

**SO, TELL ME  
WHY**

**BY**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

That moment comes in everyone's life when we are challenged to assess our achievements and provide known quantities of our past contributions to this world. Hopefully, we have accomplished some substantial positives for society, be content with ourselves in that regard. Not all of us or even many of us achieve that goal, to that degree anyway. We would all like to leave this world a better place than what we found here upon our arrival, and then most of our lives since. It's quite a wish list!

Many folks are endowed by the Creator with the ability to adequately and clearly express their ideas in writing. But to that end, it would be extremely difficult to claim that HE has particularly gifted me. On many different occasions, it has occurred to me that my life has offered me many opportunities to place ideas on paper. Maybe the clairvoyance and the desire were probably missing.

Throughout my life, many times I have noticed that there were people out there, who could find aspects of life's experiences worthwhile to read about. Then, ultimately be interested in applying some of the "lessons learned" offered, to their own way of life. I have always considered those folks extremely lucky.

Over the years, many folks suggested after listening to some of my stories, why not put them together in a biographical or autobiographical book? Of course, convincing myself that the endeavor would actually be of interest to folks, that part took many years of spiritual and intellectual challenges.

Obviously, when someone considers a book about one's life, there are at the very least, two clearly different ways to go about it. Should I allow a professional biographer to handle all the details of my life? Or simply, without being a professional writer, try to tell my own story? My take on it and trying not to get too technical about it, it seemed to me that telling my own story should be a much better choice of telling the personal aspects of my own life. In that process, after considerable brainstorming, my conclusion was that I would be better off just telling folks about

my life.

Surely, there would be many weathered, well-tested, successful experts in publishing their work out there. A slew of professional writers, many authors, much better equipped to get into the real nuts and bolts of my story, taking it apart and then putting it all back together. They most likely would do it with great aplomb, determination, and attention to detail, to combat my views expressed above. Just to antagonize, if nothing else. My take on all that is probably so. But under no circumstances could they get into my soul, maybe my mind, yes.

My life has been a relatively long trip. Seventy-six years is quite a timeline, and I consider myself lucky in that regard. Being around for that long, under the circumstances I have been exposed to, set me on a course that should provide some success in my endeavor. My strong feelings are that I have lived through some pretty trying times, and telling stories associated with those times could have at least some value to certain folks. From many of those experiences, from tons of lessons learned, I strongly believe that some of my ideas could definitely be beneficial to folks out there, in helping them to bypass some of those problems.

For many objective and subjective reasons, I lived a life devoid of the need to have God tell me what to do. That was so for a very long time, and I was adamant about changing that! As an engineer, I could not imagine myself being unable to solve problems, especially my own. It seemed not to matter much whether God was or was not close to my heart.

I was trained as an engineer, for the first five years in a full-time program of a polytechnic institute in Romania, and then another almost four years at night program for a Master of Electrical Engineer here in America. That was followed by a career of practicing my trade as an Electrical Engineer. If I learned something useful from all of that, was to treat all engineering issues, structured as follows: first, one must determine and define what the problem was/is - second, one must come up with a reasonable working solution and finally - third, you implement the solution successfully. Sounds simple to me.

Dealing with my work in that manner, and approaching all problems in that way, appeared to be very reasonable. For most of my engineering life, I had no problems that could not be solved in that way. But life, aside from engineering, had issues that could not be tackled in that simple,

reasonable manner. Not by me, anyway. Human beings, on the other hand, and I came to realize it pretty quickly, even though for the most part they are well put together physically, simply are not machines. So my routine engineering reasoning and the implementation of possible solutions, in many cases could not readily be done.

Where am I trying to get with all this? Again, trying to solve problems aside from my engineering work has caused me all kinds of hardships, strife, and unhappiness. Not to speak about all sorts of negative reactions I received from the other side. But then, living my life the way I was, made me feel that all problems were in some manner solvable. I tried very hard to “fix” them.

Not sure how and why most lives go through phases of good and bad events. In my lifetime, I do not believe I met too many folks, if any, without all sorts of issues. Some problems were very serious, some life-threatening, some less so. My own life has had all kinds of serious problems. For all practical purposes, I was not able to deal with those problems in a successful way. As I said, for most of my life. The problems were related mostly to my personal life, in my relationships with folks that were very close to my heart, emotionally, and spiritually. I went through experiences that caused me to become ill at times, sometimes very much so.

You know, when one is on a successful engineer’s path, it becomes painful to admit that you find yourself at your wit’s end. It’s not easy to take it, that you are in a very serious level of failure. Your character and morality are affected if you happen to be a man, many times your manhood is challenged. Not to mention, when your mental sanity and thinking abilities are questioned, many times you start valuing yourself less.

More than a decade ago, it is now closer to fifteen years, and I found myself at a point where it seemed that nothing in my life worked. I was close to retiring then, around 2010. This book deals with all the pertinent details, but getting ready to retire, I believe one should take stock of where they are at that moment. And I for one, found myself at a very low point in my life. Being in that state, at passed of age 60. Not a very good place to be. Then, during that period, figuring out that I was basically in big trouble, I made my life’s call. It involved some major disappointment, sadness, and pain. Not being able to solve my own problems was cutting straight to the core of who I was.

At that very lowly moment, founding myself totally out of options - except for one. How that decision was made, and just who was responsible for it may never, or not very soon be answered. Many years later and with my life on a such different, amazing, and positive path, it really does not matter to me at all. What really matters is that the call was made.

God, who even unknowingly to me, who was always my spiritual and material Creator, has responded in such a deep way to my call. Without a doubt, I know that HE is in my corner, assisting me every step of the way, and providing me with tremendous inspiration, desire, skill, meaning, and all the other blessings. The understanding, will, ability, and knowledge, to undertake such a major task - to right my life's ship. And did ever!

God took me on an amazing trip, where every single problem that existed in my life was addressed. Many folks I respect and appreciate I know call those changes miracles. I don't have to. But as an engineer who was trained to calculate probabilities, I can tell you that those changes in my life, just like Einstein said so well, applied to my life so amazingly. Quoting him - "Coincidence is when God chooses to go anonymous", and I for one, fully agree with that. Because God took me on a dizzying ride, to say the least. To say that every miserable aspect of my life at that time had CHANGED for the much better. Is it complete? No, it's not, it is a work in progress, and it probably will be that way for the rest of my life. But it is OK!

HE made me see without a doubt that my efforts would be going towards a common good, and so importantly, making me understand beyond any question, that I possess all that is necessary to successfully complete the task. For a good part of my life, I suffered from very debilitating shyness, needed to undersell my abilities and accomplishments, and always looked at others as more capable, more gifted, and much more lucky than me. Very easily and simply, my God, in a moment has dispensed of all of that. HE set me up for success. For that, my love, my blessings, my prayers, and my total devotion, go to my Lord!

Being on that other side from the Lord for all those many years, I know that quite a few folks out there would have a very hard time believing me. For all of you who feel that way, I can share this with you. I understand you, and if you were like me, I know where you are coming from. Many of you may have experienced a lot of bad stuff in your life. Most of us did and continue doing so. But what I can tell you beyond any doubt is this. I wish that you all could share in the

feelings that exist at this time inside my soul, my spirit, and my heart. There is big-time love, peace, contentment, and care for others that are as REAL as you are. Nothing fake in that. If you need to touch God, to admit that HE truly exists, well, come here and now is the moment to do it! All you need to do is just ask HIM!

My dearest wife, my rock, my unconditional support, has always been behind me, totally, throughout our years together. Her never-ending encouragement, her clairvoyance, her amazing common sense in matters that were beyond my understanding, her total love for her fellow man, all that turned out to be so important in my decision to take on this monumental effort of writing my life's story. Because make no mistake about that. When reading this book, you get the impression that it was easy. No, it was not!

My two children - my son, a father of two, a very successful oncological surgeon, someone who is extremely skilled at saving people's lives, and helping very ill folks to live a better life, have always been someone that any father would be proud of. He has always been encouraging of anything that I undertook, or planning to do. This book is dedicated in a big way to him, to what he means to me.

My daughter, mother of three, a professional in her own right, is a civil engineer, decided to devote a big part of her life to bringing to this world three amazing kids. I am of course very proud of her, of everything she stands for, her amazing loyalty, ability to love, her intelligence. She is every bit as important in my decision to write this book as my son is.

I want to thank both my kids for everything they are, for being two people who have brought a lot of good to this world, and who made this father so proud. Love you guys! You guys are the best!

My five gorgeous, smart, beautiful, amazing grandkids ... what can this proud grandpa say? I was dreaming about the day when I would be able to lay my love on these little precious guys ... I never imagined in my wildest dreams what a glorious feeling is that of being able to love, play, and spend time together with one's grandkids. I did not have the blessing of knowing any of my grandparents (I will touch on that in detail later in the book). There is no feeling as strong as that which develops between a loving grandparent and his or her grandchildren. One can

only understand that by getting through the experience.

Let me thank the other members of my family, if nothing else, just for being there so this story could be told. There were some great women in my life and amazing times that were experienced together with them. So I am very grateful for liking me, for loving me

My friends .... God has blessed me with many good friends, wonderful people who have contributed mightily to the quality of my life, folks who have been on my side for many years. Age and disease have taken some of them away from me, but their memory, their appreciation of and love for me will be with me forever! I thank God for sending them my way, Lord I am grateful to you for that!

In my long life, many folks came across it, and they are in my memory for all the reasons that are part of a person's life. Good and bad are part of everyone's life, but those who appreciate life and the lessons we hopefully learn from both, the good and bad, all were and are a very important part.

Once the decision was made that this book would become a reality, the desire to stay the course, regardless of how difficult the process might become, strangely, all presumed difficulties just disappeared. The urge to get started became overwhelming. It provided the understanding that writing this book was not only a way to satisfy an ego-boosting need, but it was something that would be in line with what my Lord would approve of doing. And that is of the utmost importance in my present life.

Now, here is the main concern .... As far as the contents of such a quasi-autobiographical nature book, well, it is a matter of discussion, argument, investigation of other sources, how to draw from others' experience in this regard, and not trying to reinvent the wheel.

My life started immediately after WW II, and for the next 76 years, just being around for this many years, one can expect a lot to happen. In my case, a LOT has actually happened. Being born and living the first 26 years of my life in an Eastern European country, Romania, during the Cold War, certainly offered me the opportunity to become quite familiar with ALL aspects of socialism and communism. The reality of it, the truths, the lies, and all the warts of the diseased political and economic system there, forced upon us and me, coerced continuously caused many

hardships that normal human beings should not be subjected to.

Born as a Jew, in a country predominantly of a Greek Orthodox Romanian ethnicity and to a lesser degree Catholic and Protestant Hungarian ethnicity, mixed in with Gypsies, Turks, Russians/Ukrainians, and some other minorities, antisemitism was always present in my life. For the entire duration of my living in Romania, antisemitism was always there, in very discriminant ways. A chapter is dedicated to explaining how Jews ended up being part of the Romanian population, trying to survive in that anti-semitic society, being part of the Holocaust, and the mass immigration to Israel, America, and other free countries in the World. The story of my ancestors, their way of life, and trying not to be assimilated, deserve a separate chapter in the book.

A later chapter deals with growing up through extreme difficulties, in the socialist/communist brainwashing, so prevalent in Romanian society at the time. One would be challenged to even believe that such an evil attempt at overtaking the mind, the personality, and the conscience would be possible. But the simplest answer to this complex issue is this, YES. Very much so. In my case, it got to the point where questioning the ill effects of such practices would be unimaginable. And then, it would come down to a simple question ... WHY bother? Life in socialism would be all the same, nothing really could change anything, anyway. The only reasonable solution to changing things would obviously be a REVOLUTION, which eventually ended socialism in 1989 ... but how would that even be possible in a system where everything was so tightly controlled? It happened because the Lord had enough of that concoction, called socialism and communism. In a later chapter, more details will be included.

The subsequent chapter of the book will deal with other important issues, my school years starting a very long time ago, specific to the conditions present throughout those years, my college years, my extremely difficult existence, and the means available.

The decision to leave Romania, immigrating to the free world, and all the hardships encountered along the way are touched upon in the book. Those were tough times in many regards, all sorts of challenges were presented to us, making the entire period hard to deal with. This was a very challenging period for my and my family's life. It took resourcefulness to manage life, get through, and come out to a bright, and hopefully, successful end.

Once in America, my life has come to a very difficult point. The process of getting through some 30-plus years, my work, my continuing education, a first marriage that caused a lot of hardships, growing in my profession, and dealing with all the normal and extra family issues, provided more than enough additional challenges. My hope is that somewhere along the way, someone reading my lines might find something useful in easing, explaining, and solving some of their challenges. One thing is for sure, I always loved people and felt that anything I could provide to help someone was fair game.

At the end of a very difficult first marriage, the Lord entered my life in a big way. As an engineer with a 40-plus-year career, one might think that a symbiosis between God and a technologist/scientist, an engineer set in his ways, would be impossible. Well, for those who fall into that category, let me just say this very simply .... You are very WRONG! Details of the process will be provided in a specific chapter. The process has been exhilarating, complex, challenging, enriching, all of that and much more! You get the idea!

Please understand ... A scientist, a technocrat's alignment with God, one's spirituality, please believe this, is not a simple thing to do. But ... It is very much possible! The process is amazing! For more, read the chapter.

My second marriage, my love, my soul mate, and my dearest Glenda, made me realize one very important fact. CHANGE is very much POSSIBLE, and it is especially enlightening, rewarding, and achievable when the Lord is part of the process. During much of my life, I heard nothing but that once formed, change of personality, way of acting, your temperament are not subject to change. I can tell you from my own experience that nothing is further from the truth. With the Lord in your soul, and honestly willing to become a better person, it is very much possible. It's not easy, but then nothing of value comes easy. The major problem standing in the way of our change is the EGO. Losing that ego makes everything so much easier.

The facts in life are not easy to recount, especially when honesty is the main ingredient. As said somewhere earlier, one's life is full of negatives and positives. Getting through all of that, with honesty, care, and goodwill, will enable us to grow, to become better humans, the way our Lord intended us to be.

My deepest desire is to share my story in simple terms, offering a glimmer of light for those who may feel lost or overwhelmed in their own lives. Whether you are trying to understand life, seeking guidance, or simply curious, I hope you find something valuable here. My wish is to help you navigate your own challenges with greater ease and hope.

To all my readers, my love and prayers go out to you. Thank you for taking the time to walk through this journey with me!

Good reading everyone!

Alex

# CHAPTER 2

## WHO WERE MY ANCESTORS

The town I call my birthplace is a very small town in Romania, in a province known to the rest of the world as Transylvania (most think of it as “Dracula Country”). As part of that province, there is a very beautiful county named SALAJ, a name that was given to it mainly as a way of describing the population living there. Salaj and the area surrounding it, with different names throughout times, with a history of at least 5000 years, has been a desired home for many different ethnic groups and people.



As part of that history, the region has been populated by ethnic Hungarians and Romanians, for the past 1000 years. The country has been overrun by all sorts of barbarians prior to that period and after, as well. The actual name of my birthplace today is Cehul-Silvaniei (in Romanian), which

translated to English simply means the town where Czech folks lived originally, in a breathtaking forested area.

The Czech Republic is not directly bordering Romania, but is not that far from my birthplace in Romania either. A distance of about 700 miles. Although possibly a bit early in a book, I placed a lovely photo of my dear small town on previous page.

### **One Main Core of My Book -The Jewish Story - The Diaspora**

Rather than getting into too much of the historical details of Romania or Transylvania (which is really beyond the purpose of my book), attention would be given to the history of the Jews living in the area, and their ancestry. Why Jews, you may ask? Primarily, because I was born a Jew, my name - Alexander Deutsch, on November 16, 1947. My entire life, the matter of how my ancestors ended up where they did, was always an open question in my mind, an enigma that challenged my imagination. About to change that in this book. Thanks to the Internet age, answering the question became more plausible. It is important to me and of course, there will be a lot of people who will smirk as they read the lines below. There is no doubt in my mind, that what inspired my book is the power and grace that God has placed upon me these days! It wasn't always that way for me. In fact, for most of my life, God had no room in my heart, soul, or mind, anywhere in my existence, but without a doubt, HE does now!

Two thousand years have passed since the Jewish Diaspora has happened. Hard to find vestiges from that period. But here is a photo dating back to those days, and it is included on page 14 below.

My working career, that of an electrical engineer, never included the need to write a book about anything. But all of a sudden, the desire appeared, the inspiration was and is there, something to write about is there. So guess what? At 76, one early morning at around 2 or 3 AM, I woke up with this strong message from God - Alex, time to write your book! Half an hour later, I found myself sitting in front of my computer and typing. The ideas just swamped my mind, no planning was at all necessary, no heavy thinking, just typing and typing. Now, about two weeks later, I just can't stop! So, is that inspiration or what? I choose to believe that God has me set up for this effort, and HIS reasons are good enough for me!

Many of us know that the Romans, when present in the Holy Land, in Jesus' time and even before, had eventually driven Jews out of Israel and into the DIASPORA. That fact eventually caused their spreading throughout most of the World. In my lifetime, destiny or God - does it really matter which? - had me visiting in different ways maybe 30 different countries, many localities in each. I have had no problem at all to come across Jews or Jewish things anywhere, and everywhere. It always amazed me how a people of maybe 15 million folks today, much fewer in the past, you could always find one or two Jews anywhere. And many times, many more, no matter where you find yourself. The only explanation I could find for that, Jews - had to be God's Chosen People as the Bible claims!

According to miscellaneous dictionaries, a Diaspora is defined as a group of people who speak the same language and are pushed out of their homeland together. For those who might be interested in understanding the meaning of Diaspora, well, here are some other interesting details.

Until recently, Diaspora a newer word in English, was thought to be used to describe the settling of the Jewish people outside of Palestine, after the Babylonian exile, thousands of years earlier. However, recent research has found that the word is quite a bit older than previously thought. It can be found as far back as the 1500s, described in a translation as "the scattering abroad of the Jews, got called the Diaspora, a word that descended from the Greek word Diaspeirein, meaning - to scatter or to spread about.

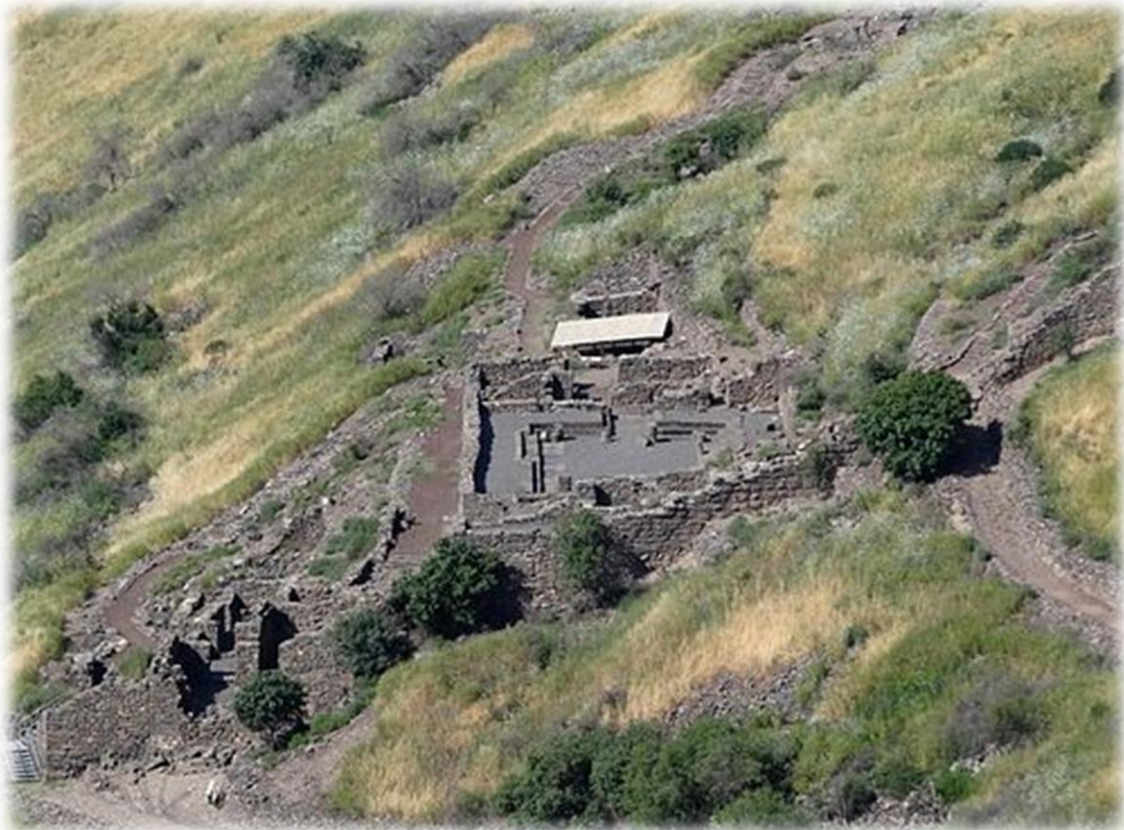
The Diaspora matter has always caused me a hardship in understanding it, just exactly what happened historically to the Jews then and how they ended up populating the area where I was born. I mean, there is definitely some stretch of imagination there. A connection is not very easy to make, just think about it. In any event, from a very early age, I tried to figure out how a Jew from the Holy Land could end up so far away from their birthplace. Later on, on several occasions I revisited Romania. Already living in America upon my immigration there, I visited my old hometown, and my parents' birthplaces. As I did all that, it was almost impossible to find any sort of reliable information about who even my grandparents, and great-grandparents were, never mind Jews in my area during the Diaspora. Is it normal for a human to desire to know that? In the case of different Christian denominations, it was much easier to do so, because in most cases, their records were very securely kept, in the respective churches. At least, that was the situation in

Romania, in the area where I lived before.

It is hard to find vestiges of the Diaspora anywhere, it happened so long ago. But I was able to find a photo depicting something that dates back to those days. It is shown below on this page. It shows the ruins of an old synagogue of the time. Wondering what life might have been for those folks.

### **History of Jewish Life In Romania As A Whole**

The history of the Jews in Romania, in general, refers to the evolution of the minority on the current territory of Romania, throughout its history. The Jewish presence in this space is archaeologically attested in Antiquity (not specifically stated), and starting in earnest from the Middle Ages. That is well documented by historical resources, and it became economically and culturally significant, starting in the 19th century. The official census of 1930, shows the total number of Jews in Romania being at or near 756,930. This number is important to note because it will have a bearing on what happened to that number due to the Holocaust.



The beginnings of the Jewish presence in Romania - it is likely that Jews had representatives in the current Romanian geographical space almost two millennia ago. That if so, corresponds to the Diaspora, above explained. Those beginnings of Jewish presence in Romania were placed by older historiography, before the conquest of Dacia - the name of Romania in ancient times, by Trajan famous Roman emperor - the one responsible for occupying parts of Romania. But this opinion has been revised by current research, as it is not confirmed by archaeological evidence. In my mind, since many of the archeological diggings happened in the socialist/ communist Romania and the government is interested in hiding such evidence. First Jews probably arrived in Dacia as part of the establishment of Roman power there. Ample reasons exist to base that belief on. Romans were everywhere in those days and humans, especially Jews, had and have the tendency to move around a lot.

By the beginning of the new era, the majority of the Jewish people lived outside the ancient Israel. The anti-Roman Jewish uprisings started in the 60s AD - The Great Revolt of the Jews - and it finished with the uprising of Bar-Kochba in 132-135 AD. That ended with the victory of the Roman army over the Jews. It had tragic consequences for the vanquished. It continued with the burning of Jerusalem and the Second Temple, massacres, captivity, and exile throughout the territory controlled by the Romans. There are some testimonies, mostly coins, that confirm Jewish presence in the Romanian territory at the time. It is unquestionable that rampant antisemitism at the time and ever since would have denied Jewish presence in Dacia/Romania, who knows for how long.

In Medieval times, Jews were shown to be some of the first inhabitants there. At times, Jews were exempted from military service in exchange for a tax. In the 14th century, Jews from Central Europe (Ashkenazi Jews) came to the Romanian Principalities, which of course included Transylvania. During the Ottoman rule, Sephardic Jews of Spanish origin, settled in as well.

Stephen the Great, perhaps the most famous of all Romanian kings, of his time, it is said that a Jew by the name of Itzhak was baptized. Following the pogroms in Ukraine in the 16th century, a wave of Yiddish-speaking Jews came to Romania.

From the second half of the 18th century and especially in the first part of the century and then the 19th century, due to the worsening situation of the Jews in Galicia - part of today's

Turkey - a new wave of Jews took refuge in Moldova - an eastern province of Romania - on the other side of the Carpathian Mountains from Transylvania. It was probably during that period that my ancestors came to Transylvania, likely from the West.

The earliest records I was able to locate go back to the mid-1800s. But by that time, they were well established there.

Between 1881 and 1914, approximately 75,000 Jews immigrated from Romania, the main destination being the United States. The Jewish population of Romania at the 1930 census, the total number of Jews in Romania was 756,930.

Following the territorial amputations of Romania in the summer of 1940, the Jewish population in NW Romania or Transylvania was 138,917. Other important information is that different sources present different data about the demographic balance of the Jews in Romania between the years 1940 and 1944 and how that was affected by the ensuing Holocaust.

Important numbers are shown below, which have unfortunately affected my own family - Romanian Jews massacred in Northern Transylvania - ceded to Hungary to the Szálasi government - 135,000. An awful lot of innocent folks were butchered by the Hungarian fascists. Another number - Romanian Jews who disappeared, were killed, or transmuted before the entry of the Romanian troops - 100,000. Yet another - Romanian Jews massacred under the Antonescu government's directions - Romanian fascist leader - 270,000. Good Lord! All that was even before the German Holocaust!

After the Second World War, the exodus of Jews to Israel, and to a lesser extent to the West, led to their almost total disappearance in Romania:

- in 1945 there were 410,000 Jews,- in 1961 225,000 Jews,
- in 1968 100,000 Jews,
- at the beginning of the 21st century - their number did not exceed 7,000 people.

A photo of the boat Exodus - quite appropriately named - took almost 5000 Jews to Israel after the Holocaust is shown on next page. Doesn't it remind us of Moses, except for the boat!



It appears that there are quite a number of people on that boat. Just wondering about the dangers facing the boat on its way to the Holy Land. One thing for sure - there were lots of happy, relieved Jewish folks on that boat, dreaming about a decent life in Israel, after all the misery they went through not long earlier.

In the 20th century, the fascism and antisemitism of a significant part of the elites between the two world wars favored the Holocaust in Romania so that following the transition of Basarabian Jews to Soviet citizenship mass emigration to Palestine - after 1948, Israel - and following crimes committed by the Antonescu regime in Romania - including Basarabia and Transnistria - and the Horthyst one - leader of the Hungarian fascists - in Northern Transylvania, this minority numbered only 146,264 people in 1956.

During the Stalinist period of the communist regime, the manifestation of religion and mosaic culture or belonging to international Jewry were considered according to the official ideology as "bourgeois nationalism" and respectively as "cosmopolitanism", which is retrospectively appreciated as an "occult antisemitism" of the regime. In all these cases, the situation led to the immigration of the majority of Romanian Jews to Western countries or to Israel, so that by the 2011 census only 3,271 Jews were counted in Romania. In a country where

Judaism has flourished amazingly in the past and close to a million Jews lived.

### **Beginnings of Jewish Life In Transylvania**



The Jews of Transylvania – The Jewish presence in Transylvania can be traced back to Roman Dacia through the discovery of several coins from Bar-Kochba’s time (circa 133–134 CE) at various sites, including Ulpia Traiana and Sarmisegetuza (existing sites in present Romania) and a couple of other sites.

As one might expect, tracing back reality in history is not always easy, or available for investigation. In trying to materialize the statement above, we ran into a situation where we could prove what was stated as true, by association only.

What we need to do is to show that Jewish coins made two thousand years earlier, were taken by Jewish associated persons and then state that those items were similarly brought to Romania, to Sarmisegetuza (today named Orastie, and located in Southwestern Transylvania - not far at all from my birthplace). I will attempt to do exactly that. The photo above is of the archeological site of Sarmisegetuza, or it is today, Orastie.

So, Roman soldiers stationed in Israel just as BC turned to AD brought Jewish Israeli coins to the Republic of Georgia - the country not far away from Mount Ararat located in today’s Turkey.

Georgia is located on the Eastern shore of the Black Sea. The Eastern part of Romania (Dobrogea) is situated on the Western shore of the sea, only a few hundred miles away. There is no reason to believe that those soldiers or others like them, would not go home to Rome through Romania, partly a Roman Empire vassal. The Georgian site is shown in the photo.

It is stated in many historical documents that similar archeological sites exist at Sarmisegetusa, Romania, and that similar Bar-Kochba coins were excavated there as well. Also, there is no reason why Jews during the Diaspora would have not gone the same route to Georgia or Romania, the same way the Romans did, and then taken coins with them. On page 18,19 are included photos relevant to all statements made above, the two archeological excavation sites, coins, etc. Just below is the typical Bar-Kochba Jewish coin, as it may have looked two thousand years ago. Obviously, in a totally different condition after being buried in 2000, one can see the Georgian coins.



For whatever reason, even though it is stated that Jewish coins were found at the Romanian site, I was not able to find their photo anywhere. Be that as it may, let's move on.

During the Middle Ages, the Jewish presence in Transylvania is confirmed by various historical sources, such as a series of 13th-century documents mentioning Jewish entrepreneurs involved in the salt trade along the Mureş River, located in the middle of Transylvania. After their expulsion from Spain in 1492, Sephardic Jews began to settle in Transylvania in greater numbers. As a result, the communities formed in Transylvania were predominantly Sephardic, with members arriving from the Ottoman Empire where they had found refuge following their expulsion from Spain.

During the Principality of Transylvania (1571–1691) years, the Jewish presence increased significantly, as evidenced by the existence of a rabbinical court in Alba Iulia in 1591. In the 17th century, Jews were primarily documented as doctors attending to the princes of Transylvania. Practicing medicine was a “Jewish” thing, just consider Nostradamus, a seer, and also a physician who practiced medicine in the mid-1500s and who became renowned for his innovative medical treatments during the outbreaks of the plague in France.

Transylvanian princes encouraged the settlement of the Jewish population to stimulate economic activity and facilitate the principality's entry into the prominent trade circles of the time, through the mediation of Jewish merchants. To this end, privileges were granted to the Jews, who were invited to settle in Transylvania. It established their legal status in the region for almost two centuries. The privileges granted guaranteed Jews the right to housing, freedom of movement within the principality, the right to leave with all their possessions, the right to practice freely their trades, under the protection of the local nobility, freedom of religion, and the right to pay taxes equal to those in their country of origin. A big step in becoming relevant in Transylvania. This was most likely helpful in my folks gaining rights that allowed them to live in my birthplace and around it, and flourish. During the 17th century, due to the protection offered by the princes, the Jewish presence became increasingly significant in the economic life of Transylvania. Historical records mention a synagogue belonging to the Sephardic community in Alba-Iulia in 1656.

During the first half of the 19th century, the Jewish population in Transylvania grew significantly. According to several successive censuses, the Jewish population in Transylvania

consisted of approximately 2,000 Jews, in the 1766 census, roughly 5,175 Jews, in the 1825 census, and around 15,600 Jews, in the 1850 census. After 1867, when Transylvania came under Hungarian administration following the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's dual monarchy, the number of Jews increased to 23,536, representing 1.2% of the total population. The 1910 census recorded 64,074 Jews, comprising 2.4% of the total population. This demographic growth within the Jewish population was primarily due to an influx of Jewish immigrants from Galicia present-day Turkey, Bucovina northeast part of Romania, and other regions such as Poland and Ukraine.

In 1867, Transylvanian Jews and those throughout the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire were granted civil rights and the right to reside in any city within the empire. Additionally, an 1895 law officially recognized Judaism as one of the country's religions. The emancipation of the Jews significantly facilitated their access to prominent positions within the nation's social and community life.

### **Jews of Romania In Modern Times**

In later years, most Jews were considered according to the official ideology as forming "bourgeois nationalism" and respectively as "cosmopolitanism", which is retrospectively appreciated as an "occult anti-Semitism" of the regime; in all cases, this situation led to the immigration of the majority of Romanian Jews to the West or to Israel, so that in the 2011 census only 3,271 Jews were counted in Romania. In a country where Judaism has succeeded greatly in the past.

Trying to explain the disappearance of the Jewish minority in Romania in the 20th century, is not a very difficult task. A significant part of the Jewish population of Israel originates from Romania, or are descendants of immigrants. Jews from Romania have maintained ties with the Land of Israel for centuries. Religious Jews could, left in old age, die and be buried there. The communities of the Jews in Romania economically helped these Jews, who lived in poverty in the cities considered holy, in which there had been Jewish communities for many, many years. Organized Jewish immigration to Israel began in 1882, as part of the overall Zionist movement. The young Romanian state initially did not grant citizenship to Jews because it was defined as an Orthodox state.

The "Ashkenazi", or those of "Germans" origin - even my name "Deutsch", as most folks know, means German. Jews came in large numbers from Germany, Austria, Galicia, and Poland, and spoke Yiddish, which is a German jargon spoken outside of Vienna. Among the latter, at the end of the 19th century, a large wave of poor immigrants left Romania making their way either to the West or to Palestine, Ottoman at the time, but for them - the "Land of Israel", Eretz Israel. A smaller Zionist immigration continued, despite the prohibitions set by the Turkish authorities.

Let's look at the situation of Romanian citizens of Jewish ethnicity in the communist regime. That regime, established in Romania approximately three years after the end of WW II, guaranteed the emancipation of all ethnic groups through the Constitution. Except that was nothing more than a fad. In reality, antisemitism - prohibited by law - took on new forms even within the Party, where, after the initial phase in which the leadership was in the hands of Stalinists of Jewish origin such as Ana Pauker and others like that, it gradually was passed into the hands of "more safe" leaders, especially since Israel adopted a pro-Western policy. In the name of the "working class", the Jews from the Party were "purged" as "bourgeois, non-proletarian elements, with unhealthy origins, cosmopolitans, with relatives abroad" - the case of the majority of Jews in Romania. Include here my parents, who have worked very hard for the Party, because they honestly believed that their work would really help the needy, the poor, and the disadvantaged. But that, like almost everything the communists propagated, was nothing but sheer lies. My parents put in tremendous amounts of time working for the cause, many times neglecting us, the kids.

The occult antisemitism of the new communist leaders, supported by the Stalinist ones, was expressed indirectly but effectively. In all documents with personal data - civil status documents, university registration forms, admission to the Party, the Union of Young Workers, which I was part of because of lack of options given. Trade unions, ARLUS - Romanian Association for strengthening ties with the Soviet Union, etc., the mention of "nationality" and of the previous surname was mandatory. Communist Jews who had managed to maintain themselves in the Party were used as instruments of intimidation and oppression of recalcitrant Jews. My parents never agreed to do that type of dehumanizing work.

The coming to power of the unpopular communist regime under the conditions of the Soviet occupation, intensely increased the motivation of a large number of the country's citizens to

emigrate, for fear of radical reforms of the economy and the anti-democratic regime and terror already known from the model applied in the USSR.

Under these circumstances, the desire to immigrate grew even more among the Jewish nationality of Romania, where the Zionist movement already had great prestige and a long tradition. My family and I, as stated above, were among the last Jews to leave Romania. We stuck it out as long that was possible.

The communist regime really distinguished itself in Romania by the measures to control the movements of the population, and from a certain moment, to block with the harshest means the mass or individual immigration attempts of the majority of Romanians or national minorities and religions. The Zionist movement, whose goal was the immigration and self-determination of the Jews in Israel, was qualified as "bourgeois", "nationalist-chauvinist" and even "fascist" (really?) and became one of the objectives of the communist repression.

### **The Mass Exodus of Romanian Jews To Israel And the West**

The departure of the Jews from Romania. was reminiscent of Moses' exodus time, when the Lord took to the Jews to leave Egypt, so they would not be exterminated there. In this case, the communist regime was very restrictive regarding the freedom to leave the country, and immigrants were considered "traitors", just like we became. Yours truly ended up being one of those, upon immigrating in 1973. The Egyptian Pharaoh's behavior comes to mind here, except that here was a communist dictator's doing.

In the period 1959-1989, the Romanian state sold almost 200,000 ethnic Jews, for which Israel paid significant amounts in hard currency, agricultural products, etc. Israel presumably paid Ceausescu \$1500 per person, or that is what we were told. The actual number surely was much higher. We were sold as "meat", Jewish "kosher" meat, and Jewish meat delivered to Israel for a price. What do you think about that? Hopefully, not much! The communist, for you.

Immediately at the end of World War II, approximately 350,000 Jews lived in Romania, most of them from the Old Kingdom (Romania proper, composed mainly of Vallachia and Moldova). The reason for that was that the number of Romanian Jews from the regions East and

South of the Carpathian Mountains were not deported the same way the “Hungarian” (Transylvanian) Jews were, so obviously many more survived. Outside of the USSR, Romania was the country with the largest number of Jews in Europe. During Ana Pauker's leadership, until 1952, approximately 100,000 Jews left Romania for Israel. Then, the Romanian Communist Party stopped the free departures. Starting from 1958 until 1965, when Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the Romanian president at the time died, 107,540 Romanian Jews immigrated to Israel. The annual average was around 13,000 people. From 1969 until the fall of Ceaușescu's regime, the president following Dej and the leader of the Romanian Communist Party - PCR in 1989, Jewish immigration settled at an average of 1,990 people per year. My family represented four of those folks, in 1973.

We, considered “traitors” by the communists, were issued special passports called “Pasaport Pentru Persoane Fara Cetatenie” immediately prior to our leaving Romania. Which translated means, “Passport for Persons without Citizenship. In other words, from that moment on, we stopped being citizens of any country and therefore, belonged nowhere. I mean, only disease-ridden, crazy minded people like those communists could conceive something so sick. Below, on this page is a photo depicting the above statement. By the way, I still have that passport, I keep it as a reminder that I hope and I pray, to never again live in a system as sick as that one was. At the very top of each passport, you can see - Republica Socialista Romania, which translated means, Romanian Socialist Republic.



The anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish acts of the communist regime could not crush the desire of the majority of the Jewish people to immigrate to the newly created Jewish state in 1948, the State of Israel. International pressure on Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej to allow Jewish immigration was steady and substantial. Because from past experience, we know that the only thing that works against them is steady pressure from tremendous numbers.

The lucky ones who received the approval to depart - which could be canceled randomly at any moment, until boarded on a plane and took off, had a few days to dispose of their belongings and prepare a box with a 35 kg. As luggage. It could only include used things, excluding art, and precious metals, except for a wedding ring, paintings and photographs, etc. Those "in the field of work" and only those crazy communists knew what that meant, would be entitled to 70 kg. One must assume that in some manner, they had an upper hand on those folks, to enable them to get back something in return from those. Whatever that was!

The documents that had to be presented for departure included the renunciation of Romanian citizenship (Yak!) against a very high fee. Departure was based on a "Travel Certificate" for people without citizenship, Something like the passports shown above. The certificate of retrocession of all scholarships, stipends, and tax exemptions from the entire period of studies. Which by the way, was a request that no immigrant could meet, myself included. Who had the money to make those retributions? We had trouble gathering enough money to buy food if you could find it! Then, a few dozen more stamped certificates that they no longer had debts to any cooperatives, utilities, libraries, etc. from the locality. Yeah, right!

Because it was well known how limited and controlled the immigrant's time was, these certificates constituted an assault on the integrity of the stamp clerks. The file ended with a farewell from the Security officer, saying something like this: "Don't forget that you still have family in the country (we personally had no one), help us, and we will help you." Boy, what memories does this bring back to me, after all these years! The sheer fear they created in us, basically is very hard to describe! It is amazing now, after all these years, how every single disgusting detail above was actually true for most of us. How amazing, this far removed from that occurrence (50 years plus now!) - what kind of sick mind or maybe a "genius, (hard to tell!) could come up with all this kind of crap?

Ceaușescu used the desire of the Jews to immigrate, in more efficient ways - he sold them at prices between \$3,000 - 9,000 per Jew. We were told \$1,500, but have absolutely no problem believing the much higher figures were paid. Knowing with whom we were dealing with. Those funds in hard currency, deposited directly in special accounts, at the branches of some Romanian banks in Switzerland. How about that? Who do you think were the owners of those accounts?

If the mail censorship officers discovered that the Jewish candidate for sale had friends or solvent family abroad, he was arrested for some reason in order to double the ransom price. For us, the figure would have been much higher, if we somehow would have chosen to immigrate directly to America, instead of Israel. Even though, our immediate family lived in the US, so obviously, we would have been prone to major extortion, but were not going to play into their hands, that way.

Incredible amounts of money, no Romanian could have been able to afford unless you were at the very top of the communist party, But why would you leave in that case? They were already living in heaven, in Romania! From the information we were given by the security agents, it was that in order for us to go directly to America we would have needed to dish out \$20,000 for the four of us, which in today's currency would be around \$300,000. But then, only God knows what the actual figure was given to our American family! Disgusting!

At the end of the 20th century, the number of Romanian Jewish citizens in Romania fell to below 7,000. I would say that this national Jewish minority easily could be considered as being on the verge of extinction today. Wonderful! Let's just say this - the Romanian communists managed to get their "final solution" for the Jewish problem work, where Hitler failed! How about that too?

### **And Now - Who Really Were My Ancestors and Why Should It Even Matter?**

For starters, we humans, have this need to know where we are coming from. At least, I do! Then, at the end of our investigation, we hope that we have something good to measure up to and hopefully provide this world with something positive.

I would venture to say, that probably it would be even more essential for us Jews because many of us have been harmed, pained, dissed, pushed aside, and around.



Our dignity, our pride, our love, our need for kindness, among many other things, has been much maligned, damaged, unfulfilled, and uncared for.

The first photo shown above on previous page is that of my birthplace, Cehul-Silvaniei, a panoramic view, gorgeous to me. Of course, I am very far away from being objective. Quite frankly, in this case, I refuse to be. My hope is that you folks, the readers of my book will find it charming.

Hopefully, all the information poured out so far into this chapter of the book will help appreciative folks understand where my ancestors came from and what they stood for. It helps me a lot to appreciate it as well! As already mentioned previously, my ancestors have resided in these two small towns, for a very long time. For a long time, the towns were and are populated by Romanian ethnics, Hungarian ethnics, Jews, gypsies, and some other ethnicities. As Jews, in much lower numbers. We are all human, we have certain needs that cannot be wiped out when it comes to our origins. Next, on the previous page, is a photo of my mom's birthplace, again, the birthplace of many of my family members from my mom's side.

Some reasonable assumptions now since solid data about the history of my ancestors is unfortunately minimally available, as no solid data could be found.

Based on my living in the area over an appreciable length of time, and also my experience in things Jewish, I am fairly certain that my generations go back at least two hundred years living in those areas.

Romania in general, and Transylvania in particular, were fertile regions of the world for Jews. These areas where my family existed, survived for a long time. If the Diaspora has produced something positive for the world's Jewry, it must be the fact that it developed in them a strong sense of survival. We know that God has chosen Jews to be HIS CHOSEN people, HIS chosen nation.

The antisemites have a field day criticizing us for claiming that. It's alright, we just continue praying to the Lord to forgive them, because we have. We must! It can probably be said quite confidently that if Jews would drag themselves through dirt, the antisemites would find a reason to criticize us for doing that!

Jews and Israel have a long history of enemies trying to wipe them out, but somehow, we managed to exist for a very long time. Almost six thousand years, at the very least. We always survived! There must be something to that, what we claim so dearly - we are God's chosen! Many times on the edge of extinction, battered into oblivion, surviving miraculously in others, we are still here to tell the story. For many enemies that tried to annihilate us, here we are, still telling our story after all these years. We are good at telling our story, it's time they should know and understand that, and quit wasting their time.

We managed to survive in the Holy Land, we managed to survive pretty much on all continents in the Diaspora. There is absolutely no reason to believe that we would not survive in Romania, Transylvania, or anywhere else for that matter. My life of 76 years has afforded me plenty of occasions and situations in which I could undoubtedly say, yes, my immediate and past ancestors have existed in my old country, made it through very difficult situations, always landing on their feet. For that, I love them, I thank them, and my heart is always full of their memory!

With all the antisemitism present, we were, are, and likely will always be subjected to antisemitism! But all that really matters is that we have GOD behind us, and with that, we fear nothing. Whatever HE has for us, it will always be enough for us, for our survival! DAIENU! As the Hebrew song well says it .... It would always SUFFICE, as long as GOD is with us!

Over my lifetime, I have almost always experienced some level of antisemitism. It existed as a constant in my life, sometimes harder, sometimes less so. But I was conditioned very early on to survive it and be well at the end of it all. I tried time and again to understand why this anger and hate against us, me, needed to exist. So far, God has not graced me with an answer. But in HIS own good time, I am sure HE will.

In my life, I learned a long time ago that the distance between love and hate is minimal, if at all. Maybe some folks can only express their love, their intentions, their feelings, and their actions through hate and anger.

But in effect, they actually do that because they LOVE me! God only knows why it needs to be that way! I experienced hate and anger in response to love and care, Certainly, not easy to understand, or accept and live with.

Understanding folks whose character, personality, intelligence, care, and love openly expressed I highly value, I must accept that at this time and in the environment, we presently live in, egos that need help cannot be moved even through love. Many times, I was told by these amazing people - unfortunately, we are not equipped with what it takes to help out these kinds of folks who need help. That the only source for that help is GOD. We can do one thing, and one thing only, that hopefully can help out such folks. That is to pray for them constantly, with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds. That way God can and eventually will come to their aid. Just remember this ... in HIS own good time!

Our world is not in a good place right now. We know that HIS word, the Bible, spells out clearly that such times will come. But now, they may already be here. We don't know that for sure unless we base it entirely on our faith, our belief in HIM! And that my dear readers, is good enough for me. We will all survive just fine if that is HIS will. All we can really do is exist in a way that HE would approve of, pray, and then expect the best because that is what HE would want.

The issue of my ancestors, their lives, their history, their expectation of us to be the ones that they could be proud of. Hopefully, we would make them happy if they could be here with us. For folks who appreciate family ties, that is a big load to fulfill. It is a big obligation on our part to be the best we can be. If I'm allowed to just jump ahead a bit here.

The Holocaust has robbed me and many others like me, of knowing our grandparents, our great-grandparents, and many members of our families. For that reason, being connected in some powerful way is critical for us, to me. My strong belief is that they are alive and well in Heaven and one day, a day that is coming closer with each day, we will meet again. That will be the highlight of my life.

Now going back to the two small Transylvanian towns, my folks have called home for a long time. Thankfully, I had the opportunity to spend some time there, at different times, after immigrating to America. I met many folks there, none of them Jews, who had been associated with my folks many years earlier. Call them "righteous" folks, people who had no problem with befriending Jews. All of them expressed their sadness for not having Jewish folks in their towns anymore. Interestingly enough, it seems that no Jew haters or antisemites were present there anymore. It is a shame that it took full extinction for that to happen. Of course, it would be hard to

direct your hate against folks who do not exist there anymore. What it really is, it is really a very sad situation, I feel.

In the days after my working career was over, on the few occasions I could visit those towns, even with all the killings during the Holocaust and the forced immigrations because of the communist hardships, there was a scent of Judaism left around. It was not completely gone, and unless God chooses differently, it will never be gone. And that is something that warms my heart. Those lost human connections represent a big loss for those towns, as far as I am concerned. And for me, and for Jews in general. It is just as big a loss for the non-Jews who lived and continue living there today. Talking at times with men of my grandfather's generation, and women who knew my grandmothers intimately, well, those feelings in my heart will never die, and will surely become stronger. Nothing can kill real human heart-to-human heart connections.

Time spent in the two towns' Jewish cemeteries will remain etched in my heart and mind forever, as well. Time and obvious neglect will never be enough to wipe out the feelings of belonging, of being one with them, of hearing their voices in my mind.

Words cannot really express profoundly everything that went on in my heart and my soul, standing there by the remains of some of those who were my ancestors. Only a photo of the Jewish cemetery of Zalau (my hometown for many years), was available for posting here. It is shown on the next page. The condition of all Jewish cemeteries in the towns of the County of Salaj is about the same condition. As pretty much everything Jewish anywhere in Romania, things are just decaying, being demolished, and forgotten, as no funds are available for much-needed repairs.

There is always something different in the soul, in the heart of a Jewish person. Not sure if I can explain it the right way, but I will try. This has absolutely nothing to do with putting down any non-Jewish person, and really, in fact, the opposite is true. Trying to explain to the average person that being a Jew is not easy, because a lot is expected of you. That the hopes of many people are on your shoulders, and that God wants you to be someone HE can be proud of. And that comes with all kinds of responsibilities. There was a saying for most of my life back in my old country ... something like this .... God never promised that being a Jew would be an easy deal. It certainly isn't, but I wouldn't want it any other way! As such, my love to you all! We all can, this entire world can use some love!

And now, antisemitism as expressed by Romanian non-Jews - a refreshing moment and perspective. It had not occurred to me that the disease of antisemitism would be viewed from two points of view: that of the Jews themselves and then of course, the non-Jews as well. As human nature goes, there are always different, sometimes opposing points of view for anything. A person with a strong character, and good moral standing, whether a Jew or non-Jew, for whom, racism, ethical hate, or discrimination of any sort should not have room in a moral, in a civilized society. Be that as it may actually be, let's see what our fellow man had to say. For me, to be objective about it and then try to make sense out of what he had to say. That racists, nazis, war-mongers, masters of immorality, pure haters would have a problem with someone for being a Jew that is easy to understand. But what about this other group of non-Jews, especially Romanians as I was, and continue to be by birth?

Here are statements taken out word for word from a Romanian publication named "Adevarul.ro - translated 'Thetruth.ro'" by one Cosmin Patrascu Zamfirache, published in 2015 (so, fairly recently). By the way .... This excerpt was chosen at total random.



The article's name: "Why did the Romanians hate the Jews? The untold history of homegrown anti-Semitism is based on the belief that "Jews can be killed from time to time for their sins"" My comment to this - Wow! It's quite refreshing to hear this when compared to the lies propagated by the Romanian communist government while I lived in Romania, where the lies were

propagated shamelessly. Like: There is no antisemitism in Romania! Yeah - Right! Of course - I need to understand what sins are we talking about? I am sure, non-Jews committed just as many sins if not more, who knows - should they be killed as well?

