

This is a translation of my father's autobiography, written when when he was in his seventies. His name was Maks Lauterbach, but he was born as Meir Naphtali Lauterbach.

Children:

I was born on October 3, 1887 in Drohobycz. (Currently U.S.S.R, formerly Poland until 1939, but part of Austria-Hungary prior to the First World War). This small town, at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, one half hour away from the oil well district, had a population of 4,000, 40% Jews, balance Poles and Ukrainians. Having full rights, the Jews were an important factor in the town, being able to tip the scale one way or another.

Like incold townlets of Galicia (a province of Austro Hungarian Empire), the center of the social and economic life was in the town square. There my great grandfathers (forefathers?) built a large house (apartment house), a corner building where two streets met, known as the "Lauterbach House". In this building, during my childhood, lived only Lauterbach families. There were two large stores in the front (of the building) one was a yardage store under the name of Abraham Aron Lauterbach, (who was my grandfather, the second one was a wine shop of Abel Lauterbach, the grandfather of of Leon Lauterbach (the family historian). I remember also that upstairs lived my aunt Mina Ludmerer, mother of Basia and Lotka, uncle Samuel older brother of my father, also Joseph Lauterbach Sr. brother of my grandfather.

On the first floor my parents had a small apartment, composed of one very large room and a tiny kitchen. This giant room was in one corner the bedroom, in another the dining room, in the third

corner stood my tiny bed, and in the fourth corner was a trap door leading to a cellar, equivalent to today's refrigerator, where food was kept, including potatoes and apples for winter.

I had a brother, Eli, and a sister Sarah, but both died in their childhood. When visiting Drohobycz (in later years) I used to go to their graves.

My father used to tell how he was in the synagogue on Saturday morning when suddenly the cook arrived, screaming "Mazel Tov mit a yingl" (Good luck it is a boy). The synagogue was known as the Lauterbach synagogue, was planned and built in the house ^{of} the well known and learned millionaire Selig Lauterbach, elder brother of my grandfather Abraham Aron. The synagogue was ~~also~~ located in the town square, and this is where all the Lauterbachs prayed. I do remember the High Holidays where the priests (Kohanim) blessed the people (Kohanic Blessing), the first row of priests being composed of Lauterbachs only, except for one carpenter Gartenberg, who was very proud to bless in company of Lauterbachs.

My grandfather, and your great grandfather (this was written to father's sons; Henry, Otto and Alexander) was a modest man, very much respected in the town, of angelic goodness, son-in-law of Rabbi Eli Horszowski, very devout, liked by all without exception. His brother Selig (see Encyclopaedia Judaica), a writer, wrote after my grandfather's death that he was adored by Jews and Christians alike.

The yardage store, then called (in German) Manufactur Geschaeft, had a sign reading; "Abraham Aron Lauterbach Manufactur Geschaeft".

The store was known in town as very dependable, the whole intelligencia shopped there, and grandfather's honesty ~~and~~ and trustworthiness was proven to me forty years later, as can be seen during my story of our flight from Krakow to Lwow (Lemberg).

Great-

My grandfather on my grandmother's side, Rabbi Eli Horszowski, was very learned, and the proof is that his reputation was such that for years after his death, the city did not elect a rabbi, but only a Dayan. He is mentioned in the Encyclopaedia Judaica, volume 6 page 38. (This is the German Encyclopaedia Judaica, published in Berlin). Father told me that the whole family life centered around this great grandfather. When people talked about the engagement of my father and mother, the rabbi told everybody that he called my father's attention to the fact that my mother is not beautiful, and my father replied; "Are the not beautiful not supposed to get married?". Mother always laughed when the story was repeated.

On Saturday afternoon grandfather Lauterbach always studied holy books, and his grandchildren would come to see him, and everyone got an apple (Sabbath-fruit). He would stroke us, but never kissed us. He died when I was twelve years old.

