

The Jack and George Story

By Marvin Green

CHAPTER 1

The Lansford Connection

Three Greenberger brothers - Albert, Nathan and Jack - settled in Lansford, a town in the anthracite coal-mining region of Pennsylvania. In the 1930 decennial census, Lansford had a population of 9,632. Many of the inhabitants were Polish or Slovakian, and many of these were coal miners. There were Welsh residents, such as the Davises, the Davidsons, the Reeses, the Jones. There were English, German, Irish and persons of other ethnic origin.

The Greenbergers and their wives and children were 12 persons in all. The other Jewish families were the Blooms, the Cohens, the Millers, the Stevensons, the Katzes, the Brills, the Abrahamsons. In addition, there was Norton Brown, a lapsed Jew, who did not participate with the Jewish community but who painted his hardware store every Yorn Kippur.

The community managed to maintain a rabbi. They imported Jewish families from Coaldale- the Schonbergers, the Wasserrnans, the Browns. Coaldale was one mile from Lansford. Also there were some Jewish families who came from Nesquehoning and Tamaqua, each of which were five miles away.

There were Hebrew school classes Monday through Friday. There were Sabbath services every Friday night. On Saturday there was a Sabbath service for the children but none for the adults, because Saturday was the most important business day. All of the stores were open. Nathan and Jack operated N&J Greenberger, a furniture store. Albert operated a general store that also sold furniture. On Sunday there was Sunday school for the children. The families observed holy days according to their preferences, but the community as a community celebrated only Rosh Hashannah and Yorn Kippur.

The community center was a very small rented house, known as "the Rooms." The rabbi and his family lived upstairs. Downstairs there was a kitchen, the small sanctuary room with the ark and about 20 metal folding chairs and another even smaller room, which served as the Hebrew school. The congregation purchased about

10 old school desks and a blackboard that the Lansford Public School was discarding.

Kosher food was imported weekly from a butcher in Hazleton, 13 miles away. On one occasion, when some of the Greenbergers had a disagreement with the other families, the Hazleton butcher was instructed not to serve them. The Greenbergers then had to get their food brought in from Wilkes Barre, about 40 miles away.

It is a tribute to the Lansford Jews, who constituted only about 4/10 of one percent of the population of Lansford, that they maintained their Jewish community until their sons and daughters were all grown. Out of the 140 students in my class in Lansford High School, I was the only Jew. In the year behind me, there were two Jewish boys, in the year ahead none.

CHAPTER 2

Hitler and the English language

I didn't make the connection, when I was 12 or 13 years old and when my mother said, "We might be adopting a child."

The Nuremberg racial laws had been enacted, and I deemed them ridiculous. Crystalnacht had occurred. In the newsreels in the movie theaters I saw "Juden" painted on broken storefront windows. I saw books by Jewish authors being hurled into bonfires; I witnessed and cringed at the Nazi pageants, the German soldiers goose stepping, the swastikas on flags and banners everywhere. I had a radio by my bed. Early in the mornings, when I awakened, I got Berlin on the shortwave and heard Hitler himself. It was awesome and frightening notwithstanding that I was half the world away. Even later on, when I was studying German in school, I couldn't understand him, but there was a rhythm and a terrifying urgency in everything he said.

What I didn't ever realize, until just recently, was that my very own family, in Lansford, Pennsylvania, might be able to save lives.

I calculated what a new brother and sister could mean to me. I decided I'd be OK. At the very least, it would be interesting and novel and so wasn't threatening. Although I wondered at this extraordinary development, I didn't explore my parents' reasons. I assumed it perhaps grew out of something in their personal relationship. As time went on, I was vaguely disappointed that the adoption never came to pass.

One of our great family events was the reading of letters from Hungary. It was always at lunchtime when I'd be home from school for this meal. My father was excited. The mail had arrived at his store, and he'd brought a letter with him. He sat in his chair at the head of the table and read the letter, gesturing and occasionally holding up his index finger to signal that an important point was being made.

I had no idea what the letters said. When my mother and father wanted a private conversation, they spoke Hungarian. Although the letters were not private, they were in Hungarian. And they were indeed private in a certain important sense. They were incredibly precious to my father. They were from his beloved family. I never realized how lonesome he was for them. To translate the letters into English would diminish them. After lunch my mother, if pressed, would *give* the briefest synopsis. She understood the letters but didn't cherish them. For her, they simply recounted daily events in the lives of some in-laws, some persons she didn't know.

And yet the reading of the letters, my father's obvious rapture, made these lunchtime events indelible moments. Intuitively, I knew enough never to press my mother for a translation. I didn't want to diminish the letters for my father.

Until recently I never realized why Aunt Ethel cried all the time. My father was one of nine brothers, and they had two sisters. Ethel was the younger one. Jack, Albert, Nathan, Fred and Sam were the *five* brothers who made it to the United States. It was they, but principally Jack, who had brought Ethel *over*. Ethel never learned a word of English. We visited her in her apartment at least once a week. I was obliged to go along. Each time she held forth, dominating the conversation, pouring out what I interpreted as unending complaints. Could life in the United States be so harsh? Sometimes she illustrated the complaint by reading aloud a letter in Hungarian. While I dreaded those boring occasions, eventually I learned to amuse myself by predicting how long it would be before she started to weep.

Today, of course, I understand. The war had started. The Nazis had goose stepped into Hungary. There was -- or there had been -- family in Hungary, persons whom Ethel knew, whom she had seen *every* day. Probably Vilmos, Paul and Geza were among them. I recognized those names from letters.

But now there were no more letters from Hungary.

I suspect it was Ethel who had planted the idea of adoption.

CHAPTER 3

Dunkirk

From May 29 to June 4, 1940, there was a military miracle.

