

We Were There From the Beginning

Sue Loebel was born Suzanne Helene Bamberger in Hanover, Germany on May 14, 1925. Her father, Hugo, was Claude's uncle. She married Ernest Moshe Loebel in 1950. Ernest now is Professor Emeritus of Physical Chemistry, Polytechnic University of New York (Brooklyn Poly). Two children, Judith and David were born to them; David, "her best friend," was taken away by AIDS in 1994. Her book, *The Mothers' Club: Of Love-Loss and AIDS*, tells that story mightily.

Her first book, *Fighting the Unseen - The Story of Viruses*, was published in 1967. Among her favorite subsequent publications are: *The Nurses Drug Handbook* (sold 350,000 copies in seven editions); *At the Mercy of Strangers: Growing Up on the Edge of the Holocaust*; and *America's Art Museums: A Travelers Guide to Great Collections Large and Small*.

She turns her writing skill to use when she describes her relationship with Claude:

"Claude, I obviously can't remember life without you being there. My earliest memories are thus tales of the times when ...

- ◆ You crept through the banisters in your house in Lichtenfels and Jetta and Kuni rescued you before you jumped.

- ◆ I visited in Lichtenfels for recuperation after my ear operation (I was not yet three). Allegedly I was a most peaceful creature, except when cousin Annegret showed up. I wildly tore at her hair, a youthful version of female competition for our beloved male cousin.

- ◆ Later you and your friends invited me to watch you shower, my first glimpse of male anatomy.

- ◆ Then there were the hikes around Lichtenfels — the time you made us cover our heads and arms before entering Vierzehn Heilingen, the electric railroad set up in the attic, the famous Schutzenfest.

- ◆ I remember you and Ruth visiting in Hanover on your way to and from Juist, and you discussing with your sister the hygienics of picking up food and eating it from the floor of the railroad carriage.

- ◆ Before leaving Germany we all met in Titisee, where you tried to show me the sunrise. (It was cloudy. You stayed in bed and I wandered through the hotel lobby at 5 A.M.) You also took me and Gaby boating in a boat with a hole. You went off swimming and flirting and we kept bailing. Obviously all of us survived.

◆ I remember our arrival in New York. Soon thereafter you took me hitchhiking and hiking in the White Mountains. We traveled to White River Junction in the baggage compartment during the night, and you managed to sleep peacefully on top of the roaring wheels. Then, of course, you set out racing up the mountains — we spent the first night at Craig Camp, me painfully tagging along after your strong steps. We met Gerald on that trip and I explained to an amused audience about the “blisters on my teeth” (toes) and my fear of “beers.” Eventually we met up with the Greens, Earl, and Lisa and the pace slowed down.



◆ I remember spending every X-mas eve with you in Bellerose. Once you picked us up in your ancient coupe called Clementine. You got a ticket.

◆ We went folk dancing together, and I was there when you met Kathy.

◆ There were canoe trips and hikes with your numerous friends: Bob and Lenore, Jack and his two Lenores, other Suhls...

◆ A few years later, again with Earl and Lisa, we went together on your honeymoon in Canada. That trip actually turned into Ernest’s and my honeymoon.

◆ I remember a visit to Nantucket when Stephan was

12 weeks old. The next summer we met in Maine with your mutti, Ruth, and Emil. We ran into our cousin Rudy and his wife, Lotte, whom we had not seen in years.

◆ There was another trip to Nantucket after your separation and your heart attack, and then that wonderful day trip to the island in Bob K’s plane, when you wanted to look at the lot you had purchased.

◆ Then Mo-Li came into your life. I remember our long talks at the beginning of your romance, and finally her arrival and us welcoming

her into our family. I remember your small apartment overlooking the Palisades, the beautiful vanity you had made for her, and of course your lovely wedding.

◆ And I watched as your beautiful relationship with Mo-Li grew stronger over the years.

◆ Then there were our mothers, of whom we took good care and who had their own problems, almost enmity — and the strain that imposed on you and me.

◆ remember you giving David a summer job — I was especially grateful for that after he died — and the presents you brought back from the Orient. I still have the sari and a blue raw-silk dress, though I do not wear them any longer.

◆ I remember our many nice dinners: at Union Square Café, a Greek restaurant, a French restaurant, and how therapeutic they were for both of us. I remember my pleasure and pride at you being monetarily comfortable. But I remember, too, the hard parts.”

Claude felt the full force of this affection and his reaction isn’t surprising: “We have been friends for more than 70 years and she documents the highlights of our relation very well. Over the years she has been a good companion to me as I have been to her, and we have enjoyed a close relationship.”



