

## Karl Linn

Married to Nicole Milner – Photographed separately

Wartime Experience: Immigrated to Israel

My mother's father Carl Rosenthal was a very successful banker and grain merchant. My grandmother Paula Wiesenburg also came from many generations of established Jewish families in Germany. My mother Henny, and her three brothers grew up in Berlin, in wealth and security. My mother graduated from a high school for economics, and her father helped her to enter the business world. She quickly attained success as the only woman procurer in a large firm on Berlin's Wall Street. With the large amount of money she earned, she furnished an elegant flat. Then, in her mid-twenties, she changed the course of her life finding her business career unfulfilling.

Much to the consternation of her family, my mother followed a new vision. Namely, she wanted to establish a farm for children in nature and enrolled in a horticultural school where she was the only Jewish woman who ever graduated because anti-Semitism was rampant. Thereafter, to gain experience, she worked for a year at a special residential school for orphans in Nieupoort, Belgium, where children were raised in a natural setting. She also served an apprenticeship cultivating fruit trees. During these years she looked for a suitable location with fertile soil where she could develop a children's farm.

She bought 16 acres, and between 1910 and 1912 a house was built according to her plans. She moved into the house with my grandmother in the winter of 1913/14, six months before the outbreak of World War I. As the house and the barn were built, she began to hire laborers from the village and plowed the fields surrounding the buildings, using the first generation of mechanized plowing equipment that consisted of two steam engines which pulled a multi-bladed plow back and forth.

In 1918, at the end of World War One, my mother became politically active and was elected to the village council. As a council member, she supported workers' rights, increased educational opportunities, better roads, and the introduction of electricity. Being a champion of women's rights, she adopted, as the emblem of the Immenhof, "Allegory of Autumn," Francesco Cossa's painting of a strong and graceful woman carrying garden tools and a harvest of grapes. She trained many Jewish young people in gardening, primarily young women, many of whom went on to Palestine later. The Immenhof also became a place for horticultural therapy for many of the young people who chose gardening as an occupation.

In 1931, when I was 8, the Immenhof finally hooked into an electrical grid and acquired indoor plumbing and a telephone. I didn't miss the outhouse, especially during the cold winter months, nor the fires we had to make in the middle of the courtyard to unfreeze the water pump. But sometimes I did miss the softer glow of the old kerosene lamps.

During the first twelve years my mother had developed the farm all by herself. She told me she couldn't find a man capable of matching her emancipation. In order to find trainees, she often went to Berlin and that's where she met my father, because my father was the chief librarian of the Jewish community center on Berlin's Fasanenstrasse.

My father Joseph Linn was born in the small town of Cherey in Russia, an hour away from Minsk, near the town Witebsk. He was the youngest of six children. His father Schmuel was a rabbi, apparently the last of a chain of fourteen generations of rabbis. Although my father also trained as a rabbi, studying in the Chader, a religious school room for children and graduating from a Yeshiva, he broke the continuity by never practicing.

In Berlin, my father went first to a Jewish high school and began to study philosophy and literature. During this time, in his late teens and early twenties, while he was already becoming well known as a poet, he also developed a reputation as an activist. He helped Jews who had escaped the pogroms in Eastern Europe to settle in Berlin and, as a compelling orator at Jewish cultural events, facilitated the development of Zionist organizations. He was an editor of the first journal of modern-day poets and writers that was called, Hakeshet (The Rainbow), published from 1903 to 1906.

My father and his first wife, a Russian medical student, had to go to the police station every week to register as foreigners. They were told that they wouldn't have to go to the police station very often if she, being a doctor, would work in the hospital for tuberculosis. Unfortunately, she contracted TB and died. They had three children, two boys and one girl. My half-sister Bella is seventeen years older than I am, and my two brothers Theo and Heinz, fifteen and thirteen respectively.

My mother told me that, when she met my father, she was attracted by his strength of character, maturity, and the pioneering nature of his life's work. Feeling that he would not be threatened by her own extraordinary strength and independence, she decided to marry him.