“The translation of the Jews in the European imagery from the "chosen people" to the "killers of Christ" was meant to influence the fate of this population over time. Coming to Europe since the time of the Roman Empire, the Jews, especially during the years of the deeply mystical and Christian Middle Ages, became a kind of "scapegoat" for all the evils that happened to people.” WOW! How true, I would say!

“If there was a plague, surely it was brought by the Jews, and if the wells were poisoned, surely the Jewish population was to blame. Medieval pogroms in England, France, Germany, and Spain are well-known. Beyond the religious and mystical reasons invoked, the Jews were sacrificed mainly for the fortunes they owned, but also to erase the loans that the sovereigns of Europe often contracted from the rich Jewish bankers. The Christian "duty" to kill the infidels or the "killers of Christ" was doubled by a good opportunity to rob the wealth of the Jews”. Another WOW! This one here, if somehow I was on the receiving end (and by association I am), instantly I would subject it to brutal antisemitism! For sure!

“Moreover, the Jews did not have the right to own land, turning to business, usury, or finance, jobs looked down upon by an eminently landed world. If throughout medieval Europe there was a strong anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish attitude in particular, no anti-Semitic attitudes or attacks were documented in the Romanian Principalities.

The Turks, Greeks, and Jews were viewed perhaps with mistrust by the Romanian Orthodox, but no pogroms or anti-Semitic laws were attested. On the contrary, Armenian and Jewish merchants, in certain cases and regions, enjoy privileges from the rulers”. Talking about being born in the wrong place!

Gosh! What an amazing article! I wish I could include it all here, but obviously I can't and that is a shame. The important thing is that Romania has turned the corner in exposing antisemitism, and that is really refreshing and full of hope! And for this former and still Romanian, it is a cause for major pride! Thank you, Lord!

Changing people's attitudes towards antisemitism and racism, in general, will take much longer, there is no arguing that what we read above is a change in the right direction. Antisemitism has been around for at least 2000 years, so it may take a few more years to change that. Well .... You can only expect so many miracles at one time!

# CHAPTER 3

## THE HOLOCAUST YEARS

### Moving Up Towards The Holocaust

The average person in this world would have heard in their lifetime about the World War II Holocaust. It is one of the lowest points in human history, no question about that. The real pain is that it took the lives of 6 million Jews and many millions of non-Jews, as well. Holocausts have occurred in history before this calamity, and in many different ways, it is happening throughout the world every day. Generally, humans tend to be affected by events that occur close to their existence, but then of course, the great majority of folks in our world are distraught by the evil a human can cause to another human.

The last major Holocaust, the one that has wiped out so many folks, and others, lives its effects every day of their lives, and probably will forever. One of those folks is the writer of this book, because of how profound of a loss has produced for me. It is difficult to determine the full effect on my mind and soul, because of the relatively poor records that presently exist. What I do know beyond any doubt however is that all those killings have denied me the joy, the happiness, the hugs, of the kisses most grandkids, and great-grandkids receive from their loving great-grandparents and grandparents. My entire life has been affected by the void created before I even existed.

The brutality, the inhumane treatment of the detainees, the suffering, the pain, and ultimately the total desperation so many people found themselves in, as administered by the German nazis, the Hungarian and Romanian fascists, Franco's brutes in Spain, Mussolini's butchers, the Japanese killers/harakiri artists. The list seems unending, one more brutal than the other, all of it was certainly conveyed quite clearly, no doubt.

It seems that they were in competition with one another, as to who won the trophy, the award. When thinking about their dehumanizing ways, their sickening methods of torturing and killing, I could not help but think that they were out to impress one another, as to whom can cause more pain, so that they could look super impressive to the others. My conviction is this, for as

many blood thirsty sickos that existed in history, just about everywhere on this planet, of all of them, these sub-humans had to be at the very top. It seems as if all these war-mongering countries, but especially Germany, Italy, Japan, Hungary, and really a slew of others, managed to collect together every psycho, schizophrenic, paranoid, and mentally disturbed sickos, all the bad apples they could find. You get the idea - all to implement their crazy plans. If you think about it, they actually managed to do a very good job at it, as far as I can tell. They got pretty close to achieving their goals. I for one, totally credit God and to some degree a lot of very courageous people for saving the world from an end to civilization.



Quite frankly, I had a very hard time deciding what photos from the camps were, let's say it this way, OK to include and which were not OK. I was fully aware from the very beginning that this moment eventually would come, and unfortunately, there was no way to get around it - the only thing that I could rely upon in this situation was human decency. I chose the photo above produced by BBC News, for several reasons. Other than just being able to look at it, as they surely had to face death, misery, and the like, this particular photo fully provides me with a measure of the miserable human condition. These folks obviously in fairly good physical condition, probably in an earlier camp period, are forced to play their instruments on their way to some awful location, where their suffering would start or continue, whatever the case may have been. I have seen photos earlier where naked kids and adults had to dance around, to entertain the brutes, some of those sub-humans can be seen in the background of this photo. You know, as much as that situation requires

exposure, I just could not bring myself to do it in many cases. As I said, human decency stopped me from doing it. Looking at many of the photos, regardless at which camp or ghetto, anything that had to do with these painfully brutal circumstances, I tried to use my heart, my mind, and my soul, as much as possible, and just set a limit as to what a normal, decent human being could and should absorb.



I also decided not to take too many photos of the camps/ghetto part of this chapter, or any other, for the reasons described above. For a good measure, I will include just one more above.

As for my folks, those alive during that period of WW II, I wonder sometimes how their life might have been, say if Hitler and his cohorts had not succeeded in taking the political and economical power in prewar Germany,

Another question that torments me - Living in such a remote area of Europe, far away from Germany, in the ways my ancestors have lived forever, were they even aware of what was going on in the world, and if they did, were they able to digest the sickness that was coming their way like a tsunami?

We know how most of the civilized world was responding to the Nazi plague, but they,

how could have even believed that they were in imminent danger, that their lives have been discounted to nothing more than let's say, that of an ant?

They were totally faithful in the fact that God was going to save them. Of course, God has his way to value human life. I believe that the most likely answer to such a question would be that God's need of them in heaven must have been substantially greater than here on this Earth! I totally and unquestionably believe that, because God loved, loves, and always will love his CHOSEN people! And I just thank HIM for that!

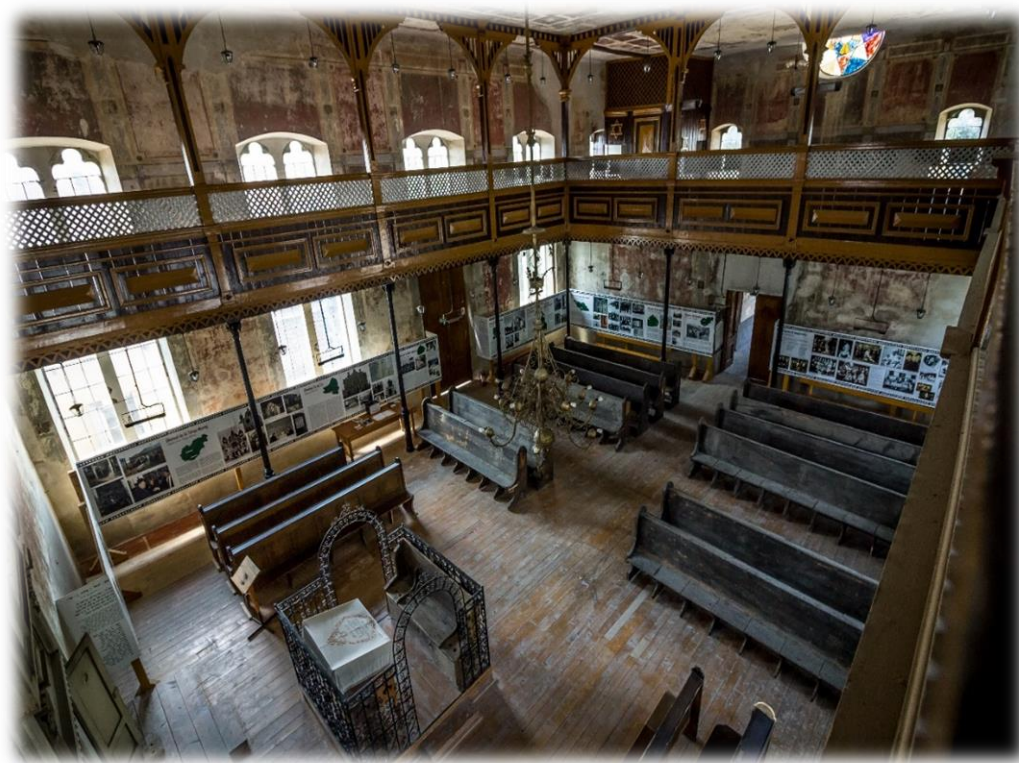
Of course, there were Jewish people in the world, even in the area where my ancestors were living, who knew better than to remain in Romania, or Europe for that matter. I just wish that my folks could have understood them, follow their ways, and go away from those damned lands. It didn't happen, and that has more or less destroyed a great majority of my family. Today, I am here to stand up for their lives and help humanity to change its ways, as it seems that a lot remains to be learned from those dark experiences. It's an obligation, a responsibility for folks like myself, to speak up, not to stay silent.

As the Jewish population numbers drastically dwindled, maybe anti-semitism decreased somewhat, simply because of the lack of whom hate was to be addressed. This process of annihilation, elimination, or disintegration eventually led to the non-Jewish community realizing that something of value was being lost, maybe forever. In Hungary and Romania, an effort was and is exerted to bring back, if nothing else, at least the idea that Jews lived in these lands, and that they provided something useful for the society. During my later visits to both Hungary and Romania, I had the pleasant surprise of being able to visit old synagogues, some converted into museums. It must be recognized that something of that nature is a long way from the antisemitic events experienced earlier in one's life.

It would be almost unfair to those righteous non-Jewish folks not to be included in here, such a classy occurrence and that is exactly what will be done. For instance, the Northern Transylvania Holocaust Memorial Museum dedicated in 2005, located in Șimleul-Silvaniei, Sălaj County, Romania - situated some 20 miles west of my hometown of Zalau - shows how a farm society changed from the days of rampant antisemitism. The museum is operated and maintained by the Jewish Architectural Heritage Foundation of New York and Asociația

Memorlaiă Hebraică Nușfalău - a Romanian non-governmental organization - with the support of the Claims Conference and Elie Wiesel National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania, among other philanthropic and pedagogical partners. Elie Wiesel himself was born in Sighet, a city not very far away from the museum.

History of the Jews in Hungary, and Northern Transylvania belonged to Hungary in the days preceding and during the Holocaust. The old synagogue of Șimleul- Silvaniei (Szilágysomlyó), which are the Romanian and Hungarian versions of the town's name, and where the present museum is situated, was erected as a synagogue in 1876. During the height of its use, the synagogue was used for worship and religious ceremonies by Jewish families from the town of Șimleul- Silvaniei, as well as some surrounding villages.



Above is a photo of the interior of the old Simleul-Silvaniei synagogue, converted today into the Northwestern Transylvania Museum of the Holocaust.

Through the inspiration of Jewish folks caring for its survival, who became interested in the abandoned synagogue's restoration during a visit to the location, sparked the interest of other American Jewish folks, some related to Holocaust survivors, and natives related to the area. Together, they launched a vigorous campaign driving the restoration project. Their efforts

contributed to raising funds to complete construction, establishing educational criteria, and supporting pedagogical training for the regional school systems. The Museum now functions as an educational hub and essential resource for Holocaust Education in the region.

Guided tours tailored to students are offered daily by other students, a project started by local students. The museum centerpiece is the synagogue. What an amazing and worthwhile effort! My thanks go out to the students of Simleul-Silvaniei for being so mature and such a worthwhile voice for the silenced.

This particular museum has an unbelievable meaning to me because being so close to my grandparents' and parents home towns, it is very likely that they were shipped to the camps from this or a nearby village. Later chapters deal with that.

### **Holocaust inches closer to my old hometown**

In May/June 1944, when the town was part of Hungary, as a consequence of the territorial agreement known as the Second Vienna Award, the area's Jewish population was forced out of their homes into the brutal Cehei ghetto and from there packed into cattle train cars and transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Although factually it cannot be proven from the information available, there is no doubt in my mind that very likely those members of my family who survived the killing done by the Hortist Hungarian fascist butchers, many have not survived the Holocaust in the end.

I know for a fact that my dad's younger brother, Joseph, and I know this from my dad's storytelling, my uncle Joseph had not. He may have been all of maybe 20-22 years old, my dad was almost 25 at the time.

My uncle Joseph was shot dead in front of their home in Cehul-Silvaniei. Over 160,000 Jews from the region perished. That number certainly contains those who were not fortunate enough to escape Hitler's ovens. Of those few remaining Jews who survived the Holocaust or were born after the Holocaust and remained in Romania, (my parents, my brother and I included), under the Paris Peace Treaties of 1947 Romania regained Northern Transylvania.

The last of Jewish families immigrated from the region during the 70's, while the country was still under Communist rule. That group included us.



The loss of its congregations left the synagogues to fate, decaying silently over time. That was very much the fate of our synagogue in Zalău. From a Jewish standpoint, Zalău had a lesser concentration of Jewish population.



There are a couple of photos of our old synagogue from my hometown of Zalău. It so happens, that the first photo contains a part of the front of our home, our first one there a partial

view of the building at the front right. Also telling - at the right top, writing in Hungarian in red, well wishes expressed, together with an explanation that we are looking at an “Israeli Church” - an interesting name! My thanks go out, probably posthumously, to the person(s) who took the photo, that allowed me to convey it to you, my readers. A second, very old photo of Zalau’s synagogue is also shown just above. This photo must be well in excess of 75 years old, the details are very poor. However, at the very right side of the photo, at its top, there is an arrow inside of a small red circle, which points towards the top of the synagogue building. Two domes can be easily seen at the top of the tower. The two domes are fully visible in photo on the previous page.

My old hometown had a gorgeous central park. In its middle, is a very beautiful sculpture of Baron Wesselenyi, a well respected local nobleman. Normally he would have never had his sculpture there, except that the local government made an exception because he was a righteous man, helping the needy. His sculpture’s photo is shown below.



### **First Few Years Immediately Before and After The Holocaust And WW II** **Holocaust Education**

Communist official history in Romania taught that Germans were the sole perpetrators of the Holocaust, thereby ignoring the role of the Romanian government in the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Jews and the many thousand killings of Jews and Romani - the official

name for the Romanian gypsies - from the historical regions of Basarabia, northern Bucovina, and Transnistria Romanian regions separate from Transylvania.

### **Efforts To Teach Non-Jews About The Evil Of Antisemitism**

Following 15 years of setbacks, in 2004, after the presentation of the Wiesel International Commission's report to the President of Romania, the country finally acknowledged in an official position the full dimensions of the Romanian Holocaust. Romanian authorities have begun efforts to educate the public about the Holocaust, it also banned pro-Nazi propaganda and the cult of war criminals. In 2005, the newly elected Romanian government at the time made a firm commitment to implement the Wiesel Holocaust Commission's recommendations on educating Romanians about the Holocaust and fighting racism in society. Somewhere, many dead Jews including my own parents and others in my family, must have felt some joy in that the country of their earlier lives finally attempted something humanly decent (refreshing!).

Thus, the Romanian authorities have taken decisive steps towards the implementation of a unitary national curriculum concerning Holocaust education. Although Holocaust education was introduced as a mandatory topic in pre-university curricula as of 1998, for a long time history textbooks have included little divergent and often inaccurate information on the subject. Holocaust education has been mandatory in Romanian schools, covering 2–4 hours of material in the context of World War II. In 2004, Holocaust history also became an optional course. According to a study, the three main obstacles to Holocaust education facing the Ministry of Education and Research of Romania were: lack of information on the topic, a lack of diversity of information, and too few teachers trained to teach the topic. Pretty discouraging, what can I say? Likely a universal, international problem.

### **Old Synagogues Turned Into Amazing Antisemitism And Holocaust Education Museums**

This shift in policy paved the way for the Northern Transylvania Holocaust Memorial Museum to exercise its commitment to its educational program. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the first-ever Holocaust Education Olympiad was hosted at the Museum. In the Spring of 2008, the Museum inaugurated the Șimleul-Silvaniei Multicultural Holocaust Education

and Research Center; used to host lectures and seminars on the subject, with programs geared to students, teachers, and academics. The teacher program encourages and helps teachers to sensitively incorporate the subject of the Holocaust into their curriculum, a discipline sorely lacking in Romania's school system.

Let's just say that antisemitism is very much on the rise in our world today, and all signs indicate that things are getting worse in that regard. Basically, day by day, through their actions, this organization could and should become the shining light that will save the rest of Romania, and more importantly, Western Europe, an area where antisemitism has found a very fertile ground in more recent times and continues to explode. Well, not that the rest of the World is faring much better against the evil of antisemitism, and for that matter, any race-based hate.

During one of my visits to Europe, fondly enough, I came across a similar situation, this time in North Eastern Hungary. Very good friends from my childhood, ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania, and non-Jews, have found a home near the town I would like to talk about. The name of the town in Hungarian is Kisvarda. This town, many years ago used to be a very well wishing place for Jews, where they were thriving in amazing ways. Hungary, in the pre-WW II years, used to have a loving relationship with the Jewish population, until Hitler came to power in Germany, and with it, brought encouragement to the Hungarian fascists and antisemites, to go after the Jews. Which they did with incredible gusto. Selecting Kisvarda as an example is totally by choice, because many towns in Northeastern Hungary, or really anywhere else as well, could easily fit the mold for Jewish extermination during the Holocaust. The choice was made because of our non-Jewish friends living in the area.



On the previous page, one can see a beautiful photo of Kisvarda's synagogue/museum building. The ghettoization of the Jews in Kisvarda began on April 8, 1944, with the transportation of the first group from the countryside. The Jews of Kisvarda proper who lived outside the ghetto were moved into it between April 15 and April 30. A total of 7,000 Jews were squeezed into the small ghetto.

## **A Few Words About The Jewish Condition In My Romanian Hometown And Vicinity**

In Cehul-Silvaniei, my birthplace and my hometown Zalau, Jewish life in the area prior to and during the Holocaust Years, intermingled. The two are very close to each other physically. Will start with my birthplace, Cehul-Silvaniei, like most of the small villages and towns in the the area, the entire Northwestern Transylvania really, it had a flourishing Jewish life, until the Hungarian fascists and the German Nazis disrupted their peaceful, quiet lives. Then systematically murdered most of the Jews there, far away from their homeland. One can easily understand and even feel their despair when facing this monstrous evil. But God would not let them to wipe out our seed, nor will HE allow that to ever happen. Evil is and will always be in this world, but God is there to protect us!

To ease myself into the next subject, even repeating myself somewhat, Cehul-Silvaniei is a town in Salaj County, Romania. History of the town - The first written mention of the town dates back to 1319, and that by any standard, is a very long time ago. In 1405, the town was mentioned under the name Chehy. The Hungarian name of the city referred to a stand of Czech origin. The town was until 1918 part of the Kingdom of Hungary and specifically of the Principality of Transylvania. After the dissolution of the principality of Transylvania in 1867 and its direct integration into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the city was attached to Szilágy County in 1876. In 1918, during the disintegration of the empire at the end of World War I, the city became part of the Kingdom of Romania.

From 1940 to 1944 it was annexed by Hungary as a result of the Second Vienna Award. This act had a tremendous negative effect on the lives of the Jewish communities in Northern Transylvania. In May 1944, its Jewish community was exterminated by the Nazis during several deportations to Auschwitz. Both my parents were part of the deportation to Auschwitz, as were most of my family members. However, they were also part of those "lucky" enough to make it eventually back home.

Thank God, it made it possible for me to tell their, and many others' disastrous stories.

As it were, at the end of World War II, the city was incorporated into Romania again. The town has long been an agricultural center. In 1968, during the country's administrative reorganization, it acquired city status and then industrialization took place (textiles, furniture).

During one of my visits to Romania after my immigration in 1973, my wife Glenda and I had the opportunity to visit Cehul-Silvaniei, and my experiences there at that time have caused me to delve deeply into who I was as a Jew, descendent of many generations of my people living there previously. Talking at random to folks there, non-Jews obviously, brought back feelings that are hard to describe. Hearing stories about my folks on my father's side made me feel very happy, thankful, and extremely proud. There were older folks there who personally knew my parental grandparents, my dad, and his immediate family, many friends, and common acquaintances. You need to be in a similar position to fully grasp the meaning of such events. Those folks made me feel very proud to be a Jew. Most of the experiences in my past Romanian life were substantially different, those of profound antisemitism towards me, and everything Jewish I represented to them. That feeling of being hated for no known reason, to me, was so prevalent, and towards most Jews, especially to those known as being Jews.

It is very important to consider here what antisemitism really is, and the planning of this book included as many details about the evil of antisemitism as it was possible, all sorts of racial discrimination or any other hate driven behavior, without exception. All efforts must be directed at eliminating them from human existence!

Zalău is the seat of Sălaj County, Romania. In 2021, its estimated population was 52,359. During my lifetime in Romania, as far as I know, its population never exceeded 15,000. Its history - it goes back to ancient times, way before the Roman Empire times. Some 5000 years ago was part of a territory named Dacia, which was part of the larger territory known as Tracia, which encompassed large areas of the Balkan Peninsula. Zalău is situated in an area that was inhabited by Dacians, not far away from the historical landmark of Porolissum, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Zalău was at a crossing point between Central Europe and Transylvania, along the so-called "salt trail".

In 1850, it was mentioned that Zalău had 415 Jews, out of a total population of around 4,300. It is worth mentioning here to attest to the age of the city that a Reformed Church was built there in 1246. The present one is one of the city's oldest buildings and one of the largest in Eastern Europe.

Totally out of sequence here, the famous Genghis Khan's third son Ogedei presumably made it to the area known as Zalau these days. In historical documents, it is mentioned that Ogedei made it as far as Eastern Europe and Hungary. Being that my old areas in Romania belonged to the Hungarians one way or another for 1000 years, it stands to reason that the Mongols made it to my old town, either incorporated or not. Interesting again from a historical standpoint!

The Jewish life in Zalau during the years following WW II was very similar to other towns in Northwestern Romania. Each with a synagogue, with a following larger or smaller, depending on the size of the Jewish population in the respective town. Zalau didn't have a particularly large Jewish population at the time. As the years passed, that following continuously decreased as more and more Jews left for Israel, the US, and other Western democracies. Or just other freer countries in the world.



As the process continued, and something happened with the rabbis, eventually it came to the point that services were not possible, primarily due to a lack of membership and participation. At some point, maybe less than five Jewish men were living in Zalau. not enough for a Minyan, the quorum of ten men required by Jewish faith and tradition for accepted prayers to God. The photo of a Minyan held at the Western Wall in Jerusalem is shown above.

With the building itself subject to disrepair and lots of vandals further destroying the facility, my dad and the other men were asked if they had a problem with demolishing the building,

and the decision was made to go ahead with the demolition. At that point, the building was nothing more than a ruin, really an eyesore.

Jewish life, as a result, totally stopped in Zalau. Not many were too sad about that. The old Jewish cemetery still existed at the time of my last visit there, circa 2018. The cemetery, in total disrepair, will likely disappear at some point in the future, unless the government, the churches, etc. take steps to stop the loss of an old patrimony of Zalau. It would be a shame .... Let me say as clearly as I can ... During several visits to my old country, I witnessed an effort to save Jewish sites, facilities, basically other Jewish items of value. A photo of the Zalau Cemetery was included in Chapter 2.

### **Cehei Ghetto - A Nightmarish Place, Of My Family's Demise**

#### **A Few Words About The Cehei Ghetto.**

This fascist/nazi post was likely the one that housed my family members, my parents included, prior to their deportation to Auschwitz. Its history was never recounted by my parents, but its closeness to my ancestor's homes makes it almost sure that they were there, and from there, shipped in cattle trains to their demise. Below, a photo of children in the Cehei camp, some real tiny ones. An old abandoned factory there served as their barrack.



The Cehei Ghetto, also known as the Șimleul-Silvaniei Ghetto, was one of the many Nazi-era ghettos for European Jews during World War II. It was located outside of the town of Simleul-Silvaniei, in a nearby village named Cehei, County of Salaj, Kingdom of Hungary (Romanian: Cehei, today part of Șimleu Silvaniei, Sălaj County, Romania). The territory became part of Hungary again in 1949 as part of Northern Transylvania. It was so until the end of World War II. It was extremely active in the spring of 1944. That is exactly where my parents were detained, and then shipped to Auschwitz.

As the brick shelters could not accommodate everyone, many ghetto residents had to live outside. Security was provided by a special gendarmerie unit from Budapest, commanded by one Krasznai, a man noted for his cruelty. He practiced constant humiliation of the Jews; in one incident, he led them to the ghetto fence, where they excreted onto a field. He ordered their picture taken, blowing it up and placing it in a shop window in town, with the legend, "this is the lesson of the "yids (yiddish name for a Jew) in the Cehei Ghetto". At other times, Jews would be forced up a hill, some of them savagely beaten in order to obtain information about where their valuables were hidden. Please note - it did not take Hitler's brutes to kill my folks, these savage Hungarians did a pretty good job by themselves. One thing of major importance - what did the non-Jewish inhabitants of the town do about these murders? Not to be mean, my very first instinct would be - probably very little if anything! How sad! One cannot help but wonder - what do we do today about very similar events throughout this very sick world?

Another interesting piece of information here - Romania's 1930 census found some 14,000 Jews living in Sălaj County, but this number had fallen to 8,000 by 1944. In 1942 and 1943, the county's male Jews aged 16 to 60 were sent to perform forced labor on the Eastern Front, on the Ukrainian border, accounting for the fall in population. Thus, those sent to the ghetto were women, children, the elderly, and the sick. Just look at the photo on the previous page, you can easily see it. The decision to set it up was taken at a conference held in Satu Mare, a larger city at the very Northwestern border of present Romania, then Hungary. On April 26, attended by all top local government officials and police forces, who fully cooperated with the program of erecting the ghetto, the decision was finalized. Following the officials' return from the conference, discussions took place in the prefect's office among these local officials regarding the ghetto's physical location.

In Șimleu Silvaniei, the Jews were rounded up; the same in Zalău, and so in the rest of the county, all with known names. Just wondering now and here, what sort of punishment was bestowed on these degenerates, following their genocide activities, after the war ended. There were numerous other nearby communities affected in a similar form. At its peak, there were nearly 8,500 inhabitants, including Jews from the nearby districts at the Cheri Ghetto. Again, my family and my parents are all part of the number.

Conditions in the ghetto were such as to keep inhabitants barely alive during the three to four weeks they were there. Due to physical torture, a n d lack of food and water, the Jews of the County of Sălaj reached Auschwitz concentration camp in particularly poor shape, so that an unusually high percentage were selected for the gas chambers immediately upon arrival. I am writing about my folks here, how could I or should I feel right now about it? The deportations from Cehei took place in three transports: May 31 (3,106), June 3 (3,161), and June 6 (1,584), with a total of 7,851 Jews sent to Auschwitz. Some 1,200 Jews survived the Holocaust (lucky me, my parents did, so I can write about it)! But later immigrated from Romania, so that by the 2000s, under fifty Jews remained in the county! Fifty Jews in a county of hundreds of thousands of folks? Wouldn't you say that the Hungarian fascists and German nazis did a pretty good job of extermination? But you know, God is our corner, and HE did a much better job of keeping us alive!

### **Telling Character Traits of Many, If Not All Jews Of The Holocaust Years**

A very telling comparison must be made here, because it, will drive home a very important point. Not only because it came from my parents, but of course, I am very proud of it just because! In the middle of tremendous antisemitism directed towards my brother, Jewish friends of ours, and others of Jewish heritage, of my generation, and after us complaining to them, guess what my parents' advice was? Son, you treat everyone with respect, dignity, kindness. Those who do the same to you, deserve those accolades. The antisemites, those unkind, best for you to walk away, stay safely away from them!

Another thing that stands out in my mind - my parents always taught us not to hate Hungarians, and Germans, even after all the harm they caused us. Or anyone for that matter. It certainly seems that would be the right thing to do until one realizes that after all the anguish

caused to us by some of them, it's not so easy to comply. But since I am a Messianic Christian now, Jesus expects me to forgive and forget. Again, not so easy to do, right? Imagine forgiving Hitler, the nazis, Hungarian and Romanian fascists, that is what my faith is expecting of me now, not to mention Jesus himself! Not easy at all!

From my parents' recounting, my mom spent her entire time at Auschwitz, while my pop was a lot more "traveled". According to his story and also based on records we (my Glenda and I) came across at Yad Vashem (Israeli/Jerusalem) Holocaust Museum records, he was at four of five concentration camps. My memory brings back that he was at several concentration camps, not sure in which particular order. The last I heard from him about this issue was about 50-60 years ago, unfortunately, my memory fades rather rapidly. On the occasion of my visit to Yad Vashem about seven years ago, I believe we found a record that he was at five concentration camps. Trying to access the documents at this time, and I have a problem locating those documents, now it becomes impossible to exactly enumerate those camps.

Here is the list of camps that I hopefully remember correctly. For sure he was at Auschwitz, In what particular order I do not remember. The other locations, in no particular order again: are Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, and Flossenburg. The last one, my memory is very vague about it. Why he was taken to all these camps was never made clear to me.

As one might expect or may actually know, life in the German concentration camps was atrocious. And of course, as time passed over that approximately one year stay that my parents and many others experienced, it came to be a major challenge to survive. Not quite sure what my dad's living conditions were there in very much detail, what I do know is that at the time the American forces managed to get to the camp, basically the detainees were living in thin air. There was not very much interest in keeping them alive, actually the opposite. But as much as they would have liked to exterminate them all, they just simply did not have the necessary time and means to complete their mission. How the detainees managed to survive had to do mostly with their desire to survive, then anything else.

In my dad's particular case, I believe that liberation day came sometime in May 1945. My dad told me the story of how a black American soldier came into his barrack, among many other soldiers, lifted my dad from the wooden racks they were laying on, to take him outside. My dad

at that point was less than 26 years old. He might have weighed maybe 100 pounds, maybe less. He told me the story of how he was very seriously ill with typhoid fever. He hadn't eaten in who knows how long, so when the American soldier fed him with the only food that he had (from a can of heavy beans and meat), that almost killed my pops.





My mom, the oldest at age 20 of six girls, sister, and cousins, had to show extreme faith and strength of character for her and the girls to survive. She had to in the last days of the camps, go at the risk of her life, to steal food from the Germans' food storages. It is difficult to figure out how one would endanger life in such a manner, but then desperation, hunger, and being at the edge of one's will to live, can drive someone to pass that edge.

At that point, my parents, separately, made the decision to return to their homeland, details of which I do not possess. However, they managed probably against tremendous odds to make it back home. They must have had an amazing desire to make it back. I can only imagine what it must have felt like to them to go back to a place where they were despised, and unwanted, where a large part of what they knew as family and home was wiped out, never to return again. I must state doubtlessly, that God had to be behind them all the way!

I honestly believe, that by now, because of this story, many of you may feel very sick and sad. They made it back, and they married. I have no idea how they met, but about a year or so later, I was born. Of course, allow me to tell you about their life story. From a simple human standpoint, it must be a special story of human willpower to survive.

## **About Auschwitz And Other German Concentration Camps**

Auschwitz concentration camp was a complex of over forty concentration and extermination camps operated by Nazi Germany. It was located in the occupied Poland, in a portion annexed into Germany in 1939 during World War II and the Holocaust. It consisted of several sites, concentration and extermination camps, with labor camps for various major German industrial conglomerates and dozens of subcamps. The camps became a major site of the Nazis' Final Solution to the Jewish "problem".

After invading Poland in September 1939, SS converted Auschwitz, and its army barracks, into a prisoner-of-war camp. Initially, the transport of political detainees consisted solely of Poles. In May 1940, German criminals brought to the camp as functionaries established the camp's reputation for sadism. Prisoners were beaten, tortured, and executed for the most trivial of reasons. The first gassings— of Soviet and Polish prisoners took place there around August 1941.

Construction of other Auschwitz barracks began the following month, and from 1942 until late 1944 freight trains delivered Jews from all over German-occupied Europe. Including my own parents, to its gas chambers. Of the 1.3 million people sent to Auschwitz, 1.1 million were murdered. My parents were part of the "lucky" 200,000 or so who survived. Those not gassed were murdered via starvation, exhaustion, disease, individual executions, or beatings. Others were killed during medical experiments.

As the Soviet Red Army approached Auschwitz in January 1945, toward the end of the war, the SS sent most of the camp's population westward, on a death march to camps inside Germany and Austria.

Although best known as the primary exterminating camp, it was by no means the only one, or the only dehumanizing one. The German nazis were experts at developing the most inhumane exterminating facilities known to man.

Generally speaking, a concentration camp was a place where people were concentrated and imprisoned without trial. Inmates were usually exploited for their labor and kept under harsh conditions, though this was not always the case. In Nazi Germany after 1933, and across Nazi

controlled Europe between 1938 and 1945, concentration camps became a major way in which the Nazis imposed their control. The aim of the Nazi concentration camps was to contain prisoners in one place.

The administration of the camps had a distinct disregard for inmates' lives and health, and as a result, tens of thousands of people perished within the camps. The aim of the Nazi extermination camps was to murder and annihilate all races deemed 'degenerate', primarily Jews but also gypsies.

The first concentration camps in Germany were set up as detention centers for so-called 'enemies of the state'. After March 1938, when Germany annexed Austria in an event known as Anschluss, thousands of German and Austrian Jews were arrested and detained in Dachau, Buchenwald, and other concentration camps.

In April 1945, the American Third Army liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp, near Weimar, Germany, a camp that will be judged second only to Auschwitz in the horrors it imposed on its prisoners. That was the camp that very likely held my father as part of its detainee population. As American forces closed in on the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald, Gestapo headquarters at Weimar telephoned the camp administration to announce that it was sending explosives to blow up any evidence of the camp, including its inmates. What the Gestapo did not know was that the camp administrators had already fled in fear of the Allies. A prisoner answered the phone and informed headquarters that explosives would not be needed, as the camp had already been blown up, which, of course, was not true.

The camp held thousands of prisoners, mostly enslaved laborers. There were no gas chambers, but hundreds, sometimes thousands, died monthly from disease, malnutrition, beatings, and executions. Doctors performed medical experiments on inmates, testing the effects of viral infections and vaccines. A couple of photos from Auschwitz are included in chapter.

Every time the issue of Auschwitz comes up, I can't help thinking about the pleasure of listening to Beethoven's music, reading Heine's poetry, Einstein's General Relativity Theory (although he was Jewish - nobody is perfect, as they say!), Nietzsche's Philosophical Theories, Marlene Dietrich's amazing artistry, and the like, originating from a place turned so evil by Hitler

and the rest of them. Even though Hitler himself was actually an Austrian import.

## **MUST HAVE BEEN ONE VERY TELLING WORD** **TO NAZIS AND FASCISTS**

### **JEW**



### **LIKE SAYING - DO NOT TOUCH, POISONOUS**

As I try to understand how the soul of another human being (and here in this notion, probably lies my answer) - were these ... I will not call them animals, because I have way too much respect for those, they are part of HIS Creation .... But those “monsters” and those that take pride in them today, do they have a soul?

Starting in the 1990s, some scholars have advanced the concept of the new antisemitism, coming simultaneously from the left, the right, radical Islam, and many other such questionable sources. All in some exotic and characteristic manners of their own tended and still do, to focus

on opposition to the creation of a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel, and they argue that the language of anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel, antisemitism in general, are all acceptable to constructively criticize Jews and Israel more broadly. In this view, the proponents of the new concept believe that criticisms of Israel and Zionism are wrongly attributed to antisemitism. But antisemites throughout history have always been very skilled at hiding their true feelings.

Jewish scholars state that anti-Zionism in itself represents a form of discrimination against Jews, in that it singles out Jewish national aspirations as illegitimate.

On the other hand, some antisemites state that in some ways, Zionism aids racist endeavors against others. And that if it (antisemitism) was real, it would result in the death of millions of Jews. It is asserted that the new antisemitism deploys traditional antisemitic motifs, including older ones such as the blood libel.

Critics of these latter concepts view them as trivializing the meaning of antisemitism, and as exploiting antisemitism, in order to silence debate and to deflect attention from legitimate support for the State of Israel.

# CHAPTER 4

## BORN IN AND GROWING UP IN A SOCIALIST/ COMMUNIST ROMANIA

### Early Years In My Romanian Home

My parents, like the rest of those “lucky’ Jewish folks who made it back from the Nazi concentration camps returned to their homes. I Never had a chance to find out under what circumstances, but just considering the distance between either Poland and Romania, or Germany and Romania, totally starved, on the borderline of extinction, I always marveled at their perseverance just to make it back. In itself, I was amazed about their fortitude, their unbelievable moral and physical strength. To say that I was and always will be grateful to them for becoming my parents, is really the least I could do!

Of course, for years they had to struggle just to make it. How they met back in the old country, how they managed to survive devoid of family, means of sustenance, with their belongings and properties either confiscated, stolen or looted, it must have been a tremendous challenge to just to recuperate and then manage to make ends meet.

Something very important here - Jews back in my old country were always criticized and despised for being communists in the early socialist/communist years of Romania. If one was Jewish in those early years after the Holocaust Romania, the group one belonged to, was very clearly defined. As a Jew you were either a communist, or you were a very religious Jew. The first group included my parents, which they did for several very strong reasons.

First and foremost, one must consider that many of them spent extensive time in the German camps, not long before becoming communist party members. While there, simple logic tells you that due to the hardships those concentration and extermination camps were all about, many of them eventually became communists after liberation. Many of them, like my father, who upon deportation were for all practical purposes Orthodox Jews, very much in God’s grace. But who, as things got beyond hope, must have wondered as any normal humans would have, if the Lord forgot them. It only seems natural to believe that many of them turned their backs on God, even greatly swinging to the other side. That many of them became communists is easy to understand under those circumstances.

Others were not lined up with God even before, so for those secular Jews swinging to the communist side was not a major conflict. This way, a lot of the communist leadership became Jewish. Any non-Jews, aware of the Jewish involvement with communism, just developed an even stronger antisemitic feelings, in many cases.

Then there was the group of Jewish religious faithful, just like my dad and mom once were, honestly believing in the idea of communism, its legality. Because they believed and hoped that the life of the masses would get better, and all the have-nots would actually benefit from the socialist/communist ideals. In the beginning, when the communists started to nationalize private resources, taking away large private lands from land barons, taking over smaller or larger businesses from average small and also many large owners, confiscating all other private resources, those were given to many of the have-nots, through collectivization. Of course, this had a positive immediate result for the communists in different ways.

With tremendous resources taken away this way, they managed to give to the masses of have-nots a lot more than what they ever received in the prior economic system. That is how in the beginning, medical assistance, free education, food, etc. were given away. Of course, this worked in the beginning until resources started to dwindle and lack of incentives kicked in. But once that happened, and it did not take very long, things started to deteriorate very quickly. Which is exactly what happens in all socialist societies. The USSR was also interested in helping the communist idea as something enlightening and enriching. But again, the failure of the socialist economic and political system was destined for sure failure, as it always does.

Being born only a couple of years after WW II, and then growing up in Romania during a time when surviving from day to day was a constant challenge for most of the Romanians, only to survive was always the main concern. If my memory serves me well - and that was always a major challenge for me since I was not blessed with a great memory - I can remember back to about the age of five. My vivid memory contains visions of us having daily struggles for my parents to procure basic foods, and minimum necessities for survival. In the very beginning of socialism, in it's first few years after the war and primarily after 1948, the year the socialists and communists gained total political and economic power, things were let's say OK. Minimal, but OK.

When Stalin passed away in 1953, who was the main reason for Romania ending up a socialist country, the entire country observed a full national funeral week, I believe. Of course, Romania

embarked on a full fight for implementing socialism and communism. There was a definite feeling of a strong fear of what would happen to Romania, now that “our father Stalin” was dead. How sick!

Well, nothing really happened that was unexpected. Things got even worse, if that was possible. They managed somehow to do just that!

At a very early age, I may have been around six, or maybe seven years old, I vividly remember those moments, like they happened yesterday. That was 70 years ago! Consider the impact of such sickening events on a young kid like I was.

Romania did not disappear, those American Imperialists, those war mongers from Western Europe did not come to bomb us, to destroy us, but our socialist and communist leaders were advertising exactly that. We survived, but that was a very miserable life to live. And that got worse and worse with every passing day, I have no idea how that could actually be. How much worse could it get?

Since they could not, or would not provide a decent way of life for the country, the socialist government of Romania was from the very beginning concentrating on harassing and setting the various ethnicities against each other. Doing that, and then benefitting from the folks fighting each other, served the government well in getting away with a totally awful political and economic performance. Every time I made it back to my old home, I could not help but be part of the harassment that Gypsies, also a dwindling group, were subjected to by both Romanian and Hungarian ethnicities. One thing you surely did not want to be in Romania - a Gypsy! Or a Jew, for that matter!

As always, pushing antisemitism was the favorite activity of the government, because it was a proven method of having the population busy with anything but asking why there is no food, or housing. Then of course, a major job in getting antisemitism to the forefront of life was served by churches, no less. A favorite activity of theirs! The 2,000 years of Jewish/Christian mistrust, dislikes, and hate would keep the population at bay from asking the government to perform. Of course, some Jewish mistrust, stubbornness, and financial pettiness were not helpful either.

From my memory I can recall two distinct, major periods of existence of the socialist/communist era in the history of Romania. The first started around 1948, and the second began with the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and the transfer of power to Nicolae Ceausescu, the quintessential total dictator of Romania. From around 1965 until his killing, together with his wife

Elena in 1989, this man was a total dictator, like no one else. As I remember, even though in the beginning, during some of the ruling years under Gheorghiu-Dej, even though they were under the Stalin's iron-hands approach in the beginning, somehow our lives were a bit better, more humane. Once Ceausescu took power, everything changed for the much worse.

Under Ceausescu, through his iron-hand policies of bringing Romania closer to the Western European economic standards, he demanded unbelievable sacrifices and commitments from the Romanian people, at the expense of living in extreme poverty. That was used to put together tens of billions of dollars, needed to pay off debts to France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Austria and other advanced European and world countries, which were way beyond the ability of Romanians to pay back. For the hard currency that was used to build factories, hospitals, buildings, etc. Romanians had to live miserable lives under the dictator. With minimal electricity, heating, or just basic food necessities, and the like. Romanians have a history of putting up with misery and neglect for long periods throughout their history.



But what they had to go through under Ceausescu's dictatorship defied logic. Above is a typical, old photo of a session of the Romanian Communist Party under the auspices of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, the uncontested godly figure in Romania for about 25 years. A few ideas about this miserable stooge.

My being born in Romania and the warm feelings towards my decent Romanian countrymen oblige me to cover a number of things about this disgusting dictator. For me, he was every bit as bad as Hitler. Maybe he did not have the means that Hitler had behind him, but had he had that ability, there is no doubt in my mind that he would have caused a lot more pain to the Romanian people. As it was, he harmed that country in incredible ways. Let's just say, he was shot dead together with his wife, when things got so bad in Romania, that nobody wanted him around anymore, and they were willing to sacrifice themselves for that goal.

Because, even the soldiers who took care of their elimination were risking their lives in a very serious manner, to do that.

Through his evil ways, he was known quite widely as a terrible leader, who took pleasure in mistreating his people in unbelievable ways. Personally, I am a loving person, I love people. I hate to see blood, mine or others'. I would have had zero problems shooting this crazy man and his sub-human wife. The suffering was just too much! God gifts you with a life, and then someone like this man renders it unlivable, useless.

Now, allow me to present a brief picture of this man. He was born into an extremely poor family, in Oltenia, which was and probably still is one of the poorest regions of Romania. Coming from this very poor family, to me, that is the best part of the man, believe it or not. There were plenty of those in that poor country, meaning poor places and folks.

He completed four elementary school grades. That was his total formal education. Much later, as part of the Romanian Communist Party leadership he arranged in some dirty way to obtain a GHD (General High School Diploma), college education, and a Master of Science (MS) in Economics, which only God knows through what cheating methods were obtained.

This man was basically a total brute. And he was the man responsible for destroying the lives of most Romanians, mine included. On next page there is a photo of folks standing in long lines for basic foods. Just before immigrating, I stood in FIVE such lines, for basics like bread, milk, and some meat, etc. But by the time I would get to each counter, they would be out of whatever was sold there! I returned home after about 5 hours without any food. My mom could not believe it!



My family and I, really for the first time in our lives “lucked out” for being Jewish. Although I will get into the nuts and bolts of that situation and that period later, let me just say that in the middle of Ceaușescu’s incompetent leadership, in the middle of the deepest misery in the socialist/communist time of Romania, we managed to apply for and then immigrate, first to Israel, then to the United States. There is a lot to be said about that process, and I plan to get into those details later on as part of this chapter and the following ones.

By the time we left, literally there was almost nothing to eat, this was in 1973, and communism did not fall in Romania until 1989. Which means that the poor Romanians stuck in that awful place had to survive another 16 years there under those circumstances.

For the life of me, I have no idea how they managed. Already in a new country, many times I was wondering how my people, how my friends, and how they could survive.

My attempts to hear back from them, those awful so-called socialists and communists would not allow correspondence between us at all. My God, what a misery!

## **Now to My Birth And Early Life**

Touching base first with my parents, my folks and how they ended up in Northwestern Transylvania, Romania. At the risk of repeating myself, I will now attempt to get into the origins of my family, on both the paternal and maternal sides. Although history appears to be nebulous about the exact origin and time period that Jews ended up living in serious numbers in Northwestern Transylvania. Jewish life traces go back to the Roman Empire times. However, it is probably the 18th and 19th centuries when substantial numbers of Jews were present in the area. Our family name, Deutsch (which means German in their language), makes me believe that my folks came somehow from the West, Germany possibly. Maybe they were part of the Sephardic Jews sent away from Spain.

My own investigation into my family roots and records indicated that my folks lived there at least for a few generations in the area. On my father's side, they lived in Cehul-Silvaniei, a small town in the present County of Salaj, as aforementioned in an earlier chapter. On my mom's side, they originated from Somcuta-Mare, another small town, this one located in the County of Baia-Mare, just north of the County of Salaj.

Both Jewish communities were thriving in their own way, with their own synagogues, and full Jewish life. Northwestern Transylvania belonged for about 1000 years to different forms of Hungarian control, as the Principality of Transylvania, Hungary proper and then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although it was part of Dacia (a precursor of Romania), and then Romania proper later, Hungary had control for much of the time over the two small towns.

For many years, there were substantially more Hungarians living in Transylvania than Romanians. But the number of Jews increased gradually, until the German Holocaust exterminated them in great numbers. For a measure of the Hungarian nature of Transylvania on the next page, is a photo of the Hungarian King Matthias, located in the center park of Cluj, my old college city of around 400,000.

The Jews of Transylvania, as were most Jews in Eastern Europe, were speaking Yiddish, a German jargon originating in a suburb of Vienna, Austria. In addition, depending on who controlled Transylvania, in later years, Jews were required to learn and speak either Romanian

or Hungarian, in elementary school years minimally (I believe only five elementary grades). Most of their education was in Jewish speaking schools.



In this manner, my grandparents learned Hungarian in elementary school, but my parents learned Romanian in their elementary school years, since by that time, Northwest Transylvania belonged to Romania. It was an interesting situation, because my parents learned Hungarian from my grandparents but without the benefit of formal education in school in Hungarian. And us, my brother Joseph and I learned Hungarian from our parents, but their Hungarian was much less fluent and correct. And then us, we did our entire schooling from elementary school all the way through college in Romanian. We learned reading and writing in Hungarian pretty much on our own. Obviously, we never became fluent in Hungarian, Romanian or anything for that matter. Imagine not being fluent in your own mother tongue. Is that strange, or is it only me? But, as in anything, there was something good in that we grew up speaking two languages. Below, I will explain why.

My parents never taught us Yiddish, probably because they wanted to use that language as a means of talking in front of us about certain matters that they did not want us to understand. Speaking two languages, Hungarian and Romanian, as far back as I can remember, facilitated our ability to learn and speak other languages.

Because of this situation, and then my life's circumstances, at one time or another I learned to speak, to a lesser or a greater degree, 9 or 10 different languages. Some while in Romania, and others after immigrating. Hungarian and Romanian are two very different languages. Hungarian belongs to a group of mid-Asian languages called Ugro-Finnic. Although the two are quite different, they are grouped together. The Romanian language is a Romance, Latin-based language. Because the differences between the two in so many different ways, it certainly helped us learn other languages relatively easily.

In the order of coming in contact with other languages, first we had to learn Russian because Romania was part of the Russian socialist/communist bloc, so learning it was compulsory. We started learning Russian in the 5th grade. But as it is usually the case with anything that is forced upon you, we resisted learning it. Even though the language itself, listening to our teachers reading poetry or novels from Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy was actually very amazing and enjoyable, even though for the most, we understood very little. I always learned just enough to pass.

Then came French, a language I studied for four years in high school and very much enjoyed. My brother studied English in lieu of French. I did not have that luxury, because I was four years older and English was not made available earlier. Because he studied English, my brother was way ahead of me when we finally arrived in America. About 60 or so years later, I can still understand a lot of French, but I can't speak it any longer. For two years in high school, we studied Latin, which is a wonderful language, but I never was able to speak too much of it.

Then immigration to Israel came, and we spent maybe about 4 months there. Enough time to pick up about 1000 words and be able to make myself understood to some degree. We then left for Italy, on our way to America, and there over a five month period and due to the fact that Italian is also a Romance language, I was able to learn Italian fairly quickly. Of course, that was 50 years ago. By now it's mostly gone. A language without continuous practice will be lost.

Next we immigrated to America, so learning English was not a matter of choice any longer. After 50 years in this country I feel that my control of English is fairly good. Lastly came Spanish. Which I decided to learn so that on many visits to Ecuador, South America, I could communicate with locals there in their own language. Of course, Spanish being a Romance language as well, it

did not hurt that I could speak Romanian.