My great grandfather on my father's side, Jacob Zalel Lauterbach was very religious, short, (father called him "Der Kleiner Zayde", ("the small grand father"). He refused to recognize any new developments, and when one Saturday he met in the street two of his sons in law, wearing top hats, instead of shtraimel, he decided to leave Drohobycz and settle in Palestine. His sons did not want him, a widower, to go there alone, so they "gave him", as was done in those days, an elderly

woman, for a wife. One of the sons escorted him all the way to Trieste, there being no railroads, they traveled in horsedrawn carriages. When I was in Palestine I visited his grave in Safed. I remember that my mother told me that my father cried when he received my letter telling of my visit to the grave of my great grandfather.

My other grandfather Hersch Chajes, nephew of my grandfather Abraham Aron, was also very religious, but more accessible to change. While Abraham Aron was very conservative and studied only holy books, my other grandfather Hersch Chajes was interested in Polish and German literature, knew well the Austrian legal code. Judges knew him, respected him, consulted him. He had Christian friends; Arzt, principal of boys' highschool, the canon priest, a neighbor of grandfather. With the priest my ^{GRAND}father had lengthy conversations, but always at the fence, (they lived next to each other) but they never visited each other. The house of Hersch Chajes was more progressive than the house of grandfather Abraham Aron.

Youngest son of my grandfather Eisik (Isaak, Eugeniusz) graduated high-school in Drohobycz and studied law at the Lwow University.

Grandmother Chajcia (Haytzia), maiden name Bergwerk, wise and determined, was the business head, she bought and sold diamonds, corals, loaned money, and she accumulated substantial wealth, for those days. She knew how to read Hebrew, but did not know how to write, and therefore my grandfather handled the books. Even though business did not interest him, the books were kept in an exemplary manner. Grandmother obviously complained about my grandfather; "Can he write?". Grandfather Chajes was very musically inclined, liked to ^{SING}~~sign~~ religious chants, and in the synagogue he gathered around him a group of boys and taught them to sing.

These boys formed a choir and accompanied grandfather when he prayed and sung. I remember when my grandfather, now 72 years old borrowed from me the novel "Rodzina Polanieckich" by Sienkiewicz and was enchanted by it. Let us not forget that for many years my grandfather wrote articles for newspapers in Hebrew, published a few works (I remember only one title, I think TIFERET ZVI), and spoke Polish and German. In Krakow we still owned a large Polish/German dictionary with his corrections. I remember that he also had legal texts in which he entered his comments.

There was a tradition in Drohobycz that funeral processions of scholars, more important personalities, would stop before the Main Synagogue. The coffin would be placed in front of the entrance, and the rabbi would give the funeral oration. I remember that this took place during the funerals of both of my grandfathers, as well as that of my uncle Selig Lauterbach mentioned in the German Encyclopaedia Judaica volume 10, page 702. I do not remember if such event took place during other funerals.

My parents told me that their dowry, from both sides, was 1,500 gulden, equivalent to 750 dollars. Father, almost never visited his fiancée, but kept buying for her books, which were in my library in Drohobycz, books of Goethe, Schiller, Heine etc in beautifully bound volumes. Their wedding was a lively one, and my mother was proud that the rabbi Eli Horszowski officiated. The first year or two they had their meals ~~at~~ alternately at grandparents Lauterbach and grandparents Chajes. This was in those days the custom that young couples, for a few years ate at parents to save money and to build their own existence. In the Lauterbach home there was the tradition that on

Saturdays fish was sent to children's homes, but it stopped after grandfather Lauterbach passed away, perhaps a year earlier.

My parents, a year after the wedding, looked for a business opportunity and started a small soap factory. They lost half the capital, closed the factory and opened a business similar to that of my grandfather, but with accent on whole^qsale. Mother was the bookkeeper, always knew invoicing well, father bought and sold, but they did not neglect retail sales. They had an open store, both were there at 8 a.m., but never closed it before 10 p.m. In winter, and I remember it distinctly, they wore woolen boots over their shoes, wore fur caps with ear muffs. In Drohobycz the winter was always severe, there were no stoves^{IN STORES}. Only during the last few years they installed a coal stove. During supper time they alternated, because one HAD to be in the store. When father went to Vienna to make purchases, mother stayed in the store till 10 p.m. When mother went with me on vacations, father never left the store, and the maid would bring his meal to the store. My parents had a very regular life pattern; at noon dinner, at 5 p.m. coffee, which the maid used to bring on the run, so that it would not get cold. Everyone knew that when the maid brought the coffee, it was exactly five o'clock. I remember my parents coming home in the winter, and warming themselves at the stove.