The Nazi Wehrmacht had demolished the Allies' armed forces. Paris was an open city, the Nazis goose stepping down the Champs Elysee and Hitler doing a newsreel dance of victory. France and its "invincible" Maginot Line and its mighty army were devastated. The British Expeditionary Force, as many as 400,000 troops, was trapped, the Nazis at their backs, the waters of the English Channel ahead of them.

One of the 400,000 was George Grunberger. Miraculously, George and 330,000 other soldiers made it safely to England.

It is also a miracle that George was not dead in Hungary.

George contracted typhoid fever at Dunkirk. He told me that he'd had a fever of 105 degrees for maybe 10 days. "It totally changed my personality," he said.

I wanted to know what George had been through at Dunkirk, and he told me about the fever when I met him and stayed in his home in Tunbridge Wells on Christmas Eve in 1945. I was disappointed, because that's all he would say. I was a corporal in the US Army. As a soldier, and even more so as a family member, I had wanted the vicarious experience of Dunkirk.

Ruth Grunberger [I can't remember for sure now whether Ruth or Judith is the older] was a baby when I visited, and a boy named Henri was there, too. I can't recall his connection with the family. He'd been "adopted" by Catholic people during the war and raised by them, maybe in Belgium. I believe his parents died in the camps, but the "adoption" had saved his life. I was reminding myself that Aunt Ethel's daughter, Anush, was one of those who disappeared from her home in Czechoslovakia, near the Hungarian border, and who presumably died in the camps.

I had come by train from London and had stopped at Harrod's to buy a stuffed animal for Ruth. Not having known that Henri would be there, I didn't bring him anything, but I played ball with him on Christmas Day.

I had been on leave at Cambridge when I got to go to Tunbridge Wells. Tunbridge Wells was famous as "buzz bomb alley," with the V1 rockets flying over on their way to London.

On Christmas Eve, George and Friedel had a party to go to, but they took me

to George's hospital and introduced me to the "sisters," who were having their own party. George was known there as "the Chinese doctor." In England, nurses are sisters. In America, nurses are nurses, and sisters are Catholic nuns. Assuming I was celebrating the holiday in a Catholic hospital, I was on the verge of trouble, because one of the sisters danced with me and led me onto a balcony and seemed very affectionate. I succeeded in disciplining myself. No way would I embarrass the Chinese doctor in Tunbridge Wells.

My visit to Tunbridge Wells is troubling to this very day. I wanted to have the same warmth and love of family that my father had, but I couldn't get to know George very well at all. I'm gregarious now and was gregarious then, but I was only 20 years old. I suppose I was too callow. I don't blame the typhoid fever. In one of our few conversations, George was telling me about a friend of his, a man who had an unusual philosophical perspective -- his premise was that there were no straight lines in nature. Abruptly George stopped what he was saying and said, "It's too complicated." I felt bad. I didn't know if it was too complicated for him to explain or if it was too complicated for me to comprehend.

When I left Tunbridge Wells and returned to Cambridge, I didn't have the answers to important questions that were on my mind all during my visit. How did you escape the Nazis in Hungary? How did you get to England? Did any others of the Grunberger family survive?

CHAPTER 4

An Indelicacy

When I met Anush in 1939, I was just turning 14 and was well into puberty. Anush was my first cousin and hence taboo as a sexual object. I never questioned that.

She was short, had a round face and hair that was cut straight on the sides and that came down onto her forehead, where it was also cut straight across. Maybe the style is called a "bob." I believe her face was lightly pock marked, as if from one of the childhood poxes. She was married and had no children. I think she lived in Czechoslovakia, across the border from Hungary. I'd say she was in her 30s.

In the summer of 1939 she was in Lansford, visiting her mother and father, Aunt

Ethel and Uncle Adolf Friedman. Adolf was a sweet, loving man who could not do enough for Ethel. Jack and Nathan gave him light maintenance work at the N&J Greenberger furniture store, just enough to let him feel that he was earning his own way.

Ethel and Adolf had one other child, Julius. Jack and Nathan and perhaps Albert had brought Julius to the United States. He was a physician, and they set him up in an office in Allentown, a substantial city about 40 miles from Lansford. He was our family doctor, and he made house calls. Whenever there was some medical ailment, my mother would say, "Cousin Julius will be here on Sunday. You can wait until then." Of course, if there were an emergency or anything serious, we 'd see one of Lansford's resident doctors.

So one of the two Friedman children was a permanent US citizen, and the other had a permit to visit for just three months and had a husband to go home to, in that summer when I turned 14.

Anush liked me. She used to sit alongside me and say "Ooly Mooly, " which my father translated as simply a meaningless Hungarian expression of affection. Sometimes she stroked my cheek and said what I transliterate as "adesh pofavogh." My father translated that as "sweet horseface." When I took slight exception, he reassured me, explaining that the remark referred to the delightfully silky facial skin of a horse.

Although Anush was in the US primarily to see her mother and father and her brother, we took a long driving trip with her. We went to Hershey, Pennsylvania, where all the houses and stores are owned by the Hershey Company that makes chocolates. We visited the White House in Washington and took tours of the city. We took her into Canada. The climax was a week at the New York World's Fair of 1939, where you had to wait in line for hours to see exhibits such as General Motors ' Futurama. We stayed at the Wellington Hotel.

I liked Anush and felt very close to her, but my brother Harold and my cousin Mitzi began to resent her protracted stay in the US. I don't know why. At Mitzi's instigation, I was invited to join an "anti-Anush club." I don't know why I joined. I'm deeply ashamed to this very day. I was 14 years old, and I knew better. My first assignment was to make Anush realize that she was no longer wanted here. Consequently, when she was sitting next to me one evening, saying her Ooly Mooly, I reached up and pinched her cheek. I pinched it so hard that she screamed.

About 3 days later Anush's visitor 's permit to be in the US expired, and she set

sail from New York, on her way back to Czechoslovakia. The date was September 1, 1939, the day that the Germans invaded Poland.

