

Not Monte Carlo: Ellie Grasse’s Journey from Bad Vöslau to Shanghai and Beyond

By Kevin Ostoyich, The Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation
September 28, 2023



Picture of Café Thermalbad from Ellie Grasse’s 2010 visit. Photo courtesy of Ron Grasse.

[Note: Items from the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation are marked with “FLSFF”]

[Note: Main sources for the narrative are items from the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation, a written account that Ellie Grasse wrote in 2001 and three interviews of Ellie Grasse that were conducted by Kevin Ostoyich: 1) September 21, 2019, in Palm Desert, California; 2) March 29, 2023, via Zoom; 3) August 15, 2023, via telephone. Footnotes to the interviews are only employed when direct quotations are used, or it is necessary to distinguish the interviews from other sources.]



In July 2010, Ellie (née Hacker) Grasse went back to Bad Vöslau with her son and daughter-in-law. The spa town has long drawn tourists interested in taking its natural spring waters. Ellie remembers those waters well; she learned how to swim in them. But the springs of Bad Vöslau were not the primary attraction for Ellie and her son and daughter-in-law in July 2010. They were there to see a café from the past. During the 1930s, Ellie’s father, Karl Hacker, ran the Café Thermalbad. Ellie remembers the family living in the town during the warm vacation seasons. She also remembers having to leave the town due to antisemitism. As Ellie, her son, and daughter-in-law visited the café, they were greeted by the proprietor. Ellie remembered him when they were both children in the 1930s. His father took over Café Thermalbad after the Hackers fled the town for their safety. The proprietor remembered Ellie’s father. He told Ellie, her son, and daughter-in-law that everyone thought Karl Hacker had left Bad Vöslau for Monte Carlo.

“Monte Carlo?” thought Ellie incredulously...

Bad Vöslau in the 1930s:

Gabriele “Ellie” Hacker was not clear what the word “Jew!” meant, and she did not understand why the other children were directing it at her. She also could not understand why the other children had recently been avoiding her. Ellie was an Austrian child attending school at the local Catholic convent in Bad Vöslau.¹ When Ellie went home that day after being called derisively a “Jew,” she asked her mother about that word she did not understand. Leopoldine Hacker listened to her daughter and told her that she would no longer have to go to the convent school. Ellie, who had been born on March 13, 1929, did not realize that her family was Jewish. It had not been important up until that point. But in the time after 1933, it was starting to matter. Across the border in Germany, the Austrian Adolf Hitler had become chancellor, and the antisemitic National Socialist movement of which he was head was on the rise in both Germany and Austria. Other incidents of antisemitism would follow for Ellie both in Bad Vöslau and Vienna. She remembers, for example, children throwing a snake at her. She says, “since then, I can’t even *look* at a snake.”² She says, “All of a sudden, I became Jewish. I didn’t know.”³

Ellie remembers only one other Jewish family that lived in the spa town of Bad Vöslau. While there were more Jews living in the town than Ellie recalls, the Jewish population of Bad Vöslau was not large (according to a 1934 census, there were 99 Jews living in the town).⁴ The number of Jews in the town grew during the summer months with Jewish spa guests. According to the website “Aus der Geschichte

¹ In the August 15, 2023 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Ellie noted that she was seven or eight at the time. It is not clear if she attended school in Vienna. She mentions only going for a very brief time after the *Anschluss* but says it was an awful experience. When asked if she had had an *Einschulung* (a celebratory event upon the commencement of first grade) or had received a *Schultüte* (a conical, decorative container with various gifts that children are given upon their entry into first grade), Ellie responded in the negative. It appears that the only consistent, formal schooling Ellie received was her brief attendance at the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association school (also known as the Kadoorie School) in Shanghai. She left that school during the fifth grade at age twelve due to bullying.

² September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

³ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

⁴ Census information: Ernst Furlinger, *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich: Nationalpolitik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter* (Göttingen: V&R unipress and Vienna University Press, 2013), 291.



der jüdische Gemeinden im deutschen Sprachraum,” there was a Jewish Bethausverein (house of prayer association) in the town until 1938 and this association set up a synagogue in a house on Prümerstraße (present-day Petzgasse) in 1911.⁵



Leopoldine (née Wohlstein) Hacker and Ellie Hacker. Dated 1935.
From Bill & Ellie Grasse Scrapbook in the FLSFF Collection. Photo provided by Rebecca Ostoyich.

The Hacker family was not particularly observant, to the point that Ellie did not realize she was Jewish. She remembers even attending a Catholic Church with the wife of the custodian of Café Thermalbad. Ellie explains that her parents, Karl and Leopoldine Hacker, were simply not religious.

Karl Hacker was born on January 13, 1899, to Julius and Gabriele (née Dubsy) Hacker.⁶ According to Ellie, her father came from a family that was in the wine business. Karl’s father was Julius Hacker. Karl’s mother, Gabriele, after whom Ellie is named, died on July 29, 1908, at age forty.⁷ Ellie says that after Gabriele died at this relatively young age, Julius married a woman (Jenny), who—Ellie was told—was somewhat of the classic “terrible” stepmother.⁸ Karl had two brothers and two sisters.⁹

⁵ <https://www.xn--jdische-gemeinden-22b.de/index.php/gemeinden/a-b/327-baden-niederoesterreich> (Accessed July 30, 2023.) More information on the demolition of the synagogue is provided in Ernst Furlinger, *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich: Nationalpolitik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter* (Göttingen: V&R unipress and Vienna University Press, 2013), 291. According to Furlinger, the Bethausverein was set up in Bad Vöslau in 1894. *Ibid.*, 291.

⁶ Trauungsbuch für die israelitische Kultusgemeinde in Wien (Wedding book for the Jewish Community of Vienna) available on geni.com: Half of the document is available at https://www.geni.com/photo/view/6000000026574067580?album_type=photos_of_me&photo_id=6000000034271568097 (Accessed August 13, 2023) the other half of the document is available at https://www.geni.com/photo/view/6000000034270776447?album_type=photos_of_me&photo_id=6000000034271888821 (Accessed August 13, 2023). According to geni.com, Julius was born on January 8, 1865 in Reinfeld, Austria and died on December 16, 1931 in Vienna, Austria. <https://www.geni.com/people/Julius-Hacker/6000000025251357627> (Accessed August 13, 2023).

⁷ <https://www.geni.com/people/Gabriele-Hacker/6000000025251981714> (Accessed August 13, 2023).

⁸ According to geni.com, this was Jenny (née) Hacker (July 7, 1867 – October 6, 1931) <https://www.geni.com/people/Jenny-Hacker/6000000175530793859> (Accessed August 13, 2023).

⁹ September 21, 20219, Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.



Leopoldine Hacker was born August 12, 1901, in Budapest, Hungary to Josef and Olga (née Mährischl/Mährischel) Wohlstein.¹⁰ Josef was Hungarian and Olga was Austrian. Leopoldine had a brother, Arnold, and a sister, Grete.¹¹

Ellie believes her parents' marriage was semi-arranged. She says her mother was somewhat reserved, and, given the spirit of the times, was deemed somewhat of a spinster because, at twenty-seven years old, she had yet to be betrothed. Karl's aunt decided to take matters into hand and arranged for Karl and Leopoldine to meet. Karl and Leopoldine got married in Vienna on February 19, 1928.¹² Ellie thinks her parents had a contented marriage, but revealingly trails off when explaining if their feelings went beyond contentment; it was a semi-arranged, contented marriage.

Ellie was born in Vienna on March 13, 1929, a little over a year after her parents got married. According to a questionnaire Karl filled out when he later tried to get the family to the United States, Karl started to serve as the proprietor of Café Thermalbad in Bad Vöslau ca. 1931.¹³ The family spent the summer tourist seasons in Bad Vöslau, where Ellie says they had "quite a bit of property there."¹⁴ Ostoyich believes Ellie is referring to the Café Thermalbad when talking about property in Bad Vöslau. Ellie says the family lived in the back of the café. During winters, the family lived in an apartment at Hörnegasse 20 in Vienna's Third District.

On January 31, 1933—the day after Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor across the border in Germany—Leopoldine gave birth to Ellie's brother, Josef.

Unfortunately—for reasons that will become clear below—Ellie does not have many memories of her father. She remembers that her father was "very good looking" and that he "mingled very well with people" in the café. She also remembers him being strict. She states that she and her brother were always to act very prim and proper around her father. Her fondest memories of her father are of her sitting on his lap while he played cards, sometimes even telling him what cards to play. She laughs as she notes that she still loves to play cards.

In March 1938, right before Hitler ordered German troops to march into Austria—the head waiter at Café Thermalbad, named Pepi, decided to hang a portrait of the Adolf Hitler in the café. Karl objected to this and told Pepi to pull the picture down off the wall. When Pepi refused to do this, Karl, whom Ellie says was tall and had a temper, "poked" Pepi one. Later, in the middle of the night, the custodian of the café went to Karl and Leopoldine and told them that they had better leave because people were looking

¹⁰ September 21, 2019, Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

¹¹ According to geni.com, a younger sister named Aranka was born but survived only five months in 1903. Ellie had never heard of Aranka prior to her August 15, 2023 interview with Kevin Ostoyich. See <https://www.geni.com/people/Aranka-Wohlstein/6000000173222840745> (Accessed August 13, 2023).

¹² Trauungsbuch für die israelitische Kultusgemeinde in Wien (Wedding book for the Jewish Community of Vienna) available on geni.com: Half of the document is available at https://www.geni.com/photo/view/6000000034270776447?album_type=photos_of_me&photo_id=600000003427188821 (Accessed August 13, 2023).

¹³ Questionnaire Karl Hacker submitted to the Fürsorge-Zentrale der Isr. Kultusgemeinde Wien Auswanderungsabteilung: [https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#\\$FL196931973](https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#$FL196931973) (Accessed August 30, 2023). He wrote that he had run the café for seven years. The document is dated May 12, 1938.

