



The little tramp from Fürth (*Der kleine Landstreicher von Fürth*): The whimsical story of a year of my early childhood

by

Willie Glaser

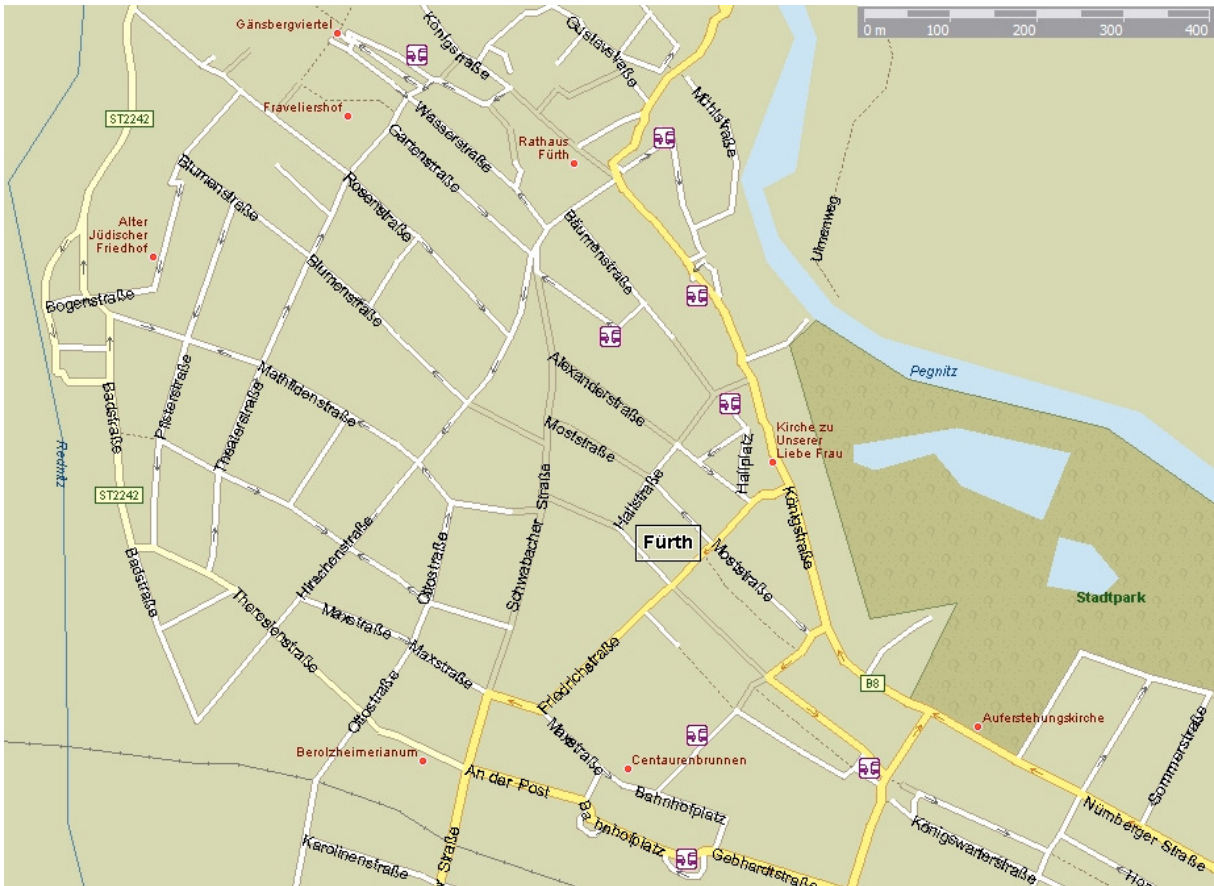


Willie as „the little tramp“, 1925
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Introduction

This is a glimpse of Willie Glaser's story, a five year old Jewish boy who happily and mischievously roamed all over Fürth looking for adventure and always found it.

His territory extended from the city limits (*Stadtgrenze*) of Fürth and Nuremberg and the Danube-Main-Channel to Fürth's *Gänsberg* quarter and Schützenhof square, from the river Rednitz swimming facility (*Flussbad*) to the Schulhof (synagogue square) and Gustavstraße, where he checked out Mama and Papa stork and the baby stork in their nest on the tall factory chimney.



Map of Willie's roaming grounds in Fürth
(graphics: *rjo* / © Microsoft AutoRoute)



The famous Fürth stork on the chimney
(photo: Alexander Mayer)

His mother told him if he wanted a baby brother or sister, he would have to put a piece of sugar for the stork on the kitchen window ledge facing the backyard (*Hinterhof*). Sure enough, the cube of sugar brought a baby sister.



Blumenstraße 41, courtyard: at the far left two kitchen windows where I placed the sugar cube for the stork
(photo: Willie Glaser)



Blumenstraße, looking towards the old Jewish cemetery: this was Willie's playground
(photo: Willie Glaser)

The *Nathanstift*

I was always ready to get into some mischief, so the arrival of a baby sister gave my mother a good opportunity to keep an eye on me. I was pressed into accompanying my mother to the *Nathanstift*, a birthing hospital, which was a bit of a walk from Blumenstraße where we lived to Tannenstraße.



Blumenstraße (this could be the original street sign)
(photo: Willie Glaser)

My sister was born end of April. During the month of May and for a little while during the summer, I dutifully trotted beside the baby carriage and often wheeled the baby carriage part of the way. I was probably watching wide-eyed when the white-robed nurse (*Schwester*) put my baby sister on a scale, examined and measured her.



Nathanstift

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

I did not believe the *Schwester* when she told me, “you were always a big screamer (*Du warst immer ein großer Schreier*) when you were born here five years ago,” and later examined by her as a baby. All five Glaser children, like most of the Fürther babies were born in the *Nathanstift*.

Going swimming

During the summer I loved to go to the very popular open-air pool (*Freibad*) at the Rednitz. After a few initial visits I had to go barefooted. There was a long covered shed with a bench running the full length, hooks on the wall to hang your clothing. I deposited my sandals under the bench and they were gone when I returned to change.



Open-air pool (*Flussbad*) at Badstraße

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

My mother bought me another pair of sandals, they also disappeared the following week. My mother told me no more shoes or sandals when going swimming. I had no choice but to walk barefooted to the *Freibad*. This was no big deal for me, it was just a short walk from the Blumenstraße to the Badstraße and it was summer.

Grandmother (*Großmutter*) Esther

I have very fond memories of my grandmother, a grand old lady and a very proper and respected woman. She was the widow of Lazarus Glaser, held in high esteem as the master shoemaker widow (*Schuhmachermeister*). She was the dowager of the Königstraße where she lived.



**Grandmother Esther & grandfather Leiser
with aunt Meta & uncle Benno in Baiersdorf**
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Whenever grandmother went shopping to the Obstmarkt for vegetables (*Gemüse*) I accompanied her with “Putzi”, the golden retriever by my side carrying vegetable basket (*Gemüsekorb*).



Farmer selling her produce on Obstmarkt
(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Grandmother Esther was very well known in this area of the town. Men greeted her by doffing their hats or caps, ladies smiled and said: “*Grüß Gott, Frau Glaser!*”



View from grandmother's house to the Königstraße
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Esther lived in Königstraße 95 on the third floor. This is a very prestigious apartment building, one of the highest structures in the old inner city, within sight and a stone throw from the city hall with its famous landmark tower. Her husband Lazarus had his workshop in a rear building (*in einem Hinterhof*) in Schirmstraße. I do not remember his workshop (*Werkstätte*) because I was only about four years old when he died.



Königstraße 95
(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkuntz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Königstraße 95 stood out from other buildings because of its beautiful turrets with onion shaped domes (*Zwiebeltürme*) gracing the top floor. During my visit to Fürth in 2008 I had to admire the very beautiful and ornate entrance door to Königstraße 95.



Original front door of grandmother's house Königstraße 95
(photo: Willie Glaser)

I usually arrived at grandmother's apartment at noon for lunch (*Mittagessen*). Grandmother liked to drink half a liter of beer every day. After finishing my meal, she gave me the old beaten up tin can (*Zinkkanne*) to fetch it, but no money because she settled her tavern bill (*Kneipenrechnung*) once a week. I went across the street to the inn *Zum Tannenbaum* (The Fir Tree) and got the beer.



Inn *Zum Tannenbaum* where I went for the beer
(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz
from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)



Inn *Zum Tannenbaum* today. Note the Star of David used in Germany as the emblem of the brewers guild
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Grandmother Esther had a strange habit: She mixed a little sugar in the beer. I knew she liked it.

The fire station (*Feuerwache*)

Very often I hang out in the fire station (*Feuerwache*) behind grandmother's house. I knew I had to be on my best behaviour there. I pitched in helping the firemen with cleaning and washing the fire trucks. A fireman hoisted me on the seat close to the brass fire bell. I made a good job polishing the bell to a mirror shine. As my reward, I was allowed to ring the bell. I told everybody I wanted to be a fireman when I grew up.



The fire station (*Feuerwache*), Königstraße 103
(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of
Heinrich Lotter)



At the fire station - some 80 years later
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Exploring Fürth (*Erkundungen in Fürth*)

Now it was my turn to take grandmother's dog "Putzi" for his daily walk. "Putzi" did not need a leash, he was a very obedient dog. "Putzi" and I happily sauntered down Königstraße, looking into every doorway and walked towards Nürnberger Straße. At Hallstraße we made a right turn. There was a drinking fountain with a large steel cup on a chain and I had my obligatory drink. I looked around: If nobody was watching "Putzi" also got a drink. This drinking fountain was still there during my visit to Fürth in 2008. A different drinking cup was fastened with a chain.



