in the fifth grade of the elementary school. By mid-October the 12 Forint that was half of the school tuition was supposed to have been paid. However, my father could not afford it. Therefore, with much sadness, he was obliged to take me from the school. I enjoyed studying but I saw how my father was struggling financially. For that reason, his decision did not hurt me, on the contrary, I was happy that I could now help my father and relieve him of his financial worries.

I STEPPED INTO THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

On a Monday in October of 1894, I started as a trainee at a General Store business. The business that had already existed since the last century's last decades had a very good reputation in Temesvar and in the Banat [region in Romania] The owners must have been very content with my work since they took me in as an apprentice without pay, for three years. After a year and a half, starting July 1896, I became a paid employee. My pay was 20 Korona [monetary value] per month. I was the happiest person! Since that day, I did not have to work pay-free and I was able to

bring home to my parents 20 Korona per month. The years passed and I made financial progress. On May 1, 1904 the business moved from Domter [part of the city of Timisoara] to a new location in the Papaffy Levar corner building. At that time, I was already working in bookkeeping for a long time. In 1905, my parents moved to 9 Ormos (now number 10) Street, which was the Löwinger house. [those days the houses in town were known by the owner's name] This last move had a major impact on my life. Here, I met my dear Szeren! My feelings towards her were so very deep and I was convinced that this woman - that fate pointed her toward me - and with whom I wanted to live the rest of my life together. At the time we met, our financial situation did not allow us to establish a family. In the fall of 1907, we moved to Hollo Street number 2. By then my father had a serious lung disease and Dr. Szana Sandor, our family doctor, recommended him to go for therapy to Adria to a place near Abbazia called Icici. I kept him company until Budapest but then I saw that his condition became worse. Barely after two weeks of his stay there we received a telegram from Lotti Funknown from Budapest that my father was gravely ill and he returned to Budapest. He was resting at her house and asked us to come and take him home. My mother and I immediately went to Budapest to bring him home. He received a lot of care at home and his condition improved.

The same year, at the beginning of September, Knopfeilmacher Gerson, my boss, became ill with stomach cancer. On the first day of Rosh Hashan, in spite of his illness, he was brought to the temple in a carriage. There he donated a substantial amount of money for charity and was brought back home again by carriage. His condition deteriorated quickly thereafter and on September 17 at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon (erev Yom Kippur), at the age of 74, he left us forever. At his deathbed were present Stenger Simon, Frank Richard and myself. Right before the holiday, I had just enough time to notify the Jewish Authorities and get a casket in order to remove the body to the house of Baruch Izidor. We did not want his body to lie in the house of a Christian woman until his burial. He was a single man and he did not have any close friends with whom he could spend even his last hours. Here it holds true what Deak Ferenc [thinks an author] once said, "The single man lives like a rich man but

dies like a dog ". His burial took place the day after Yom Kippur. There was a fair amount of people showing their last respect. In his last testament, he mentioned three of his employees, Gross Andor, Frank Richard and myself to whom he left some of his estate.

In the spring of 1908, my father's health condition deteriorated rapidly. On June 28 at 1:27 in the morning, his death put an end to further suffering. The same year we moved into the Dauerbach house on Boruhaz street. As for my job at the Metz company, I did not see it as long lasting and secure. Frank Richard who had a traveling position felt alike, so we agreed that both of us would resign and we would establish ourselves in the textile business as salesmen. On March 1, 1909 we left our jobs and traveled abroad to gain a position as brokers or sales representatives. Actually, we were successful in getting a few assignments as representatives for better-known companies. Once we returned home, we started working. Unfortunately, much against my wishes and desire we started out in the wrong direction. Frankl continued to seek out his customers among the peasants and despite his tenacity, we could not make ends meet. I looked for customers in larger cities but could not be away long, since all the administrative functions - which were solely my responsibilities, remained neglected due to my absence. My business actually flourished but it still was not enough to support two families. Obviously, we also had an office and other expenses as well. In June 1910, we liquidated our business and distributed equally the remaining assets.

On October 30, I got married. In January 1913, my sister Dora got married as well and in May the same year my brother Gyula too. Totis Rezső, who was the manager of the Gyapjuipar factory, offered me a job in Rákospalota [near Budapest] as the office manager of their local factory. I accepted that position and started working on June 15. It appeared that they were satisfied with my performance since within 3 to 4 months they raised my salary from 300 Korona to 350 Korona per month. Here we enjoyed a nice and tranquil life style. We lived modestly but did not have financial worries.



Left: Ervin, b. 1913, son of Mor and Szeren Freund, and his wife, Ancsi
Right: Ervin Freund

On November 10, 1913 we celebrated a happy family event. Our dear son, Ervin was born. He was a beautiful baby, thank God, up to the present this is evident. On the day of the delivery, Szeren, who actually cooked the lunch, went to rest after having eaten. As usual, I returned to the office thinking that by the time I come home at night, we will be ready for the awaited birth. However, it happened differently. After lunch, the birth pains increased. One hour after I arrived at the office, our house cleaner came in running with the big news: "Your son was born." I was very happy, however, since Szparber was in Vienna on business and God forbid, the factory could not be possibly left alone or closed an hour earlier, I returned home in the evening hours at my usual time. When I think about this, even now, that next to Szeren there was none close to her except my mother, I start questioning my overzealous loyalty to the factory.

Soon, we were the happy parents of two boys. Then came the unfortunate year of 1914 and on July 28 the war against Serbia started. Within a week, like in the movies, the war broke out and continued for the next four years. It was World War I. That year I still enjoyed a happy family life up to the end of November at which time the "older" generations had to report to the front at Ujpest [city in Hungary]. My Szeren at that time was in Temesvar since we were worried about my father-in-law's illness. On

December 12 he died. He was 64 years old and his death left behind a void not only in the immediate family but also in the field of education in town.



Miska (left) and Lulu Freund, Mor and

Szeren's other sons

I am writing these lines and am moved, because I cherish the memories of those who passed away. Frankly, I do not know which is bigger: my respect or my deep love for them.

On March 15, 1915 I was drafted into the army, in the 29th Infantry. My Szeren moved to Temesvar with the kids and it was where she received my paycheck.

During my initial training in the Infantry, she visited me several times. Once she brought along the kids, too! I had the feeling that the war would last quite long and there were no chances that during the war I would get home. I also knew that I could not even hope to see my children's physical and mental development. And, like many others, I had to overcome the pain and the worries.

After the training period, we were sent to the front on June 12 or 13. My Szeren and Blanka came to say good-bye to me to Becskerek. [city in Hungary] We were ready to go at night but we started moving out only at 5 o'clock in the morning. My Szeren and Blanka stayed with me the whole night at the train station and they left only after the train departed. Our feelings are a part of our past !

