

12/29/16

### **Short version of the Emigration of Eleanor Grundmann (Ney) to the U.S.**

Honey (Hannelore Grundmann) was born in 1920 in Essen, Germany, on 20 Moltke Strasse the youngest of three children. Her twin siblings, Ralph (Rolf) and Lee (Liselotte) were 7 years older.

She came from an upper middle class Jewish family. Otto Grundmann, her father, (“Opi”) was a distinguished lawyer with a thriving legal practice. He had fought in WW I as an officer, and had a dueling scar to prove it. He had been away at war from 1914 to about 1918. They had a large detached home, with both a cook and cleaning help. Honey was not allowed to cook but fortunately learned cooking skills as an adolescent. Immediately after the war French soldiers were quartered in their home at the families’ expense and their cook had to cook for the soldiers as well. Her mother, Hete, was a homemaker.

Honey’s childhood was a happy one. She was an athletic and active child. She loved running, horseback riding, tree climbing, bike riding, swimming, and skiing. She’s rightly proud of her horseback riding. She was in several exhibitions in the Ruhr Region hanging upside down while holding onto a leash; she also stood atop two other girls while riding around the ring. She kept the pictures to show it.

Honey was also a risk taker. She has a scar on her forehead from running into a mailbox; another time she smashed her scooter into a tree and lost two front teeth.

“Opi”, encouraged and even modeled her athletic pursuits. He was well known for his calisthenics. He would exercise in the all-together on their back porch at dawn. But after neighbors’ complaints, Hete put up a curtain to shield the neighbors’ prying eyes.

When Honey told Opi she wanted to get her own rowboat, he said she had to be able to tread water for an hour. After Honey passed the test, Opi bought her a Faltboat (folding boat) which she kept in a shed near the lake. Honey and her girl friend would ride their bikes to the lake and go rowing. They even took along a record player to hear their favorite songs. Sometimes they met boys who tied their boat to Honey’s and towed them around the lake.

Honey’s best friend was Franz Oppenheimer, who lived right next door. They played together every day and were in the same class in a small Jewish private school. But one morning, when Honey was only eight years old, she saw the police next door and heard right away from a neighbor what had happened. Franz’ father had shot and killed his mother and then killed himself. Franz and his older sister, Laura, were whisked away to their grandmother’s house. Honey was devastated by the horror of the crime as well as the sudden loss of her best friend. She didn’t see Franz until 10 years later when she met

him in London. But at that point she said they had nothing in common and didn't get along.

Shortly thereafter Honey left the private school and enrolled in 1928 in the public Victoriaschule . However, about five years later in the beginning of 1934, after the Nazis came to power, she was forced to leave the school. In the "race studies class" the teacher forced Honey to stand in front of the class to provide an object example of what a Jew looked like. All Jews were described as criminals and animals. The lesson actually failed when a student pointed out that Honey had blue eyes. But nonetheless after being humiliated in front of the entire class she was shunned by her girl friends. At about the same time Honey had to appear along with her mother at a parade featuring Goebbels and Goering, and to stand at attention and salute them. As a result of these events, Hete decided that Honey had to leave the school and that marked the end of her formal academic schooling. She was depressed and confused. [Honey's affidavit November 1955; opi's affidavit also in November 1955 describes Honey as being insecure and depressed.] After the war Honey wrote to the school asking for evidence of the above facts to support her application for restitution, claiming that because of the Nazis she had been unable to go further than Undersekunda (7<sup>th</sup> grade); she noted that she had taken a test to get into the Victoriaschule in 1928 and that one of her teachers, Mr. Miller, had saved her from drowning in the North Sea. She received immediate confirmation that she had attended the school and had taken the following subjects: Religion, German, Latin, French, English, History, Earth Science, mathematics, biology, chemistry, drawing, gym and singing. (Certificate from Stadt. Maedchengymnasium, Oberstudiendirektorin, Dec 12, 1957). .

Following these incidents Honey's parents enrolled her in an internship with a local chef, who trained her in cooking and baking while she prepared lunch every day for 12 businessmen. That's where she learned to bake her celebrated Zwetchenkuchen as well as her famous cheesecake and apple cake. Her parents decided that she needed to have skills that could enable her to earn a living abroad if she had to leave because of the Nazis (Opi's affid, Nov 1955). (Earlier Opi had hoped that Honey could join Ralph in his law firm; she had been excited by this idea in 1933, according to his affidavit; the German government validated this claim in its restitution award to Honey of 5000 DM on 11/22/1956).

