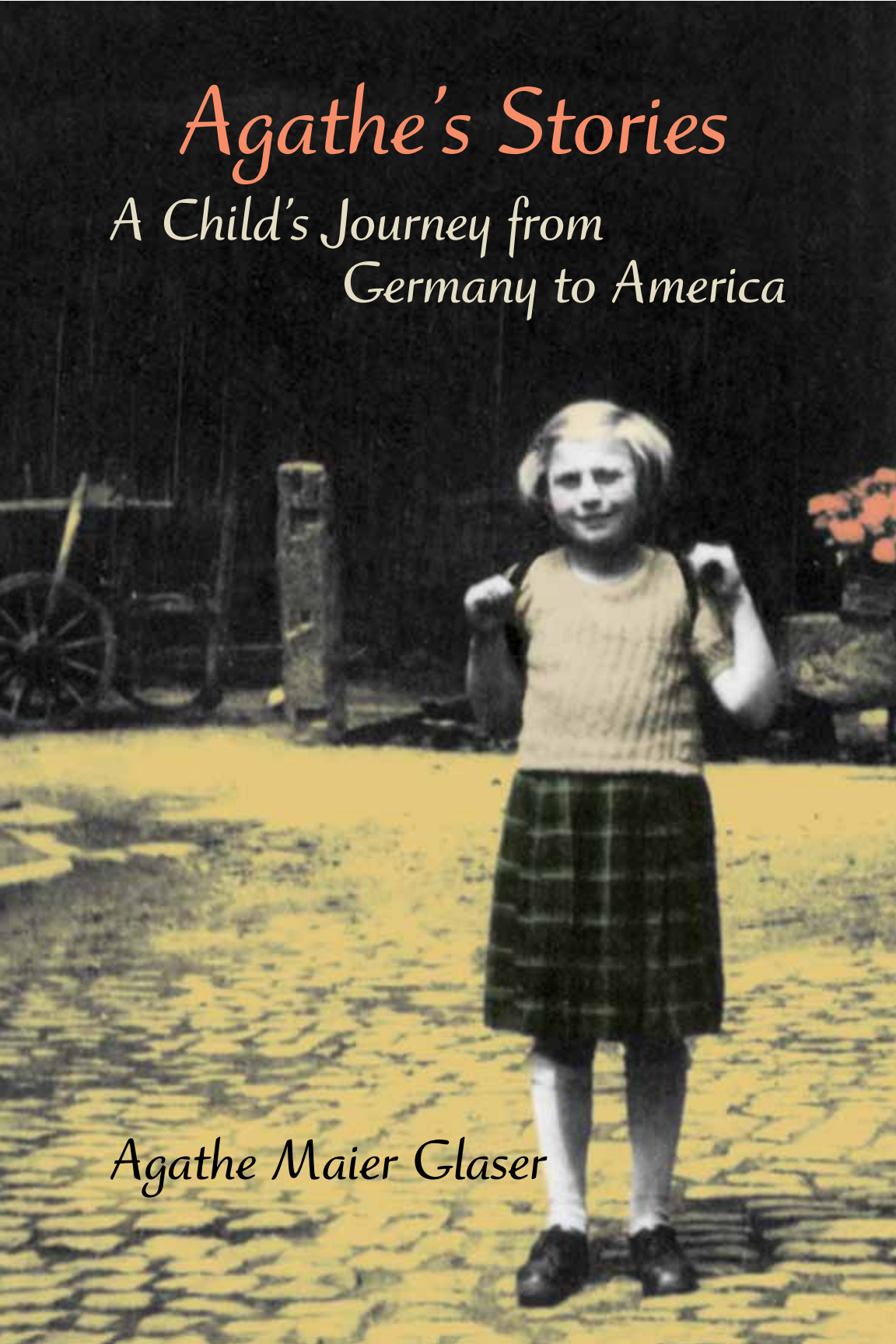
Agathe's Stories

A Child's Journey from Germany to America



Agathe Maier Glaser

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AGATHE MAIER GLASER

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*We gratefully acknowledge our copyeditor, Carol Rogers,
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Jewish Girl, 12, Travels 11,000 Miles to U. S.

Obviously the loneliest and bravest among 200 passengers brought to Seattle from the Orient today aboard the N. Y. K. motorship Heian Maru, 12-year-old Agate Maier of Karlsruhe, Germany, blinked in bewilderment as customs inspectors, immigration officials and newspaper reporters fired a barrage of questions at her in a strange tongue.

She blinked happily, however, for although she could not understand the words, they were friendly faces and pleasant-sounding words, and Agate, who had just completed a journey of nearly 11,000 miles from her native Karlsruhe, knew she was at last in a haven of refuge.

There were other German-Jewish refugees aboard the vessel. There were men, women and children. But only Agate was alone. And her only greeting as she first looked at United States soil was from two members of a German-Jewish refugee committee, who spoke words that still sounded foreign although she could understand them.

She Is Happy

To all questions from English-speaking interrogators, Agate said, clearly:

"I do not understand; but I am so happy."

Only when committee members interposed, did the child change her answer. Then in rapid German, she stated her name; that she is the daughter of Herr and Frau Sigmund Maier; that she has a brother, Ludwig, 16, and that she hardly can wait until Ludwig, whose papers are being arranged, comes over to join her. She said she is on her way to live with her uncle, Max Weil, in New York, and she is so very happy.

But she did not know, the committee members explained, sadly, that her parents may not be permitted to join her for months, "maybe years."

"The quota, you know. . . ."

Siberia Crossed

Agate, who faces 3,000 more miles of rail transportation to New York, came to Yokohama by way of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and has made the entire journey alone. But she is not afraid. She is just happy, glad to be in America.

Among other passengers were fifty-six other refugees, the fourth group of German-Jews to come to Seattle on N. Y. K. ships; sixty students who have attended the seventh America-Japan Student Conference; a group of Canadian-American High School teachers who made a tour of Japan, Korea and Manchoukuo; Dr. M. Lyle Spencer, former president of the University of Washington, now dean of the Syracuse University School of Journalism, returning from a lecture tour, and some Japanese tourists.

Alone and bewildered in a strange country after a journey of nearly 11,000 miles, 12-year-old Agate Maier, a German-Jewish refugee who faces 3,000 more miles of travel, smiled happily as she arrived in Seattle aboard the Heian Maru. She is bound for New York City to live with an uncle.

August, 1940

PREFACE

OUR MOTHER, AGATHE GLASER, is the author of the short pieces contained in this volume. Some of these stories were originally related to us at bedtime when we were children, while others we read as adults only after Mom began to commit them to paper. These tales are as timeless, charming, and full of childlike wonder as Mom herself was throughout her life. They contain a curious mixture of love of life and the cautious skepticism of a twelve-year-old girl as she navigates the journey from security to vulnerability and finally to a new life in America.