¹⁴ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.



to hurt them. Karl, Leopoldine, Ellie, and Josef immediately fled Bad Vöslau on a train to Vienna. Ellie says that she was only able to bring a doll with her.¹⁵

The threat to the Hacker family was not an idle one. In the months after the family fled Bad Vöslau, the Nazis quickly put their stamp on the town. They created separate areas for “aryan” and “non-aryan” spa guests, designated which hotels were allowed to host Jewish guests, and stipulated that the other hotels had to post signs stating that Jews were not wanted. Eventually, the Jews were given until October 1, 1938, to leave the town. Jewish properties were aryanized, and the Jewish Bethausverein was dissolved.¹⁶

Vienna, 1938-1939:

The exact chronology of events in the months after the family arrived in Vienna is not clear. As is often the case with memory, certain details can become fuzzy. The chronology that is presented here is based on the interviews with Ellie, Ellie’s 2001 written account, and various historical documents. In writing the following narrative of the period March 11, 1938 to March 25, 1939, Ostoyich has privileged the document titled “Erhebung in der Wohnung” which is dated March 9, 1939 and was included among the documents pertaining to Olga Wohlstein’s petition to the Emigration Division of the Jewish Community of Vienna over Ellie’s oral testimony when trying to determine the whereabouts of the Hacker family members from March to June 1938. Ellie’s interview testimonies are not always consistent and clear regarding these months. This is understandable given her age at the time and the traumatic upheaval that was going on around her: Her family had to flee their home in the middle of the night, Germany marched into Austria, her father left the family, and she and her mother, grandmother, and brother had to hide from Nazis under a neighbor’s bed all within approximately three-and-a-half months. That the events transpired is not in question; the specific timing of them is simply unclear.

Immediately after the Hackers arrived in Vienna, the Germans marched into Austria and annexed the country. Ellie remembers this event—known as the *Anschluss*—distinctly, because the German soldiers crossed the border on March 12 and continued to march all night into March 13, her birthday. She remembers the transformative effect the event had on the Austrian people. She says, “People who had the Austrian flag, all of a sudden, turned [to] the swastika.”¹⁷

Ellie thinks that she went to school in Vienna for maybe about two or three weeks. She says, “It was terrible. Everywhere you looked...they had the swastika. I really didn’t understand that.”¹⁸

It appears the first plan was for the family to flee Austria for the United States of America.

On May 11, 1938, Karl’s brother, Otto, submitted a questionnaire to the emigration division of the Jewish community in Vienna (Fürsorge-Zentrale der Isr. Kultusgemeinde Wien Auswanderungsabteilung)

¹⁵ About the doll: Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 1, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

¹⁶ All the information for this paragraph comes from Ernst Furlinger, *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich: Nationalpolitik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter* (Göttingen: V&R unipress and Vienna University Press, 2013), 291.

¹⁷ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

¹⁸ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.



for assistance to get him and his wife, Eugenie, to New York. Otto put down the names of his sisters Grete Schönthal and Gusti Goldstein as well as a cousin named Troing Eisinger as the potential sponsors.¹⁹ On May 12, 1938—the day after his brother had submitted his questionnaire—Karl filled out the same questionnaire in hopes of getting the following people to the United States: Leopoldine, Gabriele [Ellie], and Josef; his brother-in-law, Arnold Wohlstein (birth year: 1897); his mother-in-law, Olga Wohlstein (birth year: 1877); and Olga’s brother, Erwin Mährischl (birth year: 1888).²⁰ As had been the case with Otto’s questionnaire, Karl listed his sisters Grete and Gusti as his sponsors. Whereas Otto had listed his cousin as a third possible sponsor, Karl did not. In the September 21, 2019 interview, Ellie mentions her father’s attempt to get the family to the United States with two sisters acting as sponsors. She says the sisters in America did not realize the urgency of the matter, and the visa process simply took too long.²¹

According to Ellie, at some point the custodian of Café Thermalbad showed up in Vienna to inform her father that he was not safe in Vienna, people were coming after him, and they knew where the family lived. Given that the Document “Erhebung in der Wohnung” notes that “At this time [end of June 1938] her [Leopoldine’s] husband went to Belgium illegally,” Ostoyich speculates that the custodian from Café Thermalbad came to warn Karl at some point after Otto and Karl had submitted their petitions to go to the United States, perhaps in late May or June 1938.²² Ostoyich speculates that upon learning the news from the custodian, Karl and Otto decided they could no longer wait for visas to the United States in Vienna and had to flee to Belgium. Ellie believes Otto and Karl fled to Belgium with about eighteen other people but does not know any details about who these people were or how the journey transpired. As was the case with Olga, Leopoldine, Ellie, and Josef; Otto’s wife, Eugenie, stayed behind in Vienna. Regarding her father’s departure, Ellie says, “The only thing I remember, *very* much I remember is, when he left, he and my mom were hugging and kissing and both crying, but that’s the last time [I saw him.]”²³

Staying in Vienna was clearly not a safe option. On June 3, 1938—not quite three weeks after Karl Hacker had included him in the questionnaire that he submitted in hopes of getting the family to the United States, Olga’s brother, Erwin, was sent to Dachau concentration camp.²⁴

¹⁹ Otto Hacker’s Questionnaire located at <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11000-160813/otto-hacker-in-austria-vienna-jewish-emigrant-applications> (Accessed August 15, 2023). Otto listed himself as a trained waiter and chauffeur and that his latest employment was as the head waiter at Café National.

²⁰ Questionnaire filled out by Karl Hacker at [https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#\\$FL196931974](https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#$FL196931974) (Accessed August 7, 2023).

²¹ Questionnaire filled out by Karl Hacker at [https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#\\$FL196931974](https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#$FL196931974) (Accessed August 7, 2023). The two sisters lived in Brooklyn, New York.

²² Translation by Kevin Ostoyich. Document titled “Erhebung in der Wohnung” dated March 9, 1939, and included among the documents Olga Wohlstein petition to the Emigration Division of the Jewish Community of Vienna: <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11000-301960/olga-wohlstein-in-austria-vienna-jewish-emigrant-applications#fullscreen> (Accessed August 31, 2023).

²³ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

²⁴ Erwin was issued prisoner number 15099 in Dachau. <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/130429235> (Accessed August 10, 2023).



The document “Erhebung in der Wohnung” states that after Karl left at the end of June 1938; Leopoldine, Ellie, and Josef moved into Olga Wohlstein’s apartment on Schönbrunner Strasse in Vienna’s 12th District.²⁵ Also at the end of June 1938, Leopoldine’s brother, Arnold Wohlstein, left Vienna for Shanghai.²⁶ Karl Hacker had listed Arnold on the questionnaire to go to New York. Perhaps, at the time the decision was made for Karl to go to Belgium, Arnold too gave up on the United States. Perhaps Karl’s departure for Belgium meant Arnold lost his potential sponsors to the United States (i.e., Karl’s sisters). In any event, Arnold decided to go to Shanghai around the same time Karl left for Belgium (June 1938). There may have been a more immediate and personal reason for Arnold’s decision to leave at that time as well; Ellie remembers that her uncle—who was “a refined man,” who held a patent for coffee grinders and had a coffee grinder factory—was forced to shovel coal by the Nazis.²⁷ Perhaps this humiliation prompted Arnold’s decision to leave for Shanghai at that time. Ellie says that her Uncle Arnold left for Shanghai with a cousin or cousins.

In October 1938, a portrait is taken of Olga, Leopoldine, Ellie, and Josef during the time they were living together in Olga’s apartment.



(Left to Right) Ellie Hacker, Josef Hacker, Leopoldine (née Wohlstein) Hacker, Olga (née Mährischel) Wohlstein. Dated October 1938. From Bill & Ellie Grasse Scrapbook in FLSFF Collection. Photo provided by Rebecca Ostoyich.

²⁵ Document titled “Erhebung in der Wohnung” dated March 9, 1939, and included among the documents Olga Wohlstein petition to the Emigration Division of the Jewish Community of Vienna: <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11000-301960/olga-wohlstein-in-austria-vienna-jewish-emigrant-applications#fullscreen> (Accessed August 31, 2023).

²⁶ Document titled “Erhebung in der Wohnung” dated March 9, 1939, and included among the documents Olga Wohlstein petition to the Emigration Division of the Jewish Community of Vienna: <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11000-301960/olga-wohlstein-in-austria-vienna-jewish-emigrant-applications#fullscreen> (Accessed August 31, 2023).

²⁷ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 1, in Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.



Ellie remembers at some point that it was necessary for Olga, Leopoldine, Ellie, and Josef to hide in a neighbor's apartment. Ostoyich wonders if this transpired during Kristallnacht in November 1938. It did not necessarily have to be on Kristallnacht though, given that Jews in Vienna could be subjected to harassment at any time after the *Anschluss*. Ellie says that her grandmother and mother knew all the neighbors, but they were very frightened, nevertheless. Those who had been friendly before the *Anschluss* could not necessarily be trusted to be friendly thereafter. One neighbor turned out to be friendly. She hid Leopoldine, her mother, Ellie, and Ellie's brother under her bed. Another former friend, named Hans, joined the Nazis. Hans had been a schoolmate of Leopoldine and Arnold and even, according to Ellie, had "really liked" Leopoldine and even wanted to go out with her. Ellie remembers that as they hid under the bed, Hans came asking if there were any Jews in the apartment. The neighbor told Hans there was nobody there and that Olga and the Hackers were all gone from next door. Ellie believes that Hans knew they were hiding under the bed but chose not to find them. Ellie sees the story of Hans—whom she claims to have met later in life—as an example of how Austrians changed allegiances overnight after the *Anschluss*.²⁸

In November 1938, Otto Hacker's wife, Eugenie, submitted a petition for assistance to leave the country. Her plan was to leave on November 28, 1938, for England via Belgium, and then to travel from England to her intended destination of the United States. (Perhaps the idea was to meet up with Otto in Belgium and go together to England and then on to the United States.) The date stamp for her petition is November 21, 1938.²⁹ When asked about Eugenie Hacker, Ellie says she does not know what happened to her.



Austria had become unsafe for Jews, and it did not take long for the Nazi grip to take its toll on the family. Ellie says that her great-grandmother, Rosa, was still alive at the time, but became an early victim of the Nazis. Ellie says, "She [Rosa] was 95 years old. And they came and put her in a truck, and she died soon after."³⁰ The tombstone devoted to Rosa and her husband, Leopold shows 1939 as the year of her death.

Left: Tombstone to Ellie's great-grandparents Leopold Mährischl and Rosa Mährischl (Parents of Ellie's "Omama" Olga (née Mährischel) Wohlstein.

Note: The 1939 date of death for Rosa Mährischl. (Photo Source:

https://www.geni.com/photo/view/600000031529522937?album_type=photos_of_me&photo_id=6000000189958261824 (Accessed August 14, 2023)).

²⁸ In the September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One, Ellie claims to have met Hans later in life. She says, "He didn't say anything. But I said, 'Do you remember my mom?' He says, 'Yes, I remember her.'" But he wouldn't [anything]. So, people turned Nazi overnight."