The fountain at Nürnberger Straße
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Sometimes when walking down Königstraße I made a little side trip (*Abstecher*) to Bäumenstraße which runs parallel to Königstraße, eager to look into the large windows of the brewery (*Brauerei*) *Geismann* fascinated by the steam engine (*Dampfmaschine*) hissing away and admiring the huge copper vats containing fermenting beer. Today this area is the "City-Center", a shopping mall.

“Putzi” and I crossed into the *Hindenburganlage*, a park. Usually on a nice day my mother was sitting there on her favourite bench with other women with their baby carriages, downwind from the fountain, not to get sprayed by the water mist.

My mother usual question was: Did you behave on the street? (*Hast du dich gut benommen auf dem Weg?*) She was always ready to cope with any mischief I usually got into.

My mother should have owned her favourite park bench because over the years she brought her five babies in their carriages to this particular bench. It was her regulars’ table (*Stammtisch*).

After saying hello to my mother I walked to the other end of the *Hindenburganlage* (my mother called it “*Englische Anlage*,” the English park) to check out the see-saw (*Wippe*). Sometimes I did not have a partner for the other end, so I tried to seat “Putzi” on it. That did not work either: “Putzi” did not like it and barked at me.

My next task was to check out the weather station (*Wettersäule*). Standing tip-toed I ogled the instruments behind the four windows. Everything was a mystery to me. My father did explain the instruments to me, but the only instrument I understood was the thermometer because we had one at home in the window. Then I checked the weather vane (*Wetterfahne*) the way my father taught me by moisten my forefinger and holding it up in the wind.



The weather station (*Wettersäule*) then & today

(photos by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkuz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter & Willie Glaser)

Satisfied that the weather vane was turned in the right direction, I made my way across Hindenburgstraße to the old Ludwig railway station (*alter Ludwigsbahnhof*) to look into all the stores in the building, curious as ever (*immer neugierig*). Finding everything in order I crossed over to Friedrichstraße to visit a favourite place of mine, which I found by poking my nose in every corner and the backyards (*Hinterhöfe*) of buildings.

Pocket money (*Taschengeld*)

It was the workshop of Dr. Werner who was a Jewish dentist. When I started my first year of elementary school (*Volksschule*), Dr Werner came to our classroom and checked everybody's teeth.

Dr. Werner also made dentures. His laboratory was on the ground floor. It had a low window and I watched his two lab technicians mounting the teeth on a plaster of Paris mounts (*Gipsplatten*).

Later on when I was older Dr. Werner gave me my first part time job, cleaning the dental mounts from the plaster of Paris. He paid me 10 Pfennig an hour (*für die Stunde*). I usually worked two days, two hours after school. I made the grand sum of forty Pfennig a week. My mother let me spend a few Pfennig on two of my favorites: licorice (*Bärendreck*) or dried fruit from an African tree dubbed *Affenbrot* (apes' bread) for my sweet tooth.

When I was about six years old I already had a few jobs going. In addition to the job in the dental laboratory, I figured out soon that certain daily chores were difficult for elderly people, such as hauling coal from the cellar to their apartment. I usually received five Pfennig for two coal shuttles. Thus I earned quite a few Pfennig during the winter months.

At an older age, when I was able to read, I started to deliver the Jewish community paper "*Das jüdische Gemeindeblatt*." I picked up about 100 copies in the community office (*Gemeindekanzlei*). I had a list of names for a certain district to deliver the *Gemeindeblatt* and was paid one Pfennig per copy. I usually made one Mark.

I received five Pfennig pocket money (*Taschengeld*) per week from my father. My grandmother was very softhearted, so I was able to mooch quite a few Pfennig from her, too.

Ever so often I also hit on my uncle Max, who lived with my grandmother, for a contribution. Uncle Max liked his shoes polished to a high gloss. I became an expert shoe polisher. Uncle Max paid well.

The savings bank (*Sparkasse*)

I usually kept my penny savings in a little box. During the month of May I added to this box my collection of May bugs (*Maikäfer*) with a few leaves of lettuce (*Eisbergsalat*). My mother got upset, and told me off (*hat mich gut ausgeschimpft*) when I did not properly put the cover on the box and a bunch of May bugs started to crawl all over the house. That was when my father decided I should have a proper penny bank (*Sparbüchse*).

So one fine day he marched me to the "Fürth Municipal Savings Bank" (*Fürther Stadtspar-kasse*) at the corner of Blumenstraße and Hirschenstraße. It seems that the tellers (*Sparkas-*

senbeamte) there were used to their little costumers because a little foot stand was ready, so at least my head was higher than the counter.



Municipal Savings Bank (*Stadtsparkasse*), Hirschenstraße 27
 (photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

My father did the paperwork. I received a savings record (*Sparzettel*) to enter future deposits and a penny bank which was a metal box with a locked trap door at the bottom and a slot at the top to deposit coins or paper money. The top slot was fitted with chains hanging inside to prevent the removal of coins.

Of course this presented a big challenge to me and I spent time with a pocket knife to get a coin out, if for no other reason than I just had to beat the system.

My father insisted I should go every first of the month to the *Sparkasse* and deposit my savings. I stood on the little box and watched the cashier (*Kassierer*) opening my box with a key, ceremoniously counting the money and adding the amount to my *Sparzettel*.

The clockwork (*Uhrwerk*)

In our apartment in Blumenstraße we had a room off the kitchen, my parents called it “the day room” (*Tageszimmer*) where the family spent the day, except on Shabbat when the more formal combined living and dining room was used.

One day the clock which stood on the bookcase stopped working. My father bought a new mantle clock which melodiously chimed the hour.

I was very curious (*ich war sehr neugierig*) how the chime worked. I opened the clock with a screwdriver and took the clock apart, looking at all the parts and tried to put the clock together again. Of course, I was not able to, too many screws to handle.

As soon as my father came home, I told him: “Papa, I have to tell you something, I took the new clock apart (*Papa, ich muss dir was sagen: Ich hab’ die neue Uhr auseinander genommen*).” My father took the clock from the bookcase and all the loose screws were rattling. He said: “This time you were really a very bad boy. I am going to punish you. (*Diesmal bist du wirklich ein sehr böser Junge gewesen. Ich werde dich bestrafen*).”

My punishment was: No pocket money for two weeks and house arrest for one week which meant I could not go on the street, but could play in the yard (*im Hof*). There was a complication: The landlord (*Hausbesitzer*), Herr Ludwig who also owned the furniture factory (*Möbelfabrik*) named after him did not allow strange kids in its yard. As my mother said to my father: “At least he will not be able carry out any escapades with his two friends, the little rascals Franzl and Fritzl (*zumindest kann er keinen Schaden anrichten mit seinen zwei Freunden, den kleinen Spitzbuben Franzl und Fritzl*)”.



Blumenstraße 41, formerly the home of *Möbelfabrik Ludwig* (in the rear). The Glaser apartment was on the first floor (the four windows from right to left)
(photo: Willie Glaser)



The courtyard of *Möbelfabrik Ludwig*. The door to the left is the wash-kitchen (*Waschküche*)
(photo: Willie Glaser by courtesy of Altstadthotel Fürth)

The courtyard

Actually my house arrest was not so bad, I found a lot to do. Just wandering through the factory was an experience in itself. One of my favourite places was the workshop (*Werkstatt*) with the wood lathe (*Holzdrehmaschine*). I was fascinated by the wood chips spiralling off the cutting tool and the chips were hot. I wandered through the cabinet makers' workshops (*Schreinerwerkstätten*), where the cabinet makers put together the fine furniture.



Willie and his sister Lotte on the stairway of Blumenstraße 41 with the original banister which the little tramp slid down every day, 2010
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Horsing around (*ringsum die Pferde*)

One place in the yard played a very big role in my young life and it lasted as long the Glaser family was living at Blumenstraße 41. This was the horse stable (*Gäulestall*) for two heavy draft horses (*Gäule*) at the end of the yard. I spent a lot of time there.



The horse stable (*Gäulestall*) today, converted to apartments
(photo: Willie Glaser)

The stable offered space for two horses. Adjacent was the storage area for the heavy goods wagons (*Lastwagen*) and a light delivery wagon (*Güterwagen*) for small deliveries which was pulled by one horse only, and of course the sleigh (*Schlitten*) which was used when snow was too deep for the wagons.

I helped the coachman (*Kutscher*) to clean the stable. For this purpose one of the cabinet makers made me kid size wooden shovel because I could not handle the big shovel. My little shovel was just the right size for the horse droppings.

My mother was happy to see me spending time with the horses. She knew that the coachman Herr Wagner would not stand for any nonsense from me. I helped him to brush the horses, at least as far as I could reach. He lifted me on the horse to brush the mane.

I took special care to make a good job of polishing the three carbide lamps, two for the front and one for the rear of the delivery wagon. The lamps were made of brass and I polished them to a mirror gloss. They were used in the evenings during fall and winter months or when returning at night from a delivery.

On a nice day during the summer Herr Wagner told me: “I have a delivery to do, ask your mother if you could come with me (*Ich habe eine Ablieferung zu machen. Frag deine Mutter, ob du mitfahren darfst*).” I was in seventh heaven, sitting in the high seat and looking down on the pedestrians (*Fußgänger*).

Sometimes a delivery was made to one of the suburbs (*Vororte*) of Fürth. When the roads were quite, Herr Wagner made the horses go faster in a little gallop. At that time Herr Wagner started to crack the whip (*mit der Peitsche knallen*) and the horses started to gallop, but this happened only during the return journey.

Once he had to make a delivery to a more distant place, he told me we were leaving in the morning and will only return in the late afternoon. “Go ask your mother to make you a cheese roll (*ein Käsebrötchen*).” He knew I liked cheese. He continued: “I could prepare ham sandwiches for the two of us, but you are Jewish and not permitted to eat pork (*Ich könnte uns ein Schinkenbrot für zwei machen, aber du bist jüdisch und darfst kein Schweinefleisch essen*).”