In 1938 her rabbi from Essen, Dr. Hugo Hahn, wrote a letter in support of her employment as a household employee noting that she came from a well respected home in Essen. She is a "very neat, diligent, alert and reliable girl, who in her school work and in her later professional life, performed her assignments with great success" He observed that after attending her neighborhood school she learned cooking and baking in a local Jewish restaurant and later was employed by different families to work in their kitchens and households. "Because of her education and charming personality she is well suited to educate and supervise children. She is very verbal and will get along quickly in any environment."

As the Nazi's continued to consolidate their power in the '30's and make life miserable for Jews, Honey's parents decided to help her get additional training in an occupation that she could use if she had to emigrate. In 1936, when she was 16, they sent her to Offenbach, a suburb of Frankfurt, to become an apprentice in the leather-goods trade. That's where she met Henry Goldsmith, two years her junior. Although he liked Honey, she thought he was just a little boy, given the age difference. He became a good friend but not her boy friend. She excelled as a leather goods worker, learning skills that helped her when she emigrated to England and later to the U.S.

About two years later, in October 1938, while still working in Offenbach Honey got an urgent call from her father—just a month before Kristallnacht—telling her she had to leave Germany the next morning and not to tell anyone. It's not clear exactly what prompted this immediate directive. But she followed his advice. Taking only a small suitcase with a single change of clothing and her portable Royal typewriter, Honey bought a one way ticket to Basel, where her aunt Stella and Karl Meyer lived. Stella is the mother of Frank Meyer now living in San Francisco and father of Hailey. (Honey's documents show a "leadership certificate" issued by the Hessen Police on 10/5/1938 valid for 3 months for foreign travel. ) Apparently she had to get this certificate, i.e. a visa, so in fact the Government knew she was traveling abroad; I guess the point was she didn't tell anyone that she wasn't coming back). Initially, the Swiss only allowed her to stay 30 days but just before the end of the month, Stella got a call from Opi, stating that he had been arrested by the Nazi's although he was out of jail temporarily. This may have been precipitated by Kristallnacht. Apparently he had some connections with the police that may have given him some leniency. With this evidence that Honey would be endangered if she were sent back to Germany, the Swiss police allowed her to stay an additional 3 months. That gave her the time to get a visa to England. And so she left for London in January 1939. (Honey's letter, 10/4/58 to Meyerhoff).

But rather than finding liberation the British greeted Honey with incarceration. She was labeled an "enemy alien" and put her in jail since as a German national she must be aligned with the Nazis.

Honey's parents also arrived in London in approximately January 1940.

While in prison Honey suffered through the German Blitz. In her own words, she went crazy because she was locked in her cell during the bombardment. She and the other women prisoners screamed and banged on the cell walls. When word of the women's plight got to the House of Commons, the British relented and allowed the women to leave their cells during air raids. Her parents also were allowed to visit and brought her chocolate and sardines, a typical Opi combination. Honey said the British were putting Broam in the coffee to depress the women's sex drive.

Hete refused to go to the air raid shelters during the Blitz, and also refused to visit the jail, although it's not exactly clear why. Hete also was very upset when she didn't get mail from Rolf who was fighting in the US Army in New Guinea. (Another family connection with New Guinea: Tara's father, Gerry Gutman, who emigrated from Munich

to Australia, became the Australian Colonial Administrator of New Guinea in the 1960's).

After a few weeks she was released from jail with the help of her sister (?) on condition that she get a job as a maid. Lee wisely advised her not to work as a sleep-in nanny since she would have no time for herself. Instead, Honey found a job as a sleep-in maid. That worked out well except when she was asked during the middle of the night to empty the lady of the house's chamber pot. Again getting good advice from Lee, she pretended not to hear the lady knocking on the door.

When summer came Honey moved with the family to Brighton and cooked for 9 people. Even though the setting was prettier, she felt like a prisoner. She needed to get a permit from the police just to leave the house to go out dancing. Later she went to work at a private hotel and cooked for 18 people. But she liked that job better because she had her own radio and most importantly could stop work at 8 pm. And she no longer had to prepare tea for the family at 10 pm and didn't have to take care of the family dog.

