
PREFACE

The Promise

I CAN SEE MY MOTHER in her hospital bed, frail, tethered to her oxygen tubing, yet pulling herself up to direct me, a reproachful tone in her voice: “Get your computer out and start writing. I know you won’t remember this.” And so she began recounting bits of family stories that were important to her, something she had avoided doing until I was an adult and my children were studying the Holocaust in school.

Her eyes were piercing, not the milky soft cow-like eyes I had liked when she was healthier and in a gentler mood. Her face was wrinkled, with lines impressed by the tubing, and framed by thin, snow-white hair wisping out around her headband. All of her sisters (and her brother Miklós) had strikingly beautiful, snow-white hair. Me? A thinning, mousy gray. Short-changed again.

As Ma recounted family lore, I dutifully recorded dates and people and places so I could try to piece them together later. I chided myself for not having a better memory—after all, she and Uncle Sanyi, both in their nineties, even now reveled in reciting poetry to each other from their school days.

As an infectious disease physician, I grew more intrigued by my mother’s stories and how hard growing up in the pre-antibiotic era was—and how many lives were lost. My family was deeply affected by a variety of infections, including my mother’s near fatal bouts with diphtheria and typhoid and others’ influenza, abscesses, typhus, rheumatic fever, and tuberculosis. Many people today take

antibiotics for granted. I know how lucky we are and fear going back to the pre-antibiotic era as we squandered these treasures, breeding resistance for short-term greed. Indeed, from my mother's stories I have learned that my own family's history illustrates the precarious intersection between poverty, social class, and health.

As Ma's health deteriorated, I found it challenging and painful to balance my knowledge as an experienced physician of more than thirty years—sensitive to errors by medical and nursing staff, errors born sometimes of haste, sometimes disregard—with just wanting to be a daughter, caring for my mother's emotional needs as best as I could. The balance, to my dismay, tipped toward playing physician and shepherding her care.

In her early nineties, despite being almost blind and on oxygen, Ma was fiercely independent and still lived alone in the home she and my father had purchased fifty years before. The last two years of her life, she was in and out of hospitals in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area, where I felt she was receiving frightening care. Perhaps the biggest problem, besides poor communication and inattention to detail, was that where I saw a fiercely determined mother, grandmother, and oldest sister fighting for her life, much of the hospital staff saw an ill old lady waiting to die.

I went home and put my treasured notes from my mother aside. I largely gave up my solo practice when Ma was ill, staying with her in each hospitalization as she begged me, "Please don't leave me. They'll kill me if you are gone." I suspected and feared she was right. Even in the best hospitals, mistakes happen, and as a doctor, I've been witness to too many medical errors not to have my hackles raised.

While I wish I hadn't had to play doctor, I now know that my "interference," as some saw it, bought my mother months of life, at no small cost to my family and me. I stayed with her day and night but for taking brief breaks to eat and shower and clear my head.

After my mom died, I returned to practicing medicine, but working with ICU patients became too painful, and I made the difficult decision to close my practice. Since then, I have worked

part-time in clinical care, choosing to spend most of my time and energy as a writer to educate others about medicine and social justice and the many ways they are so closely connected.

Now I am fulfilling a promise to my mother: to share our family's experiences and to remember and to honor their memories.

My Journey with This Book

I had begun delving into my family history when my son was born and my husband and I chose to name him Michael, after my father, both to honor Miki and to celebrate the fact that my mother had lived to see the birth of a grandson. We also hoped that one day our son would be curious about his roots.

Unexpectedly, perhaps as a result of pregnancy hormones and to my husband's dismay, a switch inside me flipped as suddenly I began to feel it was important that our children have a Jewish education.

The next milestone in my evolution came nine years later in 1995 when our son, Michael, was in fourth grade. He had an excellent teacher, Valeria Arch, who had her students read *Number the Stars*, a Newbery Award-winning book about the Danish Resistance, which helped rescue Jews during World War II. Valeria invited my mother to speak to her class.

I was a jumble of emotions—proud of my mother for accepting the invitation, afraid of what recounting her story might stir up, and more than a little worried as I watched the young faces surrounding her and their expressions of discomfort, boredom, and innocent curiosity. One young girl asked my mother what the most valuable thing she had lost was. Without hesitation, Ma replied, “My baby.”

That day, my mother shared more with these children than she had ever shared with me, and her candor stunned me. When I learned of her great loss, I was shocked and horrified, and I was a college student then. These students were so young, I worried that Ma had upset them; Valeria reassured me that she thought this class was mature enough to handle the story. She did not, however, think the next year's group of students would be an appropriate audience.

The following school year, in 1996, Ma sat for an interview for the Shoah Foundation, which was collecting oral histories of survivors.¹ I was not allowed to be present during the taping and was disappointed when I watched her interview later, as most of the emotion that she had expressed to the fourth graders was gone from her recitation. While I was conducting research for this book, I watched several other interviews of survivors. I was struck by how consistently dispassionate the interviewees were and wondered why Ma, in particular, had tamped down her emotions when speaking to interviewers for the recording. The USC (University of Southern California) Shoah Foundation's project seems to have been a turning point for many of the survivors, who for the first time began opening up about their experiences because the researchers let them know how important their participation was for history.

Then, when my daughter, Heather, was preparing for her bat mitzvah in 2000, she chose to interview my cousin Andor "Ancsi" as an oral history project. He was my father's first cousin and the sole survivor of his branch of the Glattstein family. I was taken aback by his directness and the graphic nature of his story, which I had never heard. While I worried about its effect on my daughter, this visit highlighted how little I knew about my family's experiences and further spurred my resolve to learn more.

After that, when I visited my aunts and uncles, I frequently asked if I might tape their stories to one day have a more complete family history. Each unhesitatingly agreed. In 2000, I began to more seriously gather our history, taping an interview with my aunt Klari that year and then recording the other siblings (minus Bözsi, who did not attend) gossiping at Heather's bat mitzvah the following year.

Over the years, more recordings of our chats followed, with varying levels of success. What I lacked in interviewing skills I made up for in enthusiasm and a desire to know about my family members' lives. My inquiries were casual and lacked focus because I knew so little about the Holocaust and the occasions where I might have had an opportunity to gather stories were infrequent and



Kati, Judy, Klari, and Magdus, 2001, Cumberland

fragmented. The other impediment to fully accessing the stories was that I was still working full-time as a physician and raising two young children—the distractions were many and profound.