The marksmen’s clubhouse (*Schützenhaus*)

When I was nearly six years old, I had a big adventure: While roaming through Fürth I discovered the shooting range and clubhouse (*Schützenhaus*). It was an awesome discovery. To this very day I cannot figure out how I managed to gain entrance to the shooting range. Perhaps they thought I belonged to somebody.



The marksmen's clubhouse

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Here I stood, the little tyke with his short leather pants (*Lederhosen*) staring wide-eyed at the scene in front of him, the marksmen (*Schützen*) with their big target rifles with special shoulder fitting butts. They were aiming and shooting at targets and reeling back the target with a pulley.

I had a hard time tearing myself away from this very exciting activity. I watched for a long time.

It was already very close to my afternoon curfew hour and I rushed home. There I gave my mother my duty kiss on the cheek. She held me at arm length and started sniffing me, asking: "Where have you been, you smell so funny (*Wo bist du gewesen? Du stinkst doch so komisch?*)?" Little did I know that the acrid gun powder vapour would stick to my clothing.

I told her with all the innocence I could muster about my exciting afternoon. Mother ordered me: "Go into the bath tub and wash down good (*Geh gleich in die Badewanne und wasch dich gut.*)" During the years 1925 - 1926 this was not a simple task: Mother had to heat several large buckets with water.

As soon as my father arrived home, mother told him about my latest escapade. My father smiled at the story. I think as a four year veteran of WWI he was not too concerned, but he did tell me in no uncertain terms that the shooting range is out of bounds for me.

He also threatened me to tie a placard to my chest stating, "Attention, danger ahead (*Achtung, große Gefahr voraus!*)"

The *Schützenhaus* incident did have a happy ending: A little while later my father told me the marksmen's association (*Schützengesellschaft*) was going to celebrate its annual festival (*Schützenfest*) and because I had been a reasonable good boy (*guter Junge*), he was taking me to the parade (*Schützenaufmarsch*) to have a look at the colourful marksmen's bird (*Schützenvogel*).

I enjoyed watching the parade and the marching marksmen dressed in their best outfits. I looked wide-eyed at the large *Schützenvogel*, painted in many colors and carried on a platform by several men.

My visits to Baiersdorf (*zu Besuch in Baiersdorf*)

In fact, not all adventures of the little tramp (*kleiner Landstreicher*) took place in Fürth. He was also roaming in Baiersdorf, a rural town 20 km north of Fürth.

The summer months of 1925 and 1926 were filled with the most wonderful days a little boy could wish. My parents sent me for two weeks to Baiersdorf to stay there with aunt Meta and uncle Benno. They lived with aunt Meta's parents Adolf and Emma Biegel in a very big farmhouse (*Bauernhaus*).

My mother admonished me: "You have an invitation to stay two weeks in Baiersdorf and I expect you to be on your best behaviour."

Uncle Benno used to come ever so often to Fürth to attend some business. He worked together with his father-in-law Adolf Biegel, a dealer in grain and horses (*Getreide- und Pferdehändler*).



Emma and Adolf Biegel
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Uncle Benno came to pick me up. Because this was the first time I was going to be away from my parents, I got a big goodbye kiss from my mother and a hug from my father. I remember my mother turning to my father saying: "Good heavens, aunt Meta has no idea what is waiting for her (*Ach du lieber Himmel, Tante Meta hat keine Ahnung, was sie erwartet!*)!" This time my mother was wrong, I was so busy on the farm (*Bauernhof*) I had no time to get into mischief.

My first memories about Baiersdorf are from the time when I was about four to five year old and spent a week in Baiersdorf with my parents.

When my uncle Benno married aunt Meta and settled in Baiersdorf, it became a costume for the Glaser family to spend the week of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) in Baiersdorf. Grandmother Esther and uncle Max also joined us. During the many hours long prayer service (*G"ttesdienst*) I carried out what I did best: I investigated all nooks and crannies in the synagogue, a massive building, established in 1530 and destroyed during *Kristallnacht* in November 1938.



The synagogue in Baiersdorf

(photo by courtesy of Herr Horst Gemeinhardt, Baiersdorf)

In one room there were shelves holding many books. Today I know they were very old Hebrew tracts. Some were bound in leather or parchment and a few had wormholes in them. I carried one of the quite heavy tomes to my father's seat and asked him: "Why are there so many holes in this book?" My father's answer was: "There are worms who want to be clever, so they go inside the words in the book."



The interior of the Baierdsdorf synagogue

(photo by courtesy of Herr Horst Gemeinhardt, Baiersdorf)

It was Yom Kippur and the grown-ups were fasting the whole day. My mother came to take me home for a bite to eat. The house was only a few steps from the synagogue. I told my

mother about the bookworms. She rushed me home, undressed me, carried my clothing to the yard and vigorously shook out the clothing. I asked her: “Why are you doing this?” Her answer was: “I have get rid of the bookworms in your clothing.”

My first train trip to Baiersdorf was also a great adventure for me. I was too short to look out of the open window. Uncle Benno stood me on the seat and most of the journey I had my head out of the window.

Of course it did not take long and I got a cinder from the locomotive in my eye. It took uncle Benno a long time to remove the cinder with a handkerchief.



Father, uncle Benno, uncle Max and me 1925 in Baiersdorf

(photo: Willie Glaser)

Uncle Adolf was waiting for us at the station with a light wagon pulled by a team of horses. Right away I run over to the horses and “talked” to them and uncle Adolf looking worried and yelling cautiously: “Willie!”. Little did uncle Adolf know that I was an “experienced horseman”. The coachman’s Herr Wagner’s lessons about handling horses came in handy.

I arrived in front of a big farmhouse and was anxious to meet aunt Meta. She fed me right away. I rushed with my meal, ready to explore the farm including the barn (*Scheune*).

It was a busy place: A gaggle of geese was excitedly honking when I came near them. They thought me bringing food. Chickens were picking on the ground for seeds and a big rooster was parading around.

A big beautiful sheep dog (*Schäferhund*) came padding along, sniffing me and barking at me. I took him by his collar and sat down with him. I talked to him and soon he was licking my face. “Rex” and I became the best of friends. He was always by my side. I guess nobody else had the time to play with him. Uncle Adolf told me it will be my job to feed him.

One nice summer morning, after my breakfast, I came into the yard. Uncle Adolf was sitting on a bench holding a goose between his legs force feeding the bird through a funnel.

Always inquisitive, I asked him: “Why are you doing this?” He replied: “I am fattening the geese’s livers, sell them to the butcher and he makes *pâte de foie gras* from it (*Ich mache die*

Gänseleber fett, verkaufe die Gänse an den Metzger und er macht Gänseleberpastete daraus).“

I was five years old then and had no clue what he was talking about.

I soon fell back to my exploring habits and investigated the two storied barn filled with bags of agricultural products which uncle Adolf bought and sold.

One produce he dealt with was the famous Baiersdorfer horse radish (*Meerrettich*). One day at the dinner table uncle Adolf gave me a slice of the peasants' bread (*Bauernbrot*) baked by aunt Meta. He covered part of the slice with some sort of paste and said to me: “This is very good, you have to eat it fast (*Das ist sehr gut, du musst das schnell essen*).” I made a big bite, swallowed and my mouth was on fire. I ran to the kitchen, pumped up some cold water and gulped it down. Aunt Emma scolded uncle Adolf for playing this trick on me. Since then I know about the famous Baiersdorfer horse radish.

To make up for his trick, uncle Adolf took me the next day to the fire station where the voluntary fire brigade (*Freiwillige Feuerwehr*) had a fire drill. He put on his blue uniform with a wide belt and helmet. He was in charge of the pump wagon which was pulled by several firemen. Later on I understood if there was a fire, there was no time to hitch the horses. In case of a fire the fire bell tolled. He lived only five minutes from the fire station. He would grab his helmet, mount his bicycle and go off to the fire station.



Adolf Biegel (uncle Adolf), sitting first on the left, end of table, as a member of the voluntary fire brigade
(photo by courtesy of Herr Horst Gemeinhardt, Baiersdorf)



Pump wagon (*Pumpenwagen*) of the voluntary fire brigade Baiersdorf
(photo by courtesy of Herr Horst Gemeinhardt, Baiersdorf)

Behind the barn was a fairly large meadow (*Wiese*) with several horses grazing. Aunt Meta gave me some sugar cubes, which I fed to the horses. After several days one of the horses, a mare came trotting over to me and prodded me, I think to make sure she gets a goodie.

A shallow creek was running through the meadow where I always looked for fish, but to my disappointment there were none.

One time, during a hot day, I took off my sandals and put my feet into the creek to cool off. When I put on my sandals again I noticed a black wormlike thing on my foot, I could not shake it off. I tried with a stick, but this did not help either. I run to the kitchen and showed it to aunt Meta. She lit a candle, held it to the worm and it fell off. This was my first and last encounter with a leech (*Blutegel*). Aunt Meta remarked: “The leech got fat from your blood (*Der Blutegel ist ganz fett geworden von deinem Blut*).”



The little creek with aunt Meta, her daughter Ruth and uncle Benno
(photo: Willie Glaser)

The barn was a special exploring challenge for me. All kinds of farm machinery and equipment were laying about and lots of jute bags full of agricultural products. The cat had a good time catching mice there.

In 2007 I visited Baiersdorf again. The farmhouse and barn were gone, new houses were build in their places. On the former meadow now there were houses, too. I was told the creek was channelled underground and flowed in a concrete pipe.

The big sleigh (*große Schlitten*)

I was fascinated by one item, it was a big sleigh, larger than a children sleigh. Every year I visited Baiersdorf, I looked with longing eyes at this sleigh.

The following story happened years after my childhood days as a little tramp, around 1930 / 31 when I was eleven or twelve years old. At that time my parents thought me being old enough to take my sister Lottie who was about 5 to 6 years old then for our two weeks summer stay in Baiersdorf. Father brought us to the station, put us on the train and uncle Adolf picked us up.