Now that I understand that Aunt Ethel was crying, not only for Vilmos, Paul and Geza, but primarily for Anush, I marvel at my new comprehension of Ethel Friedman's plight. She was a woman who had something to cry about. I'm reminded, too, of Henri's mother, who also had something to cry about.

Two years ago, when I visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., I made a point of going to the Hungarian section and spent an hour there inspecting photographs of naked Hungarian women, their heads shaved. They were all standing or running in the cold. During our trip to the New York World's Fair, I went into one of our Wellington Hotel rooms and accidentally encountered Anush emerging from the shower. It was taboo to look, and I don't know what I saw. At the Holocaust Museum, with the women's heads shaved, I couldn't recognize Anush's distinctive hair style. It's a terrible thing to say, but perhaps saying it is justified by the enormity of the Holocaust -- I was attempting to identify Anush by her pubic hair.

I could not.

I'm sorry I pinched her cheek. Goodbye, "adesh pofavogh."

CHAPTER 5: Ellis Island

It was at Ellis island in New York in the early 1900s that the name Grunberger, with the umlaut, became Greenberger in the United States. There was a tidal wave of immigrants -- 16,000,000 persons from 1892 onward -- and the officials processing them at Ellis Island and doing the paper work had no time for precision. I think my father arrived there in 1912, at age 15, with an identification tag around his neck, and then found himself on the streets of New York, selling pencils and shoe laces and living by his wits and literally crying for his mother.

When he had to survive all alone in New York, of course he needed her, but the need remained throughout his life until he died when he was almost 80. It was from age 8 on that he had not had enough of the mother and the family that he craved.

At first immigration into the United States was unlimited. In the two years 1920

and 1921, with Europe still suffering from World War I, 898,659 immigrants entered. By then Jack was with his brothers Nathan and Albert, trying to make a living by selling groceries in Lansford, but the times were hard with widespread unemployment.

Nathan was a tall, powerful-looking man. He had been a top sergeant in the American Expeditionary Force under General Pershing in France. Jack didn't serve in the army. Although he was called up in the draft, he declared himself a conscientious objector on the grounds that he might have to be fighting against relatives in the Austro-Hungarian army. He was 20 years old in 1917 when America entered the war. There was a disparaging story about Jack in the Lansford Evening Record, the town's newspaper. He never showed it to me, but I found it one day, when I was about 15 years old, while I was secretly looking through some of his personal papers.

Many citizens resented immigrants, because they thought immigrants were taking their jobs. In 1921, in Washington, D.C., Congress established a stringent immigration quota law based on national origin. From any European country, say, Hungary, in any one year the maximum number of immigrants was limited to 3% of the number of persons, say, Hungarians, already in the United States, as measured by the 1910 decennial census. In 1910 there were 459,609 persons of Hungarian origin. In 1924 the quota was made even more stringent. The quota was reduced to 2% and was based on the 1890 decennial census. In 1890 there were only 62,435 persons of Hungarian origin. In 1929, the year of the stock market crash, the total number of immigrants from all over was limited to 150,000 a year, and of these only 1,248 persons a year could immigrate from Hungary.

When Ethel and Adolf Friedman emigrated to the United States in 1936, they had for many years waited their turns in the Hungarian quota. At last they were able to join their son Julius.

By 1936, however, Hitler was frightening European Jews, and the waiting lists for subsequent entry under the quotas became unbelievably long. By 1939, even if Anush and her husband had wanted to come to the United States to live, probably they would have had to wait another 12 or 13 years. If all of the 6,000,000 who died in the camps had wanted to come to the United States, it would have taken 40 years.

It had become impossible to rescue the Grunberger family through immigration. So it seemed.

Week after week, usually on Friday nights and on Sunday afternoons, we visited Aunt Ethel and stayed with her until she exhausted herself with weeping. Anush and

Vilmos and Paul and Geza and others dominated her thoughts. I had thought at the time that my father was somewhat of a saint, putting up with her anguished complaints week after week. Now I realize that he was weeping, too, silently, frustrated by his inability to do anything to help his loved ones. No one knew what the Nazis were doing. Whatever it was, it was too horrible to name. He went to his sister not only to comfort her but to suffer along with her in the void of information.

Although I know that my father wept for his mother in New York at age 15, I don't recall ever seeing him cry except one day, and I've never forgiven my own mother for a cruel thing she did that day. My father had come up from his store an hour before lunch time. I was maybe 5 or 6 years old. He sat on his favorite chair and started to cry. I asked him what the matter was, but he couldn't speak. I asked my mother, and she said, "His mother died. He just got a letter." For another half hour my father wept while I held onto his hand and stroked his forehead. I was not only comforting him. I was suffering along with him. Then my mother came into the room. She stood there and disapproved. She said, "Jack, you're crying like a baby."

CHAPTER 6

Baby Jack

If it is a miracle that George survived Hungary and Dunkirk and was able to live the rest of his life in England, it's also a miracle that Jack survived Hungary. His oldest sibling Ethel was "thoroughly fed up with the constantly increasing burden the birth of another child represented to her. She greeted my arrival with the remark that she wished she could drown me in a bucket of water." Ethel was already 20 years old. She "was the family seamstress. Every dress, shirt or piece of underwear was made by her."

Jack has explained that his mother "was by far the most dominant factor in our lives," which is the reason "that I refer to my mother's role in the family more than to my father's." His father "was a quiet, kindly man" who earned a rabbinical degree in Talmud education. "To make it possible for my father to devote his life to the study and teaching of Talmud was the most spiritually rewarding thing in my mother's life. It gave her the spiritual and physical strength to apply herself with

fanatical zeal to the almost superhuman task of functioning as the major provider for her large family."