My father, having been born in Russia, was an "Ostjude," an Eastern European Jew. Snobbish German Jews considered themselves superior to such "unassimilated" Jews. My mother's relatives considered marrying an "Ostjude" a shameful, degrading offense against the family, so much so that my socially ambitious Uncle Adolph severed contact with her until I was born a year later.

One month before my birth, a fire started with a spark from the attic room where my mother was curing a pig in celebration of my birth. The fire caused considerable damage to the main house at the Immenhof. As a result, I was born, on March 11, 1923, in a hospital in the Catholic cloister in Neuruppin. Religious Jews might think that the fire was a telling, divine intervention. The joyful event of my birth revived family connections and my uncle Adolph was present at my birth. He and my mother decided to give me a good German name: Ulrich Karl, with the nickname of Ulli.

I grew up on the Immenhof with my mother and sister who along with other garden trainees served an apprenticeship to become master gardeners. Throughout the year we had six steady employees who grew to 25 or 30 during harvest time. My father who worked in Berlin, spent weekends at the farm often bringing friends along.

Many guests visited the Immenhof for weekends and longer holidays. My mother had a flair for staging imaginative feasts and parties in which everyone actively and joyously participated. I still remember huge tree branches in full blossom being part of the decorations for special events and celebrations, as well as the colorful flower arrangements with which she filled the house every day.

Despite the wonderful setting in which I was raised, I suffered most during my early childhood from the absence of other children. I had no peers to interact with and share my experiences, and no role models for normal child behavior. Living as a little child in the world of adults, I remember mostly skirts, aprons, legs of people and the underworld of oak tables with their scary clawed feet carved into the wood.

My first real connection with other children as well as with the village as a whole began when, at the age of six, I became a student at the local school. The elongated school building, with its grayish stucco wall flanking the road, stood in the center of the village, across from a pond on which we skated in the winter. It contained two classrooms. Four grade levels shared one room and the teachers attempted to keep us busy while ruling the classroom with a bamboo stick. (We would rub the stick with onion juice, which caused it to break upon impact.) Each year my class would graduate to the row behind until we were up against the wall, which indicated that we were ready to move to the other room.

My sense of being an outsider because of class differences was compounded by my being the only Jewish child in the village. Though my family practiced almost no specific Jewish customs, my mother would light candles Friday evening. I often found myself in arguments with schoolmates, upholding the stature of Moses versus Christ. When other children told me that they heard that Jews would kill Christian babies and use their blood for Passover ceremonies, I was shocked and frightened. I knew that their Church was an alien place, not accessible to me. My brother Heinz tells me that, when he tried to explain to me what a church was, I said that I understood it was God's office. Going to the bathroom I always was careful that my schoolmates didn't see my penis since I was circumcised, and they were not. I felt branded to be different from the others not only in class and race, but also physically.

I suffered greatly from not having a Jewish peer group and often questioned my fate in being born a Jew. When I was in trouble with my parents, I would think about a story my mother told me about my birth. When she was in the hospital of the cloister, a knighted aristocrat, owner of a castle, persistently tried to persuade my mother to let him adopt me. Apparently, he was fascinated with my looks, especially my thick curly hair. At those moments, I wondered how I would have fared, being raised in a castle as a non-Jew by other parents. I became aware that most people in the village worked for one of the three major employers: the traditional

landowner, Ludicke, whose mansion I remember seeing from a distance; the beer brewery, which sat across the pond from the schoolhouse; or my mother.

Already in 1932, national socialism ideology had started to infiltrate the village, and my schoolmates tried to enroll me in the Hitler Youth Movement. Within a matter of weeks, however, they realized that I was the only accessible representative of a race they were being trained to hate and started to call me "dirty Jew." My mother tried to reassure me. Being so deeply ingrained in the German culture she said, "Don't worry about it so much, it's just an advertising gimmick, it's just a fad, it will pass away."