Charlotte Gysler was born the same year as Claude, but in New Jersey. She worked for McCall’s designing children’s clothes and later for Women’s Day magazine. She would marry Otto Giesler in 1949 and that was the ‘Claude’ connection. As she tells it, “Claude and Otto met in their early teens when they were both attending a commercial school in Neuchatel, Switzerland. One of their many escapades was to bicycle many kilometers in the countryside and gorge themselves on a farmer’s irresistible stolen cherries. Another was to bicycle 10-12 kilometers up the mountains to the small village of Valagin,” to eat gateaux au beurre at Mr. Webber’s. A close description of the dish would be a huge, ultra thin crepe with melted butter and salt. Accompanied with Neuchatel vin blanc of course, or, heaven forbid, tea. Valagin is still a must whenever Claude is in the district. Even today, it is a word synonymous with Claude and Otto for our children.”

Naturally the escapades continued when Claude and Otto met again in New York. Charlotte continues, “Remember the winter of 1947-1948? Claude, who was never one to waste weekends, decided to form a NYC Alpine Ski Club. His fee for the weekend: ‘Bend your knees — \$200 dollars, please’ (not really), but it was fun. Actually, I don’t remember much about the skiing, but I do remember Claude running out in the cold snowy night in his red long johns to direct the late comers at the lodge. Otto, my sister, and I were among them. Claude advertised his old friend Otto as a ‘genuine Swiss ski instructor.’ Moneywise, I think Claude broke even, but that wasn’t the point; it was his chance to ski with old friends and new.”

Charlotte and Otto returned to Switzerland. He, as a buyer of raw cotton, would traverse the world, and she treasured their travels together. She also takes pride in seeing two elegant homes she designed successfully materialize, one in Spain and one in Vervier, Switzerland. Otto ‘went to sleep’ in 1990. “He cherished Claude’s loyal friendship,” she writes, “but I too cherish Claude’s and Mo-Li’s loyal friendship. They are rare and beautiful.”



Claude describes the beginnings of his friendship with Renate Samelson this way:

“Who would believe it! I first met Renate when I was a freshman in 1930 at the Schule am Meer, a very special educational institution on the remote island of Juist in the North Sea. “Nati” — as she was called by everyone — was the eldest of four daughters of Dr. Reiner and his wife, Anni, directors



of the school. Since Nati was four years older than I was then and already an elder in the hierarchy of the school, I had little in common with her.

Actually my relationship was with her then youngest sister, Ruthli (lower right, with Nati, center, and sister Eva), who was a classmate of mine and of whom I was very fond.

Later in 1933 with the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany the school had to close, and the students, who were a close-knit community, scattered all over the world. We kept in touch with our peers as much as possible, and it was not until a few years later when I was invited by my friend Ruthli to their summer house in Brissago on idyllic Lago Maggiore in Switzerland, that I got to know Nati better.

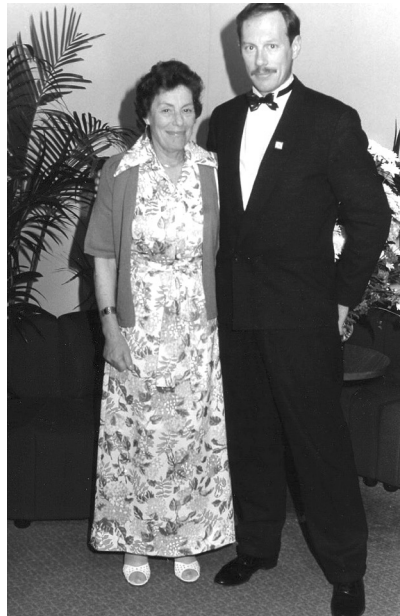


Again, after a lapse of time when I emigrated to the USA, I learned from Nati — who meanwhile had married a university professor and also lived in the United States — of Ruthli's tragic death by drowning. Nati was then my only link to the Reiner family, who lived in far away Switzerland. She thus became a friend. The Samelsons moved around a good deal from one university to another, and we kept in touch by correspondence and an occasional visit as circumstances permitted.

Once when I had a weekend pass while I was a rookie soldier stationed in Camp Hale, Colorado, I hitchhiked

700 miles to visit Nati and her husband, Hans (above), who was then working in Laramie at the University of Wyoming, just to spend a few hours with them. Nati always represented for me 'home' and my puppy love for her younger sister."

Life took Nati eventually to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where she became a physical therapist and continued offering massages even after retirement. She had trained for that in Sweden, fifty years before, and was delighted to revisit it (and Russia) on a North Cape Cruise with her son, Peter (right).



Peter, a professional magician and entertainer also performed on the trip. Needless to say, they included a side trip to the island of Juist.

Because of age and health limitations Claude and Renate saw each other perhaps only once a year but kept in touch by phone and mail. However, when they did meet both of them knew they were truly good friends and thoroughly enjoyed each other's company." Nati signed her letters to Claude, "Your longtime friend."