When it was time to go home I asked uncle Adolf if he would give me the sleigh to take home? Uncle Adolf told me: “But the sleigh is too big for you, it is a delivery sleigh” (*Aber der Schlitten ist doch zu groß für dich, es ist ein Lieferschlitten*).

I convinced uncle Adolf to part with the sled and aunt told him: “You might as well give the sleigh to Willie, you have not used it in years.” Uncle Adolf gave in and later brought us to the station. He put the sleigh on the train and off we went.

In Fürth, my father was at work and a kind passenger helped me down from the train. I put our luggage on the sleigh, took my sister by the hand and started dragging the sleigh across Bahnhofsplatz.



The Bahnhofsplatz in Fürth
(photo: Fürth City Archives)

People were sitting on benches, enjoying the nice summer afternoon. All were smiling when I passed them. The metal runners were rusty when I started out, soon they became very shiny.

One lady remarked to her friend: “Here goes young St Nicolas, he is a little early (*Da geht der junge St. Nikolaus, er ist etwas zu früh dran*).”

I kept dragging the sleigh along Friedrichstraße to Schwabacher Straße. At the corner of Schwabacher Straße and Blumenstraße a policeman came from the other direction, looked at me amused and said: “Little boy, you are going the wrong way, the snow slide is in the other direction (*Kleiner, du gehst verkehrt, die Schlittenbahn ist in die andere Richtung*).”

Pulling the sleigh on the cobblestone in Blumenstraße, I finally made it to number 41. I noticed from the corner of Theaterstraße, that my mother was looking out the window from the formal living room. By the time I arrived at the large doors of the building - they had to be wide so large horse drawn wagons could pass my mother was already standing in the doorway. First she was hugging and kissing my sister because this has been the first time my sister was away from home. Then she said to me: “Now I understand why it took you so long to get home (*Jetzt verstehe ich, warum ihr so lange für den Nachhauseweg gebraucht habt*)”, and I got my hug and kiss.

In the meantime we put the sleigh in a corner of the backyard. Later on, when my father arrived home from work, he went to see the coachman Herr Wagner to negotiate a storage place for the sleigh. Herr Wagner found a place in the adjoining storage room beside the horse stable. There he hammered a big nail into the wall and hung up the sleigh.

All the Glaser children enjoyed the sleigh and when we moved to Schwabacher Straße 22, it was stored in the coal cellar. The last time I used the sleigh was during the winter of 1937. Something tells me it is still being used by some German children.

Washday (*Waschtag*)

One day at the beginning of each month was special: It was washday (*Waschtag*). This day was a beehive of activity. I always tried very hard to quietly disappear but my mother must have had eyes in the back of her head, because I never succeed and she had all kind of little chores ready for me.

The coachman Herr Wagner did not let me stay in the horse stable. He even locked the door if he had to make a delivery on this day. I guess my mother must have whispered something in his ear.

Here the two women, my mother and the laundress (*Waschfrau*), were toiling away over the large cauldron filled with soapy boiling water. They were busy stirring with a wooden paddle the cauldron filled with one month worth of bed linen, towels, underwear and unmentionables. The women were using washboards (*Waschbretter*) in a zinc tub (*Zinkwanne*) and

scrubbing the laundry with a heavy brush (*Bürste*). From time to time the women directed a splash (*Spritzer*) of soapy water towards me and I was never able to figure out how to get even. My mother appointed me to fetch coal and also lemonade from the kitchen icebox when it was a hot summer day, and many other little chores. When the washday was finished, I had to help to clean the laundry room (*Waschküche*) to be ready for the next tenant of the building. I was not finished yet. In the late fall and winter months I had to help to winch up the wet and heavy laundry in a woven laundry basket to the attic (*Dachboden*). Clotheslines were strung the full length of the attic. I had to stand by with a bag full of clothespins while the women were hanging the laundry on the lines.

On the way back from the attic, I usually stopped by the tailor shop (*Schneiderei*) on the second floor (*zweiter Stock*). Four tailors (*Schneider*) sat cross-legged on a high table along the windows busy sewing suits. After checking out the three cats in the tailors' studio (*Schneideratelier*) I called it a day.

The drying of the monthly laundry was handled differently during the summer months: The washday had to be a perfect summer day, no rain was expected. The wet and heavy laundry was piled on a little wagon. My mother, the laundress and myself made our way over Maxbrücke along Karolinenstraße to the a place called *Sieben-Bogen-Wiese* (Seven Arcs Meadow). There the laundry was spread out on the grass to dry. In the meantime my mother opened up the food basket and we all enjoyed cheese rolls and coffee from the thermos bottle. A big job was still waiting for us. It was the big monster, the linen press (*Wäschemangel*). It was a large wooden apparatus housed in a shed with rollers to smooth the bed sheets and towels. The machine was moaning, creaking and banging away. I could not take my eyes of it. After the laundry was finished she was neatly folded and packed in woven baskets and we went home.



***Sieben-Bogen-Wiese* (Seven Arcs Meadow)**

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Waste disposal day (“*Stinktag*”)

There was a day in 1925 / 26 which my mother dreaded. This was the day when the waste in the cesspool (*Güllegrube*) had to be removed. My mother knew when the municipal workers were coming to pump out the waste. She always said: “Today the ‘stench machine’ is coming (*Die Stinkmaschine kommt heute*).”

Under no circumstances was she going to stay in the apartment. She hated the awful smell, which permeated the house, even though she closed all windows.

This is why during the summer months she took my baby sister, who was just born, to the park. In late fall and winter she went visiting her friend in the *Rosenstraße*.

When she went to the park I had to come along. She told me: “You are sure to find a friend on the playground (*Du wirst sicher einen Freund auf dem Spielplatz finden*).”

When we left I noticed a lot of kids from the street hanging around on the street waiting for the steam engine (*Dampfmaschine*). I went over to the playground, hang out for five minutes and headed back home. I would not miss the greatest show on earth.

This circus in form of a convoy arrived in front of the house, consisting of the steam engine, a large low slung tank sitting on a flatbed wagon and another wagon with many lengths of large diameter hoses (*Schlauchwagen*). The city workers coupled the hoses together and laid them through the door to the cesspool in the backyard. Then the steam engine started to clank and hiss and making all kinds of noises when power was transferred from a wide rimmed wheel via a leather belt to another wheel attached to the intake motor of the tank. In the meantime the men had their hands full to keep away the kids from the machinery. I remember at least 20 to 25 kids milling about. For easy to smell reasons no policeman was to be seen.

Of course, for disobeying my mother and hanging out on the street there were consequences, I was grounded for one or two days with house arrest. As previously reported I was banished to the backyard again.

The *Gänsberg* (Geese’s Hill)

My mother always admonished me: “Do not go to the *Gänsberg* (*Geh’ nicht auf dem Gänsberg*).” In those days the *Gänsberg*, roughly translated “Geese’s Hill”, was considered to be a rough neighbourhood. Though for Franzl, Fritzl and Willie, the tree rascals from *Blumenstraße*, this was a challenge to be tested.



The Gänsberg

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkuz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

One day the three musketeers invaded the *Gänsberg* territory and had to flee with bloody noses. The *Gänsberg* gangs of kids our age understood this was a challenge and retaliated, guarding their territory well.

I returned home totally deranged and had to think of a good answer to my mother's question which was: "Where have you been? Your shirt is full with blood and your eye is swollen (*Wo bist du gewesen? Dein Hemd ist voller Blut und dein Auge ist geschwollen!*)"

My gunshot reply was: "I stumbled and fell on my face (*Ich bin gestolpert und auf das Gesicht gefallen.*)"

I think my mother did not believe me. Perhaps she did not want to know, but she let it go at that and gave me a piece of ice from the ice box to hold against my eye.

The *Gänsberg* still was a challenge for me and I made another foray alone into hostile territory. The street gangs hanging out there thought a lone kid is not a threat and I walked unhindered down the ominous quarter.

The golden fleece

One of the more interesting court yards was situated right next to Blumenstraße 41 where we lived: There was a hammered gold leaf workshop (*Blattgoldschlägerei*) where workers hammered high karat gold leaf foil laid between parchment pages. As the result of their effort the foil was so thin it was floating on air. I liked to watch the workers pounding away at the about 25 x 25 x 15 cm square packages of parchment with heavy cudgels, reducing the thickness of the gold foil to microscopic thickness. When the foil had the desired thickness the edges were trimmed and placed between special paper.

I watched the workers through a low window. Conversation was not possible as about six to eight workers made a lot of noise. Despite this hindrance it did not take long to get to know them. They asked me to bring them beer from the pub (*Kneipe*) across the street.

Very often I was allowed to enter the workshop through the low window sills to pick up waste cuttings of gold foliage laying on the floor of the workshop. As a rule waste cuttings were collected and recycled.

I was told to save the gold foil because “gold leaf is very expensive (*Blattgold ist sehr teuer*)”. I collected gold leaf for many years till we moved away from *Blumenstraße*.

One day my mother said to me: “You are rich with gold, can you lend me some Marks (*Du bist doch sehr reich an Gold, kannst du mir ein paar Mark leihen?*)?” My father told me I should sell the gold foil to the savings bank (*Sparkasse*). I did not realize my parents were joking with me.

One day, when I went to the savings bank to empty my money box, I took a few envelopes with gold foil with me having the idea of selling the foil to the bank. I offered it to the bank teller but he laughed and said: Willie, come back to me with a little truck full of gold foil (*Willie, komm wieder zu mir, wenn du einen kleinen Lastwagen voll mit Blattgold bringen kannst*)”.

I still had the accumulated gold foil in 1939. When I left for England I left everything with my mother.