As a mother and grandmother, Mom visited Israel on a number of occasions. While she wasn't a frequent visitor to Holocaust museums, she did on one occasion participate in a remembrance ceremony by telling her stories at the Yad Vashem Valley of the Lost Communities in Jerusalem. Accompanying her there at that

time, I wasn't sure how Mom would deal with seeing the giant rocks with the names of the villages etched in them, including Malsch, her hometown. Her first response upon entering the memorial was, "Oh look at the cyclamen!" She had noticed the bright pink flowers striving for life and light, poking out from the crevices between the huge rocks. That moment spoke volumes to me about the kind of woman our mother was. While her experiences in the Holocaust were critical to the development of her character, not even the Nazis could squelch the flower-loving, little German-Jewish girl from Malsch. Her celebration of natural beauty and her will to survive in the crevices of a sometimes overwhelming existence were, I now think, stronger than any force I've ever known.

My siblings, Meyer, Sara, and Jack, and I hope you enjoy these stories. Those of you who knew and loved our mother will recognize Agathe's voice in the little girl. For those of you who did not know her: Come meet an extraordinary young woman as she tells her vivid tale.

Sim Glaser
Editor

Agathe's grandfather, Maier Abraham Maier, at age 85 in Malsch holding a neighbor's child

PROLOGUE

My Grandfather's Funeral

THE YEAR WAS 1936. I was eight years old. The line of mourners at my grandfather's funeral stretched as far as I could see, through the whole German town of Malsch. The mourners were mostly Christians from the small hamlets of the Black Forest. My grandfather had climbed these forest mountains on foot to bring the villagers grain and axle grease, news from down below, healing balms, advice, and comfort. For fifty years he had been their contact with the world. Now the mourners walked along with their uphill mountain stride, weeping.

Holding tightly to my aunt's hand, I was remembering. My grandfather had been my contact with the world and my best friend. When I was little, he took me everywhere, including to his friend the baker, who always had special miniature rolls for me. And we would go to his friend the cabinetmaker. There they would

talk politics as the curls of shaved wood flew. The big, burly cabinetmaker was angry, saying that Hitler will get rid of all the Jews. My grandfather was saying, "No Hannes, it won't come to that."

On cold winter nights, with snow blanketing the old farmhouse and each family busy with its own interests, the aroma of roasting chestnuts enveloped us, and Grandfather would tell me stories. One such story was about the time he fell out of the old sour-cherry tree because he had gone out too far on a weak limb.

When I started school, I had to write a new letter of the alphabet every day. The slate had to be covered in neat script. Grandfather said, "Go out and play, have fun. I'll finish it." This trick worked right up to the letter *F*. His *F*'s were the old-fashioned German kind, and we were in trouble. Mother was called to the school, and consequently we were both severely reprimanded.

Grandfather thought the time had come for me to learn about birth. Since he was also the town vet and animal midwife, he took me to see the goat of my brother's friend Oswald give birth. The goat had a difficult time, and Grandfather had to use a very sharp knife. We couldn't look. Oswald turned pale and ran out, but soon the baby goats appeared, one after another, standing tentatively on bent, wobbly legs. When my mother found out that we had been present, she disapproved, and she and Grandfather had, for the first time and the last, I think, a real disagreement.

In my daydreaming at the funeral, I had lost hold of my Aunt Bertha's hand and could not find her. I tried to make my way

back into the procession. The *Schwarzwalder* (Black Forest people) pushed me away. They said, "Don't disturb the procession, child." They would not let me in. They did not know that he was my grandfather and my best friend.

Grandfather did not live to see the terrible times that were approaching. For him, it never came to that.

Agathe's parents, Sigmund and Clara, with Ludwig and Agathe in the Maier garden, 1937

My Parents

WE WERE A CLOSE-KNIT FAMILY. My mother, who helped my father in his business, was a serious woman. One respected her and could rely on her. She was always properly dressed, her soft brown hair done in a bun. She wore dark dresses and sensible shoes specially ordered and made for her in the city. Her artistic side showed in the way she decorated our home. When you stepped into the small farmhouse, you were charmed by the gold and white living-room wallpaper and drapes and the woodcuts on the walls. She had all the attached carvings removed from my father's desk with the secret compartments that I often played with and had it refinished so that the beautiful original wood grain showed. Dainty figurines and silver and brass objects were in a cabinet across from the desk. She had a golden-brown tile stove installed in the corner, replacing the old wrought-iron stove. It

had tile seats on both sides and heated the whole house. In the springtime the blooms of the cherry and plum trees seemed to fill the kitchen windows.

The tortes Mother baked had dainty dough petals on them. When I helped her cook and bake, I often wished that she would talk more about her life before she and Father married. I knew that she both hated gossip and loved gossip. I knew that she adored children and despised war and that her younger brother had died for Germany in the First World War.

Herr Nissensohn, a round man sparkling with friendliness, used to come to the house carrying a giant roll of goods on his back to sell. He had introduced my parents to each other. My mother always fixed a special meal for him. He would unroll the giant pack, and we would see the ribbons, buttons, polishes, and brushes he was selling, and together we would choose what to buy.

The Sabbath, Jewish holidays, and festivals were very important to my mother. At night, snuggled against her, we would say our special prayer about the angel that protects children. I could almost feel the angel's presence.

My father, who I thought was so handsome, whistled tunes from operas and danced with me. He brought home little gifts from work and helped with the baths, doing towel wrap-arounds and rubdowns. He teased and joked with humorous sayings such as, "We had roast beef and salad—that is, when we had it." People came to my father for advice and even cures for ailments, as they had to his father, my grandfather, before him.

As times grew more threatening, my mother and father did

not agree on the need to leave Germany. Father felt the political climate would change again, and Mother felt it would worsen. She wanted to leave the country. They contacted American relatives to get visas.

At right, Ludwig, Grandfather Maier, and Agathe

Neighbors

MALSCH, THE TOWN in which five generations of my ancestors had lived, was my world. Our neighbors were all Christians. The Hornungs next door, and especially their son Otto, were my dearest friends.

The town had a *Bach,* a small river, which ran from the train station to the inn near the bakery and my house. There, where the *Bach* divided, stood a huge old linden tree with a small iron fence around it. Its wide branches with their twirling, butterfly-like pods sheltered a wooden Jesus on the cross. On *Kirchweih* Day, a Catholic holiday, everyone decorated this shrine, their holy place. My mother brought her houseplants to be part of that beautification. The Jesus icon was the way station for the yearly procession. Church elders, priests, and choirboys, dressed in ornamented robes, carried silver and gold banners. They formed a bright pro-

cession, which wended its way along the *Bach* on one side, crossing and returning home to the steeple-topped country church on the other side. In descending to lower ground, the procession passed our synagogue with its large window and rounded wooden doors, which was tightly fitted between the barbershop and my uncle's store. Then the procession passed the house in which my grandfather was born, the upper story protruding like a woman leaning against the wind.