IN 2007, when my mother was hospitalized, the day she asked me to take out my computer and start writing notes was a significant turning point in this journey. Another turning point was New Year's Eve 2007, when Miklós and Kati were visiting my mother in the hospital and Miklós unexpectedly turned to me and asked me to take him to our house so I could record his story. He was usually taciturn. Only once before had he spoken to me of his war years. That he and Kati had never shared their history with each other stunned me and renewed my sense of responsibility and commitment to compile their stories, hoping that their lives would be remembered.

We are once again living in dangerous times, and their lives hold important lessons. I am also moved to tell their stories for reasons so eloquently offered by Rabbi Jack Paskoff in his December 21, 2018, sermon: “But we do think about the marks of goodness that people left in our world. We think of the stories, and once in a while, to have a chance to tell them is a beautiful thing. And so

I hope at some point, as you think about the lives of the people you love, you'll tell their stories and you'll laugh and you'll cry. But hopefully at the end of the day, you'll be able to say of them that they left their mark, not in some heavenly life that awaits them, but in the here and now of our lives today. And then of all these folks we'll be able to say, *Zichronam livracha*, 'their memories are a blessing.' And may we aspire to live our lives in such a way."²

After Ma died, I began to transcribe the tapes in fits and starts; at times doing so was too painful. I reunited with Kati, from whom I had been foolishly estranged for six years. Our reunion was inspired by her "coming out" as being Jewish and immersing herself in an effort to provide Holocaust education to me—and to others.

I also visited Hungary twice and spoke with relatives in Sáránd, trying to better understand what life in that rural village had been like before, during, and after the war. And with this visit, the book started to take shape. I laboriously transcribed videotapes using a powerful program, Transana, which allowed me to mark significant clips—I wanted to make an audiovisual collage of their stories told in their own powerful words. This program also started the beginning of my creation of a database of information.

As a physician-researcher, I knew that organizing the vast amount of information I had collected would help me make better sense of it. A program called Scrivener made this daunting and considerable undertaking far more doable. My research papers had started with laboratory notebooks and index cards sorted in myriad ways. However, with Transana and Scrivener, I was able to make a database for my parents and each of their siblings, with subsections for childhood, the prelude to war, the war years, liberation, and coming to America. As I transcribed, I filled each of these folders with notes and quotes. I also added sections for research and historical data.

Everything in this book is real history, not historical fiction. I am aware that the reported dates of incidents might be slightly off, but I took every detail and vignette from my relatives' recounting of their experiences, hoping to honor each of their memories.

In 2016, I began to write in earnest, starting with my aunt Kati's story, using mostly her words rearranged to tell her story chronologically. That effort didn't work. My mother and Sanyi were storytellers. I am a physician, researcher, and science writer—accustomed to writing “explainers” rather than writing compelling stories. For a while I set the whole project aside.

In 2018, almost retired, I regrouped and began to read biographies, memoirs, and books about the craft of writing. I also consulted with others more skilled than I in personal narrative, and through many ups and downs, I struggled to puzzle out a timeline for the months immediately following my family's liberation. I discovered some seemingly irreconcilable differences, and I wanted this book to be right, to be perfect, to not disappoint either my family members or anyone who might doubt their truths and experiences because of an error I had made. Telling this story truthfully, I realized, is a huge responsibility.

I was afraid that responsibility would incapacitate me, and as I worked, I flashed back to my college years when I sat frozen during an exam, and my friend Esther whispered to me, “I don't care what you write. Just start writing.” And I did, and I was all right, and I passed.

At times with this book, I felt that same frozen fear, not wanting to write because I knew all the facts weren't perfectly aligned. But I wrote all that I could about the complex and muddled chapters when, after the war, my mother, her sisters and brothers, my father, and Sanyi were finding each other. The story was and remains a tangled mess—for that, I came to understand, is what their lives were.

I remain frustrated and disappointed that I could not do a perfect job recording this history but remind myself that impediments prevent perfection and that my earlier resistance to learning about the Holocaust—fear, trauma, shyness, a desire not to know—kept me from asking for the level of detail I now wish I had when I was interviewing.

THE PROMISE

I console myself with my new mantra: “She did the best she could,” the same mantra I recited when my mother pushed me to my limits and I sought for more patience with her.

MY DETERMINATION to complete this project has been fueled by the rising divisiveness, “othering,” and fascism that currently envelops our country and Europe. I wanted this story to serve as one more warning. It is my hope that if enough of us speak up, speak out, tell the truth about world history, we will somehow stem the tide of growing hatred.

I am not optimistic, but I comfort myself with the knowledge that I have done what I could.

Books were everything to my mother. Writing her story and her family’s and mine became a way to honor her and to say, “Your lives mattered. Your legacy lives on in your children and those whose lives you have touched.”

With this book, I have fulfilled my promise.

Introduction

I'VE ALWAYS HAD A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP with families and history. I have a fascination with and desire to understand the individuals and their relationships, as well as what drives them. I also have an aversion to confronting my family's history, knowing that many were deeply scarred by their experiences during the Holocaust.

Growing up, I heard little about the Holocaust; rather, the sudden silences were more telling. My parents, aunts, and uncles tried to protect my brother and me, as well as their own children, from the horrors they had endured. They never spoke of their wartime experiences in front of me or my cousins. Respecting privacy was ingrained in our earliest lessons, and we knew better than to pry.

I often sensed an undercurrent of fear, with occasional punctuations of a subconscious, almost telepathic terror, like when my mother unexpectedly saw a policeman in her rearview mirror. She was dropping me off at high school when she noticed him and quickly hit the gas to drive off. Unfortunately, my hand was still clutching the door handle, and she dragged me on the ground for a few feet. She caught herself, and then we had to deal with her guilt and her fear that she had injured me. Fortunately, I was just bruised and shaken. Other times, a glimpse of the past would slip out without warning from behind the protective walls that had been built. Mostly, my cousins and I, all children of Holocaust survivors, were sheltered from the harsh reality and had no idea what our family had suffered.

IN THEIR LATER YEARS, when I was an adult and sought out their stories, my mother and uncle began to share snippets with me. I tried to assume the mantle of family historian from them. I called my mother Anyu, which is Hungarian for “mother.” My brother George began to refer to her as Ma, and I sometimes adopted that name when speaking to others about her. She was usually called Magdus by Hungarian relatives, Maggie by her nieces and nephews, and Mrs. Stone by others. This left me struggling with what to call her in writing her story. I have chosen to refer to her as Magdus in her life before she was my mother and as Ma or Anyu in our personal relationships. Similarly, my father is Miki before my existence or to those in his generation and Apu (“father”) to me.