²⁹ Document: "Ansuchen" form of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Auswanderungsabteilung (Gruppe Abfertigung), Wein I. Signed by Eugenie Hacker, located at <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11000-160813/otto-hacker-in-austria-vienna-jewish-emigrant-applications> (Accessed September 19, 2023).

³⁰ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.



Ellie says that after her father reached Belgium, he wrote letters to Leopoldine advising her to come with the children to Belgium. Ellie claims that her grandmother—Olga Wohlstein, whom Ellie refers to as “Omama”³¹—refused to let Leopoldine do this. She says as well, that Leopoldine thought the journey to Belgium was too strenuous for her and the children to undertake. Meanwhile, Leopoldine was receiving letters from Shanghai from her brother, Arnold, imploring her to follow him there with the rest of the family.

In her 2001 written account, Ellie discusses the pressure her mother faced in making her decision. The decision was even made more difficult because Leopoldine’s sister, Grete, refused to go to Shanghai on religious grounds:

Uncle kept writing to get out and come to China[.] [M]y Dad was writing to come to Belgium[.] [W]e had my Aunt Grete³² living with Omama[.] so between my Mom and Grandma it was a hard decision to make as Grete would not leave[.] she would say the water in China was not kosher[.] she was very religious.³³

Ultimately, Leopoldine decided to go to Shanghai instead of Belgium. Olga then made the arrangements to get the family to Shanghai.³⁴

The journey was put in jeopardy though by a motorcycle. Ellie’s brother, Josef, stepped on the side of a motorcycle and it fell on him. Ellie recalls that the motorcycle sliced “his leg open from the knee to the ankle.” Ellie writes,

[N]o one would take him to a hospital as no [J]ews [were] allowed so Omama picked him [up] held the wound together got on a streetcar and went to the [J]ewish hospital across town where they sewed him and sent them home[.] [B]y that time we had papers saying that we had tickets on a ship leaving Italy to go to China[.] [T]hen my brother became very ill with an infection from the wound and we did not think we could make [it] but in the last minute he was better and we go on a train to Genoa[.] Italy where we had to wait for 4 weeks for the ship to come back.³⁵

The family was getting very on funds, but a Mr. Dankner whom they had met at the train station loaned them money, which they later paid back when they arrived in Shanghai.³⁶

³¹ Olga was born on July 1, 1877, in Meidling, Austria to Leopold Mährischel and Rosa (née Ekler) Mährischel. Olga died in May 1966 in Los Angeles, California. <https://www.geni.com/people/Olga-Wohlstein/6000000034271091513> (Accessed August 7, 2023).

³² Ellie clarified that this Aunt Grete was her mother’s [Leopoldine’s] sister in the August 15, 2023 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

³³ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 1, in Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

³⁴ Olga Wohlstein’s petition to the Emigration Division of the Jewish Community of Vienna: <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11000-301960/olga-wohlstein-in-austria-vienna-jewish-emigrant-applications#fullscreen> (Accessed August 31, 2023).

³⁵ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 1, in Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

³⁶ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 1, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection. In the August 15, 2023 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Ellie noted that she is still friends with the daughter of the Mr. Dankner.



Olga, Leopoldine, Ellie, and Josef left for Shanghai on the *Conte Biancamano* of the Lloyd Triestino line. She says, “We didn’t have much money, so we were in Third Class. There were a lot of people on that ship.”³⁷ In her 2001 written account, Ellie describes the journey as follows:

Omama[,] Mom[,] Peppi[,] and I were in a cabin 3rd class[.] [M]y Mom was [37] years old³⁸ and a very nice looking lady[.] [M]en always looked at her and there was a particular steward that really liked her and he would always bring us fruit[.] I do think he felt sorry for us[.] [O]ne of the German passenger[s] accused my Mom of being too close[.] I remember her crying as there was no truth in that matter[.] [I]t took us 28 days to get to Shanghai as the ship stopped in every port[.]³⁹



CONTE BIANCAMANO

Photograph of the Conte Biancamano from the 1950s. Photo Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Conte_Biancamano#/media/File:ConteBiancamano_reconstructed.jpg
(Accessed August 15, 2023).

Shanghai:

When they arrived in Shanghai, they were taken by a truck to the run-down Hongkew district.⁴⁰ They were fortunate though to be able to live immediately in the house that Ellie’s uncle had purchased on Tongshan Road.⁴¹

³⁷ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

³⁸ Kevin Ostoyich has corrected the age of Leopoldine Hacker here. Ellie originally wrote in her 2001 account that that her mother was 34 years old. In the September 2019 Interview, Part One, Ellie says that her mother was 36 during the trip. Given Leopoldine was born on August 12, 1901, and the family left Genoa for Shanghai on March 29, 1939, Leopoldine was 37 years old during the trip.

³⁹ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 2, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection. She tells the story of her mother being accused of flirting also in the September 21, 2023 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One. The details are the same in both accounts.

⁴⁰ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

⁴¹ In her petition Olga Wohlstein wrote “Szechuen Road 650” as Arnold Wohlstein’s address in Shanghai. Later documents have the family living on Tongshan Road. It is possible that Arnold initially lived at the Szechuen Road



As Ellie writes, this spared them having “to say in the homes where the [J]ewish committee put most of the people[.] [A]ll they had is bunk beds and no privacy.”⁴² This did not mean that the arrangements were ideal. Ellie says there were 15 of them living in the house.⁴³ Ellie describes the arrangements in the house:⁴⁴

In our house there were 2 rooms upstairs[,] one small room where my Grandma’s sister and her husband stayed[,] downstairs were another big room and what we called a kitchen[–]a big stone sink with [cold] running water and we cooked on a hibachi with any kind of coal or what we called brickets[,] some of them Omama had to fan for hours before they would burn[.] [T]he 4 of us had the one room upstairs and Uncle the small one downstairs[.] Uncle Friedel and Aunt Helen and their [daughter] and son lived [there][–]the older son lived somewhere else[.]⁴⁵ You can imagine the space was tight[,] one toilet[,] the [coolie] came in the morning to empty the toilet which they in turn used as fertilizer[,] disease was a continued problem[,] we had to boil all the water[,] to take a bath was unbelievable[,] we did have a bathtub in the kitchen with a curtain and had to buy hot water from the Chinese[.]⁴⁶

Description from the September 21, 2019 Interview:

We lived in a house that my uncle bought, because he did get...some money out. There were fifteen of us. No running toilet [...] We had one room upstairs where my grandmom, my mom, my brother, and I slept. My uncle [Arnold Wohlstein] slept right next to the room. My grandma’s sister and her husband had a room. And downstairs was a family, my grandmother’s brother, his wife, his two sons and a daughter lived in one room. One toilet, no running water. And the kitchen was—there was no kitchen, my grandmother cooking on a hibachi.

In the September 21, 2019 interview, Ellie described the “terrible” conditions in Shanghai at the time:

Everything was dirty [...] Hongkew was *filthy*. People dying on the street. And...the lane that we lived it, there was an empty field. [...] Hongkew was in a port, where the wharf [was], where all the ships would end up [...] from Norway, [etc.] And the guys were stranded there because

and then moved (perhaps before Olga, Leopoldine, Ellie, and Josef arrived in Shanghai). For the Szechuen Road address, see Olga Wohlstein’s petition to the Emigration Division of the Jewish Community of Vienna: <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-11000-301960/olga-wohlstein-in-austria-vienna-jewish-emigrant-applications#fullscreen> (Accessed August 31, 2023).

⁴² Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 2, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

⁴³ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One. [Note: Ellie consistently says there were fifteen people living in the house. She does not name all fifteen though. It appears that some members may have left the house at some point.]

⁴⁴ It appears that her Uncle Arnold had his own room. It is not clear if he lived upstairs or downstairs. Ellie’s descriptions are not consistent on this point.

⁴⁵ Helena Maehrischel was born in 1891 in Vienna. The older son, Leopold, was born June 18, 1911, and the daughter, Regina, and younger son, Karl, were twins born on November 14, 1920. Helena was a tie-maker. She immigrated to Australia in November 1948. (Kevin Ostoyich is not sure how many family members immigrated to Australia): https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person_view.php?PersonId=4536046 (Accessed August 14, 2023). Leopold was a tailor. His wife was Herta. They had a child (presumably born in Shanghai given her birthdate of April 17, 1946) named Jeanette. Leopold and his family immigrated to Australia in November 1948: https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/person_view.php?PersonId=4536047 (Accessed August 14, 2023). Note: Karl Maehrischel’s testimony is available at USC Shoah Foundation.

⁴⁶ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 2, in Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.



they couldn't leave. So, they started to drink. And so many of them just died. And they just let them die in the streets. And then when the Japanese came, it was nothing for somebody to shoot somebody. It was really a bad time there.⁴⁷

She described the abysmal conditions in Shanghai in further detail, "First of all, flies. Rats....Also where we were in Hongkew, there was a prison there. The Japanese imprisoned quite a few of the people they didn't like." She explained that they would often go to the grocery store for food, but that many times people stole. She says kids would steal bread out of her grandmother's bag when she came home from the grocery store, for example. Regarding food, she says they seldom had meat, and had very little in terms of vegetables. They ate a lot of rice. She says that a lot of people got beriberi in Shanghai because rice constituted so much of the diet. Beriberi arises from a deficiency of thiamine.⁴⁸

In her 2001 written account, Ellie described the family's financial situation as follows:

Uncle and his partner from Vienna fixed pots and pans as the coals would burn holes in them and for a while [eked] out a little money[.] [M]y Mom worked in a lady's shop[.] [S]he would take the streetcar every day into the international settlement where [every] kind of people lived from every part of the world[.] [S]he would come home exhausted[.] [S]ome of the ladies would be very demanding[.]

Leopoldine had been a dress designer in Vienna before she met Karl. In Shanghai she worked in a dress shop named Annabelle. Ellie says that it was a nice shop and that her mother did alterations in the shop. She says that her mother also made dresses for people.