On Sunday stores were closed, but in ours the back doors were open. When one knocked, the doors were opened, and my parents worked that day like any other, but only till 6 p.m. to give^{THEMSELVES} an extra rest. They worked very hard all their life, only when I joined the business, after arguments, was I able to make some changes.

Even though my mother came from a somewhat progressive home, she became quite religious under the influence of grandfather Lauterbach. Father always said "She has the Yiddishkeit from us". Here and there she

attended dances, but rarely. But one thing she did accomplish. My father, like all religious Jews wore a shtreimel. Mother tried to convince him to replace it with a high hat which became the fashion among the progressives. One wore the shtreimel or high hat from Friday early evening, to services and all day Saturday. Father refused, so mother committed heresy, she burned the shtraimel, and father had to go out and buy a high hat. Father was a known student of Hebrew and the Talmud. I remember that our bookkeeper and confidante Kestenbaum, a good scholar himself, used to say to me; "Your father is a knowledgeable one" He used to write articles for Hebrew magazines. When Nachum Sokolow was at our home in Krakow for dinner, he told my father that he remembers the articles he used to send to HAZEFIRA, a paper which Sokolow edited. I had in our safe in Krakow several of father's writings and poems, all, of course in Hebrew, but, unfortunately, I did not take them with me. Now they are lost. Leon Lauterbach sent me from Jerusalem an article of my father in which he compares the fate of the Jews to that of the Poles. This is the only thing that I have. It was translated for me into German by Dr. Auerbach.

Mother, before marriage liked to have a good time, liked to tell how she went dancing, but once married, there was a change, the influence of rabbi, grandfather Lauterbach made her take a more conservative path. It is interesting to read the letter of mother of Leon Lauterbach, printed in the family chronicle, telling of a dance being organized, when grandfather refused to give my mother permission to attend, and she agreed. In spite of of this, their married life was a most happy one.

Every Saturday, at night there was a steady tradition of gathering of the family, Chajes, at parents, at Sigmunds, Osias, at Benjamins, where women played KLABER, (a card game), father never played cards, the men conversed. Since there were no baby sitters, I always attended these gatherings, even when a small boy.

In the beginning I attended a cheder, but only for a few weeks. I remember the melamed, his nick name was "pici ruci" (in Ukrainian " small hands"), for he had one hand shorter than the other. Then I was registered in a public grammar school. One teacher Czepiel, teacher of religion Rothstein, used to "visit" our store, and here and there got fabrics as gifts, and so I passed the first four school years without difficulty. But the disaster struck when I had to take the entrance exam to the highschool.

I failed the entrance exam, I remember that I cried when the highschool director gave the names of those passing the exam, and did not mention my name. Priest Cetnarski approached me, patted me on the head and pacified me. Perhaps he knew me, perhaps because he had same red hair as I did, I do not know the reason. But I remember him telling my parents that they should not worry, that I will pass the exam later. Grandfather Abraham Aron was happy, for he was overjoyed with possibility of me going back to the cheder. I remember distinctly him telling me; " when you fail the second time I will give you two guldens!!".

What to do now? . Salko (cousin) passed the exam, others passed, and I shall repeat the fourth class and be always behind others? Decision was made that I will study the material of the first year of highschool at home, and then pass exam to be admitted to the

second year of the gimnasium. And so it happened!!

I want to go back a few years in time. When I was 5 or 6 years old, mother used to go with me for a vacation cure for four weeks to Szczawnica or Krynica. Parents kept complaining that I am skinny, and that such vacation will help me. Father never went on a vacation, at least not until I joined the business. Parents first vacation was to Abazzia. I remember that when I was 6 or 7 years old, we went to Krynica, and in order to save expenses, we stayed at Vogel's in a large room with a pleasant lady, I do not remember her name. She went to Krynica because she wanted to have a baby, and the baths there were supposed to help. There was at that time in Krynica the wonderrebbe from Siniawa, nicknamed "the Siniawer rebbe". It was difficult to see the rabbi, and people used to crowd his gabbai, secretary. After many efforts our roommate was notified that on a certain day she should report at 6 a.m. She asked my mother to go with her. We arrived there well ahead of 6 a.m. the room being full of petitioners. Each one of us had to give the name of his father and grandfather.