The day the lights went out in the *Kristall-Palast* movie theatre

In the same yard as the *Blattgoldschlägerei* was also the entrance to the *Kristall-Palast* (Crystal Palace) movie theatre. It had a large marquee on the building facing *Blumenstraße* which announced the title of the film being shown.



Ad for the *Kristall-Palast* movie theatre, 1928

(photo: Peter Frank)

One day my mother told me: “You behaved reasonably well lately, so we are going to the movies (*Du hast dich gut benommen in der letzten Zeit, deshalb gehen wir ins Kino*).”

Normally there was an age restriction, but for this particular movie there was none. It was an advertising film (*Reklamefilm*) for “Persil”, a detergent brand very well known in Germany at that time which was shown in cinemas across the country.

This film was booked into the *Kristall-Palast* for a one week run, but only in the late morning and early afternoon hours. It was the first movie to be seen by me. Because it was free there were long lineups. Mother and I managed to see the movie on the third try. I was enthralled with my first movie viewing.

Now I had to speak to the other two rascals (*Spitzbuben*) to find a way into the movie theatre without adult supervision. Because it was a free movie the ushers were not that concerned with watching out for unaccompanied kids. Befitting our style we managed to sneak in by sort of hanging on to the coat tails of adults. We watched the movie a second time.

I was very curious (*sehr neugierig*) and proposed a twofold action: One to find a way to get a seat without too much hustle and two to find out what was behind the little square window from which the movie was projected on the large screen.

From the courtyard of the building in Blumenstraße a passage led to Pfisterstraße. The box office was located in the passage which also had several doors. We tried the first door handle. The door opened up to a staircase. We tiptoed up the staircase and faced a door. From above we heard a whirring sound. I learned later this was the film projector.

I tried the handle of another door. It opened up to a dimly lit little room. On its wall were four plates with writing and handles sticking out in an upright position. I wondered about these handles ... - Well, for little Willie what was up had to come down: 1-2-3-4, I moved all handles to the lower slots. The light went out in the little room and the stairwell. We heard a lot of yelling and shouting.

We ran or better said we sort of fell down the short staircase, opened the door and fled to the Pfisterstraße exit, made a right turn on Theaterstraße. Only then did we slow down to catch our breaths.

Either Franzl or Fritzl turned to me and asked: “What happened there (*Was war da los*)?” I told them truthfully: I have no idea (*Ich hab' keine Ahnung*).”

Later at supper my mother said to my father: “Did you hear? A few young guys from *Gänsberg* switched off the electricity in the *Kristall-Palast* and caused a big panic (*Hast du gehört? Ein paar Burschen vom Gänsberg haben den Strom im Kristall-Palast ausgeschaltet. Da gab's eine große Aufregung*).“

Suddenly I became very busy with my dumplings and meatballs (*Klöße und Klopse*).

Another cinema raid

There was another movie theatre, known as the “Flea Cinema” (*“Flohkino”*), which was a challenge for the “Holy Trio” (*Heiliges Trio*). Our aim was to sneak into it which was not a question of paying the admission, but kids our age were not allowed to the cinema anyway.

Again, we just had to beat the system. After a few investigative visits we found the solution: A person could either leave through the front entrance where one paid for the ticket or an exit only door to the backyard. We waited outside the rear exit. When the door was opened by a cinemagoer, I quickly sneaked inside into the dark movie hall. However, this manoeuvre did not work: The usher caught up with me right away and lead me by the ear to the exit. Franzl and Fritzl tried the same trick and got caught, too. We all suffered with sore ears.

The next day we gathered again at the exit and discussed the problem anew. This time we concluded that there is strength in numbers. We waited till the door opened and rushed by the exiting person who was somewhat blinded coming out from the dark into daylight. The usher could not cope with three rascals dashing in at the same time. He did manage to get his hands on either Franzl or Fritzl and ejected him but never bothered to look for the other non-paying customers.

The day of the cakes (*“Kuchentag”*)

Friday always was a very busy day for my mother because she had to clean, cook and bake for Shabbat (*Schabbes*). She got up very early, because at 6.30 o’clock the charwoman (*Putzfrau*) arrived. I also had to rise early, no exceptions, especially in late fall and winter when days became short.

My mother did a lot of backing and I was pressed into service for all kinds of odd jobs and running errands such as picking up groceries from the Scheinin’s grocery (*Lebensmittelgeschäft*) in Blumenstraße.

My most important job was to get the cakes to Eckstein’s bakery (*Bäckerei*) which was located across the street from our house. Mother baked a variety of wonderful cakes. Among them the most important was the “Challah” (Sabbath bread). I liked to watch when she braided the dough. Sometimes she let me brush the “Challah” with egg wash which gave it a beautiful shine when baked.



Eckstein's bakery today
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Mother's apple cake (*Apfelkuchen*) was the best I ever tasted. Apart from that she baked crumb cake (*Streuselkuchen*), plum cake (*Pflaumenkuchen*), strawberry cake (*Erdbeerkuchen*) and a few others. The number of cakes she prepared depended on how many people she invited for the Shabbat coffee party (*Kaffeeklatsch*) after the usual afternoon walk in the city park (*Stadtpark*).

Promptly at 2.00 o'clock Franzl and Fritzl reported themselves by arriving in the kitchen (the door of our apartment was only locked at night. Mother handed each of us a baking tin (*Backblech*) with the warning: "If you drop the cake, you might as well reserve a bed in the jail in Katharinenstraße (*Wenn ihr den Kuchen fallen lasst, könnt ihr gleich ein Bett im Gefängnis in der Katharinenstraße. bestellen*)."

My mother gave me 10 Pfennig for each tin to pay the baker Herr Eckstein for his service (*Backgeld*). Then the fearsome threesome proceeded gingerly across the street to *Bäckerei Eckstein*.

We watched as Herr Eckstein placed the tins in the oven. He told us to come back in half an hour or so. In the meantime we hung out in the street but in due time returned to baker Eckstein and carefully carried the baked goods back to the apartment where we all lined up for our reward. Each of us received a generous slice of cake. Very often my mother felt charitable and poured each of us a glass of milk.

Synagogue Square (Schulhof)

As a five-year-old I was a frequent visitor to the Schulhof (Synagogue Square) during my wandering through Fürth. From my grandmother's house it was just a short walk along Königstraße to the Schulhof. I used to enter it through the ornate iron entrance gate from Königstraße.



Entrance to the Schulhof from Königstraße
(photo: Fürth City Archives)

Actually my first visits to the Schulhof was in the company of my father. On certain Jewish holidays during the year Rabbi (*Rabbiner*) Breslauer gave a sermon (*Drosche*) in the *Alt-Neuschul* synagogue which took place in the afternoon. My father liked to attend the sermons along with several hundred men. Many fathers took their children with them. The older boys around Bar Mitzvah age sat with their fathers and listened to the long sermon.

My father knew very well that I had no patience (*Sitzfleisch*). He told me to go and play with the other kids. I did what was my favorite: exploring the other synagogues, the *Mannheimer Schul* and the *Klaus Schul*. I checked out every nook and cranny. One synagogue, the Main Synagogue (*Hauptsynagoge*) escaped my scrutiny because it had finished service early and was already closed.



Inside the Schulhof
(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkuz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

All the boys and girls my age were just hanging out in the Schulhof waiting for their fathers. Soon little Willie and some other boys figured out some excitement: We zeroed in on the girls.

The girls were all decked out with their braided pigtails (*geflochtene Zöpfchen*) and attached brightly colored little bows of silk. Some of them were wearing brushed up hair (*Gockel*) topped with a big satin or silk bow (*Haarschleife*). We had great fun chasing the girls around the Schulhof and pulling the pigtails and unraveling the bows. The girls were screeching and because the windows were wide open, they could be heard in the synagogue. It did not take long and the sexton (*Schammes*) came running to restore order, together with the superintendent (*Hausmeister*) of the Schulhof.

As soon as I saw men coming out of the synagogue's door I looked for my father. Right away, his first question was: "What about all the screaming by the little girls, did you chase them again?" (*Was war da los mit dem großen Geschrei? Man konnte nur Mädchen hören. Hast du wieder die kleinen Mädchen gejagt?*) Of course I pleaded complete innocence, stating: "I was not involved, I was visiting the other synagogues." (*Ich war nicht dabei, ich habe mir die anderen Synagogen angeguckt.*)

He took me by the hand and we went home. Usually my father walked with other neighbors who dwelled in the same area. He was very good friends with Herr Landau who lived across the street from us.

The Landau Sukkah (*Laubhütte*)

The Landau family occupied a second floor apartment to which little Willie was a frequent and well behaved visitor. During the months of September and October the Landaus who were very religious, erected a Sukkah (*Laubhütte*), a temporary hut in which Jewish people are obliged to eat their meals during the seven day period of Sukkoth or the Feast of Tabernacles (*jüdisches Erntedankfest*).

My parents did not own a Sukkah because there was not enough room in our backyard (*Hinterhof*). We used the Landau Sukkah, hence my father at least was able to recite the obligatory blessings.

The Sukkah was a simple structure, quickly erected with four wooden walls, one of which had a door. The walls were locked together with a series of lift-off hinges. It took the Landaus only a short time to assemble the Sukkah which was located in their backyard beneath the kitchen window on the second floor.

The roof called for special attention. It was the custom to dress the roof with leafy branches which the Landau boys brought on their bicycles from nearby woods at the city limits. They were put on wooden slates across the roof, but not too dense, so one could make out the stars at night.

The Sukkah was emblazoned with all kinds of colorful ornaments. This is where I became a very busy boy. My mother bought me colored paper sheets and other small ornamental items. She showed me how to cut strips of paper and prepared a paste from albumen to glue the strips together to make long colorful paper chains.

I also made Stars of David from some sturdy paper my father brought from his office and colored them with crayons of which I must have had over a hundred. Then I brought my decorations to the Sukkah. Herr Landau helped me to climb on the ladder and I fastened my paper chains to the branches and the Stars of David to the walls.

