FAMILIES STENGEN AND GRUBER.

Maria Elizabeth Johanna Stengel was born in Mannheim, Germany, at 3 1/4 p.m. on the 28th of April 1916. In Germany the name by which a person is commonly called - the 'Rufname' - is not necessarily the first one of the names given at baptism. My wife's Rufname was thus Elizabeth. In her family, and for her friends in her youth she was known as "Li". In my family her name was anglicized to "Betty".

Elizabeth's father was Jacob Stengel, and her mother was Maria born Gruber. It is the two families: Stengel and Gruber, that will figure in the next section of this history.

Elizabeth's grandfather on her mother's side was Johann Gruber, apparently a man of great energy and talents. He was a business man and founder and owner of a chocolate-manufacturing enterprise. His factory specialized in producing chocolate Easter Eggs and Easter Bunnies. Johann Gruber was very successful, and became quite a wealthy man. His residence was a beautiful artistically designed house or villa in Heidelberg, quite close to the famous Heidelberg castle. Apart from his business activities Johann Gruber was an amateur painter. His oils and pencil sketches show a high degree of proficiency and very good technique. His paintings were mainly natur-morts, esp. flowers, but also landscapes. His wife Maria was a good pianist, and also a person of distinct character.

The Grubers had three adult children (a fourth died in infancy). The eldest was Ludwig, who inherited his father's business, and kept it going through the difficult years between the two world wars and after the second world war. He transferred it, however, to Mannheim. Twice in this time the business almost collapsed, but he managed to get it going again. His wife was Maria, born Velte, a very energetic and lively woman, always referred to by her nieces as 'Tante Mariechen'. They had two sons, Elizabeth's first cousins, Wolfgang and Herbert.

Onkel Ludwig served in the German army during two world wars, as an artillery officer. In the first world war he was a lieutenant commanding a battery of light (70mm) artillery. He fought on the Western Front. After returning to civilian life between the two wars, Onkel Ludwig was again called up at the beginning of the Second World War. This time he commanded a battery of heavy artillery (6 150mm guns, with a range of 15 km.). Now as Hauptmann (captain) he went all through the campaign on the Russian front, came to within 20 km of Moscow, and then was a participant of the subsequent retreat. He was inside Germany at the end of the war and was taken prisoner by the Americans (at Giessen, in West Germany). After return from imprisonment Onkel Ludwig again...
resuscitated his chocolate factory - on a very modest scale - in Mannheim. When the time came for him to hand over his business to his sons, the two, Wolfgang and Herbert, were not satisfied with the way how the factory was run, and decided to expand the business. They transferred the factory from inner Mannheim to an outlying suburb, or rather a small township some 15 km. out of Mannheim, where they built a new factory building, renovated machinery etc. The enterprise became "Gruber Act. Ges. mit beschränkter Haftung" (the father got part of the shares). The factory appears to be quite a success, Wolfgang attending mainly to the commercial side, and Herbert taking care of the technology and the actual processing. For greater efficiency, the "Company" went for further specialization, giving up easter eggs, and producing mainly easter bunnies.

Wolfgang and Herbert, as their father, were caught up in the Second World War. Wolfgang reached the rank of first (senior) lieutenant, and commanded a company in the Russian campaign. With his company he went through the southern Ukraine, Donbas, and reached the Northern Caucasus. Here in 1942 he was wounded, his foot was shattered and made him unfit for further military service. This was fortunate for him, as otherwise, considering where he had been, he would almost certainly got into the Stalingrad encirclement.

Herbert came to the army too late to take part in the fighting. He was never outside Germany, became a prisoner of war and was held for some time in France, where he was allowed to work in a blacksmith's shop.

Both younger Grubers are married, Wolfgang to Gisela, with son Peter, and Herbert to Malli, with son Manfred. Gisela helps in the chocolate factory, Malli is a business-woman in her own right: with her mother she owns and runs a drapery shop.


The second child in the Gruber family, aunt Luisa lost her fiancee who was killed in the first world war. She never formed another attachment, never married, and spent the rest of her life as an embittered morose spinster.

The third member of the family, Maria Gruber was Elizabeth's mother. She married Jacob Stengel. The history of their family will be recounted later on.

Elizabeth's grandfather on her father's side owned a gardening business (nursery ?). He had four children: Jacob, Maria, Anna and Eduard. Nothing is remembered about Anna by the presently living relatives.
Aunt Maria was married twice, from her first husband, who seems to have been not a very reliable man, she had two children: a daughter and a son. The son died in early manhood, the daughter was married and had children, but lost all connection to the Stengel family. Maria married again, to Conrad Weber, a businessman. She was rather soon widowed, but had a son, Kurt, who made a success in an academic career, obtaining the degree of Master in linguistics. He is married.