A few years later these processions would be replaced by goose-stepping soldiers, helmeted and accompanied by ominous drumbeats. They too passed my grandfather's birthplace and my uncle's store. Except for Otto and me, nobody seemed to be watching.

The Hornungs' house next door was warm and open. Other than their son Otto and Rosel, their youngest daughter, their children were all married or about to be. They were in and out, planning and enjoying each day. Otto's father was the doubtful and questioning one in their family. He trusted neither the present nor the future. He never became a Nazi, and Otto never learned to distrust Jews. Otto's grandfather, Herr Hornung, who was bedridden and looked exactly like Hitler, was hardly ever out of his room. I was sure he was one of Hitler's doubles.

Frau Hornung, who worked in the fields like a man, had strong instincts for survival. Those instincts had helped her survive the influenza epidemic that wiped out her family and enabled her to raise her children single-handedly. But would those instincts guide a loyalty to lifelong Jewish friends, or would she yield to national and group pressure? The lines in her shrewd face became comic when she told me my first jokes or consulted cards to tell

me my future in another country far away. Her face would in turn grow shrewd and wary, then friendly, and her relationship with us remained loyal but now careful.

Frau Hornung's youngest daughter Rosel and her son Otto were my first and closest companions. We shared the Black Forest, the wide-open fields covered with wildflowers, and our holidays. At Passover, when our round crisp matzohs arrived from Holland, I would bring some to the Hornungs in my doll carriage. Then I would return with the carriage filled with apples for *charoses,* the apple and nut mixture to be used at our Passover Seder.

When I was very little, Otto and I would be together at his grandmother's house at Christmastime. We were both frightened when St. Nicholas, waving his thrush broom, would say, "Have you been good children this year?" He looked familiar to me somehow, and his hooded cape had the same small tears at the pockets that my green rain cape had. Before he could punish us, Rosel would appear with long, golden hair, all dressed in white, tinkling a small bell. Her eyes reflected the flickering wax candles on the tree. St. Nicholas, Rosel, Otto, and I listened to the sound of sleigh bells and feet crunching through the snow.

The day came unexpectedly soon when the Hornungs' home wasn't warm and inviting anymore. Rosel was swept up in the Nazi youth movement. She didn't talk about it, but I saw her in the brown uniform with the military epaulets and the mannish tie. By now I was nine years old and attending the Jewish school in the city, having been dismissed from the public school because I was Jewish. Jewish children could no longer attend the German schools. Rosel had become a full-time seamstress. I would visit

her at her home in an upstairs room and watch her nimble fingers at the sewing machine. When one of her Nazi superiors would drop in, Rosel would hide me behind a curtain until the woman left. Frau Hornung's face became serious and closed a little. She became careful. Now all the happy memories from the past were closed within their house. Rosel still sewed for us at our house, and we pretended things were the same. But one wintry day I was sitting on a low stool watching her as I was humming an anti-Nazi song. I wasn't really aware of what I was doing, but she must have recognized the song. Our eyes met across the sewing machine, and our world would never be the same again. We were on opposite sides now.

Otto never learned the songs and slogans. He and I played our children's games in a dug-out circle in the ground. In the center of the circle, there stood a low wooden tripod. We made mud pies and "baked" them in the drawer-like openings that edged the dugout. We didn't know that our cave without a top was the base for an anti-aircraft gun, that our "oven" was for ammunition, and that war was very near.

Agathe with Otto Hornung

Herr Gabel

HERR GABEL, a dark-skinned man with a beautiful voice, a tall pretty wife, and a small son, was our Hebrew and religion teacher in Malsch. When he taught us, he was serious and demanding, but on the Sabbath and the holidays he was full of joy. He found bright clearings in the Black Forest for us to sit in and told us stories about the Jewish people in other times.

On Purim, our merry holiday, he put on plays and created parts for all of us. On *Tu B'Shevat,* the holiday of the trees, he brought us candy that simulated the fruit of foreign trees. He brought candied bananas, all rubbery and coated in chocolate, and bright, sugar orange slices.

When a child was born in Malsch, Herr Gabel and his wife celebrated with a party. We would sing and dance around the child. We celebrated the birthdays of the elderly and decorated their

seats in the synagogue. When he blew the shofar, Herr Gabel's head was hooded by a prayer shawl and he transported us back to ancient times. He could be so sad and so joyous.

Herr Gabel and his family were Polish Jews. One day in October 1938, they were picked up by the Germans and sent to Poland. We never saw them again.

Agathe's parents, Sigmund and Clara Maier, 1937

Kristallnacht

WHEN NOVEMBER COMES and trees lose their glorious foliage and reveal the skeletal formations beneath, the balmy weather changes to a sudden winter chill that I'm never quite ready for. Is it the sudden chill or the pushed-back memories trying to make themselves remembered that cause the restlessness and foreboding that November always brings?

The day I try to forget was November 9, 1938. The day began like other days. I went to school, the Jewish school next to the big synagogue in Karlsruhe. Something was terribly wrong. We saw men in black uniforms taking the silver ornaments from the synagogue next door. And they were picking up Jewish men everywhere. School had to close, and the teachers sent us home. The same things were happening in our usually sheltered town. Our synagogue had to give up its old silver ornaments. They robbed the

Torah scrolls of their twin crowns of silver bells and breastplates.

The familiar faces in the town were grave. Friends had warned my father not to return home, but he didn't listen. He came back to his family and was picked up and taken away by the same men in black uniforms. In the town, Jews and non-Jews stayed in their homes and seemed to hold their breath in ominous anticipation.

At twilight the SS, Nazis in black, arrived. They jumped out of black cars, their black boots hitting the ground, the cars never coming to a full stop. The adolescent riffraff, young people who had no place in the social strata of the town, were drawn to the Nazis like magnets. The Nazis rounded up the Jewish men and boys. We somehow knew the target was the synagogue. Did they know that this was the heart of our existence? It was a funny little Italian Renaissance building with its fake marble columns and firmament-like ceiling showing moon and stars. Seated there on well-worn benches, we would share our joy and grief and pray for recovery from illness. On *Simchas Torah,* the men danced in the aisles. On Yom Kippur, the men dressed in their white burial robes and slippers, pounded their breasts, and called out, "Father, forgive us our sins and inscribe us in the Book of Life." We children performed for proud parents there. The whole spectrum of life was witnessed by the painted marble-like walls and ornate lions guarding the tablets of the Ten Commandments above the ark, the holy place that held the Torah, the scrolls of the law.

As evening came, the women and children, now without their men, tried to check their growing fear of the night to come. A Jew named Grynszpan had killed an undersecretary of the German embassy in Paris. Therefore those with destructive instincts would reign tonight without fear of law or retribution. The voice on the radio announced that tonight plunderers can plunder, murderers can murder, and arsonists can set fire. Every base instinct can be satisfied.