Getting back to my folks and Northwest Transylvania, back in the day they were likely using primarily Yiddish to communicate among themselves, and to a lesser degree Romanian or Hungarian. They were primarily tradesmen, relatively simple folks. The Hebrew religion was a big part of their lives. They tended to not mix with non-Jews, although as life goes, that was not possible at times. Trading with non- Jews made it impossible not to keep some level of communication.

I know relatively little about my grandparents and their way of life, however, I know that my paternal grandfather was a shoemaker, and that was how he provided for the family. My grandpa and my dad used to go to local markets and sell their goods. That provided them with the living that they were accustomed to. I do not know much about my paternal grandma, but Jewish women of that time were primarily homemakers. Several of my dad's siblings died in childbirth, and when my dad was born and remained in life they named him CHAIM, which in Hebrew means LIFE. My dad had one younger brother Joseph. I mentioned him in an earlier chapter that he was shot dead by the Hungarian fascists in front of their home, never making it to the Holocaust. I believe he also had three sisters, but I only knew of one, Iolanda, who made and survived the concentration camps, returned to Romania, formed her own family, then immigrated to Israel, where eventually she passed away. I do not know the fate of the other sister or sisters, but they probably perished in the German camps. What I do know, I never got to meet them in life. And as always, that fact weighed very hard on my soul and my mind. I would have liked very much to have met them.

My maternal grandpa was in the business of bottling old fashioned seltzer water. My mom would tell me stories about how, at a very young age she was helping out my grandfather by taking bottles into customers' homes. My maternal grandmother passed away when my mom was three years old. My grandfather remarried. My mom had a brother, who survived camp as well, went to Switzerland and from there he immigrated to America, to Brooklyn, a borough of NYC. He became a leader in the SATMAR Jewish community, a well-known hassidic religious sect and managed to live a long life, around 100 years old. A very religious man, very close to God his entire life.

My mom also had a half-sister, who was also deported to Auschwitz but survived, being

probably the youngest one to make it at 15, and returned to Romania. She married, had two boys and then the entire family immigrated to America around 1960. She is still alive at 93.

A photo of my aunt's and her family's home in Zalau is shown below. The home is the one with the Romanian flag on it (red, yellow and blue).



Our second home was located on Republicii Street (in English, Street of the Republic - today named Corneliu Coposu Street, after a famous Romanian politician). It was part of the Cultural Center of the town at that time. A photo of our building is shown on the next page. In this residential building lived four families. Interestingly enough, these four families were as follows: my family, we lived on the ground floor, obviously a Jewish family. On the second floor lived a couple in a mixed marriage, the wife was an ethnic Hungarian, the husband, a Jew. Two other families lived on the top floor. One family, ethnic Hungarians, the other ethnic Romanians. For all the years we lived there together, we never ever had a fight, an argument or even a misunderstanding. How something like that was even possible, it's beyond me. For me personally, I had four mothers and four fathers in that house. I had more easiness in discussing my inner

problems with my ‘foster’ mothers and fathers at times, than my own parents. You know, that was the true United Nations there, as far as I was concerned! A photo of our second home in Zalau is shown below.



The details of my birth now. Born on November 16, 1947, in Cehul-Silvaniei, my mom was in labor with me for more than two days. At birth, I was about 10 pounds. There were no doctors in that small town, so at my birth, a midwife assisted my mother through her labor. It was a dreary, rainy day when I decided to come into this world!

The first few years of my life were spent in three localities, all in the County of Salaj, Cehul-Silvaniei (my birthplace), Jibou (my brother’s birthplace) and Zalau, where we spent the rest of our time in Romania, other the college years covered below.

Not sure of the period we spent in Cehul-Silvaniei, but it couldn’t have been more than maybe one or two years. We moved to Jibou, where we probably stayed another two-three years. Then we moved to Zalau. We only spent a couple of years in our first home, which was located near our old synagogue building.

## **Early Schooling**

Many memories of my “first seven years at home” as lovingly they used to call the formative years of one’s life, were full of interesting events. My parents were extremely busy folks. Between their jobs, and their commitment to furthering the ideals that the socialist/communist government was selling them, they had very little time for our parental education.

And there I reached the age of 6 or 7, and of course started elementary school. My first 7 years of schooling were at the same school, the Simion Barnutiu School.

The school system in Romania was different in those days. Elementary school and junior high school were together. On the next page, is a photo of my elementary/ jr. high school.

A couple of things about the quality of the education provided in this great school, The educational level, and the amazing skill level of our teachers were beyond reproach. Their commitment to the quality of teaching was just plain amazing, interesting, engaging. All of that and more.

Next, my high school years. Most important. The fact that both Romanian and Hungarian language education were available at my high school is without a question highly commendable.

A photo of my great high school is posted on the next page. I do not have enough superlatives to describe the quality of education at that school. I will get into that later.

But first unfortunately, I must describe an event of unbelievable vandalism, barbarism, disgrace, of the power thirsty tyrants who formed the socialist government of my town at the time Whom, in their infinite wisdom, decided to deface my beautiful school! What do I mean by that? On the building’s facade there were gorgeously sculpted decorations of colorful flowers, roosters and the like.

The school had been there for a very long time, way prior to WW II, with the power at the time was in the hands of the Hungarians. All these nice decorations were painted with strong red, white and green colors-the national colors of Hungary.



The continuous ethnic scuffle between the ethnic Romanians and Hungarians, on this occasion was directed at the Hungarians. These Romanian degenerates, who formed the government, defaced the building of its beautiful decorations, and bombing them right off the walls, pieces of flying debris were projected like bombs all over the place, quite a distance away. My heart aches just thinking about it, so many years later! Above is a photo of the building, still gorgeous, no matter what the vandals did. Of course, the Hungarians would not have failed to get even at some point, and this awful tit-for-tat scuffle would go on, and on, and on, and on! Forever!

Not sure what the Hungarians concocted to get even and when, but there is no doubt that did it at some opportune moment. By the way, at the lower left corner of the photo one can distinguish the monument of the Hungarian poet Ady Endre, after whom the school was named after. He originated from Zalau, or Zilah wow my home town was named in Hungarian!

As hard as I tried, I was not able to come up with a photo of my school prior to the bombing. But I will continue trying, because I hate to give up!

Upon my graduation from the lower school and entering my high school years, the memories that are still very strong, other than being in a very capable educational environment, were my personal relationship with some of my teachers. My direct relationship with my math teacher, Costica Cobarzan and his amazing teaching skill and his desire to instill in me his love for math and even physics, eventually became the basis of my becoming an electrical engineer, many years later.

My homeroom teacher, whom I dearly loved, who was also my history teacher instilled in me a powerful love for world and Romanian history, even though subjects and student interests were directed towards what was called either the “Real” or “Arts” split of classes. As an engineer, even though the subjects taught in the “Real” classes were what really mattered to me, my love for history has stayed with me to this day, thanks to my homeroom/history teacher, my dear Mrs. Filip.



As it was in those days, my parents were very busy. For the most part they had no time to spend with us kids. Here and there, whenever they could find some time in their busy schedule, they tried to be with us, doing something special. But ultimately, I grew up as a street-wise kid, who tried hard to survive that hard life. And that, from a very early age on. One of my real favorite things to do, all by myself, was to take my bike and go up my mountain - the Meses - and get lost there for the entire day, then head home - a lot of fun! I still feel that fresh air in my nostrils and the natural, wild smell of flowers. A photo is shown on the previous page. Wow!

Through an avalanche of memories, I recall some of my nannies taking “care” of me - through beatings and sometimes through borderline molestation. When through school years that would happen again, for the whole day I would take my little bike and get lost in the surrounding neighborhoods. I would find peace there. For one thing, through the years I formed a very close bond with nature that I never lost for all the years of my life.

Both my brother and I were for years spending some of our days at a daycare center, which was not necessarily a great way to grow up. But if it taught me something, it was that there was some structure to life - discipline, hardships and going with the flow. Getting one to submit to ways other than what they would like or want. I guess, in some ways it was useful. Hopefully, in some positive way, it taught me to survive how to survive and take care of myself.

During all that time, I figure all together maybe 15 years, we had two home locations. The first one was on a hilly street, which was heading from the park in the center of town up towards our amazing mountain. Playing in the ice cold water of the numerous streams from our nearby mountain, enjoying all sights, colors of unimaginable beauty and bird life, nature was a big part of it. Spending hours after hours in God’s land!

### **Religious Life In My Hometown**

That first home of ours was very close to the town’s Catholic Church and of course, our synagogue was not that far from there either! Hey, nothing was far in a town of only 15,000. I remember my earliest years when the synagogue was frequented by many, just as the other churches were. Zalau had, at its best in the old days, three gorgeous churches, a Catholic Church, an Eastern Orthodox Church, and a Protestant Church. These days there are several others, mostly

modern ones, of course. The population of Zalau has more than tripled since the days I last lived there. I mean, it's 50 years later, for sure, a long lifetime!



Some friends still frequent the church even today. One interesting thing about life in socialist/communist Romania was that many, if not most Romanians, Hungarians and others were participating in the ongoing services as the government was not extinguishing people's need for closeness to God. The church was consecrated in 1884 and it has been sitting there ever since. First picture on previous is that of the Reformed Church, which has been there since 1907. Obviously, it has an exquisite beauty. It is impossible not to be impressed when standing on its grounds. Also very impressive is the Romanian Eastern Orthodox Church, sitting on top of a hill. As a kid, any time I found myself in its proximity, I would wonder about its beauty. A photo of it is shown above.



The order in which they are shown: the Reformed Church, followed by the Catholic Church and then finally, the Eastern Orthodox Church, without any real preference.

Now to the Jewish Synagogue of Zalau. Photos were included in previous chapters. For a period after starting the writing of this book, I had a real hard time finding pictures of my old synagogue. I played in the building and its courtyard for years with my friends. I remember those days like they happened yesterday.

The synagogue had, and continues to have a major significance for me. Succeeding in finding some very old photos of it, here and now, I thank God for aiding me in for doing just that!

What I do remember with disdain is the extreme decay it was in, when my dad and a couple of other remaining Jews were asked by the authorities and eventually decided to have it demolished, rather than continually disgraced in that manner. Of course, those awful government people did not see any value in saving such a valuable patrimony item, not only for Jews, but also as part of Romanian patrimony. Because whether they liked it or not, the synagogue and its people had existed there for a long time.



**Zalău - Zilah - Waltenberg**

**P-ta Republicii 1950**

When the time came in May 1973 for our immigration to take place, literally, it was as if we were in the middle of a very, very sad funeral proceeding to a cemetery. For everyone present, it was just a terrible gathering, with us leaving forever. It was very likely, one of the most disheartening events that I have ever been part of! Very, very sad!

A photo very valuable to me personally is shown above. Why? My pops was for many years the editor-in-chief of the only newspaper in our small town. He spoke either 4 or 5 languages, was an extremely bright man, AND a great writer. My writing talent must have come from somewhere, no? Haha ... no, just kidding!

Anyway, his beautiful office, where I used to love to hang out as a kid was in the building

on the left, his window was in the center of the second floor, in the section with small tower above it. It was very cool! The actual printing shop was across the street, in a separate building on the left side. I used to love watching the letter setters do their amazing work, setting all those tiny lead letter pieces, at an incredible speed. I told them that when I grew up I wanted to do that kind of work! Of course, it never came to that. The photo was taken from the central park across the street - a little park. Our town was just beautiful. By the way, the photo shows it - dated 1950.

And now, the turn of the Jewish synagogue of Zalau, my old home town, has come. We covered some aspects already in previous chapters. I could be writing here forever, but there are a couple of issues that need to be covered.

First one, funny in a way. There were times in my school years - and I don't know how that kind of attitude came over me, but I felt very strongly that I was unquestionably the best, and that all others could only be second to me. Ridiculous, no? Well, it is my belief now that God had some issues with my stand in that regard, and my attitude problem. And here it is how HE solved it for me. In the final years of my high school time, there were a couple of classmates of mine, sons of some relatively average folks (not that it really mattered to me one way or the other). Those guys through their smarts, talking here about genius level smarts, when it counted the most, they just left me in their dust! Flew right by me and my best, like I didn't exist! In that moment, I said to myself, quite embarrassed .... OK, no problem, from now on you can be handsome, but there are others who are a LOT smarter than you are. In my later life, I came across many folks who were at genius levels, which I never was. I came to appreciate and learn from them.

You know what, I survived it! I feel, it may have made me a better person. I hope it did.

Second - when in high school, as hard as it may be to believe it, from a town that used to be quite Jewish, I was the only Jew in my class who was left. My home class had 40 people, not sure how many the entire class of 1965 had. But, not a single other Jew. Obviously, the Holocaust and mass immigration to Israel, the US and the West did a number on the numbers, no pun intended!

Easing into the next chapter: My college experience, Final Years in Romania, as it will be seen further, it was a complex step in my life.

# CHAPTER 5

## MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE - FINAL YEARS IN ROMANIA

### Getting Ready For College

A period of about 5 years, starting with the final high school year and continuing immediately after, the high school, lots of excitement was involved. First of all, we had some very serious discussions with my parents, as they wanted to have as much control over me as possible. Any parent that is worth their status as a parent will want to let you know what you can or cannot do. Technically, I was still underage at that point, not yet 18.

In my case, my father was pretty easy actually. Easy meaning that he just wanted the two of us to be good friends, to trust each other, and I believe me, we certainly were. My pops came home from the Nazi camps really beat up, physically and mentally. In those camps they managed to shorten his fuse to a minimum, so as long as you kind of went along with his views, it was all good. By no means was he unreasonable. While I was growing up in my early school years and even later on in high school, I challenged him on many occasions, a lot. His fuse would be very seriously ready to blow at times, and actually it blew on a pretty regular basis. But back in the old country, and in basically most, if not all Eastern European countries as far as I remember, physical punishment by fathers was a matter of course.

In all fairness to him, I was a pretty bad kid and I always challenged him to punish me, if he didn't like some of my routine. And very often, he didn't. Being belted and being kicked in the butt were fairly regular events. My brother was exactly the opposite of me. My pops, I don't believe he ever touched him in that way, but he didn't have to. Let me just say it, my brother was an exceptionally bright guy (probably close to genius level, or already there). I will touch on some of his achievements in future sections of this chapter. You surely get the full picture of the difference between us two, relative to each other!

My mom, on the other hand ... that's a totally different story. Mommy had a golden heart; the opportunity will be there to describe more of that later. For now, let me just say this: like any

Jewish mother who respected herself, she would FORCE their sons and probably daughters too, to become DOCTORS. For the most part. To me, it is almost funny! You probably know that a great number of doctors were/are Jews. Which of course, is a big-time stereotyping. Can you imagine all doctors being Jews? I hope not. Haha!

Be that as it may, well, she was pressuring me into considering becoming a doctor, just for good measure. That would all have been good, but I just couldn't stand looking at blood, mine or especially somebody else's. You cannot become a doctor if blood is a foreign matter to you and you do not want to be associated with it in any manner. It wasn't going to be easy to convince my mom that there would not be a doctor's career in my life. But eventually, she must have realized that she was fighting a losing battle. That just was not going to be part of her existence. My mom did not like to lose at anything. Especially in something involving her kids in any way.

Something to note here - my brother, as I already said it, was a very smart guy. He ended up being in his life, in this particular order: a civil/structural engineer, electrical/electronics engineer, taxi cab driver (life just threw that one in for good measure!), and then an occupational therapist. Quite a selection, one might say. Just wondering now about my bro - how much time did my mother spend in trying to convince him to become a doctor? I was not privy to those discussions, since my brother was roughly 4 years younger than me. By that time, I was long gone to college. Or who knows, that may never have happened.

When my conversations with my mom reached more or less the final stages, she understood quite clearly that there was no chance for me to become a doctor. None! Then she figured this out - talking about control - she would only allow me to attend a college or university in Cluj, a city of around 300,000 people at the time, for me, it was a huge city, as my small town only had about 15,000 people, as mentioned earlier. Cluj was close to my hometown, only some 50-60 miles away. I could already smell major excitement and FUN coming my way.

My bargaining power at that moment had already maxed out, so fighting to go further away from home had about as good of a chance for success as my mom convincing me to become a doctor! Did not bother fighting beyond that point. But only now would my real problems begin. Leaving my small town, I had no clue what would become of me, talking about a career. Most kids didn't at that age. Basically, I had no interest in doing anything. I was way too immature. My

parents knew that, you can only imagine how much confidence they had in me creating a real good career for myself. When I think about it, I can't stop smiling, even actually laughing!

At that point, somehow, I had developed enough sense to look at all offerings at the various schools in Cluj. It must have been, for sure, another divine intervention. The lucky break for me was the fact that Cluj was a college town as large as any in Romania. When in session, Cluj must have had around 50,000 students coming from elsewhere, I estimate. The city was buzzing incredibly when the students were there. Just consider, in that student heavy environment, I was supposed to apply myself to my studies ... Yak! Common.

Anyway, it took some serious time to read through all the programs offered, how and where. The one thing I knew was this ... I had an awful memory, so anything specifically requiring the use of memory was out. I also knew that I loved math and physics, it seemed as if God had endowed me with a great ability for organization and figuring things out. So what could I be?

Teaching was out for sure. Pretty easy to figure out that the most likely career for me was going to be some sort of engineering. After that, it became a lot easier. The reason being that Cluj had a Polytechnic Institute, and it offered four specialties. Mechanical, civil/structural, agricultural machinery, and electromechanical engineering.



The photo on the previous page depicts a student during the acceptance exams into a Polytechnic Institute, without specifying the year, or where in Romania. It was very typical other than what the actual competition was. It does say in Romanian that they were 5 to a spot, which is half of what we had when I entered the college. It was well known in those days that being accepted to the Polytechnic in Cluj was not for the faint of heart! Especially, electromechanical engineering.

What would be my best choice? Well, I had zero interest in agricultural machinery engineering, for the simple reason that I did not plan to spend my life in the countryside. That was the easy one to eliminate. Civil/structural engineering did not have much appeal to me either. Not sure exactly why, other than I had to eliminate three of the choices, so I had to start somewhere. That agricultural field could have been my real life's calling. I guess we'll never know. Civil engineering, maybe the same way. Who knows?

What was left was the choice between the remaining two. When I got a bit more in depth into analyzing what exactly they meant and what each covered, well, it turned out that a lot of what mechanical engineering offered was also part of the electromechanical engineering, so I decided to become an "electrician". As the title implies, with the electromechanical, electro, and mechanical, it's simple to figure out that it was both. Of course, being doubly difficult, I missed taking that into consideration. I was taking on two careers, not one only! Why would I make it easy on myself? Hehe!

### **Examination To Get Into College**

The next step was something to behold. In those days, and I don't know what the system is like now, but then, one had to go through a three-week examination period, both essay writing, and then verbal support of it. I mean, the candidates were examined in all sorts of math, physics, chemistry, and other subjects (which escape me now, some 60 or so years later). Please believe me, not to put myself on a pedestal, but we the candidates had to go through a nightmarish time there, as it turned out, to be some crazy testing period.

Well, let me start by saying that each engineering specialty passing exam had its challenges, but the electromechanical engineering had 1200 people applying for the approximately

120 spots. I mean, 10 candidates on a spot. Not a very good ratio. We were housed in a dorm of the respective faculty/college that we were applying for. I will attempt to find a photo of that building, and if I manage, I will include it in one of the book's appendices.

In our dorm room, we were six of us from the same high school from our hometown. All guys that I knew intimately. We were, as much as that was possible, trying to support each other. But you know, when it came to the moment of truth, we were each trying our best, on our own. We did not have the luxury of supporting the others in the end. You know, ultimately it was, and it will always be, a dog-eat-dog world!

Anyway ... the grades, the in-between grades, and then the final grade, were scaled between 0-10. So, the exams started, then eventually ended after about three weeks of unbelievable tensions. We were all trying our best, but in the end, each one of us was on his own, as I said. At the very end, after weeks of those crazy exams, one night the final scores were made available and were listed. All of us, all 1200 were listed on those unending lists. It was a nightmare to find your name, either accepted or denied. To say that this period was even more nightmarish than the exams themselves does not begin to tell the full story.

We were all standing there, trying to find our names on the damn lists. I don't know, but I am almost sure that someone yelled at me, "Hey, you are in!" I am not sure what my real emotions were at that moment, but I know for sure, I was totally numb. I couldn't move!

Anyway, that moment of total happiness eventually turned into some pretty awful moments, as the process went on. None of my five boys made it. And I mean, these guys were not just good, they were very good, very, very good! I will not be able to ever understand what happened, the only thing I could think of is that they simply may have not been good test takers. When it all quieted down, I found out that my passing grade was 8.5 out of 10. Pretty damn good! I came in somewhere around the 65<sup>th</sup> or 70<sup>th</sup> place. Who cared? The important thing was that I was among the 120.

Of course, my friends not making it ate away at my happiness, but life deals with pills like that. A couple of my friends eventually made it later on, a year or two later. The quality of education we received from our high school was exceptional, really the main reason I made it! We

were competing against guys from all over Romania! Talk about a challenge!

At that time the Polytechnic Institute of Cluj had several campuses, below is the photo of the main building, where most of my engineering education took place. The exams for admittance took place at other campus locations though.



## **My College Years**

The next thing I knew, my first school year started, the results of the examinations, my making the cut, at that point meant absolutely nothing. All that mattered was your performance in the college year. Quite frankly, the freedom I had interfered with my learning habits in a big way, and of course, with my performance. In the back of my mind, I was always aware of what my parents and others back home who mattered to me, what they expected of me and of what would they think of me, if my performance lacked.

By default, I came to the conclusion that whether I got 10's or 5's (passing grade in those days), or anything in between, did it really matter? As long as I got passing grades, I thought,

nobody really cared. There were so many sources of fun (I will cover that later), it was a lot more important to me to have fun than to get all 10s. How often would I have the chance to enjoy myself as a student?

During those five years in college, I never came close to 10's, but I passed through. Until the very last fifth year, when I failed one subject which eventually became a big part of my future profession. It just got to the point that I didn't care anymore. I had to retake that subject, but because it was not available again that fifth year, I needed to take the course in my sixth year. As I did that, it became a source of some embarrassment with my parents and others. The next term when I finally could retake it, more or less, I aced it with an 8 out of 10. Things like that happen in life. And then, in 1971 when I graduated, I was only 23 years old. Big deal! But imagine all the fun I had during that last, sixth year. Still immature obviously to some great degree, I said to myself ... "Think of it as additional fun." What can I say? There were many sources for fun during my college years, all together just too many to mention all here. But let's just say - girls, rock concerts, all kinds of sports events, playing lots of poker - and losing my food money in the process! - you get the idea.



I absolutely loved to go to the Opera House, when in session, as many as three nights a week! Think of it this way: the Opera House and singers were subsidized by the government, and

because of that, students like me could participate at costs that in those days would be equivalent to about 50 cents. You must agree, it was definitely a great bargain! I couldn't help it, I loved music my entire life, way too much! A photo of the Opera House Building is shown on the previous page, with my wife Glenda, visiting Romania many years later. My college years started in 1965 and ended in 1971.

Something here, just to keep things in perspective, I guess. My first college year, I lived on a school campus, in a dorm room with five other guys from my electromechanical engineering school. I mean, intellectuals like me, you could say. For that first year, my time in the dorm was spent among other things, sharing with these people great food that my parents brought me weekly, pretty regularly. Followed by fighting them, because of their antisemitism routine, pretty much after each meal. For some good old fun! They were ethnic Romanians, of the Eastern-Orthodox faith, and I was the only Jew among them. They just could not tolerate me, and I had to physically fight them. They enjoyed my food very much though, that's for sure! Lots of fun ...

Anyway, at the end of that first year, my parents and I decided that I had had enough of that, so starting my second year of college, I lived with an uncle of mine who had an apartment there in Cluj. For the rest of my college years, I lived with him. My uncle eventually passed away a while back, but for being so kind to me, I will be eternally thankful to him.

I finally finished college, when the only thing remaining to do was to prepare what was called in those days - The State Project - think of it as a major project requiring six months of work to complete. In my case, it turned out to be a major factory located remotely somewhere in the country. Then upon completion, one would get their engineering diploma and be ready to work in a state sponsored job. That was the system in a socialist/communist society. No private enterprises existed at all!

As my luck would have it, I ended up at a large ALUMINA plant, not that far away from my hometown. The plant has been since demolished, it would have been by now about 70 years old, maybe older. An old black/white photo of it is shown on the next page. It is the only one I was able to find.

Faintly shown, one can read the name of it in Romanian... Uzina de alumina din Oradea

... in English, The Alumina Factory of Oradea. It was a huge plant. The four or so large thermo towers in the background were part of creating the tremendous amount of electrical energy necessary to process the alumina ore into aluminum. You had the chance just now to learn something important about Electrical Engineering, isn't it?!

Alumina is a white powder that is obtained from raw aluminum ore, which eventually through an electrical process called SMELTING, aluminum is produced. Because of the complex electrical processes that take place, the electrical equipment and systems required are incredibly complex. My project required the automation of the plant. In other words, very little if at all, human intervention would have been required.

Well, I had absolutely no clue what all that was, what I needed to do. Zero! Imagine that my finishing college and becoming an electrical engineer was dependent on this project. Let me just say that a lot of hours were thereafter spent by me just to figure out what to do next.



... generală a Uzinei de alumina din Oradea. În plan secundar unul turn de răcire

At that moment, God came to my aid, AGAIN! As HE always did and does in my moments of great trouble! First, a number of young engineers from the plant came to me, asked me about my project, and then they offered to assist in figuring out things and then putting everything together. Those guys took me to areas of the plant that probably no one else had accessed, explained to me clearly what happens to make things work, why and how. Let me just say, for the first time in all my college years, I realized this - man, this is what I want to do and be! This is cool stuff, this is a lot of fun! I could not wait during my nightly sleep to get up and jump on things again. In the end, I planned and prepared my project, with all kinds of calculations, writing reports, and preparing many drawings. I could not believe what was possible!

Then the day came when my project was presented and listened to by a group of engineers that formed the commission which was going to judge my work. Again, grading was between 0-10, and I ended up with an 8 on my state project. That's how I became an electrical power and automation engineer. A career of 40 plus years of successful work, as an electrical engineer, and eventually a manager of electrical engineering continued.

In the socialist/communist economic system, upon completion of the state project work and its successful presentation, the government would place you in your first job, supposedly in the order of your credentials/grades, but that was seldom the case. All kinds of exceptions were made for folks who were treated preferentially by those in power. Generally speaking, they were trying to satisfy everyone's desire for the preferred location/town/city, an employer you could live with, and the maximum salary, etc. In that system, salary was kind of standard for the various types of professions, type of work within the profession, etc. The fact was that the salaries throughout, unless you were in a total position of power, were minimal and insufficient.

In my case, I graduated with a five-year electrical engineer diploma, which in the American standard of college education was equal to a Master Degree in Electrical Engineering degree. That was based on the number of credits accredited - in the neighborhood of 190 credits.

It was basically the second best degree one could hope for, after petroleum engineering. That, because they were more needed to deal with Romanian's still important oil reserves - highest by far in Europe, but the difference was basically, maybe 10%, at most.

## My Mom's Visit To America

Something of great importance happened to my family in 1966 or 1967. My mother was invited during my college years, to visit her brother and half-sister in America. Obviously, that was without a question a major moment in my family's existence. The trip allowed my mom to see her brother for the first time since the Holocaust days, which by that point was at least 25 years earlier. Also, to visit with her half-sister and be with her after so many years, after their immigration to America. But just as importantly, she got to see and understand what America was about, and that was fairly in depth, considering that she was there only for only a few months. I am sure it was mind boggling in many ways.

To say that my mom's entire time in New York City was shock after shock, in the good sense of the word, goes without saying. Just consider being in the middle of New York City, after all you had seen your entire life were those tiny Romanian/ Hungarian villages and towns. A couple of photos of NYC are shown in the following pages.



My second year of college was the time when mom's visit occurred. After returning, my

parents who were already “retired” and placed on “dead tracks”, found themselves in a position of having to decide if they were going to take the chance of applying for immigration or just live the rest of our lives where we were. My mom was pushing in a big way for us to immigrate to the US. She had no patience left for waiting, wanting to be with her siblings. And of course, she knew that even with the hard work waiting for my dad and her upon arriving to the USA, they were opening all kinds of opportunities for the two of us, my brother and myself.

After returning to Romania, our family had no peace until we could immigrate, to unite with our family in America. The problem was that living in a very small town in communist Romania, it was almost impossible to have peace with the entire political machine there being on our case, and without them causing us as much trouble as they possibly could while trying to stop us from immigrating. My father had plenty of “enemies”, who would have liked nothing more than to harm us, in any way possible. So no question, there were major risks in applying.



My parents after their return from the Holocaust, decided to become supporters of the socialist/communist movement in the local government. I detailed this earlier. As a result, they became well known to the local authorities. In a way it was a positive, as in that way, they were

able to put a larger piece of bread on the table, so to speak. On the other hand, they had no choice, but to be part of the leadership in that hometown. And here and now, those authorities felt threatened by what my parents helped expose. No doubt about that, in that damn system.

As it usually happened, at some point they were replaced by non-Jews, in those leadership positions. In my parents' case, they were "mothballed", which meant, being forced into "retirement". My dad, at age 48 was retired, and his hair was snow white. He looked like a real old man. Both of them were in very poor health. My mom, about four years younger, was retired as well. I have no idea how that could be, but they were done working, living on some ridiculous pension. Jumping out of sequence a bit here, I recall how my parents, once in America had their hair dyed, or refreshed in some way not sure exactly how, but looked like different people. More details later on.

For me, I loved that, because my parents were back to "normal".

In this condition, again, closing in on 50 years of age in my dad's case, and around 45 in my mom's, after her return from America, they had to make that decision whether to apply for immigration or not. To their credit, with our future (my brother's and mine) on the line, they risked major upheaval from the authorities, and decided to apply for permission to leave. Just consider, both at those ages, going to a strange place and starting a new life there. I mean, talk about courage. And then having those awful enemies, the communists there in the government against you.

Hopefully, someone with full understanding of the situation can appreciate the dire straits they were setting themselves in, putting all of us in harm's way in a major way. But the one thing I can say about my parents, as hard as the Holocaust years in the German camps were, was that those years prepared them for rough times ahead and these challenging times for us all would be among the roughest times they could have faced.

We never knew for sure how those enemies could actually have caused us harm, but let's say, we had to wait about 7 years to get the visas to leave for Israel. My guess is that they just could not, no matter how hard they may have tried, stop us from eventually leaving. Because that damn dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, loved dollars way too much!

The applications were filled somewhere between 1966 and 1967. At the time, I was in my

second year of college and my brother was in mid-high school. Not sure how the proceedings went, they were happening mostly in Bucharest, Romania's capital, and likely at the Communist Party and Security offices (something in the nature of the CIA, except a communist version of it) in our hometown.

On my end, probably in 1967, when the leadership of my college was informed about my application for immigration to Israel, a meeting was held. Being part of the Young Workers Union, which was automatically bestowed on any young person in Romania, especially in colleges and one could not be in college without belonging to that organization, - in that two-hour-long meeting I was going to be admonished for being a "traitor" to the country, a "capitalist" tool for the country's enemies to use, well, the whole gamut of crap one can think of.

Quite frankly, I don't believe that, in my entire life, did I ever felt that belittled. I was made to feel totally worthless, that I was wasting the money the country spent on my education, that I had cheated some of those who could not qualify for college at the admission exams out of their spots. I mean it was a total embarrassment. That my parents raised a "traitor", that I had no moral values, I wish I could remember it all. Like I said, the worst moment of my entire life probably. Not because it was true, but you can imagine standing in front of at least 200 people, probably more, while this was going on. The communists used me to sell their propaganda to those who were remaining behind, Some, real good friends of mine.

My friends were there, and were forced to criticize me, in any possible way they could. However, when that meeting was finally over, guess what happened? Many of those present there ran towards me, they started embracing me, hugging me, lifting me up, and praising me in ways I could not believe. Many of them started to say, you are lucky devil, you will have the time of your life in Israel, we can't believe you are living, we wish we could join you! Haha! Well, what can I say. I will tell you what ... Thank God, He made me Jewish! Haha.

The entire thing was just so strange, so surreal. In those days I used to be extremely shy, as I have already mentioned, you can only imagine my emotions that entire day! I mean, there were moments when I felt that I was going to collapse, or fall to the floor.

I made through all of that, but saying that I was a marked man in many different ways, it

does not begin to describe my remaining college years and that was three plus years!

On the other hand, as time has passed, it became more exciting thinking about the day we finally get on that plane. Let's just say that it was not easy at all for me to concentrate on my studies, that's for sure.

## **Working In Romania As An Electrical Engineer And Time In The Romanian Army**

I started work in Romania as an engineer in 1971, I believe, and my salary was 1,800 lei monthly (Romanian currency, which at that time was exchanging, if I remember correctly, at around 30 of them to the dollar). That was after taxes, in other words, the net. Just for reference, that amount of money could buy 6 pairs of pants, and maybe 25-30 pounds of red meat. Certainly, not all that much. I believe by the time we left Romania in 1973, my salary have been increased to around 2000 lei/month. These days, or the last time I needed to exchange dollars for lei circa 2018 or so, the exchange rate was something like 4 lei to the dollar. They were the new lei's, based on the euro, which obviously was acceptable for use in the entire European Union, including Romania.

My first job, funny since I did not consider going into the agricultural machinery engineering field, was with a local government organization, dealing with design projects for the agricultural sector, mostly buildings like silos, large stables, and the like. Quite frankly, not a very exciting and challenging field of work for an electrical engineer.

Between the time I was hired to work for them and the time we left Romania, we are talking about a two year period, I was drafted to go to the Romanian Army. So for a period of 6-7 months I was away from my job. The period in the Romanian Army deserves its own separate section, and as such, it will be dealt with later on, either in this section or a subsequent one.

For a while we worked out of a very old building but then a decision was made that a new building would be erected for us and others, and we moved there maybe in the fall of 1972, October maybe? Well, that building's heating system was not operational, and as such, we never performed one ounce of work because of the continuous unbearable cold. We would spend our days bundled

in coats and throws, and why we even had to be there is something that I probably will never be able to understand.

Just to be fair, we didn't do much work in the old place either, but at least we were not freezing. It always amazed me how we could survive there without any work being done, and how funds could be generated to exist. Then of course, I realized that the government could print as much money as they wanted to, who would check on that? Shades of the present American Government situation, isn't it? Anyway ....

One other matter here ... somewhere in an earlier chapter I mentioned about the fact that in socialist/communist Romania, a private sector of work did not exist. Actually, that was true if you were one of the many. But special arrangements could be made by those in power and of course, their protected ones.

I vividly recall, and we certainly were not anywhere near the protected group, but that one time, our group of young engineers in the company I was working for, someone approached us with a need of engineering and design services. Essentially this person tried to engage us to complete his project at a minimal cost, outside of the normal means of doing engineering work by our firm. He wanted to see if our group was agreeable to get the work done, on what might be called, "on the side".

Needless to say, we were out of our minds because of all the excitement, first of all, that someone would trust us with that assignment. Of course, very happy to make some extra money. We are talking here more than 50 years ago, if memory again serves me well, about 5000 lei's for the 3 or 4 of us. Which, at that time, may have been roughly around 2 1/2 months of my salary. Peanuts, as they say. Enough to have a few drinks at our local bar. Well, guess what?

Somehow, the commissar of our local government's office got hold of the fact that we were trying to screw the government out of those few bucks. Next we knew, we were called to report to him about the matter. He threatened us that if we were ever to do that again, strong disciplinary measures would be taken against us. To be honest, we were not exactly sure what those would have been, but we never even as much as thought about doing that kind of work ever again!

So much for incentives in that sick society and country. Out of sequence a bit here and now ... Fast forward to my early days in America. No one in all the 50 years here would ever tell me how much I could work, where, or with any restrictions imposed. I will get to these details later, but let's just say this - at times in my working days, I worked as much as 100 hours a week, and I held at times as many as 3 or 4 jobs. You sense the difference, don't you?

One other very interesting thing in America, out of sequence again ... in all those years, no one ever asked me to prove that I am an engineer, or a Professional Engineer at that. The only thing that mattered was to get the job done right, on time, and within the budget. Again, the difference is clear. My employers always took advantage of my professional acumen and those many years of experience as an engineer, but ALL as part of my resume, forwarded to potential clients as part of our proposals to do the work. No client has ever put into question the veracity of our statements!

As mentioned already, during my working years in Romania, which lasted less than three years, probably in all less than even two years, something awful was done to me by the communists. Those who were in charge of our eventual permission to immigrate had me drafted to go to the Army, when we hoped to leave as soon as possible. Only to make us as miserable as they could.

The picture below shows the brutal way the young Romanian soldiers were treated by their unscrupulous captain. This is happening in today's "democratic" Romania. Read below what the so-called nurses that formed our medical commission (mostly women) did and the rest. Although not shown here, those soldiers below were totally naked, which we also were in some situations, except wearing shorts. Normally, after completion of one's college years.

There is no doubt in my mind that people like me, political undesirables, sons of priests, and a slew of folks like that, were considered traitors, and treated as such.

After my mom's return to Romania, our family had no peace until we could immigrate, to unite with the rest of our family in America. The political machine tried to cause as much trouble as possible, attempting to stop us from immigrating. Eventually I was sent to a disciplinary battalion (similar to the one shown above), where all officers were there because they themselves

were bad apples. They would have the time of their lives to make us “traitors” hate our lives, which by the way, many times while there, we felt that we would be better off dead.



Somehow, the six months passed, but during that period, I was subjected to TWO boot camps, a month and a half each. Normally, regular draftees were asked to do one. At age 25, three years after my regular draft should have taken place, overweight as I was, that hard training almost killed me. Several times I ended up in the medical quarters. The remaining three months, I was guarding the local arsenal, 24 hours on, 24 hours off, three hours on guard, then three hours off because the barrack was so dirty and smelly, I could not breathe in there!

I could write an entire book just about my time there. Eventually, after a miserable time, I made it back home. I was supposed to become a lieutenant of tanks as a college educated person, but because I was a “traitor”, I never made it past the rank of a private. One of the ways they delayed our immigration was by drafting me into the Army.

I was labeled a traitor, although I had never committed any crime, I loved Romania, it was the country of my birth. Eventually, we could not immigrate directly to America because that dirty dictator of the time, the disgusting communist leader of Romania, Ceausescu wanted from my parents \$20,000 in the 1960s American currency. Today that might be worth \$300,000, maybe more.

Asking for that kind of money? From whom? So obviously, we could not immigrate directly to America.

But that was the time when we lucked out for being Jews. Israel had passed a few years earlier the law of ALIYA, when Israeli law dictated that the country would be paying for each Jew wishing to immigrate to Israel, \$1500 per person to the government of their country. That was the way Israel bought us out of Romania (read Ceausescu) for \$6000, total for the four of us. I guess we weren't worth all that much.

Once they pocketed the money, we were given a week to leave Romania, leaving our lousy belongings behind. I will never forget, the day of our leaving Zalau, it was May 9, 1973, which happened to be Victory Day, the day of defeating Germany. Our car, the car that was going to take us to Bucharest, Romania's capital, was made part of the parade by accident. Hey, in a way, we were victorious. So to anyone with a sense of humor, it should strike them as ridiculous, I would say. We, the Deutsch family, a group of damn traitors, a name given to us by the righteous communists, we the traitors, were celebrating the day of the Nazi Germany's defeat. Haha!

Well, one way or another we made it to Bucharest. Where we spent our last few days in Romania, the country of our birth, only to leave it now.

Now my last words about that country of my birth. I will call it my country, Romania. I would have loved to feel "Romanian", but I never really felt more removed from anything and everything Romanian.

Of course, leaving behind memories, good and bad, probably to never have anything to do with it all again. At least, that was the way I felt at that moment! We had our passports, we were "traitors", belonged nowhere. We figured that Israel would make us belong there, which was automatic. What an amazing feeling - you put your foot on Israeli soil, you are automatically a citizen - Jew or non-Jew alike! That is kind of special, you must agree! Below are three of the most gorgeous Romanian sites, the snowy Carpathian Mountains, the Peles Castle, summer residence of Romanian kings for many generations and then, probably the most famous of them all, the Bran Castle, better known as Dracula's Castle! I love Romania, those damn communists could not kill that in me!

What can I say? I was born in a very, very beautiful country, because Romania in general, and Transylvania in particular, must be considered some of the most beautiful places I have ever seen! And with God's grace, I was fortunate enough to have visited around 30-40 countries of this world, all continents other than Antarctica. I do not have enough room for all the beauty! Luckily, today everyone can access the Internet and experience it for themselves! Please do! I will, however, add a couple of more photos, most representative of the country.



Continuing with our last moments in Romania, those few days afforded to us necessitated work to collect papers that were required in our new home, whether Israel, America, or elsewhere, having to do with schooling, papers required for identification purposes in our new life and the like. So there wasn't that much time left.





In any event, the day of our flight to Israel came, and before we knew it, my brother and I were seated in the last two seats of this older plane, an IL-18, which stands for Ilyushin (famous Russian airplane engineer and designer) model 18. For us, it was the most wonderful plane anywhere in the world, taking us to the “Promised Land”. How that flight was, we really had no idea how to describe it. What I know is this: when we arrived at Lod Airport (Israel’s main airport), we were very nauseated. After a very rough flight of around three hours we arrived. That plane, for the entire duration of the flight, was shaking the living heck out of us. I guess the turbulence must have been brutal, or simply, the pilot had no idea how to fly the plane. You know what? None of that mattered - we were in a dream world, no question about that. Within a span of three hours, we just flew 50-100 years in time.





The three photos, a panoramic view of the City of Sighisoara (a very old and picturesque city in Transylvania – on page 98), the Danube River Delta and the Black Sea (above).

My heart is asking me to place a last photo of my old home here. I look at photos of it, and it fills me with such warm feelings. I wish I could make my readers feel that. It's glorious! Please check it out on page 23.

A few final observations about my old country and my relationship with it. Romania was

and will always remain the country where I was born. Nothing can change that. Those deep feelings of love will never fade. It provided life for me for some 26 plus years, and equipped me with first a rate education, throughout all various levels. Romania may not have had all the wherewithal that many other countries had, some much more advanced than itself, but my old country, its teachers and professors made up for that with ingenuity, integrity, character, care, love, and a slew of other lovely and precious qualities. For that, I will always remain indebted to the country and its people.

Immediately after WWII, Romania, under tremendous pressure from Stalin, and its socialist/communist leaders took advantage of the turmoil and lack of everything necessary to sustain life, and made an absolutely terrible choice by aligning with Stalin and the USSR. They may have not had much choice in that either.



Quite frankly, America and the rest of the West, had a major fault in just throwing Romania, and much of Eastern Europe to the “dogs”. Or maybe I should say, not fighting harder against the communists.

Now that finally Romania has become a democracy again, slowly but surely, things are heading in the right direction. For that my thanks go to God! It will not be easy to fully join the

advanced countries of this world. Old treasures, both natural and human, will ensure that this eventually will happen.

Old habits are very hard to break, the socialists/communists did a LOT of damage to the country, to its people, and to its legacy. But no matter how hard they tried, the communists could not totally destroy it. Romanian's people are very intelligent, hard workers and resourceful in many ways. The spirit of its people is the most valuable capital it has.

The country has a very long history of surviving terrible hardships and making it through. Romania will come back from the nightmare the socialism and communism created, but of course, it will take time.

With a lot of time and great efforts, I am convinced that it will happen sooner rather than later. The old generation, born in those communist days and who spent much of their lives (yours truly included in there) in socialism and communism, quite frankly, needs to die out. That way, real, serious change can take place. I made the decision to move forward 50 years ago. I was a lucky one in that regard for it to happen.

After immigrating from Romania many decades ago, I had the opportunity to re-visit the country on several occasions. Every time, I noticed palpable differences there, for the better each time. It is now 35 years since communism failed and fell, it will probably take another 35 years or longer, for major changes to appear and take place.

For those who care, Romania is one of the most beautiful countries that you will ever see. It has people who are very happy to receive guests with open arms. They have a very long tradition of doing just that. Take a chance and visit the country, you will be rewarded with some real great times. Of course, I am less than objective when I say for you to make Transylvania, my old place, your first stop. if and when you decide to visit, I promise, you will love it! Wish you a good time there, and all the best!

# CHAPTER 6

## IMMIGRATING TO THE “FREE” WORLD

Last we spoke about Israel in a previous chapter. We had arrived at the Israeli central airport of Lod. We spent some time there with family and friends, and next were taken by the airport security forces and probably by representatives of the Israeli government, to be debriefed about our intentions. Specifically, what our plans were concerning remaining in Israel or leaving it for America.

We found ourselves in quite a difficult situation at that point. Times were very hard for Israel then, just like they are now. It almost always seems that times are tough for Israel, and the world as a whole. Remember, in 1973 there was a lot of tension in the world because of the oil supplies dwindling, the oil embargo was brewing, there definitely was a feeling of major trouble brewing.

Israel, as you probably remember or guessed, whatever the case, was in harm's way in a very serious manner. At that time Israel was trying to bring as many Jews to live and exist there as possible. Quite frankly, as many young Jewish people as possible, boys and girls alike from all over the world, because of the need to populate the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces).

If you recall, the reason we were in Israel primarily was because we could satisfy the dictator Ceausescu's unfillable thirst for dollars, many of them. So here we were, taking advantage of Israel's kindness in bringing us to the country, paying for us and buying us literally as you would a cow, a pig (sorry, not kosher!), chicken, lamb ... you get the idea!

Luckily, at 26 I was considered too young in Israel to deal directly with the authorities, so my parents handled matters relating to my brother and me. When those Israeli officials questioned my parents like this: you folks plan to remain and live in Israel, or you plan to move to America? What were my parents going to say? Lie? I don't think so. Yes, they said, we plan to move. We had relatives living in Israel, but nothing like my mom's brother and half-sister, who both lived in

NYC, my uncle lived in the Borough Hall area, one of NYC most Hassidic neighborhoods, if not the most. My aunt and her family lived in Elmhurst, in Queens. Another NYC borough. She was a secular Jew, as was her entire family. She would never have been accepted by my uncle, who was at the very top of the prestigious Hassidic sect of Satmars.

Be that as it may, my parents honestly replied that our intent was never to live in Israel for the reasons just mentioned above. Those officials had absolutely no problem with my parents' statement, Jews are used to always being on the move (consider the biggest move ever, anywhere, the Diaspora), so they said, "No problem", with respect to our choice. Just recall, Israel had just paid that Romanian dictator \$6000, not exactly peanuts in those days!

They left us waiting in that room, for quite some time, as I recall. By the time our flight arrived at Lod Airport, after collecting our few pieces of luggage, then spending time with our relatives (I don't remember the exact sequence of events), in any event, by the time those officials returned it was late at night. We were dead tired; it had been a long. Long day.

Had we decided to remain and live in Israel, our faith would have probably and most likely been to a much nicer place than where we ended up going. But this way, they packed us and our bags into a van, and we found ourselves in the middle of the night, being shipped to an immigrant center in the desert, somewhere, which we found out the next day, was in Dimona. Two things about Dimona (a lot more will be said later on in this chapter). First, it is not far from the larger biblical city of Beer-Sheva, which has two meanings: well of the seven and well of the oath. It is not known which of the two was actually meant. Anyway, Dimona is not situated very far from Beer-Sheva. Second, the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center, actually, Israel's Nuclear Reactor is located in Dimona as well. A photo of Dimona is included below.



We were taken to the Dimona “ulpan”, which served both as our home as well as the center where we would be studying Hebrew. The name literally means a learning center for intensive Hebrew. And that is exactly what it was. We loved the place. Needless to say, from the moment we landed at the airport, and afterwards, seeing the sights and all, as dark as it was, we could tell that we had “flown” through about 50-100 years in time (no pun intended here). I mean, the difference in everything, buildings, roads, people, food, everything was in such stark contrast with Romania, where basically we had NOTHING. I mean, it all blew my mind. We will get into more details as we go through this chapter.

It was in May 1973, I do not remember exactly the day, let’s call it around the 20th, for lack of that info. Well, what I do remember vividly is that a few drops of rain fell that night on our way to Dimona, and it NEVER rained again on us while we were in Israel. We left on August 23, 1973. I recall that date so well, because that is a Romanian national holiday that celebrates Romania being freed from the German WW II occupation. A photo of Dimona is shown on the previous page.

Other than the weather (which will be detailed further in this chapter), it can basically be described like this: early morning is the best time of the day, until the sun gets too strong and the heat begins to be unbearable; during the daytime hours, say between 9 AM and sundown. The temps would be well in excess of 100 degrees; then after the sun went down, gradually it got cooler, so that in the middle of the night it could cool off into the 40s easily. And then, at least in Dimona, the process repeated itself, day after day after day. In between, at least again in Dimona, almost regularly, a strong wind would come around and stir tremendous sand gusts. I mean, you couldn’t see anything, and it would last, and last, and last. It is called in Arabic “khamsin” - not sure about the spelling.

What I recall about the khamsin is that the atmospheric pressure tightened so much that I would experience tremendous headaches, which would stay with me for days. I also remember that the “ulpan” building windows were not windows at all, just openings in the walls. I mean, during the khamsins, the sand would be everywhere, including our souls. Let’s just say, it was quite something else. But like everything in life, we got used to things, as eventually towards the end of our stay in Israel, it became a matter of course, if you can believe that.

If I remember correctly, we were given money for our sustenance (food money), as living in the ulpan was free for us. I must say this here, Israel had at the time quite a few extremely socialized programs. In that regard, I believe Israel was a country organized in the structure of Western European countries, more than America. The socialism was typical to the Western European style socialism.

Our first trip was to a grocery store, to get basic foods, which was an experience in itself. Oh my God, what an amazing sight! After being in Romania in a situation where we had a hard time having enough food for ourselves, here we were, in a place that had every kind of food you could imagine, of a quality I did not know existed. Oh my God! I can't stop saying that. The bread, the cheese, the sour cream, the desserts, the meats, all the foods. I knew one thing at that moment: We would never go hungry again!

Eventually, after a couple of days of rest, we got our first chance to experience the "ulpan". At the time of our "aliyah" (pronounced that way, but actually spelled Aliyah, or our immigration to Israel), in 1973, most of the immigrants to Israel were those coming from the USSR, as most of the immigration from other Eastern European countries was already over. There were Jews from other countries in the world coming but in much smaller numbers. Most of our colleagues in the ulpan were though Russians, more correctly, Russian Jews.