One day, a group of classmates grabbed me forcefully, stood me on a chair, and demanded that I sing the horribly anti-Semitic song by Horst Wessel, whose lyrics refer to a time "when Jewish blood will squirt from knives..." ("Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt..."). I refused to sing the mortifying song and never returned to school. My throat became so constricted that I could no longer sing comfortably. (To this day, I can sing easily only in a hot shower.) Since I had not changed, this swift transformation of attitude both terrified and wounded me deeply. My encounter with the generalized rage of racism, which had nothing to do with me personally, or my character, was agonizingly painful.

When Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933, everything began to change so rapidly that we were caught by surprise. After his takeover, the Nazis assumed control over all aspects of life with amazing speed. Huge posters appeared that inflamed the frustrations of the German people, directing them toward resentment and hatred of Jews. The images portrayed us as sinister subhuman beings, threatening and sucking the blood of the German people. I remember some of these posters, with captions that said: Germany Awaken- Germans Protect Yourselves - Don't Buy from Jews.

At home, I witnessed my mother and sister burning books throughout February and March, ridding our library of any literature that the Nazis might find objectionable. Since the fire filled the house with smoke, we told our workers that the house, being too cold, needed to be heated by a fire in the fireplace. It is possible that these weeks of book burning saved my father's life.

On April 1, just after my tenth birthday, events escalated both nationally and for our family. The government called a national boycott, prohibiting Germans from buying from Jews, and began a campaign to unleash and fan the fury of the German people, mobilizing them to eradicate us. That morning, my sister discovered two piles of newspapers outside our gate. Two armed Nazis in uniform then appeared, saying that they were under orders to search the house, because my father was accused of publishing articles critical of National Socialism. These articles were supposedly printed in the stacked periodicals, for which he had never written.

I watched as the Nazis threatened my father with their revolvers, holding one against his chest and the other against his back, declaring that if they found any incriminating evidence, they would kill him on the spot. They ransacked the house, emptying every bookshelf and drawer,

and pushed my father from room to room at gun point, as I had seen cattle being prodded along. My mother and sister stayed close to him. After four hours, the house and barn were in a shambles, as I imagine a village would look after a pogrom. I wondered then who had framed my father. I later learned, from Bella, that the most likely suspect was the excellent cook we hired just before the Nazi takeover. Bella believed that she was planted as a spy, overheard our conversations, which were critical of the Nazis, and snooped through our library. Deeply shocked and fearing for his life, my father emigrated within weeks of the Nazis' first house search, escaping to Palestine, the land of his Zionist dreams.

My mother, Bella and I were to follow my father as soon as we managed to sell the farm. This took 15 months, during which we lived in an ongoing state of anxiety and fear. The continuing boycott, which prevented us from selling our fruit to non-Jews, undermined our economic existence. Mr. Stettin, our primary wholesaler in Berlin, sadly told us that he could no longer buy from us. As I sensed that we were running out of money, I felt it my responsibility, as the only male in the house, to contribute to the survival of the family, so I started to eat less.

During these 15 months groups of Nazis would appear from time to time and searched the house, making cynical and derogatory remarks and ominous threats. I heard their goose step on the cobblestone road leading to the Immenhof, and I still react with shock to similar sounds, such as high heels on pavement. Since I knew that the Nazis hated red, the color of the Communist flag, I put my Dr. Doolittle books with their red covers in the front row of the bookshelves, so they wouldn't think I was hiding them. I also made sure that my toy gun was very visible.

Since the Immenhof was quite a distance from the village, living there was like being on an isolated island surrounded by hostile enemies, exposed to constant threats of racial persecution. During the day, our telephone was monitored and at night it was disconnected. Hearing Hitler's hoarse and chilling voice on the radio, inciting the German people to go after Jews and destroy us, I felt like a fox cornered in a chase, being pursued by a pack of bloodhounds.