My mother knew what was to come. She sent us to hide at the Hornungs' house. She wanted to handle it alone. When the first group of ruffians arrived, she met them outside. They had a gun. She talked to them as to children: "Hitler doesn't approve of this. He didn't give this order. My family fought and died for Germany. Hitler will rescind the order. You will be jailed." They hesitated before the strong and almost kindly woman and then they fled.

My mother's strength grew as the need for it grew. Later that night we went to check on the other frightened women and children and then made our way to the synagogue. It was a bright shell in the night, the flames leaping inside. Young boys, laughing and dressed up in skullcaps and prayer shawls, danced on piles of broken holy objects and pulled Torah scrolls that would not tear. Their grimacing faces were lit by the flames. I didn't recognize them from before, but I will never forget them.

We helped my aunt and young cousin in the next building, where they had always lived. They had been locked in. We smashed the door open, my mother reassured them, and we returned home.

That night they came again, urinating against the shutters and shouting obscenities. We all lay fully dressed on my parents' big bed. My mother and brother were so calm, but I shook the whole night. Daylight finally came and with it the order to halt

the lawlessness. We, the children, fished our Torah scrolls out of the river where they had been thrown. We dried them in the sun, smoothed them tenderly, and rolled them up to be secretly used in the future.

For weeks we were only half our real selves. The other half was waiting—waiting and listening for my father's return. The other men were slowly returning, but not he. My mother would leave for the city, returning late after seeing officials, consulting friends, and perhaps bribing—I don't know. Father finally came home, a broken shadow of his former trusting, life-loving self. He had lost a lot of weight and had a large bump on his forehead. He had been pistol-whipped because he wouldn't say *"Heil Hitler"* to a guard. I heard my parents talking late at night about the men having to stand for hours dressed in only their underwear in the bitter cold. They could not tell us about his experiences for fear of retaliation by the Nazis.

My father didn't want to live anymore. My mother, my brother, and I took turns watching over him. We put away sharp knives at night. He and I walked in the woods, and only there the heaviness seemed to lift and he could even smile and whistle his songs. But on returning to the town, he grew heartsick again. Slowly, after a three-week stay in a sanitarium, some of his old self re-emerged.

The Germans didn't let the Jews earn a livelihood anymore, and we had to use our savings. There was even talk of needing to sell our house and move in with another Jewish family in order to have the money to emigrate. The bump on my father's forehead

was proof of mistreatment by the Germans and kept my father from being able to leave the country. When there was proof of being beaten by the Nazis, they would not let you out. The Nazis didn't want the world to know what they had done to the Jews in the camps. My mother would not leave without him, but they made every effort to get my brother and me out of the country.

It was almost 1940. I was twelve. The only way to leave Germany was through Russia. My brother and I had to have Russian visas. My family had a close friend in Berlin who could use his influence to get us the visas, but we had to be in Berlin, ready to leave. My mother took us to Berlin, where Jewish organizations were ready to help us.

Agathe and Ludwig

Berlin

IT WAS NOW THE SUMMER OF 1940. My mother brought my brother and me to Berlin and left to return home to Malsch. In Berlin we saw for the first time the full impact of anti-Jewish laws and the propaganda through which the *Deutsches Reich* hoped to cleanse itself of Jews. Our plan had been to go through Holland and Italy, but they became closed to immigration. Berlin was the last gate to the outside world, the only place to obtain a Russian visa and then to escape via Russia.

My mother had left us each at a different rooming house. My brother's was for men and boys, mine for women and girls. My brother and I soon learned the rules of the city: Always carry with you your identification card with the big red *J* on it, and show it in all places of business. Pay careful attention to the curfew time for Jews, between the hours of one and five every afternoon. Do

not enter parks forbidden to Jews. Since I was quite blonde and German looking, I didn't feel too restricted by these rules.

My brother, who was sixteen and four years my senior, made most of our decisions, and while awaiting our visas and avoiding rules we had glimmerings of good times. We bought fruit at fruit stands, saw the sights of the cold and beautiful city, and visited with our only Berlin friends, who were helping us with the Russian visas. They had a beautiful home in a suburb of Berlin, but we always had to return to our dreary rooming houses at night.

One day one of the women at the rooming house asked me to go get some imitation butter at the corner store during curfew time. Since I looked so like them, she said it would be all right. I went to the store and asked for the butter. A resigned-looking, gray-haired man asked me to show my identification card. With my heart suddenly pounding, I put it on the counter, red *J* side down. He came closer on his side of the counter, his face showing no emotion. He said, "I won't ask you to turn it over, but don't ever come in here again." I turned and left, the bell of the door ringing in my ears, and fled back to the safety of the rooming house.

Those last days in Berlin were marked by air-raid sirens. Our friends, the English, were attacking Berlin. Everyone rushed for a shelter. We knew that during those air raids we were not permitted to enter a non-Jewish shelter. My brother and I would be out seeing the city, entering parks where no Jews or dogs were allowed. We looked so German, no one stopped us. We didn't realize that we could be picked up and taken to a camp.

The last night in Berlin I had to stay in a large, burned-out synagogue. They were gathering us to leave for America. There

were many mattresses on the floor, each with a space marked off around it for each person's belongings. I covered myself with my good, navy-blue travel coat. In the morning I was sorry to see that my pillow had opened up. The feathers were all over my navy coat. The giant, blackened walls of the synagogue seemed to say, "What terrible thing is happening here? This used to be a place for glorious prayer; now it houses those fleeing this wretched city, this wretched land."

Agathe's passport

The Trip

WHEN I SAID GOOD-BYE to my mother, I didn't kiss her. I wouldn't kiss her; that would have been too final. We both stood there mute. Her eyes said everything. They compelled me to have faith. Mother had taught us in our prayers to have faith in God's angel that watches over all children.

Then she said, with heaviness in her voice that seemed to weigh on her whole body, "I have to get back to your father. I know that our friend Fred will get you the Russian visas. If I'm not here with you, he will feel wholly responsible for you and will put pressure on the officials. This is the last chance, the only way out. He must get those visas." Then she said, "Always stay together. Always take care of each other." We walked away from her. I remember her standing there, thin and worn, the lines of her face pulling downward.

I wasn't able to heed her words, for my chance to leave came before my brother's. Those in charge had decided. We had no choice. I was notified of the Russian visa a few days later in the afternoon, wrote a quick postcard to my parents, said good-bye to my brother, who I thought would follow in a few days, and by evening met the strangers with whom I was to travel halfway around the world.

There were twenty-one people in our group. I was the only child without a parent. There was Karen, who was the only child my own age, and her parents. Herr Hirsch and his non-Jewish wife and two children were always quarreling. Fraulein Sanft was taking good care of her elderly father. The absentminded Herr Professor Sonreich was a professor of botany. The frilly, warm, scatterbrained Frau Eheman, being a woman and traveling alone, was appointed my guardian. The group had much in common. We were all Jews with one last chance to escape.

It was late 1940. With the war having begun, the Germans had already invaded Poland, Holland, and France, and we had the desperately sought-after visas and passports that permitted us to move beyond the ever extending reach of the Germans.