In any event, we had our first get-together, and were introduced to our teacher, a very pretty young woman, whose name was "Bracha". The best translation would be "blessed". She was extremely blessed in teaching us Hebrew. Her excitement, her style, her patience, her persistence in teaching us, all of that was so breathtaking. She was about my age, maybe a couple of years older. I was young, and that always helps with learning, but her skills in teaching allowed me to speak basic Hebrew, at a level that allowed me to communicate simple sentences with Israelis quite amazingly and quickly. By the time we left Israel, I had mastered maybe 1,000 or so words, quite sufficient to allow me to make myself understood. And that was good enough for me.

Gradually, we delved into living in Israel, a different way of life, different customs, different attitudes, different priorities - just a totally different way of life. Of course, each country, more or less, has its own ways. Quite frankly, it wasn't all that easy for me to deal with all the change, and what a change it was.

In the beginning, we were limited in being able to do things, visit places and meet folks, simply because of the lack of funds. The Romanian government, just like how they stripped us of our Romanian citizenship on the basis that we were “traitors”, had sent us away into oblivion without any money or other sources of existence. We can make a strong argument about that situation to anyone, but unless one finds him/herself in that position, I can see that it would be difficult to feel for us. And that is OK, we are really not looking for sympathy. A break here in my story.

Just below is probably one of the most recognizable photos of Jerusalem, it shows a portion of the Old City’s Western Wall. The photo itself shows the famous golden dome of the Muslim Al-Aksa Mosque, centrally located.



The famous Western Wall is also called the Wailing Wall, for all the misery Jews have poured onto it during their millennial existence. It was part of the Jewish Temple that was destroyed.

Eventually, we managed to gather some funds and visit Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Beer-Sheva and some other localities, primarily while visiting relatives and friends. Gradually, we

managed to get a better feel for what Israel was and what it means to be a Jew in the Holy Land. Those were and always will be special moments in our lives. A true sense of being a Jew with equal rights was driven home and it felt really good. Extremely good! We finally belonged somewhere!

Then the first couple of months passed and my brother and I were summoned for the draft. As I mentioned earlier, I had finished with the Romanian army and the experience was disastrous for me and my parents, especially my mom. And it had a very bad effect on my mom. This fact is important, for the details described below. So as a result of the draft, my brother was drafted for three years, since he was not involved in any military duty before. I was drafted for nine months, because of my age and because I had the Romanian Army experience behind me. Well, as soon as my parents heard about it, especially my mom, immediately the preparations for immigrating to America began.

Since we are talking about the Promised Land, I believe it would be unfair to leave out a number of representative photos of basic Israeli locations. So here we go!





We'll start with the Tel-Aviv skyline and Yaffo, its suburb. Next a photo of Haifa, a city in the northern part of Israel, where one can visit Elijah's tomb, across from the eastern shore of the



Mediterranean Sea. Just above a photo of Beer-Sheva, which contains ruins from biblical times. Beer-Sheva is located in Israel's desert named Negev.



Next, just above another famous spot in Israel's Negev: a photo of the Dead Sea, Its waters contain about 30% salt. When bathing there, I could not drown, no matter how hard I was trying. Imagine how helpful that is, when you have no idea how to swim. One thing for sure, it's quite a sight!



Just above, the last of these photos. I chose a very special site in Israel's history, the famous Masada. One of many locations where extremely courageous Jewish fighters withstood the attacks of enemies, often ending up victorious. One thing about Masada, when you stand there in front of

it, it's impossible not to be impressed by its splendor. I can only imagine the efforts that went into building it, especially at that altitude it is located at! It is also situated in the Negev, the large Israeli desert.

Finally, for good measure, just below is a photo of Galilee, because it was very important in biblical times. Like I said, many, many, many more sites of Jewish history are missing, because it is only so much room I have in this book.



My mom had a premonition that something bad was about to happen and she could not deal with the idea that a war could break out at any time and we could be killed. Which in Israel CAN happen anytime, as it does, just look at the war between Israel and Hamas at this time. It's only been going on and off for maybe 3,000 years. The Bible calls them Philistines. But tell me please, how close is that to Palestinians? The Bible says that they fought each other, the Jews lost, and the Ark was taken from them. But then King David tells the story of how, afterwards, the Jews fought them again. This time, they won and got back the Ark. It's been going on for all those years, but I believe even much longer. Hamas, I believe, to be among the descendants of the Philistines, they will not stop fighting Israel any time soon. Israel better be ready for that!

My mom's amazing feeling was right on the money. As it happened, immediately after we left Israel, towards the end of August 1973, only a couple of months later, the Yom Kippur War broke out in October. More details on that later.

We informed the local authorities that we were invited to a family wedding, in part true.

Israel, the great country that it is, never bothered us with too many questions, nor about whether we planned to come back or not. They issued us the original identification documents, but no passport. It was quite a short time to get that done, even for Israel. But they had an interesting way to solve that problem. They issued us documents named Travel Permits, which to this day is the official document that verifies our identity as Israeli citizens.

Because if we ever were to move back to Israel, once you place your foot on Israeli soil, you automatically become an Israeli citizen. I have mentioned that earlier. But that fact deserves repeating. In my view, it's very special. After I immigrated to the States, they never took my citizenship away, nor did they call me a traitor. Quite different from the Romanians, isn't it? Well, those Romanians were communists, or so they called themselves. Today's Romania and its government are different, thank God! Not as different as Israel. But nevertheless, different.

Now, onto Italy!



We were helped financially to fly to Rome by an organization named HIAS, or Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, which to this day helps folks in dire straits like us to relocate out of trouble. I cannot commend these folks enough for their unbelievable work, in helping out folks in terrible immediate need.



The first photo is the San Pietro's cathedral and plaza. Let me start by saying this: without any question, my stay in Rome was definitely one of only three greatest moments of my life. During our stay in Rome and Italy for that matter, we were as I said above, sponsored by HIAS. We were not allowed to work for any financial gain and were required to intensively study English. I respected the request not to work, but learning English, that was a different story. I do not exactly remember the reasons for it, maybe the quality of teaching, maybe there were so many things to do in Rome, but I picked up very little of the language. Not quite sure how much, but for all practical purposes, I arrived in America without any sort of English-speaking ability. But once in America, I needed to learn English in a serious manner. You know how it goes - necessity will make you more geared to learn to do things. But I will get to that later. The photo above is the Coliseum.



The idea of staying in Rome was to wait there for the American visa to immigrate. In those days that would take about six months, but hey, what a sacrifice! Living in Rome and Italy for six months waiting for the American visa, I must say, it was a deal I could not refuse!

There was another “sacrifice” to be made however. The American embassy/ consulate handling visa/citizenship/passport matters was not in Rome, but in Naples. There came our other sacrifice. We needed to travel to Naples and back to Rome, AND stay in Naples for a few days. We managed somehow to survive. What a terrible time to spend there. This is the time when I would like to thank so much to Italy and the Italians for giving me that wonderful opportunity to stay and enjoy their country, at a relatively difficult time in my life. Saying that I will never forget their graciousness, does not begin to express my total gratitude for their unconditional kindness. God bless you Italians and Italy! While still in Rome, one other item of special note. Everyone, I am sure, when talking about Rome, could not possibly forget about The Vatican. Neither can I! Of course, we were allowed to spend our day at and in the Vatican for FREE! No payment at all. Guess where I spent five or maybe six Sundays, while in Rome? Well, you guessed it



A beautiful photo of Naples is shown here. Naples is a gorgeous city!

The second photo on page 112 is a magnificent photo of one of the most beautiful palaces anywhere in the world. It is the palace of Vittorio Emanuele II!

The art world housed inside The Vatican speaks for itself, no explanations required. However, what needs explanation and probably not many know this fact, at least not in the days I visited Rome, is this; the fact that I had no money did not stop me from visiting the Vatican. Because once a month, on a Sunday, we were inside there! And did I have the time of my life!

So, the photo from the Vatican is that of the Sistine Chapel. I wish I could show its incredible beauty. There is just no way to show it in a photo, it cannot be done. I am now convinced of that. But I will include one below anyway.



There were some other matters worth mentioning here. We lived for most of those five or six months more or less in central ROME, in a hotel-like building, called in Italian “PENSIONE”. An American would consider it to be a lower cost, inexpensive hotel. In any event, we lived in one of them and for us it was very special too. Just remember our living conditions in Romania, prior to our immigration from there. You must appreciate the shock factor involved here when one tries to understand how this is possible in countries like Israel or Italy but not Romania.

This place, other than having a great owner, one who was available to me, to teach and speak Italian with me, had an amazing corner table in the hallway, where pasta and sauce were steaming 24/7. It was there to take at no extra cost. Imagine that! I was never hungry again while in Rome.



And then, the amazing Italian table wines at the corner grocery store, selling for a fraction of the cost of what a bottle of Coca-Cola would go for in those days. I have no idea how much water I drank while in Rome, but I would guess a LOT more wine! Hehe ...

As far as my learning Italian while there, reading papers, watching TV, and talking a lot with my landlord, in about three months I became fairly fluent. It was amazing to me how quickly one can learn other languages, if enough attention and effort are expended. Learning several languages, I came to realize that software packages like Rosetta Stone, Babble, Pimsleur and others, use a model for learning and they apply that method to any of the languages they handle.

Once you realize that, and you set your course of action similar to theirs, it becomes easier to learn other languages. I should say easier, because any learning of a language, in the long run, will require some serious effort.

Above is a photo of a typical “Pensione” in the area where I lived while in Rome. This one is not the one I lived in but is very similar.

Whatever the case, when all was said and done, I was glad to be able to communicate quite well with my landlord and others. The man was amazed that I was able to improve so much in such a short period of time. By the time I left Italy for America, my Italian was amazingly good. What happened eventually, many years later - we are talking 40-plus years later - when life had

me tackle Spanish (details later), it interfered with my Italian. The two languages being so close in many regards, and not practicing Italian at all anymore, my command of Spanish became substantially superior, quite superior to Italian. Even today after all these years, I still can almost fully understand Italian, but the command of speaking Italian simply isn't there anymore. I am convinced that with practice it would rapidly come back, but the opportunity to do so is just not there.



The last couple of months in Italy, we are talking somewhere from November through January 30, the day we left Italy for America, we lived in the Port of Rome, named in Italian, “Ostia del Mare” (Ostia by the Sea). It was a very nice city, that we enjoyed tremendously. The climate of the area was so much milder than that of my Transylvanian mountains, with its cold,

snowy, icy climate, it was so refreshing to be on the Mediterranean shore in December or January and not see everything frozen. An aerial photo of Ostia is shown on a previous page.

Then, the day of our departure finally came. I do not remember too much about that, other than boarding this huge Boeing 747, Jumbo-jet plane. Many hundreds of folks were packed like sardines on this huge thing. An Alitalia plane. My thoughts were concentrated mostly on what would happen if our plane crashed into the ocean? Not a very comforting thought! That scenario, thank God, did not materialize, but it kept my mind quite busy for the approximately 9-10 hours, the flying time to get to New York's JFK Airport. This was the third flight of my life. As far as I can recall the flight, I don't believe that there were any major issues occurring. We eventually arrived, after a flight that seemed to take forever. I remember looking from the plane's window nearest to me, while it was flying over Manhattan (New York City proper), seeing those amazing skyscrapers from up there. Quite a view! Basically, the whole thing just blew my mind. Compare that view to my 15,000 people town in Romania, which, when I lived there, I thought was big. Yeah, right!

Next, I know, we are at the JFK airport next. Our original flight to Israel from Bucharest, then that airport in those days, and now this one at JFK, I mean the shock of the difference was just too much to handle in one session. Wow! At this point, I can confidently say that trying to analyze and deal with the shock, it was as if we just flew (no pun intended at all here!) through about 100 years of forward movement in less than a day!

Living back in an Eastern European socialist/communist country for all those years, where the ability to grasp what the so-called "free" world meant, where anything about the West was so limited, so guarded against, one could not grasp the backwardness of Romania when she was set vis-a-vis the true free World. There were some folks who could travel anywhere abroad, favorites of the government, people who were strongly advised to be careful about what was OK to say about life in the West, upon their return home, and what was a taboo. Others, who chose to defect, even if they tried to bring light in some ways to the country, were presented as sickos who were lying, because they had a beef with the system in Romania.

Folks like me only had one way of hearing about the real truth in the world, not the bunch of lies presented to us by the Romanian government. And that was the shortwave radio

communication from radio stations such as the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Luxembourg, and the like. But because of all the brainwashing, one had to at least wonder, who was really telling the truth?



Allow me to include the photo of a radio that looks exactly like my tiny radio, that kept me good to it, to find out what really was going on in the world. I can't believe that photos of it are still available! To many, this photo may mean nothing, but for me, it was EVERYTHING!

I was more or less a kid when I was religiously listening to this thing, not even sure how we managed to have that radio. My parents had no idea that I was listening to the “West”, and the local government and security forces had teams of electronics experts, so called “jammers”, who were infecting the airways with “noise”. Many days, reception was impossible. I was staying up nights to listen, because at those hours, the jamming would be less intense.

Imagine a teenager, sitting there with my tiny radio, laying in bed under my covers, believing that this way, those “bad” people would not find me if they came into our home. Hmmmm... What beautiful memories! I will never forget, when in 1970 George Harrison's “My sweet Lord” came out, me listening to Radio Luxembourg to hear it! I was “already” 23 then.

These were moments of my life that are etched so strongly in my memory, I guess we all have such memories. My conviction is that moments like the one I described above define who we were, and more importantly, who we have become. No matter how we look at those moments, they are a steady measure of what we have become.

And now, after collecting our meager belongings at the airport, packing them in my uncle's car, they took us to their home. At that time, they lived in a neighborhood called Elmhurst, a neighborhood of Queens, one of New York City's five boroughs. Well, that trip from the airport to their home, is very hard to describe the array of emotions that were swirling in my head. Using a usual term, it was like I died and went to heaven! What I was seeing totally blew my mind. You know, it wasn't like the shock I experienced when I first set foot on Israeli soil. That was something only vaguely similar because of the breathtaking difference between Romania, and what I was witnessing there in Israel. Being a Jew in Israel was a feeling in itself.

But here and now, in America, it had a deep meaning of its own. You know you hear about it back in Romania, nothing but the worst, as you would expect. But being here and witnessing for yourself what America is, was something else. Of course, the deep meaning of America took a much longer time to experience and understand. But just that moment, going through those neighborhoods of Queens, was an experience I will never forget. I wish I could better express those unbelievable feelings, but hey, I am sure you can understand that tremendous excitement I found myself in during that ride to their home.

That day was so packed, to be honest with you, for most of it, I wasn't sure if I was dreaming or witnessing reality. By the way, many times over the next several months, I would wake up in the middle of my sleep, and pinch myself to make sure I am alive or dead! That it was reality, and not a dream. Let's say, it was something else.

But eventually, things settled down and I came to realize that it was REAL! It was like hearing from God – “Welcome to your new life in America, Alex!”

# CHAPTER 7 - LIFE IN OUR NEW COUNTRY - GOD BLESS AMERICA

## Challenges In A New Life

We found ourselves in a totally new country, living in a real close relative's home. These folks, my aunt Eva, my mother's half-sister and her husband, Zoli Weisz, were extremely kind to us. They unquestionably made our first few days in America very pleasant and happy. We had a beautiful place to live in, great food, entertainment, and pretty much everything needed to exist, in our new, first place, so far from our last Romanian home. Before they immigrated to the US, we lived door-to-door in our old hometown. After they left, we felt so lonely. They were the ONLY real close family we had left at that moment in Romania. So, to say that we missed them those last few years, you can imagine.

But in our minds, as any normal person would have it, we were concerned about how and when we would be able to stand on our own. HIAS, the organization that paid for our travel from Israel to Italy, supported us there as far as room and board were concerned, and then again covered our costs to make it to America. But now, they were essentially no longer responsible for our welfare. All those financial obligations we had concerning HIAS - even though there were no contracts signed that we would be obligated to pay back whatever they expended on us, it was understood that as soon as we would be in a position to do so (have our jobs, a home and the ability to cover our own expenses), we would start helping HIAS to help others (and plenty of help was needed all over), by donating as much as we could afford. My parents knew what sort of sums HIAS had spent on us throughout the process. As far as I can remember, my parents returned more than what was originally expended on us. Then of course, in addition to that, I have contributed over the years to their benefit, to this moment. I will NEVER stop donating to that amazing cause they are committed to.

Immediately after our arrival to America, from what I recall another organization named NYANA (New York Association for New Americans) or something along those lines, stepped in to help us. In 1973, this agency would help folks from anywhere in the world to settle in NYC, and we were just one of those extremely lucky families that this particular organization was helping

out. By the way, even though the agency was deeply rooted in Jewish philanthropy, they helped both Jew and non-Jew alike to settle in New York City. From what I understand, they are not in operation any longer. Also, they were so well supported, no pay back was necessary.

Their help was tremendous in all areas of life. Settling us in our first new home, a very nice apartment in a beautiful apartment building (not new, but very well maintained), providing funds for food and other expenses, and helping us find jobs. They sent us to our first jobs, and were just there for us until we could stand on our own feet. What an amazing group. Maybe my parents did repay them in some way for their help, but I am not aware of that. In any case, we did not need their help for very long. I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, we were able to stand on our own within a few weeks, not too many. Maybe four - six weeks.



### **Working - The American Way**

Here are the details of my very first job in America. Let's just start by saying that my English was practically non-existent, for the most part. My very first job was with an engineering firm in Manhattan, located in a skyscraper at the corner of 5th Avenue (the most famous of avenues in NYC) and 42nd Street (also pretty famous). Let's just say, it was located at one of the most

important intersections in NYC, across from the NYC Public Library. If I remember correctly, the office was located either on the 10th or 14th floor, in a building at 500 5th Avenue with at least 50 stories, maybe more. Wow! What a change from my previous Romanian workplace. A photo of my first office location is shown on the previous page.

Just think about it, being transplanted into one of the most populous cities in the world, finding my way around, and trying to do a job that my employer would be happy with. I mean, there were all kind of responsibilities there. That organization, NYANA, just sent me there, to this firm, Jansen & Rogan Consulting Engineers, PC. We are talking about 50 years ago. It wouldn't be surprising if the firm is no longer in business by now. The firm was basically a mechanical/electrical engineering firm, primarily involved in commercial building engineering and design of all sorts.

NYANA must have called them because folks working for NYANA may have been on friendly terms with the leaders/owners at the firm. I can imagine that someone called the firm and told them along these lines ... hey guys, we are sending you an electrical engineer who recently immigrated from Romania. He is basically deaf and mute, I guess said in some kinder manner. "Be gentle with him, don't bite him!"

Well, the first person I came across there was the firm's Chief Electrical Engineer, who happened to be Jewish. What a wonderful man! I mean, standing in front of him, he was trying so gently to speak in English to me, probably explaining what he wanted me to do there. Of course, I got nothing out of that conversation, other than realizing he was a true gentleman. I remember the man's name to this day ...

Sam Chafetz, PE (those two initials mean Professional Engineer), is a license that is given to those engineers who pass a complex state exam qualifying them to work as engineers and lead other professionals who are not licensed. In conjunction with that, as my destiny would have it, ALL my managers (bosses) through all my latter jobs, every single one of them were top-notch professionals, each eventually guiding me to become a professional that all of them could be proud of.

A few things about that first job. Firstly, without any English, without any experience, all

I could handle was to become a copyist. That job, at the time, entailed transferring red line marks done by designers and engineers onto originals that would serve to produce new, correct blueprint drawings. Like I have already stated, no technical person working in that line could start any lower. My writing at the time was absolutely horrendous. My boss, let's call him Sam, never once complained or admonished me. He had the patience of an elephant, as they say. For that nothing-special job, my company was paying me double the minimum wage, which in itself was a miracle. The year was 1974. I worked there from around early March until that fall, probably a half year or so. During that period, I worked many weeks up to 100 hours per week. All kinds of overtime, "super" money, which in those days, if I worked five workdays, plus three extra hours per day, they would give me \$5/night, no taxes. The money had some unbelievable power then.

Here comes a real kicker. Working in that manner, I was bringing home \$350 per week, or as it was, around \$1500 per month, let's say. That was again, the net.



What could someone do with that money? Well, to fill up a huge cart at a supermarket, soup-to-nuts, as they said then ... \$30/week, that covered the food for the four of us. Or around \$120-130 per month. I am sure you are beginning to figure it out. The next summer (1975), I bought my first brand new Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme (car of the year that year) for \$4,750. Color - sky blue, with a Landau top. How about that? Three months of my pay! Not bad. What a gorgeous "baby". "God bless America," I would say. A photo of yours truly is included just above. His first car, his outfit style circa 1975, a polyester flower y shirt (can't tell, but take my word

for it!), bell-bottom pants, checkered jacket, AND the hair! I have been bald for about 40 years now. What wouldn't I give to have a fraction of that hair now? Hmmm ... By the way, sorry for the quality of that photo, but that was the photo technology of the 1970's.

In that work place I lucked out with another thing. One of the senior electrical engineers there was from Romania. He made my life so much easier. Being able to talk to another human being every now and then in Romanian was a special feeling. Another blessing.



For whatever reason (you may say that I was probably starting to feel my way around), I decided that moving on to another firm, would provide me with better opportunities, and hopefully more money. I was a goner! I felt terrible about doing that to my lovely boss, but hey, it is the American way, isn't it? So, my next job was with the firm of Meyer, Strong & Jones, a highly respected, well-known, older engineering firm. At that time, the firm was located at 230 Park Avenue in NYC. That gorgeous building is located behind Grand Central Station, a pretty famous spot in NYC. A photo of the building is shown above.

That firm afforded me such better opportunities that making the move was basically a no-

brainer, so to say. Firstly, it gave me the opportunity of learning and applying my much-improved English skills in such an amazing manner, that very quickly I passed through the roles of draftsman, junior designer, and a full designer, to Jr. Electrical Engineer. All of that in about two plus years. Not too bad! Take my word for it.

Of course, by doing that my salary very quickly went from \$10,000/year to somewhere around double that, \$20,000/year. That felt really good. I was at Meyer, Strong and Jones, PC till around 1976. At that point, my immediate boss received an employment offer from a fire alarm system manufacturer, and I decided to join him at his new place. Actually, I learned fairly quickly in America, that if you want better pay, to be better appreciated, and in general to grow and learn faster, you have to move from firm to firm. Loyalty at least in engineering would leave you in the dust. But eventually, that turned out to be a mistake, joining my former boss. But hey, that is how we learn in life, probably more from the bad moves than the good ones.

That firm was named Codata Corporation, it was trying to make it in a new field, with lots of competition. The firm was always in financial trouble, squeaking by from month to month. With the situation being what it was, I always felt that tomorrow would be my last day working there. Well, November came, and we were in trouble again. I was telling myself, "There is no way for them to lay me off; I am the only one producing drawings for them." Well, guess what? I was the first one to be laid off.

That was some experience of being laid off in America. Just learning to survive. Standing in the unemployment line, waiting for my "chicken feed" a Social Security employee approached me. This person may have had a high school education, not that it mattered in itself. This woman made me feel worthless for standing in that line. You can imagine what an effect that had on me if after 45 years I still remember the scene. It was the only time in my 40-year engineering career that I was unemployed. Anyway, that passed too, like everything else ....

After about 5-6 weeks, I found a pretty good job, working for a manufacturer of heavy machinery in the corrugated paper/box industry. That job provided a very good opportunity to learn some serious electrical engineering. It also gave me the opportunity to do a lot of business-related travel and get to know the country that way. Let me just say something here, out of sequence: Something important happened during that period - I got married. We'll get to that in a

subsequent chapter. But no question, that added more pressure to my life.

The name of the firm was and probably still is, S & S Corrugated Paper Machinery, PC, a top-notch firm in that domain. One of their heavy machines, a conveying belt moving folded boxes is shown below.



Another great firm where my engineering skill received a tremendous boost. I lasted with this firm probably until 1979, again around two and one-half years,

After that, I found a real special place to work for, believe it or not, the owner of this firm was the brother of George Soros, a mechanical engineer originally from Hungary whose name was Paul Soros. Hopefully, we all know a person named George Soros, a disgrace to Hungary. You could not find two brothers more different than these two. Paul was a great boss, an inventor of heavy machinery used in the business of port developments, and an expert in tremendous material handling systems. He was one amazingly great inventor in this domain. This man had more inventions and patents than anyone I have ever met.

Ship loaders, unloaders, reclaimers, and huge conveyor belt systems. I will try to get a couple of representative photos in here, because equipment of this degree of complexity is not often seen. The machine in the first photo on next page, was designed and built for Conrail Corp., a major transportation firm in Pennsylvania and Philadelphia. I spent more than a year helping to erect the machine at that site. The machine is called a radial shiploader, and it was built under a patent from our firm to load Japanese ships with Pennsylvania coal for our military in Japan. Another great opportunity for me to enhance my engineering skills.



I had a special affinity for this company and this great man, Paul Soros. I loved how in so many different ways, he found means of doing good for others. For instance, for many years, the man developed a foundation that helped young engineers of limited economic means attend college to pursue careers in various engineering fields. In my book (no pun intended), it doesn't get any better.



But as always, something bad must come before good eventually happens. Something really bad was about to happen. I have no idea if Paul Soros had anything to do with it, knowing this man, I doubt it. Probably his micro-managers, in their wisdom, who decided to get rid of the company's retirement plan. It was at the time the government was trying to introduce the 401K retirement plan and the like. Well, the firm did have a pension plan, in addition to the 401K. But

it was decided that they would introduce 401K no matter what, in lieu of our pension plan. In the process, the management came up with a formula to calculate each person's share of the distributed pension fund.

At that time, I was around 38, had a wife and two kids. When that day came for us to find out what each one's share would be, they announced mine - well, when I heard the number, it felt like I had been shot. My share for the seven years or so that I worked there - a grand total of \$406.

I didn't know what to say or do. Actually, that's not quite true. I figured out that my days with Soros Associates were numbered and the number was very low. It was in 1985. At that point my yearly pay was somewhere between \$35,000 and \$40,000 per year. So, I started looking for a job again.

Almost immediately, two offers came my way. Interesting, the salary offers were almost exactly the same, both senior electrical engineering positions. One, very enticing actually, was from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, located either at One or Two World Trade Center, somewhere on the 72nd floor. So, living on Long Island, NY at that time, the travel to the new job location would have been quite a burden. I mean somewhere around four hours total per day, without any traffic issues or other similar problems.

The other offer - was at a Wastewater Treatment Plant in Seaford, Long Island, for my local government there. The commute from my home to the job site was only about ten minutes against traffic. You figured it out, choice no. 2 was the one chosen.

Now, here is the kicker in the whole thing ... Imagine this ....1985 vs. 2001. Had I chosen to be with the Port Authority, a state job, likely I would have been there for the rest of my life. Which means, the odds of me going down with those towers on 9/11 would have been pretty high. So, what can I say? As destiny would have it. The other thing: through my working days, over many years, I worked in those towers, on those floors (you will see later in this chapter), handling a lot of work. In fact, I worked on a project in one of those towers the last time in 2000. Had September 11 occurred in 2000, who knows? I could have been gone. Like always, God had me saved for something different.

Deciding to work for the water treatment plant turned out to be a good thing. Not being in

the crazy NYC traffic, rush probably saved me a few good years of my life. Spending regularly time with my family was definitely a positive factor in a marriage that certainly had many, many challenges (I will touch on that in a future chapter).

My time at the wastewater plant - originally in my offer sheet - the company I was going to work for - Malcolm Pirnie, Inc., was a very well-known environmental engineering firm with a history going back probably 200 years. They were offering me a position as Sr. Resident Electrical Engineer, a position requiring a Professional Engineer's license - for a period of no less than two years of employment. I started there in the early summer 1985 and I was there until Fall of 1997. That opportunity was something that not many Power Electrical Engineers get to experience, as I spent about as much time in design/engineering as I did as a resident handling in construction administration. A winning combo that not many engineers like me could claim. This significant experience later opened doors to opportunities that would not have been available to me otherwise.

In addition, at this moment, I would like to add a couple of things. First, after attaining my PE license, a lot of private consulting jobs became available to me. Amazingly, my exceptional experience as expressed above, came into play. There weren't too many engineers like me on Long Island and as such, my consulting practice (A. D. Engineering Service, PC) was in very high demand. At times, I had as many as four engineers and CADD operators working for/with me on my private projects. Here for a moment .... Do you recall my problems back in Romania when the commissar threatened me and my friends? Now, no one threatened me; instead, they were very happy and thankful that I accepted to work on their projects, pleased to have them completed on time, within the planned costs and schedule.

But 1997 came, and my job was going to end at that site. My company did not want to lose me, so they offered me a position, a real good one, at their headquarters. However, accepting that job would have meant a heavy commute of at least 5-6 hours per day, but those days were gone for me! I didn't take the job.

I was again looking for a job. I found one with New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), more specifically a branch of theirs named the Triboro Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA). This was an agency that was in charge of maintaining and building new structures associated with all east-side bridges and tunnels around NYC. I will not get too

deeply into this assignment, a NY State job, that was very constrictive and boring. BORING! My office had a window facing the Bronx side of the Triboro Bridge. I kept looking at it all day, every day, and eventually, it just got to me. That, combined with the fact that consulting companies were being paid big bucks to do engineering projects for us, only for us to end up redoing their designs, so we could build something, just made me leave. Public work wasn't my cup of tea, definitely!

Might have been with them maybe a year, or a year and one half. By the way, they were paying LOUSY! I was still with TBTA when I accepted my next job. That job turned out to be with an engineering firm called Loring Associates, located at One Penn Plaza. I was hired there as Vice-President of Electrical Systems. It was really the first decent job that I had in my career up to that point. I worked there from 1997 - 2000. My salary in 2000 was I believe, \$110,000. I liked working there, it was a good situation, but as it always is, there was a nutcase there who happened to be off his rocker at the time. He, for no reason, liked to screw with me... his name - Barry Maltz, part-owner. I always wondered if he among other things, might have been the resident Nazi of the firm. Just wondering!

I managed to squeeze out 2-3 years there with Barry pissing me off on regular basis. One day I just said, "goodbye." In October 2000, I got an offer I could not refuse from probably the best engineering firm I worked for. No, actually for sure the best when it comes to appreciation, respect, amazing working conditions, and money. Everything, just the best. I was made a PRINCIPAL of the firm, in a company of around 400 people, there were maybe 30 of us, spread out in about 10 branch offices.

So, my starting salary at Einhorn, Yaffee and Prescott, Mission Critical Facilities, Consulting Engineers was \$126,000 per year. This firm was working on major projects related to .COM era, data center design, and construction. I mean ... the money was just FLOWING into this company. So, I started there, like I said above, with that salary. At Christmas, about three months on the job, I received a \$30,000 bonus. That, just blew my mind. I was applying myself for this firm like there was no tomorrow. If they told me Sunday night - Alex, tomorrow noon time you gotta be in Oshkosh ... that is where you'd find me. There wasn't such a thing as "well ... I can't."

The nicest thing about that job, it was 80% electrical, the rest mechanical, plumbing,

architectural. I was always the main event on a project. Pretty soon, I became Project Manager, Vice-president in charge of the project, and a manager over a group of up to 12 engineers, designers and CADD operators.

I became a very important person in the NYC office of this firm. Eventually, in 2008 our firm was put on sale, I guess the old owners wanted to retire. Every big deal company in the country and world wanted to buy us. HP, Microsoft, Apple, Yahoo, Google, all the other players, there were at least 12 bidders, probably more. Well, HP won the dance. We became their toys.

Here is what that meant in very quick terms .... Between options from EYP, incentive packages, and bonuses from HP, when I retired in 2012, that package was well into six figures. The incentive package included two additional years of medical insurance to cover Glenda and me until Medicare kicked in, as well as additional money to cover miscellaneous medical expenses.

### **Further Education in America**

As already covered in the earlier chapters, my highest level of education from Romania was an electrical engineer's diploma. In American education terms, that would be the equivalent of a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering (MSEE). The Romanian credit system requires 190 credits to complete a program for electrical engineering.

In America, a BSEE - Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering requires somewhere around 150 credits. To obtain an MSEE in addition to a BSEE, one needs another 36 credits. So, the total in America is not all that different from Romania's - 186 vs. 190.

Here is what happened in my case, and why I needed to go back to school. As I have already commented on it, when we were ready to leave Romania for Israel, we simply could not obtain my transcripts from the Romanian Education Ministry. That document would have shown what I had completed in Romania. Why that was not sent to me when my diploma was sent remains another question that will never be answered.

We arrived in America, and I was afraid that when the time came to prove to anyone what I had completed at the Polytechnic Institute in Cluj, I would not be able to prove that I really was an engineer. I had no one to direct me toward the right thing to do. On my own, I decided that the

best course of action to make sure that I had an American credential would be to go back to college.

I decided to go for an MSEE at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (now NYU). The school had known for quite some time that folks like me, immigrating like I did, often did not have the transcripts.

So, they implemented a program where one would go back to school, complete half of the total credits required, or 18 credits, for a non-degree program. If one did that with an average of B+ or better, then that person would be placed into the degree program until the completion of studies. That is how I got my MSEE diploma from Brooklyn Poly.

Later, when I was filing for my PE license, I was asked again for my transcript. As it turned out, at some point, while already fully engaged in the MSEE program at Brooklyn Poly, someone from Romania brought my Romanian transcript. So now, with the American MSEE completed, I had a credit total of 226. Let's say, I have so many credits that I do not know what to do with them.

## **Professional Training And Licensing**

Some would say, "why is this important to folks, to strangers, to you?" Why? Good question to answer, and I hope to be able to do so. Let's just say that in engineering, in certain branches such as my field of Electrical Power Engineering, a lot of companies' credentials were very much dependent on having licensed engineers. As an engineer, if you wanted to further your earning ability, a PE (Professional Engineering) license was absolutely essential. As a non-licensed engineer, you could always work for a PE, but to work on your own, a PE license was required for the great majority of projects. Also, in telling the story of this book, it plays a great part in my life.

It starts like this: As I discussed earlier, my engineering schooling started in Romania, where I earned my degree as an electrical engineer that was my life support, for almost fifty years. I worked in Romania as an engineer for about two or three years, but for all practical purposes, that was basically very little or actually nothing in terms of preparation for what was to come.

Before I knew it, I found myself in America, trying to make something out of myself. Many of those details were listed in the section above (about my working positions throughout my life).

There is something common to many professions - doctors, attorneys, nurses, and even engineers. After many years of schooling, training and practicing the profession, we are asked to pass some very rigorous examinations in order to get licensed. One might question, "Why is that additional examination for licensing necessary?" Surely, there are answers to that, some more acceptable than others. I guess the real answer to that question might be CONTROL, in one form or another.

Be that as it may, in my case, licensing became a real hardship, a pain. Why? Well, first off, I came to America at the age of 26. There were all kinds of hardships just to start my life, our lives, here. I did not have a mentor, or someone to advise me about the steps that were best for me to maximize my abilities as an engineer. Then of course, the language barrier. In the end, I decided to go back to engineering school for an MSEE, I detailed all that above.

At night, since my MSEE was done over a four-year period, my working hours, during those four years meant my day would start at 5 AM and end at 11 PM, sometimes midnight. That situation left very little time for getting licensed and going through the necessary process and effort.

Before I knew it, time flew right by, family, work, etc. I was pushing 40, having been out of basic engineering school for at least 15 years. But this is the time when being licensed was becoming critical. The way the Professional Engineering licensing worked then (it may have changed since I don't know), it had two parts of eight-hour examinations, taken on two consecutive days. Some major effort, I might say.

The first part of the examinations had to do with the theoretical part, in all the subjects that one studied in engineering school. The second part focused on subjects that dealt with the practice of the profession. I believe you needed at least five years of actual work as an engineer, in a field that you were trying to get licensed in, to be allowed to take the second part.

Well, let's say that being examined in matters that one studied decades earlier is not something easy to do, and I might end up saying, to some degree it's unfair. As things went, I eventually got licensed, obviously (I am a PE), but that only happened in 1994 or 1996, one of those years. By that time, I had been out of the Romanian engineering school for 20-25 years. My

basic engineering knowledge was seriously challenged. I probably started the licensing examination for the first time 10-15 years earlier. I tried to pass the first part at least three or four times. With the exams set up on consecutive days, not passing the first part basically rendered passing the second part irrelevant. Well, it got to the point that I was going to give up on the idea of obtaining my PE license. All this was happening in New York State.

At that time, I believe that God stepped in, more or less challenging me to continue with my attempts. How? One of my best friends, and we've been friends for almost 40 years now, a man who happened to be the best Civil/Structural engineer I have ever met, came to me and he started to challenge me (I believe God had a big hand in this anyway!) about taking the PE exam. The man, his name is Robert Todd - Bob, happens to be a Christian, so to me, he was just conveying what God wanted me to do. I believe this was happening I said, either in 1994 or in 1996.

A separate note here - I have another Civil/Structural engineer, that one is without a question my best friend these days, back in Romania - Lewis Kadar, we are friends for 50 years now. It seems that I hold on to friends pretty well!

Getting back to the PE exam. I listened to Bob, I said to myself - why not? - I am pretty good with questions. So, I took the first part, then I took the second part, and then the waiting for the result began. Anyway, "D" day arrived, and guess what? The miracle of miracles. At age 49 and some months, I passed! I was a PE in New York State! The next day - I went to work and guess what was the first thing I did? Yes, I ran to find Bob, and once I did, I said to him: Hey Bob - guess what happened yesterday! He goes without blinking - You passed the PE exam. I said to myself, "How did he know that?" Much later, I realized - Bob was God's messenger, and at this point, I have zero doubt about it!

As you may have already guessed, my professional career shifted into high gear. More on that later. As far as the PE licensing is concerned, living where I did, anyone who knows the area knows the Tri-State includes New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, each requiring its own PE licensing. The process is called "equivalency". It's mostly simple bureaucratic paperwork, but in New Jersey I had to pass what they called "the law", more or less testing knowledge of how to practice your profession there. In Connecticut, I had to pass a test named TOEFL - Test of English

as a Foreign Language. It's still funny to me that need of English proficiency was required for folks like me where English was a second language. At that point I lived in America for 20 years plus, and to get my PE, I needed to pass an English-speaking test. Later on, after relocating to live in Pennsylvania, I applied for a license in that State as well, but never actually got the chance to perform on any projects there.

To complete this PE issue - like I said above, it completely changed my access to all kinds of projects with the various local, federal and state governments. A couple of years later I incorporated a small engineering business in the State of New York - A. D. Engineering Service, PC - under which I performed lots of private engineering work. A long way from my Romanian working days, that's for sure.

### **Becoming An American Citizen**

As presented in some of the earlier chapters, upon leaving Romania, for that brief period between being on the plane to Israel and setting our feet on Israeli land, we were citizens of no country. A very eerie feeling, to belong to no country.

Luckily, that lasted only about six hours, because we became Israeli citizens automatically, just as soon as we stepped into Israel.

We then left Israel and in Italy, we at least had the Israeli citizenship. Once we arrived in America, of course, we wanted to become American Citizens just as soon as the naturalization law allowed us to become one. The law, might still be the same, required for us to first live in the USA for a continuous minimum of five-year period. I can understand now why, but I would have preferred to become one faster. But I understand now that even to recite the American Oath of Allegiance, you needed to know at least some minimal English. The thing is, Israel did not have that requirement. I thought that was cool.

Working as much as I did in those first years, quite frankly had no idea how quickly those five years would pass, which they did. Anyway, sometime in March 1980, finally the day came and I became an American citizen. I wish I could express how proud I was, and very happy at the same time. I would never again be a traitor or a country-less person.

Photo of my naturalization paper is shown below.

No. 10832561

**ORIGINAL**

Petition No. 874042      Alien Registration No. 20 395 765

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Date of birth November 16, 1947, sex Male  
 complexion Fair color of eyes Blue color of hair Brown height 5 feet 10 inches  
 weight 185 pounds, visible distinctive marks None  
 Marital status Married Country of former nationality Roumania

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

*Alexander Deutsch*  
 (Complete and true signature of holder)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
 EASTERN DIST. OF NEW YORK      S.S.

Be it known, that at a term of the \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_ Court of  
 The United States \_\_\_\_\_

held pursuant to law at \_\_\_\_\_ Brooklyn  
 on April 8, 1980 the Court having found that  
 ALEXANDER DEUTSCH  
 then residing at 102-32 65 Avenue, Forest Hills, New York  
 intends to reside permanently in the United States (y when so required by the  
 naturalization laws of the United States), that in all other respects complied with  
 the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be  
 admitted to citizenship, thereupon ordered that such person be and is to be  
 admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 8th  
 day of April in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and  
 Eighty

RICHARD H. WEARE  
 Clerk of the \_\_\_\_\_ U. S. District \_\_\_\_\_ Court  
 Deputy Clerk

Seal

IT IS PUNISHABLE BY U. S. LAW TO COPY,  
 PRINT OR PHOTOGRAPH THIS CERTIFICATE.

## Fighting For Regaining My Romanian Citizenship

Since we are talking about citizenships here, let me present something that was/is of a great importance to me. It concerns Romania classifying me/us (meaning the rest of my family) as “traitors”, upon applying to leave the country through immigration.

Many years after arriving in America, it occurred to me that basically in addition to being classified as a “traitor”, I was stripped of my Romanian citizenship as well. As always, the socialist/communist government of Romania at the time explained stripping us of our citizenship that we had “renounced” it as a condition of being allowed to leave the country. Until today I have missed to see or understand the connection between the two. If one checks it, you will find that any civilized country in the world allows for multiple citizenships. In fact, today I have four.

Even though Romania has been a more civilized, democratic country since 1989, its position remains unchanged in that regard. Probably, because they want to circumvent a situation where their country might be sued by folks who were discriminated against via this citizenship/passport situation.

My attempt to recover my citizenship happened around 2008-2009. I explained earlier that it took more than 2 years to obtain all the documentation required of me and probably in excess of \$2000. One may ask - why bother? My simple answer to that question is this - why not? When something of value is stolen from you, especially something very meaningful to you, are you supposed to just take it and do nothing about it? I don't think so. But what happened under the socialists and communists was that after tremendous brain washing, we got to a point where it seemed normal for the government to do whatever they felt like doing. What is bothersome to me is that the present government, which is part of the European Union, is still allowed to continue the great tradition of the socialists and communists.

Hopefully, one day that will change too, like other bad problems have changed in the past. For whatever reason, my son asked me, dad, am I entitled to Romanian citizenship? First, I could not believe that he would actually be interested in having Romanian/European Union citizenship, but after taking some time to figure it all out, I realized, why not? It certainly has some value, but then, it is his right. Being born of at least one of the two parents who were Romanian citizens, he is automatically a Romanian/European Union citizen. The trick now is that the paperwork requirements are the same as the ones I went through. That is his decision to make. He has all my backing because it is his right.

# CHAPTER 8

## THE MAJOR STRUGGLE OF MY LIFE

### In The Beginning

A long time ago, as a kid, I remember my mother always telling me, teaching me two things, among many others. And it was happening on a pretty regular basis, as well.

First, she was saying - you should be kind to girls! To be honest with you about that, I didn't quite understand why she was making such a big deal about it. When you are that young, and if you are a boy, the last thing you want to be around was girls. They seemed like bad news to very young boys.

But as I got older, slowly, I began to understand why she was telling that. My experiences showed me that I saw many times girls not being treated nicely. Sorry to say, but girls were looked down upon, being treated with disrespect, and boys were mean towards them. And that was definitely the case. Even mothers and wives were not treated much better. I remember clearly that it bothered me, sometimes quite a lot. I began to understand what my mom was talking about. I consider it very unfair to our girls, ladies in our family, and everywhere.

As a result, I always tried to be kind to my friends who happened to be girls, and they liked me a lot for trying to treat them kindly, and respectfully. I have never in my life had problems relating to girls, girlfriends, or women in general. Ever! Until I just had a major one. Please, believe me, there is quite a good reason for me getting into this matter at this time. It will show itself later.

Second, and this one really confused me at that time, when I was so young, my mom used to tell me - you should take care of your family when you grow up! Well, this one I definitely had a problem understanding, but I figured it this way - if my mom was telling me to do that, it must have been important.

Well, as far as this second point, later you will understand how it affected a long period of my life, and because my mom's requests were like the law to me, we Jewish boys kind of respected

what our moms commended!

Fast forward to my first marriage. When I arrived in America, and I have covered parts of that in previous chapters, let's just say, I was 26 years old. So among a plethora of issues that became critically important, one was the matter of getting married. When you are a Jew, whether 13, 20, 26, or older, according to a good Jewish mother, you can never get married too young!

In 1974, the first year I spent in freedom in this country, meeting girls was pretty much impossible. I mean, my English was awful, more or less nonexistent. I was about as "green" as a human being can be, nothing really exciting in me, to be conducive for an American girl to find attractive. As a result, it took that entire first year after we arrived at the end of January, and until Christmas time, to muster enough courage and enough English, to actually start dating. I met a lot of girls, pretty much all Jewish (kind of the unwritten law). Well, let's just say - nothing fit! I have no idea how many girls I met that first year, but I would think at least 50. Probably a lot more.

I was very disappointed, to say the least. I had serious intentions, but most of them were not interested. On top of that, my mom was on my case continuously, saying that I was getting too old to be home with momma, at 29!? What can I say?

My mom was really great person, and not only because she was a great mom to me, but she had a golden heart. For the most part of her working career in Romania, she was the Human Resources Manager of the largest employer in my old town, a company manufacturing beautiful furniture. In that position, she helped many, all kinds of people, with securing jobs for them. In many cases, she helped many single mothers, by getting jobs for them, apartments to live in, and arranging daycare space for the babies.

Why am I saying this? My mom did not know the word "bigot," or in any way did she accept bigotry. I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter, that my mom never saw a difference in people's races, religious beliefs, ethnicity, and the like. However, when I used to come home in the old country, at times with non-Jewish girls, as long as it was not marriage related it was OK. But marrying a non-Jewish girl was like a major sin. Of course, I couldn't understand the conflict there. Anyway, later I came to understand my mom's problem with that. She told me - listen, every

marriage has strife in it, there is no way to get around that. And when that happens, I do not want to hear that your wife would call you a “stinking Jew”. That sort of thing was very prevalent in earlier years in Romania, while mixed marriages were still in fashion OR, she said, you might call your wife a “shicksa” (the spelling might be wrong - a cheap woman, in Yiddish!). What would I say to all that? Jewish boys very much respected mothers’ wishes, especially in those days.

Why is this important here? Because I knew that if I was going to marry an American girl, only a Jewish girl would do, as far as my mom was concerned, anyway. One thing was for sure, I was not even supposed to bother trying to meet non-Jewish girls, as it would have been a waste of time. It’s now 1975.

A couple of my good friends, from back in my college years in Romania, immigrated to America as well. They lived very close to my home at the time in Queens, NYC. In their building, one of their neighbors, an older lady, had an apartment near theirs. It just so happened that a niece of hers was visiting her. The niece was a Hungarian girl, about a year or so younger than me. Her name was Eva. She lived in Budapest, an amazingly beautiful city.

In my book, Budapest is one of the three most beautiful cities in the world. Anyway, Eva was visiting America for something like three months. During that period of time, we were introduced to each other. I think we hit it off and spent quite a bit of time together.

It goes without saying that she was Jewish, but knew very little, most likely nothing, about Judaism. But she was Jewish, so my mom was OK with me dating her.

As far as I was concerned, we were coming from a similar cultural background, from almost the same part of the world. We spoke the same language (Hungarian) and I figured that this relationship would have a much better chance of working with all the commonalities in our past lives. My relationship with Eva, while she was in America, for the most part, was mostly platonic.

Eventually, the three months came to an end, and Eva had to return home. From the airport, she pleaded with me to continue our relationship, long distance as such. We continued to correspond, fairly regularly, and after about two years of that, she eventually returned to America. Believe it or not, she won an immigration lottery, part of the quota for Hungary.

We eventually married in March 1977 but had no kids for the first four years. The first year, things were good. Eva and I, although we were not madly in love with one another, managed to kind of get along. However, after the first year of marriage, a problem developed between Eva and my sister-in-law. As time passed on, things just got worse and worse. The scuffle affected the entire family, including the people already alive at the time, and later on, the babies that were born as the years passed by.

It got to the point that Eva started to treat my parents poorly, which needless to say, affected me very negatively. Many of my family members questioned why would I stay in that marriage.

Well, there were two major reasons why I decided not to divorce. First, remember my mom's teaching me about taking care of my family. Divorcing wouldn't have respected her wishes or her teaching.

Second, in my mind, I considered the fact that no one in my family ever got divorced, as it was something that no Jews in my family would ever do. I did not want to be the first one to do that.

### **Married Life And Kids**

The first few years of the marriage passed pretty quickly. I described in a previous chapter about my working career and the jobs I worked at. Eva, who already worked in Hungary for a major hotel system there for a few years, using her experience, managed to find a job with a hotel in NYC. During that period, we lived in Forest Hills, Queens, NYC.

I remember vividly that many nights, I would go to NYC to pick her up from work, then come back home, trying to get some sleep, because in a few hours, I had to go back to the city, to my own job there. It was a very busy life. Maybe that explains why I didn't have the time to consider divorce. Missed the boat there, no doubt!

Well, in 1981, my son was born in July. So now, it wasn't only the two of us anymore, but we had a little guy that needed our full attention. Eva stopped working for the hotel, and she concentrated on being a mom and housewife. We didn't have time for too much strife, as the baby was taking a lot of our attention.



Our first home was in a multi-home apartment building in Rego Park, Queens, NYC, as shown in the photo above.

The building management decided to “red herring” the building sometime towards the end of 1981. That meant, we were “forced” to either buy our apartment at around \$50K or move out immediately. Winter was coming, we were there with one tiny baby, basically in big trouble. The one good thing was that we managed to save through our work around that much, maybe a bit less. That apartment building, as most buildings of that age in NYC at that time, was badly infested with mice and all kinds of pests. Our apartment was situated right next to the incinerator chute, which just made our decision that much easier.

So, we decided to move to Long Island, about another 30 minutes further away from my job location in NYC. The one good thing about that - commuting to the city got a lot more civilized, because the LIRR (Long Island Rail Road) operation was much better. I didn’t need to take the dirty, non-ventilated old, and beaten-up subway. That was great!