In Shanghai Ellie briefly attended the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School (aka "The Kadoorie School"). She says there were many bullies in school. She talks, for example, of the divide between German refugees and Austrian refugees there. She says the girls bullied her out of jealousy because the boys liked her. The bullying came to a boiling point one day when Ellie wore an outfit to school that was somewhat short. Ellie had had enough. At twelve-years-old, she left school during the fifth grade and started an apprenticeship in a hair salon.⁴⁹

Lea Zuckermann ran a hair salon in the bottom of a house in the lane that Ellie lived on Tongshan Road. Ellie went to the salon and asked Zuckerman if she would take her on as an apprentice. Zuckermann agreed. Thus began a rather unpleasant apprenticeship. Ellie explains that Zuckermann "was quite mean. All I did for practically the first year [was] wash the towels and hang them up on the roof garden. And my hands would be...frozen...I had sores all over my hands. Lea...would then let me wash hair. Then she would let me comb out some of [the client's hair]."⁵⁰

While working for Lea Zuckermann, Ellie encountered bar girls. Bar girls provided companionship to guests in exchange for high-priced drinks at certain watering holes. She says of the bar girls, that it was often difficult for women of 18 or 19 to find work, and this was one way for women to make money.

⁴⁷ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

⁴⁸ Ellie's description of Shanghai in this paragraph, including the quotation, comes from September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Two.

⁴⁹ For age when beginning apprenticeship: Ellie Grasse, "Ellie Story" (2001), p. 2, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

⁵⁰ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Two.



She says of the bar girls, “They would go and work in a bar, where the Japanese soldiers would come in and drink, and, you know, they served food in [the] bar. And they would live on the tips. And, me being a hairdresser, they would come in and get their hair done every day.”⁵¹ Ellie remembers there being such bars in Hongkew in the vicinity of the Garden Bridge. Ellie says the bar girls who came to Zuckermann’s hair salon often talked about their work. Ellie says Zuckerman often was interested in hearing their stories. Ellie was also curious to learn about their activities, but Zuckerman would send Ellie up to the roof to hang up towels to shield her from the details.

At age 15, Ellie was fed up with the slow pace of the apprenticeship with Zuckermann, which was now in its third year. Zuckerman was still not letting Ellie do anything beyond hanging up towels or washing and combing hair. Ellie quit. Given that she was popular with the customers, she took some of them with her to her next place of employment. On December 23, 1944, she received her official permit to switch employment to the Friseur Hochwald salon, which was owned by Adolf Hochwald and was located on 317 Kungping Road. She says Hochwald had male and female customers. The situation at Friseur Hochwald was better than had been the case at Lea Zuckermann’s salon given that Ellie was allowed to cut hair. Nevertheless, Ellie remembers that Hochwald being a “tyrant,” for whom “nothing was ever good enough.” She notes, however, that “he never let me go as he knew I would take a lot of customers.”⁵²

上海無國籍避難民就・轉・退職許可證
THE PERMISSION FOR
New Employment/Change of Employment/Retirement
Shanghai Stateless Refugees Affairs Bureau

許可證番號 Permit No.	0429	日附 Dated	23 DEC, 1944
雇傭主氏名 Employer's Name:	HOCHWALD, ADOLF		
被傭者氏名 Employee's Name:	HACKER, ELLI		
營業場所 Business Address:	317 KUNGPING RD		
住所 Residence:	599/22 TONGSHAN RD		
通行證番號 Special Pass No.			

昭和 年 月 日
上海無國籍避難民處理事務所

**The permission certificate for when Ellie switched employment to Adolf Hochwald’s hair salon.
Dated December 23, 1944. (FLSFF).**

Ellie notes that the texture of Japanese and Chinese hair was very different than what she was used to. This led to a major mishap when she performed her first permanent on a Japanese lady. She says,

⁵¹ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Two.

⁵² Description of working for Adolf Hochwald: Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 3, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

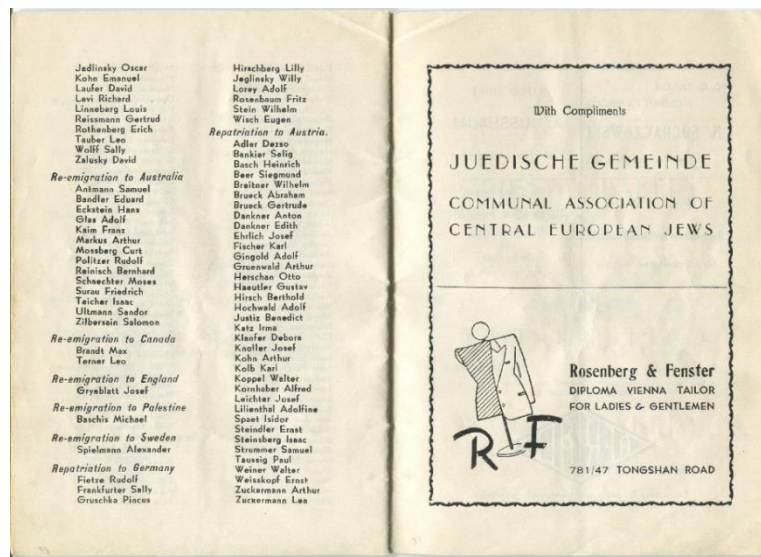


In those days, when you did [a] permanent, you had an electric thing that you plugged in. I *always* remember the first Japanese hair I did at the salon, I left it in too long, and her hair burned. And she had curls all over. And...I couldn't communicate—the little Japanese and Chinese I knew was so little. And, I made all the girls, I said, "Tell, show how *nice* she looks." And she went out of there *really* happy. [*She laughs.*] But I never forgot that! I burnt the heck out of her hair! [*She laughs.*]⁵³

Ellie says that she made such a good show of saying how good the woman looked that the woman did not notice "that half of her hair was on the floor."⁵⁴

Ellie says that the clientele became predominantly more and more Japanese over time during the occupation.

Ellie says that she always had "cheating" customers on the side. She would run to do these clients' hair during her lunch hour, because she could keep all the money. She finds it funny that she still remembers the name of one of the women she did this for, Rita Meyer. She says she would run to Rita Meyer's house every day to comb her hair. Ellie once suggested to "Frau Meyer" that she sleep with her head over the side of the bed so that her hair would not get messed up. Ellie laughs at how brazen she was to offer such advice to a woman as if she were an authority even though she was a teenager.

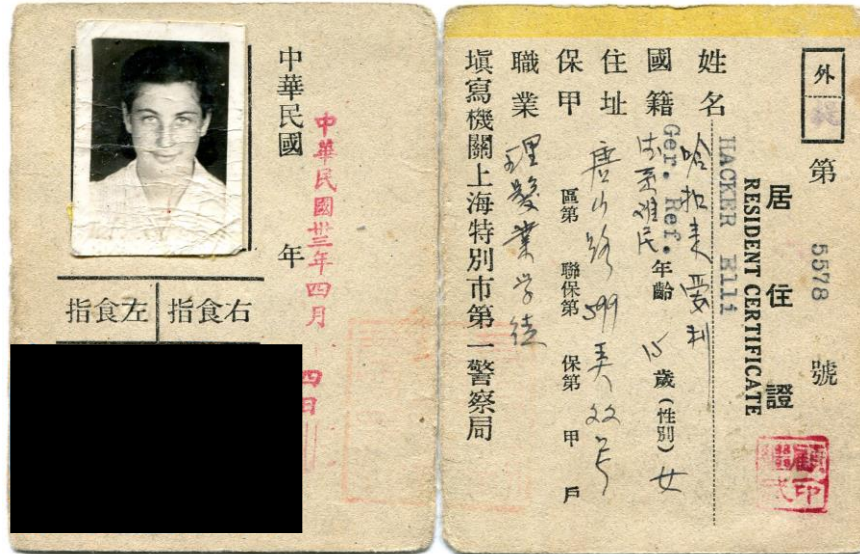


Ellie's respective employers Lea Zuckermann and Adolf Hochwald are listed as members of the Guild of Craftsmen Shanghai Members who repatriated to Austria (FLSFF).

⁵³ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Two.

⁵⁴ March 29, 2023 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.





Ellie’s resident certificate in Shanghai identifying her as a German refugee.

Note: Ellie’s fingerprints (which appear on the original certificate) have been blotted out for this text. (FLSFF).

Ellie says that it was never her aspiration to become a hairdresser. She says she did so in Shanghai simply out of necessity. She says that had the Nazis never come to power and annexed Austria, she may have gone to school in Switzerland at some point. But the Nazis came to power, annexed Austria, and Ellie wound up cutting the hair of Japanese clients and refugee bar girls in Shanghai.

Life in Hongkew worsened considerably as the war went on. Ellie remembers the bombings that occurred during the last stage of the war: “Life became very bad[.] July 17 [1945] when we were bombed by the Americans and from that time on we were bombed 12 noon and 12 midnight like [clockwork][.] [I]t was a bad time[.] but in spite [of it] life went on.”⁵⁵

She was coming back from doing hair, when the bombs of July 17, 1945, started to fall:

[T]he bombs were raining down[.] not only that but it was very overcast[.] you could not see the planes[.] you only saw people lying on the ground wounded dead[.] I was running home and a Chinese was running beside when he just dropped[.] [I]t was something[.] and here I was not a scratch on me[.] [A]s I entered the lane[.] one of my friends was waiting for me[.] [H]e kept asking questions[.] but I could not speak[.] years later I would have nightmares remembering he finally slapped me and it got me mad and finally got my voice back[.] [I]t was a bad day[.] my folks were really worried.⁵⁶

She remembers that soon thereafter they heard that a bomb had been dropped on Japan “that was horrible and could end the world.” She remembers that there were rumors “that an invasion had started and all kinds of military would be landing in Shanghai[.] [W]e were all scared what that meant[.] [I]n the meantime no one had heard how their relatives or parents had come through in Europe where

⁵⁵ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 3, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

⁵⁶ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 3, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.



the war had ended[.] [O]ne day the war with Japan was over[.] [W]e could get out and be free to walk wherever we wanted.”⁵⁷

After the war ended, Ellie and her girlfriend went out and left Hongkew walking over the Garden Bridge. They encountered two American soldiers. Ellie was 16 years old at the time. One soldier went over and put his arm around Ellie’s girlfriend. Ellie says she thought immediately about the other soldier, “Well, if *this* guy puts his arm around me, he’s history!” She says though that he was “very kind, and four weeks later, never living together, I married him in a Catholic church, because the Army wouldn’t marry us.”

The American soldier Ellie married was Bill Grasse. Bill later wrote his account of meeting Ellie in Shanghai:

Dead tired after moving from place to place during the war, I arrived in Shanghai with several servicemen. Our first night was to be spent in the Astor House on the border of the Honkew [sic] settlement. Although I was exhausted, my Army buddy Sgt. Fred Strohte insisted that I go with him and walk the big city of Shanghai.