The members of our traveling group became quickly acquainted with one another on the terrible flight, my first, from Berlin to Moscow. The small plane with only our group aboard jaggedly dipped and climbed, making us all ill. We each were enclosed in our own web of misery. Only a baby, held by its mother, sucked on its bottle and slept peacefully, undisturbed by the movements of the plane or the uncertainty of what was to come.

After what seemed a lifetime, the plane came down for a border check outside Moscow. We scrambled out of the winged source of our discomfort, down the ladder-like stairs, to sink ankle-deep in Russia's mud, which soiled my only shoes. When we got to Moscow, we were taken to a hotel in the heart of the city.

Shaken and bedraggled, we found ourselves in the city's most luxurious hotel. Fountains reflected in mirrored ceilings. At dinnertime, in a dining room sparkling with white linen, crystal, and silver, we ordered dinner from huge gold-tasseled menus. I pointed self-assuredly to five places of Russian lettering on the menu and received from the unsmiling Russian waiter five courses of ice cream.

Exhausted, I fell asleep and never got to see the Moscow subway with the rest of the group. Later on, Frau Eheman and I saw the impressive sights of Moscow and the back streets as well. I felt sure I knew the way, but actually we were lost. Just as we were ready to give in to hopelessness and frustration, we found someone who spoke German. He informed us that we were at the back entrance of our own hotel.

Moscow was the first and last place of luxury on our trip, and therefore it shines brightly in my memory.

As our trip progressed, I found my guardian as warm and scatterbrained as she at first seemed. Frau Eheman sometimes left our papers unattended on a bench in a station, almost forgetting them as we ran to catch a train. I felt I had to take charge. I took care of the papers, and I also tried to keep her from doing ridiculous things like having a romance with a Russian officer who was traveling with his son on the train. Finally I threw myself between them,

saying, “Mother, don’t! What will Father say?” She was not grateful.

The Trans-Siberian Railroad trip was the longest single part of our journey. It was the only way one could cut through the vastness of Russia and Siberia. On that nine-thousand-mile trip, there seemed to be no life along the way except for the occasional groups of ragged, barefoot children begging for food, and the huge omnipresent posters of Stalin greeting us with the same mysterious smile at every station. When the train made water stops, Herr Professor Sonreich would quickly get off. His form would grow smaller and smaller in the distance as he hunted for rare specimens of wildflowers. The warning whistle of the train would bring him running back, flowers of Siberia clutched in his hand. More than once the train had already begun to move.

The train was becoming a home, a narrow crowded one with small compartments, each of which slept four. One entered the compartments from the narrow aisle lined with once-beautiful wood and soot-covered windows through which we viewed the passing scene of rolling hills. The even chugging of the train was interrupted only by family sounds—Frau Hirsch complaining to her Jewish husband in a strident voice about the discomforts of the train, their children echoing her. Prim Fraulein Sanft, taking care of her father, cleaned and straightened up as if our cramped compartment were her little house.

Our compartment home for nine days was warm but not cozy. The seats were hard. The back of the seat was a board that was let down at night to make a bed. The steward taking care of our compartment was a surly, blond giant of a nonspeaking Russian, probably with a dialect that no one on the train could understand.

The highlight of the day was going to the dining car. We paid with tickets that had been handed to us when we boarded the train. One never knew how many tickets a meal would cost. I worried they would not last the whole trip. But if they didn’t last, I knew that I could always have some of my pâté de foie gras from the little container in my suitcase with their Russian white bread. I had brought the pâté of goose liver from home, and as long as it lasted I was secure from hunger.

I could not look forward to nights of restful, refreshing sleep. When I bedded down for the night in my upper berth, the thin mattress, which lay without an enclosure on a slippery board, would slide off at the first curve, taking me with it. I would land on the hard floor between the two lower berths. I tried holding onto the baggage net next to my bed, but as sleep came my hold would loosen and I would land again between Fraulein Sanft’s father and Frau Eheman. They were sympathetic. They put pillows and overcoats down to break the fall.

Finally I had an idea. I was small and very light. I would sleep in my baggage net, against the wall over my bed. I climbed into the hammock-like net, curled up, and then straightened out gingerly, a little at a time. Then I heard the terrible sound of nails being ripped out of the wood as the frame of the net came away from the wall at the far end. I was terrified. Fortunately I didn’t wake the others. I had heard someone say, “If you cause damage and you don’t pay for it, the Russians won’t let you off the train until you do.” I had ten German marks. That was not enough. Perhaps I would have to stay on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, a traveling prisoner forever!

In the morning I sat with my back propping up the baggage net. When the dull maker of beds came in, I acted sleepy and said *nyet,* and motioned him on. In the evening, when he returned to let down the beds, I again sat with my back propping up the baggage net, acting as if that were my most comfortable position. He shrugged and went his way. I was the last to get up from bed and the first to go to bed, always assuming my Buddha-like position when any Russians were near. Did the big Russian know? He always shrugged in the same way. Did the others know of my childish fear of the never-ending ride?

There was a romance between a pretty young woman and a charming young man, both part of our group of twenty-one. One day in Siberia, the woman stepped off the train at a stop and we never saw her again. The rest of us took care of each other. There was a Russian-Jewish interpreter on the Trans-Siberian Railroad who claimed he had not been prepaid by the Russian railroad for his services. I didn't trust him. Having only the ten marks that we were allowed to take out of Germany, I offered my wristwatch. He said he did not take anything from children, but I learned later that Fraulein Sanft had given him something for me, perhaps jewelry.

In spite of our looking out for each other, an ominous threat was always there—the threat of something happening on the way, something that would keep us from getting to the United States. If war broke out between Germany and Russia, we would all be caught in that enigmatic land. The Russian people were friendly but puppet-like, as though moved by an unseen hand. Their

omnipotent dictator's wary eyes seemed to watch them from large banners, his secret smile never telling us whether he was a saint or a madman.

There was a "friendship pact" between the Germans and the Russians, but we knew how the two nations hated one another. They were getting ready to spring at each other's throats when the time was right. When they sprang, we would be clawed by both sides. Any delay in our journey brought us closer to that danger. Each time our passports were checked, we were afraid that some oppressed, ground-down official might need to prove his effectiveness by finding a small flaw that for us could mean return to Hitler's Germany or to the no-man's-land of Siberia. This would mean going from danger to danger, never finding any haven.

Our close contact and common fears bound us together in friendship. The nine days on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which brought us from one end of Russia to the other, from Europe to the Orient, taught us how to help and protect each other. This part of our trip was coming to an end. My broken baggage net had not been discovered, and when we said good-bye to Frau Eheman's Russian officer and to the interpreter, who had become more humane, we all felt freer. We were getting closer to our goal.