Ma had an incredible memory for detail and was the keeper of family lore on the Ehrenfeld side of my family. Similarly, my uncle Sanyi was a meticulous historian for the Glattsteins, my father’s clan. I lack their memories and so relied on recording them as much as I could and writing things down.

After Ma died in 2008, I attended a conference of Holocaust survivors, hidden children, and second-generation descendants of survivors held by the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust & Descendants.¹ Since it was not very far from my home in western Maryland, it seemed a low-risk way of learning more about the Holocaust and beginning to fulfill my promise to my mother. Seeking a common bond with others, I searched for people from Hungary. I naively asked one woman, “Isn’t there anyone here from outside Budapest? Is there anyone from Debrecen or smaller towns?” She looked surprised and told me that almost no one from rural Hungary had survived the attempted annihilation of the Jews. I was stunned, having had little sense of how unique and lucky my family’s experience was, and I asked a few Hungarian attendees to explain more of the wartime history to me.²

Both of my parents were from eastern Hungary—the city of Debrecen and the countryside—and had survived, along with five of my mother’s six siblings and one of my father’s two brothers. During the war, they took different paths and were imprisoned in different

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places, yet all made it through. I realized that in many ways, their stories were different from the norm and warranted telling. Their story of survival—the extraordinary nature of all those sisters and brothers who endured so much—seemed all the more miraculous. I wanted to understand what ingenuity helped them survive and how their nondescript, middle-aged facades belied their strengths, both for surviving the war and for starting life anew in a strange land.

By learning more about them, I hoped to learn skills, too, skills that might help me in the future, for I often wonder if I lack their competence or pragmatic resourcefulness outside of my role as a physician. Not surprisingly, given our family history, ever since adolescence, I have longed to possess practical skills, such as finding shelter and food and blending in comfortably among strangers.

Except for my father, who tragically died too young, at only fifty, these survivors lived long and productive lives. Despite many trials before, during, and after the Holocaust, their lives are a remarkable testament to their resilience.

The story that follows is the biography of two intertwined families from rural Hungary. On her deathbed, my mother asked me to ensure that their remarkable story was preserved and passed on. While too many years have passed since I gave her my word, I now feel a sense of urgency to complete this project and fulfill her wishes and am now much better prepared to do so, having traveled back to Hungary, conducted more interviews with family, and read more extensively on history and the Holocaust. This book is based on hours of interviews with family members, the culmination of a decades-long endeavor. Some family members shared more details than did others. I know that some of what follows will likely offend some of my relatives. There were many spats in the family, and I have recounted these as they were told to me—to give a sense of the varied colorful characters we grew up with and were shaped by. I make no claims as to the veracity of any individual's perceptions. I recount only what was I was told.

The Ehrenfelds

A SMALL VILLAGE IN EASTERN HUNGARY, Sáránd, is where my mother's family's story begins.

Visitors still often arrive in Sáránd by train, stopping at the same unwelcoming station that was my mother's portal to the bigger world. When I first visited with my mother in 1978, that station was the same as she remembered it: two stories of bleak tan stucco with dark doors and window frames, capped with a peaked roof. The stark white blinds made me wonder what dark secrets were hidden inside. The building felt forbidding, with no trim or shutters around the masked windows to soften its appearance. A sullen stationmaster stood outside, arms folded across his chest, wearing a navy uniform and red cap trimmed with a gold braid. With his cigarette dangling between two fingers, he motioned me away when I began to take a photo. I took it anyway.

After elementary school, my mother left this station every day to venture to school in the bustling big city, Debrecen, which had a population of about one hundred thousand. The village of Sáránd, 9.4 miles south of Debrecen, had about two thousand residents. In 1978, all the roads were still dirt, and pigs, cows, and chickens ran freely through the town. The Református (Calvinist) church remains the focal point of the town, demanding attention with its brown spire and clock towering above the grayish-white stone.

THE EHRENFELDS



Mór Ehrenfeld, circa 1918

My mother said that little had changed from when she grew up there. Mór (Mozes) Ehrenfeld, the dignified and reserved family patriarch, apparently ended up in Sáránd by accident.

Born in 1879, Mór grew up in Bököny, a bit north of Debrecen, the sixth of eight children in a poor family. His father, David Ehrenfeld, was a peddler of fruits.

My grandfather Mór's first marriage was to Maria (Kupferstein) Grosz, who came from a tiny rural village in the plains region of northeastern Hungary (either Nyírjákó or the adjacent Petneháza). She and Mór moved to distant Lénártó (now Lénártóv), Slovakia, 150 miles north of their birthplaces, a region of low mountains not unlike the Appalachians. I don't know why Mór went there, other

than perhaps it looked promising, being on the trade route from Poland to Galicia, and it was nestled in a lush little valley.¹ Family lore is that Mór managed an estate there for a Baron Kornfeld and learned many refined manners from him. Mór's twin boys, Istvan "Pista" and József "Józsi," were born there in 1907.

Mór reportedly wanted to go south to Hajdúdorog, an agricultural region northwest of Bököny, almost equidistant between the larger cities of Nyíregyháza and Debrecen. I don't know why it had particular appeal nor how he apparently got so lost en route that he bypassed Hajdúdorog and ended up going farther south, even beyond the *középpont*, or hub for the region's trains, in Debrecen. I suspect that perhaps he wanted to be closer to his sisters Etél and Rebi, who lived in that region. I believe his parents had already died, but despite making a trip to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and hiring a genealogy researcher in Hungary, I have come up with almost nothing else about Mór's family.

Legend has it that the young family ended up stopping in Sáránd when they took a wrong train. They met a Jewish merchant, and Mór ended up buying the general store from him and becoming well-established in the small town.

This is not unlike the way I ended up in Cumberland, Maryland, in 1983. I first met the town when I was about twenty years old, driving alone on the old Route 40 from St. Louis, Missouri, to Silver Spring, Maryland. A tire blew out in the valley just beyond town, and as I waited for help, I looked around and thought what a lovely area it was, nestled in the Appalachians. A decade later, the local hospital recruited me to start a solo practice in infectious diseases there—as no other specialist was available in more than a seventy-five-mile radius—and like my grandfather, I built a thriving practice from scratch. I'd like to think a bit of my pioneering spirit was passed on to me from my grandfather.