A Mitzvah (good deed) gone wrong

Once, the ever resourceful little Willie had a great idea: During his earlier investigations of the backyard he had discovered a small storage room with several boxes containing Christmas glass ornaments. They were used by Herr Ludwig to decorate the two large shop windows facing the street.

”Great,” Willie thought, “they will make beautiful decorations hanging from the Sukkah’s roof.” He asked Herr Wagner if he could use some of them depicting Christmas themes. “Sure,” said Herr Wagner, “but be careful carrying them across the street.” (*Ja, sicher, aber sei vorsichtig, wenn du sie über die Straße trägst.*)

I brought the ornaments to Herr Landau and proudly displayed my artistic contribution. Herr Landau smiled, patted me on the head and said: “Willie, this was a good idea, but sorry, I cannot use these lovely Christmas ornaments, because Jewish people do not celebrate Christmas.” (*Willie, das war eine gute Idee, aber leider kann ich diesen schönen Schmuck nicht benutzen; der ist doch für Weihnachten bestimmt und jüdische Leute feiern nicht Weihnachten.*)

When my father visited the Sukkah later in the evening Herr Landau said to him: “Your little Willie is very smart and surely in the eyes of G”D he earned a Mitzvah (good deed).” (*Dein kleiner Willie ist sehr klug und in G”ttes Augen hat er sich sicher eine Mitzwah verdient.*)

The Landau boys made two very ingenious pulley systems for the Sukkah: One pulley could lift or lower a light roof-cover for the Sukkah used in case of rain. The other pulley was used to lower food in a woven straw-basket, even hot soup in a ceramic tureen. This was done over objections by Mrs. Landau who would rather carry the tureen down two flights of stairs.

The Passover (*Pessach*) Festival in Blumenstraße

I vividly remember the Passover period at age five: My mother made sure I did my share of work. There was a lot of special things to do for and during *Pessach*. She told me: “Today is the Eve of Passover and you must help getting ready for Passover.” (*Heute ist Erev Pessach und du musst bei den Vorbereitungen für Pessach helfen.*) She handed me a large string net shopping bag in which she had placed what she called “the good silver set of cutlery” (*das gute Silberbesteck*) for twelve which was quite heavy and said: “Carry it to the Jewish Junior High School (*Israelitische Realschule*). There in the yard Herr Heinemann will make the silverware *pessachdig* (kosher and ready for Passover according Jewish laws).”

I used my little wagon which I build with the help of Herr Wagner who had supplied the main components, the wheels. My mother helped me down the stairs. We loaded the silverware on the wagon which she covered. She also told me: “When you go to the Jewish Junior High School your friends, the two rascals Franzl and Fritzl cannot come with you. Go to the Schulhof and Herr Heinemann will take care of you.”

I sauntered along Blumenstraße, crossed Theaterstraße and entered the Schulhof. The place was a beehive of activity with people milling about. My mother more or less told me what this was all about: The silverware was going to be immersed in boiling water.

On one side of the Schulhof there was a low hut in which two cauldrons were bubbling with boiling water. Herr Heinemann lowered the cutlery into the water for a few minutes. At the end he fished it out again with a stick and placed it on a table to cool off. He selected two pieces of the tableware and examined them with a magnifying glass finally saying to me: “Tell your parents everything is kosher for Passover.” (*Sag deinen Eltern, alles ist kosher für Pessach.*)

After I brought home the cutlery, I said to my mother: “I am going now to play with Franzl and Fritzl.” (*Ich geh’ jetzt mit Franzl und Fritzl spielen.*) My mother’s answer was: “No, you have to help Papa to bring all the *Chometz* to the attic.” (*Nein, du musst Papa helfen das Chometz auf den Dachboden zu bringen.*) *Chometz* means all grocery items not deemed to be kosher for Passover.

When this was accomplished, my father went to see Herr Wagner for whom he had prepared a sales contract which stated that Herr Wagner would buy all the *Chometz* in the Glaser household for the sum of fifty (*fünfzig*) Pfennig to be bought back by my father after Passover for the same amount. They both signed the contract and Herr Wagner gave my father fifty Pfennig. After Passover my father handed Herr Wagner fifty Pfennig and bought back all the non-Passover groceries.

I was a busy little guy. Soon after removing the *Chometz*, the delivery boy from Scheinin's grocery store in Blumenstraße brought the *Pessach* grocery and most important the Matzos (unleavened bread). The only place where my father could store the Matzos was in the formal living / dining room.

The Matzos were round and packed in five pound packages. It seems when my parents calculated the amount of Matzos to order, they included all neighbors and Herr Wagner because they all loved to nibble on them.

What they did not count on was the appetite for Matzos by my two friends, Franzl and Fritzl and the horses. Well into the middle of the Passover period, mother said to my father: "Something is wrong. It is impossible that we ate so many Matzos." (*Etwas stimmt nicht. Es ist unmöglich, dass wir so viele Matzen gegessen haben.*) Little did my mother know that I was feeding Matzos to my two friends Franzl and Fritzl and to my special friends, the two draught horses. To feed them, I crumbled the Matzos in a pan. They liked it. Sometimes I did this twice a day.

My mother must have had eyes in the back of her head, because about the fourth day of Passover she caught me taking out a few pieces of Matzos intended for the horses and asked: "Where are you going with the Matzos?" (*Wohin gehst du mit den Matzen?*) My answer was: "I like to feed the horses." (*Ich will die Pferde füttern.*) "For sure you also gave the two rascals Matzos (*Sicher hast du den zwei Spitzbuben auch Matzen gegeben*)," stated my mother. To make sure that I understood, she added: "End this *Narischkeit* (Yiddish for nonsense) or you get house arrest!" (*Schluss mit dieser Narretei oder du bekommst Hausarrest!*)

The good news was that we were able to conclude Passover with just enough Matzos to go around. In previous years there were always Matzos left over.

The *Pessach* milk run

To obtain *pessachdige* milk was a bit of a chore. Scheinin's Jewish grocery store was closed during the Passover period. Therefore observant Jews in Fürth had a way to obtain their milk from farmers in the countryside.

My father had a friend with whom he had attended commercial school (*Handelsschule*). This friend had a brother who was a farmer and this is how we got our Passover milk supply. Father used to borrow a bicycle from Herr Ludwig, our landlord and said to my mother: "I am going to cycle to the countryside." (*Ich geh' radeln auf's Land.*) He took the tin milk can (*Milchkanne*) and brought back a few liters of milk.

Later on, when I was five years old, my father arranged with Herr Landau for our milk supply. The Landaus had their favorite farmer (*Bauer*) and their two boys had bicycles and looked after the milk supply for us. The boys hang two cans from their bicycle handlebars and the older one sat me on the crossbar.

This was not the first time I was on a farm (*Bauernhof*). On uncle Adolf's *Bauernhof* there were horses, but no cows. Right away I got friendly with the horses and 'talked' to them. The farmer was surprised how I handled the horses.

After another visit he showed me how to milk a cow. The Landau boys already knew the milking routine. They brought a little pail along to milk into, because it was difficult to milk directly into the can. That year and later years I did a good milking job.

Later on in my life my milking skills came in handy, first time during the war when I was a soldier and fighting in 1944 in Normandy: Farmers were not able to milk their abandoned cows in the fields, so I milked whenever there was an opportunity. The second time was when I came to Canada in 1947 and worked on a farm for a while.

The Rag Mandel (*Lumpen-Mandel*)

Amongst the explorations carried by little Willie, one place stood out. This was the warehouse of the scrap dealer Herr Mandel. Later I found out the official firm's name: "*Erste Fürther Lumpensortieranstalt*" (First Fürth rag sorting establishment). The warehouse was located in the vicinity of Bogenstraße and Weiherstraße. It was a place full of wonders for a little boy. There were many bales of paper, rags and scrap metal.

During one of my visits I noticed a man bringing pieces of iron with a horse and buggy. One of the workers put the metal on a scale, weighing the pieces and Herr Mandel gave the customer money. I rushed back home, because I knew where a lot of iron was to be found, but I had to talk to Herr Wagner first about the old horseshoes and the pieces of iron rims for the wheels of the delivery wagons some of which were cut apart. Herr Wagner allowed me to take about a dozen horseshoes. He wanted to keep some to give to his friends. It was the custom to nail horseshoes over an entrance for good luck.

The next day I loaded the horseshoes on my little wagon and headed for the scrap depot. Herr Mandel knew who I was because he was very well acquainted to my father and mother. He said: "Aha, what does little Willie want to sell me? I see some nice horseshoes." (*Aha, was will der kleine Willie mir verkaufen? Ich sehe schöne Hufeisen.*) Ceremoniously he put the horseshoes on the scale, weighed them, reached for his purse and gave me one Mark, which I believe was a lot of money in 1925 / 1926.

Herr Mandel asked: “What are you going to buy with this money?” (*Was willst du dir von dem Geld kaufen?*) Willie’s answer was: “My papa told me that all the money which I receive has to be put in my savings box.” (*Mein Papa hat mir gesagt, dass ich alles Geld, das ich bekomme, in meine Sparkasse stecken muss.*)

Whenever I found a piece of scrap metal, I brought it to Mr. Mandel. I had to put the weights on the scale and after pondering and figuring on a piece of paper, he took out his purse and though probably the small piece of scrap iron had no value at all, he handed me five Pfennig. I think he liked me.

Mr. Mandel was the chairman of the Polish Synagogue (Yiddish: *Poilsche Schul*). Everybody went there for the Simchath Torah celebration which was very cheerful compared to the other synagogues.

Braunhut’s bag recycle depot (*Braunhut Wiederaufbereitungsanlage für Säcke*)

Not far from the Mandel scrap dealership was Braunhut’s recycle depot for used bags of all kind: jute potato bags, sugar bags, corn bags etc. It was an ideal playground with ropes hanging down from the upper floor, good for swinging from bale to bale. We played there often, especially when Herr Braunhut was absent.