When the rabbi started receiving petitioners, the gabbi called first the "granddaughter and the great grandson of the Drohobycz rabbi, Eli Horszowski". This was a great honor for we came last, but were the first to be received. I remember well this Godfearing man, of short height, who, looking straight at us, asked; "Why does not great grandson of Rabbi Horszowski have peyes?". Mother asked him to bless me. He put his hands on my head and blessed me. Believe me, all my life, whenever I was in a difficult position, I recalled the blessings of the Rabbi of Sieniawa, and the words of my mother; "You will fare well all your life for you were blessed by the Rabbi of Sieniawa", and I religiously believed in his blessing, and still do.

So I studied privately the subjects of the first grade of gimnasium, but time was coming when I had to pass the test to be admitted to the second grade. At this point grandfather Chajes wrote a letter to the principal of the gimnasium in Wadowice, a friend of his, Mr. Arzt. He suggested that I should travel to Wadowice, and take the test there. I went there with Hania (mother's sister) now engaged to Jacob, and we stayed with the Reich family. The principal Arzt was present during my exam, so was aunt Hania. I passed the test with flying colors, being examined in Latin by prof. Ptaszek, in zoology or mineralogy by prof. Siczynski. I recall now that before the exam I had to learn a poem by heart, and, curiously, I was examined about it. I suspect that Hania knew ahead of time what I will be asked during the exam.

In Wadowice I attended gimnasium for two months, second grade. I became friendly with the Reich family, and I met them frequently in later years in summer resorts. They always reminded me of what happened there one evening. We boys played outside, and not being too smart, ended up by tinkling on each other. We came home in completely wet pants, smelling rather badly. I ~~called~~^{caught} really hell from Hania, I threatened to complain to my parents, but did not do it. After two months of school in Wadowice we returned to Drohobycz where I was registered in the second grade of high/school.

I was never an exceptional student, but somehow I passed all grades without repeating any. I studied, parents helped a little by bribing teachers, and there were many of them who demanded to be bribed, and some, without a bribe refused to give passing grades. I had a good friend, Rosen, son of a tinsmith, we studied together until graduation. In the fifth grade we had a teacher of Polish language, Bojarski, a bribetaker of rare proportions, He took any amount, and

when mother paid him off, she asked for favored treatment of Rosen. His answer was;" Let his sister or brother come to see me", and having been handed ten kronen, gave him a good grade.

In the beginning of the eighth grade of gimnasium, in 1903, I looked sickly, so my parents took me to see Dr. Lachowski. He was a well known antisemite, who had only Jewish patients, especially chasids. He stated that I am too weak to live much longer, suggested that I drop out of school immediately. You can imagine the despair of my parents since I was the only child out of three that was still alive. After a family consultation we went to see Dr. Kozlowski, the most respected physician of the day. He examined me thoroughly and declared that I am completely healthy. When mother quoted what Dr. Lachowski said, he responded;" I take full responsibility in declaring your son as being completely healthy, no matter that he is skinny and pale. Please do not interrupt his studies, and if you want to do something for him send him in fall to Krynica, mostly to make his mother feel better. But do not stop studies!". So it was. I went with mother to Krynica, it was time for Sukkoth holidays. Father joined us once for Saturday and Sunday. After the vacation I went back to the 7th grade of the gimnasium.

Until the 1908/1910 period there were no coffee houses, for people to meet socially. The trade in shares of the Boryslaw oil wells was source of income to thousands, tens of brokers searched for partners in oil wells. Owner of the land rented it out for ten to twenty years, receiving small amount of cash but 20% to 22% of the gross income. Once the well was completed he sold this gross income in fractions of 1%, $\frac{1}{2}\%$ and even $\frac{1}{16}\%$ of the total, called "bruttos". The trade

of these "bruttos" was handled by traders in the square, this being typical of Drohobycz. One day a Czech supplier of my father arrived. Seeing all these traders, walking around with their hands crossed in the back, ^{HE} asked my father; "Sagen Sie mir was wollen die Leute? Wovon leben sie?". (Please tell me what do these people want? How do they make a living?). But once coffee shops were established the crowd in the town square thinned out.