Even when I visited Sáránd with my mother in 1978, decades after the war, some folks remembered Mór—for lending everyone credit in his store or for sometimes giving a child candy.

THE EHRENFELDS

Maria died in childbirth in Sáránd in 1910, leaving Mór a widower with two young twin sons. As was the custom at that time, he then married the oldest eligible girl in the family, Maria's cousin Anna Róth, who was also from Nyírbákó, and moved her to Sáránd in 1911.

It became Anna's lot to raise Maria's sons, in keeping with local traditions and arranged marriages.



Anna Róth (18) and Mór Ehrenfeld (32) wedding, 1911

In Sáránd, Mór continued farming, a business he had learned while managing the Lénártó estate, and also ran a general store and tavern. My mother and her sisters told me that their father was so knowledgeable about farming that others often turned to him for assistance.

Growing up, I never heard my mother or her siblings say anything nice about their mother, Anna, though I could tell they adored their father. It wasn't that they spoke badly of Anna; it was more that they said so little about her. Only as an adult did I realize that their silence reflected disapproval rather than their growing up for many years without a mother. It was only after I stepped back and made a timeline did I begin to gain perspective as to why Anna was often mean to her children.

Anna was only eighteen when she was married off to Mór, a widower fourteen years her senior. She was separated from her own close family, and once married, she promptly began having children of her own, one almost every two years, except during World War I. By 1922, eleven years after marrying, Anna had five children, as well as two stepsons.

ANTISEMITISM IN HUNGARY has waxed and waned over the centuries. When Hungary was under Turkish rule (1526–1686), life was better for the Jews, as the Ottoman Empire even encouraged their settlement and allowed them to hold official government positions. Conditions for them worsened under the Hapsburgs. However, some Hungarian noblemen recognized their skills and sheltered them on their estates. In 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of the Hungarian Parliament removed restrictions on the Jews, such as those prohibiting them from living in cities. Jews became more assimilated, educated, and prominent members of the communities.²

In 1882, a fourteen-year-old Christian girl disappeared in a town called Tiszaeszlár. Rumors were that she was murdered by Jews so her blood could be used in rituals, a common and recurrent defamatory canard—and a lie still used today by conspiracy

theorists. The teen was later found to have committed suicide by drowning herself in the Tisza River, and the accused were acquitted after fifteen months of imprisonment.³

This notorious episode became known as the Tiszaeszlár blood libel trial. According to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research's encyclopedia, this was the first such ritual murder trial occurring outside of Poland or the Russian Empire since the sixteenth century.⁴

The acquittal sparked a wave of similar accusations and worsening antisemitism in Hungary. Despite this, Jews in this "emancipation period" (1867–1914) became more assimilated. They were patriotic and actively fought for their country in World War I.⁵

MÓR HAD GONE OFF to fight in the war, at times in Albania and in Montenegro. He had sustained a shrapnel injury to his neck that abscessed and had to be periodically drained; it was a lifelong, painful reminder of the war. He also was injured by mustard gas. As a decorated veteran of World War I, Mór was granted a temporary reprieve from the growing antisemitic regulations in the 1930s and early 1940s.

My mother described the first signs of danger she noticed:

[The Hungarians] started to take away business from Jewish merchants. They had to take in somebody who was non-Jewish; they were the owner by name only, the Jews. They had to give it to the new owner. . . . You had to have a partner who wasn't Jewish, or you couldn't buy anything from the wholesaler. We tried to keep a low profile, not to be outstanding in anything, because we always knew we were secondhand citizens.⁶

Mór, previously exempted from restrictions because of his war service, lost his licenses to sell tobacco and liquor.

In 1938, Hungary passed more restrictions, similar to the Nuremberg Laws in Germany. The first law restricted Jews to only 20 percent of professionals. A year later, Jews could make up only



Anna, circa 1930

6 percent of those groups—including students attending universities—and none could hold government jobs. Most lost voting rights. This second Jewish law also defined Jews as anyone with two, three, or four Jewish-born grandparents.

Anna, with her brooding look and icy stare, bore a total of seven children; one girl died when only a year old. This photo stared down from the wall in my mother's bedroom until 2008. It always felt threatening.

Undoubtedly overwhelmed by her expanding family, Anna seemed to have been unhappy with her lot in life, later hissing as she complained to her youngest, "Why did I ever marry a widower?"⁷

I heard a lot about Anna's playing favorites with her children. She treated Pista and Józsi as stepchildren—which, of course, they were—and picked on them. One day, Józsi hit Magdus, Anna's eldest, on the arm with his violin bow. When Anna saw the bruise, she broke Józsi's violin across her knee, shattering it, knowing the violins were the twins' most cherished possessions.

My mother, Magdus, made her way into the world in 1912, just a year after her parents married. She must have been a challenge, having a determined and questioning nature. As she got older, Ma was tasked with household duties, giving up her education to help raise the younger children. Outgoing and helpful, she also spent considerable time in the store, helping her father wait on customers.

Another daughter, Bözsi, followed in 1914. Magdus recalled that everyone was unhappy and always hungry. With Mór away at war, Anna had to work alone in their general store, as well as care for her two babies and her young stepsons. In October 1918, when

Miklós was born, they sent a letter to the army, and Mór, then a well-regarded sergeant, was allowed leave from Italy to celebrate the birth of his son. When he returned to his unit, the war had just been declared over, so Mór returned to Sáránd. He resumed running his store and the adjacent tavern, and he and Anna went back to having babies about every two years—Klari (1920); Jolanka (1922), who died the year after she was born; Kati (1924); and Gabriella “Henduka” (1927).



Magdus (about 21), circa 1933,
Sáránd

WHILE AS A CHILD I never heard anything about the Holocaust, my aunts and uncle regularly spoke adoringly about their father. They told a number of stories about their parents when we all got together for the Ehrenfelds’ first big family reunion in 1992 at Brookdale, in the Pocono Mountains.

Anna was said to be good at taking care of the cows. Marcsa, a cow with infected eyes, needed daily treatment. When Marcsa came home from grazing in the field, she would go to Anna as though she were one of her own children to have her eyes rebandaged. The sisters also joked that they were named after the cows Anna loved so dearly. Miklós added that Anna was able to save a diseased tree. However, my mother bemoaned the fact although their fruit and nut trees were planted for production, they had to let them lie fallow for several years because of the Orthodox Jewish rule of *orlah*.⁸

MY GRANDPARENTS reportedly had an unhappy marriage. Most of the difficulties likely stemmed from their fourteen-year age difference and Anna’s being unprepared for or not wanting the

burden of producing and caring for a large family. Perhaps some of their marital difficulties also emanated from my grandmother's nature and upbringing.