One fine day we went to the warehouse and started to jump from bale to bale. This time our jumping created a cloud of flour dust. We were jumping on flour bags not yet cleaned and processed. Our faces and clothing were covered with a flour coating; we looked like ghosts. We realized right away that this did not look too good, but we had to go home and face our parents.

The moment I entered the kitchen and faced my mother I was in trouble. She looked at me and yelled: “Where have you been? You look like a corpse! Quick, in the bathtub you go!” (*Wo bist du gewesen? Du schaust aus wie ein Toter! Schnell in die Badewanne mit dir!*)

While I was changing into fresh clothing, either Franzl’s or Fritzl’s mother came into the kitchen: “Mrs. Glaser, what is happening with our children? I think Willie is the instigator.” (*Frau Glaser, was ist los mit unseren Kindern? ich glaube, der Willie ist der Anstifter.*) She probably was right.

I received the routine punishment of one week house arrest, plus no pocket money for two weeks and the hardest penalty: for one week no riding with Herr Wagner making deliveries. But as my mother told everybody: “Oh, so bad, but so sweet and handsome!” (*Ach, so schlecht, aber so süß und schön!*)

My father, the *Wimpel* maker

A *Wimpel* is a linen sash, about four meters long and 18 centimeters wide, presented by the parents of a baby boy to the synagogue to bind the Torah scrolls together. The text on it is beautifully decorated, either painted on or embroidered in Hebrew with the child's name, date of birth and blessings.

My father was very good at calligraphy because he had a beautiful handwriting. His hobby was making *Wimpels* for people in the community. He told me the first *Wimpel* he made was to celebrate my Brith Milah (circumcision). He donated my *Wimpel* to the hospital synagogue (*Spitalschul*). He produced about 50 to 60 *Wimpels*. He started in 1923 and stopped in 1938. I watched with keen interest when my father started to make a *Wimpel*. He mostly worked in the evenings after work.

One day I accompanied my mother to the "*Kaufhaus Fiedler*" (Fiedler's department store) to pick up a small roll of linen material which had to be specially ordered. The tailor (*Schneider*) on the second floor cut the material to the required length and width and seamed and sewed the pieces together.

My father stretched the linen material on a board. First he outlined the letters with his special soft "Faber" pencil (*Bleistift*). This done he proceeded to fill in the letters with special color paint, using a very fine hairbrush for contours and a thicker brush to fill in. He had lined up a large array of small paint bottles in many colors.

The Jewish hospital (*Jüdisches Krankenhaus*) and the hospital synagogue (*Spitalschul*)

My father, like many other Eastern Jews belonged to one of the many synagogue congregations in Fürth. We belonged to the *Spitalschul*, a small chapel in the Jewish hospital. I celebrated my Bar-Mitzvah there.

The *Spitalschul* was originally established for patients of the hospital. There were only about 40 seats. In later years members of the community also joined the *Spitalschul* which was located on the ground floor of the hospital. The director (*Verwalter*) was Herr Lewin. He also was the prayer leader (*Vorbeter*) in the synagogue.

One day I told my two friends Franzl and Fritzl to come on Schabbes to the synagogue and, always curious (*immer neugierig*), we were going to look around in the hospital.

I waited for them at the front gate and led them to the synagogue. I opened the door and there we stood, myself dressed in my Sabbath suit (*Schabbesanzug*) and Franzl and Fritzl in their leather pants (*Lederhosen*). Franzl and Fritzl looked wide-eyed at the men wrapped in their white *Tallesim* (prayer shawls). It took only a second or two until Herr Salzhauer who was the

Schammes (sexton) approached us, pointing to the door and uttering one single menacing word: “Out!” (*Raus!*) The three rascals (*drei Spitzbuben*) beat a hasty retreat.

Far from being discouraged, we had to explore the hospital. The three rascals climbed the stairs to the first floor. We opened a door and entered a long corridor. A white-robed nurse approached us, looked us over, pointed to the door and also uttered a very menacing “Out!” (*Raus!*).

We retreated again and went to explore the backyard of the hospital. There was not much to see. I noticed an odd looking wagon in a shed. Later on I learned that it was the hearse (*Leichenwagen*) which the burial society (*Chewra Kaddischa*) stored there. I never found out about the horses to pull the hearse.

From the hospital we went to my house and collected our slices of “Challah” with butter and jam and a glass of milk. Butter was only used on Sabbath.

Later, when my father came home from synagogue, he told me: “The head nurse complained to me that three youngsters with dirty pants were running around in the hospital.” (*Die Frau Oberschwester hat sich bei mir beschwert, dass drei Burschen mit schmutzigen Hosen im Krankenhaus ‘rumgelaufen sind.*) Apparently the head nurse never noticed my neat Sabbath attire. My father was upset and said: “This was the first and last time. If you do it again, I put you across my knee.” (*Das war das erste und letzte Mal. Wenn das noch einmal passiert, lege ich dich übers Knie.*)

The Fürth jail (*Fürther Gefängnis*)

Whenever the little tramp (*kleiner Landstreicher*) misbehaved or did not toe the line, at least in my mother's judgment, she threatened to send him “to jail in Katharinenstraße where you will learn quick how to behave” (*ins Gefängnis in der Katharinenstraße, dorten wirst du schnell lernen wie man sich benimmt*). So whenever I walked past the jail I was a little scared. I always passed in a hurry, looking at the gray building with its windows covered in such a way that daylight could only enter from the top to prevent inmates looking out on Katharinenstraße. The jail was called jokingly “St. Catherine's cloister” (*Katharinenkloster*).



Fürth jail in Katharinenstraße

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Little did I realize in 1926 that in 1945 I would be visiting the Fürth jail in a semiofficial capacity. Though this story relates to an older Willie, I like to tell it here because it is an interesting tale. This is how my visit came about: After the end of war my division, the First Polish Armoured Division was stationed in Meppen, Germany. My regiment was stationed in Haren in the Emsland region. My division was part of the BAOR (British Army of the Rhine). I had quite a bit of furlough coming to me and decided to go to Fürth to check what I can find out about my family and friends there.

I asked my commanding officer if I could get a Jeep from the motor pool as a lot of automotive equipment was not used anymore. He complied and also gave me an official voucher to obtain gasoline, food and lodging good for the British Zone of Occupation. My regimental office issued an letter of recommendation to be used for supplies in the American Zone of Occupation to which Fürth belonged.



Willie as a Polish soldier in 1947

(photo: Willie Glaser)

When I arrived in Fürth and drove through the inner city, memories of my wandering as a five-year-old boy came back to me. I parked my Jeep in a designated zone and walked towards the main entrance of the city hall (*Rathaus*) which was manned by a G.I. guard. I looked towards Königstraße with my grandmother's house, Hochleitner's bakery and the inn "*Gasthof Schwarzes Kreuz*". I was overcome with emotions but collected myself, approached the G.I. guard who while having seen British uniforms looked wondering at my side arm and my "Poland" shoulder flashes. I asked him how to obtain fuel, lodging and food. He directed me to the officer in charge of the local American military government.

I found the office, knocked at the door and was asked to enter. I walked into a spacious room, maybe the lord mayor's former office, saluted and introduced myself as Willie Glaser, born in Fürth, coming here to check on family and friends.

I could see the astonishment on the face of the officer. He came forth from behind his desk, shook my hand and introduced himself as Meinstein from Zirndorf. Now it was my turn to be astonished. Memories came alive about the times when we played soccer together in the schoolyard of the Jewish Junior High School. Another boy who liked to play soccer with us was Heinz Kissinger. I believe Meinstein and Kissinger were in the same class; they were a year younger than me.

Meinstein pulled out a bottle from his desk and we were going to have a schnapps and talk about the old days. After a long conversation he told me: "You will come with me to my quarters and I will look after you. How long are you staying in Fürth?" I told him for three days.

I left my Jeep at the city hall. Meinstein drove through an area which looked familiar to me. We were in Dambach. He entered the driveway of a large and imposing mansion. When we got out of the Jeep, Meinstein said to me: "You have arrived now at the Schickedanz Villa." I believe at that time the businessman Gustav Schickedanz who owned the place, was in jail being investigated for Nazi ties.

The next day I went to the newly formed Jewish community office (*Jüdische Gemeindekanzlei*) located in the building of the former Jewish Junior High School. There I met with Jean Mandel, the scrap dealer's son. I used to know him as *Schank*, the Franconian dialectal pronunciation of the French first name Jean. In 1938, he was deported to Poland. During the war he was hiding out in the forests. After the war he and his wife had returned from Poland to Fürth. He became the driving force in establishing the Jewish community again. Jean Mandel was the chairman (*Vorstand*) for a long time. Later he also became a Bavarian senator.

We had a long talk about my family. The only fact known about the fate of the Jewish people from Fürth at that time was the deportation to Izbica. Later on Jean Mandel took me to a Displaced Persons camp near Fürth. I met with people who had spent time in different concentration camps, hoping to find a clue about my family, but nobody could help me.

The day after Meinstein had to question some prisoners in the Fürth jail. He invited me to accompany him. I spent an hour observing his interrogations of some Nazis. Afterwards I visited the houses where we lived in and other places from my childhood. The following day I left Fürth.

In 1996 a reunion of former Jewish citizens of Fürth and Nuremberg took place in a hotel in the Catskill Mountains near New York. Some 400 people attended. Here Meinstein and I met again. Again, we had a schnapps and talked about the three days I spent in Fürth with him.

On the way to St. Michael's Fair: "Auf geht's zur Kärwa!"



General view of St. Michael's Fair

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

St. Michael's Fair in Fürth takes place during the first two weeks in October. It was a great time to be a five year old kid. The fair covers a large area from Königsplatz in front of the city hall (*Rathaus*) down the full length of Königstraße which is crowded with stalls (*Bretterbuden*) selling all kinds of fare. The air was filled with the wafting aroma of frying sausages (*Bratwürste*).