Claude wanted to let an article in the Hamburger Zeitung, Feb, 1990 introduce another classmate of his from Juist.

"Her presence fills the auditorium! Even when silent, Maria Becker calls herself A Radical Individualist, a rarity in our time, where reproductions and copies are often taken as more important than the original.

Today, the theater buffs of Hamburg can see Becker in Ghosts Karl Parylas production. With good intention the critics call Maria the last great actress of tragedies of the German stage. But this is not true. Ms. Becker never consented to or agreed with this title, as she also represents light comedy as well as roles of lighter fare. In short, the love all type of theatre has been her steady companion. The aura her presence inspires is certainly not restricted. Whoever knows Maria Becker personally — over a glass of Chianti, for instance, with a plate of simple pasta al'oglio, will know how pleasant it is to be with her and how her open, natural way is outright hypnotic.

Maria was born in 1920, daughter of the then famous actor Theodor Becker and her equally famous mother, the actress Maria Fein. In 1930 went to Martin Luserke's Freie Schule am Meer on the island of Juist in the North Sea. The curriculum of this unusual school specialized in music and primarily in the performing arts. Martin Luserke, the director of the school, was a playwright and writer in his own right. Besides producing unusual Shakespeare productions in the large building which he especially designed for performing arts, he wrote plays of his own, keeping in mind who of the small student body would play which role. He recognized Maria's dramatic talent which Maria was only one year old and created some roles especially for her.

With the rise of the Nazi regime in 1933 this liberal arts school fell on hard times and eventually closed its doors. Maria opted for an acting career and left Juist to study with the Reinhardt-Seminar in Wien. Forced by the annexation of Austria (Anschluss) by Hitler's Germany, the 19 year

old Maria Becker fled to London, where as a German speaking actress there was little opportunity for her career. Shortly thereafter she was able to get a contract with the well known *Zuricher Schauspiel Haus*, which with a few gaps became essentially her base until 1956. At that time she and her husband, actor Robert Freitag, together with Will Quadflieg founded the *Zuricher Schauspiel Gruppe*, which performed not only in German spoken regions but also in Canada, USA, Belgium and Holland.”

When it comes to celebrating her relation with Claude, Maria Becker calls it *Pieces of Memory*. Her account has all the graceful movement from place to place, and from topic to topic, we would expect from a star.



“Never had I seen a shallow wicker-plated small basket used to bring roses you cut in the garden into the house where they were arranged in vases. I was fourteen years old in 1934 and the Nazis already ruled Germany and Mrs. Bamberger, Claude’s mother had invited me for the holidays to her beautiful house in Lichtenfels. Claude’s uncle, a friendly, somewhat portly gentleman with horn rimmed glasses and a chic Merced convertible picked me up in Berlin and drove with me across Germany to Lichtenfels. We stopped, I believe, in Mannheim and looked at the cathedral. I still

remember the spectacular statues, especially a tall, happily smiling angel. The trip is only piecewise in my memory but I still remember the weather was beautiful, most of the streets were dirt roads and there was practically no traffic. Nothing like today. Claude's mother received us in Lichtenfels with wonderful food and showed me to my cozy room. I was especially impressed by the miraculously beautiful garden. Ruth was not there and Claude was in boarding school in Switzerland. I believe it was called Rosenberg.

Mrs. Bamberger was a good-looking very active woman although deeply overshadowed by the death of her original and talented husband. I still see him standing on the beach in Juist, when he came to visit his children Ruth and Klaus. I noticed that he was not dressed like most businessmen. He was wearing a black suit, a shirt without tie, with a kind of band around the collar and a black hat with a wide brim.

His wife suffered very much under his untimely passing and I had the feeling that it was agreeable for her to have me as a companion. We made short trips in her Mercedes; she had learned to drive only recently, and tried to be especially cautious.

At home, she put the roses, which she cut every morning in her garden, in the wicker basket and then arranged them in beautiful vases. Everything in the house was beautiful and tasteful, and nicely kept and there was a sweet gemütliche housekeeper who cooked deliciously. Her name was Kuni — a kind of person whom you cannot find anymore today.

I don't remember how long I was alone with Claude's mother until he arrived from his Swiss boarding school. The first thing he noticed with disappointment was that I could not ride a bicycle. He started immediately to teach me with great patience how to do it and dragged me, as soon as I could keep my balance sufficiently, on long biking tours. It was a physically painful but emotionally uplifting experience. We rode to the nearby magnificent cathedral of the Convent of Fourteen Saints (Vierzehn Heiligen) to Castle Banz all uphill from Lichtenfels but rewarding once we reached our goal. Klaus now thought I was ready to seek further frontiers and decided on a trip to Nuremberg, some 100 odd kilometers from Lichtenfels, where we stayed with his relatives.