Sgt. Strohte and I left the Astor House to walk over the famous Garden Bridge, which spans the Soochow Creek along the front of the city’s harbor. At the same time, the young girl who had lived in Shanghai for nearly seven years obtained a rare pass and permission from her mother to leave Honkew [sic] for a short walk into the city.

As I walked the city, my eyes met the eyes of the young girl who had left Vienna those many years ago. Although we had just met, it was as if we had known each other all of our lives. I found out her name (Ellie) and asked if we could walk her and her girlfriend home.

To make a long story a little bit shorter, Ellie and I were married in Shanghai on Nov. 13, 1945.⁵⁸



Left: Bill Grasse (direct middle) standing with Astor House in background. The writing is Bill Grasse’s. Photo from Bill & Elly Grasse Scrapbook in FLSFF Collection. Photo provided by Rebecca Ostoyich.

⁵⁷ Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001), p. 3, in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.

⁵⁸ Bill Grasse RENTOPICS story “A RenTopics Story for the Ages,” copy in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection.



Bill made the long story a little too short. The fact is that Bill and Ellie may not have ever seen each other again after their first encounter had it not been for a dance.

When they had met, Ellie wrote down her name and address for Bill Grasse on a card. Nevertheless, he did not contact her. Later Ellie heard about a dance that was going to take place with the soldiers at the Astor House. She decided to attend the dance. A soldier there wanted to dance with her. Bill's friend, Fred Strohte, saw Ellie at the dance and went upstairs to get Bill and tell him that Ellie was there. Bill came down. He made sure that he, not the other soldier, walked Ellie home. Ellie recalls that she and Bill saw each other maybe ten times after that. Bill then came to ask Ellie's mother for Ellie's hand in marriage.

The Catholic U.S. Army chaplain would not marry them, so they were married in a Catholic church in Shanghai. Ellie says that her mother and her Uncle Arnold (who was an Orthodox Jew) attended the wedding and two of Bill's friends attended as witnesses. Ellie says, "That night I had to be back in the lane by 11 o'clock, because it closed."⁵⁹



Wedding Day – November 13, 1945. (Left to Right: Bill Grasse, Ellie (née Hacker) Grasse, Leopoldine (née Wohlstein) Hacker, Adolf Wohlstein (Leopoldine's brother).

From Bill & Ellie Grasse Scrapbook in the FLSFF Collection. Photo provided by Rebecca Ostoyich.

⁵⁹ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Parts Two & Three.





Various Photographs and Items from 1945 documenting the Relationship between Ellie Hacker and Bill Grasse. From Bill & Ellie Grasse Scrapbook in the FLSFF Collection. Photo provided by Rebecca Ostoyich. Note: The writing in the scrapbook is Bill Grasse's.

The married couple could not stay together long in Shanghai. Bill had to ship out alone. He explained, "Unable to find a way to bring Ellie home with me, I ended up taking an Army flight back to the U.S. without her. We were reunited nearly three⁶⁰ months later, when Ellie came stateside as a war bride on the USS Gen. Hugh [L.] Scott."⁶¹

Ellie says that after Bill left for the United States, she was very determined to follow him there:

I had a bike. Every day I would go...where the Americans were stationed, where they shipped people out. Every day I would bike up there. And this one guy—he was...a big shot—[would say,] 'Are you here again?' I would sit there and ask him, 'Is there any transportation?' That went on really for four months. I would take my bike every noon...and pedal over there and go. One day he said, 'You know what? I'm so tired of you, I'm gonna really work hard to see you get out.'⁶²

Soon after that Ellie was put on the USS *General Hugh L. Scott* with about twenty other war brides and set off for the United States. Among the war brides was the Russian wife of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Mouza Coutelais-du-Roche. Ellie says that she and Mouza remained friends until Mouza died.

⁶⁰ Bill Grasse writes three months. Ellie consistently states four months in the interviews.

⁶¹ Bill Grasse RENTOPICS story "A RenTopics Story for the Ages," copy in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection. Note: Bill incorrectly wrote Hugh C. Scott.

⁶² September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Two.





The USS *General Hugh L. Scott* circa 1945. Photo Source:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_General_H._L._Scott#/media/File:USS_General_H._L._Scott_\(AP-136\)_in_port,_circa_in_1945.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_General_H._L._Scott#/media/File:USS_General_H._L._Scott_(AP-136)_in_port,_circa_in_1945.jpg) (Accessed August 17, 2023)

The United States of America:

Ellie arrived in the United States in 1946. The ship arrived in Seattle, and Ellie was put up in a hotel by the American Red Cross. She says, “I didn’t leave the hotel room for three days, because I was scared.”⁶³ Bill drove his father’s car from Hollywood to Seattle to pick her up. Then they drove down the Pacific coast for about a week until they reached their home in Hollywood.

Two years later, in 1948, Ellie gave birth to a daughter. They baptized their daughter in a Catholic church, and Ellie decided to convert to Catholicism. Ellie says that she raised her daughter and her three subsequent sons Catholic. In 1950, Bill and Ellie moved from Hollywood to Burbank, California. She says she still owns the house in Burbank.

Ellie tried to get her mother to the United States, but this was no easy task. Given that Leopoldine had been born in Budapest, she fell under the unfavorable Hungarian quota for admittance to the United States. A friend of Leopoldine’s who lived in the same lane in Shanghai by the name of Max Blumenthal came up with an idea. Given that Max had been born in Lübeck, he fell under the much more favorable German quota. Max offered to marry Leopoldine; she would then fall under his quota, thus enabling her to go to the United States. There was a major problem with this plan though: Leopoldine was still married to Karl Hacker, of whose whereabouts nothing was known. Ellie says that her mother, in fact, did not socialize that much with people in Shanghai, given she thought that Karl was still alive.

⁶³ September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Three.



To remarry, Leopoldine had to make inquiries regarding whether Karl was still alive. Eventually, she received word that Karl died on the side of a road of typhoid while fleeing the Nazis. With this information, Leopoldine could marry Max.

Max Blumenthal had come from an affluent family in northern Germany. According to Ellie, Max's family owned many movie theaters. The Arolsen Archives has Max Blumenthal's official Buchenwald records. According to those records, Max Blumenthal was arrested by the Lübeck Gestapo on November 30, 1936. He was then most likely sent to Sachsenhausen [Ellie mentions this in her interview] Sachsenhausen appears in the records but is crossed out. Ostoyich believes that what is intended with the cross out is that Max was sent from Sachsenhausen to Dachau on February 2, 1937. He was then admitted into Buchenwald from Dachau on September 23, 1938. Blumenthal's inmate number was 6167. He was released from Buchenwald on February 4, 1939.⁶⁴

According to Ellie, Max's release was due to a deal his father, Martin Blumenthal, struck with a friend who was employed in the concentration camp system.⁶⁵ Ellie says that Max's mother, Else Blumenthal, was so devastated that her son was in a concentration camp that she lost the will to live and died of grief in bed.⁶⁶ Ellie explains further that Martin then asked his friend if he could take Max's place so Max could be released. According to Ellie, the friend made this happen. This may have happened, but Ostoyich has not found evidence of Martin Blumenthal being incarcerated in Buchenwald (the camp from which Max was released).⁶⁷ There is record, however, that Martin was deported to the Łódź ghetto (Litzmannstadt) on October 25, 1941, and was killed there on April 25, 1942.⁶⁸

Max had a sister named Franziska Rosa (née Blumenthal) Emmering.⁶⁹ The *Stolpersteine* website devoted to Max's sister, provides more information about the events leading up to Max's arrest:

Her brother Max Julius Blumenthal sought refuge in Amsterdam at his sister and brother-in-law's after he was badly beaten up in July of 1935 by members of a branch group of the Nazis.

⁶⁴ <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/5559999> (Accessed August 9, 2023).

⁶⁵ Note: When telling the story in the September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Two, Ellie refers to them living in Hamburg. Martin Blumenthal's address is listed as Königstrasse 116 in Lübeck on Max Blumenthal's Buchenwald index card: <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/5559999> (Accessed August 17, 2023). The *Stolpersteine* information have the Blumenthals living at Beckergrube 74 Lübeck. The *Stolpersteine* website for Franziska Emmering provides more specific information on the various addresses in Lübeck. This website is quoted in the main text of the present article for this information.

⁶⁶ According to geni.com, Else Blumenthal died on April 2, 1938. <https://www.geni.com/people/Else-Blumenthal/6000000102111073845> (Accessed August 9, 2023).

⁶⁷ Ellie refers to Martin being killed in Dachau. Ellie tends to use "Dachau" when referring to any concentration camp though.

⁶⁸ <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=11477427&ind=1> (Accessed August 9, 2023).

⁶⁹ The *Stolpersteine* website devoted to Franziska Emmering provides the following information: "Franziska Rosa Blumenthal was born in Hamburg on 30 April 1907. Her parents were the trader Martin Blumenthal, who was originally from Lübeck, and Elsa, nee Wolff, from Stargard, then Germany now Szczecinski, Poland. She was the eldest child in the family. Shortly after the birth of Fränzi the Blumenthal family moved to Lübeck, where they had an apartment as well as their retail business at Beckergrube 74. Fränzi Blumenthal thus along with her younger brother, Max Julius (born in 1908) grew up, went to school and attended religious classes at the Synagogue in Lübeck." <https://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de/l/en/main/location-addresses/engelswisch-29.html> (Accessed August 17, 2023).



But being a German citizen he experienced insurmountable difficulties in Holland. Without a work visa he could not get a job so when his visitor's visa expired in September of 1936 he had to return to Lübeck. He found employment with the Jacobi Company working in the warehouse. He was arrested in November of 1936. After spending three weeks in a local jail he was transferred to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in Oranienburg, located north of Berlin, later to Dachau Concentration Camp and then Buchenwald Concentration Camp, outside of Weimar.⁷⁰

The *Stolpersteine* website for Franziska Emmering also provides more concrete information regarding Martin's fate:

Martin Blumenthal had to leave his apartment at Beckergrube 74 after the death of his wife and lived in sublet rooms, first at Königstraße 116 in one of Rosa Taschimowitz's rooms, then on Hartengrube at the Lissauers and finally at Sophienstraße 1 with the Mansbachers before he was forced to leave Lübeck "to no known address" according to official records. On the basis of entries in the memorial book of the Bundesarchiv (National Archives) it is known that he was deported on 25 October 1941 from Hamburg to Lodz, Poland and died in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto (the German name for the Lodz Ghetto) on 25 April 1942. In the residents lists of the Lodz Ghetto one finds he was registered as having lived at Rubens Straße 2, Flat 13.⁷¹

Regarding Max Julius Blumenthal's release, the *Stolpersteine* website for Franziska Emmering states, "Max Julius Blumenthal could thank several Jewish organisations for their intensive efforts to procure his release from the Buchenwald Concentration Camp in the beginning of 1939. Following his release he fled to Shanghai."⁷²

The Initiative Stolpersteine für Lübeck site has the following information for Martin Blumenthal and Max Julius Blumenthal:

Martin Blumenthal and his son Max Julius Blumenthal lived at Beckergrube 74.