We bought our first home in East Meadow, a city of about 50,000 inhabitants. A photo of our first home is shown on the next page. It wasn’t huge or fancy, but we, more importantly, our

kids loved it! We bought it in 1982 for around \$60K. It was a small one level ranch, with no basement. Nothing spectacular, but it was OURS. We took a small mortgage, so that we could make it work, and a mortgage that we paid off in four years. At that point, we decided to move “up”, as my daughter was born in 1984, and we definitely needed more space. We just simply outgrew our small ranch. We sold it for about \$115K, and bought our second home in 1986. That home went for \$206K, which basically ate up the entire amount we got for our first home, my parents helped us with around \$8K, we put in most of our savings at the time, and that plus a mortgage of maybe \$50K allowed us to purchase our second home. A photo of that home is shown below. It was located in a better section of the town, in a safe cul-de-sac, which was safe for the kids to play in. As you can see from the photo, there were many beautiful big trees in the area, which was one of the reasons the neighborhood was called Barnum Woods.



This was a beautiful home with a very good school system. So, no question, this was moving up for us. That house was our home, one way or another, until Eva moved out of there sometime in 2018. Our divorce proceedings finally ended around 2016. It was originally filed in 2008. That is New York law for you! Oh, for laughs, the attorneys for the entire duration cost us \$120,000. During that period, at one time or another, both of us had to do “pro-se”, which in simple terms, means representing ourselves (no attorneys in those times). The best way for me to qualify for that entire process - ridiculous! You may say - and who cares? I can understand that. But my hope is that some folks finding themselves in that situation might be able to save themselves some grief and come up with better solutions after reading this piece. At least, that is my hope.

### **Our Kids’ Schooling**

The education of our kids, through the worst of moments of our marriage, never took second place. For not a single moment. We were going to make sure that this part of the story was handled flawlessly. And for the most part, it was. We had problems basically for the entire duration of the marriage in ensuring that our marital issues did not, as much as possible, affect their education.



The schooling years started when we were already living in our second home in East Meadow. Both our kids went through the same elementary, jr. high and high schools. The elementary school was named Barnum Woods, after the section of town’s name where the school swas located, and it was also located very close to where we lived. It was named after the Barnum

& Bailey Circus, as they had housed their animals there in the old days, during the summer times. We lived very close to the school.



The junior high school was named Woodland Junior High, because of all the woods in the area. Finally, the East Meadow High School was where they completed their high school level education. The three school photos are included on pages 145 and 146.

My son continued his studies at the University of Rochester, in Upstate New York, an amazing university where he got an amazing bachelor's education. He graduated from there with a double major, one in pre-med and the other in finance/economics. The beautiful campus and the main building are shown in the photo below. He followed that program with a one-year master's program in Public Health at Columbia's Mailman School. From there, he got accepted into Mount Sinai's School of Medicine, in New York City.

Finally, eventually he participated in a two-year fellowship program at the John Wayne Cancer Center in Santa Monica, CA. He became a very, very good doctor. I wish my mom could have been around for that. Oh, my, she would have been so proud of her grandson. Be that as it may ... Photos relating to his time in college and university are on the next page. First, the University of Rochester campus and main building.

Photos of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and of the John Wayne Cancer Center in Santa Monica, CA, are shown on the following page. That is where he obtained his MD and Fellowship in Cancer Surgery Treatment.





For good measure, just remember this father arriving in America with zero dollars in his pocket and basically, no English. I would say - not too bad!

My daughter received just as good of an education in the line of work she pursued. This needs no telling, but do you think I was proud when she announced to me that she wanted to be an Engineer? All I could say was- what?!

Well - my baby, not only did she surprise me with that announcement, but she was actually admitted into Lehigh Engineering School in Bethlehem, PA. Wow! That is a very, very, very good school of engineering, and an old one at that as well. She managed a very good average in her school years, somewhere around 3.4 in an engineering school (that is not easy), graduating and then being offered a great job with a construction management firm in Philadelphia. My daughter did very, very well, and I am surely very proud of her! Her wonderful Engineering School at Lehigh University in Bethlehem is shown in the building photo below.



### **Dealing With Narcissism: Its Effects On Others**

Narcissism - what is it? Why am I raising the issue? What can one do about it? All good questions, and let me see if I can do a good job of coming up with good answers.

In all these years while married to Eva, and really ever since, I must say that marital strife was, and is, a constant. And when I tried to understand why, almost invariably it turned out that

more marriages had to deal with narcissism issues, whether one side of the marriage or both.

Why am I trying to get to the causes of narcissism? For one thing, it caused me all kinds of problems, meaning in my own marriage, and secondly, because I hope that my points on it will help others minimize or even eliminate their problems with narcissism. It was determined through psychological tests that my ex had a very strong narcissism problem. Below is a list describing the problems, and the reason for listing them here is really not to address my previous marital situation, since that is done with. But hopefully, understanding the full extent of the condition, will help others who suffer because of their narcissism. But, for one reason or another, they fail to seek help. The narcissists may feel that a stigma is attached automatically to those who suffer from this dreaded disease.

### Who Really is a Narcissist?

Symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder and how severe they are can vary. People with the disorder can:

- Have an unreasonably high sense of self-importance and require constant, excessive admiration.
- Feel that they deserve privileges and special treatment.
- Expect to be recognized as superior even without achievements.
- Make their achievements and talents seem bigger than they are.
- Be preoccupied with fantasies about success, power, brilliance, beauty, or the perfect mate.
- Believe they are superior to others and can only spend time with, or be understood by, equally special people.
- Be critical of and look down on people they feel are not important.
- Expect special favors and expect other people to do what they want without questioning them.

- Take advantage of others to get what they want.
- Have an inability or unwillingness to recognize the needs and feelings of others.
- Be envious of others and believe others envy them.
- Behave in an arrogant way, brag a lot, and come across as conceited.
- Insist on having the best of everything — for instance, the best car or office.

At the same time, people with Narcissistic Personality Disorder have trouble handling anything they view as criticism. They can:

- Become impatient or angry when they don't receive special recognition or treatment.
- Have major problems interacting with others and easily feel slighted.
- React with rage or contempt and try to belittle other people to make themselves appear superior.
- Have difficulty managing their emotions and behavior.
- Experience major problems dealing with stress and adapting to change.
- Withdraw from or avoid situations in which they might fail.
- Feel depressed and moody because they fall short of perfection.
- Have secret feelings of insecurity, shame, humiliation, and fear of being exposed as a failure.

Just by reading through the various issues, a “normal” person immediately realizes the severity of the condition. Trying to make my marriage work became a challenge that was unbeatable.

In our case, I don't really know for sure what caused my ex to become that way in the first

place, although I do know about some of the details of her upbringing, and they surely sounded like major reasons for creating a narcissistic person, no question. I do not want to get into the nuts-and-bolts details of that, because my intent here is not to criticize, since it likely wouldn't help anyway at this point. My reasoning is strictly to help others avoid the terrible ways my first marriage had gone. Hopefully, my intent is reasonable to my readers. One thing I can say here without a doubt is this: I wish I had known about narcissism in the past, as it might have helped me in my previous married life.

Let me say this: Eva, first and foremost, is the MOTHER of my two wonderful, great kids. Well, not kids anymore. My son, 42 now, is a very successful oncological and robotics surgeon. He is married to a great neurologist, and they have two gorgeous boys, ages 7 and 5. My daughter, 40, worked for years as a Civil Engineering Assistant Project Manager. She and my son-in-law (a great oncological radiologist in his own right) decided to have kids. My daughter has worked very hard to raise three gorgeous kids, which she is still doing, aged 10 to 3 1/2. If you could call me a great dad, and grandfather, that would make me very happy. Might even be close to the truth.

Let's get back to Eva. A very highly educated, smart, and intelligent woman, a good mother in many ways, a great housewife, a hard worker, and honest. As you can tell, lots of serious qualities. But now, when you set those qualities against the highest level of narcissism, you can tell that there is a major issue one must deal with. Which of course, has caused, continues causing, and unfortunately will likely be causing problems, and strife for who knows how long. Maybe for the rest of our lives. I say "ours" because ALL members of my extended family are badly affected.

As an engineer, I am sorry to say, that I was ill-prepared to deal with narcissism. Not only that, but being so very busy at work for most of the time, I could not and did not address the problem in a timely and correct manner. And of course, as is usually the case, things like that never get better, only worse.

I must add here, that being unable to address the issue properly, I was getting very often extremely frustrated, and the only way I could address the matter was by shouting, breaking things, and other destructive behaviors. For that, I am extremely sorry. I wish I could go back to rectify all of that, but obviously, that water has long since flowed under the bridge.

Here comes the second matter that my mother always preached to me: “You take care of your family”. So now, I am sure you can understand what happened. I stayed with that first marriage for 32 years! Until the kids were out of the house, on their own, and set in their ways. At this point, I decided that I had enough of that marriage, and I also decided to offer Eva around 70% of what we had, so that I could end that part of my life. She refused, as you might expect (didn’t want to miss a great source of her controlling ways). Next, we were in a six to seven year divorce nightmare. Which, wiped out quite a bit of our finances, with the money rapidly migrating to lawyers. I predicted that would happen, and that we’d be better off just amicably ending the marriage. I also proposed to give the attorney money to our kids, so they could pay off school loans. The answer was an emphatic “NO!” As I was leaving, she basically made me understand that she could not trust me. What could I say? I never took a single penny away from my family.

Telling my kids that the marriage was over was, by far, the worst moment of my life. The best part of this whole thing was that the strife was over! Eva and I didn’t have to cause hardships to one another any longer. I am thankful to God for that!

### **My Special Family Members And Great Friends**

During all those days of marital strife, the shining light for me was always those family members and friends, who were there for me unconditionally and all the time. Amazingly, God has blessed me with quite a few of those.

As my memory has become weaker over the years, I am almost sure that I will miss mentioning some, and it is not that I have forgotten them for everything they did for me, but as I said, my memory! Which has never been very good, but now it’s declining substantially.

In any event, let me start with my family members. The immediate ones, my parents, and my brother, well, they have been written about quite extensively already. I loved them very much, and my parents were something else. I look forward to seeing them again in heaven!

My brother - well, he was my only sibling. As we were growing up in the old country, being almost four years older than him, I found myself many times having to protect him from bullies, who, in order to get back at me for our fights and all, found it easier to attack him. But

I believe, for the most part, I was a good older brother to him. He once made a statement to me, saying that I was not a good brother to him in the old days. Needless to say, that hurt!

My brother and my sister-in-law, were gracious to me, early in my marriage. As the years went by, things slowly, gradually got worse, I will never know for sure why. To make matters more interesting, both my brother and my sister-in-law were occupational therapists for many years, doing work with children with special needs for a school district close to where they lived. This means the two of them were professionally trained in psychology, so I would say, they were a lot better equipped to handle family issues than I was.

Here is my analysis of the situation - I honestly and not maliciously believe that my sister-in-law had a serious measure of narcissism herself. When pitted against each other, meaning my ex and my sister-in-law, you can imagine the end result. So, the strife, on that end, was always present. This, of course, negatively affected all members of our family, starting with my parents at that time, then all the kids and grandkids, in a very serious way. Again, this is the take of a layman in psychology. That process started about 45-50 years ago and never stopped, nor do I think it ever will, as far as I can see. I hope I have it wrong, but somehow, I don't think so. As far as I am concerned, I would rather have all that garbage bagged up, and then just start from a clean slate. All of us, let's get rid of the old, beaten-up crap, and start with something fresh. Maybe one day, we'll see - it might just happen.

As for my brother, here again, is the assessment of a layman when it comes to psychoanalysis. My brother was and always has been an introvert. God makes us the way HE chooses. He is also an extremely addictive person, and basically, for a lack of better words, someone who is easily persuaded, especially by my sister-in-law.

Their kids, two girls and a boy, and grandkids, three girls and three boys, are people I love very much, always have, and always will. They are my family. But because of the two narcissistic issues, my relationship with them at this point is non-existent. Totally opposite to what our mother preached to me. So, as you can realize by now, my heart is aching as far as that goes. But people who mean a lot to me, every single one of them, advise me all the same ... "Alex, all you can do is pray for them and love them!" After a lot of effort on my part to "fix" the problem, I now totally understand and give in - God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit ... it is in Their hands now! Good hands, I

might add!

Maybe I should not bother you with this, but you know, as far as I am concerned, this one is a total winner! My brother and sister-in-law are in Arizona for 1-2 months. Since we arrived in Arizona a couple of weeks ago, we are less than an hour's drive away from them. Had the process been in reverse, we could have been in the car a couple of days later and gone to visit them. As it is ... we are waiting, and waiting, and waiting ... I guess we might wait for them to show up while we are still alive! I don't know, maybe something serious is wrong with me!

Moving on .... The rest gets easy. I do not have any other family in America, none in Romania or Hungary, I have a few relatives left in Israel, but those family members are of the same variety as the ones previously discussed. My love, my second wife Glenda, she has family in America, a big family, and we'll get to those later.

My favorite section is coming up, my real favorite one. My dear friends, and God blessed me with some really good ones. They fall into two categories: the first group is made up of friends from back in my home countries, Romania and Hungary, and then, of course, the once I have managed to make in this country. Now, as you might realize, at 76, I have been around for a long time. But as a result of that, some, unfortunately, quite a few now, have passed away! But not from my heart and my mind!

I have stated that I love people, trying very hard to do that. So, the point is this, those who are my friends, remain that way for life. I will start with our old home in Zalau, Romania. I have described this already - that was the real United Nations of this world, there in our old home. In that house, there were, let's see, altogether, 7 kids, 4 guys and 3 girls. My brother, who was basically an introvert (as we discussed earlier), did not mix well with the rest. But I was friends with every one of them. The oldest of the girls, Ildiko, was not only a good friend to me but also my first girlfriend, as I doubly loved her! Hehe... The second oldest girl, Marika (the Hungarian version of Marie), and I were very close friends until we left Romania, and with the communist system in place, we lost contact with each other until the internet became prevalent. Around 2000, maybe a year, or two off each way, we finally managed to reconnect. I believe it was through Facebook. We never lost contact again, and in fact, she and her husband came to visit us in America, and we visited them twice in Romania. We also invited the two of them to come with

us to visit Israel (I will get into that in an upcoming chapter). So yes, we are still very good friends. We communicate quite often on Skype or Facebook. For me, the internet is truly a miracle!

Another girl, the youngest in our house, Liliana (Romanian version of Lilly), was around 7 years younger than me, but that didn't matter - we made very good friends anyway. After we left Romania, she married and immigrated to America. Not sure I remember how, but we reconnected, and she came to visit us in our second home in East Meadow, Long Island, NY. She went through some marriage problems of her own, remarried, and then divorced again. She hasn't remarried and these days she lives in a beautiful home she owns, and she has made very good friends with Glenda, my second wife. She lives about an hour and a half away from us. We talk very often on the phone, and we visit each other.

Her brother Vasilica (Romanian for Basil), was a classmate of mine. A guy I liked a lot, because he was an extremely serious guy. In those days, I tended to align myself with more goofy guys, all in the name of having fun. I loved to make people laugh and see people laugh, which was my favorite thing to do. Eventually, I became the class buffoon, and that was certainly perfectly fine by me.

There was another boy in our home, I loved him just as much. He was about 10 years younger than me, but it mattered not. We were buddy-buddies, like I was with the others. Once I left Romania, I lost contact with him. But that only lasted until I reconnected with his sister, Marika. Shortly thereafter, we were an item again. We had a lot of fun together, just like before. He never came to visit us in America, but we visited him and his wife Cuki (sweetie in Hungarian). We had a great time there, with all of them. We also visited some of our favorite places back in Romania. We spent time together at a beautiful place in Hungary, I will include a photo here, in memory of my friend, who passed away only very recently. With him, a big part of my life disappeared.

The name of the place in Hungary is Gyula, and the photo on the next page honors his memory. The photo is of a fantastic hot water spring spa there, where we had lots of fun.

Another great friend of mine, his name was George. We were friends forever - from age 3 until his death, I recall it being around 1970. George moved away and got married in a different

city, quite a bit away from our old hometown. We lost contact after that.

But through the Internet and mutual friends, we managed to reconnect. I would say this happened sometime between 2005 and 2008. This way, we got to spend some more time together, until his passing. I visited him and his family twice after we reconnected. Those were very special moments for the two of us. I got to meet his wife, Mariana, and his two boys. A very nice family, indeed. I will describe some of those times in another chapter.



All those years we spent together in Romania, George was, for sure, my best friend. We did all kinds of stuff together. George was an extremely God-gifted person. He had a natural talent for pretty much everything, he had golden hands. We worked together on some unbelievable projects

growing up, but he was without a doubt the leading force in everything we built. Painting pictures, writing poetry, building electric motors and transformers (maybe that is where I got my desire for electrical engineering), and a lot of photography and dark room work. I mean, there wasn't much that we wouldn't try together. Let's put it this way, George was a big part of my life, my development, and someone I could always count on. My appreciation for all that goes to George! He is surely in heaven now. He lived the last years of his life in a gorgeous village near the Carpathian Mountains. The photo on the previous page, in his memory, is that of the small town where he lived until his passing.

One other real, close, and dear Romanian friend I would like to add to my list is a wonderful lady from a town named Petrita, not that far away from George's place. She came into my life at a very tough moment for me. Just as my first marriage was totally falling apart, at its end, around 2008. Shortly after, I moved out to my new home, as it had just got constructed, and finished.

After filing for divorce, I became very lonely, For whatever reason, I said to myself that my next lady friend/wife would have to come from Romania and be a non-Jew. Met her on the Internet and she qualified on both accounts.

Minodora happened to be a Christian. I did not know that when I met her on the internet, but it did not matter to me either. She turned out to be a great friend to me, a very nice human being. We hit it off, and we spent every moment together, on the Internet, of course. Eventually, we became an item. I got to visit her in Romania and Hungary, and it was all good. The problem was that the immigration folks would not give her a visa to come to America to join me here. And I could not marry her in Romania, or I would have become a bigamist. Talk about complications! Time was passing by, and my divorce was not finalized, so I was really confused as to what to do.

All the strife, grief, and loneliness were getting me very sick. Then, as all this was happening, something incredible just happened. For reasons, I couldn't quite figure out, Minodora just became sickeningly jealous. Quite shocking to me. Imagine dealing with someone accusing you of cheating, and being some 4,000 - 5,000 miles away from you. If you've never dealt with extreme jealousy before, neither have I. I learned quickly, with someone like that, if you approach the situation from a standpoint of convincing them that the accusations are not true, it only gets

worse. Every computer click on the Internet would make her ask, "Who are you talking to?" What can you say?

Here and now, I would like to cover the amazing relationship with my best friend EVER. His name is Lewis, and to me, he is one amazing guy. He happens to be an engineer as well, although not in electrical engineering, but in civil/structural. One of the very best, no doubt. Lewis and I went to the same College of Engineering in Cluj, Romania. We graduated together, then and started working for the same design institute in Zalau. That's where we met and became instant good friends.

Lewis has had serious strife in his own life, of a different kind, and has endured some major trauma as well. He was married very young, so that by the time we met - maybe 23-24 - he was already married. I don't know how quickly they had the kids, but I would say, pretty early. They had four kids, the oldest, a girl, and then three boys. They were together until 2000, when his wife died of cancer, I believe. I tried not to dwell too much on that to this day, so as not to refresh bad memories for him. If that tragedy wasn't bad enough already, one of his sons was killed in a car accident within the last 10 years. Lewis is a very, very, very nice man, why something like this happened to him, I will let God explain. It's HIS domain.

As with the rest of my friends, we lost contact when I left the country in 1973. How we reconnected, the same as with all the others, probably through another friend on the Internet. What's important is that we did. Since then, we have been in constant contact, he came to visit us TWICE, we visited him in Romania at least twice, maybe three times, and he was part of the group that came along with us to visit Israel. I love Lewis very much, and nothing will ever split the two of us EVER again. In his honor, I have included an old photo on page 160 of Lewis' and my college city.

At this moment, let me just get to a couple of amazing friends here in America. The first one, let's call him Bob. What an amazing man! Bob was originally from Trinidad & Tobago (I am going to call it T & T, sounds like dynamite!) - some islands bordering on Venezuela, which is situated on the northern part of South America. Bob's family lived part of the time in T&T, and some around Atlanta. Basically, Bob lived away from his family, so that he could provide for them. Destiny brought us together sometime between 1986-1988. We both ended up working at a

huge wastewater treatment plant in Seaford, Nassau County, NY. In other words, on Long Island, NY. We were there together until I moved to my next job in 1997. So that makes it 10 years, more or less.



Even though our two specialties were totally different, and we never really had to work together on anything that required our specialties to be combined, we somehow developed a very close relationship.

At that time, Bob was already a Christian, a “believer” was the name a person like him would receive. But I was not. To his credit, Bob never, in any way, tried to “sell” Jesus, to me as the solution to all evil. Never. But, he’s example in everything that he did while we worked together showed a part of him that was very appealing to me. He had an amazing heart, his work with lots of folks in major need of assistance and help, in a spiritual sense, was just incredible to me.

Together, on several occasions, assisted people in deep trouble health-wise and otherwise. We prayed for them, just making them understand what it all came down to - the only sure help left there for any of us, was God. Please remember, that I was not a Christian at the time. Our prayers were answered many times, and that made me understand the power of prayers to God. And just as importantly, that prayer works! At that time, as an engineer, I was basically sold on

the fact that I would believe only what I could see and touch. Please mark this fact, because in a later chapter, you will learn about the things that came into my life because of the prayers to God! A big change!

But that wasn't the only thing that Bob meant to me. In the middle of my most miserable moments during my first marriage, he took all the time necessary to support me, when there was no one else there to do it. He even came to my home, to see how my ex and my kids were doing. Actually, Bob might have been the only person who had the opportunity to see some very bad moments in that household.

He was, at times, my only friend, my only true friend! I explained earlier in the book that Bob deserves credit for not giving up on becoming a licensed professional engineer. That achievement opened all kinds of doors for me, in my subsequent working professional career. He deserves at least as much praise for that as I do for putting in the effort to get it done.

After 1997, my last year with Bob at that job site, we kind of separated, although we still kept in touch. But, as life has it, sometimes bad things happen to good people. In that bad family situation, quite frankly, I had no appetite for life most of the time. Later on, I moved to Pennsylvania, misplaced my contacts list, and with that, I lost touch with Bob.

Fast forward to early 2023. While cleaning up my office's closet, among many other things I was able to locate, guess what - my box of contact numbers! One of them was Bob's, and luckily (read that, thanks to God!) his number had remained the same all these years. I called him, and guess what? He answered. Oh, man... what a moment!

Well, the old Bob remained the same, though his hair just got a bit whiter, just like mine (whatever I had left!). What a happy moment. We agreed that we'll get together as soon as the weather cooled off, and the rest is history! Bob and his wife, Merlyn, whom I never met before, came up to Pennsylvania to spend a few days with us ... they live near Atlanta, GA these days. What a wonderful time we had that week!

One thing to note here: the big difference between our relationship then and now we interact on an equal basis ... because, around 2010, I became a Christian as well, a Messianic Jew, or call me whatever you'd like. And as they say ... No one is perfect! Hehe .... By the way, Bob

is the person who bought me my first Bible about 40 years earlier, and that wonderful gift is still the way I speak to God today! Another closed circle! Bob will definitely be part of this book again, in the following chapter.

I have many, many other friends in this country, there is no way to include them all here by name. I love them all, and they are, and will always be in my heart!

However, there is one other dear friend whom I must include here. His name is Munjal. He is of Indian descent, but has lived in the States pretty much his entire life. He is as American as anyone I know. Munjal, other than being an absolute and total gentleman, is an electrical engineer's engineer, as they say. A professional engineer just like myself, he is about as good as they get. He worked with me for many years, as my right-hand man. Once a job was given to him, I could forget about it entirely, knowing he was responsible for getting it done. Never once did I have to worry about him completing it.

We have worked together on many private projects through my consulting engineering firm, A. D. Engineering Service, PC. He was so valuable to me, allowing me to take on projects that I knew would be finished on time. A perfect man for the job.

Now, Munjal has qualities and abilities that are pretty amazing. He is a champ at playing tennis, ping pong, and pickleball. Not just good, but very, very good! Even at his age now, he is about two years older than me at 78.

That, and his love for music and movies. He introduced me to Indian music and movies, and I am grateful for that. Well, I could continue listing reasons why he is so great, but I will stop here. Onto the next chapter!

# CHAPTER 9

## GOD ENTERS THE BIG PICTURE

### Open Discussion of God Versus Science Conflict (If There Is Any)

For a scientist, a technocrat, a technology freak, educated in a scientific field in whatever manner, it seems impossible to identify God as our Creator. Probably the same way it is pretty much impossible for a priest, pastor, evangelist, prophet, apostle, etc. to accept Science as the ultimate explanation of our existence. This matter has been at the forefront of the constant dissension between the two opposing views.

From the very beginning, we must say, as Einstein did, there is no opposition between science and religion, but only distinction. Science helps make many of the secrets of the world clearer, but it is limited because it relies only on reason, and logic. However, true knowledge means much more. If reason were not supported by the work of the Creator, the gate to Truth would remain closed.

Science, in order to advance more and more in its efforts, should embrace what in theology is called, the warmth of love and the light of faith. On this basis, the Church builds its teachings that are addressed to man, giving him the trust that through love and faith, one can advance to infinity in the knowledge of God and His creation. In light of this truth, science becomes an important step toward knowledge, which can bring the eternally searching man closer to the true answers. From this standpoint, the human mind must recognize its impotence and allow itself to be guided by the work of grace. By thoroughly researching the secrets of life, the scientist finds the same answer that the simple believer has known from the very beginning: God exists!

God surely exists. Take my example here. I am 76 now, and for most of my life, I lived a life that might be considered that of an atheist. From first grade to the last year of college, I had to deal with the fact that I was taught to believe In Science. And Science had no acceptance of God, especially in the socialist/ communist country of Romania. As I immigrated from Romania and experienced more of the “free” world, I came to understand that there was more to existence than

Science, because for one, I could not figure out how one could address dealing with the soul, the spirit, and those issues that do not seem to be of material nature.

### **An Atheist's Trip To God**

In the previous chapter, I touched on some of the issues concerning my need for help from God. At one of the lowest points in my life, I came to the realization that I could not solve any of the serious problems I was experiencing in my life. None actually. What do I mean by that? Well, here are some of them:

- My marriage was down the tubes, and there was nothing there that I could do about it
- My boss was doing everything in his power to get rid of me.
- My health was awful, with major issues hounding me—diabetes was out of control, I had heart issues, and depression.
- My kids seemed to have forgotten that I existed.
- I was in divorce proceedings that were going nowhere, but all our money was going away fast.
- My girlfriend was a jealous wreck, killing me softly.
- I was in terrible financial shape.

Trying to resolve all these matters on my own, did nothing for me. Around that time, my psycho-therapist came into the picture. She tried to advise me on how to address my issues, but nothing seemed to work.

At that point, I found myself turning into a deplorable wreck of a human being. I would find myself crying for a half hour or longer, just by watching some very simple tear-jerker movies. My therapist seemed not to have all that much to offer for that condition. Although her presence in my life was a definite plus. Next, I found myself in the hands of a psychiatrist, who placed me on some pretty heavy medication for depression. All that did for me was to make me sleepy pretty much the entire day. The whole thing was just plain awful.

Just about then, two things happened. My baby, Glenda, my soulmate came into my life. I will detail that experience below. More importantly, I resolved the girlfriend issue. I realized that I needed to finish my relationship with her because it was literally killing me. The problem was that my conscience was in deep trouble, just trying to get rid of her. Glenda came up with a great idea, I believe. She told me to tell Minodora that I would support her materially for another six months, after which she would need to find another man to take care of her. That is exactly what happened, and she became history, as far as I was concerned.

Glenda and I met on the Internet, I believe the dating service we used was Match.com. Anyway, we hit it on the head from the very beginning. What are the chances for a Kentuckian woman and a Transylvanian man to find each other as we did, but more importantly, for things to actually work out so well, I am not sure I can figure that out. But that is exactly what happened.

Here is something now that is of great importance, however. Not long before I met Glenda (who turned out to be my soulmate, as I said), as I mentioned earlier, when I could just not find a way to solve my many issues, I asked in this order ... God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, anybody out there, I need your help if I am to remain alive on this Earth, and you fix my problems. OR, if that is not possible, just please take me away for good.

Well, let me just say it this way ... My life just took off in such a way, that I still have a hard time believing and understanding what was happening to me. I mean, first of all, miracle after miracle was coming my way, at a frequency and depth that, like I just said, it is hard to believe even now that was happening.

So, just as quickly as I can explain it and the order in which they happened. First, within a short period of time, Glenda came into my life. Then, Minodora was gone. Then, my divorce ended, I mean the legalities got resolved, and I got a document from the court, that Eva and I were divorced. However, the financial part still remains to be finalized. So, the first part was finished by late 2011 or early 2012... the financial part was not until 2014. I will get to that a bit later. My health miraculously started to get better, my boss allowed me to work from home (details of that also later as well), and my kids started to call me pretty regularly. There were other amazing changes in my favor, but those will come later. But, let me start at the beginning, wherever God tells me that is!

## **Growing Up Devoid Of God**

As I have already mentioned, my life started almost immediately after World War II and the Holocaust. Obviously, such two powerful occurrences would have had an impact on anyone's life, mine included.

Had I been spared of the trauma of those two events, I am convinced that my spiritual life, my proximity to God, would have turned out totally differently. A "normal" Jew from the area where my folks came from would have, without a question, turned out to be a very religious Jew. Far away from anything Christian, including Jesus. But as events turned out, that wasn't going to be the case for me.

For most of what I call my early life, up until my college years, I lived among mostly non-Jews. Many, if not most of them, were old-fashioned Christians, meaning, in that order, Eastern Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestant Christians. I mean, those lined up in one way or another with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Many of my friends would fit one of those categories. As such, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were never too far away from me. In fact, on many occasions, such as Easter, Christmas, and the like, I was always asked to be part of the processions.

So, Jesus was never far from my heart, because I just loved what He stood for. Being a champion for the needy, the have-nots, the disadvantaged, was special to me and, therefore, celebrating anything on Jesus' behalf was always something that felt good to me.

But as it was, being basically a Jew, I could not just drop everything and forget about what God wanted me to be. He made me a Jew, and as such, I am a Jew and I will die as one. A Messianic Jew, who loves God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and I see absolutely no problem with that. Many Jews and Christians do, but that is their problem, not mine.

Around 2010, the moment came for me to make my statement about where I stand with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. It came absolutely naturally to me to express my stand, I had nothing but warmth in my heart thinking about it and, most importantly, doing something about it. The rest now, as they say, is history!

As Glenda entered my life so powerfully, it was only a natural help for me to continue my

growth as a “Born Again” person or as a “Believer”. What does it mean? I didn’t overnight become an expert in the Bible, “speak in tongues” or hear God’s voice indiscriminately. No, I did not. But with every day that went by, I got to know and feel clearer where I stood with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The one very serious matter that required full attention was to enable myself to bring God and my scientific background of many years together, so there would be no “shock” to the system when dealing with both at the same time.

You basically have zero chance of explaining to an atheist the beauty of God and what HE stands for. And you have basically the same success rate of making a believer appreciate what science has to offer to life. But I already stated earlier that my strong belief as someone who has been deeply ingrained in both God and Science, I see that relationship as a distinction, as science very much belongs to God. I see absolutely no need at all to create a conflict out of it.

Be that as it may, with Glenda, we decided to take our spirituality to the next level, which meant that we would find a church of our choice, that would stand for what we believed that our church should be, which was a graceful way to serve God, and provide us with the support we needed to fully fill our place in the service of God.

What that ended up being at first, we belonged for many years to a Bible study group in Clark’s Summit, PA. We were on average a dozen folks in the group: Cindy (our leader), Phillis, Marlene, Lola (also called Joy, a wonderful name, when you belonged to God), Richard, Marge, Angela, Lola, Glenda, Kathy, Ellie, Diane, a second Kathy, and me. There were a few others, but the group, most times, would not have more than a dozen members for any one of the get-togethers. Our teacher/pastor/soulmate/spiritual leader was a Canadian doctor in theology, and we called him Dr. Bill.

Our services were exceptionally educational in things about God, and the thing I loved most about Dr. Bill was that, as knowledgeable as he was, he never took exception to my asking whatever questions I had, or that others had, for that matter, sometimes taking a week or more, to come up with the correct answers. That Bible Study went on for many years—I would say at least 7-8 years, at the end of which it was dissolved as it could not be continued at Cindy’s home any longer. But the very good news, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit did not leave just because Bible study ended.

Around the time of its dissolution, we managed to find our first church, and it was located in our hometown of Lords Valley (interesting name for a town that had our church, isn't it!). Our church probably had 50 members, and we were with them for a few years. We made several good friends with some of our brothers there, and later on, the church elders helped us financially to do missionary work in Ecuador. I will get to that later.

Eventually, our church moved to a new location, not far at all from our previous place, and we were there for maybe a couple of years longer. But as it happens sometimes, bad things happen to good people. Our pastor, a nice man, somehow (maybe the Enemy?) caused offense to Glenda, in a way that I thought was very non-classy, rude, and offensive. I asked Glenda to consider moving elsewhere, which she agreed to do. It was all for the better, as we found our wonderful small church in Hawley, PA, close to our home. Our non-denominational church is named "My Father's House of Worship." Love it and our brothers and sisters there! We've been there probably about 4 years now.

I will talk about our church below. The one thing I want to say here is something that I really, really love about God, among many other things. When one door closes, HE always opens another. And usually, it's for the much better! A photo of our church is shown on the next page. The building has been upgraded since then, but the other photo was the best rendition I could find. It should do, it's only a building. The people inside that building, on the day of full participation, are what I consider our church.

Our church has been there since 1935, or 88 years. That's a long time. There is just no question in my mind, that it's got God's blessing, big time!

The worship part of the service is exceptional, I absolutely love it. Our worship group of guitarists, keyboard players, and singers is an amazing group of musicians—very good at what they do. Our pastors, a husband and wife team, are well-trained preachers, and it's an absolute joy to listen to them. Occasionally, we get guest speakers, and we like them. Services end with luncheons, which are super—most folks stay on for them. The entire situation is very friendly, almost like a family event.

This tiny church, though its membership is small, has a huge stand for all things God, and

it's the perfect fit for us. I need nothing more as far as the church is concerned. In addition, we participate in a prayer session during the week and also a very engaging Bible study on Wednesday nights. I find myself engaged with God on a more-or-less continuous basis.



There always will be people who are, by nature doubters. For those, trying to make them understand what God does to someone like me, is basically a losing battle. They do not care to understand that my soul, my spirit, soars when God enters it. They cannot imagine something that they have never experienced. Is God real? He is very real to me, when miracles happen to me, when my soul feels a heat that cannot be otherwise expressed. And in the end, does it really matter if God is real, as long as when I ask for Him, He is in my soul? I don't need to convince anyone about that, as it is a process that each one of us undertakes for him or herself.

Folks like that have no need for anything outside of themselves, yet, when they hit the wall—and they definitely hit it sooner or later, and if they are honest about it, eventually, they run out of means of solving their problems. Those folks are invariably in harm's way, because the way they live, and the other aspects of their lives are not any better. Then, denying their need for a supernatural power to provide them help is all that they have.

For people like that, there is only one way to peace. That is, to find God on their own, on

their own accord, at their proper time. We, as Christians, are required by God to go out and announce the good news. We can do that, I do that, but my choice is to do that when the opportunity arises. In my Christian life, that opportunity comes all the time. When that happens, that is the moment I tell those folks, “Hey, here is what God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have done for me.”

And what they have done for me, many times, definitely defies logic. Not that logic is required in any way to accept and understand that God is always there for those who live in humility, who pray all the time—not only when trouble comes visiting. Those who live a righteous life can expect that God will always be there for them.

### **When God Comes Visiting Your Life - What A Glorious Moment**

I can, for sure, write a book only to explain all the amazing miracles that God had in store for me. It may have been that HE was so happy seeing that finally came to see the light (read that as Jesus made it in a big way into my soul, my spirit, my heart, and my mind), and finally I decided to become the believer that HE always planned for me.

Well, let me start with my depression. With all the medication, psychotherapy, whatever, I could not crack that monster. For those who know what it means to be an engineer, you will easily understand that for an engineer not to be able to define a problem—theirs or others’—it’s unacceptable. So, when depression hit, I felt twice as bad for not being able to control that awful disease and myself. Well, when Jesus came at my request to help, for you unbelievers out there, guess what happened? The dreaded disease started quickly evaporating. Those damn medications that were so quickly prescribed by my psychiatrist, and which caused me nothing but sleepiness all day long, well, I started to eliminate them. Against my psychiatrist’s advice, Jesus came in big time, and very shortly, my depression was history. That is a fact. Or, more correctly, was the case. Pretty quickly gone! Amen.

Please allow me here, to take a bit of a side journey, only because it has a lot to do with what happened next. The timeline of my miracles might be a bit out of whack, but please believe me, every one of these miracles happened. One quick observation before I move on: at this time, I was part of another Bible study/prayer group. This was held at a friend’s house, a wellness center in Waverly, PA.

Aside from being one of the most spiritual places I have ever been in, this gathering was visited by many very blessed folks—people who represented God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in amazing ways. It was during those gatherings that I experienced some of the most miraculous events in my life.

Let me touch on something here, again. I was, I am, and I will die an engineer. God made me that, and every fiber of my body reflects that. I am no fly by night, that is for sure. Whatever I have to say from here on out in this chapter is, beyond a doubt, MY TRUTHS. They happened to me as I recount them. And, those occurrences were witnessed by many, each time. Am I in any way “special” that way? I don’t think so. I am just another human being in this huge world. I do not see why whatever happened to me it could not also happen to anyone.

Let me start here. There were many occurrences of miracles, but I will just touch on a few. One occurred in 2011, in the summer. You may ask, how do I remember something like that which happened more than 10 years ago? Oh, there are several reasons. First, I was suffering from a major sciatica pain issue on the left side of my body—I mean, from my left shoulder all the way down to my left ankle. This pain was so awful that, many times, I was rendered immobile. Another reason was that it happened when Glenda sold her home, and she was going to move in with me. The house sold the day she put the sign out on her front yard. Another one of God’s miracles, if you ask me. How often do you hear of that happening? I had never heard about anything like that ever before. Normally, the odds of that happening, I would say, are probably very close to zero. She sold that home for basically what she asked for it. Now comes the important part of why the miracle that happened to me was connected to the sale of the home.

Because of the speed with which the home sold, we had to be out of there in some ridiculously short length of time. I don’t know—like a month or something like that. What that meant was that I had to pack everything in that house, and prepare the home to be ready for the transfer of ownership and all related tasks. That was, with my bum shoulder, hip, back, knee, and ankle. Glenda was and is a registered nurse who has worked pretty much her entire working career of 40-plus years. That came in handy because, in order for me to be able to do any work, she had to press points on my body with her elbow, targeting all those pain points. It allowed me to work for half-hour periods at a time.

That went on as long as it did, but during that period, at one of our Bible study meetings, a well-known pastor/prophet was scheduled to speak, pray over people, and try, through Jesus, to heal folks. Those meetings were held at our friend Donna's wellness center. A photo of it is shown below.



Well, my turn came, and Jerry F. came my way. No one had ever performed that sort of blessing from God over me before. I had no idea what to expect, but Glenda wanted me very much to have Jerry pray over me. He came my way, and, before anything, he basically recited to me just about every medical issue I was suffering from, in the order of most severe to least severe. I mean, this man had no way of knowing all that. I had never seen the man or spoken to him before. Anyway, after that, he prayed over every location of my sciatic pain area. Soon after that, as he was praying, I felt strong heat in all those areas. This might have been around, say, 7 PM, but by the time we left there, say around 10 PM, my discomfort in the areas was reduced to maybe 20%. The next morning, all that pain was totally gone and it has never returned in the 12–13 years since. I would say that, in my book, that surely qualifies as a miracle. Jerry had another amazing event with Glenda—a very important matter that I hope to include later, if space permits me. By the way, Jerry passed away unfortunately/ He wasn't a young man.

That was the first one. After that, another amazing man of God, came my way at the same Bible study location. His name—I will call him Mike Y. He was a beautiful man, who went through a lot of bad stuff in his life. He has a large church in the Gettysburg area. So, Mike held a gathering at Donna’s Wellness Center. During one of Mike’s services, at the end of it, he prayed over folks, including me. One of the areas of his/Jesus’ healing was my ears. During my career—the 13 years or so spent at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Long Island—a lot of piling was driven, to provide extra support and protection for major structures. Pile driving involves a lot of heavy hammering (all day long) of the piles (heavy, huge metal bars) to drive those piles tens of feet deep into the ground. These piles will then support heavy structures.

My ears were subjected to tremendous noise, for a long time. Because of this, or maybe a combination of this and other factors only God knows, I was experiencing serious ringing in my ears. Enter Mike. That night he prayed over my ears, and, miracle of miracles, the ringing was just gone. Over the years, I have experienced other issues with my ears, such as vertigo, several ear infections, and the like, which brought back some of the ringing. But I am convinced it was caused by other issues, not the pile driving.

Another pastor/seer/prophet at Donna’s—her name, Robyn R. This lady was a very powerful representative of God, and of Jesus. As part of her services, when she prayed over me, I was “thrown” several feet backward. That had never happened to me before, so to say that I was flabbergasted doesn’t even begin to express my feelings at that moment. I remember that, in my atheist days, I would find it ridiculous when something like that was part of a televangelist’s routine. Well, what can I say? That sort of thing has now happened to me two more times. For the faithful, it is called “The Power of God”!

Now, an amazing part of my present life. Of course, this part is very much about God, like everything is for me these days. But, I am talking about the most amazing gathering of folks who care very much about each other, who care about one other others’ problems, and about our world at large. I am talking about our very special Bible study group, formed in part by some of the brothers from our church and another group from various places in New Jersey. I joined our Bible study group maybe a little less than a year ago, but as fast as time goes by these days, I may have been with the group for longer than a year.

Anyway, we meet every Wednesday night, occasionally at other times for holidays and the like. But we are very committed to making those 2-3 hours valuable time spent on our growth in the Lord, and in getting our intellectual acumen sharpened, again in our Lord's service.

As the case may be, we also listen intently to our brothers' and sisters' issues, and we all have issues. That is how life is. The purpose of what we do in those meetings is to get into the various Bible sections. And we really apply ourselves the best we can, in trying to first understand the intent of the specific verses, then listen to the various people's opinions, and have interesting exchanges—very exhilarating.

The group is composed of Ed, one of our church elders, a well-respected and very knowledgeable man when it comes to God. Aside from that, Ed is probably one of the most well-read people I know. I look to him to always reply to my points or questions related to church history, or just plain historical matters.

Next, there's Jay, an amazing man of God as well, with serious religious education throughout his growing years. He is a school teacher, with an amazing art/painting skillset. His opinions/comments during our specific Bible chapters/verses are just plain convincing and always to the point.

Next would be Gene, my brother, my friend. Gene was, for many years, trained in the Catholic Church to become a priest, I guess. But then he came to REALLY understand God, and what God expected of him. I really respect Gene's knowledge and intellect, when it comes to God especially so. I would never hesitate to accept his ways of explaining what I need to learn. We may disagree sometimes, or I may miss his points—it's all possible.

Susan, one of our sisters, is married to Gene. Susan is about as knowledgeable in the Bible as one can get. I value her opinions very much. She and Gene are about the best friends of Israel and things Jewish that one can find. Susan happens to have Jewish blood in her ancestry. Something special that Susan and I share is that we are learning Hebrew together! Well, at least, we've started. Tom and Ellen, husband and wife, are two super folks, I would like to say they are my very good friends. They always have the most intelligent answers to questions discussed. They live in Arizona, but with the Internet age, that really means nothing. They are a very solid part of

our Bible study group.

Then we have Clareine, a wonderful sister in Jesus. She is a teacher, and, as far as I know, she leads a school's band. Knowing her personality, I can only imagine how excited those kids must be to have a music teacher like her. I have to somehow get to participate in one of her instructional band gatherings.

Then we have a number of others who participate occasionally—folks like Soli, Ken, Charlie, Brian, Rick, Marge, etc. And of course, yours truly, who is probably, at 76, the junior member of the group. But, at the same time, I am the one who, whether they like it or not, spices up our gathering, with my never-ending questions or opinions. I hope they do like it!

One last thing here: usually, at the beginning of each session, we get a chance to bring to the floor any issues that we might have, which often turn out to be problems that each one of us experiences in our daily lives. We treat all discussions with extreme respect, patience, and interest and provide whatever we can as answers to those problems. We don't have any pretenses, judgments, or criticisms—you know, those heavy opinions. It is an amazing thing to see brothers and sisters pay the attention they do. This type of experience is very uplifting to me, and I am convinced, to everyone in our special group. That kind of humbling, respectful approach comes without an objection from God. Our get-togethers are done via Zoom—an amazing way to stay in touch with everyone.

### **For Those Who Find Themselves On The Fence Concerning God, Faith And Spirituality**

Can we know God? The answer, simply and categorically, is—yes, we can know HIM, and not just by retreating into our own shell, but also in the middle of our of everyday lives. If we could see God as a wise old man, He would be quite acceptable to us. But since we cannot touch Him other than in images we create ourselves, again, it becomes hard for us to allow Him to approach us. But, since we can see Him in all things and touch Him through them, including in ourselves, suddenly He is there for us. It's a complicated relationship for us to deal with, that's for sure, because, I feel, we are seriously challenged by it.

Even if we don't see God in His entirety, we can feel Him, we can touch Him with our heart, our soul, and our spirit. We can know God, first of all, through our love for Him, and since God is in everything that exists, we know Him through unconditional love toward the world, toward ourselves, and towards our destinies.

Secondly, God can be known through the pain of our bodies, spirits, and souls. Accepting pain and keeping love for God means getting through any traumatic situation the right way. It shows maturity in us, and in our understanding of God and what He stands for. The ability to overcome any stress gives us physical and mental health.

Thirdly, we can know God not only through forced detachment, but also through voluntary restriction.

Fourthly, God can be known by offering love and energy. The more energy we give, the more energy we receive. The more we offer, work, create, love, and care for someone, the easier we will feel God in our souls. Love for God and the feeling of His presence in our lives depends on our choices. They depend on those choices that can elevate our souls, minds, and bodies so that they feel the presence of God simultaneously.

Loving the surrounding world unconditionally seems difficult, even impossible for us, but we have the option to reach love for the surrounding world. Everything we do in every moment can lead us to love or take us away from it.

Accepting the pains of life, and the traumas inherent in the human condition, helps us to feel and know God.

Enmity, hatred, the desire to destroy another, revenge, and incomprehensible suffering keep us away from God and from understanding His work in everyday existence.

God does not exist if we cannot love, and He can only be known when our relationship with the surrounding world is one of love. God is here.

This is why every person has the chance to know God, but everyone reaches more or less communion with HIM, depending on his own choices, which have nothing to do with anything other than what happens to us every day.

## **Be A Guiding Light For Those Who Are Still On The Road To Finding God, Jesus, And The Holy Spirit**

I consider myself a very lucky person, in that, God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have enabled me to represent the great cause of saving as many souls as possible. It's a long way from my days as an atheist. I am proud to be entrusted with this special role and honor. The way I interpret this honor is by explaining to non-believers, how I see myself approaching them, from God's perspective. That is very cool—I love it. Here are some of the points I've made regarding that process.

As followers of Jesus, the most fundamental question we face is how to engage with those who do not share in our faith. The Bible gives us a guideline on how to interrelate with unbelievers, while still living according to it, and remaining truthful to our faith. There are many in our world today spreading crazy theories, but we must remain faithful to our Book. Which still remains the only pure answer to all our issues of today, and always. In this way, we ensure that our actions meet with God's will and spread the love and grace that Jesus symbolized during His time on earth. Understanding how to deal with unbelievers is not only crucial to living a God-honoring life, but is also key to being an effective witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

**Unbelievers must be approached with love and respect** - exemplifying the love of Jesus. They should be engaged in conversations with respect, avoiding negative attitudes. Always pray for unbelievers, seeking God's guidance on how to best address them. Be an example of Jesus's love through your actions. Share the gospel clearly and sensitively, understanding that each individual's journey to faith is unique. Rely on the Holy Spirit for wisdom and discernment in your interactions with unbelievers. Remember that salvation is God's work, and our role is to plant seeds and water them, trusting God for growth.

**Love and respect** - this is what Jesus said in John: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." The call to love is not limited to fellow believers but extends to all of humanity. Amen to that!

**Showing compassion** - Throughout the Gospels, Jesus interacted with individuals from various

walks of life, including those who were considered sinners, tax collectors, and Gentiles—groups that were often marginalized by the religious elite of His day. He extended compassion and kindness without compromising God's standards or accepting sinful behavior.

**Providing dignity** - Romans exhorts, "Repay no one evil for evil. Take care of good things before all men." This verse says a lot about our behavior with those who may not treat us well. As Christians, we are called to a higher standard—one that involves respecting others and recognizing their inherent worth, even when they don't share our beliefs.

**Gentleness and respect in dialogue** - One of the key instructions regarding dealing with unbelievers is found in 1 Peter - "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and fear." Defending our faith does not involve an aggressive attitude. Instead, it suggests a willingness to share the reasons for our faith in a gentle and reverent manner toward the other person.

**Avoiding confrontation** - Arguments rarely win souls. Instead of engaging in heated debates, Colossians pleads, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone." The wisdom here is to converse meaningfully, making the gospel palatable and preserving the dignity of the conversation, rather than engaging in a war of words.

**Listening carefully** - James reminds us, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, let each one be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." Being good listeners can sometimes speak louder than any argument we present. When we listen, we show care for the individual, not just eagerness to push our agenda.

**Prayer for unbelievers** - Prayer is a powerful tool in the believer's arsenal, especially when it comes to the salvation of others. Paul prayed continually for the salvation of Israel, as seen in Romans, where he states, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." Our heart's desire should similarly be to lift up unbelievers in prayer, asking God for their salvation and opportunities to witness to them.

**Interceding with persistence** - The Bible illustrates the importance of persistent prayer. We are

encouraged not to lose heart, but to continue interceding for those who do not know Jesus, trusting that our persistent prayers are powerful and effective.

