

Village Voices

In Our Own Words

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KRISTALLNACHT

by Gaby Kopelman

The years of Hitler's rule had been difficult enough for any Jew then living in Germany, but the "Night of Broken Glass" in 1938 was a watershed. From that day on, events were categorized as before *Kristallnacht* or after *Kristallnacht*. I was fortunate: no harm came to me or my parents on that night. But no Jew, not even a child, remained untouched by the experience or its aftermath.

In July of that year, a law had been passed requiring Jews to register and to carry identification cards. It meant that anyone could be stopped wherever he was, asked for his card, and at once identified as Jew or non-Jew. On October 28 three months later, 17,000 Polish Jews, some of whom had been legal residents, though not citizens, of Germany for decades, were sent back to Poland. Since Poland refused to accept them, these poor people were marooned in miserable internment camps on the Polish frontier.

Herschel Grynszpan, the 17-year-old son of one of the couples thus deported, was living in Paris at the time. On November 7, hearing of his family's expulsion, Grynszpan, carrying a gun, went to the German embassy, intending to kill the German ambassador. The ambassador was not there that day, and Grynszpan ended up shooting another embassy official, Ernst vom Rath, who died two days later.

This was the match that set off the already smoldering fires.

On November 12, Goebbels announced that the killing of vom Rath was an attack by "International Jewry" on the German Reich, and that night Nazi youth roamed the streets, beating up Jews and breaking the shop windows of Jewish enterprises. Some 26,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps, and 7,500 businesses were destroyed. Because of the many windows smashed, this night came to be known as the night of broken glass, *Kristallnacht*.

For me, memories of the night of broken glass started the next morning.

I'd bolted down my breakfast and come charging down the stairs, book-bag

strapped to my back, ready for my usual ride to school. My father's garage and its workshops lay in back of our apartment house, and Krupenio, the garage manager, would often drive me to school. But on that morning, I found Krupenios's brawny arm stretched across the back door of the house, barring my way out to the garage. "No. Not today."

What? Why?

"No school today. You go up. Tell father come down. Now!" I didn't protest, but raced up the stairs; it was all very exciting, and who cared about going to school, anyway? I stormed into my parents' dim bedroom. "No school! Krupenio says to come down!"

My mother, frightened-faced and pale without make-up, sat up in bed, clutching the blanket. "What happened? What's wrong?"

I was impressed to see that my father, a rather formal man who did not sit around in shirtsleeves even in his own home, hastily drew on his trousers over his cream- and violet-striped pajama pants. "Stay inside. Don't answer the door!" This, flung over his shoulder, as he rushed out the door and down the stairs, as though to an appointment long awaited and only accidentally forgotten.

Sometime that same morning, my father, taking nothing with him, not

even a briefcase, left to go into hiding at the villa of his friend Ilusha Pollack, in the outskirts of Berlin. Pollack was also a Jew and a fellow Russian émigré, but one blessed with a mistress, a Frau Kreiss, whose husband was well connected in the higher echelons of the Nazi Party.

My mother phoned my Uncle Albert. A short while before, Albert's wife, my mother's sister Toybi, had left her husband and 3-year-old child and run off to Argentina with her lover, a petty crook, well-known to the police. Relatives from the four corners of the world had pleaded with Albert to let them take the child out of Germany, but he had refused all such offers.

Now once again, there was no reasoning with him. No, Albert had no thought of going into hiding, leaving little Tommy behind to the mercies of the Gestapo. Absurd, argued my mother, even the Germans were not after 3-year-olds—there were limits, after all! But Albert was not to be moved—bad enough that the boy's mother was gone, should he now lose his father as well? And if Toybi ever found out he'd left the boy alone, he was certain she would never return to him.

So, Albert stayed on in his apartment, sitting there waiting for the Gestapo, clutching to his breast the Iron Cross he'd earned in World War I, fighting for Kaiser and Fatherland. Later that day, they did come for him. Despite his Iron Cross, Albert was thrown into Oranienburg, a concentration camp not

far from Berlin.