Since Jack himself showed no inclination to study Talmud, he was apprenticed at about age 11 to a dealer in fancy foods, some distance away in the town of Miskolc. Both of Jack's sisters lived in Miskolc. Evidently Ethel in particular served as a mother substitute, because she "had a very constructive influence on my life during my three years' apprenticeship. She urged me to acquire self-education by reading and attending theatrical performances."

Despite the comforting presence of his sisters in Miskolc, despite the fact that Jack experienced his "departure from home [as] a welcome emancipation from the distasteful, restrictive lifestyle imposed on me," he continued to hunger for his mother's presence and family management. In fact, when his apprenticeship ended, it was his mother who came to get him and who unexpectedly decided to ship him to America. After only a few days he found himself traveling "through the principal cities of Europe en route to Antwerp, Belgium." He arrived at Ellis Island on September 19, 1911, literally without a penny. He borrowed 2 cents to write to his brother Albert informing him of his surprise arrival.

"The relatively brief period of 12 months I spent in New York seemed to me more like five years. I experienced unimaginable hardships, hunger and frustration. All my mother's prophecies came to pass. I often cried when no one saw me, and experienced how bitter is a stranger's bread. I remember when, in desperation, I got out of bed in the middle of the night to escape the swarms of bedbugs that were feasting on my young blood."

Jack became a United States citizen in 1924, and his "very first act was to apply for a passport in order to satisfy my yearning to see my mother and relatives in Hungary again." When he arrived in Mesocsat, "I had completed the cycle to the spot from which I left 14 years earlier at age 14. My brother Heinrich and four of my nephews and nieces were awaiting my arrival at the station." I believe that Heinrich was George's father and that George was one of the nephews who greeted Jack. Jack's mother was not well enough to be there, too. "My brother and I warmly embraced. We were both so overcome with emotion that we were well on the way home from the station in a horse-drawn carriage before we regained our voices."

Jack's mother was waiting for him at the gate of Heinrich's house. She had deteriorated physically and was leaning on a walking stick. "My mother kept

caressing me and repeating over and over, 'My dear, fine child.' It must have been fully one hour and several tear-soiled handkerchiefs later before I regained my voice." Jack then stayed 8 weeks "with my mother, brother and his lovely family."

My own brother Harold was two years old at the time that his father was gone for 8 weeks plus the time for the crossings of the Atlantic and the continent of Europe. He and my mother and my father's brother Nathan went to New York to greet my father at the arrival of his ship. Although my father commented, "Needless to say, it was a most happy reunion," this reunion's emotional force was nothing when compared with the power of his reunion with his mother.

Jack next saw his mother in 1929 when he, along with his brother Albert this time, paid another visit to Hungary. Heinrich had died the previous year, and she was grieving.

Nothing could be "more productive of lasting satisfaction than the memory of the joy our visit provided our beloved mother in the last year of her difficult and heroic life." In addition to the joy, Jack and Albert "fulfilled our mother's dearest wish." They arranged a dowry and marriage for their niece Shari.

Jack and Albert accomplished one more thing, too. "We arranged to send our nephew George to a theological school in Frankfurt, Germany, where he continued his medical studies at Basel, Switzerland, and settled in London." The full details of this arrangement are not clear in Jack's memoir.

Jack was about 78 years old, and he was looking back when he recorded his memoir. Speaking of the meeting with his mother in 1924 when he was 27 years old, he said, "Our reunion was the most dramatic, emotion-filled experience of my life."

When Jack's mother died in 1929 or 1930, Jack's universe was totally transformed.

CHAPTER 7

The Biography of George Grunberger

I start with my credentials for presuming to write a biography of George Grunberger. First, I limit the scope of the biography to the few aspects of George that I am familiar with from personal experience and from information I've gained from family sources.

Second, I think I have some good ability to extrapolate from minimal clues. And, third, I am most fond of George and want to understand his life.

The historian John Toland wrote an important and popular biography of Adolf Hitler. More to the point, in 1971 he won the U.S. Pulitzer Prize for *THE RISING SUN*, a methodical, documented study of Japan and the United States as Pearl Harbor approached. In 1985 he published a novel, *GODS OF WAR*, a piece of fiction about Japan and the United States. In a foreword to the novel he argues that literature may be even more truthful than historical reality. He says, "Over the past years I have devoted much of my professional life to studying and writing the history of the relationship between the United States and Japan before and during World War II. But even the most scrupulously researched history can be only an approximation of the truth. And that is why I have turned to fiction, the fittest stage for humanity. You will meet invented people, you will read conversations I did not hear and scenes that I did not witness. Despite that, I believe that the story you are about to read is as real as, if not more real than, formal history. "

Although I'm not sure whether I subscribe to some of Toland's claim for fiction, I do agree that "even the most scrupulously researched history can be only an approximation of the truth." Another historian (R. G. Collingwood), answering the title question in his book *WHAT IS HISTORY?*, says that history is a "web of imaginative reconstruction."

Herein I am imaginatively reconstructing a single part of George's life -- his miraculous escape from Hungary and the Nazis.

George's mother died in 1918 during the World War I influenza pandemic. George was a pious, precocious child about 7 years old, and he took her death in two different ways. First, it was a divine manifestation that could not be questioned. Second, although the influenza had terrified him for his family as well as for himself, the disease appeared to be caused by transmissible agents in the environment, probably bacteria; if these agents could have been identified and treated with the proper pharmaceuticals, his mother might not have died. The inconsistency between these two different approaches was constantly on his mind. As he sometimes phrased the issue to himself, does man have the right to intervene in divine manifestations?

The loss of his mother was catastrophic. George's uncle, Jack Greenberger, brother of Heinrich, George's father, says there was an overwhelmingly matriarchal situation into which Jack and Heinrich and their 9 siblings were born

and in which they were raised. Consequently, when Jack's mother died in 1928 at a time when Jack was 31 years old, the catastrophe undid him and rendered him forlorn.