Eduard Stengel emigrated from Germany to seek his fortune in Mexico, where he came to own a tobacco plantation. His end was tragic: he had an affair with a local girl, whom he, however, did not want to marry, as he intended marrying a German girl, whom he knew, and perhaps was engaged to, before leaving for Mexico. This became known, and Eduard was murdered by the relatives of the Mexican girl.

Grandfather Stengel died rather early, and his widow married again. Her second husband's name was Scheit. As Mrs. Scheit Elizabeth's grandmother owned a gardening business, whether it was the same that was owned by her first husband, or whether she started a new one, cannot be ascertained. From her second husband she had another child, a daughter, known in the family as Auntie Hannchen. Auntie Hannchen married Heinrich Schleyer. Contrary to some of the other relatives in the Stengel family, Onkel Heinrich retained a closer connection with his nieces. He worked as an employee in a Colq trading agency, and during the second world war also worked for the Reichsbank. In his advanced age he came to live, together with Auntie Hannchen, in the same old age home as Onkel Ludwig, where I (with Elizabeth) visited him in 1979. Onkel Heinrich was 89 at the time, Onkel Ludwig - 83. Onkel Heinrich died in February 1981.

Elizabeth's immediate family.

Elizabeth's father, Jacob Stengel, from his youth was technically inclined, and was particularly interested in motorcars, and in fact played an active part in the early development of the motorcar industry in Germany. He got his technical education in the "Technische Hochschule" in Paris (what is the French designation of the institution I do not know). Already before the first world war he drove motorcars, took part in motorcar racing, and together with a Frenchman, de Goulat, designed and constructed a racing car which held a world record for speed for 13 years. On returning to Germany he worked for the firm Daimler-Benz, under the immediate guidance of Carl Benz himself. This was in 1916-17. Jacob Stengel then moved to Munich (in 1918), where he took part in the build up of the firm BMW (Bayerische Motor Werke). At some stage he was head of the Construction Bureau of the BMW factory. In 1922 Jacob Stengel joined two other men, now back in Mannheim, to found their own motorcar buil-
The firm bore the name of "Heim und Co". Heim was the main Director of the firm, Stengel was Director in technical matters, and a third man, Eberle, was Commercial Director. Elizabeth's father was the actual builder of the cars, and did personally the testing of the cars produced by the factory. The firm was reasonably successful for nearly ten years, but then came the depression of the early thirties. "Heim and Co" went bankrupt, partly through competition from the stronger firms in Munich - BMW and from Daimler Benz. The commercial director, Eberle, hanged himself, and Elizabeth's father lost all his money and was left without any means of subsistence. He was already married at the time, with four children, and the family was left in an awful plight. For a time Jacob Stengel found work with an electrical firm, "Stolzkontakt", and then he returned to work for his old employer, the BMW. He served as a BMW agent or representative in Paris for several years, up to the beginning of the Second World War. Although he was in employment, he was not able to provide adequately for his family in Mannheim. Having to keep two houses may have caused extra expenses, or possibly he still had to repay some debts incurred through the bankrupt 'Heim Co'. Anyway Elizabeth's mother had to struggle, to keep the family at her flat in 6 Bach Str. in Mannheim. To have some extra income she took a lodger in her flat, and in a bitter hour she had to sell her piano - a cherished possession. This was a heavy blow to her. In 1938 Elizabeth's mother died of pneumonia, and the four children were left to look after themselves, as their father was still in Paris.

The four children born to Jacob and Maria Stengel were: Elizabeth, my future wife, born 28 April 1916, in Mannheim, at 3 ½ p.m., Walter, born 2 October 1918, at 8 a.m., Luise, born 27 March 1920, at 5 a.m., and Johanna (Hanna), born in Mannheim, 28 April 1925, at 8 3/4 p.m.