Once Albert was arrested, leaving Tommy in the care of his nurse, Albert's apartment provided a safe hiding place for my mother—there was no reason for the Gestapo to make a return visit. Her presence there also provided some comfort for little Tommy, who had never before been separated from his father and had never stopped longing for his mother. One morning, my mother found him hiding in Toybi's closet. Tommy's face was buried in one of her dresses. "It smells so of Mummy," said the little boy.

At that time, there was no thought that children might be in danger, and I remained in our apartment in the care of our maid Martha. Neither I nor Martha knew the whereabouts of my parents, a secret entrusted only to Krupenio, whom my parents counted on to keep an eye on their household.

An attempt was made to persuade me that our parents were going away on holiday and that this holiday extended to the schools. I don't know how convinced I was, but it was a fact that my school, serving Jewish children, was closed, leaving me free to play all day long. All in all, I recall that time as not too unsettling, even though I was not allowed out of the house, except in the evening, when for half an hour, under Krupenio's protection, I could run around the garage yard.

The random arrests of Jews ceased after a short time, and my parents were able to return home a couple of weeks later. I know now that, during their absence, Krupenio had risked his liberty, and perhaps his life, to bring my parents clothes, papers, and money, as well as carrying messages from husband to wife in their separate hiding places. He could not have been ignorant of the risks involved, but undoubtedly thought of them modestly as the sort of thing one decent man did for another. Krupenio was a man in a trap, caught up in events he could not possibly have foreseen when he'd first come to Germany, married a jolly German girl, and settled into our little attic flat.

After *Kristallnacht*, I inevitably was more acutely aware of the dangers seen and unseen that surrounded us. After six weeks of incarceration, there was Uncle Albert's return after his release from the Oranienburg Concentration Camp.

It was a memorable event—the scene took place in Uncle Albert's living room, and the image of his emaciated, ravaged face, his sunk-in eyes, and the gray stubble sprouting in sparse tufts on his shaven skull, has never left me.

As my mother told me many years later, Uncle Albert had found the relentless hunger worse than the beatings. Never afterwards was my Uncle Albert—my well-turned out, elegant uncle—to be without a crust of bread in his pocket.

A CRUST OF BREAD by Steve Schnur

He appeared with a creak at the top
of the stairs.

It was two o'clock in the morning.
I awoke with a start from the sofa
below.

He descended without any warning.

What could he be after? What
possible thing,

When all of the world was asleep?
A doctor, a sandwich, or something
to read,

A soda, an ice pack . . . or me?

He went to the kitchen and tore from
a loaf

A generous portion of bread.
But instead of putting it into his
mouth,

He held it high over his head.

“Bread, bread, such glorious bread,
And God bless America too.

I came here from Poland not that
long ago,

A terrified, penniless Jew.

“But here we are safe and here
we are free,

My wife and my children and I.
And here we can speak, and here
we can vote.

I'm grateful, so grateful am I.”

NOT YOUR TYPICAL BURGLAR

by George Kurz

On February 2, 1995, Elisabeth and I
went out for a lovely dinner at the
Ryland Inn. The next morning, Elisabeth
had trouble finding the pocketbook she
had taken with her. She searched the
kitchen. I searched the car. Neither of us
found any trace of the pocketbook.

“The last thing I remember is setting it
on the floor next to my chair at the
Ryland Inn,” Elisabeth said. We called
the restaurant with a description of the
missing handbag. They were certain that
no such item had been left there the night
before.

“It must be around here somewhere,” I
insisted. We searched a second time, but
to no avail. Perhaps the handbag had
indeed been left at the Ryland Inn, and
another customer or an employee had
made off with it. However, there was a
second item that Elisabeth realized was
missing from her desk in our kitchen, a
desk calendar. Furthermore, we had
found our kitchen door unlocked that
morning. Usually we are careful to make
sure our doors are all locked at night.
Perhaps we both had overlooked the
unlocked kitchen door the night before,
but that was a third thing that was
unusual.