On the way we went to a public swimming pool. Huge billboards were fastened over the entrances inscribed *Juden ist der Eintritt verboten* (Jews are forbidden to enter) Klaus went in without batting an eyelid and I followed rather meekly. 'Nobody will notice,' he said. While I don't remember much of that trip, I do remember that I had a totally spoilt stomach and could not eat anything.

Klaus insisted that we look at the medieval town, bicycling steep, cobble-stoned streets by bicycle, no easy feat for me — a novice cyclist feeling deathly ill with a stomach virus. Nevertheless I was impressed with the, narrow and fairy tale ancient alleys and courtyards everything preserved as if time had stopped. With the advent of World War II, all that was reduced to rubble; in one night this memorial of another time has been an unredeemable loss.

I remember very well the visits of a sculptress, a friend of the family. Her name was Lerche. I still see the magnificent courtyard, the steep wooden stairs and the apartment in the medieval house or castle in which we sat and were hosted with opulent coffee and cake. Everything was much more beautiful and quieter than today, less traffic, no airplanes no tourists and no asphalt. You hardly noticed the Nazis, here and there SA-men, rarely a small troop of Hitler Jugend. One could, as many did, unfortunately think yourself secure, believing everything would disappear one day as it had come. The terrible war to come was not felt yet, although I personally suffered under a latent panic and never could get rid of the feeling of a constant insecurity.

When we were even younger, Claude and I were at the Schule am Meer (School by the Sea) where I spent the happiest three years of my life. We lived in the house of the little ones which was New Foundland and which was managed with great energy. by Freulein Neumann. Saturdays there was hot water for our showers, a luxury in which we could not indulge during the week. We had to stand under the shower and soap ourselves under icy water, winter and summer at seven o'clock in the morning. But Saturdays we sat warmly showered all together in one room and Freulein Neumann cut our feet and finger nails. There was Claude, curly haired



(that's how I remember him) and always full of life and funny. How we became such friends I don't remember, because I always thought he was so much younger than I.

After my vacations in Lichtenfels, the Bambergers went to the U.S.A. But we wrote to each other from time to time. After the war when I came as a guest of the Schiller Theater to New York we saw each other again after a long time. Mutti Bamberger was older but unchanged and Claude was married to Mo-Li. Since then we still see each other, but regrettably not often enough. Yet the childhood friendship has kept to this day.

Those are pieces of memory which still stay in my head, but all the same they are vividly alive. It was a pleasure to take them out and leaf through them."



Another childhood friend of Claude's is Irmgard Salb (nee Brutting). She and Claude were six when the political times were turning grim and the school was disbanded. Her memories of Claude are positively adoring, possibly because he proposed marriage to her! Wiser minds decided otherwise and it would not be until 70 years later (left) that they would meet again and keep in touch ever after.

In his book, "**Breaking the Mold**" Claude described how he and Irmgard discovered each other 70 years later!

He wrote, "In Irmgard's case, a miracle happened. While vacationing on a Caribbean island, we befriended Rainer Schwartz, a retired German Wehrmach General and his wife Ruth. We told them the story of the picture of Ruth (my sister) which I had described in my Art Book in 1989. Rainer, six years my senior and the same age as my sister, told me that he had gone to High School in Bamberg and that is where he went each year for a class reunion of those fellow students who were still alive."

It was during one class reunion that Rainer Schwartz learnt that Irmgard Brutting was a younger sister of one of his classmates. Soon after, Claude received a war letter from Irmgard, now Frau Dr. Hans Salb and a grandmother of many. As Claude was about to attend a plastics exhibition in Germany, they agreed to meet in Munich in 1995. In his letter to Irmgard, Claude recalled, "Of course I have not forgiven you for jilting me. You may recall that we were "engaged to be married" under the beech tree in your garden, and the next thing I knew, you disappeared from my life and moved to the end of the world."

Irmgard promptly responded as follows, 'Klaus, you are all wrong. I remember the episode very well. The engagement took place in the willow warehouse of your father's business, in which we liked to jump around, using the willow reeds as a sort of trampoline.

At one point, you suddenly stopped jumping and said, "Irmgard, I must talk to you, we must get married." I was all shaken up and said immediately, "Klaus, that's impossible because I am Catholic. But undaunted, you replied, "I know it's all right , I have discussed it with my father and he said it is OK."

At that moment, I didn't know how to reply. All I remember was that marriage was something 'forever'; it has also to do something with priests, altars, churches and I wanted no part of that."