In the eighth grade of gimnasium I was hit by typhus (stomach typhoid?) three months before final exam. I was sick for about six weeks. We wondered if I should take the exam or not. I went for advice to prof. Nowak who taught the German language. He responded; " You donkey, take the exam, and you will pass!". I asked him, and he agreed not to ~~EXAMINE ME~~ about Goethe's Faust. Then another question arose. Prof. Elias, teacher of mathematics and physics announced at the beginning of the second half of the schoolyear; "Listen to me, for there will be as many groups of questions in both subjects as there are students!". Nobody inquired any more for everyone of us knew what questions will be given to him during final exam. But then in a few months one student, whose name begun with letter "K" dropped out. There was a discussion about the sequence of questions for students whose last name begun with letters K & L. The teacher was asked quite openly in class and he bluntly stated; "You donkeys, when one drops out, then the number of questions is accordingly reduced. This is a stupid question." He was a very gentle man.

The written exams passed well, and I was admitted to the oral exams. During exam in German language, prof. Nowak asked me with a smile; "What about Faust in volume one and volume two?". Somehow I answered,

with him helping me along.

My parents were always very modest and lived, especially in the early years, as the financial conditions allowed. Each year, by end of December they would prepare a financial statement and adjust their living conditions accordingly. I remember that when I was five or six years old, my parents moved to a larger apartment; one large room, one small room and a kitchen. Then we moved to a larger one with two large rooms with a kitchen, and then to a four room apartment with a kitchen. Two years before I finished gimnasium my parents bought a lot on Szewczenko Street, having lived before only on the square. They built own house with two apartments, one on each floor, planning one for me, on the upper floor. After ~~the~~^{my} wedding parents lived upstairs and we downstairs. How did they build and pay for it? Each week and each month they would spend 100, 200 or 300 kronen on the building. There was a tradition that a house had to dry^{out} with the brick building standing unfinished a whole winter. In the second summer the building would be finished and people would occupy it in fall.

The furniture was purchased in the same way. They had the same furniture in the first three apartments. But when they moved into the four room apartment with a kitchen, they went to Lwow (Lemberg) to buy furniture. They bought bedroom and dining room furniture, very attractive, and owned it to the very end when they lived in Krakow. I remember well the big credenza, finely built, the upper part supported by two figures, of a man and a woman. Unfortunately the woman had a very pronounced bust, and this was unacceptable to my father. It was solved in an admirable fashion. The dealer ordered in Vienna a floral garland carved out of the same wood as the furniture, to be attached to the bust, and the

change pleased my parents. The house built on Szewczenko Street had a garden and a small summerhouse (gazebo) that was used as a sukkah, since it had a roof that could be opened to the sky. Our house, considering the times was quite an improvement over previous apartments. We had our own bathroom, ^{now} ~~since~~ Before we went every week or two to the public baths. We had waterline inside, connected to the water well in our yard. We had two maids, a Jewish cook and a housemaid that kept the house in order. Our kitchen was of course kòsher.

Since we now had our own large home, and my grandparents were getting on in years, my parents organized Purim balls. These balls were traditional in Drohobycz. Bands were hired, people in costumes went from home to home, teased everybody, and were hard to recognize. Perhaps it was a sign of times, when people enjoyed freedom and liked to have a good time. In homes of the well to do, the master of the house would always sit it the ^{front} ~~from~~ room and would distribute moneys to poor people who would go from door to door, this being the local tradition. In the evening there would be a big dinner, and then people in costumes would visit homes, especially the well to do ones. My parents would first go for supper to grandparents Lauterbach and later, at 9 p.m. to the Chajes grandparents. It was always fun trying to guess who was in what costume, but we were not always successful. I remember that once, when at the home of Chajes grandparents, we saw two horse driven carriages arrive full of masked people. The visitors started teasing everybody, esp. Hania and Regina, both young eligible girls. We could not identify anybody, until midnight, when we found out that uncle Isaak, a university student in Lwow (Lemberg) school of law, came with his friends. In the morning they returned to Lwow. These were trouble-free days!!