The next train trip took us into Manchuria. This was a new world for me. I had seen only one Asian person before, who had been working at the country fair at home. Things went smoothly until we arrived at Fusan in Korea. Here we crossed by ferry the Korea Strait, a body of water separating Korea and Japan. We were almost merry. For the first time, we felt as if we were on vacation. We watched from the afterdeck how the waves cut through by

the ferry joyously dissolved and re-formed, separated and united, again and again.

The Asians around us on the ferry were busy and not interested in us. They must have been commuters. As we docked, their papers were checked quickly. Polite officials smilingly waved them on. Our papers were checked slowly and carefully by four men. I thought they had better hurry, as we had a train to catch for Kobe, Japan. They took their time, then smiling politely, returned the papers to some of our group, permitting them to go on. The ferry was docking on the Japanese side adjacent to a huge railroad terminal. The first to get their papers waited for the rest of us. Then another group was permitted to leave.

Soon only the Hirsches, Frau Eheman, Herr Professor, and I were left, then only Herr Professor, Frau Eheman, and I. We urged the others to go on and hold the train for us. They left reluctantly. The officials checked my papers and put them aside. They let the professor go. He kept circling back as if he couldn't find his way. Finally he too was gone.

Frau Eheman sat dejectedly. The red hat with its red feather and her overly rouged face framed by the bright yellow hair made her look like a sad clown. At last the officials summoned her and told her that she was permitted to go. She would not leave, the silly woman. The train for Kobe was going to depart without her. The others could not hold that train up. For what seemed like hours but was perhaps only minutes, the officials sat bent over my passport, grinning in what I thought was embarrassment. Suddenly I knew—my visa had expired! That was why Fred had to get me out of Berlin first. That was why I had to leave without

my brother. Finally I told Frau Eheman to leave, and she did.

I walked slowly round and round the deck of the ferry, so alone, while the officials deliberated. Tears left their wet tracks on my cheeks as, finally, I cried. Oh angel at my shoulder, I thought, I can barely feel your presence. Are you there? Oh Mother, you did tell me he would be there always. Oh angel, will they let me go? If I fall on my knees and beg, will they let me go? Then they called me. One of them wrote something in the passport, another stamped it and handed it back to me. They all smiled broadly and bowed. I was free to go, but to go where?

I got off the ferry and was lost in a huge maze of crisscrossing railroad tracks and ticket stations. The loud hum of strange sounds enveloped me, and no one understood my repeated desperate question, "Where is the train for Kobe?" Did they think all children my age traveled alone? Did they think I took this ferry every day? Maybe they didn't care at all!

Then far off I saw the most beautiful sight—a red feather on a red hat! I pushed and shoved through the self-concerned, scurrying crowd, calling for Frau Eheman. I reached her, and we fell into each other's arms. At least we were lost together.

Our search for the train to Kobe continued. We called out questions alternately in German and English. There stood the only other European, crumpled and unsure, with weeds protruding from his pockets. It was Herr Professor. He did not seem surprised to see us, as he must have missed the train too. He said we had to buy tickets for the next train for Kobe and that he would get them. He paid at the ticket window, dashed off with us at his heels, and then doubled back. He had forgotten the tickets! When he

returned with tickets in hand, we ran for the next train. We ran in the direction of the ticket man's pointing finger. There it was—the train for Kobe, and outlined by the windows were familiar faces, joyous at seeing us. They cheered, waving American Coca-Cola bottles as we came alongside the train, which had not left after all.

Reunited, we traveled on to Kobe. There we spent a full day, and the Jewish community of Kobe had a lovely dinner for us in the dining room of their synagogue. They were happy that we had made it so far and that we could go on to America. We continued by train through Japan, stopping at small, muddy villages and at night sleeping on straw mats all in one common room. I remember one of the young men always going to sleep in his overcoat.

We finally arrived in Yokohama, where we were to board the ship for the United States. We had a few hours to see the city, but some of us got to the boat quite late, just as they were about to pull up the gangplank. Aboard ship I soon found out that I was in third class, in the belly of the ship. The lucky ones were in first or second class. Those of us in third class slept in a common room next to the kitchen, with curtains dividing us. I could hear Frau Hirsch complaining all the time, saying, "Why didn't we stay in Germany? Things were better there." Her husband did not reply.

The food was unfamiliar. It looked brown and squishy. One day I simply couldn't eat it and discovered it was snails, which were a delicacy to some but not to me. We had many hard-boiled eggs and were lucky if one out of three was not spoiled. At night, lying on my bunk bed, I could see the bugs marching along the pipes above my head. When morning came, we could go on deck in the fresh air. One afternoon I fell asleep in the hot sun. I woke

up perhaps two hours later and could not see. I felt shaky and nauseous but made my way back to our cabin. It was a mild case of sunstroke. After that I was more careful.

Karen, who had become a special friend, and I taught German to some of the friendly Japanese sailors. They in turn taught us English and brought us Japanese delicacies. One day they brought us bowls of beige soup. The soup contained neat round dumplings. The texture of the dumplings was rubbery and not chewable. When no one was looking, we chucked them overboard.

Many Japanese students were onboard, returning to their schooling in the United States after a summer at home in Japan. They were lighthearted, but we had seen the preparations for war in Manchuria and Japan. Sometimes on the trains the shades would be pulled down, and soldiers patrolling the aisles would see to it that we did not look out. I caught glimpses of tanks and guns lining the train tracks. Now on the boat and almost in America, we tried not to think of that sign of impending war.

Social workers greet Agathe at the pier in Seattle, August, 1940

Arrival in the United States

MY TRAVELING COMPANIONS went straight on to the East Coast. I went to Seattle via Vancouver. In Seattle photographers were there to meet me. They called me a heroine and asked me how I felt. "Happy," I said. My hair, done in Shirley Temple curls aboard ship, had come undone, and I was tired. A committee was there to greet me. They were German-speaking, two men and a woman. They smiled and told me what a fine home I was going to for the next month until my brother would arrive in the United States. They took me in a black, shiny car. The house was white and majestic, with green lawns and a smooth, ribbon-like walk leading to the front door. The committee gave me my suitcase and the flowered pillow with a handle sewn on that my mother had made for me. They said, "We have to run now—go on up to the house—they are expecting you." I walked up and knocked. No one seemed to be at home.

A girl about my age with dark, curly hair and very bright-red cheeks emerged from the house next door. She motioned me to come into her house. Taking me into the apple-green kitchen with its soft white curtains moving in the breeze, she put some bread into a shiny silver thing and soon it popped up, all brown and crisp. She buttered it, had some eggs, orange and white, sizzling in a pan, and poured me a glass of very white milk. She watched me eat and drink. It all tasted heavenly. We managed to talk some, even with my limited English, and remained friends during my stay in Seattle.