Although happier than she had been, she was still eager to get out of housework. She bought a British magazine "Luggage and Leathergoods" where she found an ad for leather goods workers posted by the Alligator Leather Goods Co., in the small town of Bishop Auckland (County Durham) in Northern England. She wrote and immediately was hired.

She quickly was promoted to be the supervisor (forelady) over 15 other women workers "on the bench". She was advised not to make friends with the workers but how was that possible in such a small town where she knew nobody else. She stayed there one year and fell in love with her supervisor, S. Rollman. After Belgium fell to the Nazis, the British moved to take over the factory since it was owned by Germans. Honey along with her boyfriend were hauled before a tribunal in Darlington. Mr. Rollman was asked two questions. When was the factory started. A. 1928 (i.e. before Hitler). And where did the money come from to open the factory. A. Germany. With those replies, the British took over the factory and took Honey back to her apartment. She had to pack up her stuff and they sent her in a filthy truck to the Penitentiary in London where she was locked up in a single cell.

During one of his visits to jail, Opi told Honey how he was working as a volunteer with the Jewish Committee to help married couples get visas to the U.S. She said well why don't you put me down on the list. Opi said but you're not married. Honey said, well put me down anyhow. He did and months later he got her a visa to the US.

Although she got out of the Penitentiary she still wasn't free. She was sent to the Isle of Man to await the issuance of the visa. Finally, when she got the visa, she left the Isle of Man. The British again assigned a policeman to guard Honey while she was on furlough

With her visa in hand, she boarded the next ship. But a few hours later, they kicked her off because she didn't have a ticket.

The next day, accompanied by her policeman, she went to every shipping line trying to buy a ticket. But there were none. Finally, at the Cunard Line office, she begged and cried and a sympathetic ticket agent offered to take her to lunch the next day. Her policeman was nice enough not to sit at the same table but sat nearby. She told the agent she'd be willing to sleep anywhere on the boat, even on top of the coal. He said if you're willing to do that I'll get you a ticket. And he did.

The next day –September 23, 1940--Honey boarded the “Cynthia” on the Cunard Line – this time with her visa and ticket and \$150 in spending money. (Honey affid, Nov 1955). But nothing was easy. The boat had to wait six hours for the British mine sweepers to clear the harbor of mines and the ship left the harbor accompanied by British destroyers. When they were only one day out at sea Honey was up on deck. Just as she asked an officer to let her look through his binoculars there was an explosion. The ship had been struck by a torpedo. While the boat didn't sink there was virtually no fresh water for the rest of the 9 day trip since the U-Boat's torpedo had destroyed the water supply. She stayed on the bottom of the ship, sleeping on top of the coal. Near her on the coal was a Chinese priest who also was going to the US. Ironically, he spoke Hebrew and Honey didn't.

In the US the days after arriving she obtained a job in a leather goods company in Kew Gardens, from a company recommended by Lee.

In 1941 Honey worked for the Stanley & Stanley Co, a Leather Craftman outfit,, for about 6 months. She showed “unusual ability in designing and assembling work in the fancy leather goods line” the company wrote.

In 1943 the Eko Company, located in Kew Gardens, a manufacturer of high grade alligator leather goods, wrote that she did all kinds of bench work, cutting patterns and instructed unskilled help. We have been greatly satisfied with [her]work. She has proved to be a highly industrious, intelligent and reliable worker who performed her duties with great skill and understanding.”

In November 1944 that she had worked for the Litex Products Co in Manhattan for a year as a forelady and sample maker. “We have always found her extremely able and conscientious...Her samples and designs were always most original and in very good taste.”

In June 1945 her employer, F.H. Leather Products, 611 Broadway, wrote:

Mrs. Eleanor Ney has been with us for more than 9 months as sample maker. She was in charge of the production and has fulfilled her duties to our full satisfaction. She also took care of all the necessary working and cutting patterns and gradually improved the workmanship. ...she was also able to handle the table workers and operators the right

way and in addition accomplished a great amount of work herself. She is a pleasant and willing person of very good education and her sincerity is beyond any doubt. We deeply regret that, for personal reasons, she will leave our firm...(Fred Hamburger).