Martin Blumenthal b.1878 was deported in 1941 from Hamburg to Lodz/Poland where he was killed 25 April 1942. Max Julius Blumenthal b.1908 was taken to Camp Sachsenhausen and later via Dachau near Munich to Camp Buchenwald. He could escape to Shanghai in 1939 and survived seriously ill.⁷³

Stolpersteine ("stumbling stones") dedicated to the memory of Martin and Max Blumenthal are to be found in Lübeck.

⁷⁰ <https://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de/l/en/main/location-addresses/engelswisch-29.html> (Accessed August 17, 2023).

⁷¹ <https://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de/l/en/main/location-addresses/engelswisch-29.html> (Accessed August 17, 2023).

⁷² <https://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de/l/en/main/location-addresses/engelswisch-29.html> (Accessed August 17, 2023).

⁷³ <https://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de/l/en/main/location-addresses/beckergube-74.html> (Accessed August 9, 2023).





Stolperstein for Martin Blumenthal in Lübeck.

Photo: <https://mapcarta.com/de/N2444385771> (Accessed August 9, 2023).



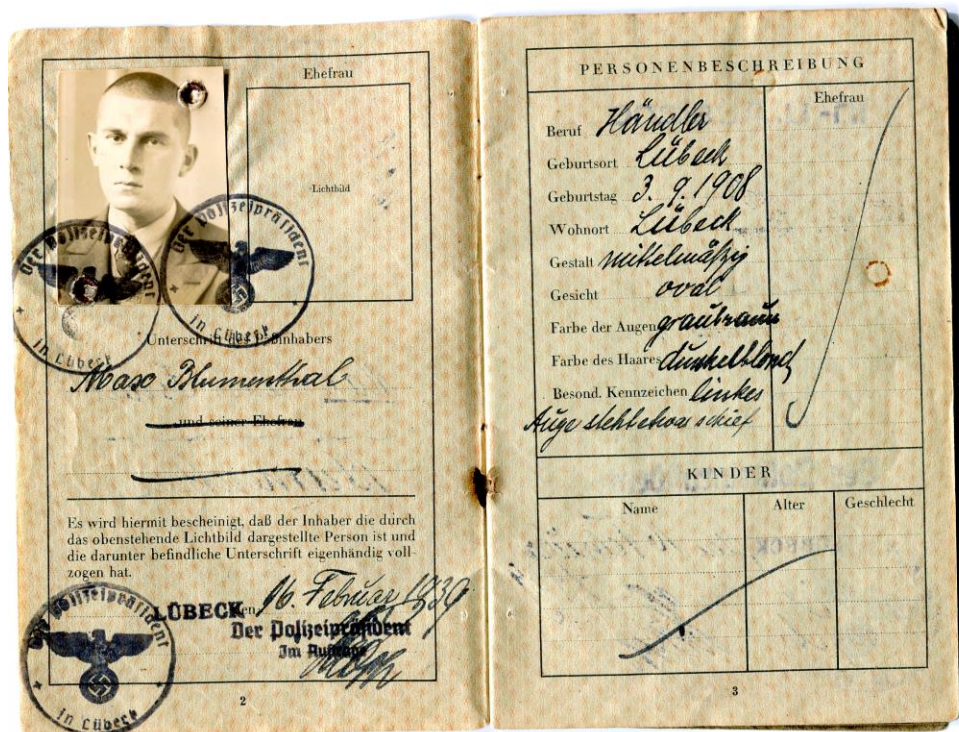
Stolperstein for Max Blumenthal in Lübeck.

Photo: <https://mapcarta.com/de/N2444385778> (Accessed August 9, 2023).



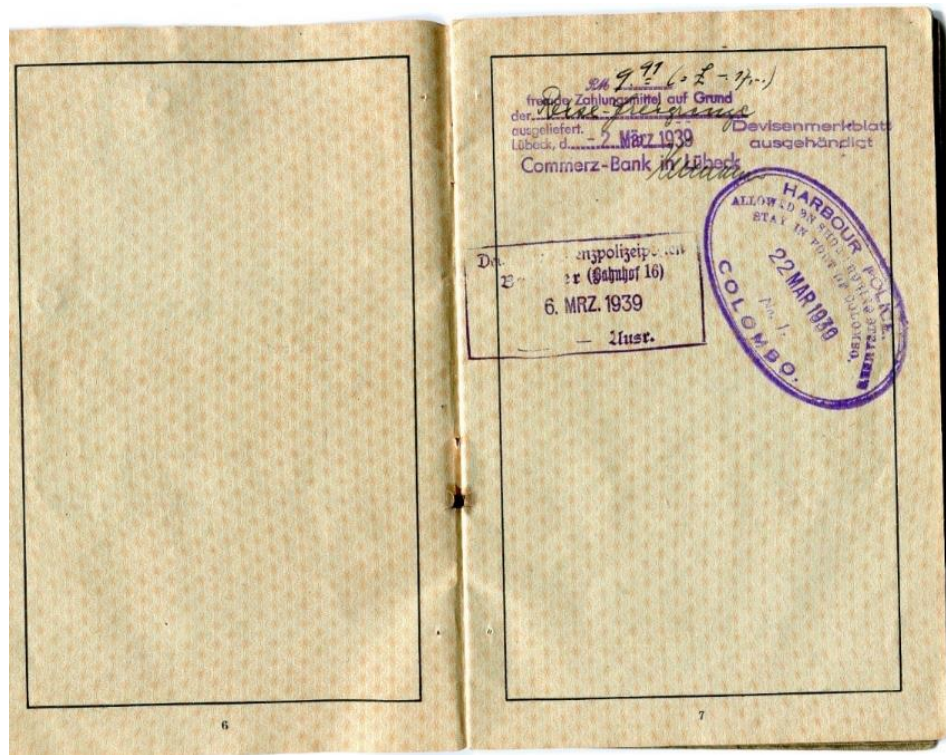


First page of Max Blumenthal's "J" Passport. Notice the addition of the name "Israel". (FLSFF).



Second and Third Pages of Max Blumenthal's "J" Passport. Issued February 16, 1939. (Note: His closely-shorn-hair appearance is most likely due to his recent release from Buchenwald concentration camp.) (FLSFF).





Pages 6 and 7 of Max Blumenthal’s “J” Passport showing that he left Germany in March 1939 and arrived in Colombo, Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) on March 22, 1939. (FLSFF).

Max’s sister Franziska Emmering was sent along with her husband, Aron, and daughter, Ingrid, to Camp Westerbork in Holland. On June 8, 1943, the Emmerings were sent to Sobibor extermination camp. Aron was killed there on June 9, 1943, and Franziska and Ingrid were killed there on June 11, 1943.⁷⁴

According to Ellie, what had been proposed by Max as a ploy to get Leopoldine to the United States from Shanghai, turned out to be a loving marriage of forty-two years.⁷⁵

Ellie notes that the members of her family who eventually made it to the United States from Shanghai were her grandmother (Olga), her mother (Leopoldine),⁷⁶ her uncle (Arnold), her aunt (Arnold’s wife),⁷⁷ and her brother (Josef).

⁷⁴ *Stolpersteine* website devoted to the Emmerich family, Title: “The Emmering Family lived at Engelswisch 2” Author: Heidemarie Kugler-Weiemann, 2013, Translators: Glenn Sellick and Martin Harnisch, 2013: <https://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de/l/en/main/location-addresses/engelswisch-29.html> (Accessed August 17, 2023).

⁷⁵ Leopoldine passed away in 1982. Ellie remembers her mother as being a very caring person, who “never said a bad word about anybody.” September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Three.

⁷⁶ Ellie did not mention Max Blumenthal, but he also went to the United States.

⁷⁷ Arnold had been married previously in Vienna but got divorced. He married his second wife in Shanghai. He and his second wife lived in Los Angeles. Ellie says she remained close to her uncle.



Not everyone who made it to Shanghai survived. Olga Wohlstein had a sister named Elsa. Ellie explains that Elsa and her husband had not made it to Shanghai. Their two sons went to Shanghai. Both Elsa and her husband were killed in the Holocaust and their oldest son, Otto, committed suicide in Shanghai because he had not been able to get his parents to Shanghai. Furthermore, two of Olga's brothers, Alfred and Erwin, died in Shanghai due to health reasons. Alfred died on November 27, 1944, and Erwin died on December 21, 1944.⁷⁸ Erwin had been included in the initial plan to go with the Hacker family to the United States, but he was incarcerated in Dachau concentration camp in early June 1938. He was transferred to Buchenwald concentration camp on September 24, 1938, and was ultimately released from Buchenwald on February 21, 1939.⁷⁹

The rest of the extended family who had made it to Shanghai immigrated to Australia.

Meanwhile, in California, Ellie waited to become an American citizen. She says in preparation for her citizenship examination, Bill tried to inform her about American politics and the Bill of Rights. But the information did not seem to sink in. When she went to the examination, the official questioning her said to her, "Tell me about the Bill of Rights." Ellie responded, "Who's he?" The official responded, "I can't grant you citizenship if you don't know that." Ellie responded, "I have three children. I'm a good wife. I'm a good person. And I don't see why you can't give me the citizenship." The official looked at her, laughed, and granted his approval. Ellie Grasse became a citizen of the United States of America in 1951.

Ellie explains that her husband "was a pioneer in the equipment rental business." Bill Grasse and his brother and sister ran rental equipment stores. The business had been started by Bill and Bob's father. They eventually bought the original business from their father. Their father then built his own competing business. Bill and Bob then bought out their father a second time. Ellie says they eventually had five locations.

When Bill and Ellie's four children were grown, Ellie went to work for a department store. She quickly became promoted to head of her department. But, she said, Bill asked her to stop working, in part

⁷⁸ For Alfred, see <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=6475261&ind=1> (Accessed August 10, 2023). The Arolsen Archives contains a document listing Alfred's cause of death as pneumonia. <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/search/person/78827391?s=erwin%20Maehrischel&t=20050&p=0> (Accessed August 10, 2023). For Erwin, see <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=de&itemId=6475290&ind=1> (Accessed August 10, 2023). The Arolsen Archives contains a document listing Erwin's cause of death as omphycoma pulmon. <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/search/person/78827391?s=erwin%20Maehrischel&t=20050&p=0> (Accessed August 10, 2023).