We were unable to arrange a meeting. Irmgard lived in Hamburg in the north and my meeting place was in Munich in the south, clear across Germany. However when, one day in Munich, I entered the lobby of my hotel, I was greeted with a big smile from a very good looking 'elderly' lady who threw her arms around me and said, 'Da bist Du es jetzt.' (Here you are). 'Who are you?' I replied, puzzled. Then she said, 'I am Irmgard,' and so, after a seventy year interval, we were reunited once again."



"I was very touched," Claude writes, " when, among the many letters I received, was one from a distant cousin whom I had not seen in more than

55 years, but who had kept in touch with me through periodic year-end reports about his life and family.

As the reader can see from his letters, Phil went through an enormous amount of trouble to give some background information about my mother's side of the family, a chronicle that otherwise none of my descendants would ever have known, as many of the Wolff side of my family have died — and the few people who are left are neither interested in nor or even capable of reconstructing the past. Therefore, Phil's contribution to this book is of particular interest and value.

Phil Jr. is the son of Phil Lee Blumenthal (1889-1964), a first cousin of my mother. My mother and Phil Sr. had the same grandparents, who lived in Schwaebisch Hall, Wurttemberg, Germany. Their daughter, Minnie, and son, Aaron, emigrated to the U.S.A. Minnie married Bernhard Blumenthal in 1866 and gave birth to their son Phil Lee a few years later. Phil Lee, father of Phil Blumenthal, Jr., was a chemist and lived in Buffalo, N.Y. before early retirement to Louisville, KY.

With the Nazi regime on the rise, two months before the famous Kristallnacht in November 1938, my mother — the famous Mutti — took the midnight advice of a minor official in our home town, Lichtenfels, Bavaria, who had some inside information about what was in store for the Jewish residents of Lichtenfels. She fled, from one night to the next, leaving behind her home, her garden, her business, and my father's valuable art collection in short, the possessions accumulated during a lifetime. All she had with her was one suitcase, the legally allowed limit of one hundred marks (the equivalent of \$25 by the exchange rate of that time), and a valid passport. Upon arrival in New York she found shelter for a few days with some distant relatives, but she had no idea what to do next. I, Claude, was working as a delivery boy for a drugstore in Cleveland, Ohio, earning about \$7 for a 50-hour week, sometimes \$8 if I was lucky enough to get a tip here and there. I could be of no help.

My sister, Ruth, was an au pair living with a family in England, Mutti's brother, Leo, and his family were living in Paris, France, and the rest of the family had stayed behind in Germany. Mutti knew she had a cousin, Phil Blumenthal, living in Louisville, Kentucky. From her childhood she remembered him visiting Schwabisch-Hall in 1901 to see his family. He was much older than she, and all she remembered was that this cousin had come from distant Kentucky, in America, which to her mind was inhabited only by cowboys and Indians. In fact, she remembered asking him where he kept his gun. Now, virtually destitute, stranded in New York, Mutti put a phone call through to her cousin Phil, ostensibly to get his advice about what to do. She found out that his aging mother-in-law, who had taken over

managing his household with two young children when his wife died, could no longer handle the chore and Phil needed someone to help him raise his children. He suggested that Mutti should take this job, which seemed to her a perfect temporary solution to her problem.

For the following four years my mother took care of her cousin's household and helped to raise Phil Jr. and his little sister, Julie. Only after they were in high school did she leave to join me in Cleveland, where I had remained, withstanding constant pressure from the family to move to Louisville. To me, Louisville was still the Wild West of my mother's childhood memories, while Cleveland appeared to be modern and civilized.

Eventually, Mutti's move to Louisville resulted in the entire Wolff side of my family settling there. Soon after Mutti's move, my sister, Ruth, followed; she remained in Louisville, where she became a prominent resident of the Jewish community, until she died in the 1980s. My mother's younger sisters, Lina and Ilse, followed in 1941, and finally my grandmother Therese managed to get there via Tripoli in 1942. All of them had been fortunate to obtain American visas, with the help of affidavits from Phil Sr.

I should have mentioned above that not all of the Wolffs are out of touch. I recently received a warm note from Lucian and Christina Wolff in Bonn, Germany. "The love you gave to your friends and your fantastic ability to make all different kinds of people around you feel accepted and at ease are both expressions of your extensive love of life. You show us that happiness can simply mean to enjoy and be with human beings, with all their possibilities and also with all their limitations. This is a great and wonderful sign of hope. Du bist ein echter LebensKunstler (a true artist at life) und wir lieben Dich."



One word describes the curriculum vitae of Claude's cousin, Herbert Loebel, and that word is 'innumerable' — innumerable academic degrees and lectureships, memberships in professional institutions, businesses founded, public activities that revolutionized the Northern region of England, awards like the OBE and the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of his native Germany, and an intense list of publications along the way.