Elisabeth knew the handbag had
contained money, a credit card, house
keys, car keys, and so forth. We resisted
the thought that anyone had broken into

our house. After all, there was no sign of forced entry. Possibly someone who had a key had entered through our kitchen door and taken the handbag, but why would anyone be interested in the desk calendar? In any case, we eventually decided to call the police. Elisabeth described the missing items to the patrolman who came to investigate. We had little expectation of ever recovering the lost items and proceeded to have the locks on our doors and the locks on Elisabeth's car changed. A couple of days later, Elisabeth became aware that a second handbag, usually kept in the kitchen, was missing.

About two weeks later, a story broke in the papers about a 41-year-old female attorney who had been apprehended and confessed to multiple burglaries in several towns in Hunterdon and other counties. Nearly all involved physicians' homes and offices. Money and drugs were the principal items stolen. We received a call from the police telling us not only that our house was one of the physicians' homes broken into, but also that the burglar told the police how she had gained access. She had made two small holes in a window screen, allowing her to reach in with two fingers and unlock the screen to raise it, then pry open the window and climb in. Sure enough, we checked the screen in the area she described, and it had two holes. She must have let herself out through the kitchen door, which explained why

we had found it unlocked that morning.

We felt very disturbed that an intruder had been in our house and gone about her business so quietly that neither of us was awakened! On the other hand, we felt fortunate that we had not been threatened with physical harm.

A couple of weeks later, we received a call from the police that a group of boys had discovered the two handbags in a river and turned them and their contents in to the police. The contents included the desk calendar and just about everything that Elisabeth had remembered as being in the bag, plus a few things she had not remembered. Only the cash, jewelry, and keys were missing. I went to police headquarters, identified the items, signed for them, and brought them home. Everything was hopelessly water damaged. The police granted my request for the name and address of the boy who turned in the items, so Elisabeth could send him a thank-you letter.

When the burglar was sentenced, in addition to monetary penalties, she was required to make financial restitution to 10 persons—all of whom were physicians, spouses of physicians, or medical groups—and to serve four years in a New Jersey state prison. She was given credit for the 447 days already served, a large part of which had been spent in a drug rehabilitation center.

When she became eligible for parole five months later, all victims were invited to

provide input to the Parole Board's Victim Input Program. We made two recommendations: that she perform community service with a nonprofit organization and continue in a drug rehab program as an outpatient.

Additionally, she was placed under "Intensive Supervision" and had to complete restitution to the victims of over \$4,000. The happy ending to the story is that by December 1998, she had completed restitution to us and presumably to all the other victims.

AT PENNSWOOD by Henry Martin



"...and now, our special hearts and flowers salute to Valentine's Day, please welcome Dr. Edward D. Eads, world renowned cardiovascular expert."

DOGS by Doug Meaker

Once we determined that Tiny viewed all children as potential enemies, we owned no other dogs. We were already blessed with the presence of a number of dogs because Hope, our eldest daughter, who lived with us for several years, owned, whelped, and trained a number of dogs. She still does, but in her own home.

Hope's first experience was with Mandy, a pound puppy, she got soon after she moved to Philadelphia. She said we might be concerned about her safety in the city and added, "Meet my protection," as she showed us a cute little ball of tan fluff. Well, Mandy grew into a full-sized dog with a German Shepherd appearance and a Husky voice. No one messed with Mandy! However, growing up in house of cats left Mandy a little confused about her identity. One day, Hope, returning from school, happened to look up and said to herself, "I hope I didn't just see what I thought I saw." She went up to the fourth floor and—sure enough—there was Mandy helping her cat buddy Henry chase squirrels across the roof next door. Hope managed to get Mandy back in one piece.