⁷⁹ Erwin had been incarcerated in Dachau from June 3, 1938, with prisoner number 15099. <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/130429235> (Accessed August 10, 2023). His camp number in Buchenwald was 9444. <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/de/document/6543472> (Accessed August 10, 2023). For the inclusion of Erwin in Karl Hacker's unsuccessful attempt to get the family to the United States in May 1938, see the Questionnaire Karl Hacker submitted to the Fürsorge-Zentrale der Isr. Kultusgemeinde Wien Auswanderungsabteilung: [https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#\\$FL196931973](https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_CAHJP997011250899505171/NLI#$FL196931973) (Accessed August 30, 2023).



because she kept coming home with colds. For perhaps twenty years, Ellie served as treasurer for their Catholic church on a strictly volunteer basis.

Bill and Ellie returned to Shanghai in 1984. They retraced many of their steps, taking photos of Ellie's former lane and house, the Astor House where Bill had lived, as well as places they had been together in 1945 (such as the Garden Bridge).



Various Photographs from the trip Bill and Ellie took in 1984, including the recreation of a photo that had been taken of them in November 1945. From Bill & Ellie Grasse Scrapbook in FLSFF Collection.

Photo provided by Rebecca Ostoyich.

Note: The writing in the scrapbook is Bill Grasse's.

Bill and Ellie eventually retired to Palm Desert, California. In a strange twist of fate, when they moved into their new house, Ellie found out that "on a corner, across the street, was a steward that was on the ship that we came across. And he remembered my mom."⁸⁰

⁸⁰September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part Three.



Ellie says that every year on their wedding anniversary (November 13th), Bill would send a card to the army chaplain priest who had refused to marry them in Shanghai. Bill wanted to make sure that Father—later, Monsignor—Brown knew just how wonderful their marriage was.

Bill and Ellie were married for over 62 years. On July 18, 2008, Bill Grasse passed away.⁸¹ Ellie says of the man, whom she first encountered near the Garden Bridge in Shanghai all those years before: “Wonderful husband, wonderful father, wonderful guy.”⁸²

Ellie has spoken to various schools and institutions about her family’s history. For example, she has spoken at a school in Fisher, Indiana and the Illinois Holocaust Museum. She says she even went on a trip to Shanghai with Soka University of America. On November 10, 2021, Ellie was interviewed for a YouTube event sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Palm Springs and Desert Area: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lAD_jMHeks (Accessed September 2, 2023). She says that when she tells her story to young people, she conveys the message that “whether you’re black, green, or yellow, it doesn’t matter; you’re still human.”⁸³

A few years ago, Ellie conveyed a special message to her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. During the September 2019 interview, she read aloud the letter she had sent them:

To All My Family,

To tell you how proud and fortunate I am to have each and everyone.

Eighty years ago, a nine-year-old girl, whose family fled from her home, homeland Austria, to the only country open to them, China, Shanghai. It was going to the end of the world. Arriving there, we lived in a house, no bath or toilet, in a ghetto confined for seven years. When World War Two ended, as a sixteen-year-old, I and a girlfriend went for a walk outside to the Garden Bridge and spotted two soldiers. Sixteen was much older looking, I was much older looking. They asked us if they could walk with us. Not speaking much English, we nodded. And the rest of the story you all know. Coming to America was heaven. Your Father, Grandfather, Papa, was a great man, the love of my life. So, I want to thank each and every one of one of you, how thankful I am, after eighty years, to have a wonderful family. I treasure each and every one of you with all my love.

Your Mom, Grandma, Oma.⁸⁴

As of that reading, Ellie noted she has 12 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. She says that, although her children were raised Catholic, her family honors her Jewish heritage.

⁸¹ <https://www.rermag.com/mag/article/20941143/industry-pioneer-william-bill-grasse-dies> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸² September 21, 2019 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich, Part One.

⁸³ August 15, 2023 Interview with Kevin Ostoyich.

⁸⁴ Transcription of Ellie reading the letter.



Not Monte Carlo:

Ellie did not find out until decades after the war that the information her mother had received regarding the fate of Ellie's father was incorrect. It was not until one of Ellie's great-granddaughters did a research project that she found out that Karl Hacker did not die on the side of a road fleeing the Nazis, but was in fact murdered in Auschwitz. Research by Kevin Ostoyich has wielded more details and documentation regarding what happened.

The brothers Otto and Karl Hacker had not been able to take their loved ones to the United States as they had attempted to do in May 1938. Instead, they fled from Vienna to Belgium. In Belgium they were captured and sent to the Kaserne Dossin transit camp. On August 13, 1942, Otto was deported on the 3rd Transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau. On September 26, 1942, Karl Hacker was deported on the 11th Transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau. According to Yad Vashem records, both Otto and Karl were murdered.⁸⁵

ID, No.	III. TRANSPORT	66.
754. Ansbacher Guthan AB 0618	22.4.42 Wurzburg	X Staatenl. H Hfrowngestellte ✓
755. Lehmann Korn AB 0611	2.4.42 Burgaslach	X Staatenl. F Hausfrau ✓
756. Lewin Gullis AB 0678	1900 Iglow	X Staatenl. H Walter/Austreicher ✓
757. Lewin-Jorensen Kyma La. AB 0678	1904 Jerusalem	Staatenl. F Hausfrau ✓
758. Lewin Sauris AB 0671	5.6.42 Hinterbock (Schneel)	X Staatenl. G Schneider ✓
759. Hacker Otto AB 0101	11.8.42 Wien	Staatenl. H Koch ✓
760. Lehmann Gym AB 0641	29.8.42 Graz	Staatenl. F Hausfrau ✓
761. Wolff Horst AB 0600	5.5.42 Berlin	X Staatenl. H Fischler ✓
762. Gaffhammer Trude AB, K.V.	9.9.18 Wien	X Staatenl. F Kontoristin ✓
763. Szydelko Sonsk Szymiel AB 0488	13.1.42 Warschau	X Staatenl. H Schneider ✓
764. Szydelko Irma AB 0484	22.1.42 Warschau	X Staatenl. F Schneiderin ✓
X 765. Szydelko Finkelstein Lea AB 0485	1901 Warschau	X Staatenl. F Schneiderin ✓



Above Left: Entry for Karl Hacker's brother Otto Hacker on the III. Transport from Kaserne Dossin (transit camp in Belgium) to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The transport left on August 13, 1942.

[https://beeldbank.kazernedossin.eu/portal/media/\(preview:preview\)](https://beeldbank.kazernedossin.eu/portal/media/(preview:preview)) (Accessed July 28, 2023.)

Above Right: Otto Hacker (from the Kaserne Dossin website)

<https://mheuropehot.blob.core.windows.net/mediahaven-saas-browse-main/KAZERNEDOSSIN/7a76fac2de304c03b4bbaf468ee0bdd3ddd4c5f94f3145728e9ca97bb866e87c/browse.jpg>
(Accessed July 28, 2023)

⁸⁵ For Otto Hacker:

https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=de&s_id=&s_lastName=hacker&s_firstName=otto&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true (Accessed September 19, 2023), for Karl Hacker:

https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=de&s_id=&s_lastName=hacker&s_firstName=karl&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true (Accessed September 19, 2023).



Number	Name	Date	Origin	Destination	Notes
2001	Kalter Karl	15. 9.42	X stotom.	F Goshifafra	✓
2002	Kalter Karl	7.7.41	X stotom.	F Goshifafra	✓
2003	Wassner-Pain Ellie	26. 6.42	X stotom.	F Wastrea	✓
2004	Fuberal Charles	3. 6.36	X stotom.	G Ona	✓
2005	Fuberal Henri	9. 6.36	X stotom.	G Ona	✓
2006	Alexandre Ferdinand	14. 6.42	X stotom.	H Internarbiter	✓
2007	Alexandre Ferdinand	10. 7.42	X stotom.	F Wastrea	✓
2008	Alexandre Ferdinand	21. 8.42	X stotom.	FL Schlerin	✓
2009	Alexandre Ferdinand	7.10.42	X stotom.	FL Ona	✓
2010	Kalter Karl	15. 1.42	X stotom.	H Koch.	✓

Top Left: Entry for Karl Hacker on the XI. Transport from Kaserne Dossin (transit camp in Belgium) to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The transport left on September 26, 1942. (A handwritten note on the document incorrectly states that Karl was married to Sophie Freitag. Perhaps Freitag was a member of the eighteen individuals Ellie says went with Karl to Belgium.)

[\(https://beeldbank.kazernedossin.eu/portal/media/\(preview:preview\)\)](https://beeldbank.kazernedossin.eu/portal/media/(preview:preview)) (Accessed July 28, 2023.)



Bottom Left: Karl Hacker (from the Kaserne Dossin website)

<https://mheuropehot.blob.core.windows.net/mediahaven-saas-browser-main/KAZERNEDOSSIN/027f5ccba154fc186db1d727725ec1d44d68e6e216b47ee89d383ee031be950/browse.jpg> (Accessed September 19, 2023.)⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ellie confirmed that this photograph is of her father in an Email to Kevin Ostoyich dated September 19, 2023.



Karl Hacker and his family had not left Bad Vöslau for Monte Carlo.

Ellie says that her mother had the opportunity to reclaim the Hacker's property in Bad Vöslau at some point in the decades after the war but refused to have anything to do with the town. Ellie has gone back to town on numerous occasions over the years.