George's circumstances were different, however. Unlike his uncle Jack, George was not all alone in a matriarchal world. His brothers and sisters survived, and, most important, his father Heinrich survived. Heinrich was "the apple of [his mother's] eye, because he was a well-learned man in Talmud. He was also a successful businessman and a strictly observant orthodox Jew." Eventually his mother, Raizel, came to live with Heinrich and his family and spent her last days in his home. Meantime Heinrich remarried, remarried fortunately, and his new wife loved and cared for her stepchildren.

So George surmounted the catastrophe and did so with a strong family and with their abundant love and help. He paid a price, however. Under the guidance of two generations -- his father and his grandmother Raizel -- George elected to pursue Talmudic studies. He did so virtually automatically, because he took seriously the injunction in Deuteronomy: Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children. If his father and grandmother were under a divine obligation, he, too, was under the divine obligation. Therefore he believed he was protecting them by following their teachings. The price he paid was that he remained confined in rural Hungary.

By contrast, five of Heinrich's eight siblings -- Jack, Albert, Nathan, Sam and Fred -- escaped Hungary to the United States.

Jack Greenberger said, "My mother's overwhelming preoccupation with religious observances and her intolerance of the slightest deviations from the original precepts promulgated by our sages thousands of years B.C., based on conditions then existing, imposed the most severe restrictions on our abilities to lead a normal childhood life." When Jack was sent off at age 11 to be an apprentice to learn a trade, it was a "sudden emergence from darkness to light, to freedom to act in accordance with our own convictions and to chart our own objectives in accordance with our own individual talents and needs."

In 1924, when Jack visited Hungary 14 years after leaving at the age of 14, he was greeted at the railroad station by George and Heinrich and 3 other of Heinrich's children. George was astonished by the emotion that Heinrich and Jack displayed at seeing each other again for this first time. For the next 8 full weeks Jack stayed at

Heinrich's home with George and Raizel and Heinrich 's new wife and his other children.

George was also astonished by other things he observed about his uncle Jack. Uncle Jack seemed to be one of the legendary millionaires from America. In fact, when Jack stopped off in Budapest en route to the station where Heinrich and George met him, he secured change in pengos for a \$20.00 bill of U.S. currency. As Jack said, "I became an instant millionaire. I received 5,000, 10,000 and 25,000 denomination paper money, each the size of a wash rag. All my pockets were bulging with pengos. For a while I was handing out double tips to get rid of the load. I soon learned not to change more than \$5.00 at a time."

During his 8 week-stay Jack eagerly had many conversations with George, discovering that George was an exceptionally brilliant young man who had an adult's interest and understanding. Their wide-ranging discussions included religion, philosophy, world affairs and the magnificent opportunities to be had in America.

George also manifested the strongest interest when Jack boasted of the scientific and technological achievements in America.

While Jack was excited as he saw George glimpsing the New World, he was hesitant about encouraging George to leave his Old World. Not just Heinrich but Raizel, too, were intent on George's successful pursuit of his Talmudic studies. Whereas Heinrich, a successful businessman might be open to a new life for George, Jack believed it would be unfair to Raizel. He therefore elected to defer, but to defer only temporarily, a program to emancipate George.

When Jack returned to America, his mind remained on George. Speaking of the 11 children in his family, he said, "It can hardly be due to an accident of birth that all 11 of us, limited to only five years of formal schooling, possessed the intelligence and the zeal to extricate ourselves from the limitations to our general development that were inherent in our narrow environment. In contrast, our many cousins, who were born and raised under similar circumstances, stayed put, and without exception remained provincial in their intellectual outlook."

Five years later, in 1929, Jack, accompanied this time by his brother Albert, again visited Hungary. The brothers were determined to do something about George. Raizel was in the last year of her life. Their strategy was to arrange for George to go to a Yeshiva in Frankfurt, Germany. They saw this move as a clever

compromise. On the one hand Raizel would be satisfied that George would be continuing his theological studies in a world-class school. On the other hand George would at last be exposed to the larger world that existed outside Hungary.

This clever compromise was the miracle that saved George's life.

George responded readily. As he completed his theological studies, he realized that there were two distinct but intertwined strands to his life. He was reminded of his interpretations of his mother's death. He could carry out God's dictates and thereby serve God and mankind as a rabbi, but also he could serve God and mankind by learning the science of medicine and intervening to help those who needed help and scientific attention. Had he known medicine 10 or 12 years earlier, he might have saved his mother.

With the sponsorship of the American uncles, George enrolled in medical school in Basel, Switzerland.

Once George was established in Switzerland, many of the letters that arrived in Lansford to be lovingly read by Jack, my father, now were from George. These letters were at least in part in

English, and I could understand them. George's excitement about his studies was contagious. On one occasion he asked my father to locate and send him an important book. I remember his handwriting on his request. I believe the author was a doctor named Chevalier Jackson. I believe the subject was gastroendoscopy. With some difficulty, my father obtained the book, and for me it was a triumphant opportunity. Before my father had a chance to mail the book to George, I read it cover to cover, understanding little but intuitively comprehending how important it would be to George.

Thereafter I used to boast to my schoolmates that I had a cousin who could remove open safety pins and other foreign objects from a person's stomach.

In the years following World War II, I met George and Friedel in the United States on a number of occasions. He spoke about many subjects and was strikingly conversant with world events. We all valued and sought his opinion on numerous subjects.

Lurking beyond my immediate perceptions of George, there always were, however, the concerns I'd first developed in Tunbridge Wells at Christmas time, 1945, that I didn't know the man. I have a theory that a man is a baby locked away in the man's thoughts and feelings. Until George's younger daughter, Ruth, was

married, I could never see that baby.