In her childhood and youth Elizabeth seems to have been closest to her brother Walter. The happiest times of her childhood were the periods she spent at her grandfather's home in Heidelberg, in the house that was close to the Heidelberg Castle, and later she enjoyed greatly hiking over the country together with Walter and his friends. In her teens, however, her life was marred by the financial plight that the family was in. In spite of all the efforts by her mother it was impossible for her to make the ends meet. The limited resources were reserved to give the boy of the family, to Walter, the best opportunities in life, in particular a chance to complete his school education. The girls had to take the second place. To help out with the finances of the family Elizabeth had to leave school when she was 16, and to start earning money. For a short time she worked helping her grandmother, Maria Graber, in
The Chocolate Factory, and then for a year she served as secretary-typist in a small coal trading business. She did not like this work, and after a year found employment with the giant I.G. Farbenindustrie in Ludwigshafen, again as secretary-typist. To get to her work she had to commute daily across the Rhine from Mannheim to Ludwigshafen. Elizabeth became a very proficient stenographist, and once won a competition for speed in stenography, having done 200 syllable per minute. As an efficient stenographist she was in demand not only by her immediate boss, but also occasionally by others. Much later, already after the Second World War, she was charged with recording a speech by Kanzler Adenauer (for the Abteilung fuer Innenpolitik und Sport of the "Neue Zeitung" for which she was working at the time). Elizabeth enjoyed her work in the I.G. Farbenindustrie, as she was often engaged in a variety of activities, in particular helping out for Dr. Weiss, who was Direktor of the "Sozialabteilung" of the I.G. Farben, attending with him at lectures and conferences, organizing theatrical performances for the workers of the Concern etc.

The two younger sisters also had no chance to complete their school education, and, as they were growing up, left school to start working. Luise followed Elizabeth to the I.G. Farben. Hanna did not go beyond the primary school, and also started work in I.G. Farben.

Walter was the only child in the family who completed the Gymnasium. His goal in life was to become a pilot, and on graduating from the gymnasium he volunteered to join the Airforce. He was very enthusiastic with his flying. At the start of World War Two he was Oberleutnant in the Airforce, piloting a 'Stuka' (a dive bomber, Sturzkampfflugzeug).

Walter was successful as a fighter to start with. For some exploit, the nature of which is not remembered by his sisters, he was awarded the "Iron cross" ("Eiserne Kreuz") - the renowned distinction for bravery in the German army. Erich Hammer, Elizabeth's brother in law once said that Walter had sunk an enemy ship, perhaps that was what the medal was awarded for. There exists a photograph, taken at an officers' celebration of the award of the Iron Cross to Walter and a friend of his. The medal can be clearly seen on Walter's chest.

His luck did not last long, however, At the battle of Dunkirk in 1940, when the British were pulling their army out of France, and in which Walter was taking part, he was attacked by British fighter planes. In the skirmish he was fatally wounded in the face. Walter, though mortally wounded, succeeded in returning back and landing his plane. The radio-operator, who was with him in the plane, and who was unhurt...
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Death visited the Stengel family again later. In the early years of the war Elizabeth got engaged to a young man, who was subsequently called up and sent to the Eastern Front, in Russia. In 1942, in the fighting around Kerch in the Northern Caucasus, Elizabeth's fiancee was mortally wounded in the stomach and died.

In the meantime life was getting more and more difficult for the three sisters living in Mannheim. The bombing by the Allies of the
German cities started, and often in the middle of the night Elizabeth and her sisters had to wake up and go to air raid shelters, and then in the morning still have to go to work in the I.G. Farben. When the Germans occupied France, Elizabeth's father was sent to Paris again, as representative of the BMW, but later he returned to Munich to the headquarters of the BMW. Jacob Stengel developed a very negative attitude to Hitler and the Nazi regime. He often shocked his family by making scathing remarks about Hitler, and by listening in to Allied radio broadcasts (a big crime under the Hitler regime) - the family feared that Jacob's utterances or radio listening would be overheard and reported, and that he would come to grief. Nothing of that sort happened, however.

The war was drawing to a close, but in the last weeks of the fighting the Stengel girls were exposed to another bitter experience. The air raids were now made both at day and at night. The transport was disrupted, and the girls had to go to their work and back on foot. The Allies were already invading Germany. One day it was announced at the I.G. Farben that the bridges across the Rhine were to be blown up, to stop the invaders, and that all the employees were to go home. Elizabeth and Hanna went home on foot. Luise for some reason stayed that day at home. When Elizabeth and Hanna reached Bach Str. 6, they found that their house was no longer there. All was enveloped in flames, smoke and dust. Luise was sitting in the street on a pile of their house belongings, blinded from smoke and dust.

As Luise tells it, there was an air raid alarm. She and some neighbors went to a bomb shelter, actually a cellar in a nearby school building. The bombs started falling, and one fell very near the school. The bomb shelter was not destroyed, but shaken so badly that the air in the shelter was filled with dust. The dust got into her eyes, and almost blinded her. After the raid was over Luise returned, and found that their own house had had a direct hit and was completely destroyed down to the ground. Only the cellar was left intact, and all the personal belongings that the girls were left with were those stored in the cellar. Some of those were later lost by plundering.