When Ellie visited Bad Vöslau in the late 2010s, Café Thermalbad was closed. YouTube videos, articles, and press release indicated that café was purchased by the municipality and was to undergo extensive renovations.⁸⁷ A press release about the plan for the purchase the Café Thermalbad spoke of Bad Vöslau being steeped in history. No mention was made of the Hackers.⁸⁸

According to scholar Ernst Furlinger, not much has been done to commemorate or preserve the Jewish elements of Bad Vöslau's history. Furlinger claimed in his 2013 book, *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich: Nationalpolitik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter*, that the traces of the Jews in Bad Vöslau had still been completely supplanted. He noted the former synagogue had been turned into a private residence. There were no mentions of the Jews in the editions of the *Heimatbuch* that were published in 1957 and 1986. Furthermore, there were no historical sites devoted to the former Jewish citizens of the town. According to Furlinger, this was all in line with the lack of memorials in Lower Austria to any of the 15 Jewish communities that were destroyed there.⁸⁹

In 2018—at the time that Café Thermalbad was closed and awaiting renovation—a banner with the portrait of the man who served as mayor of Bad Vöslau from 1940 to 1942 was hung outside one of the town's hotels. The banner commemorated of the 110th anniversary of the former mayor's birth, and a quotation printed above the portrait proclaimed that the mayor had been an exemplar of service to “our hometown.” One of the owners of the hotel was the granddaughter of that mayor.⁹⁰ At least one journalist took exception to the fact that a portrait of a Nazi was hanging at such an establishment.⁹¹ The Hacker family's history reveals that such an occurrence is not without precedent in the picturesque spa town.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Cafe Thermalbad (video 2018): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6x_8W5B8YAE (Accessed August 7, 2023). For an update from 2020 with pictures of the renovated building, see https://www.meinbezirk.at/baden/c-lokales/voeslauer-reicht-umbau-des-caf-thermalbad-ein_a3870723 (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁸ <https://www.voeslauer.com/assets/content/pdf/PI-Cafe-Thermalbad.pdf> (Accessed August 8, 2023).

⁸⁹ Ernst Furlinger, *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich: Nationalpolitik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter* (Göttingen: V&R unipress and Vienna University Press, 2013), 292.

⁹⁰ It appears that the family who owned the hotel in 2018 sold it in June 2023.

<https://www.pressreader.com/austria/kurier-3402/20180513/281784219735492> (Accessed August 8, 2023).

⁹¹ See Bernhard Odehnal's critical article, “Der Nazi-Bürgermeister von Bad Vöslau” (Published May 11, 2018). <https://blog.tagesanzeiger.ch/welttheater/index.php/39626/der-nazi-buergermeister-von-bad-voeslau/> (Accessed August 8, 2023). Additionally, see [Plakat zum „Gedenken“ an NS-Stadtchef sorgt für Aufregung | kurier.at](#) (Accessed August 8, 2023).





The original caption in the article: “Reine Provokation: Ein Besuch der Kurstadt Vöslau offenbart einen weiteren «Einzelfall» der Rechtspopulisten. (Foto: Bernhard Odehnal)”⁹²

When the headwaiter had hung a portrait of the Nazi Führer in Café Thermalbad eighty years before, Karl Hacker was having none of it. At the time, the people of Bad Vöslau chose not to stand by him. Instead, the Hackers had to flee the town for their safety.



Ellie in front of a sign for the café “Restaurant Thermalbad” during the 2010 visit to Bad Vöslau.
Photo courtesy of Ron Grasse.

When the proprietor of the café told Ellie, her son, and daughter-in-law in July 2010 that he and others had always thought the Hacker family had gone to Monte Carlo, Ellie saw the statement for what it was. She knew then and remains convinced to this day that the proprietor knew very well that the Hackers had *not* gone to Monte Carlo. Monte Carlo is the fiction the people of Bad Vöslau used to paper over the portrait Pepi had hung up on the wall all those years ago.

⁹² <https://blog.tagesanzeiger.ch/welttheater/index.php/39626/der-nazi-buergermeister-von-bad-voeslau/>
(Accessed August 8, 2023).



Items Pertaining to Ellie Grasse in the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Collection:

Accounts/Memoirs:

Ellie Grasse, “Ellie Story” (2001) [Three-page memoir]

Bill Grasse RENTOPICS story “A RenTopics Story for the Ages,” [One-page account]

Documents:

Army of the United States Separation Qualification Record for William P. Grasse

Max Blumenthal “J” Passport (Reisepass)

Permission Certificate for Change of Employment Issued from the Shanghai Stateless Refugees Affairs Bureau to Elli [sic] Hacker. Dated: December 23, 1944.

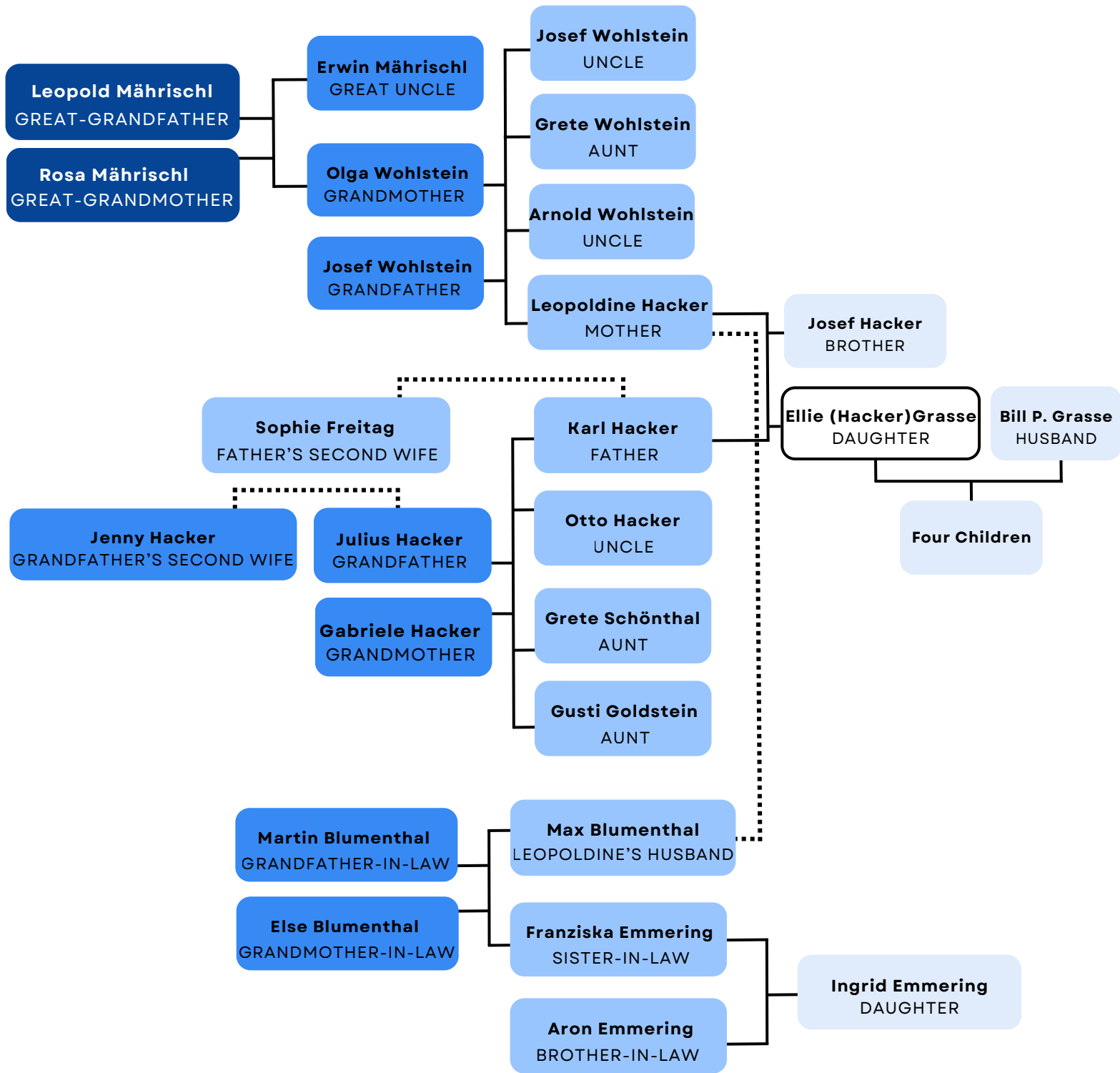
Resident Certificate Elli [sic] Hacker

Photographs:

Photo Album of Bill and Ellie Grasse



Ellie Grasse's Family Tree: Not Monte Carlo



..... Indicates second marriage without having children together

 Indicates individual at focal point of family tree



About the Author



Kevin Ostoyich is a professor of history at Valparaiso University. Kevin and his students at Valparaiso began partnering with the Florence and Laurence Spungen Foundation in 2013. The Foundation provided artifacts (mostly documents & postal history) to the students from Holocaust survivors who were in the Shanghai ghetto, “Shanghailanders,” for archival studies and the curation of temporary exhibitions at the university. In 2021, he collaborated with the Foundation to author the preface and two additional chapters in the Foundation’s book, *Forging Secrets: Faces and Facts Inside the Nazi Operation Bernhard Scheme*, published in 2022. In July 2023, he joined the Foundation staff as a researcher, writer, and interviewer, focusing on artifacts from the Spungen Foundation collection. He has interviewed and written stories about Shanghailanders on the Foundation’s behalf.

At Valparaiso, he served as chair of the Department of History from 2015 to 2019, was the recipient of the Dixon W. and Herta E. Benz Fund for Faculty Support (an endowed position) from 2020 – 2022, and was bestowed the Excellence in Teaching Award for 2017-2018. He holds his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and his A.M. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He is currently an associate fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg (global dis:connect) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

Additionally, he is a board member of CANDLES Holocaust Museum, the Sino-Judaic Institute, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, and a non-resident fellow of the American-German Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Kevin has served as a fellow and guest professor at multiple institutions and universities; has written many articles and book chapters; has co-edited *The History of the Shanghai Jews: New Pathways of Research* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) and authored *The German Society of Pennsylvania: A Guide to Its Book and Manuscript Collections* (German Historical Institute, 2006); interviews Holocaust survivors; gives lectures about the Holocaust worldwide; and creates historical theatrical plays about Shanghai Jewish refugees with students.

The Spungen Foundation can devote many pages honoring Kevin’s work, so let’s just say he keeps very, very busy teaching, writing, conducting interviews, and working on documentaries.



About the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation

The Spungen Foundation was established in 2006 by Florence Spungen and reflects the individual and collective philanthropy of the founders, their children, and their grandchildren. The Foundation focuses its grantmaking typically in Santa Barbara, CA and Lake County, IL. One of the Foundation's strategic areas concentrates on the Holocaust and genocide education. The Spungen Family Foundation has one of the largest collections of Holocaust artifacts in private hands, mainly consisting of postal history, such as letters, post cards, stamps, along with money, children's artwork, and more. The collection has been used for Holocaust education all around the world.

The mission of the Foundation is to improve the quality of life of individuals and families facing health challenges, and to address issues that particularly affect the Jewish community.

Visit us at: www.spungenfoundation.org