After Ruth's wedding, George and Friedel arrived in Miami to visit the Jack Greenberger family. I flew down from Chicago to be with them, and I drove out to the Miami airport to greet their plane. I saw something I can't ever forget. The George Grunberger who got off the plane, the man who haltingly walked through U.S. customs, had transformed into a person entirely different from the vigorous Chinese doctor in Tunbridge Wells and entirely different from the interesting and intelligently-opinionated man I had met on other occasions in Florida and in Washington, D.C.

I felt that I was reading this man's mind and feelings. I could tell that he felt he had completed his life. He had taught his daughters diligently. Now they were both successfully married to serious-minded Jewish men. Now, in terms of theology, he had done his duty. That chapter and that obligation were completed. Now, in terms of science, he had not only helped mankind, but also he had properly combined the two strands of his life, the two strands that he had carried with him ever since his mother died in 1918. If he could not save her, he nevertheless saved and served and helped numerous others. He had done diligently, had made a good living and had married off his daughters.

As I watched George at the Miami airport, I said to myself, "This guy is beat. He deserves a rest."

CHAPTER 8

The Big Picture

The Jack and George Story culminates on September 1, 1939, the day the Nazis invaded Poland, the very same day that Anush set sail from New York to her death in Europe. After that date and then during all of World War II, there was nothing that Jack Greenberger could do.

For several months prior to World War II Jack had been engaged in an ingenious effort to circumvent the restrictive U.S. immigration quotas. He was attempting to bring George Grunberger to Lansford, Pennsylvania. Although the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service authorities were agonizingly slow to

respond to his arguments -- I saw many letters back and forth, extending over many months -- eventually they succumbed to Jack's skillful research and argumentation. For Jack, however, each day's delay had seemed a matter of life or death. Each day lost was a day closer to the day on which George might have to return to Hungary, which was immediately adjacent to the Czechoslovakia that Hitler had gobbled up after Munich. Hence in part the Jack and George Story is a story of official bureaucracy that from today's vantage seems strangely unperturbed by the human suffer'ing that Hitler was about to unleash upon the world.

It is almost 53 years since the end of World War II. In his *WAR AND PEACE*, which he completed in 1869, Tolstoy wrote of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1811, 58 years earlier. We are now in a position to view World War II with about the same half-century perspective that Tolstoy had for Napoleon's disastrous adventure.

What Tolstoy saw were horrendous crimes "opposed to all human reason and all human nature." He was seeking to comprehend the causes which could possibly give rise to such horror. In the epilogue to *WAR AND PEACE*, he says, "Towards the end of the year 1811, there began to be greater activity in levying troops and in concentrating the forces of Western Europe, and in 1812 these forces -- millions of men, reckoning those engaged in the transport and feeding of the army -- moved from the west-eastward, towards the frontiers of Russia, where, since 1811, the Russian forces were being in like manner concentrated.

"On the 12th of June the forces of Western Europe crossed the frontier, and the war began, that is, an event took place opposed to all human reason and all human nature. Millions of men perpetrated against one another so great a mass of crime -- fraud, swindling, robbery, forgery, issue of counterfeit money, plunder, incendiarism, and murder -- that the annals of all the criminal courts of the world could not muster such a sum of wickedness in whole centuries, though the men who committed those deeds did not at that time look on them as crimes.

"What led to this extraordinary event? What were its causes? Historians, with simple-hearted conviction, tell us that the causes of this event were the insult offered to the Duke of Oldenburg, the failure to maintain the continental system, the ambition of Napoleon, the firmness of Alexander, the mistakes of the diplomatists, and so on.

"According to them, if only Metternich, Romyantsev, or Talleyrand had, in the interval between a levee and a court ball, really taken pains and written a more judicious diplomatic note, or if only Napoleon had written to Alexander, 'I consent to

restore the duchy to the Duke of Oldenburg,' there would have been no war. "

Could Tolstoy have foreseen the Holocaust? In 1935, say, when Germany adopted the Nuremberg racial laws, was there no one who could foresee the crimes that Hitler would soon commit in pursuing his Final Solution? (I specify 1935, because it was in that year that Jack Greenberger determined to bring his sister Ethel and her husband, Adolf, to Lansford, Pennsylvania, not to save them from Hitler but to allow them to live in America, the land of opportunity.) Was there no diplomat who could write a "more judicious diplomatic note" to Hitler, dissuading him from implementing his vision of the Thousand-Year Reich? With the full knowledge of the causes of human behavior, with the full knowledge of history itself, was there no historian in 1935 who could even guess what was coming?

Winston Churchill has written his book *THE GATHERING STORM*, and he was a voice against Hitler from Hitler's beginning as Chancellor of Germany in 1933. I remember seeing Churchill in a movie newsreel in 1938, commenting on Neville Chamberlain and Munich and Chamberlain's "peace in our time." He said of Munich, "The Allies had to choose between war and dishonor. They chose dishonor. They shall have war." But I think that not even Churchill could have foreseen the Holocaust.

In 1935 in Lansford, Pennsylvania, Jack Greenberger did not foresee the Holocaust, but he approached his brothers with a plan to rescue Ethel and Adolf Friedman from what he regarded as a stultifying life in rural Hungary. "I urged my brothers to back my effort to bring our only sister and brother-in-law remaining in Europe to live near us. My brothers did not think it was a good idea to uproot them from their native soil at about age 60. I was determined to bring them out, even without financial help from my brothers, although Nathan did share the cost of their maintenance until he passed away in 1940. We set them up in a modern, well-furnished one-bedroom apartment in Lansford, where they lived until I retired in 1943. At that time I rented an apartment for them in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where their son, Julius, practiced medicine." It was in the 1920s that the American brothers had furnished a marriage dowry for Julius's sister Anush and had sent Julius through Prague University medical school. When Julius graduated, they brought him to the U.S. and set him up in a general family medical practice in Allentown, a substantial city 40 miles from Lansford.