The three girls found temporary refuge with some neighbors, whose house was not hit. Jacob Stengel, who at the time was living in Munich, decided to take his daughters away from near the front line. In the midst of the disorder and chaos of the last days of the war, he managed to get to Mannheim, using whatever transport was available, walking part of the way. On the ruins of his house he found a chalked in message, directing him to where his daughters had found refuge, followed them there and all four together undertook the return journey to Munich.
Some trains were still moving, but the passengers sometimes had to get out and lie down on the ground while the trains were straffed by the allied planes. Munich at the time was also under heavy bombing, and Jacob Stengel brought his daughters to a small village, Ilsank, South of Munich, right on the Austrian border, and there they remained until the end of the war. Subsequently all moved to Munich.

When the occupation forces were firmly established in Germany, many Germans were allowed to work for the occupation authorities. Jacob Stengel got employment as a technical expert for some American bureau, and Elizabeth also got a secretarial job with some American occupation authority, and later changed to work for a newspaper "Die Neue Zeitung", authorised by the Americans.

It was during this time, in the beginning of August 1946, that I first met Elizabeth. I was at the time holding the post of professor of Histology and Embryology at the UNRRA University, and she was still in her first employment, before the Neue Zeitung. We met on the shore of the river Isar, where I went for a sunbath and a swim, and Elizabeth came to relax during a lunch break. We got married at a "Standesamt" on the 15th of March 1947.

Luise's private life was marred by an unfortunate love affair with a married man while she was still a young girl. She never got married but in her later time developed long lasting associations with men who were years younger than she was: first with Max, and later with Rudi. The young men were quite willing to marry her, but Luise steadfastly declined in view of the difference in age. I did not come to know Max very well, although I met him both while his association with Luise was on, and later when the close association was broken, and Max had married and had a family of his own. Rudi was a different matter: he is definitely a nice fellow, modest, warmhearted and very much in love with Luise. He works (in 1979) for some engineering firm, and is an active supporter of Strauss, the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (Germany's conservative party).

Hanna married Erich Hammer, a man 14 years her senior. During the war Erich served in the Navy, but had never been out to sea, being attached all the time to the on shore staff of the navy. After the war he became a travelling salesman for a large clothes manufacturing firm, the firm Loden Frey, until his retirement in 1976 or 1977. He is a domineering, self centred man, who tends to tyrannize both his wife, and those who come in touch with him. Hanna and Erich have no children.

After Elizabeth and I left Germany for Britain, Jacob Stengel lived together with Hanna and Erich in his flat in Simmern Str. 7, which he managed to get with his American employer's help in the years after...
the war, until he met an untimely death in August 1949. The weather that summer was hot, and he went to the Isar for a dip in the river. He went to the river on his bicycle, and was probably hot when he entered the water. In the water he had a heart attack and was drowned. There were no other bathers at the spot, and his drowning was discovered only when a policeman noticed an abandoned bicycle at the river's edge, with Jacob's clothes documents and wristwatch next to it. The body was found only four days later.

A letter notifying her of her father's death was the first letter which Elizabeth received after we arrived in South Africa.

During the time between our first meeting, in August 1946, and our marriage in March 1947, Elizabeth and I met frequently, sometimes in town, sometimes going out on one day excursions. Our favourite place for excursions was "Gruenewald" - a forest, as the name implies, on the southern outskirts of Munich. One had to go there by tram. The forest is a large and beautiful one, adjoining on one side to the river Isar south of the town (upstream). On one occasion Elizabeth and I went together, by railway, to the village Ilsank, where Elizabeth and her sisters stayed at the end of the war, after fleeing Mannheim. We stayed in the house, where the sisters used to live, the house belonging to "Oma" Hallweger. From there we made excursions, on the one side to a forest called "Zauberwald", and on the other to the lake Koeningsee, the lake on the shore of which lies the little town Kolben, Hitlers country residence during the war. Hitler did not stay in the town itself, but in his special residence up on the hill above the town and the lake, called "Adlersnest". We stayed in Ilsank for a few days.

Some time in 1946 postal correspondence became reestablished between Germany and the outside world. Mother and I used this opportunity to establish connections with people whom we knew outside Germany, in America in particular, as well as attempted to write to other countries.