Herbert writes: "It is one of the regrets of my life, that I have known you and Mo-Li only these last ten years. Had you responded to my first letter of 1988, instead of contemptuously consigning it to the waste paper bin with the words "another genealogy nut", it could have been eleven and a half! So you deprived me of 18 months of a wonderful friendship.

However, you have more than made up for it. Not only by the incomparable kindness you have shown me, but also — perhaps even more — by “catching” my interest in family research. Don’t they say “imitation is the greatest form of flattery?” And I know that it has given you great satisfaction to rediscover the life of your ancestors, parents and cousins. Anyhow, it is now in print and forever, particularly if you deposit copies in some archives, for example the Leo Baeck Institute in New York and the Lichtenfels town archive. The latter should also have copies of your other books, the fruits of many years of work, which are important records not only of your and your family’s lives and work, but of the turbulent, indeed cruelly violent times you and we have lived through.



Personally, I have had a number of unexpected bonuses from my family research, not least because I met many unusual, interesting and friendly cousins. But none have embellished my life more than you and Mo-Li!

And now that I mentioned Mo-Li again, I can say without fear of contradiction, that the greatest achievement of your life was to secure the love of such a beautiful, warm-hearted, clever and competent woman. She has made you the envy of all your friends. And while these lines are intended to celebrate your birthday, it would be unthinkable to leave her out of this paean, since she surely helped you to reach this day.

You tell me that you suffer from some of the usual ailments associated with advancing youth, But outwardly, at least, I have noted no change these last ten years. Above all, your unmatched humor has not diminished by an iota, nor the extent of your thoughtful hospitality, nor your enjoyment of the good things in life — you do not even mind the hassle associated with going to the theatre in New York. You still collect me by car from Stamford, Connecticut and until recently, at least, you were still skiing and did more

travelling than most people half your age. May you long continue with some of these activities until 120, as we Jews say. I raise my glass to you.”



Meinhard Meisenbach reminisces with Claude:

“I think it was in 1923 when your and my parents met for the first time. You were two or three years old then — and I was not yet born. Our parents must have soon taken a mutual liking. I conclude this from the dedication in the book your parents gave to my father as a birthday present in 1930. The dedication went like this: ‘There have always been stereotyped phrases and expressions, and many people are fond of them. Among real friends, however, they aren’t valued highly.’ (Because they don’t need them.)

As our parents lived in different cities I can only guess what it was that brought about their friendship: our parents, especially your father and mine, were connoisseurs of the arts. Anton Rauh (1891-1977), a well-known Bamberg painter and, since 1920, also an art dealer, had organized about 60 arts exhibitions in Bamberg between 1920 and 1933. In 1922 Rauh and his friends, the painters Otto Boveri (1868-1946) and Josef Albert Benkert (1900-1960), organized a widely regarded exhibition of expressionist art. Maybe it was on that occasion or at a meeting of the Kunstverein ‘Samberg or the Verein fur Graphische Kunstfreunde where your and my parents got to know each other and eventually formed a lasting friendship.

The two couples saw each other frequently; this is why you, dear Klaus, must have got to know me. But since I was a baby then (I’m four years younger than you) I wasn’t of great interest to you, let alone a playmate, I’m afraid.

I myself have no recollections whatsoever of our first such meetings. There was, however, a funny incident that must have happened in 1929 or 1930. I know of it because my mother



Brigitte and Meinhard Meisenbach

told me about it: One day, my parents were going to visit your parents in Lichtenfels, and I saw a cheesecake already cut into wedges, ready to be taken to Lichtenfels as a present. I secretly snatched it and devoured it, leaving only five wedges for my grandma, my parents, for my younger brother and for the housemaid. I had my fill of cheesecake so that I couldn't move or say much and was benevolently praised by everybody as a good boy.

Although I obviously was able to count to five at that time (the five spared wedges of cheesecake give evidence of that), I can't say that I remember meeting you or Ruth on that occasion. At that time, we were too young to form a friendly relationship. I only remember that you and my father talked about a toy concrete construction kit for children, and this fascinated me so much that I wasn't interested in anything else.

I also vaguely remember other visits at your family's beautiful home in Kronacher Strasse, especially the paintings (though I must admit I can't recall their motifs), the library with its Bauhaus armchairs (my father had similar ones in his office) and the staircase. The bookcases and the large double staircase have probably made me compare your home with ours in Bamberg: Your staircase possessed a very important advantage: the wall of its first landing contained a narrow closet for storing suitcases etc. For children it was a wonderful place for hiding and playing.