**Seeking divine guidance** - In all our interactions with unbelievers, it is essential that we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Praying for words to speak and for the Spirit to open hearts prepares the way for effective witness. Ephesians advises, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching for this, with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that the word may be given to me, that to open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel”.

**Being an example through actions** - illustrates this point: “In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, godliness, incorruptibility, sound speech, which cannot be condemned, so that he who is an adversary may be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about you. “Your lifestyle should embody the teachings of Christ. This does not mean that you have to be perfect, since no one is without sin (Romans), but it does mean that in your struggle for holiness, you become a living testimony to others. By doing so, unbelievers can be compelled to inquire about the hope and change they see in you, providing organic opportunities for evangelism.

**Demonstrating the love of Jesus through service** - Jesus exemplified service in His ministry. He washed the disciples' feet (John) and healed as well as ministered to the outcast and marginalized. In the same way, our acts of service – whether helping a neighbor in need, being present in times of crisis, or contributing to the betterment of the community - illuminate Jesus's love for humanity. Matthew encourages us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

**Honor God in your vocation** - The workplace is often a primary mission area. By being ethical, hardworking, and honest in your work, you reflect God’s character. Colossians says, “And whatever you do, do it with all your heart, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; because you serve Christ.” Your integrity as a believer can influence your peers and lead to conversations about faith.

**Sharing the Gospel with sensitivity** - We are commissioned to share the Good News with others

(Matthew). However, how we share the gospel is crucial. The apostle Paul became "all things to all men, that I might save some" (1 Corinthians). This means being culturally sensitive, emotionally intelligent, and spiritually discerning to know when to speak, what to say, and how to say it, always speaking the truth in love (Ephesians).

**Understanding each journey is unique** - Each person's encounter with God is unique. Our responsibility is not to convert—that is the work of the Holy Spirit—but to clearly and lovingly present the truth of the Gospel. Acts recounts Philip's meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip took time to understand where the man stood in his understanding before sharing the good news of Jesus. We must meet people where they are and lead them to the Savior, not subdue them.

**Sharing your personal testimony** - One of the most powerful tools in your evangelism tool kit is your personal testimony. Sharing how you came to faith and how Christ transformed your life can be both relatable and impactful. Revelation says, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." Your testimony is a unique narrative that can resonate with the life experiences and struggles of an unbeliever.

**Trust in the Holy Spirit** - Recognize that it is the Holy Spirit who convicts and converts (John). Our role is to be obedient in sharing the Gospel and to be vessels through which the Holy Spirit works. This takes a huge pressure off us and puts the responsibility for salvation squarely on God's shoulders.

**Practicing discernment** - The Holy Spirit gives wisdom and discernment, allowing you to navigate conversations and understand when someone is open to hearing about Jesus. The prayer for discernment helps you avoid "casting pearls before swine" (Matthew), an admonition that Jesus gave to ensure that the sacred is not trampled upon by those hostile to the Gospel.

**Being led by the Spirit** - Romans says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." Being led by the Spirit might mean entering into conversations you feel ill-prepared for, or staying silent when your instinct is to speak up. Trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit is essential to witnessing effectively to unbelievers.

**Understanding salvation as God's work** - It is important to remember that as we plant and water seeds, it is God who gives the growth (1 Corinthians). This truth keeps us humble and dependent

on Him. Our task is to live faithfully, share the gospel, pray, and love unconditionally, knowing that ultimately, each individual's response to the gospel is a personal decision made before God.

**Planting seeds faithfully** - Our calling is to scatter the seed of the Gospel indiscriminately, trusting that some will fall on good ground (Matthew). Our task is not to establish the condition of the soil—that is, the heart of the receiver—but to faithfully sow the seed.

**Trusting God's Timing** - You may not see the fruit of your labor, and in some cases, you may never see it in this lifetime. But that doesn't mean your efforts are wasted. Ecclesiastics assures us that God "made everything beautiful in its time." Trusting God's perfect timing is a cornerstone of faithful confession.

**Encouraging new believers in the community** - When one accepts Christ, it is the beginning of a new life. They will need guidance, discipleship, and a community of faith. Encourage new believers to join a body of believers where they can grow in their faith and understanding of God (Hebrews).

**Living as God's Light** - Leading our lives in high alignment with the above ways to behave as Christians, as believers, and as “born again” individuals fulfills the carefully established expectations of our God. It becomes our responsibility before God. He sees everything, and we couldn't give Him a better way to see us in the proper light. We are supposed to be His light towards everyone. We should immerse ourselves in His glorious light!

## **MY PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST - A FINAL STATEMENT**

For most of my life, I lived an existence devoid of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. A pointless life, directionless and, for the most part, full of misery. I saw no need for God or any reason to adjust my way of thinking. I led an immoral life, where lying, cheating, stealing, and the like were regular occurrences.

I grew up in socialist/communist Romania, in an economic and political system that did not help me in any way to redirect my life in a godly direction—if anything, it did the opposite. As a Jew, I was, for the most part, ostracized for being “a Christ killer”, even though I have never

committed anything violent against Jesus, not even in thought. Actually, for me, Jesus Christ was a champion for the poor, the sick, the disadvantaged and so, one for the underdog. And as such, Jesus was always close to my heart. Those values that He fought for during his life, and since, meant, and continue to mean everything to me.

In the middle of a miserable existence, Father God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit decided that, for Alex, a lost soul, it would be acceptable to enter the Kingdom of Christianity. And here I am now, as happy and as content as any human being could expect to be with their lives. Jesus Christ—Yeshua Hameshiah - His Jewish name—literally and not only figuratively, is, and always will be, My Salvation. He is now the central figure of my existence, and for that, I am very thankful. My life was changed by Jesus in ways that I couldn't even begin to guess at before He entered my life. The change has been constant in my life to this point—and substantially for the better.

I must admit that my present existence is not perfect, or even as close to perfection as I would like it to be. Part of the old Alex is still hard to break and get rid of. But with Jesus' presence and assistance, and my hard work toward the change, I am totally convinced that all of that is possible.

What does Jesus mean to me? For starters, I no longer feel that something is unachievable. In fact, I know that my Lord will always be in my corner, helping me to achieve the unachievable. If anyone KNOWS my heart, it is surely Father God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. When I open my mouth in front of them, my brothers in Christ, or even the average humans who do not have the benefit of knowing the Lord, they are impressed by the wisdom that is generated by my mouth—all because of Jesus' love for me. Jesus is in my heart now in a different way than before, that feeling allows me to dream big and get things DONE in an amazing manner.

What gives me an even warmer feeling about Jesus is that my Lord was a Jew, just like me, and that fact proves that Christianity and Judaism are not mutually exclusive, but in fact, the opposite.

Jesus, my dear Lord, you are everything to me, and I wish words could adequately describe how I feel about You! My world now is in a state of peace, contentment, appreciation, and love

for my fellow man. Is it a finished work? By no means. But the work ahead, part of which I write this for today, excites me, and my expectation is that Jesus will always stand behind me, as He has always been. My love and commitment to be someone that the Lord would take pride in is—and always will be—unlimited. I love you, Jesus, and you are my everything, Lord! AMEN!



# CHAPTER 10

## MY SOUL MATE COMES, RETIREMENT IS GREAT

### So, What Now? Life Goes On!

It's 2009 now, March 18. Why can I remember this date after almost 15 years? It's interesting how we retain some things that happen to be important. I guess. When I last touched on my terrible life during my first marriage, I did not get into the notion of - what will happen tomorrow, when I am no longer married to Eva (my first wife)? What happens the next day? As an engineer, as someone who planned the heck out of everything in his life, this matter of splitting from my previous life 32-year life would not go pretty much at random.

No, it didn't. Not by a long shot. So, In the summer of 2008, when I already had serious inklings that my life would take a very serious turn, I started to figure out, where I was going next. I knew one only thing for sure, and that was that I could not live in my old house any longer. Nor did I want to. One thing I must say here, before I move further: whoever tells you that 32 years of time and effort invested into a situation - a family - any endeavor - you just walk away smelling like roses, is mistaken. It was the most sickening moment of my life. Everything you know as your life, is just totally disrupted. Please believe me, it's very bad! All of you considering doing that, think twice, three times, as many times as necessary. Make sure that it is what you really want to do. After I passed through the experience, I very seriously considered becoming an anti-divorce expert!

But, as they say, life must go on. So, I needed to come up with a plan for a new home, a way to get to my job, and to continue working with a big smile on my face, like nothing had ever happened, other than a change in address. Yeah ....

### Finding My New Home

It was very easy for me to figure out that I could not support two households in New York

or New Jersey, that would need to be close to my workplace in New York City. It wouldn't take a genius to figure that one out, because the math would just not work. Even though, at the time, I was a manager of engineering over a dozen people, making a good income and all, the math would just not allow me to support two households in those areas. Because, you guessed it, even though I was "divorced", I still was what those damn attorneys and judges called "The Party with Money", which translated, meant I was making good money and my ex was not. Right. These legal folks, at times, are totally unscrupulous. The sort of decisions they make are beyond idiotic. I could get into some numbers here, but I won't waste my time.

Anyway, right around then, I remembered that, in the old days, when things were not totally bad, we had a summer home in a very nice place in Eastern Pennsylvania, in Lords Valley. I probably mentioned that earlier in the book. So, I thought to myself, why not buy or build a home in that development, at a fraction of what it would cost me in New York or New Jersey. The only catch - a 7-hour total commute to my workplace, DAILY. That, on a good traffic day. I am sure, many would now say, "Are you crazy, buddy?" I wouldn't blame anyone for saying that.

However, there were two positives to moving. One, I would get far away from Eva. Two, I only needed to work two more years until my retirement. At that point, I believe God intervened. I will tell you how. First, I managed to sign a very nice contract with a local builder to have him build me a beautiful home, at a very competitive price. Back then, just around and after the 2008 market crash, home prices became very competitive in that area. Second, my employer, HP (Hewlett-Packard Computers), allowed me to work in the New York City office, either two or three days per week, on alternate weeks. I would say, not too bad. With one exception - waking up at 3 AM on some days, and then trying to sleep till 7 AM on others, totally screwed up my sleeping pattern. But what can you do? It is what it is, as that very smart saying goes!

It's history now, but I had some incredibly screwed up times in those 2 years. No wonder I ended up with that king-size depression. But life goes on, as it always does, thank God!

Anyway, it is now March 2009, and I started my life in my new home, very lonely, other than the computer presence of Minodora (I covered her existence and our relationship earlier), and basically not much else. A rather nice break happened my brother and my sister-in-law bought a summer home there, and they would come occasionally. During those times, we would get together

and have a pretty good time. Eventually, they retired and moved there. Then there was some excitement in my life. The photo of my home is shown below.



But eventually, serious job-related problems, problems with my boss, my divorce going nowhere, my mini cash reserves dwindling quickly, and lack of talking to and seeing my kids, all ended up with me starting to get very sick with depression, which came to a head in the beginning of 2010. I described my condition and all that in earlier sections. So, basically, I was in harm's way in a big way, up until Glenda stepped into my life around Labor Day 2011. That was a deadly period in my life, no question.

### **My New Life with My Second Wife (Glenda), My Love, My Soul Mate, My Dearest Friend**

Labor Day 2011 – well, actually it was maybe the second day of that weekend. Finally, after a wait of about 2-3 months, since we first met on Match.com (I will get into that a bit later), while she was helping out a sister in Kentucky with some sort of a construction project, I was waiting patiently for her to come back home and for us to get together. We had these wonderful phone conversations, but you know, nothing beats meeting in person. So anyway, she finally arrived at my home that September day.

I was standing in the front part of my home, watching my baby getting ready to come in. She had this Hyundai Sonata, and she was trying to get all her stuff out of the car, or whatever. It seemed as if it took forever for her to come to the front door. I didn't want to go outside, because this way I had a chance to observe her, her ways, and all.

Finally, she came up the stairs, I opened the door, she came in, and then, we hugged and kissed like we had known each other forever. I mean, instant gratification, as they say! My lonely, dog days were over. For the duration of her first visit, all we did was sit on the couch, hold hands, and hug, I mean, I certainly was in Heaven! We had to interrupt that visit late at night, because Glenda had to go home, to get her daughter ready for the school day. At that time, her daughter Martha who was spending nights with her father, who was living nearby Glenda, would come in the mornings to Glenda's home for breakfast, then take the bus to school. So, that was that. Obviously, Glenda had to be back home for the morning.

### **God Steps In, Again and Again, as My Problems Go from Bad to Worse**

From that point on - and even a bit earlier, as I have already mentioned, God stepped-in in a big way to help me with my problems. By that time, Glenda was seriously in my life. We were not married yet, but we lived together. What an amazing relief that was - to have her there with me.

I was on disability with that crazy depression I had. During my disability period, my employer was paying me 70% of my salary, as part of what they call "short term disability", which, if my memory serves me correctly, lasted about six months, from January 2011 until mid-year 2011, maybe July or August. Then, the "long term disability" kicked in, and that was paid by an insurance company named Sedgwick. That also paid at 70% my salary. However, around January 2012 - or maybe February of that year - Sedgwick totally arbitrarily decided to stop my payments. So, starting **i n** February, I was not paid anything, even though my psychiatrist had determined that my mental condition was such that I should not be asked to return to work until at least August 2012. I mean, that was more than half a year later. It made absolutely no difference to the insurance company; they just refused to pay another cent. In the process, I figured out later that they short changed me by approximately \$50,000. I eventually had two attorneys look into the case, but neither was able to do anything helpful. As a matter of fact, that case is still in court

somewhere in New York State today, because I was employed there.

So now, I was asked to go back to work. I know God intervened on my behalf at that point, and I will explain how I know. OK. In February, I can tell you, I was nowhere in shape to lead 12 subordinates in any manner, whether in the office in NYC or at home in Pennsylvania. I just physically and mentally was not capable of doing it. Let me say this, by that time, Glenda and I were living together, she was my support, she was my life, she was my everything. I needed to hang on to life. God sent her to me, no doubt about that. I have no idea what would have happened to me, if it wasn't for the Lord and Glenda. I was really done, but they brought me back to life. That's it!

So, I asked Glenda, "baby, what do I do now? We need money to exist." I did have a 401K, but I was too young to take out funds from there without paying some ridiculous taxes. 401Ks are good, a blessing, no doubt about that. But, not until you are retired, you basically have no other income than Social Security, so you either pay very little in taxes, or no taxes at all, depending on how much of Social Security you get.

Anyway, we tried to brain it out, and we decided that I must go back to work, no matter what, so we could exist. Now, to make matters worse, Glenda had just come out of a messy divorce herself and was dealing with a terrible workers' comp situation, so she did not have much herself.

Here is where God intervened AGAIN! I contacted the office to explain that my insurance company wasn't doing what they were supposed to do, and I needed to go back to work so I could pay my bills. But now God stepped in - and after talking to them, my boss called me. He goes ... " Alex, you will be coming back to work, BUT you do not have to come to the NYC office. Whatever work you need to do will happen from your home in PA." WOW! You know, further miracles kept happening, because my Lord is GOOD! HE, Jesus, and Holy Spirit KNOW my heart. They know who I am, and what I stand for. That's it.

I was getting my full paychecks, one after the other, until the next miracle happened toward the end of August 2012. Let me just say, I worked altogether between my small engineering firm and then HP, which had acquired us, so between those two, I worked for them for 12 years. HP's stock was doing terrible. Their Board of Directors, led by Carly Fiorina - the lady who ran for

President of the USA against Trump - decided that they would let 10% of the workforce go, resulting in layoffs. The management of HP knew really nothing about my small engineering firm or what we even did, so, because of that, a large number of our employees were the first to be let go - including me. However, for the first time in my life, I “lucked” out. Read that - God has shown up big time on my behalf, and I am sure, on behalf of others as well. Here is what that meant. They had a formula where they added your age and the number of years worked for HP, and that number would either qualify you or disqualify you for a “pension” payment from a fund that HP had set aside for that purpose. So, guess what my number was? 77 - not too bad with a number that high. Well, here is in dollars what that meant for me - and I am very proud to say it, because I always worked my butt off for that company. Here it is - almost a year’s pay, in my case being a manager - close to \$200K. Two years of additional medical insurance for both me and Glenda, which being 65 at the time, would bring me to the time I would be covered through Medicare, \$15,000 for additional medical expenses, AND, here comes the real killer - Unemployment for six months. All I could say, as I was crying with happiness, was – “thank you, God!”

Another big-time miracle! But it’s not over by any means. So, when my small engineering company was acquired by HP, that qualified me for an options plan from my old firm, let’s just say, which turned out to be well in excess of \$150K, and if I stayed with HP for two years, which I did, another \$100K. All I can say about all that, is God has been very good to me!

The money we got originally - you know, that almost one year’s pay - that carried us probably through five of the following years. What also happened was that, on August 31, 2012, I was RETIRED! I would have retired anyway that November, because I would have turned 65 years old, and my retirement age would have been 66, but didn’t care about losing maybe \$100/month in Social Security benefits.

It was a lot more important to me to get healthier as well, and spend some great times with Glenda, which we did. Again, thank you, God!

On the next page is a photo of my old office building where I worked for both EYP Mission Critical Facilities, Inc. (my small, but amazing engineering firm,) and one of HP’s offices in NYC. Our office was located at the top, on the 14th floor. A beautiful old-style office building in NYC, on Park Avenue, between 29th and 39th Streets.



Once retired, some of my serious psychological issues began to dissolve, which, together with having my Glenda with me, created a big change in my life. Then, on December 28, we got married. That was a wonderful event, where most of my friends at the time were present at our wedding. The official proceedings were conducted by our dear friend and brother, Dr. Bill W., our pastor and Bible study group leader. The entire process was so beautiful, with lots of love spread around. You know, it's impossible for me not to include the following: I was the only Jew in the

wedding group, everyone else was Christian. In my entire previous life, I was, for the most part, despised and even hated for being a Jew, but now, everyone was loving me like crazy for being a Jew, but now, everyone was loving me like crazy for being a Jew. So, how about that? I tell you, it felt so great, so good. I wish you could feel my heart's warmth! Pretty amazing. On the previous page is a photo of Glenda and me, once we married!

Well, my life took off in ways that I have a hard time recounting. As far as all those major problems that caused my depression or were the major reason for it happening, well, I have already explained what happened to my divorce, how I solved my conscience problems about letting Mimi go, and how my two kids started calling on a regular basis. The issues with my boss were resolved with my retirement. So, I started to feel FREE! Having Glenda, only made everything that much better. We started to do major improvements on our home, many, no, mostly with our four hands. Glenda was not only a great wife, but she had amazing hands blessed for construction. In fact, believe it or not, she had a Bachelor's in Carpentry from an Idaho college. Until, I met her, I had no idea that something like that was even available. That is a woman to have for a wife! Not only did she appreciate my hard work, but she also helped me physically build things. That is cool by any standard.

I forgot to mention earlier, but before I met Glenda, from around 2009 through the end of 2010, I worked very hard on our basement, where I turned barren walls, into a caveman's dream. In those years, I was home, away from my office, either two or three days a week. That gave me ample time to do work in my basement. Since I was the manager of a group of up to a dozen engineers, designers, and CADD operators, my work was primarily geared towards client liaison, setting up huge projects conceptually, and ensuring that the group was doing the job they were supposed to. With my multi-decade experience, all that was no big deal, as I could do that work with my eyes closed. As a result, a lot of time was available to me on the days I was working from my home. That is why, over the two or so years, I was able to do a lot around the house. Had I not had that chance, probably boredom would have killed me. I am thankful first to God, for that opportunity. I am also thankful to my company, for being understanding and creating the situation they did. But, in all those years, as I have already mentioned it, those previous 10 years, I gave my company everything I had. So, the situation was like this, we did a lot of good for each other. I am glad I did that for them, and I'm thankful for everything they did for me. They were, without

question, my lifesavers!

At around the same time, during one of our Bible study gatherings, someone, a person known for his ability to prophesy, told us that we would do missionary work for the Lord, in a Latin (?) country, without actually letting us know what exactly the whole thing was about. As this “Latin country” was being discussed, I will say this - it was an exciting time for us. As an engineer throughout my entire life, anything that required attention, I would just plan every single detail to no end.

### **Missionary Work in Lord’s Service in a “Latin” Country**

So, it’s the latter part of 2013, and we have maybe a few months left to take care of planning all the things that were involved with the trip. First, I took a world map and started to figure out, just exactly what “Latin country” could we be talking about. Most of our friends from our Bible study groups - we belonged to two of them at that time, - had a very easy solution: “Just let God lead you, it’s His will anyway!” You know, I could not argue much with that, but to make God’s planning easier, I continued checking things out.

After we figured out that America wasn’t a predominantly “Latin country”, we also figured out that we didn’t need to look northward, since there weren’t too many Latin countries that way. That was the easy part. Going south was a different story. The first one we considered was Mexico. After asking Glenda, “How about Mexico, baby?” both of us broke into a resounding NOOOO! OK, A big part of North America was done. We continued going south. Next, of course, was Central America. Somehow, one after the other, most of those countries were eliminated as well. There were a couple of places that actually sounded desirable, but eventually, they eliminated themselves. First, Costa Rica - too expensive ... and lots of huge bugs! The only one left was Panama. Panama actually had lots of nice things about it, but eventually, the weather there, for most of the country, was not desirable. Again, as pleasant as New York City on a bad day in mid-summer. Yak!

We just left North America! Next, we came to Colombia. I don’t know how many people know that Colombia was a great power in South America for at least a couple of hundred years. It used to be called Gran Colombia, and at that time, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, and of course,

Colombia formed that huge country. Maybe Gran Colombia only had parts of those countries, but it was quite a sizable country at that time. Eventually, after the split (those parts of Colombia became separate countries), the influence never ceased.

OK, so what about Colombia being that “Latin country”? It certainly is a Latin country. They have lots of poverty there, so the Lord’s work certainly could help. At the end of the day, we arrived at the observation that, hey, Colombia is big time drug cartel place, which, to some degree, is true. But to be fair to Colombia, things have improved drastically there. It is a gorgeous country, it is a natural beauty. So, I said, you know what? Let’s just not eliminate Colombia. Who knows, it may turn out to be our best choice. If not, let’s just remember, the rest of South America is not exactly Paradise.

Next comes Ecuador. It is a much smaller country, in terms of its territory. We started to really learn as much as possible about Ecuador. Probably, most folks only know about Ecuador because of The Galapagos, if they even know about that. The Galapagos happens to be a natural wonder. God created something very special on those islands. When we started to really learn about Ecuador, we quickly realized that The Galapagos are basically a luxurious way for tourists to separate their money from themselves. In addition, it is primarily a tourist’s paradise, and we weren’t going to a Latin country for fun, we were going there to do God’s inspired work. We quickly figured out that The Galapagos would not be for us. We really started at that point to learn as much as possible about Ecuador itself. We made a strong point about not going anywhere near The Galapagos.

We quickly found out that Ecuadorians, for the most part, are different from most of the world. They still like, even love pretty much everything American. That was very refreshing, and still is. We found out that Ecuador, shaped more or less like a pizza pie, is cut in half by the Andes Mountains, running north to south. Those mountains, other than being gorgeous, are green most of the time, at the time we were planning to be there - January to April - as all ‘snowbirds’ are. You do not want to be on the west side of the mountains, in which the weather is awfully humid and hot, pretty much the entire year. The eastern part, named El Oriente or Amazonia, as you can imagine, is awful. It’s really hot and humid!

But that inner region, the one that follows the Andes, is something else! Meaning,

gorgeous. In those months listed above, it is super beautiful. It might have a more humid day here and there, but the temps are between mid-50s and mid-70s, most of the time. If you want cooler weather, you pick a city 100 feet higher in elevation, and so on. Something warmer? 100 feet lower in altitude. It's that simple. It's nice to spend your January, February, and March in shorts and tank tops, don't you think?



So, the more we read about Ecuador, the more we realized that we were very close to finding our “Latin country”. Then, we started to really study as much as possible about the various cities throughout the Andes. We figured out quickly that we should stay away from Quito. It's a beautiful city, no doubt, located at 9,350 feet above sea level, which makes it the second highest capital city in the world, after La Paz, Bolivia. Later, we spent a few days (and nights, unfortunately) in a Quito hotel, and I could not sleep at all because the altitude sickness I experienced while there. It became quickly clear that Quito would not be our home. By a process of elimination, we were left with the choice between two locations. First, Cotacachi, a beautiful place for expats, and the second, Vilcabamba. Cotacachi is located in the northern part of the country, while Vilcabamba is at the southernmost end. Expats who lived in Ecuador earlier told us that Cotacachi tends to get colder. Vilcabamba NEVER gets cold, so you can imagine which one became our choice. There are several larger cities within the Andes, all very beautiful

cities as well. But we wanted a smaller place.

We have gone to Vilcabamba, Ecuador, for seven years during our winters, in those three months when our home in Northeast Pennsylvania was getting hammered with huge winter storms (known as nor'easters), one after the other, continuously at times. A photo of Vilcabamba is shown on the previous page. Quite frankly, we had no idea what to expect from our missionary work, but it did not take very long to figure it out once we made it to Vilcabamba the first time. What we knew for sure was that we just found our little winter paradise.

Vilcabamba is located in a valley at around 5,500 feet or so. Many years ago, it served as one of the Inca kings' summer retreats. The village had, during our first visit there in 2015, about 6000 inhabitants, of which around 1,500 were "gringos". For Ecuadoreans, this only means foreigners. There were expats and visitors there pretty much from all over the world, coming and going. As for Americans, most came either from the West Coast states, and some from the American Southern states (mainly Texas). Aside for serving as targets for our missionary work, we had a wonderful time there every single year. We feel terrible about it, but what COVID did to us and Ecuador as well was force the ceasing of our regular visits there, and of course, stopping us from doing God's work. In 2020, we had a terrible time making it back home, but I will get to that later. What that meant, though, is that we haven't made it back there since - without a doubt, a big shame.

We have made a lot of very good friends there, lots of them. The best part of the entire experience was that just about all the folks there, whether locals, the expats, or just simple visitors like us, acted respectfully, pleasantly, and humbly - really on their best behaviors. We still communicate with friends there, and again, we are very sorry that we had to interrupt our visits because of all the bad things that have happened in the world today. We pray to the Lord, that this situation changes for the better soon, and when it does, we hope to go back to our home away from home in Ecuador.

Our trips were more or less during the same time periods - between early January and early April each year, for the maximum 90 days Ecuador allows us free visas, after which a pretty steep fee would apply. We never stayed beyond the 90 days, in any of those years there.

Our first year in Ecuador was in 2014, when we arrived in Guayaquil. It is their largest city, with a population of over 3 million. There was a reason we picked GYE (pronounced “Wah-yeh”), as our first stop. The airline service was better flying there - you could choose several non-stop flights from JFK airport. Second, we were associated with a firm named Young Living (YL) headquartered in Utah, the top worldwide company in the essential oil business. Because Ecuador is home to such amazing flora and natural healing properties, it was only logical for YL to develop plant farms in Ecuador. They have a farm west of GYE, just before you reach the Pacific Ocean. On the next page is a photo of the farm. One can see the Pacific far in the background. The quality of the photo is not the best.

They operate in many other things, a clinic, which can be seen in the distance, far left. The home of Gary Young, the founder of YL, can be seen to the left of the clinic. These facilities seem small, but the clinic does amazing work healing cancer patients. Cancer is a killer, no doubt, but the treatments have helped many patients, or made their lives more livable, for those who unfortunately could not be saved.



We stayed at the farm for about two weeks, where we took treatments to improve our health, and helped care for a person in dire straits, afflicted with digestive cancer. Our goal was to

make his life more livable. Weldon was an intimate friend of Gary's. It was probably one of the most worthwhile efforts of my life - certainly while in Ecuador - attending to his needs together with Glenda. This fellow was from Texas, and I prepared for him some real nice Hungarian/Romanian meals, which he got to enjoy very much. I loved looking into his eyes while he savored them. As a Jew, I was obligated to make him a very delicious chicken soup, with all kinds of veggies in it and angel hair pasta. He so much enjoyed my "Jewish penicillin".

Once our time at the YL farm came to an end, about two weeks later, we returned to GYE. Glenda was scheduled to hold a session on REFLEXOLOGY, which is a healing method using acupressure and massaging nerves in the hands and feet. Glenda is licensed to provide that sort of treatment. The session was held at the University of Guayaquil, and was attended by many young interested students. It was a total success.



From GYE, we took a van service to Cuenca, Ecuador's third largest city, with about 500,000 inhabitants. Beautiful old, Spanish conquistador city. The trip took many hours. We stayed in Cuenca for a few days. It is a city with many expats (at the time maybe 15,000 gringos). There are all kinds of beautiful cultural means for enjoyment. One thing that threw a monkey wrench into my experience was the drastic altitude change. We had gone from sea level in GYE to around 8,500 feet altitude in Cuenca, I mean, it was definitely a challenge, but by the time our stay in

Cuenca was ending, a few days later, amazingly, it got a lot easier for me to handle the altitude. Ecuador in general, and Cuenca in particular, are exquisite places. A photo of Cuenca is included on previous page, but as far as I am concerned, no picture would do it justice. Remember, we were at around 8,000 plus feet here, so basically over a mile and a half into the sky. The mountains seen in the background are way over 10,000 feet in height. Amazing!

We then got into another van service, which took us to Vilcabamba, a trip of about another four hours, if I remember correctly. The trip, well, those Ecuadorian drivers seem to want to kill themselves. Driving through curvy roads (there seem to be no straight roads in Ecuador), at times in excess of 80 miles/hour, well ... let's put it this way .... We did a LOT of praying to the Lord!

That road from Cuenca to Vilcabamba goes through a city of about 200,000 people named Loja, around an hour from Vilca. That city would become the place we would go to for serious medical attention, for more extensive shopping of all kinds, and just to get a feel for what we might be missing from the US. Although, quite frankly, we did not miss much, if anything. Ecuador, in many ways, is a very modern place. We would not do justice to that country, and its cities, or just the whole place in general, if we did not provide enough photos for you folks to get an idea of how beautiful this God's country really is. A photo of Loja is included here, and next, we are on our way to Vilca.



About an hour after we left Loja, we neared Vilcabamba, which we had to approach from high in the mountains. Vilca is in a valley ... let me explain now what the name means, perfect

place to do it here ... A photo of it is included on the previous page. The name is formed like this - Vilca is derived from Huilco, which is a native tree that grows everywhere in the area. Bamba, in the native language named Qechua, means valley - so you put the two together, Valley of the Huilcos, or Vlcabamba. A photo of the road to Vilcabamba is shown below. This will give you an idea about what we are talking about. A lot of Ecuador has those kinds of roads. This is definitely, God's country!



When I think about that very first moment, coming down from those mountains into this gorgeous valley, I still get goose bumps. No way to get around it! That scene is etched forever in my mind and heart, and it will stay there forever! As they sometimes say, it is God's country, no doubt, Vilca is exactly that!

The other thing I could not help thinking about if that moment - yes, the Lord had directed us to do missionary work in His name - but why Vilcabamba? Like HE always does, before long, HE presented us with the WHY. Just remember the title of my book - So, tell me why? This is just one of those several "why's" - the reasons this book had to be written. Others will be explained later. I have a special section for that - the EPILOGUE to my book. Just be patient!

Obviously, I do not have enough room in my book to get into all the details of all the years we traveled to Ecuador, but I will try to touch on the important points of the trips as best as I can.

Before we ever planned our first trip to Ecuador, in fact, at that time, we didn't even know that it would be Ecuador, or Vilcabamba for that matter. What we did know was that, regardless of where we ended up, probably we'd be better off if we were able to speak Spanish. Glenda is not great at learning languages. Some people are gifted in that regard (likely one of those is me - God endowed me with that gift, and for that, I am as always, grateful to HIM!), some are not. Earlier in the book, I explained how I was gifted in languages, and how over my lifetime, I managed to speak better or worse in 9 or 10 languages. Another Vilca photo here, to show the most famous mountain formation of Vilca, Mandango, as seen from down in Vilcabamba (at the very top left). If you look very, very carefully, you might distinguish a face looking at the sky on the top of Mandango. The point at the top is the nose. Imagination required. Pretty "incredible", as my Ecuadorian friends would call it! To get up to the top of Mandango by foot is a definite challenge, but they have cool horseback riding options up there.

Sitting in my office, planning the trip out, I said to myself. "If I am going to a country where Spanish is the language spoken, and if I am asked by the Lord to do HIS missionary work there, then I will put in the effort to learn to speak that language well enough so that people of that country can understand me and I can understand them." To get the show on the road, I figured the best way to learn it would be to get a software package designed to learn languages, as quickly and easily as possible. To a level that can be used in a regular way.



I looked it up on the Internet available sources. I tried in the past to learn other languages or just refresh them. Checking things out, I decided to get the Pimsleur Approach method. It is somewhat similar to Babbel, Rosetta Stone, and other similar packages. I really liked Pimsleur. Later, I got packages for Hebrew (refresher) and Brazilian Portuguese. All of the languages are structured in a similar manner, there is a system to learning, which, for me, made it easier.

Anyway, for those few months - maybe six - the CDs were always on, whether I paid attention or not; they were just playing in the background, allowing the information to seep into my ears constantly. I will not lie, it took some serious effort. At the time I was doing this, I was around 65 - not exactly a spring chicken. And my memory was getting weaker all the time. But you know what? Amazingly, I got a good sense of learning Spanish. I love Spanish, it sounds musical to me. Like always though, HE was stepping in with help. My knowledge of Romanian did not hurt either.

My Spanish, by the time we got to Vilcabamba, had improved steadily. For the first two weeks, I listened a LOT. But slowly, gradually, I got the courage to start speaking, which is always the barrier that stops someone from communicating. But once that courage kicked in, well, I had no problem whatsoever translating both ways. The natives loved it, because they considered my effort a sign of respect for their culture. Both sides appreciated my ability to communicate between them, enabling exchanges that would have otherwise been impossible.

The best part was that when I got to the point of communicating with them well, you could see how happy they were that a “blanchito” (that stands as a diminutive form for a Caucasian person) could actually speak their language. Speaking to these folks, most of whom only really spoke Qechua, their native language, I mean being able to communicate sometimes for an hour with them in Spanish (or some sort of Spanish), was pretty amazing to me.

In this manner, a few years passed, and we just got to handle life in Vilca better and better each year. Through the years, we began flying into Quito rather GYE. Quite frankly, GYE was too large to enjoy, with a lot of crime, like any large city has. Between all the bad weather, crime, and other tough things to handle, we just did not go to GYE again until 2020, when COVID forced us to return there due to difficulty finding a flight out of Ecuador back home. We had to board an American government arranged charter plane, that took us to Miami.

When we got to Miami, we had a very hard time finding a flight that would get us back home, as near to Lord's Valley as we could get to. After flying in some pretty exotic routes, through Detroit and Scranton/Wilkes Barre, we got home, believe it or not, the same exact day and time that our originally scheduled flight almost a year earlier had been supposed to land. What can I say? I can only say that I wish COVID never happened and hope that it never happens again.

Ecuador was - and still is - special to us, because our friends there. When I think about the fact that Ecuador is probably the most exotic and biologically diverse country in the world, I just can't help but think about hopping on a plane and going back there again. Did you know that Ecuador has 30,000 species of orchids alone? Yes—30,000. I hope you appreciate that fact. Another amazing thing about it ... you can spend a day in the rain forest at maybe 7,000 plus feet altitude, in the front of a gorgeous huge water fall. I mean, you are talking God-created beauty that is hard to describe.



There are so many beautiful places in Ecuador, some of which we touched, but places in Amazonia and the western part of the country - that we did not. We cannot stop talking about Ecuador, without giving you a detail about something so prevalent there. It would not be fair. There are at least 20 very serious volcanos, at least 15,000 feet in height, or actually more. Above is a photo of one. Look at that gorgeous beauty. Tungurahua is one we visited. At that time, they

expected an eruption like you see above at any moment. Ecuadorians take volcanic activity and ensuing earthquakes in stride. They are used to them. There are almost no days when at least one earthquake does not occur. While there one year, we were in the middle of a 7.5 earthquake on the Richter scale. It was some experience, but you know what? life resumed after about 20 minutes, like nothing happened. The house shook like jello, but since they build to such high codes, the buildings usually have no issues after all the shaking. Here is something to think about: Heard it while were visiting one time. Cotopaxi, Ecuador's tallest mountain and volcano at over 20,000 feet in altitude, if it were to have a major eruption/explosion, Ecuador would disappear. Not a comforting feeling, but hey, Ecuadorians live their everyday lives with this knowledge. Another - If Tungurahua, the one with the picture above, if that one explodes, the beautiful tourist town at its bottom, Banos (which means Spas in Spanish, because of all the hot spring spas in the town) would disappear as well. Again, people live their lives there, no problem.

One last photo of Ecuador - extinct volcano Palalahua - maybe 30 miles north of Quito, smack on the Equator. The farms you see are located inside what was once the crater, but now appear as simple mountains. The farms are actually active. Imagine cultivating crops inside a volcano crater. Lastly, in Ecuador, at altitudes of 5,000 - 10,000 feet, the soil is so rich because of the volcanic lava and all, the soil depth in some places is up to 4 feet deep. You should see how everything grows in there. For example, corn grows to be 15 feet tall, with ears of corn a foot and a half long.



Let's now talk about the missionary work in the "Latin" speaking country. One thing became clearer, fast. We kind of figured out which one the "Latin" country would be, and it was there for us to see - it was Ecuador, no doubt. As to how, where and when that would happen still remained somewhat unclear. In the first year there, the opportunity immediately opened up for us to perform the missionary work we were prophesied to do.

In that first year, we stayed with a good friend who had lived for years in Ecuador. Kal (short for Calvin) had lived for many years in some of the West Coast states and Canada. Eventually, he and his family moved to Ecuador. I met Kal on the Internet as I was checking out things about the country. We became very good friends, and he invited Glenda and me to stay with them, in their apartment in a very nice section of Vilca.

As it happened, his home was very close to a small local Pentecostal church, frequented by locals. The very first time they had a service, it was something so amazing. I mean, we were so excited to hear the worship music coming out of that small church. I mean, it sounded like some African tam-tam drum lead music. It was very cool. Shortly thereafter, we found our way inside the church and connected with Pastor Arnulfo, a wonderful Lord's man. He was of a very dark color, and you could see clearly his African heritage. But if nothing else, the man was blessed by God with an amazing singing voice, an extremely warm demeanor, and was just a pleasure to be around him. And he was an amazing preacher. This happened almost immediately after we arrived the very first time, so we started communicating with him about who we were and why we were there. Well, it took some doing. But, when heart talks to heart, it's amazing what God can do. The one thing with the Ecuadoreans, once you talk to them in Spanish, no matter how poorly, they go into rapid speaking mode, for what I called in Spanish 'mitrallieta', which translates to machine-gun.

We never really had a problem communicating; we were very much loved there, and we received such respect. I translated to Glenda as much as I could. We quickly got involved with all aspects of keeping the church business going.

That effort became a regular yearly effort for us. We helped build a Sunday school for the kids, repaired and extended the church building, and assisted Arnulfo and his family with survival items. We knew now what our missionary work would be like.

We managed to receive funds from our American church, substantial funds, through which we were able to construct an extension adjacent to the church's main building, and help single mothers with funds to help feed families, and the like. Soon, we began to fully understand what "missionary work in a Latin country" meant.

Later on, we managed to hook up with a large American missionary organization, E3 Partners Ministry, an outfit through which we were able to provide more extended ministry work. These folks were working with Franklin Graham, one of the principals at the Billy Graham Foundation. They did a lot of good work. In one situation, we were helping to heal many Ecuadoreans, providing vision and hearing help to needy folks.



Our missionary work did not end there either. The Pentecostal Church of Ecuador, headquartered in QUITO, had a structure where the region of Loja had a supervisor in charge of over 20 pastors/churches. The third year, I believe, our pastor Arnulfo was promoted to lead a much larger church in Loja. He was replaced by a young pastor at our smaller church in Vilca. Somehow, politics caught up with our three pastors (it was claimed that Arnulfo was taking away the flock from our younger pastor), and, as human nature would have it, serious issues developed, as the older pastor probably was more favored by the supervisor. We never really found out just what exactly happened, but before we knew it, we were called into a meeting of all five of us. Obviously, they cared about how we felt about the situation. It was not an easy gathering, but let's just say, the Lord helped us to bring the three pastors along. Things got better, and eventually, order was re-established. The Lord, through us, mediated the problems away.

About that time, we felt that an English-speaking church would be a blessing for the expats

of Vilca. We worked on that for one year, and by the time our Ecuador visit came to an end that year, an English-speaking church was fully established. It was great to see that happening. Eventually, we had to leave, and by the time we came back the next year, that church was not providing services any longer. Had we been there full-time, that course may have been different. Let's just say that we felt very good about our efforts for the Lord in Ecuador. We can hold our heads high about what we were able to achieve there.

We have to end Ecuador's story somewhere. How about here and now?

### **Now The Time Has Come To Tell The Story Of Our Martha**

Here is the story of our daughter Martha. I was not her biological dad. Jerry, Glenda's previous husband, was. But it didn't matter, I felt that she was my daughter, period. And she did feel like I was her dad. In fact, she called me that. And that - was perfectly fine with me. When I met Martha for the first time at Glenda's old home, we established that our relationship would be a true father-daughter one, and even though she was only 16 at the time, she was very mature that way. I loved Martha very much. A lovely picture of our baby, together with part of our hearts, is included just below.



Martha eventually went to college, at the University of Kutztown, a smaller, but very nice and good school in rural Pennsylvania. It is truly located in a very picturesque spot. She loved it very much there, applied herself quite well to her studies, and eventually graduated. We love you so much, Martha, and you are with us every single day!

Then, the biggest tragedy of Glenda's life and the most miserable day in mine occurred only maybe a month after her graduation from Kutztown, Martha's life was cut short in an awful car accident. Our world, Glenda's and mine, was shaken to the core, my God! How can I even begin to convey our pain to you all, our immeasurable grief for this senseless loss? No matter how you go about it, in the end, there is nothing more to it than an infinite and total emptiness. From that moment on, we knew that our lives would never be the same.

You always hear people in similar situations say, what can you do and say? But you know, that is exactly what happens. You cannot figure out what to say and what to do. As sick as I was over that nightmare, my primary directive, so to say, was to try to be there for Glenda, in every possible way. I tried my best, but you know, in that position, there is one source for relief, if you can call it that. It is only God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit that can help, and that is exactly what they did for Glenda and me. Thank you, God, for making Glenda such a faithful believer in YOU, because hadn't it been for YOU, I have no idea how we could have survived our deep grief. Glenda and I participated in several services at Donna's Waverly Wellness Center during that period of terrible existence. And there, our great spiritual leader, Jerry F., took Glenda aside, and Jesus and Jerry managed to put enough life back into my baby, so that we could carry on.

Just briefly, talking about nightmares. A couple of days prior to Martha's passing, Glenda and a very good friend of ours, let me call her Marge H. went on a long driving trip to Georgia, where Marge's daughter worked. When the accident occurred, I received a call from Marge (right there, I knew something was very wrong, I would have expected Glenda to call me), she asked me if I was sitting. My God, I said to myself, please tell me that Glenda is doing OK. Well, the Lord heard me, because immediately after that, Marge tells me, Glenda is OK. A big weight was removed from my heart, right then and there. A moment later, Marge tells me, Martha has passed away. I mean, as you can imagine, I just died there twice, within a matter of a couple of minutes. Let me just say this, I do not wish that for my enemies (and I hope I have none at this point in my

life), would ever have to go through something like this. I can't imagine a more heartbreaking, sickening feeling than what I just went through there, in that moment.

The worst part of it, my baby is a thousand miles away from me. I mean, we were tested there big time, no doubt about that. Years have gone by after that, and we still found ourselves up at night, trying to figure out why something like this had to happen to us. And there was only one real answer for us, as our friend, our pastor, our strongest support in those days, Jerry F., put it ... folks, there is only one explanation why something like this had to happen to you, and that is - God had a much more powerful need for her in Heaven!

I can't wait to see her in heaven one day, but until then, God has certain plans for me down here, and who am I to say no to that? Plus, I must take care of my Glenda - Remember my mom's second command (you always take care of your family)?

### **Life Goes On, Because It Must, And We Must Adjust To It**

I mean, what choice is there? One thing I will say. From that moment on, I realized that my life, of course, would need to focus on what I must do for my wife, and being there for my kids and grandkids, because that is what a husband, a father, and a grandfather is supposed to do.

# CHAPTER 11

## AMAZING VISIT TO EUROPE AND MOROCCO

### Let's Get On The Road - 2008

Let me start by saying this. Traveling to many places, and experiencing different ways of life and people, was always something that I loved to do. For that reason, as my life was changing for the much better, I decided to allot four sections of my book to that topic. In this first chapter, my life was as bad as one can imagine. But then, over the last 15 years or so, things have gradually gotten better, and now it is super compared to many of the previous 32.

How would it be best to start this chapter? First, I essentially got a word from God that separate, different chapters would do better justice to how my life actually happened. So, here I am to comply with His will—who am I to contradict Him?

In my previous marriage, we did some travel, mostly in the U.S. and some in Canada as well. You know, the standard stuff, take the kids to Disney World, Disneyland, Niagara Falls, Six Flags Amusement Parks, Dutch Wonderland, Busch Gardens, and the like, many times, it was only me and the kids, Eva preferred to stay home, I guess. We had some fun in those days, though those moments were few and far between them.

The one thing that happened in my later years, during my first marriage, was the lack of doing things as a family, caused me to develop a strong need to do it more often after my divorce.

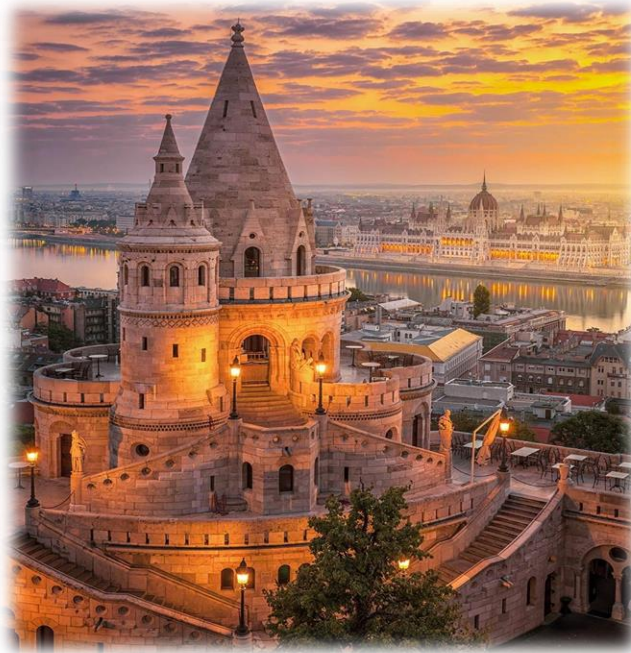
Consider 2008—it was the year with lots of not-so-great things happening. The housing industry crashed, my side engineering business stalled, and four ongoing projects I was managing at the time just stopped on a dime—All at the same exact time. How everything stopped so suddenly like that is beyond my ability to explain! My divorce started, and I got to meet Minodora, my Romanian “girl” friend. Hmmm ... That’s where I want to focus. She turned out to be a bad connection by 2011, but those three years were still pretty cool. We did some fairly serious

traveling together.

That year, we traveled to Budapest, Hungary, where we met for the first time. We had such a great time visiting Budapest. That city must be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. I have covered that previously, and a number of photos are included below on the following pages.

The first photo shown below is the most famous Hungarian Parliament building, situated on the shores of the Danube River, the largest European waterway. Next, there's the old, but also very famous Buda Castle. The 2008 trip to Europe was a time I could again place my feet on European soil, after about 15 years. That last occurred in 1989, just as the communist system was going to implode. In all my 26 years living near Hungary in Transylvania, maybe about 150 miles from the Hungarian border, my family and I were never able to get visas to visit Budapest. So, this was the first time I could actually set my feet on Hungarian soil. It may not seem like a big deal, but believe me, it was quite a big deal for me. At the time, I was still working, so I only had so much time to visit. As a result, I could only spend two days in Budapest, and for that matter, Hungary. I felt really bad about that because that is a city and a country that deserves a lot more time, to fully appreciate and connect with its people. With the little time we had, we still got a fairly good feel for Budapest. I knew immediately that it would not be the last time I set foot there. By now, I've probably spent time in Hungary on at least 4 or 5 occasions, and my prayer to the Lord is that I will get another opportunity to visit there at least one more time, before the long trip (to eternity).





That vacation was scheduled to take place between December 20, 2008, and January 9, 2009—almost three weeks, which was as much time as I could take off work. My entire vacation was spent pretty much on this trip. We managed to do a lot of nice things though. As I mentioned earlier, we spent a couple of days in Budapest, which was gorgeously lit because of the approaching Christmas. Then we spent three days in Vienna, which at Christmas time is a city filled with beautiful concerts. The atmosphere is out of this world during that time of the year. A photo of Vienna's City Hall building is shown below.



From Austria, we drove to the Czech Republic, to its capital, Prague, which is another jewel of Central Europe. When I think about those three wonderful cities—Budapest, Vienna, and Prague—and the cultural hubs that they represent, I can see why they are such highly desired tourist destinations. Without a doubt, they should be on the top of any serious traveler’s list of places to visit. There’s no question that they should also be on the list of serious classical music and opera music aficionados. A photo of Prague is shown below.



Next, we drove back through Hungary, to get to my old home in Romania, Zalau. I have already provided a lot of details about it, but I would just like to say here, again, the first time I set foot in Romania and Zalau, since 1973 was 35 years earlier. A long time by any standard. Let me just say this—it was a very strange feeling, to be perfectly honest. But it was also exciting at the same time. The major impact there was the growth of the city from 15,000 to maybe 80,000 or so. During the two days we were there, I only came across a single person that I knew from my old days. Friends who lived there, people I knew—where were they? The city has grown so much in that time span. It was a very strange feeling. It was similar to what astronauts might feel after coming back from space after a long mission and finding everything totally different. Well, that was exactly how I felt at that moment.