My parents had a problem: They did not like to see me wandering alone on the fairground. I remember my mother saying to my father: "We have to watch him, he should not traipse around during the fair as usual (*Man muss auf ihn aufpassen, er kann doch nicht über die Kirchweih bummeln wie gewöhnlich*)." Thus my mother and father took me to St. Michael's Fair, my mother in the afternoon, my father after supper. Both my parents liked to visit it and so did my grandmother and uncle Max.

My grandmother's house at Königstraße 95 was right at the heart of the action. When I visited her regularly every day, my mother admonished me: "Go right away to granny and no detours (*Geh gleich rauf zur Omama und keine Abstecher!*)" However, my mother knew she was waging a losing battle. Her naïve hope was I should not get in any mischief. Besides, how could the little tyke (*Knirps*) Willie pass up the chance to visit the fair's biggest attraction to children which was:

The great carousel (*großes Karussell*)

When I walked down Schwabacher Straße towards Königstraße there it was right on Königsplatz. I could not miss this children's delight and beautiful machine. I loved to hang out there with the other children having many rides on the colourful wooden horses going up and down on the poles. Everybody bought me a ride.



The great carousel

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Uncle Max was especially generous. Whenever I visited the fair with him he bought a roll with fillet of marinated herring (*Rollmopsbrötchen*) or sardines (*Sardinenbrötchen*) for us. My parents also liked to walk around with me on the fairground. My father favoured to visit the lottery stall, a large temporary shed crammed to the rafters with prizes including plush toys. The prize was printed on a paper strip encased in straw (*Strohhülse*). The cobblestone street around the lottery shed was littered with empty straws. I do not remember my father ever winning a price.



A lottery stall at St. Michael's Fair

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Mother and father loved to watch the fairground barker dubbed “*Der billige Jakob*” (Cheap Jacob) peddling his wares with jokes and amusing comments. Most of his tags were lost on me because as a child I had no clue what he was talking about. Once my father bought an umbrella from him having lost his old one.

I remember particularly well a stall peddling some patent medicine. Apparently the main ingredient of this product was a garlic extract. I had pushed my way through the crowd and was standing in front of the table loaded with the patent medicine when the hawker (*Straßenhändler*) pointed to me addressing his audience as follows: “If this little boy will eat a lot of garlic like the Jews do, he is going to become very old like the Jews with their grey beards (*Wenn dieser kleine Junge viel Knoblauch essen wird so wie die Juden, dann wird er so alt wie die alten Juden mit ihren grauen Bärten*).”

Sabbath promenade

And there are the memories of the Sabbath promenade (*Schabbesspaziergang*) in the city park. Everybody walked along the main alley (*Hauptallee*). It was a continued doffing of the hat by my father, stopping and greeting and making small talk with acquaintances.



Pond (*Weiher*) in the city park with swans

(photo by courtesy of Dr. Herbert Jungkunz from the collection of Heinrich Lotter)

Very often my parents took me to the botanic school garden (*Botanischer Schulgarten*) section. The walk continued to the pond (*Weither*) with several graceful swans and some ducks resting on the little island in its center. Meanwhile I longed for my glass of milk and a generous slice of cake after our return back home where friends of my parents came visiting and my mother served coffee and cake.



Father and mother (pregnant with my sister Lottie) on their Sabbath promenade (*Schabbespaziergang*) in the city park, 1925
(photo: Willie Glaser)

My childhood hero

When I was five to six years old I already had a hero: His name was Hans Hagen and he was a famous soccer player (*Fußballspieler*). Hagen played for the local team *Spielvereinigung Fürth*. His nickname was “The Prince”.

I was brought up on soccer. This happened because of my uncle Max who was an ardent soccer fan. Uncle Max attended all the home and out of town games and very often took me with him.

Königsstraße

95 *Iarntrog Laz., Kaufmann, Königs-
straße 137½
Baumer Jos., Schuhgeschäft —
Laden — p
Fürther Anzeiger — Verlag — p
Spielvereinigung Fürth G. V. —
Geschäftsstelle p
Abler Joh., Zollaufficht 1
Baumeister Karl, Zeitungsverleger
und Hauptschriftleiter 1
Birkner Luise, Rentnerin 2
Weiß Gisela, Kurzwarenhändler 2
Kampfer Joh., Lehrer 2
Glaser Ester, Schuhmachermeisters-
witwe 3
Glaser Markus, kaufm. Angestellter 3
Haberdajch Konr., Reichsbahninsp. 3

Entry for König(s)straße 95 in the Fürth address directory of 1931: the office (*Geschäftsstelle*) of the *Spielvereinigung* on the ground floor, grandmother Esther and uncle Max (Markus) on the 3rd floor
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Frequently he also could be found at the business office (*Geschäftsstelle*) of the *Spielvereini-*
gung which was conveniently located on the ground floor of Königstraße 95 where he lived
on the third floor.



Uncle Max in front of the business office of *Spielvereinigung Fürth* at Königstraße 95
(photo: Willie Glaser)

I spoke often with Hans Hagen. His wife was the daughter of the owner of Hochleitner's bakery at Königstraße 85. The bakery was located on the ground floor. Today it is a dwelling and the neighbouring building Königstraße 87 houses Fürth's Jewish Museum. Grandmother Esther was very friendly with the baker's wife and visited there very often. When I visited grandmother and she was not at home, I knew she was at the bakery.



In the foreground the Jewish Museum, behind the former Hochleitner's bakery at Königstraße 85
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Soccer news (*Fußballnachrichten*)

The favourite pub (*Stammlokal*) of the *Spielvereinigung* was located at the corner of Hallstraße and Alexanderstraße. After any match at home or out of town, a crowd gathered in front of the *Stammlokal* to wait for the result which was telephoned and posted on a board outside. Uncle Max had the honour to telephone the results, especially of out of town games.



The team of *Spielvereinigung Fürth* in the mid-1920s
(photo: Willie Glaser)

Carnival (*Fasching*) 1925

In early February of this year mysterious happenings occurred frequently in our household. Often my father and mother kept looking at me with measuring eyes and had some conversations, which obviously were about me. They stopped when I was nearby.

One day my mother asked me to stand on a chair and measured the length of my leg. Innocently I asked: “Am I getting new pants (*Bekomm’ ich neue Hosen*)?” My mother replied: “Yes, or so (*Ja, so ungefähr*).”

I noticed my father bringing home small parcels which were placed in my parents bedroom. On another day my mother took me aside and informed me she was taking me to a kids costume party (*Kinderfaschingsball*) at “Geismann’s Ballroom” (*Geismannsaal*). I would be dressed as the little tramp (*kleiner Landstreicher*) from the Charlie Chaplin film by the same title in which Jackie Coogan played the kid’s role.



Ad for “Geismann’s Ballroom”, 1928
(photo: Peter Frank)



Front and back of the picture postcard taken by professional photographer of Willie, the little tramp
(photos: Willie Glaser)

I did not know much about this character but remember my parents talking about “the little tramp” which as I learned later was a big movie hit.

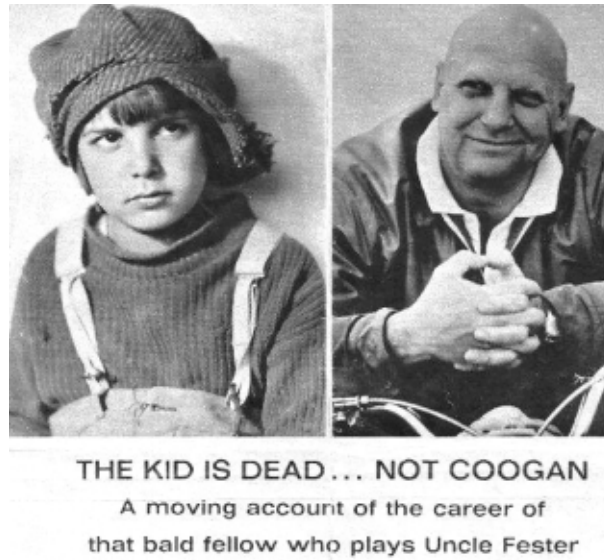
First I had to try on the pants which were a good fit. So was the sweater. I believe the cap was donated by the coachman Herr Wagner from *Möbelfabrik Ludwig*. The large red handkerchief with white polka dots which I carried belonged to my grandmother.

Everything fitted to my mother’s satisfaction. She told me: “After supper you try the rags on again, so Papa will see what you look like (*Nach dem Abendessen wirst du dir noch einmal die Lumpen anziehen, so dass Papa auch sehen kann wie du aussiehst.*)”



Memorabilia of a little tramp, part 1: newspaper clip about a remake of the film in Israel
(photo: Willie Glaser)

So after supper I dressed again in the tramp outfit. My father hoisted me on a chair, got his camera and tried to take a flash photo (*Blitzlichtaufnahme*) but the camera did not work. Anyway, my parents looked at me admiringly and my mother turned to my father saying lovingly: “Oh, so bad, but so sweet (*Ach, so schlecht, aber so süß!*)”



Memorabilia of a little tramp, part 2: newspaper article about Jackie Coogan
 (photo: Willie Glaser)

So ends the story of a year of my early childhood which was the happiest and most carefree period in my life.

During one of my visits to Fürth I made inquiries about my little pals and fellow rascals (*Spitzbuben*) Franzl and Fritzl. I was told they are reported missing in action in Russia (*verschollen in Russland*) since World War 2.



Willie, formerly known as the little tramp, at age 89
 (photo: Willie Glaser)

Montreal, January 8, 2010 (my 89th birthday), extended October 2010

Willie Glaser

edited by *Gerhard Jochem*

[Index](#)

[Home](#)