



Dr. med. Emil Mosbacher

(June 7, 1886 Fürth - May 31, 1973 Forest Hills, NY)

by his daughter Marianne Flack



Dr. med. Emil Mosbacher, c. 1943

(Photo: private)

My father was born on June 7, 1886 in Fürth (Bavaria). He was the youngest of 12 children, of whom 7 survived into adulthood. His parents were the teacher and head of the Jewish orphanage in Fürth Sigmund Mosbacher and Karoline, nee Sichel. The family was Orthodox and observant, but Sigmund instilled an ethos of inquiry and scientific progress which coexisted with piety and faith in the household.

Emil attended Fürth's Humanistisches Gymnasium (humanistic high school) where he studied Greek and Latin among other standard courses for the time. He graduated in 1906 and then went on to study medicine with a specialty in gynecology and obstetrics. He studied at the universities in Graz, Munich, Würzburg, Berlin and Heidelberg. From the latter he obtained his medical degree *Summa cum Laude* in 1910.

He was proposed for an academic career but had to refuse for economic reasons. My father was the only member of the family who attended university. He was supported by his older

brothers who were established tradesmen by that time. There were enormous age differences between him and his siblings.

Having been an assistant at the university clinics in Vienna for one year (1911/12) and in Frankfurt / Main for three years (1912/15) where he also did research studies at the Institute of Nobel Prize laureate Prof. Paul Ehrlich, he went to Nuremberg. He lived in a large apartment at Frauentorgraben 67 near Plärrer square. From 1915 till 1917 he was appointed chief of the maternity hospital in Nuremberg.

On June 4, 1915 he married Anna Schweizer, born August 2, 1891 in Fürth, the daughter of the factory owner Emil Schweizer and his wife Dina, nee Obermeyer.

During World War I Emil served since September 1915 as a military medical officer in Nuremberg, France, Belgium, Essen and Fürth. For his service he was decorated with the Prussian Iron Cross 2nd Class on April 29, 1917.

He did not support the war and was appalled by the bloodshed, so he offhandedly told me once that he granted medical discharges as frequently as he could.

In 1918 he returned to Nuremberg. After his discharge from the army on April 31, 1919 he established a private practice as certified specialist for gynecology and obstetrics in his apartment. He became one of the two leading Jewish gynecologists in Nuremberg, the other being a Dr. Müller. He also practiced at the Jewish Hospital in Fürth and at the Theresien- and Martha-Maria-Hospitals in Nuremberg. In 1923 a son, Sigmund (after the emigration Stephen) was born.

On June 15, 1926 Emil's wife Anna died after a stillbirth in January, leaving him a young widower.

My father was active in the Jewish community. To my knowledge for some time he was the head of B'nai B'rith in Nuremberg. He was politically progressive and supported the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Weimar Republic's policies. He always spoke admiringly of the foresight of Bismarck in providing government-sponsored medical insurance, and supported the kind of *socialized medicine* that was already the norm in Germany.

On August 28, 1931 he married Rosa (Rose) Neumann, born May 1, 1899 in Würzburg as the daughter of the insurance agent Josef and Jettchen, nee Strauß. It was a very happy marriage.

In 1933, a second child, Lore Marianne, was born. By then, the Nazis had had a significant effect on life in Nuremberg. My father had contacts who warned him whenever there would be some kind of anti-Semitic action, and he often stayed in one of the hospitals to avoid direct confrontations. My mother also had devised a code by which she could warn him not to come home. His reputation as an outstanding physician overcame the destructive ideology of Nazism,

at least temporarily: Several Nazi Party members brought their wives to see my father surreptitiously.

His natural optimism kept him from making the decision to flee Germany until 1938. He could not believe that the situation would get worse as he had an almost naive faith in human goodness. This created a certain amount of tension between him and my mother, who was ready to emigrate as early as 1933.

Eventually he found American members of the Mosbacher family, a prominent Chicago family who must have visited Fürth at the turn of the century. These were only distant relatives (the Mayer and Meyer families), but they willingly and generously provided visas and affidavits to us, allowing us to emigrate in October 1938.

When we arrived in New York, we found that the Nazis had confiscated the insurance policy which was to support us while my father was to study to get his American license. Our family was literally penniless, and again the Chicago relatives came to our rescue. We lived in very shabby furnished apartments from the time of our arrival until we moved to Toledo, Ohio in May 1940. My father had successfully passed his licensing exam, having to learn English, and our American relatives had suggested that he establish a practice outside of New York.

Emil had a very difficult time re-establishing his profession as a specialist. There was a strong bias against foreign doctors at the time. It was still the Depression and he had great difficulty getting referrals from other colleagues, who did not know about his outstanding talents. Nevertheless, in a letter of recommendation from February 1939 a colleague wrote about him very favorably:

He has the most excellent qualifications both from a professional standpoint and from personal character. The Doctor [Emil Mosbacher] is one of the most gentlemanly individuals I have ever had the pleasure to meet, and his good reputation has preceded his arrival in this country. He enjoyed the trust and confidence and, I might say, affection of all those whom he served in the community where he practiced.

With the start of the war against the Axis, my father tried to enlist in the army (this time he supported the war!) but was deemed too old. He then was able to take over a neighborhood practice from a younger doctor who was joining the U.S. Army. From that busy practice, he was able to create a second one in his specialty.

Again, his naturally humane qualities made him much beloved in this essentially working-class neighborhood. With his classical education and taste for all the giants of German culture - Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller, and his love of Latin, he was nevertheless a true democrat and an elegant practitioner of anti-elitism.

In 1945, just before the end of the war, his son Stephen Mosbacher was killed in action in Germany. This was a tragedy which caused irreparable harm to my father's positive outlook but he still maintained his religious practice and his faith.

Despite the general kindness and goodwill of many people in Toledo, he was persuaded to move to New York in 1949 where he joined a practice on Central Park South in Manhattan that included a number of German émigrés, including Dr. Leopold Seidenberger, a colleague and friend from Nuremberg. He also established a smaller neighborhood practice in Forest Hills, Queens and later in Kew Gardens, Queens. He became a Diplomate in Gynecology in 1950 when he was already over 60 years of age.

In 1964, he had to give up his practice quite suddenly because he developed macular degeneration as well as emphysema. For the last ten years of his life, he lived in Forest Hills. He received many visitors who kept him active and alert and interested in the affairs of the day. He loved American films and musicals and had a profound interest in history and politics. He traveled to Europe several times, enjoying holidays in Switzerland and Italy, and returning to Germany at least once, although he did not go to Nuremberg.

Many members of his large family were lost in the Holocaust. Beset by tragedy, he maintained his wise and tolerant perspective until his death on May 31, 1973.

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edited by *Gerhard Jochem*

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