When I uncovered a photo of Anna's father in 2015, I could see that Anna and her father shared the same icy stare and demeanor, and I wondered how much these traits affected their children. I wondered, too, how much of their personalities and apparent lack of parenting skills came from their hard childhoods and wartime trauma.

Anna's father—my great-grandfather—Herman Róth, a potato farmer, was not a very nice man, according to my mother and uncle Miklós. He had nine children with his first wife, Julia Grosz. After she died in 1916, he married Rózsa Rosenfeld and kicked the remaining children from his first marriage out of the house. After Anna married Mór and had children of her own, one of her sisters, Irma, worked as a *cseléd* (maid) for her, but soon she married and left. Leonka, the youngest sister (about Klari's age) helped Anna with the housekeeping and stayed with the family in Sáránd after Anna's death. She also went to school in Debrecen with Klari and Bözsi. Magdus and Miklós recalled Leonka as a talented, natural artist. She was killed at Auschwitz.

Four of Anna's other siblings also moved to Sáránd and were supported by Mór. He even bought a house on the outskirts of Sáránd where there was grass, not just dirt and dust, for two of them, Etél and Jenö, who both had tuberculosis. White leghorn chickens provided nourishment from the abundant eggs they laid. Two other siblings, Béla and Rózsika, cared for Etél and Jenö for about five years until they succumbed to the infection.

My uncle Miklós told me about visiting his grandfather Herman once or twice when he was young and how disturbing those visits were. He told me of his surprise and hurt that his grandfather never touched or embraced him. Miklós was frightened, too, as every drawer that he opened contained a gun. His aunt Rózsika also told him that Herman locked Gypsies in the icehouse, a tale that further terrified the young boy.

Kati never met Herman; he had died before she was old enough to visit. However, as a child, she visited the farm in Nyírjákó. Kati recalled that the workers lived in very small row houses on the farm. She was impressed that the family's house was two stories high, with the bedrooms upstairs, and had an "English closet"—an indoor bathroom with a chain that was pulled to flush the toilet. In Sáránd, the Ehrenfeld family had an outhouse in the far corner of the yard, and they had to skirt piles of manure from the animals. Yet Kati recognized how much better off they were than most of the other villagers.

ANNA SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN after her father in her iciness and difficulty expressing affection, the latter trait being passed on to her children in varying degrees.

Both Magdus and Kati told me with dismay that Anna periodically stole money from her husband's tavern. My mother felt guilty for helping her mother steal from Mór. When they were paid in the store or bar with large bills, the money was put away in a different drawer that was more inaccessible. Magdus would give some of the paper money to Anna, who then gave it to her brothers and sisters. When she spoke of her mother, Magdus often sounded bitter and expressed the belief that her mother loved her siblings more—and did more for them—than her own children.

Anna also bred resentment by playing favorites with her children. Each had a unique place in her affections.

The twins, Józsi and Pista, were stepchildren and thus never in her good graces. Despite this, Anna's biological children never regarded Józsi or Pista as unequal in any way.

Magdus, the eldest, was the reliable hard worker. She had a serious face enlivened by her warm brown eyes, with thin lips and a very high forehead. Her earnest facade belied her stubborn and willful nature, which manifested itself from the time she was young. She was often in trouble, even as a young child, and was nicknamed *nagyszájú* (big mouth) by her mother, which Magdus

seemed proud of. When she was four or five years old, her mother made her a doll from cornhusks and dressed it in a white frock. They went to Debrecen together one day and the wholesale business owner gave Magdus a beautiful doll, a real doll. However, on the return trip home, while they were waiting at the rail station, the doll slipped between the slats of the bench they were sitting on and was inadvertently left behind. Anna became angry with her young daughter, but Magdus said, “I didn’t like it anyway. Don’t bother to fight with me because I didn’t like it anyway.”

About six months before Anna’s death, Magdus was sent to a distant village to work as a *cseléd* for one of her aunts to cook, clean, and do tasks in the apple orchard. One day, she was in a tree trying to clear a wasp nest when she saw her father walking toward her. It turned out that her parents were worried about what had happened to her, as she worked so hard that she hadn’t even had time to write home.

Bözsi, dark-skinned and shapely, was the *cigány* (Gypsy), which was not a term of endearment. Bözsi is a nickname for Erzsébet (the queen of Hungary, 1867–98) or Elisabeth.



Bözsi (about 10), circa 1924, Sáránd



Bözsi, 1948, Germany

I never heard much about Bözsi's relationship with her parents. Like many children, she was displaced when the next baby came along, and she could no longer sleep with her mother. She was jealous of Miklós at the time and cried, "Dobják be a budiba!" (Throw him in the outhouse). She had dark hair and high cheekbones and was a beautiful young woman, earning her mother's approval for her looks. She was also aloof and did not have the right personality to wait on customers in the family's store. Bözsi was thus later nicknamed "Queen Elisabeth," both because of her regal bearing and her haughtiness.

Bözsi had a distinctive and grating nasal voice. As an adult, she always had her hair teased into an updo with a French twist, which was strikingly elegant with her snow white hair, and maintained her commanding demeanor.

Miklós was welcomed by Anna, being her only son, and was immediately more valued in the family than the girls were. In fact, he was so valued that he was sent away from home at the age of four so he could receive a proper Jewish education. During the school year, he stayed with the family of his paternal aunt, Etél Lindenfeld, in Hajdúhadház (often called Hadház), ten miles north of Debrecen. Hadház was a larger town and had several hundred Jews who could support a religious school. While he was allowed home for summer vacations, Miklós was otherwise exiled until the age of fourteen, when his mother died. Miklós never forgave his mother for sending him away and referred to her contemptuously as a "born-again Jew" in a manner very uncharacteristic of his usual kind demeanor. As he grew older, Miklós looked just like his father, and he had a similar calm, quiet nature, which was comforting to his sisters.