Tolstoy was attacking what has been called "the great man theory of history,"

the theory that all of history can be explained in terms of men such as Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt. One can understand the ambitions of Napoleon himself and of Hitler, but I think Tolstoy is right to inquire about all of the other persons involved. What caused millions of men in 1911 and 1912 to leave their farms and their wives and their children and to march eastward to Russia and millions of men to do the same in Russia and to march westward to fight the invaders in the blizzards at the gates of Moscow? In the 20th Century, what induced millions of civilized Germans to smash windows, to desecrate Torahs, to gas and cremate 6,000, 000 Jews, or, perhaps worse, to stand by while these crimes were being committed?

It may indeed be that the writers of fiction -- Toland, Tolstoy, Herman Wouk in *WAR AND REMEMBRANCE* -- are better able than the historians to memorialize and account for the cataclysms that periodically rack humanity.

I find *The Jack and George Story* very instructive. There is something in the character of individual men and women that contributes to history. History is the record not just of the Roosevelts and Churchills but of the innumerable cumulative actions by innumerable persons, each of them doing what his or her character requires to be done.

As to Jack Greenberger's character, there was indeed a baby locked away in his thoughts and feelings all during his adult life, including, of course, the war years. The baby was a sensitive, caring, obedient baby. Jack died when he was about 78 years old, and throughout his entire life the baby in him yearned for his mother. In New York, at age 14, he was starving and frozen and being eaten alive by bedbugs and many times wept for his mother when no one could see him. He had no choice. He had to become his own mother. In Lansford, Pennsylvania, he cried when his mother died and as his wife stood by and rebuked him. His contribution to history was to be a mother for his loved ones, to provide for them the mothering that he had not had enough of for himself, to nurture them with food, clothing and education and to seek for them a better life, even if the better life was far from home in a New World.

In his memoirs Jack revealed a salient episode that begins to explain his mother-dominated character and behavior. Specifically, he tells of a deep regret that had haunted him during his last 60 years. He said, "I shall never cease to regret the unfortunate circumstance that prevented me from bringing some measure of happiness to the life of my sister Mathilda." Jack's remark expressed the feelings

and thoughts of a mother with unending responsibility for her offspring. The unfortunate circumstance was that Mathilda died of influenza in 1918 in Hungary, but, of course, by that time Jack could not possibly have helped Mathilda. He had been gone from Hungary for more than 7 years.

Still in Hungary at age 10, Jack saw that Mathilda loved a handsome young man whom she couldn't marry. Her parents forbade the marriage, because in the man's "job as an engineer with the national railway system he was obliged to work on the Sabbath." Mathilda soon married another man, an umbrella manufacturer. "She obediently submitted to the extreme orthodox ritual of having her beautiful knee-length hair cut *off* and replaced with an ugly wig." Jack was heartbroken for Mathilda because Mathilda herself was heartbroken. "I retain painful memories of my beautiful sister on her wedding day. In contrast to the joyous demeanor of the assembled guests, she looked moody and unsmiling. . . . Although [she] resignedly went about fulfilling her wifely duties, she never smiled."

A year or so later, when he became an apprentice in Miskolc, Jack sometimes stayed with Mathilda to take care of her when her husband was traveling on business. "On one of those occasions her first child was born. I was the one who ran for the midwife. Many times I tied a heavy cord to the baby's cradle in case the baby cried. I did my best to rock her to sleep by remote control in order to allow my sister a little extra sleep. My sister loved chocolates, figs, dates, etc. that I was able to bring her on rare occasions."

In 1929, when Jack was a U.S. citizen and had been in the United States for 18 years, he had his first formal encounter with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization authorities. It was unsuccessful. It began on the occasion of his second and last visit to Hungary. While there, he procured a U.S. visitor's permit for Paul Grunberger, George's older brother, age 16. In so doing Jack must certainly have been reliving the time that his own mother had come to Miskolc when his apprenticeship had ended and when she then unexpectedly put him on a ship to the United States. His plan was simply to do the same for Paul. He was going to convert Paul's permit to permanent residential status, and thereafter Paul could stay as an immigrant seeking citizenship. For about 18 months Paul did odd jobs in the N&J Greenberger furniture store while Jack negotiated in vain. During that time Paul became my friend. I was 4 years old and then 5. When Jack finally conceded that he could not prevail, Paul reluctantly went home, and I loved him

and missed him tremendously.

In 1935 Jack's rescue of Ethel and Adolf Friedman from rural Hungary or nearby Czechoslovakia occurred right on the crux of the world change implemented by Hitler. It was not in 1935 but in looking back in his memoirs decades later that Jack recognized that he had saved the lives of Ethel and Adolf not by design but by chance. He said, "It is the irony of fate that the brother whom in desperation [Ethel] had the urge to drown at the time of his birth turned out to be the savior of her and her husband's life in snatching them from the grasp of Hitler's executioners. Whatever happiness I helped to bring to the lives of my sister and brother-in-law was one of the most satisfying accomplishments of my life." If Ethel was in fact happy in her accidental sanctuary in the U.S., her happiness was hidden from me by her copious tears. No doubt she was happy in part, but she was a mother, too, and her only daughter, Anush, had sailed away from the United States, returning to that place where those who would torture and kill her were awaiting her return.

Aristotle deals with the same phenomenon that Jack recognized -- "the irony of fate." Investigating causes in Book II, Chapter 6 of the PHYSICS, Aristotle gives the following example of a "chance" or "incidental" cause: "A man is engaged in collecting subscriptions for a feast. He would have gone to such and such a place for the purpose of getting the money, if he had known. He actually went there for another purpose; and it was only incidentally that he got his money by going there." In the Aristotelian sense, snatching Ethel and Adolf from the grasp of Hitler's executioners was a chance or incidental outcome of Jack Greenberger's desire to bring the entire Grunberger brood to the land of opportunity that he had discovered.