The Thomases, with whom I was to stay, soon returned. They were nice. They thought of me as mature and self-sufficient. Hadn't I just traveled without family halfway around the world? When my hosts would go off to visit their grown children, I found myself frightened in the big house alone, with the thunder and lightning outside. I would curl up into a small ball in the corner of the bedroom. I was homesick. I missed my family and my travel companions. Red-eyed in the morning, I would admit to nothing. Sometimes the Thomases took me to the movies. I wondered why the film stars stayed alive in those swashbuckler movies and the others would get killed. Weren't the others important? At night my hosts would admonish me to put the shades down when getting undressed. In our farmhouse in Europe, we didn't have shades or neighbors nearby.

In the morning, the "big treat" would be waiting—a half of a cantaloupe. The colors were so beautiful, but the flavor was foreign. I would force it down dutifully but couldn't eat it for years after. Cantaloupe ever after brought back the loneliness and despair of those first days in America.

Somehow word got out that I was up for adoption. But my parents were alive, and we would be a family again! People trying to adopt me kept coming, checking me out. One lady, wearing very old, dark clothes, seemed to be measuring my body strength. Perhaps she had young children who needed caring for. They all seemed to have plans for me. One couple was nice. The father smoked a pipe—I liked that. They took me to their home, which was warm. They had two boys; they wanted a girl—perhaps they wanted me. But I had parents, and I was sure they would get here.

Mrs. Thomas helped me write a desperate letter to an American cousin, pleading to get the adoption process stopped. There was no reply. Fortunately nothing came of the adoptions. Mrs. Thomas tried to Americanize me by parting my hair in the middle and making two braids, one on each side, and tying those braids together with a nice ribbon. But I wanted Shirley Temple curls.

Four weeks passed. My brother had arrived in San Francisco. I was anxious to see him, and it was arranged for me to go to be with him. We said our good-byes, my first American friend, my newest family, and I. The same committee that met me at the boat put me on the train. I felt at home. I made friends with the people near me, who fed me chocolates from a giant box of candy. I saw a magazine with a funny little Hitler on it. It was Charlie Chaplin acting comically the part of Hitler in a movie. I couldn't understand the humor. I was confused. How could they laugh? Was America far away enough to feel completely safe? My parents were in his cruel hands, but here people sang the words to a popular song, "For to love the Führer is a great disgrace, so we *heil,* we *heil,* right in the Führer's face."

When we arrived in San Francisco, the people on the train gave me the giant box of candy, and there was my brother Ludwig waiting with another committee. I was finally at my destination. It didn't feel real. I was in San Francisco. We were taken to the Jewish orphanage, which had small individual homes with orange-tile roofs on a hilly site. Strange eucalyptus trees with silver slivers for leaves and pungent red geraniums were everywhere. I was brought to my assigned house. There were children about my age with an elderly, tired-looking housemother in charge. Her hair was frizzy and stood on end. She could not keep the children orderly. She didn't seem to notice that a newcomer had arrived.

The days after proved to be similar to the first day. I met the head of the orphanage. He seemed to be a gentleman, quite distant from the children and the harassed housemother. He took the necessary notes in the quiet of his office. He dictated them into his machine, and the interview ended. On Friday night they had a religious service with no singing and no Hebrew—so different from the traditional services that I was used to. The head of the home and the psychologist conducted the service in a classroom. They had their street hats on. I yearned so for my *Shabbos* back home, for the familiar songs and prayers and for my kind of synagogue. I had to get out of there—I would run away! I would find a family to stay with. Being a quiet little girl, I couldn't fight for attention and I would get lost in the noisy shuffle of the orphanage.

Miss Minzey, the social worker from the Jewish agency, appeared one day. Tall, with wavy salt-and-pepper hair, a black cape, and a black hat with red cherries, she looked like a kindly witch. Miss Minzey had a foster home in mind for me. I insisted it be religious

and kosher and that my brother had to go there too. She said no, with a vigorous shake of her head. The foster home that she had in mind had one extra bedroom, and they only wanted a young girl. But I would not be separated from my brother.

Miss Minzey told me this was the only kosher home available and that these were good, warm people who loved children. Miss Minzey had placed a child there before. She negotiated with my future foster parents. Someone suggested that we put up a screen between me and my brother at night, which solved everything. Finally we would have a home until my parents came.

Without meeting our new foster parents first, my brother and I moved in. They were young and lived in a small, rear ground-floor apartment of a four-apartment house. Life centered around her very clean and cozy kitchen.

My foster mother was petite, with her black, curly hair contained in a net. When she said, "Call us Aunt Hennie and Uncle Charlie," my heart filled with joy and gratitude. She felt my parents should not be replaced. They would make it to America. Uncle Charlie, younger than his wife, was red cheeked and boyish, with a big laugh but a heaviness underneath. Even though he had come West as an orphan years before, he had a New York, almost Russian, way of speaking. Though he at first teased me about being German, with each passing day he seemed to grow more fond of me.

I felt my foster mother's love and respect almost instantly. They accepted my wishes for a kosher home and tightened up a bit in the way they kept theirs. They respected my keeping the laws of the Sabbath, and Aunt Hennie tried to make the dishes

my mother made. Aunt Hennie was a fine cook in the Austrian-Hungarian fashion of her background. She would roll out the soup-noodle dough paper-thin and let it dry somewhat, then roll it up and cut it into fine strips. These would be tossed and dried, ready for chicken soup. She thought I would appreciate this, but since my mother had done the same on the work-worn table in our kitchen in Europe, I took it quite for granted.

I didn't miss my mother's homemade rye bread, for after a few days it would get quite tough, and here we had freshly baked bread every day from the bakery. The San Francisco weather stayed mild, and winter never seemed to arrive. I didn't miss the frostbitten feet or the cold in my upstairs dormer bedroom in Germany. But I missed the family gathering on those winter nights around the tile stove while the snow blanketed the old farmhouse, barns, and animal stalls.

On the long trip to the United States, I had to think for myself and even for my temporary guardian. Here in America, I rebelled at being treated like a child. Bedtime was a big issue, for I loved to read. I had to be in bed by a certain time and keep a record to submit to Miss Minzey. Since I didn't ride on the Sabbath, I had to walk miles to her office when we met. She never checked my bedtime record—she wanted me to realize what fine people my foster parents were. Of course they were fine, but I wanted to hear that I was fine too.

By the end of the first year, my foster parents' and mine, our lives began to mesh. I began to understand Aunt Hennie and Uncle Charlie's relationship and even helped them communicate with

each other. There was an underlying sadness, because they had had one stillborn child and could not have any more children. Uncle Charlie had been orphaned at age thirteen. They were the children of immigrants, and their families' adjustment to the United States had been difficult. Their goal for me was that I become Americanized quickly. They worked at helping me lose my German accent, but they maintained my religious education and sent me to a daily Hebrew school where I had Jewish friends.

Agathe's foster parents, Charlie and Hennie Rosen

Letter from Agathe to her parents, 1940

The War Years

IN 1940 WE LEARNED that my parents had been deported from their home to an internment camp in the French Pyrenees. The men and women were separated and lived in different parts of the camp. French soldiers guarded everyone. Letters came steadily, injecting my life in America with sadness.