Next, we visited my old friend, George, I have placed photos of his hometown in earlier chapters. We spent 4 glorious days with him, after which we headed towards Minodora’s kids’ homes. Also, on the way back to Budapest. My plane would take me back home to America from

there. We also stopped for a few days at a natural hot spring resort, very well known both in Romania and Europe alike. The name of the place—Felix spas. A photo is shown below, on this page. We had a great 3 or 4 days there. Imagine, bathing in 135-degree water, outdoors, while snow fell on our heads. That was a sensation I had never experienced before—or since. An interesting sensation, what can I say?



Eventually, all good times come to an end, though. So did my vacation time spent in Europe. What could I do? I'll tell you what. Before I knew it, I was back in America. As they say, "c'est la vie". Hey, my French comes in handy sometimes!

I will say this much—the traveling, meeting some of my old friends back in Europe, and quite frankly, getting a nice dose of the European culture that I'd been missing in America— it did wonders for my head! Those cultural elements are available in America as well, but we are programmed to work, to make money here. It is what it is, as they say.

### **A Big Year Of Travel For Me - 2010**

Just thinking about it, I get all kinds of goose bums. As soon as I got home back to America from the trip in 2008, I started to experience the winter thawing blues a couple of months later. In that area, we are talking about thawing happening well into April and the early part of May.

I started planning my next trip to Europe. Obviously, my friends were there, as always.

They were, and will be, there as long as I live. They keep my “European juices” flowing. But as it turned out, for that 2010 year, not one, but two trips ended up being planned. The first would take place around mid-year 2010. The second was scheduled toward the end of 2010. That made for quite a busy schedule, no matter how you look at it.

The years passed quickly—they passed quickly then, too. Suddenly, it’s 2010. I was missing my friends in Europe. Feeling quite lonely, I felt strongly that I wanted to be with them again as soon as possible. I let them know that I decided to come back to Romania, and needless to say, they were very glad that we’d soon be together again. And so it was. Eventually, that day at the end of May came, and I hopped on the plane again. I was becoming a globe trotter—just kidding!



The first few days were spent in Budapest as usual—which needless to say, I could easily spend the rest of my life visiting. The place is so conducive to my happiness and to an easy-going life. Anyway, among the things we did there, the first was a boat trip on the Danube. A photo of that sort of event is shown above. There is always an exciting event, you can visit the marvelous Synagogue building—if it is not the largest in the world, it is certainly one of the top three. Budapest has always been a major center for Judaism and Jewish culture. A photo of the sanctuary is shown on the next page.



We strolled up to the Buda side of the city, where the historic Hungarian Castle is located and has been there for many hundreds of years. Then one can stroll through the center of Budapest, on the Pest side. There are a slew of amazing restaurants—Hungarian food is world renowned. The cultural life of Budapest is second to none. If you like natural thermal spas/baths, Budapest

is full of them, but the more famous ones are the Szecsenyi and the Gellert Hotel. There is one other site that should never be missed: The Margit Sziget (which, in English, would translate to – “Margret’s Island”) is one amazingly beautiful place to spend a day. It is located in the middle of the Danube.

I was very lucky to have visited Budapest several times, I can never get enough of the place. Every time I am fortunate enough to be there, I always plan to do a lot.

Next on the list for visitation was Hungary’s great lake, named Balaton. It might be one of the largest in Europe. It’s a beautiful resort area. We spent a couple of days there as well. My dear friend George and his wife joined us at the Balaton, in Hungary, and we had a really great time there. As I have already stated in other chapters, George lived in Romania at that time. A photo of the lake and one of the many villages situated on its shores is shown on the previous page.

Next, we headed to Gyula, another wonderful natural hot spring spa area, very nicely put together. It is as lovely a place for relaxation as anyone can imagine. Gyula, is a very small town, founded in 1332.



From Gyula, we headed towards Romania, to visit a good friend there. Their family lived in a town called Petrila, which, at one time, was a part of a large coal mining region. The coal, also the iron ore mining richly present there, allowed for serious steel production in that part of

Romania. A representative photo of the works in the area is shown on the previous page. We spent a few days there. Eventually, we headed back to Budapest, Hungary, where we spent a few more days. As I mentioned before, I couldn't—and never can—get enough of Budapest.

The days passed quickly, as they always do. What can one do about that? I will tell you: rent a car, get in, drive a few hours, and find yourself in Austria. Of course, that is exactly what yours truly did. The drive takes approximately 3 hours. You can hop on a train as well, if you'd like—it is a pleasant experience, and you get to enjoy the sights better that way. One can also stop for a day or two at one of the many natural thermal springs of Western Hungary, on the way to Vienna. One of the best is Bukfurdo. A photo is just below.



Second, a very nice place to visit if you enjoy bathing in warm water, is the Thermal Lake of Heviz. Is there anyone who doesn't like to bathe in waters that are well over 100 degrees warm? I don't think so! Whatever your preference, it is all there for your enjoyment. Hungary has it all! It is renowned throughout the entire world for the number and quality of the natural hot springs it offers, and it is the destination for many folks from all over Europe who travel to Hungary to enjoy these natural miracles.

Before we knew it, we were in Vienna—The city of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, just to name a few of them. Great composers, and wonderful music. Another miraculous place, a truly cultural paradise. We spent three days there, only because that was the available time in our budget. Of course, we attended a Mozart concert in the park.

No visit to Vienna should should exclude a day (minimum) at the Schonbrunn Palace. The photo below shows why the place cannot be missed. The palace, in all its incredible beauty is simply breathtaking. Vienna certainly steals your heart as soon as you set your feet there—and pretty quickly too.



But Vienna has many wonderful sites to visit. We cannot do justice to them all here. Let's just say that we had another few wondrous days to enjoy while we were there, too many to list here. On the next page, is another wonderful photo of the city. Time grew very short on us, and because of that, we had to leave Austria and Vienna. What a shame! But Hungary and Budapest are not exactly chopped liver either. A few more wonderful days there, then flying back home! Nothing lasts forever—or so they say.

**Now The Second Leg Of My 2010 Vacation—Wait To Hear About This One!**

Getting home after a really nice vacation sometime in July, I began my final planning for the late fall/early winter trip shortly thereafter. This was going to be something very special. Why? Well, first off, a lot of it was going to happen in Southern Spain, adequately called in Spanish—Costa del Sol—or as you would have it in English—Sun Coast! What a wonderful name and so perfectly descriptive!



Back home in Northeast Pennsylvania, at the very same time, winter was seriously knocking on the door. Normally by that time, back home would already be cold for one thing. And often, I would have already shoveled snow—many times in serious measure. What a difference to be sunbathing, either on the Mediterranean beaches or just sitting in some gorgeous park on a bench, absorbing the sun in abundance.

### **Next Adventure on The Horizon - It's 2010 Now**

Anyway, that day finally came—I believe it was maybe November 26, 2010. I remember it well, it was right around Thanksgiving. I was giving all my thanks for being able to fly to where the birds fly in the winter! hopped on a beautiful Iberia Airlines flight (for those unfamiliar with flying, that is Spain's major airline). The flight was great, and the service over the Atlantic was excellent. Before I knew it, I had stepped onto Spanish soil, in Madrid.

I wish I had planned the trip so that I could have spent a couple of days in Madrid. But I could not, as my friend was waiting for me in Malaga—a beautiful city on the Costa del Sol, southwest of Barcelona. Unfortunately, I also could not go to Barcelona, as I only had so much vacation time left. But guess what? It gave me a good reason to plan another visit to Spain, to spend some time in both Madrid and Barcelona, and maybe a few others. Spain is one beautiful country, and its people are something else! Extremely warm, friendly, and welcoming, they make sure you feel at home in Spain.

Talking about plane-hopping? Well, before long, I was on another plane, taking me to Malaga. Another great flight, and I was in paradise. What an amazing place. I wish all of you could be in Malaga, in the fall or early spring. Don't go to Costa del Sol in the summer, unless you literally like to be fried! From here on out, there will be lots of photos! Not that we missed too many up until now in this book. But these coming up are amazing. No matter which way you go and look, that gorgeous sea is always right there. Two great photos of Malaga are shown here.





We picked Marbella as our “home in Spain”. Talk about one beauty after the other! A photo from Marbella is shown below. I wish I could describe to you all the shades of blue and green of that sea. In my life, I have had the opportunity to see many seashores, but this one here must be the most beautiful sea colors ever! We spent on and off a few days, in and around Marbella—too many experiences to describe.





Two photos of Marbella are shown here. How can you not like what you see?



There are many beautiful places to vacation near Marbella. But one in particular I would like to mention here: it is named Sotogrande. A photo is included because the place is something

else. Next on our list was Gibraltar, “the Rock”, as they call it. As you approach it, the town still in Spain is called Algeciras. The view of the Rock from Algeciras is just unreal. The beauty is beyond description—literally, you have trouble deciding where to look first. I still have that picture in my brain banks!



We drove up to the top, of the Rock, and made several stops along the way. The number of stores and activities to do along the way is just incredible. A photo of the downtown area is shown below.



When you get to the top, right there is a gang of monkeys that have lived there for hundreds of years. They jump all over you—your back, your head, wherever they can find an empty spot on your body! I mean, that event alone was something to behold. That was one day I will never forget as long as I live. An amazing experience. The picture of the monkey is shown on the next page.

But like everything else, this adventure came to an end as well. The beauty of the sea and surrounding cities and towns on the next page—it's really indescribable, and no photo can manage to capture that beauty. Once seen, your brain will never let go of it.

Gibraltar is part of Great Britain, and it has been that way for a long time. When you stop in stores there, it is impossible not to feel the “British” scent. And by the way, the entire Costa del Sol has a very strong British flavor to it, and English is spoken everywhere. The majority of businesses in the area are owned and run by Brits.



From Gibraltar, we hopped onto a boat service tour that took us across the strait, where the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea meet, and, of course, Europe and Africa come together. The watercolors were incredible—the blues and the greens. The waters swirl like crazy, there are some incredible vortices at that spot. On the African side, we set foot in Tangier—a pretty famous

city in Morocco. A photo of Tangiers is included below.

As always, we were on a short leash in terms of time. It feels unjust, but really, all we had was half a day. And that included the boat rides, which were maybe a bit less than an hour each way.

As limited as our time was, it still allowed us to enjoy a wonderful meal at one of the local restaurants. Afterward, we visited the famous local open-air market, then headed towards the boat that was going to take us back to Spain. That was our “vacation” to Africa. Oh, there was something happening there at the time of our visit—Morocco’s king was visiting Tangier on that exact day! The city lies on the Atlantic Ocean—how bad can it be? I mean, Tangier is a great place to visit in Africa.



Before too long, we were back in Spain, and now the focus of our Spanish visit started. Next on our itinerary was another beautiful Spanish city, Cadiz. One of the most marvelous cities in Spain, it is just one of so many extraordinary locations. But this city, on the Atlantic, is really something unique and very special. First off, the city is the oldest continuously populated city in the Western World. It has existed for at least 3,000 documented years. Additionally, it was the place where Christopher Columbus embarked on his second voyage from Europe to America. I just marvel at those nothing-but-white homes.

I love that look. Of course, with the heat they have there for many months each year, white must be the preferred color. Now that I think about it, all cities, towns, and villages in southern Spain have mostly white houses, or some other light colors, such as faint beige. It's a distinct characteristic of the region.



The city's architecture is unbelievably beautiful, and its location on the Atlantic gives it just another touch of greatness. I wish we had more time to spend in Cadiz, we just needed to move on to our next stop.



Next on our list was Seville. What can I say about it? Another beauty. This city also happens to be the hometown of Picasso, and it houses his museum as well. We did not include photos of his museum, because choosing any one of his paintings would have been an injustice to the rest. However, a photo of the amazing buildings in Seville is included below—it's beyond belief. But then, every single building in that city is nothing but a work of exquisite art. It's hard to believe that it is real. I loved sitting on the bench next to Picasso. It felt a little funny, but I loved it anyway. A photo of Picasso is on the previous page.



Next, we traveled to Portugal, before we returned to Spain. The first spot we visited in Portugal was a wonderful city on the south shore of Portugal, named Faro. What a place! How can I put it best? After our drive seemed to last forever, suddenly, like an oasis, there it was—the most amazing tourist spot you’ll ever find, in the middle of nowhere! It is situated in a region of Portugal, named Algarve.

Algarve, they say, is one of the most affordable and beautiful retirement places you’ll ever find. Especially if you happen to be an American! Portugal is an amazing place to me, anyway. A photo of Faro is included on previous page. The first one is that of the main avenue in the town, which a NYC American may call the 5th Avenue of Faro. We came across it totally unexpectedly, in what seemed like the middle of nowhere.

When I was very young, back in Romania, I had the opportunity to listen to a genre of Portuguese music called Fado. The way I can describe Fado is to call it the Portuguese equivalent of Blues music—American Blues, specifically. I don’t believe I have mentioned this before, but music is, more or less, everything in my life, as far as fun and entertainment go.

I cannot imagine myself not being able to listen to some sort of music at any time. In my book, there are only two kinds of music, GOOD and BAD. Good music is what touches my soul and my heart.

When I listen to Fado, it feels like my entire body and mind are consumed by it. I must have been 10-12 years old when this world-famous Portuguese singer, Amalia Rodrigues, came to Romania, for a few concerts. She was like the Ella Fitzgerald of Fado. She sang so beautifully, and I can remember it to this day.

She has been deceased for many years. I mean, she probably was 40-50 years old by 1960. Now, I listen to young Portuguese Fado singers, all because that amazing lady instilled in me a love for Fado. Obviously, I am not Portuguese—not even close to it—but music like I that goes straight to your soul, your heart.

Next, we found ourselves in Lisbon. What can I say about Lisbon? I just fell in love with it instantaneously. All it took was finding an amazing restaurant, with live music (including Fado), and I was done! Wow!



I mean, Lisbon is simply beautiful and extraordinary. Many people probably know little about Portugal, or perhaps they do, but even though it is physically small, Portugal was a very important factor in how our world eventually ended up being shaped. Let's put it this way—they were in Japan (influencing that country's culture), China, Brazil (a country of 200,000,000), Madagascar, other territories in Africa, and Arabia. They discovered many maritime routes, participated in spice trades, and established ties in India. They certainly had major contributions to world emancipation. Hey, Magellan was Portuguese! Were they without faults? Of course not, but they were not any worse than all the other colonizers. In any event, one thing is for sure—their music is exquisite, no doubt about it. Included above is a beautiful photo of Lisbon from the Atlantic coast. Wow! Our Portugal Adventure Comes to an End.

As for us, our Portugal experience ended just as we headed back to Spain. We still had many nice stops coming up. We weren't finished with Spain by any means. Several other stops awaited us before we'd fly back home.

Next, we had Granada on our radar. So, we decided to go back to our home in Spain, which was Marbella. We rested for a few days. By that time, it was well into December. I remember soaking in the sun in mid-December, at about 80 degrees. It was absolutely beautiful. The day

came to head back on our Spanish travel. We got into our car and headed towards Granada—another great city in Spain. Getting to Granada, we had to pass through some serious mountains, the Sierra Nevada (“Snowy Mountains” in English)— which are well in excess of 10,000 feet in elevation. As such, we needed to pass very dense fog at times, and dozens and dozens of tunnels. The Spanish resolved their mountainous terrains through complex tunnel systems, rather than viaducts and massive bridges. Their highways in that area had tremendous elevation issues. My engineering background tells me that they chose the better of their options, even though the costs may have been quite prohibitive in some cases.

Below is a photo of the Sierra Nevada mountains in the southern part of Spain, with roads that cross those mountains. There was definitely a challenge to pass them, to get to Granada. The interesting part was this: driving from Malaga, on the Mediterranean coast of Costa del Sol, it would be very warm, but then we’d find ourselves driving for hours through nothing but olive tree orchards. Unbelievable— the immensity of that business. Later, I found out that Spain was the number one country in the world for olive production and everything related to olives. The next three countries, in that order, were Italy, Greece and Israel. Together those three produce 30% of what Spain produces. No wonder! I mean, you drive for four hours through nothing but olive tree orchards. It’s astounding. The photo on page 232 is a shop in Southern Spain where they sell olives.







I never saw so many olive products in one place in my entire life. Just imagine—that is only one store! They may have 50 of those in just one shopping market. Spaniards eat a lot of ham, as well. A photo of a ham shop is also shown above.



We eventually got to Granada, which, needless to say, is a tourist's dream world. You cannot talk about Granada without mentioning its history of occupation—first by the Romans and later by the Moors. As you can imagine, both had major influences on Granada.



Roman vestiges are everywhere, Granada was referred to as Iliberis in Roman times. More recently, it was overtaken by, among others, the Arab Moors. From those days date back to the world-famous Alhambra Palace. Photos of Alhambra are shown above. Just from the photos alone, I would call it incredible. To properly visit the Alhambra, you probably need a week. Another famous site in Granada is the Cathedral—a must-visit. Also, pictured above is one of the

favorite Spanish dishes, served at major restaurants. The tastes are indescribable!

Our Granada visit ended here, but before we could head back to Malaga—and then, of course, back home to America—there was one other stop of note. That stop was Ronda. Ronda is located atop a famous ravine, and its entrance is on a viaduct dating back to Roman times. A photo of it is shown below.



We couldn't leave without experiencing what it is so famous for—its bullfighting arena, one of the most well-known in Spain, and perhaps in the entire world. When you attend one of those shows, I mean, it gets to be about as exciting as anything you can get. First, the huge crowds going literally berserk. Why or how? I'm not entirely sure. But then, you are talking about passionate Latinos, who can go nuts for no particular reason. A photo of the bullfighting arena is shown below.



This arena has been a cornerstone of Spanish culture since 1784—hundreds of years! It's just mind-boggling to me. After the fights, we had a great meal at one of their restaurants. You should have seen the walls—adorned with hundreds of photos of famous fighters and historical bullfights.

As we made our way back to Malaga, we stopped to take in the sights one last time. I decided to include another photo of the bullfighting scene. What an unbelievable moment for both the fighter and the bull!



Anyway, we are on our way back now. There are a couple of things we did in the Malaga area that need to be included here. Hopefully, I can share some representative photos.

I must say a couple of words about that trip through the southern mountains of Spain. The unbelievably beautiful sights, the many tunnels, the fog and clouds we passed through—it was something I will never forget.

And then there were the shells on the Mediterranean beaches. I have had the opportunity to visit a few beaches in my life, but I have never seen shells like those on the Spanish beaches along the Mediterranean. Look at the photo below—it's remarkable.



Southern Spain just simply defies logic in so many different ways. Maybe I am just totally in love with the place, not sure, but please check out the photo below and tell me—what do you think about that construction? Obviously, they can do it.



It's there. But man, wow! Imagine working at those altitudes for years, hanging above thousand-foot abysses, as you try to do your job. If you know mountain weather, you know it can change in seconds, and it can be brutal. I mean, my engineering mind just wanders around when I look at that.

When I look at that photo, I cannot help but think—how did they build that bridge there, and what happens if those mountains decide to move a bit? I could not come up with an answer. I'll let God answer that one! I am sure, HE has much better answers than I do.

This part of my adventures comes to an end now, but don't despair— there's more on the way! Just please read the next chapter!

# CHAPTER 12

## THE TIME OF OUR LIVES IN EUROPE

In the winter of 2014, while enjoying our vacation in Ecuador, Glenda and I figured that planning a vacation for later that year to Romania and Hungary would be something nice to do. At that point, we were not aware at all that we would end up visiting 12 countries. It turned out to be the vacation of all vacations. You will see after we go through all the details! Wow! And of course, by this time, my life had become a lot happier as well!

Trying to plan the actual best route for the entire trip was not such an easy thing to do. The deciding factor in the end hinged on the fact that if we made London our first stop, it would minimize the flying time of the first leg, because a New York City to London flight is usually less than 6 hours. As you may realize, flying is for sure not my favorite way of having fun. Just remember my first flying experience on that old, beat-up plane that took us to Israel.

We arrived at Heathrow in mid-August 2014. We only had 6 days in England and London, which is basically nothing to get a real understanding of what the Brits are all about. We are talking basically gorgeous, old-world life. There is no way to start any photos of London, without first showing the British Parliament Building and Big Ben at the very beginning below.





The view, especially from the other side of the river Thames, is certainly breathtaking, without question. The fact that in the mid-1800s they had the technology to build something like this, to me, is awe-striking. Next for us, was to visit the London Bridge, another amazing construction. The Thames River just makes its view that much more glorious. Parts of the bridge

were built between 1066 and 1078. A long time ago. Another site that we could not miss was the Trafalgar Square, a pretty amazing construction in itself. Photos of the two amazing sites are shown on previous page. Two gorgeous views. There are not many places like London in our world! We spent a couple of days visiting London.



We figured that we could not miss the famous Royal Windsor Palace. We took a short train ride, and there we were. Oh, my Lord, talking about something majestic. Just look at it above for yourselves. Unfortunately, the royals were not there during our visit. You win some, you lose some .... How can you not be impressed by something this grandiose?

After our week (or so) in London, we hopped on our next plane, and before we knew it, we found ourselves in Bucharest, Romania's capital. I mean, there was definitely quite a difference from London, but hey, I was back in my old homeland. We didn't have much time in Bucharest, because of our packed visiting schedule. We picked up our car there, a Skoda, a beautiful car, which, in those days, was a kind of big deal to get in Romania.

We had a day in Bucharest, just enough time to give Glenda a chance to get an idea about it, just by driving around in our beautiful car. I cannot leave Bucharest without including at least one photo & there is one on next page.



Bucharest is a beautiful city of around 2 million folks, and it will always have a special place in my heart, for obvious reasons! There is a saying in Romanian, which applies perfectly here. I hope it doesn't lose a lot in the translation - "Drumetului ii sade bine cu drumul", which translates to - "For the world traveler, the road is the best home". In other words, on the road again for us! Romania, and its people, may have some warts, but one thing no one can deny is that it is, for sure, one of the most beautiful countries in the world, and of course, it will always be in my heart.



Once our time in Bucharest came to an abrupt end, we headed northward, towards the Carpathian Mountains, which are always a breathtaking trip. One cannot really travel very far in Romania without eventually reaching the Carpathian Mountains. Just on the previous page is a beautiful photo of the Romanian Carpathian Mountains.

Further north we visited Brasov, another beautiful city in Transylvania, on the northern side of the mountains. This was followed by Sighisoara. A photo of it was included in an earlier chapter.

On our way to our next stop, which happened to be Sovata, we visited a wellness and general healthcare city. It is famous not only in Romania, but also a large part of Europe. During my time in Romania, lots of foreign visitors used to come there for very beneficial treatments. We met there with a couple of old-time friends of ours, so from that moment on, we were in great company with lots of amazing fun. Let's call my friends Maria and Valentin. Attached are a couple of photos from Sovata on this page and the next.



Next stop Sibiu, to visit my old buddy George (Ghita), who was very happy to see us. A photo of his village was included in an earlier chapter as well. We continued to Alba Iulia, another beautiful, old city in Transylvania. Alba Iulia played a major role in many important events in the history of Transylvania and Romania as a whole. For that reason, and also because it is just a very beautiful city, I decided to include a photo on the next page. Alba Iulia, at one time, used to be the capital city of Transylvania.



Eventually, we made it to my old college city of Cluj, to be with my best friend Lewis. Photos were included in earlier chapters. I must tell a Lewis story here. I feel that the story is quite out of the ordinary. Let me start it this way, and it might be hard for some to understand. But you know, one thing about socialism/communism: logic did not prevail most of the time. Brainwashing was very much in fashion in that system, as well.

Lewis and I go back to the mid to late 60's. I have covered part of the story in the chapter about my college years. That's how far back our friendship goes. Lewis is an ethnic Hungarian from Romania, which qualified him as a minority person. That also brought upon him additional hardships, to say the least. At an early age, maybe around 16 or so, Lewis decided that he would not live his life in Romania, but instead, he would do everything he could to defect. To defect from the Eastern European socialist/communist bloc was about as close to "mission impossible" as one could get.

Together with a buddy of his at the time, they attempted the impossible. They planned to defect to America, through what used to be known as Yugoslavia. They managed to get as far as Trieste, bordering Italy with Yugoslavia. However, their luck ran out there, and they were returned to Romania. Talk about a dream being killed!

Anyway, I met Lewis, as I have already covered earlier, at our first job. We were together there in every way possible. I never discussed this matter with Lewis during our two years together, until we immigrated. A couple of things about that: first, I never heard my friend speak English, which is not easy for a Hungarian to learn, until he came for the first time to visit me in America in 2015. Second, I always found it funny that my friend failed to make it to America, and I managed to make it here somehow. Talk about fate, destiny, or blind luck, or as I call it these days, the Lord's work!

We spent some time at our friend's place. He was wonderful in everything he provided for us. Meeting some of Lewis' special friends, having meals at all sorts of the best restaurants in Cluj, and spending time at the opera house, I mean, we had the times of our lives while in Cluj. All this was with my very best buddy and some of his friends! Oh, I almost forgot - we had such a great time visiting the Botanical Garden of Cluj. That place is unique and out of this world! That is, if you like nature!

Our few days there passed pretty quickly as they always do when you are having fun! And believe me, we know how to do that! By the time we did all of that, it was towards the end of September 2014. We were back in the car again and heading towards my old home, Zalau.



Zalau, like Budapest and Cluj, I can never get enough of, obviously. We spent a few days there with our friends Marika and Valentin. I can't help but include another photo here of my beautiful childhood home. The old, small town has changed so drastically in the years I have been away, it's just about incredible. A photo of the city center, these days is shown above. It's still beautiful to me after all these years. One cannot very easily erase all the memories that come with looking at a photo like this!

But moving on, we must do. The thrust of the bulk of our European visit is coming up now and quickly. We moved into Hungary, and the first stop was to visit my old hometown friend, Ocsi. He lived in northeastern Hungary, in a small village called Anarcs, which happens to be close to Kisvarda, which we covered in an earlier chapter.

Next, in Budapest, again. I warned you earlier, I will never be able to get enough of it. It's absolutely mesmerizing to me. Who wouldn't love to have an exquisite Jewish meal at a glat-kosher (means food prepared according to very tight Jewish traditions of cooking) restaurant like the photo on next page shows it! All you need is to make sure that your wallet and pockets can

hold enough cash or credit cards to pay for that meal!



Anyway, moving right on, since Budapest is only one of the many stops on our itinerary. Next on the list was spending some time in Prague. Quite frankly, going from Budapest, Hungary, to Prague, in the Czech Republic is not a very big drop, if any. This city is glorious, a lot of history

behind it. Lots of cultures have crossed paths around there. The Czechs are a gentle, industrious group. Their capital city is something else. Beauty is everywhere. When we arrived there, so many visitors were roaming around, I couldn't believe it. People love to visit the place. By then, it was October already, and it was getting to cold. No matter, there were still tons of visitors. We stayed in Prague for about three days maybe, but gosh, we could have been there for weeks and not run out of options. It's simply a marvelous place, that's all. But, like always, we had to move on, though we still managed to stay for a couple more days in the Czech Republic. We made it to another glorious place in that country.



Karlovy Vary, well, another breathtaking place. This place was founded by Holy King Charles the IV in the 13th century. He was on a hunting trip when they came across some naturally thermal springs, with mineral waters that cured the king's many digestive issues. People have been drinking the water there ever since. I would call that place "in the middle of nowhere," as many of these are in Europe, but talk about a kingly place. Wow! I have to include a photo of it to do it some justice.

Talking about beauty! You've got it in this place, for sure. I could just keep adding more and more photos; the beauty is everywhere. But there's something here that cannot be overlooked. Queen Latifa starred in the movie Last Holiday, which was filmed at the Pupp Hotel in Karlovy Vary. A photo showing the place is included on next page. After our visit there, I could understand

why the movie was called that name. After a holiday there, you don't need any other. You are maxed out! One other thing that comes to mind - on the hotel's ground floor, there is a bakery/cafe. The stuff made there is beyond belief, I still have the coffee and chocolate taste in my mouth after all these years!



But, as usual, we must move on. What a pity! Do not worry though, Germany is next on

the radar. And this is that part of Germany they call Bavaria. Pretty famous. One could spend a lifetime just checking out things in Bavaria alone, but our schedule was quite brutal. Let's not forget, Oktoberfest started in Germany, so being in Bavaria in October kind of lends itself to some serious schnitzel, potato eating, and beer drinking. We, unfortunately, only had a couple of days to spend in Germany because our Salzburg, Austria destination was calling loudly. Talk about going from good to better - that is if you care at all about serious music.



If someone knows anything about Salzburg, Austria, they surely know about its most representative character - Wolfgang Amadeus (which means “loved by gods,” and was he ever!) Mozart. I love loved opera, classical, and symphony music since I was very young.

So when I listen to Mozart, my brain is totally tuned into his music. I mean, talk about beauty in music - you will not find anything better, as far as I am concerned. I wish I could make his music “readable” here in this book.

Boy, would that be something else! As he is my all-time favorite, a photo of him definitely belongs here on next page.

In my book (no pun intended!) he is the best, bar none. And there have been many, many greats in classical music.



Moving on ... From Salzburg, our car took us quickly towards Italy. Before long, we entered the Dolomites, a gorgeous mountain chain in northern Italy. Talk about beautiful mountains; not many are more impressive. I loved the colors - between white and grey, you will find every shade known to the eye. Wow! You may say, “hey, you, everything looks beautiful to you!” And you know what my answer to you would be? YES, everything made by God is beautiful, no, GORGEOUS - if HE blessed you with eyes that can see! I don’t mean just look, I mean SEE. Look beyond the obvious, and you will discover beauty that you may have never thought was there before. For me, as I got older, I began to see beyond the obvious a lot easier and faster. And so, I started to see beauty that was blinding. What can I say? I am happy that I can do that.



Anyway, back to the Dolomites and Italy. If you recall from earlier chapters, my earlier life included a five-month stop in Italy, on my way to America, while waiting for the American visa to immigrate to this great country. A photo of the Dolomites is shown on previous page. I can't see how a normal person would not be enchanted by their beauty!



So, Italy meant, and it still means, a lot to me. Of course, we were approaching Italy from a different side, so I was kind of interested to see how Italy would look forty years later, and to see that northern portion that I had no chance to visit 50 years ago. Our route through the Dolomites Mountains was exquisite, passing through Bolzano, where we stopped for an amazing meal, then headed to Venice. On the way there - talk about unbelievable! A huge city on the water. You can only get the full impact of all that construction on the water if you are physically there, to experience the entire place. Where do I start? How about with the two photos on the previous page? I mean, a thousand pictures would do it no justice.



I will just stop right here. We spent whatever time we had for Venice, which basically was a joke. A day or two there? Then it was on to Trieste (remember, my friend Lewis' "punctum finalis" (final point) in his attempt to defect), which is a border city with Slovenia. Trieste is a beautiful city in its own right, but we basically had zero time to spend there. We included a photo above simply out of respect for us being there. A shame that we could not be there a few days.

On to Slovenia. We just stepped briefly into Slovenia simply to get to Croatia, which was quite a target destination as part of our visit. I find myself repeating the same words - amazing, beautiful, stupendous. I mean, after a while, you run out of superlatives. Literally, one place is more beautiful than the next. Take Rijeka, Croatia, as an example. God set this place in an

amazing spot. It's impossible not to be impressed. Just take a look at the photo below.



We stayed a couple of days in Croatia, or perhaps closer to a week. We spent time strolling around Rijeka, and its amazing port. Then we spent a day at a place that can only be called God's home (or heaven, if you prefer so). A couple of pics are shown of the place below and the next page. It's called Plitvice National Park. Not sure which photos to include here, I had a very hard time deciding. I would love to transfer to you as much beauty as I could. But no matter which ones I select, I just can't go wrong. The beauty is literally everywhere.





We then left leave for Zagreb, Croatia’s capital. After seeing all those amazing natural sights, you would think, “what can we see in Zagreb that would compare to Plitvice?” A lot, I would say, only the beauty is different. Just look at the wonderful building in the photo below, and you will understand.



We must leave Croatia, because our time is growing short. We are heading back to Hungary, this time approaching from the southwest. We will shortly be on our way to a very good friend of mine, back from the old country. Let's call him Laci, a very typical Hungarian first name. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in a small village near a larger Hungarian city named Gyor. We spent a couple of days with them. Very friendly people, guest-loving folks. We had a couple of very nice Hungarian dishes while with them.

Just below is a wonderful panoramic view of a famous abbey very near to our friends' home, this one a UNESCO World HERITAGE site, shown below, also near Gyor, one of the largest cities in Hungary. We visited the abbey. It is a wonderful old facility, we came across many interesting books in its large library.



We had a really nice time while we were with our friends. One thing to mention here, which for me was a glorious moment. Laci, who is my senior by about five years, was one of my first mentors in the business of electrical power engineering. We worked together at my very first job in Zalau. He was an important man in my life, and a very good friend, to boot.

From Laci, we embarked on a trip back to Cluj, from where we were scheduled to fly to

Israel. The details of that part of our visit to Europe and Israel will be covered in a later chapter.

The last week or so before the flight, we were planning to spend it in Cluj with my friend Lewis, and one other friend living in Cluj, Sandu, and his wife Dorina. The few days with Sandu and Dorina were just amazing. My friends had a beautiful summer home up in the mountains, not very far from Cluj. That's where we spent three days, relaxing and reminiscing about the old days. Sandu and I were classmates for all four years of high school, and on the class's basketball team. So, I would say we had a pretty tight relationship. Below is a photo of the village and the lake where their home is located.



As always, any time we found ourselves in Cluj, it was spent in one way or another together with Lewis. Any time spent with him was always a great experience. Lewis is more or less fluent in English, which for a Hungarian ethnic person is pretty incredible. You often hear how some folks have trouble picking up other languages, other than their mother tongue. Hungarians are famous for having that problem. But not Lewis, he is VERY good in English.

My Glenda has a major problem learning any language other than her spoken English, at which she happens to be very good herself. So, Lewis loves Glenda's English, he always tells me,

“You speak English fairly well for an immigrant, but Glenda speaks REAL English.” The fact that Lewis speaks English well, along with other positive traits my friend has, such as smarts, kindness, patience, a dry sense of humor, and many others, enough now, endears him to Glenda. So, the two formed together, from the very beginning, a mutual admiration society. When the three of us are together, the conversation is entirely monopolized between those two, like I don’t even exist. For the most part. I am not complaining, just stating facts here. Hehe! So, let’s just say, those two had a great time together, AGAIN! I don’t mind it really, I love them anyway.

I always have a wonderful time in my college town. You know, between these two cities, Budapest and Cluj, I have a real hard time picking a favorite.

But now it is October 22, and the calendar says - Flying time to Israel. We hop on the British Airline plane, and off we go! But you need to hop to the next chapter to find out what happened there. I must say, a LOT.

# CHAPTER 13

## ISRAEL, HERE WE COME

Where do I start? Let me say this - whether a person is a Jew or something else, in my view, all human beings should visit Israel at least once in their lifetime. Of course, a great majority will never be able to do so, simply because they have limited financial means. And that quite frankly, is a shame! Now, those who can afford it, and don't do it, you all, have no idea what you are missing.

One of the major reasons for my writing this book is that, to bring it home for those folks. Hopefully, I will make a difference in their way of thinking, especially the ones who could afford it. Then you have those who for one reason or another detest or even hate everything Jewish. What can I say to you? I pray that God in some miraculous way, changes your way of thinking. Because I, as a Messianic Jew, all I can do for you is to pray and forgive. Which, as you may figure out, is not at all easy. But I am working strongly on that. Because that is what Jesus is expecting of me, nothing less.

So now let's move on. Glenda and I arrived at Lod airport. It was Glenda's first trip to Israel, my second. I don't know how Glenda felt about setting her feet on Israeli soil, but I can tell you, as a Jew, it doesn't get better. It's just the way it is. I am sure that most "normal" human beings probably feel the same way putting their feet on their home country's land, especially if they were coming back from a foreign land. Except in a Jew's case, we have been on the move for so long, living in so many different lands, it becomes normal to set foot wherever you are living. But then comes Israel, and for me as a Jew, I experience the same warm feeling.

We gathered our belongings, what bags we had, and headed towards our car rental place, which I believe was either Avis or Hertz, one of those large American car rental companies. I guess, you can't get too far away from America! Which as far as I am concerned, is cool!

Into the car and on our way to Haifa! Of course, Israel is not a large country, so there is always something interesting to see while driving. We passed by Tel-Aviv, Herzlia, Natanya, Caesarea (a famous Roman time port from biblical times), and then, of course, Haifa.

We picked Haifa as our central point, not necessarily because it is located centrally in Israel, but because it is a very beautiful city, it is by the sea, and it is close to a slew of biblically significant sites (I will get to those in detail later). Another very important reason for us was the cost of housing. Housing in Israel can at times become expensive. But we made friends with a Romanian Jew (for obvious reasons) through the Internet, who happened to be an Airbnb host. We were planning to stay at his place, which was within easy walking distance to the beach. We rented the place on a monthly basis, which was meant to be from late October to the end of November, so one month or so only. We figured that if we wanted to visit a couple of places further away, requiring an overnight stay, we would just do that in addition. That happened a couple of times, once we visited Jerusalem, and the other when we spent time at the Dead Sea and a couple of other places there.



We spent the first few days in Haifa resting, going to the beach, and planning our stay in Israel. There are tons of attractions to explore and places to visit. I can't see how one can start talking about Haifa and not have a photo of the Bahai Temple first. The facility is so imposing, sitting pretty much in the center of the city. The question then becomes that of choosing a photo

of the temple or that looking down from the temple, seeing a good part of the city and that of the sea. I chose the latter. Please note the vivid sea water colors (picture attached on previous page).



Without getting too much into the Bahai religion (not the purpose of it listing here), it was founded in the 19th century, and it teaches the essential worth of all religions and the unity of all people. You can't be anywhere in Haifa and not notice the Carmel, a hilly area that runs parallel to the seashore. On the Carmel, one can visit Stella Maris, a beautiful monastery, shown in the photo on the previous page. Also, on the previous page is a panoramic view of Haifa, in a photo taken from above, on the Carmel (a hilly chain running parallel to the sea shore.)

We can't move on from Haifa without mentioning and including a photo of Elijah the Prophet, whose cave stands there, facing the sea. Included on the wall of his cave, are all sorts of religious artifacts. When we visited the site, we were so very impressed, primarily by the simple life this God's amazing messenger may have lived. To be honest with you, sitting here and writing these lines and thinking about Elijah, goosebumps are forming on my arms. I would love to touch this holy man, and ask him to tell God that Alex loves Him very much!

The one thing about Haifa, and really about Israel, is that being such a small country, it is very easy to hit a lot of the sites easily and make most of them daily trips. And that is exactly what we did!

During one such visit, we traveled to Galilee, to a beautiful and old city on the lake, named after the Romans adequately, Tiberias. It was obviously named after the Roman Emperor, Tiberius.

At total random, we met an American Christian tourist group who were visiting Israel at that time. We knew that they were going to be in Israel, but we had no idea that they would be dining there, at a restaurant on the boardwalk. Part of the group included one of our very good friends, a pretty famous pastor from Pennsylvania. Well, Glenda and I were walking on the boardwalk there, I do not remember for sure what the exact time was, but it was dark, maybe 7-8 PM. As we walked, believe it or not, whose voice do we recognize? Let's call him Pastor Mike Y. He is a person who, when he opens his mouth, you immediately know who that is.

At that point Glenda goes, "Pastor Mike, Pastor Mike!" You can imagine his surprise when he saw us. We were invited to dine with them. The restaurant was across from a tiny 1000-year-old church, where the group was going to hold a harp concert dedicated to the Lord, that very night. Now the interesting part about the whole thing was that the group, formed of folks from several

countries, had no idea only a week earlier how to play harps. They had never played a harp before in their lives. I wish you could have been at that concert. It was something else—in other words, just plain amazing.



Another pretty amazing thing happened to me that night. Pastor Mike told me sometime earlier, while we were in America at his church, that one day if we made it to Israel, he would be delighted to baptize me there. Well, that night at the Galilee that is exactly what happened. I and an Asian man from Canada were baptized in the Galilee. That was quite an experience, to say the least. I mean, being dipped into the Galilee without a change of clothing—you can imagine the logistics to get that done. When it was all finished in the end, I was still able to walk away somewhat dressed. But you know, when God has a plan for you, nothing can stop it or make it impossible to get it done. And I mean, nothing.

It was pitch dark by then—I don't know—maybe 9 PM or even past that! In order to get into the Galilee, we had to walk down a pretty steep incline, with huge concrete blocks one on top of the other. How we made it, I have no idea. But the next day we went to Tiberias again, only to see the place in daylight. When I saw what we climbed over to get to the water, my God, no normal humans would have done that under normal circumstances. But I and the other guy were “marked” men for that occasion. I am glad we did. It, though Quite frankly, being in that water that Jesus walked on definitely gives you a different feeling.

At that point, having spent probably maybe a week in Haifa and its vicinity, we felt that the time had come to go visit more far-away places. Up to that point, probably the furthest point that we visited was Tiberias, and it was not further than an hour and a half on the first-class Israeli highways.

But now the time has come for our next adventure, so to speak. We drove to Jerusalem, and we spent maybe five glorious days there. I mean, there is only one Jerusalem in this world, and it is situated in Israel. Simply, because that is what God intended for it. By now, I had visited Jerusalem four or five times. I consider myself so very lucky because the great majority of humanity will never have that chance, the means, the will to be able to do that. Below I will post a photo that I took during that visit in late October 2014. Look at that beauty. The golden dome of the Al-Aksa Temple is central to everything. I even called for the rainbow to show up too!



Next in Jerusalem, we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is considered Christianity's holiest site. It has been at that location since the 4th century. Jesus' crucifixion took

place at that site. Below is a photo of the church compound. It is one impressive structure, that is for sure.



Just below is the next important site we visited in Jerusalem, the Holocaust Museum Yad Vashem. Issues relating to the Holocaust and antisemitism were touched upon in the first two chapters of this book. The Holocaust Museum is a large facility where family members of Holocaust survivors or just average folks interested in history and what actually happened in World War II, Nazi Germany, and actually throughout the world, can find a lot of relevant information and resources.



We visited the Gethsemane Garden and the church on that site, supposedly in that garden there is a tree that is believed to be 1000 years old. Below is a photo of the garden and the tree. I wish I relate the full impact that the view of that tree gives a person. The first thing you feel is - how can something like this exist?



Next in Jerusalem, not to be missed, is the Western Wall or the Wailing Wall, as it is mostly known. It is one of Judaism's main sites, because, firstly, the tremendous stones are the remnants of their beloved Temple. Their faith is that any prayer placed in the crevices inside the wall goes straight to God's attention. Look at the photo on next page, you must admit that a crowd like that is impossible to discount. Those folks there, all have something to communicate to God, so it is very busy there on a day like that!



It's impossible to spend a day in the Jerusalem's Old City and not spend a few hours checking out in detail the various shops. Below is a photo of a grocery shop that pretty much has everything under the sun, and of course, the moon as well! Look at that photo, is that something or what? You can spend a day in that one shop alone.



And while you are there, many visitors make it a very important part of their visit to Jerusalem, to follow the route of Via Dolorosa, which in Latin or Italian or both, means the Painful Road that Jesus took while carrying the Cross that He would eventually be crucified on! Let me say this, if you are human, of any kind, it's impossible not to feel the pain He must have felt! He did it for us, no less! Well, our visit to Jerusalem was over, at least for now. Something tells me that this visit wasn't the last one. But I have inside information, so I must know something!

We are on the way back to Haifa, to our home base. But before Haifa, we made a stop to visit both Tel-Aviv and Yaffo, which is a very, very old port city, a suburb of Tel-Aviv. I love the photo below of Tel Aviv from Yaffo, taken on a really cloudy day at the end of October 2014. I love that photo. Is it only me? Notice the sea action.



While we were in Yaffo, we stopped at a local restaurant, a fish and seafood place, since that place is on the sea obviously. It was one huge eatery, no question. While we ordered a lot of stuff, I'm not sure if we were that hungry, or just simply curious. Below is a photo of part of the spread, by no means everything. The price of that meal was exorbitant, no question, but we could say that we had a big meal in Tel- Aviv. By the way, Tel-Aviv in Hebrew means "The Hill of Spring". Interesting name!



After a wonderful day in Tel-Aviv, we headed back to Haifa, with the intent to start visiting spots in northern Israel, as there are lots of very nice sights.



Next, on our way to Nazareth. In one of Nazareth's neighborhoods lived at the time my first cousins Sonia and Ivan, children of Aunt loli, my dad's sister. Nazareth is a nice, old city, and let's not forget, it was here that Jesus was rejected in his hometown, forcing him to leave for Jerusalem. Above is a photo of Nazareth. Later on, during that 2014 vacation in Israel, we had the opportunity to participate in an amazing organ concert at the church, of which a photo is included on previous page. It was such an enjoyment listening to some of the most beautiful

organ music ever composed.

After a couple of resting days in Haifa, during the daytime on the beaches, and nightlife up on the Carmel, we headed a bit north to Akko, a very, very old biblical place. It so happens that some very dear relatives lived in that area. My cousin, something like a second or third cousin, Gabi, lived with her family there. We visited with them and we were introduced to Andrey, Gabi's son. Later on, he became very valuable to us, taking us to places that only really versed natives knew and could access. We were very thankful to him and appreciative of Andrey's kindness. I wanted to include a representative photo of Akko below, but I can't decide which one to use. I picked something I hope you all like.



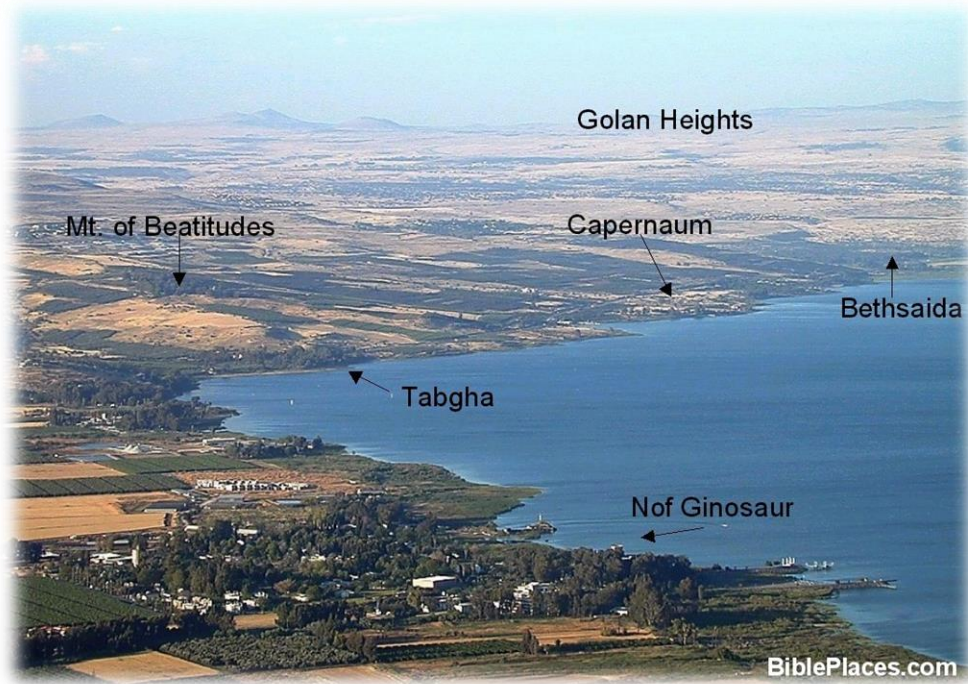
Akko (Acre, as it was named in biblical times) is a lively city that has existed continuously for about 4,000 years. Its beginning was at Tel Akko, more commonly known as Akko. From the Hellenistic period onward, the city expanded west to the area that later became the Crusader and Ottoman city. Everyone was interested in Akko, because of its location and its eventual history. It's a city that unquestionably will impress anyone interested in ancient history.

I have a shot of the sea outside of Akko that just blew my mind. I sit here and look at this photo above and just keep enjoying it endlessly. To me, it is God's work in action! Amazing, simple beauty. Let's move on, because we must. Below is something you don't see every day, for your enjoyment! Back to Haifa



We spent a few more days there. We visited a wonderful place up on the Carmel named Rothschild Garden, a beautiful flowery place. It just so happened that when we visited there, they had an outdoor concert that was totally exquisite. On next page, I have included a couple of photos of the place.

A lot of our next few days in Israel were dedicated to visits to various places around the Sea of Galilee. For that reason, I decided to include a few photos here, together, to make it easier from a telling-of-the-story standpoint. There is a photo on page 274, a map of sorts, so that one can imagine where a spot of interest is located.



There are an amazing number of very important sites on and near the Sea of Galilee that we have visited. Obviously, we will not be able to touch on all of them, but we'll talk about a few, the ones that have been very important to Israel for a very long time.



We'll start with Capernaum (which comes from the Arabic "Kfar Nahum"), situated on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is a historic city. Jesus has spent all kinds of time at this location. A lot of biblical events occurred in this amazing place. Two of the most famous sites are situated in Capernaum.

Capernaum is an ancient city on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Israel. It was Jesus' second home and, during the period of his life, was among other functions an administrative center and a customs station. Jesus chose his disciples Peter, Andrew, and Matthew from Capernaum and performed many of his miracles there. Matthew was a tax collector in those days.



We visited the center, which left quite an impression on us. Hopefully, the photos below will do it some justice. The photo on next page shows the remains of the old synagogue, where it is stated that Jesus may have made some of his famous statements against the high priests there, at least that is what the Bible states.

Next, on next page, is a photo of St. Peter's house, which is located at the bottom of the circular structure at the back of the photo. The Sea of Galilee is visible in the photo.



A photo of the Mount of Beatitudes is shown on next page. Jesus is believed to have given the Sermon on the Mount, on a low hill; near Tabgha. The octagonal-shaped Church of the

Beatitudes symbolizes the eight beatitudes as described in Matthew. The fruitful garden of Tabgha, also on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, is traditionally assigned as the site where Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish, per Matthew. In Tabgha is the Church of St. Peter's Primacy, where Jesus is said to have appeared to his disciples after the resurrection.



Moving on to the next important site by the Sea of Galilee, we next come to the Yardenit. Yardenit is the site in the south of Galilee, where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Yardenit is situated at the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. It is the baptismal spot for Christians, many of whom come from all over the world. Below is a photo of the process.



What is next on our schedule? I would say, still a lot. Let's move next to another ancient site, this time on the shores of the Mediterranean. We are talking about Caesarea.