It was not before a visit to Lichtenfels shortly after Christmas 1934 (maybe 1935) that I really got to know you, although you were no longer at Lichtenfels at that time. In the meantime the Nazi government had already gained control of Germany and had imposed its racist rule on the German people. German Jews were tortured and humiliated, and eventually relentlessly murdered. At that time your father had already passed away; and you attended a Swiss boarding school. I was only ten at that time, and I couldn't imagine what a hard time it was for your mother in Lichtenfels, in Germany, and how admirably bravely she struggled to survive until she managed to leave Nazi Germany just in time in 1938.

But let me have another look back to my visits to your home and our indirect encounters. The staircase in your house plays a key role in my recollections. Its second landing was like a balcony from which we could see what was going on in the house. The first door in the corridor led into Ruth's room. She had a very impressive miniature grocer's shop where I very frequently "bought" loads of sweets. In retrospect I am still amazed how patiently Ruth played with me, though she was much older than I.

Opposite Ruth's room was yours, and I was allowed to stay there sometimes. Numerous winner's awards and records testified that you were a successful sportsman. I must admit that they didn't impress me

much because I have never been a good sportsman myself. The aim of physical education at school was to raise a new generation of able-bodied young men who were to become instruments in the hands of Nazi rulers. It went under the label of “national physical training.” For this, and for other reasons, I didn’t like sports and physical education in general.

On the other hand, I was very interested in your low-voltage wiring which you had nailed to the walls and even to some pieces of furniture. I would have liked it very much to install such a device myself in my room at home. But, alas, my mother would never have tolerated such.

On another occasion I saw some sort of a shelter you had dug in your garden (unfortunately we didn’t meet on that occasion either), and after returning home I also dug a big hole in our garden. I also very well remember your mother coming round frequently to see my parents.

Although it was not before the end of World War II that my wife Brigitte and I and you and Mo-li really got to know each other and establish a sincerely friendly relationship, our very first meeting was so full of mutual understanding and friendship as though we had seen each other day in day out during the past decades.

Dear Klaus, dear Moli, we want to thank you for your wonderful, lasting and candid friendship. So now we are going to tilt the horn of plenty to pour onto you our innumerable good wishes: may the sun of good luck shine onto you for many, many years full of happiness and tranquillity, We do hope that our friendship will last forever and that it will be continued by our children and grandchildren.”



Claude had two aunts, Lina and Ilse Wolff, living in Hartford, Conn. Beloved aunts as they were, and often visited by Claude and Mo-Li, by some strange providence, they brought two new “aunts” into Claude’s life — Lena Wulf and Henny Lampe. Halina Sudyka, who took loving care of Lena Wulf into her old age (she died in a nursing home at age 102), took down the story of how this happened from Lena herself . “When Lena’s mother died (1958 or 59?), some of the condolence cards were accidentally delivered to Lina Wolff. This is how the two women became aware of each other. They had similar jobs — Lena Wulf was a physical therapist and Lina Wolff was a social worker — so they also crossed paths professionally on occasion. They became friends.

Lena and Henny learned about the two sisters’ nephew, Claude, from them. They heard a lot about him, but never met him. Whenever he came to visit his aunts in Hartford, Henny and Lena did not get to meet him. The

sisters always had an excuse: he was tired, he was just visiting quickly, etc., so Henny and Lena got the impression that the two sisters did not want to share their precious nephew or their time with him with anyone else. And that was fine. But when they knew he was being married at the sisters' home one weekend, they picked a bucket of rambling roses from their garden and sent it to the house as a wedding gift for him, even though they had not yet met him or his bride.

Their first meeting came when one of the aunts passed away, and they finally met Claude at her funeral. After the one sister died, the other quickly became ill. Because Claude and Mo-Li lived far away, Lena became their intermediary in Hartford, talking to them frequently to update them about his aunt Ilse's health. When Ilse died, Claude and Mo-Li came for her funeral. Afterwards, they asked Lena and Henny: "Do you want to be our new Hartford aunts?" Which, of course, they did.

Every year since, Claude and Mo-Li have shared their wedding anniversary at the lovely Hopkins Inn on Lake Waramaug with Lena and Henny. The first time they went to the Hopkins Inn, Claude reserved a single room for Lena and Henny to share. But when Henny snored so loudly that Lena didn't sleep a wink, every year thereafter Claude got them separate rooms. After Henny passed away, other friends of Lena's were always included in their anniversary celebrations at the Inn.



Halina and Lena

Lena recalls she and Henny traveling by train to New York City, to meet Claude and Mo-Li, to go to the theatre and other great places. They would carry a lemon meringue pie on their laps to bring as a gift for them.

She delights in the way that Claude and Mo-Li open themselves up so easily to others and have been so generous in sharing of themselves with Lena and all of her friends. Their friendship is one that has meant more than can be described. Lena loves you both dearly and thanks you from the bottom of her heart."