KLARI CAME NEXT and always felt neglected, "the girl after the boy." She also was the one child to share Anna's distinctive cleft chin. Klari garnered her mother's attention only because she was sickly and scrawny. Anna plied her with expensive imported foods like bananas and dates that were too costly to be shared with the other children. Klari complained that her mother and older



Magdus, Klari, cousin Magda “Mártonfalvi Magda” Ehrenfeld, and Bözsi, circa 1930

sisters would force-feed her like they did the geese. Anna would take waif-like Klari and the baby, Henduka, with her to vacation at warm baths in Hajdúszoboszló. In 2008, I was taken to visit these famous healing mineral spas by my cousin András. I could picture my grandmother and her daughters there, enjoying the warm waters, the children playfully splashing each other. They also went to spas near Nagyvárad (now Oradea, Romania), where Anna’s sister Irma lived.

When Klari was a child, her father privately referred to her as his *fa kutya* (wooden dog) because she was impassive, like a statue of a dog. By the time Klari was in her late teens, Mór noted that she was always *szomorú*, sad. Perhaps he recognized himself in her.

I wonder when Klari changed, because I was always struck by how malleable her face was, with an ever-changing array of expressions.

Kati was said to be homely by her mother—which later saved her life as a child. I don't see the homeliness in the rare photos of her and find it ironic that Anna was ashamed of her daughter, given that Kati reportedly looked like Anna's side of the family—the Róth side.



Kati (10), 1934, Sáránd

Kati seems to have suffered the most from her mother's poor parenting skills. In the hierarchy of Anna's favorites, Henduka (the baby) and Miklós ranked at the top and Kati was at the bottom of the scale. Anna called her ugly and always left her young daughter behind when she traveled. Just seven when her mother died, Kati had only hurtful stories about her. When I asked about their relationship, Kati remembered her mother spanking her twice.

The first time was when she was about five years old. She had been playing in the town square with other children but dawdled, lagging behind. A young Hungarian peasant, dressed in the old attire of the Hortobágy (plains) shepherds, with loose, almost skirt-like pants covered with an apron, picked Kati up and carried her to a nearby wooded area. While gently cradling her, he lifted his apron and placed his penis in Kati's hands. "Here's a doll for you," he said. "Kiss it. That's it. Play with it." Later—a child has little sense of time—perhaps much later, he brought her back to the town square, where Anna and a crowd were gathered, wailing about the lost child.

"Look what I found in the woods," the young man said, depositing Kati in front of Anna. Instead of embracing Kati with relief, Anna grabbed the small girl, lifted her dress, and began hitting her in front of the villagers. All the while, Anna humiliated



Klari (about 11), Henduka (about 4), Anna (39), and Kati (about 7), circa 1931, Sáránd

her, telling Kati what a bad girl she was and spanking her in front of the neighbors.

The second spanking was also for something unavoidable, when young Kati, who was ill, soiled her underwear at school.

Kati always remained afraid of her mother and yearned for her love.

Kati was built more stockily than her sisters, which came in handy for the hard work she had to do most of her life. She became the “good,” obedient child, later caring for her father and sisters.

Kati grew up outwardly the most pleasant of the sisters. Being the youngest, she had a special closeness with her father, and after Magdus left, she was his right hand in the store.

Then there was Henduka, the baby and everyone’s favorite, even among nearby villagers. She accompanied her mother everywhere.

Anna had a photo with her younger daughters enlarged to display on the wall of her home. Kati was pictured in the original,

but Anna had Kati erased from the photo, inflicting a wound that festered for the rest of Kati's life.

The sisters didn't speak much about their parents, but when they did, it was consistent with the adage "It's always the mother's fault."

All the children spoke reverently of their father—about how well-read he was and multitalented, being skilled in farming and running his store. He spoke six or seven languages, including Czech, German, Yiddish, Albanian, and Slavic languages, and often helped villagers with applications or business dealings.

A 1924 business directory lists the following professionals in Sáránd: six shoemakers, five boot makers, four wheelwrights, four blacksmiths, three butchers, two grocers (though curiously, Mór is not listed, perhaps because his was a general store), two carpenters or furniture makers, two innkeepers (Mór and Ignác Leitner, a Jewish man on the outskirts of town), two barbers, one tinsmith, and one midwife.⁹

Besides the general store and tavern, his major business, Mór managed a small farm in Sáránd, growing vegetables and melons between the rows of grapes, as well as raising cows to provide kosher milk. Mór also had a seven-acre vineyard east of town, en route to the nearby village of Hajdúbagos.

Mór was generous in extending credit in his store or feeding any beggars who came by. Until the past few years while researching and writing this book, I hadn't appreciated how generous Mór was to extended family, Anna's and his own, and how many people he was quietly supporting without complaint or recognition. Learning this made me even sadder that I never knew him and that the younger members of our families have grown apart. Hearing these details about Mór and realizing how remarkable he was also made him a real person in my mind, rather than just a faded two-dimensional photo. I am remorseful that until August 2018, I did not even know when he died and so could not properly observe his *Yahrzeit* (anniversary of his death).

The Glattsteins

THE STORY OF MY MOTHER'S FAMILY, the Ehrenfelds, is but half of my own, as the girls' lives became intimately intertwined with two of the Glattstein family's sons and their mother, another unlikeable matriarch.

My uncle Sanyi (Sándor), clean-cut and fair, the obsessive keeper of family records, traced the Glattsteins back to the mid-1700s, when Wolf Zev and his father, Azriel, were in the northern Abaúj megye (county) village of Szina, south of Košice (Kassa). They were among the first Jews there, according to tombstones. Taxpayer records from 1768 note three Jewish households whose heads made their livings from peddling and selling their wares in the Abaúj markets surrounding their homes.¹

As with Mór Ehrenfeld, I have no idea what attracted the Glattstein patriarchs to this area of northeastern Hungary, an agricultural region where many worked on estates, nor why they later moved. Almost all of my knowledge of the Glattsteins comes from multiple interviews with Sanyi over the years and his own very detailed notes. My recording him started seriously in 2003 in Los Angeles.

Wolf Zev and his father migrated sixty-three miles south and made the larger town of Mezöcsát their permanent home. Azriel even had a house recorded in his name there in the early 1800s. His children and grandchildren spread throughout Hungary, with several becoming prominent rabbis. In about 1872, one grandson,

Anton (Antal in some records), a grocer, married Pesl (Pepi) Czucker, who became my great-grandmother. About fifteen years after they married, she died, leaving behind five children, including my two-year-old grandfather, Zsigmond.