In the summer of 1933, two boys, Jonathan, and Daniel Maasthe first Jewish children I had ever met came to stay at the Immenhof with me. Their parents, who ran a publishing house in Berlin, were also preparing to immigrate to Palestine. Jonathan was older and Daniel younger than me, but each only by a year, and I thoroughly enjoyed their company. We explored the farm and the countryside, playing and creating adventures for ourselves. This discovery of the "peer group" for which I had longed throughout my childhood stands out as the one remarkably positive experience in an otherwise terrible time of Nazi rule.

During the same summer, the "Law of Revocation of Naturalization and Deprivation of German Citizenship of Jews," passed, stripping my siblings, Bella, Theo, and Heinz, of their citizenship and leaving them stateless since their parents were not German born. Being stateless, they feared that they might never be able to leave Germany legally. My sister said that "being without protection of any country made [her] feel like a wild animal." As Jews, they were also

forbidden to continue their studies at German universities. Bella had to leave the Landscape Architecture program at Dahlem in Berlin. Theo eventually escaped to Prague, then to Basel, Switzerland, where he finished his Ph.D. in Physics under extremely difficult conditions. Heinz, who had distinguished himself as a budding surgeon, escaped to Italy, where he tried to continue his medical studies in Palermo. Lack of financial support forced him to abandon his studies. He escaped to Cuba and ultimately immigrated to the US, where he became a businessman.

In the winter of 1933-34, to remove me from the threats and unpredictable terrorizing of the Nazis, my mother sent me to live with Jonathan and Daniel in Berlin. My first experience with religious Jews left me feeling more like an outsider than ever. Sitting in temple, I watched as everyone else, wearing religious garments, prayed by rocking back and forth and reciting incomprehensible Hebrew texts.

Apart from feeling estranged from the religious world of Judaism, including the discomfort of attending Hebrew school, I had a good time with Jonathan and Daniel as we explored Berlin, going to museums, parks and shows. Nevertheless, my feeling of being an outsider and my homesickness both grew, and in February of 1934, just before my eleventh birthday, I insisted on returning to the Immenhof.

Luckily, my mother found a very sympathetic young Jewish teacher to become my tutor. She had lost her job because of the anti-Semitic laws and came to live with us. She was a vivacious and attractive young woman in her late teens. Unlike most adults in my life, she made real contact with me and showed a genuine interest in getting to know who I really was. My mother was often included in our picnics and outings.

When we put the Immenhof on the market, the local store and hotel owner, Ferdinand Winkelman, entered into negotiations with my mother, since he wanted to buy the farm for his son Herbert. During the fifteen-month long negotiation, Winkelman frequently expressed his uncertainty over whether the sale could be consummated at all, since the Nazis constantly issued new discriminatory laws. During this period, he insisted that we both keep the farm in perfect condition and rejuvenate the trees through severe winter pruning, because he wanted the full benefit of the harvest season that would immediately follow the sale, which was set for June 1934. This particular year was supposed to produce a bumper crop anyway, as a result of especially favorable weather conditions.

During the early negotiations, his son Herbert visited the Immenhof frequently. Bella, who was close to him in age and knew him socially, showed him around and acquainted him thoroughly with the operation of the farm. Then, one morning during the fall of 1933, my brother Heinz saw two young men in SA and SS uniforms approach the farm on motorbikes. As they approached the house, Heinz hid behind a tree and overheard the SA man scream that Jews had no right to own and pollute German soil and that the farm should be taken away from us by force. Heinz recognized him as Herbert Winkelman and the SS man as his brother.

Herbert felt justified in threatening us with his "pure blood and pure soil" racial fanaticism and forced expropriation because the Nazis had just passed the National Farm Inheritance Law. Hitler considered German farmers of pure Aryan blood to be the foundation of the emerging "master race." The law stated that farmers could call themselves farmers only if they were of pure German blood back to 1800. Farmers with any Jewish or "colored" blood could no longer inherit farms. The law also protected German farmers from losing their farms through land speculation, insinuating that Jews were profiting by such financial chicanery. The Nazis also established a government agency specifically to assess property, to make it easier for Aryans to acquire Jewish land. As it became known that the Immenhof was for sale, they dispatched evaluators who assessed the farm at a fifth to an eighth of its actual market value.