Lichtenfels, Germany, Claude's Home Town



23. September 2000

Geburtsgruß

Lieber Klaus!

Ach wie schön, daß Du geboren bist!
Gratuliere uns, daß wir Dich haben,
Daß wir Deines Herzens gute Gaben
Oft genießen dürften ohne List.

Deine Mängel, Deine Fehler sind
Gegen das gewogen harmlos klein.
Heute nach vierzig Jahren wirst Du sein:
Immer noch ein Geburtstagskind.

Möchtest Du: nie lange traurig oder krank
Sein. Und: wenig Häßliches erfahren. -
Deinen Eltern sagen wir unseren fröhlichen Dank
Dafür, daß sie Dich gebaren.

Gott bewinke Dir,
Alle Deine Schritte;
Ja, das wünschen wir,
Deine Freunde und darunter (bitte)
Deine

*Hannelore
Hermann
und Lisa*

23rd September 2000

Birthday Greetings

Dear Klaus

What a joy that you were born

What a privilege to have you as a friend,

And to be blessed with all the gifts the goodness
of your heart has been presenting us to enjoy.

Against all this, any faults and imperfections
you may have are trivial indeed.

Today, after forty years, you are still a birthday child.

May you never have to go through a period of sadness or
sickness and may you be spared any harmful experience.

Our gratitude goes to your parents who have given you your life.

May God protect all steps you take: this
is the fervent wish of your friends

(signed: Lisa & Hermann Schulze)

(free translation by Sigrid Karner)



ZUM
GELEIT

WIE MIT DEN LEBENSZEITEN, SO
IST ES AUCH MIT DEN TAGEN,
KEINER IST UNS GUT GENUG,
KEINER IST GANZ SCHÖN,
UND JEDER HAT, WO
NICHT SEINE
PLAGE,
DOCH SEINE
UNVOLLKOMMENHEITEN.
ABER RECHNE SIE ZUSAMMEN,
SO KOMMT DOCH EINE SUMME
VON FREUDE UND LEBEN HERAUS.

FRIEDRICH
HOLDERLIN

Preface

As with lifetime,
it is with the days: none of them seems good enough
To us;
none is perfectly beautiful and each one
has – if not its aggravations –
Its imperfections.
But added up, you do get a sum of joy and life.

Friedrich Hölderlin
(free translation by Sigrid Karner)

Wanderfahrt

Das Lied der Franken

1. Wöhlauf, die Luft geht frisch und rein, wer lange sitzt, muß
rossen: den altersschwächsten Sonnenschein laßt uns der Himmel
kosten. Jetzt reicht mir Stab und Ordenskneid der fahrenden
Scholaren, ich will zu guter Sommerzeit ins Land der Franken
fahren! Valerie, valera, valerie, valera, ins Land der Franken fahren.
2. Der Wald steht grün, die Jagd geht gut, schwer ist das Korn
geraten, sie können auf des Maines Flut die Schiffe kaum verladen.
Bald hebt sich auch das Herbstan, die Kelter harret des Weines;
der Winzer Schutzherr Kilian beschert uns etwas Feines: Valerie,
valera, valerie, valera, ins Land der Franken fahren.
3. Wallfahrer ziehen durch das Tal mit fliegenden Standarten; hell
grüßt ihr doppelter Choral den weiten Gottesgarten. Wie gerne
war ich mitgewalt, ihr Pfarr' wolte mich nicht haben! So muß ich
seitwärts durch den Wald als räudig Schaflein traben. Valerie,
valera, valerie, valera, ins Land der Franken fahren.
4. Zum hell gen Weit von Staffelstein komm' ich emporgestiegen
und seh' die Lande um den Main zu meinen Füßen liegen. Vom
Bamberg bis zum Grabfeldgau umrahmen Berg und Hügel die
breite, stromdurchglänzte Au - ich wollt', mir wüchsen Flügel.
Valerie, valera, valerie, valera, ins Land der Franken fahren.
5. Einsiedelmann ist nicht zu Haus, die weil es Zeit zu mähen; ich seh
ihn an der Halde drauß bei einer Schrittrin stehen. Verfahrner
Schüler Stoßgebet heiß: Herr, gib uns zu trinken! Doch wer bei
schöner Schrittrin steht; dem mag man lang's winken. Valerie,
valera, valerie, valera, ins Land der Franken fahren.
6. Einsiedel, das war mißgesan, daß du dich hubst von hinnen! Es
liegt, ich seh's dem Keller an, ein guter Jahrgang drinnen! Hoho!
Die Pforten brech' ich ein und trinke, was ich frinde... Du heil ger
Weit von Staffelstein, verzeh mir Durst und Sünde. Valerie, valera,
valerie, valera, ins Land der Franken fahren.

v. Scheffel