Henry and Mandy were buddies, as I've said. Henry would pick a fight with another cat and then go sit between Mandy's paws, as much as to say, "Meet my big sister! OK, she looks like a dog. But she's really a cat; I have the Rooftop Agility Test to prove it."

Mandy was blessed by the Pope, and we think it went to her head. The Pope had come to town—I forget which year and which Pope. It was announced that, in honor of St. Francis, he would bless the animals. Well, very early in the morning, Hope took Mandy on lead with her to witness this event. So Mandy was there and blessed along with the other pets. She did have a certain attitude afterward.

Hope would take Mandy with her to the local Episcopal church (the priest was a friend). They would go to the early service and sit in the back pew. The priest said that, as he looked out over the congregation of college students recovering from whatever they'd had the night before, it was heartening to see Mandy sitting up with her ears pricked. He sometimes felt she was the only one paying attention.

Hope was an excellent dog trainer; for example, she could put Mandy in a "Down, Stay" outside a store, go in and do her stuff, and come out to find Mandy still there waiting patiently. Hope was so good she considered dropping out of Temple after two years and becoming a professional dog handler. I pointed out that she'd worked for a top professional one summer and watched while he had to kowtow to a woman with a lot of dogs and more money than brains. I said "Hope, you don't tolerate fools gladly. You saw what happened with

that dog handler, and you haven't established yourself as a dog expert." She continued in school. It was one of the few times I can recall giving parental advice.

Hope's next dog was a purebred Golden Retriever called Bear. He grew too big to conform to the breed standard, so she neutered him and concentrated on obedience training competitions. He was good at that—when he wanted to be. To show off his gentle mouth, she would put three uncooked eggs in and let him carry them and then break the eggs to show they were raw.

There was one two-day competition held inside because of bad, cold weather. Each ring was surrounded by curtains. Bear had done his stuff and passed the day before. The second day, he went over to the side of the ring and stuck his head under the curtain, so all one could see was his rear end with tail wagging. The judge said, "Is this the same dog I passed yesterday?" "Yes." "OK if I laugh?" "Why not? He's blown it anyway." So Hope retrieved Bear. As I said, he was good at obedience when he wanted to be, but he dearly loved crowds and being the center of attention, so he thought it was all fun.

In another completion, one of the challenges was to leap over a bar; Bear had done this many times. But on this occasion, he picked up the bar, brought it back, and laid it at Hope's feet. "See, Ma, I retrieved the stick?" He didn't pass.

Bear loved water, so Hope would take him swimming in the local canal. He'd leap off the bank into the water. One winter day, she took him to the canal, and he leaped off the bank, as usual, but onto ice. As he slid across the ice, he looked back as if to say, "Wha'd you do with the water, Ma?"

Goldens are a very popular breed, so to be successful in the show ring, which is how a dog becomes a champion and saleable in this country, one has to have a professional handler, which Hope couldn't afford and didn't want. So, for her third dog, she switched to Flat Coated Retrievers, a less popular breed. These dogs were bred, handled, and shown by private owners.

Her first Flat Coat was officially named High Hopes Run for the Roses, but known to us as Derby. She was born 8/8/88 which made her birth date easy even for this old codger to remember. Derby may not have had the best conformity to the breed standard, but she had attitude galore. When she entered the show ring, it was as though she told the judge, "You can let all those others go home, because you know you are going to give the blue ribbon to me." It was from Derby that I learned that Flat Coats had two conditions: bouncy and dead. Later, I learned that some Flat Coats are actually mellow.

Derby was bred three times producing 11, 12, and 13 puppies. Hope has made a practice of keeping one bitch from each litter and selling the rest. She tried keeping a male once, but he was so hen-pecked he had no chance of strutting the way a champion should. Besides, the pack dynamics are simpler. There is one alpha bitch, and that is that. The alpha need not be the oldest. The oldest are allowed to retire and are quiet, so long as the youngsters let them be.