Later parents organized parties with band playing till late in the evening. We danced, Dr. Ignacy Liss, husband of Basia would lead the cadrille, dancing ^{THROUGH} ~~through~~ the whole house.

Describing the mode of living during my young years I would like to add that during my parents life, father concentrated mainly on synagogue prayers, he would never go to a coffeehouse. Mother would attend services on Saturday morning, while father would go Friday night and Saturday morning. About ten to twelve members of the synagogue, mainly relatives organized, after Friday dinner, a party; they would order a barrel of beer, cooked peas with pepper, combined ~~debates~~ debates, (religious ones), prayers and dancing around the "Belemer" (, center of the synagogue, where on a raised platform the Torah was read). There was always a Sabbathgoy (a gentile) to put out the candles, and to light the fire in the stove in winter.

Father, his brothers, uncle Rubin Wald, used to go for a walk on Saturday afternoons, going toward the Gorka (small mountain). In the evening, as mentioned before, we had regular family get-togethers.

Father, like my grandfathers, never accepted any honors, neither as member of city council nor of the Kahal (governing body of the Jewish community). He liked to live modestly, to his very end.

I omitted to add the following sentence: When going to prayers women used to wear finest clothes and all their jewelry.

When I was, for the first time, a candidate to the Kahal of Krakow, the office of our Zionist party was in my office, and I was a candidate of this party, my father would constantly drop in, hoping that I will be elected.

The Lauterbach synagogue had its own association "Gemilat Chasidim", which extended loans and financial support to the needy ones. When we lived in Krakow father used to make contributions to it.

My birthday was always celebrated in the synagogue, for I was born on the first day of Sukkoth. All members used to remind my father that this called for a barrel of beer. And this was drunk before the afternoon Mincha prayer. But when my parents finished building their home, the beer barrel was at our home and the synagogue members and the family used to come there. Even the well known scholar uncle Selig Lauterbach used to come there, his advanced age notwithstanding. He seldom used to leave his house. Parents congratulated me on the first day of Sukkoth, my birthday, and than again eight days later, the anniversary of my circumcision.

In the gimnasium the Jews kept more or less to themselves, but our relations with the Poles and the Ukrainians was very correct. Toward the later years of the gimnasium several of us became interested in the Zionist movement, Herzl was still alive then. While it was forbidden ^{FOR GYMNASIUM STUDENTS} to take part in political movements some of us, secretly, started visiting office of the zionist organization, reading zionist leaflets, "DIE WELT" the main zionist newspaper, listening to discussions and lectures. After graduating in 1905 all of us joined the organization and the Zionist student club Makabia. I remember how suddnely the office of the

organization received the news of Herzl's death. It was like a strike of lightning, we were all depressed, and wondered; "What will happen now?".

Parents agreed with my wish that I should go to Vienna to attend the Commerce Accademy for a "Abiturientenkurs", ~~and then join the firm.~~ So it happened. I spent a year in Vienna studying, going every other day to the theatre, and taking care of various business matters for my father.

I saw and heard all famous actors and singers, even though I am not musically inclined, I saw every opera. Interesting was an opera performance attended by the emperor Franz Joseph and Spanish king Alfons with his wife, the whole Austrian court, all the ministers, mayor of Vienna, ambassadors. The public was allowed to sit only on the fourth floor (gallery). It was hard to get a ticket, everyone had to wear a dark suit, but that evening is a pleasant memory. Most frequently I attended the Burgtheater where I saw the most famous actors; Sonnenthal, Baumeister, Kainz. Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller works were always in the repertory, but some modern plays were also included. Operettas were the craze then, ^{like the} some Merry Widow was performed several hundred times. Operettas were a pleasant change since such light music was easier for me to enjoy than Wagner.

I always saw plays from the fourth gallery (floor) but when mother came to visit me, all suppliers started sending us complimentary seats in the loges, and we enjoyed those.