Ludwig and I corresponded with our parents for two years. Their letters were at first hopeful, but they did write in a kind of code, using Hebrew names for certain meanings: "Herr Roev [Mr. Hunger] visits us often." They wrote of "Marie," which stood for death, and said she is often present and takes the elderly. They openly complained about the bitter cold. The letters said, "When we see your girlfriends at the camps, we are so glad that you are not here." They said that all their pride was gone now, and they asked us and relatives to help with money for food and begged for

action on visas to get them out. The visas could not be obtained through relatives or friends, and I don't know if money for food ever reached them. In each letter, written in neat handwriting partly by my father and partly by my mother, and covering tightly every inch of the page, they spoke of their yearning and hope of seeing us again.

In their letters our parents told us to study hard and be good with our foster parents so that it would be easy for them to love us and take care of us. My mother spoke of the wildflowers in the camp that reminded her of those at home. She worked hard trying to make some money to help my father, and she was finally able to work with the young children in a separate camp. My father became the camp barber—work for which he had little experience other than cutting his own children's hair and shaving my grandfather. They wished us happy birthdays and asked for pictures. They said to choose friends carefully and told me I had the gift to know who could be trusted and who could not. Every letter spoke repeatedly of their quest for remaining healthy and seeing us again. I worried about my mother getting her orthopedic shoes.

My daily activities in public school and religious school and my warm relationship with my foster parents kept me from dwelling on my parents in the internment camp. A year later, in 1941, my foster parents moved to a large pre-earthquake home in the Mission District of San Francisco. They took in, as boarders, the wives of sailors who shipped in and out of San Francisco's harbor. These women had come from different parts of America. I learned from being with them about other parts of the country. One had a little boy that I became very fond of. One newly wed and much-

in-love woman would head alone for the waterfront when she thought her husband was coming in. Uncle Charlie, my foster father, would often drive her there. One wife, a beautiful woman who had become a special friend of mine, could not stand the loneliness and went out with other men. My foster parents felt they had to tell the husband when he returned to San Francisco, and he was very angry. The wife moved out of their house a short time later. I never learned what happened to the marriage.

Suddenly, in August 1942, the letters from my parents stopped. My letter telling them about school and the dentist and hoping that they were well, and about how nice the High Holidays had been, and about what a nice sukkah we had, was returned. I had ended the letter by wishing my mother a happy birthday and that with God's help, everything would turn out all right. I sent greetings and kisses and signed it "from your Agathe."

At that time I had no way of knowing, but we later learned from records that in August 1942 my parents were deported to Auschwitz and died there.

Malsch, after the war

EPILOGUE

Return to My Home

MY HUSBAND, JOSEPH, as a rabbi and Jewish leader had been to Germany. He insisted that he and I return to my hometown with our children. It was 1970. Our daughter was eleven years old that year, and our sons were fifteen, thirteen, and five. I did not want to go. Even after we arrived in Germany, I was uneasy about visiting Malsch, but Joe relentlessly drove in the direction of the town. He felt that perhaps by returning to my childhood home, I could recapture some of my happier memories. We stopped at a gas station not far from the town. A man about my father's age when I last saw him helped us. He spoke in the soft dialect of the region. Something tightened in me. I suddenly could not breathe and felt that I would never breathe again. Then suddenly breath came back to me.

As we drove into the town I saw that the *Bach* was gone, and

the split in the road with the linden tree and the wooden Jesus on the cross were gone too. A newer, wide road made for cars had replaced it all. We drove to where the synagogue had been. All that remained there was a small cemented space. I could not believe that so much of our lives had taken place in that tiny area ... or had the neighboring yards encroached on it over the years? My aunt and uncle's store was still there, though they and my cousin died in Auschwitz, as my parents had.

We found my old house and saw the bakery in front of it and the Hornungs' house beyond it. I took my family into the cobblestone front yard. There was now a space to park a car. I showed the children the barn and stables. The woman who owned the house appeared and invited us in. The house hadn't changed much, but the living room with the tile stove where my father's desk and my mother's lovely figurines had been was quite bare. It was now a child's bedroom. We went into the kitchen, still the large, bright, warm room that had been the center of activity.

We went back out to the courtyard. A man appeared in the upstairs window of the Hornungs' house and was clearly watching us. He waved and yelled across the yard, "Ah-gah-teh!" (the German pronunciation of my name) and disappeared from sight. A minute later he was running across the yard, and then suddenly he was with us. He put his arms around me and said, "Ah-gah-teh." It was Otto, my childhood protector and friend. My children had grown up hearing about Otto—he had become a hero to them. We were in tears. The storybook character was real. The little boy who had come to their mother's defense in those dark days was now a man, and here he was in the flesh. It was a very emotional moment for us all.

Later Frau Hornung came from her house. She looked remarkably the same, only older. We sat down, and she told us in vivid detail of the day my parents were picked up and deported. My father was at home, but my mother was with an aunt in the city getting a new pair of her special shoes. Frau Hornung then took us to see Rosel. We went to a small house in their backyard with a ramp leading up to it. Frau Hornung said, "Rosel does not walk anymore." We went into the house, and there was a faded Rosel in a wheelchair. She too recognized me and called me by my name. She had her son serve my children a drink made with wild raspberry syrup, the way my mother had made it. There were low shelves for her to reach. There on a shelf I saw the brass alligator. If you pushed the tail down, the alligator opened its mouth. It had come from my childhood home. What a strange mixture of emotions I felt at seeing these old friends and some of my family's belongings still here in Malsch after these many years. It was like a dream.

I was glad that we made the trip to my home. Memories came flooding back that eventually helped me to create this memoir. Telling my story has been and will always be important to me. It is my hope that the record of my experiences will be passed down by my children and their children after them. I have enjoyed telling them to you as well.

Agathe with grandchild in Scarsdale, New York

BIOGRAPHY

AGATHE MAIER GLASER was born in Baden, Germany, in the town of Malsch Bei Ettlingen. She lived with her parents, brother, and grandfather until 1940, when, at the age of twelve, she had to leave Germany alone and hurriedly, due to the impending expiration of her visas. She traveled halfway around the world, through Russia, Manchuria, China, and Japan, without family, and arrived on the West Coast of the United States.

Shortly after she left, her parents and all the Jews of Baden were deported to a detention camp in the Pyrenees of France, where they lived for two years with hunger and cold as their constant companions. From there they were deported to Auschwitz, where they died.

Agathe was taken in by kind and loving foster parents who helped her adapt to her new country. She became a teacher of

Hebrew and then art, often designing with Hebrew letters. Having always been a storyteller, she began in later years to write about her own childhood experiences and to share her experiences as talks to congregations and other communities throughout the nation.

She married a future rabbi, Joseph Glaser, who she accurately predicted would always fight for the rights of Jews and all oppressed people. They had four children who have continued in helping the disenfranchised. Agathe passed away in December 2006. She was the grandmother of seven grandchildren, whom she adored and who loved her deeply.