Hope sells her puppies for a pretty good price, taking a lot of care to make sure the puppy is a good fit for its new home and family. Therefore, even though she has the right of first refusal, she gets very few puppies back, and those are due to a change in the owner's life. I asked once whether she could make money doing this. "No, not and do it right." I've lost track of how many bitches she has raised, bred, and whelped, although I'm sure she hasn't. I recall she has about 150 on her Christmas card list—owners who had a puppy from Hope since she started in 1988.

MIGHTY MITE

by Elaine Ferrara

As fellow veterinary student George and I are walking a cow with a blocked abomasum (one of her four stomachs) from the barn to the surgery suite, George decides to let his rope go free.

The cow, taking advantage of the opportunity, leaps in the air, taking me with her. I yell, “George!” as loud as I can, hoping someone might hear and provide assistance.

I grab the rope tightly across my chest with both hands. And, the second I hit the ground, I dig my heels into the concrete. She’s off and running, slamming me into a barn window, which fortunately does not shatter.

About 40 feet later, we come to a stop, accompanied by the whoops, hollers and cheers of some veterinary students, and of a few professors too!

Not bad for a 98-pound city girl!

It is no surprise that George went on to medical school.

WHEN THE COCK CROWS

by John Wood

In the cock-crow of a day,
When a new day is a-borning,
Light fills the eastern sky
Before its source revealed.
The cinema of dreams shuts down.
Morning rituals begin.
And, yes, it’s almost cast in stone—
The curtain lifts as the morning cup
is brewed,
Poured, inhaled, and sipped.
A soft blue canopy
With sleepy cotton clumps

Commands the balcony,
Where the stillness of the hour
Interrupted solely by benevolent breeze.
Below, a gray squirrel
Does his random walk in fits and starts.
A bluebird chances by.
The quiet stays.
And so you know
That life is good
And, without a spoken word,
Give thanks.

Letters to the Editors

LIGHTEN UP

What’s missing from your solicitation for VV input is a bunch of things we used to get from residents other than the nostalgic category that increasingly holds forth at present. Now commentary, opinion, recommendations, comedy/amusements/stories/jokes, “there but for the grace of God” items, etc., etc. are mostly missing, other than recycled cartoons. Maybe I’m just out of step, but I think a lighter tone at least occasionally would be welcome.

All the editors agree with this suggestion from our colleague Dick Piccolini.

CONNECTION?

I was reading Kathy Hoff’s story about Nancy Osborn and her involvement with the Whitman Massacre, that horrific event in Waiilatpu, Oregon Territory, when Cayuse Indians killed the medical

missionaries, Marcus and Narcissus Whitman. The Cayuse thought the Whitmans had caused the measles deaths of many tribal members.

A dim tickle started in my mind: wasn't there a Spalding connection with that sad event? (My mother was a Spalding.) Delving again into the depths of the dusty Spalding genealogy, I found it! The Rev. Henry Harmon Spalding and his wife Eliza, in the company of the Whitmans, were part of one of the first wagon trains on the Oregon Trail in 1836. (Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding were the first Euro-American women to cross overland!) The Spaldings settled among the Nez Perce, near the present day Lewiston, Idaho.

The Whitmans traveled further West, and lived with the Cayuse, at Waiilatpu, near the current Walla Walla, Washington. Although relations were not always smooth among the missionaries, Spalding's 10-year-old daughter, Eliza, had gone to spend the winter at the Whitman mission just before the massacre in 1847. She was one of 47 hostages, mostly women and children, who were held for nearly a month before being ransomed and liberated. She served as translator, as she was the only captive who knew Nez Perce!

To satisfy my curiosity, I followed the family genealogy backwards, and found my line and Henry Harmon's

line began with brothers, sons of the first Spalding to arrive in Virginia in 1619.

Kathy, do you suppose, your ancestors and mine might have known each other in 1847? Perhaps a possibility, as it seems they were at the same place at the same time.

Isn't history fun!

Sally Burkman

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