Anton remarried in 1887 and moved with his three young sons to Tiszadorogma, a small nearby village on the banks of the Tisza River, as it was his new bride's hometown. Anton and Rachel Leah Horowitz raised their two daughters and four sons there, in addition to the three boys from Anton's first wife. The couple had a general store with a bar in their house. I knew two of their children, my great-aunt Etél (and her husband, Emanuel "Mano" Kramer) and her brother, Samu, who lived in New York City in their later years. I met them in the late 1950s when we visited the big city to see my father's few surviving family members. Samu and Mano worked in the Horowitz-Margareten Matzoh Factory.

Like many teens, Zsigmond had no desire to stay in a small village nor to work in the family's business. He moved to Debrecen, where he became an apprentice and later a journeyman in a grocery store. Sometime between 1906 and 1909, Zsigmond took a job at Grünberger & Glück, a wholesale and retail grocery store. One of the owners was Sándor Grünberger, who had a sister named Ella, ten years his junior.

Zsigmond and Ella married on March 8, 1911, in Hajdúszoboszló, a small city near Debrecen, where Ella and her family lived. Ella and her twin brother, Jakab (generally called Jakus), were the eighth and ninth children in their family. Their mother had died when they were fourteen years old. Jakus went to Debrecen to attend high school. Ella stayed home until her father remarried, then she went to Debrecen to learn dressmaking, since sewing was a common trade for women at the time.

Zsigmond and Ella started their married life together by renting an apartment on Bethlen utca (street) in Debrecen. Zsigmond had enough money saved to be able to buy a small house at Bercsényi utca 35. They moved there and opened a small general store in the house. Their lives were uneventful until the war came. They had



Wedding of Ella Grünberger (21) and Zsigmond Glattstein (26), 1911, Hajdúszoboszló

two sons before the war: Jenő, born in 1912, named after Ella's young brother who had died of typhoid fever a few years before, and Miklós ("Miki"), my father, born in 1913.

When World War I started in 1914, Zsigmond was drafted into the army and served until the end of the war. While he was home on leave, Ella became pregnant with Sanyi, who was born in January 1916 at their house. Only two weeks later, tragedy struck Ella's family again. Her sister Hermina died of a stroke at age thirty-four, leaving an eight-year-old son, who was also raised by her brother Jakus.

THE GLATTSTEINS



Ella's family. Her brother, Jakus, became the patriarch of the family after Zsigmond died. *Back row:* Ella's sister Hermina (Grünberger) Schwartz (born 1882), brother József Grünberger (born 1889), sister-in-law Sarah "Sári" Lowenheim Greenburger (born 1876), twin brother Jakab "Jakus" Grünberger (born 1890). *Front row left to right:* Ella's nephews, Jenő "Jancsi" G. Schwartz (born 1908) and Sanford Jerome Greenburger (born 1903)

Family lore is that Zsigmond was desperate to get out of the army so he drank a lot of coffee to cause palpitations. He soon became ill and was forced to sell their house and the general store on Bercsényi utca, downsizing to a rented apartment at Csapó utca 29, with only a medium-sized room, a small entry hall, and an even smaller kitchen. He was not discharged but reportedly died

of heart disease precipitated by his heavy caffeine intake in 1919 at age thirty-four, leaving Ella, only twenty-eight years old, widowed with three young sons between the ages of three and seven. Her life shattered, she struggled to make a living and raise her sons, first working at home on her own sewing machine as a seamstress, making ladies' dresses. Since her income was not enough to support the family, several of the Grünberger brothers pitched in to help her. Sándor, who had the grocery store, pledged to give her groceries every month, equivalent in today's dollars to \$35 to \$40. Her twin brother, Jakus, a lawyer, paid the rent. Zsigmond's brothers also helped the family.

Ella's apartment building had four units surrounding a courtyard, typical of Debrecen design. Her only living sister, widowed Ilona (whom we called Ilonka *néni* ["aunt" or a term of respect, like Mrs.]), also lived there with her children. Bachelor brother Jakab (Jakus *bácsi* [uncle; bácsi or a term of respect, like Mr.]) helped both his sisters. He and Ilonka adopted Hermina's son, Jancsi, and raised him as their own. The families remained tight-knit. Although young, Jancsi was killed in World War II. Thirty-odd years later, his widow, Irén Schwartz, became like an aunt to me.

When I was a lonely freshman student far from home at Washington University in St. Louis, Irén unhesitatingly adopted me into her family, and I spent many weekends with her.

Jakus served as the father to his four nephews—Miki, Sanyi, and Jenö (Ella's sons) and Jancsi (Hermina's son). Jakus remained the patriarch of my father's side of the family for the rest of his life. We visited him regularly after he immigrated to New York City in 1958. He was a strict, conservative penny pincher. He spent no money on anything nonessential but paid ungrudgingly for whatever he considered necessary, such as Ella's rent and his nephews' studies.

Helen (Hella), Ilonka's daughter, became Jakus's wife. It was not uncommon for such relatives to wed where finding a suitably religious partner was difficult as it was in rural settings and the Orthodox community). This is called an avunculate marriage and was not prohibited.



Ella (Grünberger) Glattstein, Jancsi G. Schwartz, and Irén Schwartz, circa 1940

Most of the ancestors on both sides of my family were religious and clannish. While that clannishness led to the occasional intermarriage, it also meant that family members took care of one another. We visited the elderly Glattstein-Grünberger family in New York once or twice a year. After my father died, they and their children supported me. This value system influenced so many of my life's decisions—for example, the place I chose to do my medical training and where I established my practice. I wanted to be within reasonable driving distance of my mother in case she needed me. This connection was conspicuous enough that the two Indian women physicians I trained under commented about it and asked me where my family was from. They saw my family values as not typically American.

Later, my willingness and need to take care of family became critical in my choice of a life partner.

My father, Miki, and his two brothers attended the elementary school of the Orthodox Jewish Congregation, located on Reál Iskola street between Hatvan utca and József Kir. Herceg utca. Sanyi told

me that being too young and too poor to take the streetcar by themselves, they walked the half mile.²

In 1920, a year after his father died, Jenő came down with meningitis and was left with learning disabilities and a bent back. He could carry on a conversation, but he could never learn a trade nor hold down a job.

After finishing the fourth grade, Miki and Sanyi entered *polgári*, middle school, and then attended the new religious high school, the Debreceni Zsidó Gimnázium. Classes were held six days a week, Sunday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and each day the brothers studied five subjects, including math, geography, history, language, and literature.

On Saturday, the students were required to attend morning services in the synagogue. They conducted the religious services under the supervision of the teachers. Sanyi often served as a Torah reader. Other students chanted as cantors.