Mother's first priority was to write to her old friend, Eugenia Leonidovna Kolupaev, who lived in Philadelphia, U.S.A. Mother wrote to her friend to tell her where we were, and of the predicament we were in, as well as about our wish to emigrate to the U.S.A. Mrs. Kolupaev responded at once. She started sending us food parcels from America, and made great efforts to provide for us the opportunity of going to America. A very lively correspondence started between members of our family and Eugenia Leonidovna, and her son Peter.
Mrs. Kolupaev tried on her part to prepare the ground for our emigration to America, contacted in this connection various charitable organizations which concerned themselves with DPs and emigration, and persuaded mother to meet representatives of these organizations and certain private Americans when they came to Munich. All these attempts were completely without effect. I went several times to the American consulate in Munich, equally without any results.

The main stumbling block was that all persons wishing to emigrate to the USA had to be screened by the American Intelligence organization, the C.I.C. (I do not know what the three letters actually stand for). I and my family attempted to get such a screening but the agent of the C.I.C. took a negative view of our character, as I will state in a later section. Attempts at a second screening were no better. Apparently the C.I.C. representatives in Munich were a particularly nasty lot.

While mother wrote to Mrs. Kolupaev, my first move was to write to Professor Theodosius Dobzhansky, the geneticist, who emigrated from Kiev in the 20s, and had a brilliant scientific career in America. Dobzhansky knew me very well, and I had great hopes that he would help me to get to the USA. I received no such help, whether from lack of will or from real impossibility on the part of Dobzhansky. Dobzhansky in fact helped the family Pavlovsky to reach America, but in my case his reaction was lukewarm to say the least. Instead of trying to help me overcome my difficulties, Dobzhansky directed my case to England, to Professor Waddington, who though not knowing me personally, knew me from my published work. Waddington showed some interest, and wrote to me accordingly, but for a long time his approach remained only tentative.

At the time - in 1946 and 1947 - the wish of myself and my family was very definitely to emigrate and settle in the United States. In view of the desperate situation in Germany, however, we were ready to go anywhere, so long as we could get out of Germany. Among the Russian refugees in Germany many looked to Southern America as a possible place for emigration. There was, in Munich, a group of Russians who banded together in a sort of organization calling themselves "The New Colony". This organization started negotiations with representatives of Argentine, with the intention to emigrate to that country. Mother and I joined this group. The future of the group was somewhat doubtful, as the "New Colony" asked for permission to settle in Argentine as a farming unit. For intellectuals, as most of us were, the plans to become farmers...
in an unfamiliar country were not very promising, and could be accepted only out of desperation. A small group of leaders of the organization (a man whom I knew in this group was a Mr. Chapec) did go to Argentine, but the plans to bring the rest of the group to Argentine fell through. Still quite a few of the Russian refugees reached South America, though mostly somewhat later. Both my UNRRA University assistants went there: Dr. Werbizky to Argentine, Sylvia Kaarepenn - to Brazil. Nina and Basil Petrovsky also emigrated to Argentine.

Looking for other possibilities, I composed an application form, accompanied by my curriculum vitae, and sent it to a number of Universities in the English-speaking world: the United States, England and the British Dominions. Only one of my applications evicted a response: this came from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. Professor van der Horst, Head of the Department of Zoology in that University wrote to me from Munich, expressing his interest at having me as a staff member in his Department. At the time his approach was only tentative, as was Professor Waddington's.

In 1947 mother and I felt rather depressed: all our efforts seemed to be of no avail, and waiting became more and more exasperating.

With the closure of the UNRRA University in January 1947 I lost my source of income. I was not entirely without work, as there was organized, at the time, a "Ukrainian University". Aunt Valentina played a prominent part in this university, and I was invited to lecture in Zoology at the University. The Ukrainian University was scarelessly comparable with the UNRRA University. There was no building that the University could claim as its own. The lectures were given in some rooms, which were also used by some kind of school. There were no practicals. The medium of instruction was Ukrainian - no difficulty for me of course. The numbers of students were much smaller than in the UNRRA University. I was paid for my lecturing, but the amount of pay was very small, compared with what I received from the UNRRA University I never came to know closer, either the students, or the other teachers of the Ukrainian University.

My family life cannot be called very happy in this period. Although Betty and I were married, we could not actually live together. When I met Betty, she lived in a room rented in some peoples' flat. She later moved to live with her father and sister (Hanna) in a flat which her father managed to get at 7 Simmern Street. I could not move into that flat with her, there was not enough room, and in any case I was not prepared to be separated from
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