Ferdinand Winkelman clearly hoped that, during the long negotiation period, new laws might enable him to take over the Immenhof, without having to buy it at all. Although he did end up paying us for it, he paid so little that he recouped most of the purchase price through selling his first harvest.

When we finalized the sale, the Nazis withheld 25% of the already diminished price for the National Escape/ Fugitive Tax (Reichsfluchtsteuer) imposed on all emigrants. We were left with barely enough money for my mother to get a so-called "capitalist visa" to immigrate to the British Mandate of Palestine. Since she was considered "elderly" at the age of 49, she had to prove that she would not become a burden to the British government by opening a bank account with at least £1,000.

We finally escaped Germany on July 4, 1934, before the Nazi's began transporting Jews to the concentration camps en masse. We shipped some of our belongings in a huge wooden container, called a lift, through a bonded firm called Levant. Saying goodbye to my dog was heart wrenching and seemed to outweigh all my other losses. Upon parting, I promised him that I would be back in twenty years.

Waiting for my sister's visa took about two months. Palestine, as a British mandate, was discouraging Jewish immigration in an attempt to pacify the Arabs. Luckily, as a young professional gardener, she was able to get her visa to Palestine without having to come up with financial resources, such as my mother had to show. My mother was determined not to leave my sister behind and made a vacation out of the inevitable waiting period. This interlude in Italy allowed us to recuperate somewhat from the traumatic life-threatening months we had just endured. I knew that we had narrowly escaped a people who had threatened our lives. We were on our way to join my father in Palestine which he envisioned to be a safe homeland for Jews. From that time on I have carried the feeling that my life had been given a second chance; life has become a very special gift.

For years that turned into decades, I wished that I could see the house of my early childhood once more. My deepest roots are connected to the Immenhof. Throughout my life, I could close my eyes and instantly call up vivid memories of my mother and sister working with other women tilling the earth; propagating, pruning, and spraying fruit trees; harvesting, packaging,

shipping, and preserving fruits and vegetables; and caring for animals. My family's daily life, work, recreation, and celebrations reflected the rhythms of the changing seasons and gave form and cadence to the days of my childhood.

In 1986, fifty-two years after my uprooting from the Immenhof, I was invited to Germany for six weeks as a Fellow of the German Academic Exchange Service. This, finally, gave me enough time to arrange a limited three-day visa to East Germany. The Communist authorities assigned me to a hotel in Potsdam, and I confirmed my reservation with both anxiety and anticipation.

Although I was eager and excited to see the farm, the impending visit had tapped and re-stimulated childhood terror that I had buried deep inside myself. That night I arranged to view the film "Shoah" at a colleague's office and spent many hours late into the night watching the film that vividly portrayed the prevalence of the virulent anti-Semites.

I had borrowed a car from a friend and as I reached the smaller country roads, I found myself humming a song I had not sung for many years: "Do I have to, do I have to leave the small city?". Soon tears were streaming down my cheeks. The experience of being forced to desert my pets and leave my home and my life on the farm returned to me full force. In a flash I realized that since that forced uprooting I've been a displaced person.

I was fortunate to discover my best boyhood friend, Arnold Probst and he gave me a big hug. He remembered that we played soccer together, but he also said, "you were not really part of our community. When we played soccer, you wore special soccer boots and we played barefoot; you had a bicycle and we did not." Though as we parted, Arnold told me how relieved they were that we had fled early enough. The year following our escape, farmers from small villages were summoned to a public spectacle in the regional city. In the town square a young Jewish woman was tied up, standing in an open cart pulled around by a horse, while hot tar was poured over her body, and feathers stuck all over her skin.