Caesarea was an ancient port and administrative city of Palestine, on the Mediterranean coast of present-day Israel south of Haifa. It is often referred to as Caesarea Maritime, and it was rebuilt and enlarged in 22–10 BCE by Herod the Great, king of Judea under the Romans, and renamed for his patron, the emperor Caesar Augustus. It served as a port for Herod's newly built city at Sebaste, the ancient Samaria of central Palestine. Caesarea had an artificial harbor of large concrete blocks and typical Hellenistic Roman public buildings. An aqueduct brought water from springs located almost 10 miles to the northeast. Caesarea served as a base for Herod's navy, which operated in aid of the Romans as far as the Black Sea. The city became the capital of the Roman province of Judaea in 6 CE. Subsequently, it was an important center of early Christianity, in the New Testament, it is mentioned in Acts in connection with Peter.

Anyone visiting Israel and Caesarea today will be amazed at the condition of many structures. On next page, are a couple of photos of the place, very impressive, I might add.



The ancient amphitheater is still there in amazing condition after 2,000 years. Just amazing. Those Romans could build, no question about it.

It's impossible not to marvel at the amazing ancient work, at the ability these folks had to build things. There is one photo below of the mosaic work at Caesarea that has been there for 2,000 or so years. How can one not be in awe looking at that marvel? Just think about the technology they must have had to cut those tiles with the perfection they did. The photo above is that of Caesarea.

Now touching on our trip to the Negev, Israel's desert area, on the way to the Dead Sea. When you reach Beer-Sheva and you go south, east, and west from there, the desert is everywhere. But Israel created areas in the desert that are beautifully green, and prosperous.





We included Dimona, the town of my immigration, Ashdod, and Ashkelon, maybe 5 miles north of Gaza. On this occasion, we drove down to near Tel-Aviv, then south of Beer-Sheva, and got to Arad, just west of the Dead Sea. We stayed there for 2 days and nights. We had an amazing time there. The Dead Sea is an experience in itself. We included some relevant photos in earlier

chapters, but we'll include a few more on the previous. You may have heard about this, or maybe not, but the Dead Sea has a 30% salt content.



The two photos on the previous page are from the Dead Sea - in the water, you cannot drown no matter how hard you try.

I could add photos here forever, I have to stop somewhere. We spoke about Masada in an earlier chapter, but there is a photo here that I feel I must include.

Below is a photo of a famous biblical place, one which most humans have heard about. It is mentioned in the Bible as the place where the end of the world is likely to originate. The famous Megiddo, or as most of us know it, is, of course, the Armageddon. We basically got lost there on our way to Nazareth, on an alternate route. But we believe that actually God directed our way in that direction, for us to experience this site full of such meaning. Whatever the case, it was a very meaningful visit for us. I mean, the history of the place is just very impressive.



There was one place that I would like to add here, with photos below. It is a natural hot spring water place, located on the Jordanian border, and just east of the Galilee. We had a glorious time there, bathing, resting, relaxing and really enjoying life. I wish that all of you could spend a day in your life there. The photo I was very impressed by is the one above because what you see up there is a bathing pool more than 2000 years old. Looking at it, I was just wondering there at that time, did they wonder if we would witness their nice (for a two-thousand-year-old design and construction) bathing pool so much later?



The bathing area of today is named Hamat Gader, was shown in a previous chapter. But like always, eventually everything ends, and so was our trip to Israel. Time to get to Lod airport, hop on that Air France plane, and find our way to Paris!

## **Hey France And Paris, Here We Come!**

Paris is a beautiful, old city. It's been there for a while and we all form an idea of what it might be. But until you get there and you experience it for yourself, you really don't know it.

Anyway, our home there was right off the Place de la Republic, which is one of the more famous spots in Paris. It is primarily used for all sorts of gatherings, mostly political in nature. While we were there, we had no option but to be part of one loud PLO demonstration. It was the only way we could get back home. There were police everywhere and, as you would expect, with lots of yelling and even fighting present. But hey, that is Paris for you, especially these days.



We had a grand total of about a week, of which, a day was assigned by us to visit a city northeast of Paris named Reims, by train, no less. Which, by the way, turned out to be very nice. We had a chance to see how rural France might be.

Well, as you would expect, our first day was used to learn something about our neighborhood, check out some shops, and of course, take a look at the Eiffel Tower. We did all

that, and some photos of the events are included on previous page and below as well.

Oh, the meal below was exceptional, not only because it was French, but because it was primarily delicious. You might not care much about the French, but one has to admit it, they know cooking in and out. And that is a fact, oh, that piece of torte you see there, was just superb. What a taste!



On the previous page is a partial photo of the Eiffel Tower, and you may say it is not so great. First, we are proud that We took that photo, as it is. It was on a very cloudy day as well, so considering all that, I would say, not that bad. The tower is some construction, no doubt, especially considering how long ago it was built.

Next, onto Reims, just to get out of Paris for a change. We all know the French love wine, and this Reims region is famous for wines. A photo of one wine cellar there is shown below.



By the way, they don't only have wine cellars in Reims, they have some exquisite buildings as well. Check out this gorgeous church below and on the next page.



Beauty is beauty, no matter how defined. Just check out that photo of the church window below. I could sit and enjoy it forever. What amazing art. Someone's hands were just blessed by Him, no doubt about that!

On our way back to Paris, enjoying one more time the gorgeous French countryside. What amazing beauty! We were so glad to get this opportunity to visit Reims.





Back in the big city. The next day was dedicated to visiting a few of the most famous Parisienne sites. As you would expect, the first was the Notre Dame church. What a view, this world-famous facility! Its beauty is beyond explanation. Another famous site in Paris that needs no explanation - is the Arc de Triomphe. See photos of the two above.

The beginning of December 2014. Hey, our plane leaves soon for home. Three months away from home, you know what? We were getting itchy about returning home. As they say, or something like that, everywhere is great, but home is the best. And so it is, I found that out on that early December day. On the plane, flying home. What a great feeling! God Bless America, my home, sweet home. Here I come!

My story, however, does not end here. Interested in further finding out what happened? Well, read on!

# CHAPTER 14

## OUR EUROPEAN FRIENDS' DREAMS COME TRUE

### My European Friends' Dream Of A Lifetime

A few months earlier, at the end of 2014, we returned from our European and Israeli visit. Glenda and I figured that as part of the holiday season of 2014, it would be nice to propose to our good friends from Romania and Hungary a visit to us in the summer of 2015.

It would be the fulfillment of a lifetime dream, if they agreed to come to visit us in America, all costs covered by us. This would serve as a nice gesture for their housing of us on our previous visits to Europe, and, as said earlier, it would also be the fulfillment of their dream.

If one was born beyond the Iron Curtain walls, and Romania and Hungary were part of that, you could not expect under those circumstances to ever get the chance to visit America or any other country in the "Free World". Unless, you were part of the "elite" communist-favored group, about 5% of the entire population of the country. Let's just say, none of us were in that group, not even close.

For those who missed learning about it, the Iron Curtain bloc was the name given by the "Free World" to those few countries in Eastern Europe that were "lucky" to be taken by the Soviet Union (USSR), under their leadership and "protection", as a token for the sacrifices the USSR suffered in World War II.

With that in mind, we offered our friends, five in all, that special vacation time in the USA. Needless to say, they all were taken aback, in major disbelief. That someone would offer them something so amazing. But Glenda and I were so much in agreement about allowing them to live out their dream, that nothing would have stopped us from doing just that.

We were in no need of any special appreciation or anything like that, because these were our dear friends, and for us, friends are for a lifetime.

Anyway, as you would have it, in all those years of mistrust, antagonism, and, I would almost say, hate, a sort of opposition against those socialist/communist countries developed in the West. Even though socialism and communism had failed and fallen more than 25 years earlier, we were afraid that our government may not honor our friends' requests for visas to come to visit. Well, it turned out to be absolutely not be the case at all. Of course, all five of our friends (Lewis, Marika, Laci, Erzsike, and Vali) were over 60 years old, so they no longer really presented any danger to the US. Shortly after applying for the visas, all of them obtained them from the US to come to visit. Three did so on Hungarian passports, and two with Romanian ones. What a tremendous feeling we had, knowing my country saw it fit to let our friends come to visit us. When you have been brainwashed by communism, something like this is always in your mind, ingrained forever.

In any event, they came in two separate groups. Four of them came together, while Vali came separately because, as a teacher, he had to wait for the Romanian school- year to end.

They arrived at JFK on a Lufthansa flight, and when finally, they cleared customs and we got together, it was a moment for the ages. Obviously, I went to get Vali when he arrived. There was a three-hour drive from the airport to our home in Pennsylvania.

At first, we spent our time mostly in our development, which is kind of in the middle of nowhere, up in the mountains, in the middle of nature. A photo of our clubhouse is shown below.



We have several large lakes, where swimming, boating, and fishing are very much in demand. A photo of one of our lakes is shown below, along with an amazing golf course, as you can see in that photo. Let's put it this way, our friends and we did not go bored at all. Our home is part of one of the best vacationing residential community associations in the Pocono Mountains, of Northeast Pennsylvania. Shortly thereafter, we took them for a nice boat tour on a large lake not far from us. A photo of that site is also shown below. There are a number of other picturesque tourist sites in our wonderful small corner of the world, so we took them around, for them to understand where we have lived for a good part of our lives. They loved it here with us!



Eventually, we planned a more serious trip, that included, among others, Philadelphia (just more or less in passing). We spent a couple of days with a very good friend of ours, an engineer like me, with whom I worked together for a few years.

We were at his home for a couple of days, and, notably, we visited a rather well-known brewery about two blocks from his home, the Dogfish Head. A photo of it is shown on the next page.

Leaving my friend's house, we headed to Rehoboth Beach, which is only minutes away. We had a great visit there, including enjoying the waters of the Atlantic. The photo on the next page is a must see. Hmm, what a sight!



From there, next thing we knew, we were at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel system. Look at this thing in the photo next page - it blows your mind! It gives you one amazing feeling to drive through it, in the middle of the ocean.

I have driven through there a couple of times. Every time I get a feeling in my stomach, thinking, boy, this is dangerous, especially driving at highway speeds. Anyway, the next thing we knew ... Virginia Beach ... the one that calls itself ... for lovers! Hmmm ...



Well, the day we got there, just for fun, the air temp was in excess of 100 degrees, BUT the water was just under 80. So we were saved. We had a great time bathing in the Atlantic, for sure!

Next, it was onto Williamsburg, on our way to southeastern Kentucky, Glenda's birthplace. Of course, my Hungarians and Romanians were dying to find out what was so special about

Kentucky. Plenty, I would say, and that is in addition to Glenda! Haha ... Kentucky never produced anything that could exceed her in any possible way, that's for sure. And they did produce a few very fine things, for which they are famous!

Anyway, we were not in Kentucky just yet. Williamsburg, I have visited a couple of times since I arrived in America. Every time I visited there, I could not help myself but think .... Boy, this is one classy place! It surely is. It's one amazing place in American history, and today as well.



No wonder we are as good as we are, coming from a place like that. Nothing, but class. I definitely owe it at least one photo, maybe more. Well, here again, before we knew it, we had to say goodbye to Williamsburg, but I know for sure, I will be back. We continued on the way towards

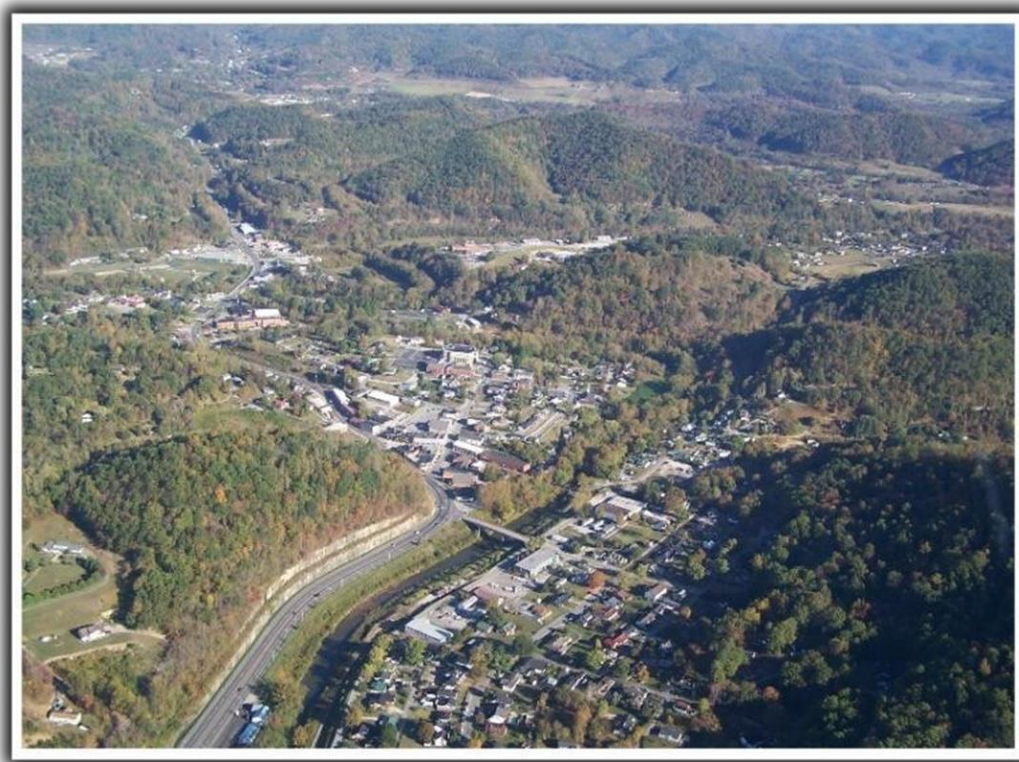
my baby's birthplace, down on the highway to Pikeville, in Southeastern Kentucky.

But, guess who was on the way to Kentucky, in a small Virginian coal town, the great town of Grundy? Who was waiting for us there? Shirley, Glenda's older sister, an amazing old-fashioned American lady. Suddenly, her home had SEVEN more souls in it! Seen! Haha. Well, she welcomed us so wonderfully, and we all had such a great time there. My friends are still asking me about her now, almost ten years later. "How is Shirley doing?" That's pretty nice



Next, we arrived in Kentucky! When we got there ... it was as if my friends had grown up there. We all had such a great time. They will never, ever forget the bluegrass concert we attended. It was called "Front Porch Picking," held in an amazing cultural center in Prestonsburg. The performers were average folks like you and me who happened to have learned at some point in their lives to play one or more instruments. I mean, the music was unbelievably beautiful, and my friends were going crazy about the whole thing. I am sure that concert will be with them forever. I know it will be with me. Our time spent in Kentucky was the greatest. We drove a long way to get there, but boy, was it worth it! Look at that photo above - is it something or what? Pikeville, KY, represents everything Appalachia is all about. There is serious coal mining happening there. People are hard workers, honest, and good folks. You get that impression as soon as you have a sort of conversation with any of them. The photos here on next page, hopefully, will do justice

to this God's land. I mean, there are things in Kentucky that you will not find anywhere else. Just take the Ark Encounter (a full-size replica of Noah's Ark. And then, all those gorgeous horses and horse farms, AND the bluegrass! I have more if you care. How about the Bourbon Trail? Forget the bourbon, which is exquisite, but those 150-200 distilleries, are pieces of history you should witness. And then ... the people .... The best!



After spending a few days there, we started to drive northeast towards our home. The intent was to make a stop in Washington, DC, because how many times would these folks have a chance to visit Washington? I would say, not that often.

Of course, when one visits Washington, there are a couple of sites that are absolute musts. I would say the Capitol is right there at the very top. Next, probably would be the White House. We had to stop somewhere. We spent a couple of days in Washington, DC.

Next up: New York City. The Empire State Building, and the Freedom Tower. Also, we had to show them the Metropolitan Opera House, at the Lincoln Center. Photos are found on page 298 & 299. New York City is one of the major world cities, if not THE most. There is no way to describe all the things New York is. I can tell you that when I first arrived in New York in 1974,

the city completely dazzled me. My jobs, for the most part of my career, have been in one way or another associated with New York City. It was as if God said, “You know, small-town Romanian boy? I will show you how to exist in the middle of Metropolis, and also thrive!” Did HE ever!





Then, gratefully, we found ourselves on the last leg of our long trip - on the way home, on the way to the Poconos!



Quite frankly, the Europeans are not used to long drives like we just did. Their countries are very small, compared to ours. The good news was that they finally could rest, which is what they did. They rested, and rested, and rested!

For all those years that I worked and lived in New York City or around it, when I drive around the city these days, there is almost no place that I would not recognize as having some of my work done there over the years. There were a couple of places, which I have described in earlier chapters, where, in one way or the other, I was involved. For one thing, I worked on projects that had to do with nearly all the bridges and tunnels around the East and West Sides of New York City. Just imagine driving anywhere around Manhattan and recognizing your work just about everywhere.

When I tried to explain that to my friends, they had a hard time believing that. I can now understand why. It's actually pretty amazing, not because I did it, but just to take it all in and realize that all this happened in your lifetime, if you are a normal human being, you must feel good about something like that!

Shortly after our Manhattan visit ended, I figured that a nice place to visit next be Upstate New York and Canada. It was getting warmer, as we were hitting mid-summer. New York City, and even some of the areas of the Pocono Mountains where my home is located, tend to get hot and humid in the summer. That's when Glenda and I figured that going north would be a good idea. Of course, selling any sort of trip to my friends had a very high probability of success! Hehe...



So here we go. It was quite a trip to Upstate New York and Canada, and it took us days to complete. I know we went up the NY State Thruway all the way to Watertown, passing through Binghamton, and Syracuse, and past Alexandria Bay, where the Thousand Islands site is. Eventually, we got to Ogdensburg, where we stayed overnight. About this place: it is home to the famous sculptor Remington. He was known for all his western horse statues. One of those beauties is shown above. His sculptures were very fashionable with celebrities and also politicians (I guess celebrities in their own right).

The next morning, we were scheduled to go back to Alexandria Bay, from where we were going to take a boat ride around those famous Thousand Islands (or actually, many more, about double of that). That trip was the experience of a lifetime for my friends. I was lucky enough to

have been on one such trip, a very long time ago. I forgot basically what it was like, but as soon as we got going in earnest, very quickly it all came back. That boat ride is truly one of the ages. The beauty spread out everywhere is overwhelming. I wish I could describe all the beauty to you, to make sure it all comes across properly. I don't believe that is really possible. Instead, I will place a few photos here, for eye enchantment, if nothing else! Enjoy!

Below are a few very beautiful photos of the many islands that form the Thousand Islands. Let's not forget that the islands themselves are the main reason for the trip to Alexandria Bay, but the boat rides are just plain great on their own!

First, the famous Boldt Castle, something very special in itself. Then, a couple of other beauties and one of the several bridges between Canada and the US. Lastly, a photo of a boat ride, you know what I can't forget from that boat ride? Many things, BUT that fresh, cool air striking my nose, in mid-July. WOW, that memory is with me forever!

### **And Then, Onto Canada.**

We continued our visit into Canada and to Montreal, along the St. Lawrence River. Lewis' cousin Bogarka (a Hungarian name that means Little Bug, although she is anything but - just kidding!).



Montreal is a beautiful old city, as you would expect, with a very serious French flavor to it. So if you are allergic to anything French, you are probably better off going the other way (Toronto, Ottawa, and the more western provinces)! But if you like French stuff ... Montreal, Quebec City, and the rest are definitely for you!





If you don't mind French, though, follow me. Being Romanian at heart, and given that Romania was a French-loving country for hundreds of years, I certainly have an affinity for French stuff. No doubt about that. Montreal is famous for many important things, such as: industry of all kinds, computer/IT, medicine, universities and colleges, transportation, and arts, just to name a few. A beautiful photo of Montreal's Downtown is shown below.





There are many things about Montreal that could be included here. You may not be a sports fanatic, but a very old French Canadian ice hockey team has won more than 20 Stanley Cups, awarded to winners of the National Hockey League title. This is by far the most ever won by a team in the 100-year history of the league. The point here - French Canadians are nuts about ice hockey! A couple of other photos from Montreal are shown above, the first of their botanical garden, and the second of an amazing amusement park.

Next, onto Montebello and Ottawa. What is Montebello? When travelling from Montreal to Ottawa, it's impossible not to come across Montebello. The photo on the next page is of Ottawa's Downtown. The one shown below is that of Montebello Fairmont Chateau. For almost 100 years, Fairmont Le Château Montebello has been known for its rustic charm, unique architecture, and beautiful natural surroundings. Described as the true Canadian experience, the world's largest log cabin is a welcoming resort destination with more than 40 unique activities and experiences available on-site.

The 7th G7 Summit (called the Ottawa Summit) was held in Montebello, Quebec, Canada, and nearby Ottawa between July 20 and 21, 1981. The venue for the summit meetings was the Château Montebello, the one shown above. It is clearly a very beautiful site, just off the Ottawa River.

We had such a wonderful time at the Chateau, I wish I could have had our entire vacation there. The hosts were so very kind to us, the room and board were beyond exquisite, and our walks, in private with Glenda and then together as a group with our dear friends, were, as they say, what dreams are made of! Just like now, as I tell you this story about an amazing event in our lives. But again, just like always, we hit the road, heading to Ottawa, Canada's capital city. Another beauty - what can I say. Here is a beautiful evening photo of the city. Just look at it!





Next, an interesting thing about Ottawa. Below is something just for kicks. It is the Kazakhstan embassy building there. How would you like to have an embassy like that? Not bad, I would say!



Back on the road again. We are now heading towards Toronto, a very beautiful city in Canada, and our last visit on this trip. Toronto is not the capital of Canada, but it is its largest city, and it is located on Lake Ontario. One beautiful photo of Toronto is shown on next page, with the lake visible in the background.



### **Back To The USA Again, Back Home - What A Feeling!**

We were back on American land, but by no means finished with our vacation. The first stop on our route back home to Eastern Pennsylvania was Buffalo, NY. Buffalo is an old American city, that has its own charm. The photo below is of the impressive City Hall building. Pretty amazing.





Next, since we were in the immediate area, we proceeded to visit Niagara Falls, which, obviously, is a world-famous site. How about I just say this. We had the times of our lives there, sightseeing the falls, taking a boat ride (just like the one in the picture above). It was just something else. Above are two photos of the falls, the first from the Canadian side, the second from the American. Each has its own beauty, no question. The boat you see near the falls - we took

that ride. The ride, I could put together a book just about it. The American side is not as glorious, but take it from me, it is absolutely breathtaking. See the photo - the rainbow is not too shabby either.

Next, we visited Rochester, an older New York State city, that was named after its namesake in England. A photo is shown below. You must admit that the place looks nice.

It is very special to me for many reasons. It is home to an amazing college, the University of Rochester, or as they call it, the U of R. It is the college where my son completed his undergraduate program, where he received an absolutely astounding education that has served him well and will continue to do so his entire life. After pursuing a lot more schooling, he ended up with a career as an oncological robotics surgeon, and he has been very successful in his work, I might add. But I am diverging here ....

The city is beautiful. At one time, it was considered one of the best in the world in certain technological areas (and might still be), such as Optics at my son's former school, an amazing medical center named the University of Rochester Medical Center, and the very well-known Kodak Photography company, before the digital era took over. The university campus is located



on the Genesee River. They even hold regattas on the river, and U of R is big in that regard. A couple of photos are shown on previous page and below, first of the U of R campus, and second of a panoramic view of the downtown area at night.



Finished with Rochester, we started heading south to get back home. On the way, however, we came across a site deserving mention here. We passed through Corning, a place that was once famous for manufacturing very high-quality houseware, plates, bowls, and the like. They do not do that anymore, as far as I know, but in lieu of that, they have become world leaders in fiberoptic cable manufacturing, which pretty much handles all IT/computer and cell phone communication

needs. A photo of Corning's fiberoptic cable manufacturing facility is shown on the previous page.

There is only one place we need to touch on, before we get back home. That place is Scranton, PA. It has been around for a long time. Some serious coal mining of the very best quality was done there for a long time. Scranton is a town full of working people these days. One other thing it is famous for: it was the first city in America to have electric lighting on its streets. For that reason, it is called the "Electric City". A photo of the now famous sign is shown below.



From there, it's only a skip and hop to get home. I believe by now, my Pocono Mountains deserve a photo of their own. Check it out below. Please forgive me, but I must add one other, from the zillions of amazingly beautiful pictures folks have taken of my gorgeous mountains.



Wintertime in the Pocono Mountains, for winter aficionados, is like a cookie jar for a kid - you just can't get enough of it. There are an infinite number of places where you can have the time of your life. For a taste of that, please take a moment to check out the photos below.



I really hope that you find the above pretty!

# CHAPTER 15

## WE JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF ISRAEL

### Back Home In December 2014

We arrived back home. Our friends spent some more time with us in 2015, before we headed back to Europe again. One thing we knew for sure, this would not be the last time we would be with them. Somewhere, whether in Romania, Hungary, or some other place on this globe.

These folks, not only were they our amazing friends, which you can't have too many of those, but also folks with great hearts, helpers with anything that anyone needed. They helped me, while their remaining time allowed, to build one amazing deck in the backyard of our home, a truly amazing project. Not only because we built something useful for this world, but more importantly, our friendship grew that much stronger in the process. The photo below shows the deck work while the structure was put together.



To “repay” their kindness, their help, and really to do something together again, we figured, why don’t we combine a trip again to my former homeland, AND, as part of that, offer a trip to them to Israel? It was something my friends would have been flabbergasted to learn about. They would have never had an opportunity to travel to Israel on their own, we believe!

Before we ever thought about how that Israeli event would develop, we knew that the Romanian/Hungarian part of the visit had to be planned out first. In the end, we picked 2018 to have that trip take place. It’s almost like we knew that COVID was on the way.



The two years or so passed quite quickly. Before we knew it, as they say, we were ready again to fly to Europe. It was in September 2018 that we flew to Budapest, Hungary, via Heathrow, London. We have already stated on several occasions how special Budapest is for Glenda and me. We were invited to stay with my friend Marika’s daughter, Erika, who had an apartment in Budapest.

We had a few days there, and as you would know, we always used days like that to get to know Budapest better. It's a huge city, with lots of amazing places to visit. I placed a photo on previous page. In the very center of Budapest, situated in a very beautiful plaza, is the building where the most famous French bakery in Budapest is situated. A few moments about the history of the place: very quickly, the place was opened in 1858, by one Henrik Kugler, initially as a cafe, with all kinds of Chinese and Russian tea being served there. Years later, while in Paris, he met Emil Gerbaud, after whom eventually the place was named. Gerbaud was a master baker, and eventually, he transformed the place into a cafe/ bakery that is now pretty much world famous. If you ever visit Budapest, Cafe Gerbaud is a must on your list of spots to hit. A photo of the place can be seen on previous page.

The few days in Budapest came to an end, and we found our way towards another very special place in our hearts in Hungary. That was the natural hot springs spa in Gyula, with a wellness center located there. Hungary, as a whole, sits on top of a sea of lava under its crust, which keeps the spring water emanating from below at a temperature of up to 150 degrees, with all kinds of minerals contained in the water, to boot. So, to say that these spas, pools, and more have a therapeutic effect on the body is an understatement.





The usual group of very close friends of ours was present. We stayed there for roughly a week, and we had a great time there. The beautiful weather of early fall added to the experience. First, a photo on the previous page shows the Gyula Castle, which has been sitting there for 600 years. But the water - all of it - is the thermal, mineral-rich, health-promoting variety and is present EVERYWHERE. I wish I could be bathing there right now. No matter whether it is winter or any other season, spending glorious time in the water is always available and possible. While in Gyula, there was another very famous place we visited. We just could not miss it. There is an old sausage factory there that is famous throughout Hungary. Hungarians are big on sausage eating, and pork in general, anyway. A photo of the sausage factory/museum is included below.



On the way to Romania, we passed through Szeged, a very beautiful southern Hungarian city. We visited Szeged, and two very exquisite buildings received our full attention, in addition to several others we could not include photos of here due to space constraints. The first was the Central Cathedral of Szeged. The second was this unbelievably beautiful synagogue. Photos of both are included below.



The Cathedral is likely fully attended. Plenty of Christians are still living in Szeged even today. It's a different story with the synagogue. The Jewish Community of Szeged was founded in 1785. Before WW II there were as many as 8,000 Jews living in Szeged. At present, the community has around 300 members. How they can support a facility like that is probably the million-dollar question. I do have a probable answer: likely, wealthy Jews from around the world donate, and the Hungarian government very likely subsidizes the synagogue and its members. I am grateful to all for that! Gorgeous two buildings!

Now we find ourselves on the way to Romania again, because our flight to Israel is scheduled to depart in a couple of days from there. Before we board the plane, I have a bit of perspective to share about the trip to Israel. Let me see how I can make it short. Most folks, at some point in their lives, will think about a trip somewhere in the world. Usually, money and other factors will stop it from happening. The more exotic the trip, the more expensive, obviously.

A couple of things. First, I have felt this way about Israel from the moment I immigrated from Romania to there. Any human being, whether a Jew or anything else, should visit Israel at least once in their lifetime. I have stated that before, so obviously, it must be important to me. If you do visit, you will get to understand what is so catching about that country, that part of the world. For such a tiny place, it has a lot to offer. For me, my most profound experience was how close to God I felt - and feel - there. That feeling is always present anytime I am fortunate enough to find myself there.

The other thing, which is very important to make the trip happen, is how you go about it without spending all the money you have. So, as an engineer, my entire career I was presented to nothing but problems that required solutions. No matter what problem I was trying to solve, some sort of planning was always in place. In this case, I started planning this visit to Israel with my friends at least a year earlier. With a trip like this, several things come into focus.

First, getting there. We figured that, as far as the group was concerned, we would be flying from Cluj, Romania, to Lod Airport in Tel-Aviv. There are all kinds of options. We decided, and that is another important factor - that we would stay two weeks in Israel. Two weeks in Israel is a really nice period of time, because anytime you engage a travel agency, usually their preferred time frame is a week. Reason being that two weeks would begin to be so costly that not many

people would be able to sign up for that.

Now, they usually book you on a regular flight, with extras for anything and everything under the sun. We chose another route. An inexpensive, charter flight, where no frills were included. To optimize our packing, we decided to limit ourselves to either one, or maybe two pieces of luggage per person. We figured we'd wash our clothes a LOT. In the Israeli sun, they surely dry fast! Haha ....

The airlines that come to mind are Wizzair and Ryanair, but there are others as well. The cost of flights was ridiculously low 5-6 years ago. Not sure what has happened since. Round-trip fares were very, very inexpensive. You are talking about a three-hour flight. What luxury does one really need?

Next, a car rental to use while in Israel. I managed to rent an automatic car, which at that time was not easy to do. Today, it may be different - not sure. Not a fancy car, I believe it was an Opel, 1400 CC. Small, used, but it took us just fine everywhere in Israel over the two-week period. It was a hatchback that seated the 5 of us, plus our bags. It wasn't a Mercedes, no luxury, but it served us just fine.

Next item, housing. We stayed at the same place we stayed in 2014. Someone I knew from before rented us his apartment for a month at some ridiculous price. Food, no big deal - we prepared all our food. All of us knew how to cook. We had great food for peanuts. Every now and then we went out for a restaurant meal, so that we wouldn't miss out on that experience. Other than that, we always saved on entrance fees and the like, getting pointers from our landlord's family and others in Israel.

Now you all know what the travel agencies charge for trips of this sort. A two-week trip to Israel easily runs between \$5K - \$10K, depending on the level of luxury included. You can figure out for yourselves what that would have been for the five of us. Well, for the five of us, two weeks with the package described above, you might say I am a liar. But I am a Christian, and I don't lie ANYMORE since I became one. Total cost: \$2,500. Now, you may not be able to do that! The point I want to make is this - things can be done to improve the odds of you visiting Israel, if money is not plentiful for you.

We arrived in Israel on September 22, 2018. If you know anything about Israel, the end of September is when the weather is starting to be SUPER. No major heat, just pleasant. Another reason we scheduled the vacation for this time of year.



A few hours after our plane landed, we got our car, and we headed towards Haifa, our home away from home. We were tired, so some rest was in order. But the next day we planned to go to a very special and beautiful place in northern Israel, named Rosh-Hanikra. It is just barely south of the Lebanese border. Rosh- Hanikra is famous, among other things, for its grottos. What are they? A grotto is a natural or artificial cave used by humans in both modern times and antiquity, and historically or prehistorically. Hmmm ... I don't have an idea who might have used these grottos historically, but they certainly are something special. Check out the photo above.

Next, we took a rest day again, all the activity can quickly catch up with you. We rested, because next day we planned to visit Caesarea, Glenda and I had been there earlier, but we can never get enough of the place. We are talking about Biblical times here. In Caesarea, beauty of incredible proportions is everywhere.



Obviously, the photo above shows that if anything, Romans were here long ago - and how they ever were! Caesarea was the port (arrival point) for Roman trips, workers, materials, food, etc. - Just about everything the Romans needed to maintain control of the Roman province of Judea. It was the “capital” of the Roman province. Check out the beauty of the place in the photo above.

Here is something that touches me deeply, because it has to do with my Romanian roots. It's about a town not far from Haifa, named Zihron-Yaakov, which was founded in December 1882, when 100 Jewish pioneers from Romania, members of a Romanian Zionist movement, purchased two plots of land 5 kilometers apart: one in Zammarin and the other in Tantura. Deeming the name of the place to derive from "Samaria", for a number of years the place was called Shomron in the Hebrew and Yiddish press. The families came from Moldavia, a region in Romania. A beautiful photo of Zihron-Yaakov is included on next page. While at Zihron-Yaakov, we also had

a chance to visit the Rothschild Gardens on the Carmel. A photo from Rothschild Gardens can be seen on next page.



Next day we were scheduled to visit Jerusalem, which meant an early start. But in few hours, we were in Jerusalem. The thing about a super-duper trip like this is that you don't have the luxury of spending days and days in one place. You need to move on. But that one day allowed us to visit: the Olive Garden area, the Old City, the Wailing Wall, Al-Aksa temple, some markets, and to do just some strolling around in the Old City, enough visiting for my friends to get a feel for Jerusalem. As the sun was going down, we were on our way back to Haifa, to our home base.



Following is a photo of the Baptismal Spot on the Jordan River on the next page, where it is said that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. What I can say is that when you are present there, it is impossible not to feel a sense of piety. Think about it ... the Lord was there a LONG time ago. Cannot help but experience a direct connection to Jesus there - if you are a Christian, that is for sure!



The photo above was taken inside the Nazareth church.

And now, we are moving on again. We visited Sin Hod Nisco Museum of Music Boxes (something different, I would say). A photo is included below, on this page.



Next on our schedule, Daliyat al-Karmel. Daliyat al-Karmel is a Druze town located on Mount Carmel in the Haifa District of Israel, around 20 km southeast of Haifa. Its population is around 18,000 people. Just quickly, who are the Israeli Druze? Nine-in-ten Israeli Druze say they have a strong sense of belonging to the State of Israel. Israeli Druze rarely marry across religious lines (fewer than 1%). The Druze place great emphasis on philosophy and spiritual purity. In Israel, the Druze are active in public life and are subject to the military draft. A couple of photos of Daliat al Karmel are included below. We enjoyed our day there very much - very entertaining.

Moving on. Next, we spent a couple of days at the Dead Sea. We included photos of the Dead Sea in earlier chapters, but we'll add a couple more on page 329. It's just too beautiful not to. On page 328, are also a couple of beautiful photos of the Negev (Israel's desert) for you to enjoy!

From the Dead Sea, we traveled through the desert, trying to get to the wonderful hot spring by the Galilee (covered in a previous chapter) - the place named Hamat-Gader. We wanted our friends to enjoy a relaxing spot, as our vacation in Israel was quickly coming to an end. Photos of the place were included earlier, but let's add one on page 329, as I like to say, for good measure! Not bad, huh?!



We also stopped briefly to visit Tel-Aviv. Photos of Tel-Aviv and Haifa have been included in the earlier chapters. We certainly enjoyed our day there, then drove back to Haifa. Maybe we'll include one other photo of Tel-Aviv above.



Obviously, we took our friends to a few of the spots that we enjoyed before, so they could get to do the same now. Our last day in Israel was October 5, 2018, as the next day our flight back to Cluj, Romania, was scheduled. Photos from Negev Desert and Hot Spa Hamat Gader are included on next page.





## **Back To My Old Country, To Stroll Through Some Wonderful Places**

On October 6, 2018, we were back in Cluj, staying at my friend Lewis' apartment. We planned to visit a number of cities and towns in Transylvania and Moldavia. Some of these places I visited earlier in my life, but many I had not. Of course, they were all new to Glenda. The group consisted of four of us, my friends Marika and Vali, Glenda, and me. Lewis could not join us because he was still working as a consulting engineer. Having been away for two weeks in Israel, he had urgent work waiting for him.



All these sites are absolutely beautiful. I would like to provide as many photos as possible for your enjoyment. The first leg of our trip included visits to Baia-Mare, Densus (famous fishery), Sapanta (known for its “Merry Cemetery,” where poems written by the deceased or their families are carved onto the gravestones—many of them quite funny!) , and Poienile Izei. The photos, above and below. Next, a wonderful waterfall and a very narrow mountain pass in the Carpathian Mountains. Next couple of days were spent in Moldavia - Beautiful part of northeastern Romania. Just briefly, a bit of history: The two regions of Moldavia were “taken” by the USSR more than 100 years ago. The history is complicated, like that of all of Europe. This is because no country in Europe is “pureblood,” with a completely homogenous population. The same goes for Bessarabia and Bucovina. Without a question, however, the great majority of the population there are Romanians. The map shows Romania, as a whole. The two regions in question

are situated in the upper right corner, Bessarabia shown in orange (let's say) and Bucovina in a yellowish/brownish/greenish color mix. Nowadays, Bessarabia is mostly part of the independent Republic of Moldova, and Bucovina is mostly part of Ukraine. Parts of Bucovina are back in Romania these days.







So our visit to that area included parts of Romanian Moldova (shown on the map in blue) and parts of Bucovina that are now back in Romania. Hopefully, this explanation provides a good understanding of the area we visited. We visited a slew of very beautiful monasteries, many of them UNESCO Heritage sites. A few photos are shown on pages 334 & 335. The last one, named Manastirea Coronet, is an extremely old, famous, and very valuable heritage site of Romania

Next, another wonderful heritage site of Romanian art. It is a shop where artisans create absolute works of art from a very special black clay, naturally present in the nearby land, Marginea. A photo of such a shop is provided on page 336. The work is absolutely beautiful! Next, another exquisite site, coming back into Transylvania. A photo is included on page 335.

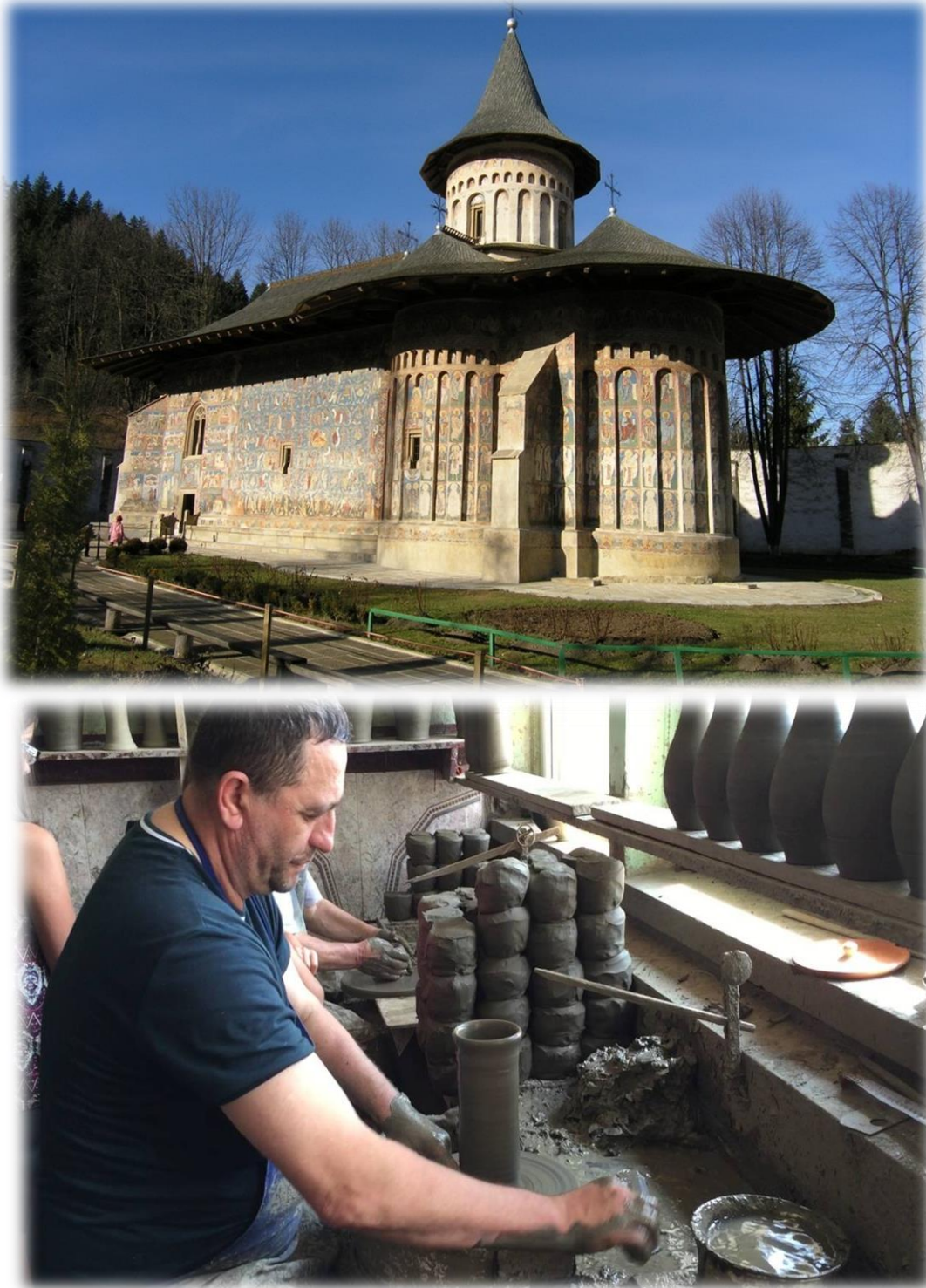
Back in Transylvania, we went for treatments in Sovata, which we covered in an earlier chapter, during another visit to the area. What we have not covered is that we made several visits to the Praid salt mine, which provides amazing benefits to lungs that are not in the best of shapes. We spent 4 or 5 days between the health and wellness treatment places. Quite beneficial to our overall health. A photo of the salt mine is shown on page 335.





Now, it was time to slowly find our way back to Budapest, as our flight back home was very quickly approaching. On the way there, however, we stopped again at Sighisoara and Cluj,

both of which we have covered in quite a bit of detail in earlier chapters. We spent another day in my hometown of Zalau (only to recharge our Romanian batteries), and then headed onto Hungary.





On the way to Budapest, we stopped at our old friend Ocsi's home, to reminisce a bit more, and then, onto the Budapest airport named Ferihegy. Next, on the British Airways plane to London, and eventually contacted to another of their planes to NYC, JFK airport. And that is the end of this wonderful visit. When is the next one? Who really knows, if or when. I would say, only God!

# CHAPTER 16

## EPILOGUE

Sitting here, trying to figure out what is it that I really wanted to convey to you, my readers, with this book about my life. The one overwhelming thought that is going through my mind is this: what would I like an author to tell me, at the end of my reading his work? And that is, without in any way insulting a normal, well intended person's mind.

My life has been a long one, without a question. My Creator has endowed me with relatively good health. And HE has also put a lot of events in there, that I had no problem writing my life's story about. Never considered myself all that exceptional, but as I stated somewhere in my book, some ideas came across my mind, that made me believe that I was much better than the average person. Really?

Nevertheless, quite a few times in my life, I felt this strong urge to tell the world - hey, some things have happened to me that might deserve communicating to others. That actually, there might be some folks out there who could benefit from my experiences. From some of those "lessons learned" by me along the way. Whether good or bad, actually from both.

Throughout my life, during some conversations with folks who's intelligence and well-wishing intents I came to appreciate, I realized that there might be something worthwhile to recount to others. That people could actually find my ideas interesting enough to bother finding out.

In my book, I attempted very hard to convey folks the idea that for most of my life I was basically an atheist, an agnostic at times, or at best, sitting on the fence about God. With aging, with gaining more wisdom, understanding life better, with experiences that could not be simply explained by science, I began to invite God to help. Things like the workings of the soul, the spirit, faith, destiny, and the good and bad in life. Serious matters like that, became difficult challenges for me to explain.

Between my schooling and my professional career as an engineer, I was associated in one way or another with science. We are talking here around 60 years of my life. Science was always

a big part of who I was, am and always will be. It explains a lot to me, but then, it does not many others. Things that only God could! And that - in miraculous, amazing ways! That I really do not need any proof of God's existence, to understand that HE was, is and always will be there for me. No need for any sort of material proof, I know what I feel in my soul, my spirit, my heart and my mind. And, I like very much what I do feel, when God enters my inner being.

I love very much Einstein stand on God, when he said, among many other interesting things. That "coincidence is when God choses to go anonymous", or when he refused to believe that things in this universe are happening stochastically (a greek word, which basically means - happening at random). In other words, there is an order to the way everything happens. From that standpoint, to step into saying that there is a force out there ensuring that all things work together in unison, I don't feel or believe that is a huge leap of faith.

The above statements are there to ensure that we understand that I value without any reservation God, faith, science and all. In that particular order. In that sense, I would like to clarify something here, at this moment. There is a good reason for it all, I assure you. As I have stated already on several occasions in the book so far, the idea of writing this book has been in my mind for a very long time. But actually the effort to get started with it in some logical, organized way, lacked. Until God clearly stepped in to change that!

But then here we are with Glenda, my wife, for those who missed that somehow, finding ourselves on a vacation at some close relatives in Phoenix. One mid-night, maybe around 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, I hear a voice in my spirit, in my head. Never heard something like that before. "Alex, time to write your life's story book". What? Well, these days, God talks to me that way A LOT. So, as you may have already figured it ... "Alex heard from God". Many of you may say, here is a nut case. Or you may say hey, this guy is lucky that God talks to him. Well, believe me, I would not judge you either way. You are fully entitled to believe as you wish. Would I love for you to hear from HIM like I do? Of course! And in the process, I would love for you all, those who might think about it, to feel the warmth and peace that I do in my heart! It feels VERY, VERY, VERY good!

Anyway, back to my epilogue here. Here comes the part that just blew and blows my mind away. And that of some of the folks that are close to me, who know me well, who and what I am.

Within minutes from that moment I thought I heard HIM, I felt an absolute urge to sit down in front of my computer. And start my story. OK.

Again, I was an engineer for close to 45 years. Writing, composition, papers, etc. were not exactly my THING. In fact the opposite. I dreaded writing. That's all. I start writing my book, because HE asked me to do that.

This writing, I am somewhere around three weeks into it, since I started the process. At this point, a 300-plus page book IS written, ready for proof-reading and a first run of editing.

To write a book in three weeks, I guess, any bona-fide writer wouldn't mind that. Is this a work of art? I don't think so, but I am convinced that many people would find it at least interesting. The one question I have for you all. How can someone like me, not experienced in writing autobiographies be able to do that? I will tell you how. Without HIS intimate involvement, I honestly don't believe it can be done.

My writing, was simply flowing. I didn't need to think what goes next, how many chapters or how many pages. Technical issues involved with any book writing, I needed not to bother with that, HE did it for me. I am sure by now you get the idea how this book was created. The other thing, I LIVED these 76 years, I know best what happened in my life. I mean, other than HIM!

Now in understanding that like any profession, being an author has it's own professional settings, ways in which a good, interesting book is written. I will not claim for one second that I have all the wherewithals that are expected in professional writing. But I do have is a very good understanding of my life, what was and is interesting in it, and what should absolutely be eliminated. I understand that there will be a group of people who live their lives, more or less in a similar way to mine. For those individuals, this book is primarily written for.

My hope is that along the way, I may be able to interest folks who are are different from me, and have them invest the time, and hopefully the money, to see what I and my book are all about. To those folks, my hat off! I hope that I made your worth while. Then of course, I have the group that absolutely hates everything I stand for, some will hate me for no particular reason. And I can think of several reason for that. They may hate me for being a Jew. We know that group, no further introduction of them is needed. There will be others who hate me for being Romanian. I

can think right here of a few of those reasons now.

There will be others who will hate me for being Hungarian, which really, I am not. But those, I guess, they probably for no good reason say, I hate that bloody Hungarian. I am sure there would be some hating me for being an engineer, because somewhere in their lives, they got screwed by one. There will be others who will hate me simply because I was able to write this book. I can go on with a million reasons why, but I will stop right here.

For all of you Alex haters, out there in this world, guess what, I will forgive you and try to forget that all you haters exist, and I am sure by now, even you know why. My JESUS is asking me to do that, and as far as Jesus goes, I do NOT play games. If you somehow haters take the time to read my book or parts thereof, well guess what? I thank you for that and really, really hope that you in the end found something good enough in it to make you content. Or even learn something of value.

As stated clearly in parts of this book, it was conceived and written down because the Lord asked me to. But also because my life, with the many warts it had and continues having, somewhere in there, something of value to anyone who bothered reading it, made it worthwhile.

When I started to write this book, I had no idea what to expect of this experience. In my wildest dreams I could not have figured that it would turn out to be this exciting. Not sure what will happen next for me, in terms of writing again. I will leave that up to God, HIS guidance. Probably, there would be some issues about what to write next. But there is no doubt that a taste for writing has been created in my soul. Somewhere reading on the Internet that many folks who take up writing, eventually experience the same feeling. Since I completed this book, I have written another, not nearly as complex as this one, but precess was continued. I have a few ideas what my next one should cover, but that is obviously still in the works. My only question - I would love for God to explain to me why we had to wait 76 years to happen. Hopefully, NE may have an answer for me.

My hope is that some publisher out there would take interest in publishing this book, because without that, obviously you folks would not be able to read it.. But assuming that it would happen, and more importantly, you take an interest in reading it, who knows, you may find that

useful ideas were gained by you after reading it. I just thank you for that, and that idea has me very excited!