Sanyi described himself as a perfectionist, very bound by rules, and Miki as “normal,” never hesitating to bend the rules. My father was described as a *csibész*, a mischievous rascal who charmed everyone.

Sanyi was a good student who became, in turn, a lawyer, a watchmaker, an orthotist with Miki, and then a mathematician and computer programmer. He also enjoyed studying the cello, which he played in the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra.

My father, on the other hand, was as smart as his younger brother but had no interest in studying or music. Miki was handy and could fix anything. He was very sociable and an avid soccer fan, a passion he passed on to my brother.

ON OCCASION, Grandmother Ella and her brood would travel to visit the Glattstein family in Tiszadorogma, a village west of Debrecen. The train crossed the Hortobágy, Hungary’s Great Plain, to Egyek, leaving them to navigate the Tisza River to reach the tiny village. In the summer, they traversed the river by a ferry large enough to accommodate three or four horse-drawn wagons and

many pedestrians on its broad, open deck. One man operated it by hand, using a long pole with a hook at the end. This enabled him to grab a cable that stretched from one bank of the river to the other and pull the ferry across. In the winter, they crossed the frozen river on foot.

As a boy, Miki spent many long summer vacations in the countryside by the Tisza River. Sanyi was three years younger. During his one summer in Tizadorogma, Sanyi went to cheder (Hebrew school) every day. There, he learned to chant portions of the Torah and the Haftarah and attended services in the synagogue to help prepare him for his bar mitzvah. He spent the entire two-month vacation in Tizadorogma like Miki did but lamented the fact that in subsequent years, he was not invited back. Sanyi was very serious and strait-laced as a youth. He suspected he wasn't asked back because he wasn't as entertaining as his mischievous and charming older brother, Miki.

I think Sanyi's insight is accurate; while he was warm and friendly, I saw only his studious, usually data-driven manner. In contrast, Miki was known by both sides of the family for his playfulness and as someone who could set people at ease and make them laugh. He was invited to spend every summer vacation in Tizadorogma with his uncles and aunts until he flunked out of school and was not allowed—by law—to repeat that grade.

While Miki was bright and initially did well in elementary school, he did not want to study—his mind was on everything else. In the high school, he was always playing tricks on the teachers such as rigging their chairs so they would fall or pulling their coats when they walked by. Surprisingly, he was never caught!

Because of his failing grades due to his disinterest in school, Miki had to drop out and seek an apprenticeship. To his dismay, after he started his vocational training, he could no longer take time for the long summer vacations in the countryside by the river.

JANCSI AND SANYI both graduated from high school and then the University of Debrecen for undergraduate studies. Both obtained



Etél (Glattstein) Kramer, Florence (Kramer) Radkowsky, Emanuel “Mano” Kramer, and Samuel “Samu” Glattstein (Etél’s brother), circa 1953

doctor of law degrees, Sanyi on June 28, 1940, in the midst of the growing uncertainties of war. That month, Italy entered the war, invading France, and Romania was forced to cede swaths of territory by the Soviet Union to Ukraine; the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic States, and France surrendered to the Germans.³

BY THE LATE 1920S, the Glattstein family scattered farther. Zsigmond’s brothers Herman, Samu, and Ferenc “Feri” moved to Edelény to work in the offices of the coal mine (Edelényi Kőszénbánya), which was also owned by the Horowitz-Margareten family.

Although dispersed then throughout north-central Hungary, the families remained close, visiting each other regularly before the war. The few survivors helped each other after the war. In fact, Etél néni and Mano bácsi were integral in getting my parents settled after they immigrated in 1949. When I was about six years old, we began driving periodically from Silver Spring to New York City to visit my great-aunt and uncles who lived on the Lower East Side.

While I enjoyed the visits, I hated the drive and often got sick from the fuel smells as we passed through New Jersey, which was

thick with oil refineries. I was also overwhelmed by the noise, poverty, and filth of New York. Every year, Mano bácsi sent us a care package with matzoh, gefilte fish, and coconut macaroons for Pesach (Passover). I especially appreciated the macaroons as my birthday often fell during the holiday, and cakes were prohibited at that time of year. My mother's cousin Florence was attentive to my mother, who was twenty years her elder. When I was young, I took these close family ties as the norm and never questioned the family's history. With everyone's aversion to speaking of the war or their losses, for years and years I heard only bits about the village life and their family closeness.

I remained close, too, with Jakus and his daughter, Marianna, whom I called Mari, and with Ancsi, the son of Feri and the sole survivor of the war in his entire family.

I grew up regularly visiting Jakus, Hella, Mari, and Ilonka in New York City. Uncle Jakus's thriftiness was legendary, as was his hoarding. I still have a small copper-colored custard cup he got for opening a bank savings account. I think of him fondly and with amusement whenever I see that cup. He was a remarkable character. He would repeatedly open accounts to get the sign-up gifts, which he shared liberally with family, then later close the accounts, moving the funds to another bank offering a sign-up bonus. He had piles of newspapers stacked against the living room walls in his tiny one-bedroom apartment in the public high-rise development on FDR Drive. I hated the green walls of the claustrophobic elevator and the pervasive smell of urine in the long, gloomy hallways.

As a child, I always found the three older relatives odd in appearance. Jakus was very thin, with white stubble on his chin, deeply sunken eyes, and tightly drawn skin under his jaw. In contrast, his sister Ilonka was matronly and nondescript, except for her yellowish white hair and soft, wrinkled double chin, which hung like crepe, all but hiding her neck. She, too, had deeply set eyes, but they were softened by her chubbiness. Hella looked like a softer version of Jakus, except for having full wavy hair and hooded eyelids that made it look like she had been crying.



Grünberger family: Hella, Mari, Jakus, and Ilonka, circa 1960, New York City

Miki and Sanyi were uncommonly close brothers and except for short periods remained together from childhood, through the war, and until Miki's unexpected death in 1964. Sanyi often commented to me late in his life that he was surprised at their closeness, given their extremely different personalities. But often opposites attract and complement each other.

My father's family, the Glattsteins, lived in the city of Debrecen, with its urban amenities such as electricity, a trolley, and cultural events, as well as a large Jewish community. In contrast, my mother's family, the Ehrenfelds, lived in a small village where they were isolated socially and did without similar amenities. From my childhood on, I pestered my mother to tell me about her life in the "dark ages" before electricity and modern conveniences.