The miraculous rescue of George Grunberger from the Nazis was another incidental outcome of Jack's efforts to be for his family what his mother had been for him. The deliberate aspect of the rescue took place in 1929 or 1930 when Jack and the American Greenberger brothers got George out of Hungary and into the Yeshiva in Frankfurt, Germany and then to the medical school in Basel, Switzerland. The objective then was merely to better his life, to give him entree to a world that would appreciate his remarkable qualities.

It was not Jack, however, but George himself who was responsible for George's "incidental" rescue from the Nazis. That is, Jack had done step one, and George did step two. George's daughter Judith Sheldon writes from England, "My

father actually came to England in 1938 or at the very beginning of 1939. He had wanted to go to the States but was unable to obtain a visa, so decided to come here, learn English and try again for a visa for the USA from here. He had been working in Switzerland where he had studied medicine, as a doctor. He obtained an entry visa here for a limited period and seems to have tried to find employment as a doctor in one of the British Commonwealth countries, unsuccessfully.

However, with the outbreak of the war he obtained permission to remain in Britain indefinitely, and work here."

Jack's memoirs supply some amplification. Speaking of George's months in England before the war began, Jack says, "I had completed all arrangements to bring him to the United States when, a few days prior to his sailing, World War II broke out, and he became stranded in England."

When Jack says that he "had completed all arrangements," he meant that he had figured out the ingenious way of circumventing the impossibly restrictive U.S. immigration quotas. In his later life Jack was universally regarded as a highly educated man even though he had had only 5 years of formal schooling. He studied everything. His sons, who are lawyers, were often amazed at his detailed understanding of the U.S. income tax laws.

Friends consulted him and turned to him in their difficulties with the Internal Revenue Service. He employed this same ability to arrange for George to come to the U.S. He obtained and read the technical immigration quota law, and he discovered in its intricacies a loophole, Section 204(d), which defined a "nonquota immigrant" to include "an immigrant who continuously for at least two years immediately preceding the time of his application for admission to the United States has been, and seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of, carrying on the vocation of minister of any religious denomination."

The task confronting Jack and George was to persuade the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization authorities that George fit within the specific two-year requirements of Section 204(d). Although George had become a physician, Jack argued that there was nothing inconsistent in a man's being a physician as well as a rabbi. George and he managed to provide proof that George had continued his daily observances all during and after his medical school years and during the time that he was in England. Also they advanced to the authorities the example of Maimonides, the Spanish Jew. In the 12th Century, as the Spanish Inquisition was

developing, Maimonides fled to Egypt and became the nagid, the accredited leader of the Jewish community, the man who compiled the Mishna Torah. He also became the official physician to Saladin, the Muslim military leader who led the defense against the First Crusade. Probably it was George who suggested the example of Maimonides. Perhaps George, the Talmudic scholar, regarded himself as carrying on the tradition of Maimonides.

Jack never let up in pressing the case for George's visa. Over and over again he explained that George was to be an additional rabbi in Lansford, Pennsylvania. Look, the authorities said, a large part of the congregation in Lansford consists of Greenbergers. You people are just trying to bring in your nephew. Then they resorted to their larger question, which was a most practical one: Why is it, they asked, that a small town like Lansford needs two rabbis?

You're right, Jack replied. Rabbi Samuel Newberger is indeed our incumbent rabbi in Lansford, and it's true he has only 6 or 7 students in his Hebrew school. But there is no plan to replace him. Lansford is a community of extremely religious Jews. We need George Grunberger because he is an acknowledged Talmudic scholar. Rabbi Newberger will teach our children. George Grunberger will elevate us all in our religious aspirations. On several occasions Rabbi Newberger confided in me that he feared he would lose his position once George had arrived. On the other hand, he said, he was looking forward to the opportunity to meet a great Talmudic scholar.

It is part of the irony of fate that Jack's successful but protracted negotiations delayed George just long enough to keep him in England.

George's subsequent successes in England validated the result. Lansford, Pennsylvania would have been a most unlikely sanctuary. For George, it was fortunate that the war intervened to frustrate Jack's efforts. I find it hard to visualize George Grunberger, the man who served as a distinguished and expert specialist physician in Tunbridge Wells and in London, as a happy man in Lansford, Pennsylvania. I think he would in effect have been serving out a sentence in order to be rescued by Jack.

George's daughter Judith tells of what actually happened to George when, as Jack puts it, "he became stranded in England. She says, "As far as his army service goes he was drafted into the 'Pioneer Corps,' a group of 'enemy alien' conscripts, and as far as I know from him, spent most of his service digging and refilling trenches on the beach in Southwest England! He was released from army service in

1940 or early 1941, on the grounds of ill health and given permission to find civilian employment. I never heard of him being in Dunkirk or even doing any fighting at all, and I am sure this is factually correct. I actually have the document of release from the army. I believe that soon after, he went to work in Tunbridge Wells and specialized there in ENT work."

The commencement of World War II almost marks the end of Jack's efforts to mother his brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews. Although there remained family members stranded on the continent amongst their potential executioners, both Jack and George realized that they were powerless to do anything for them. Judith writes, "My father appears to have been in contact with his family in Hungary until the Germans invaded and I have the telegrams sent from Hungary after the war detailing the fate of various family members and giving news of those who returned." His two brothers Paul and William miraculously survived. "He visited [them] and lea for the first time after the war in either 1947 or 1948. I can't remember exactly which year. I think it was probably 1948 as I seem to remember him coming back and we already lived in London (we moved to London in August, 1948)."

The thrilling discovery that Paul (Pali) and William (Vilmos) had survived reawakened Jack's maternal efforts. Jack immediately sent a cable to Paul, but, in November, 1945, he wrote to George, "I regret to say that I have no reply to date from Pali to my cable. This notwithstanding, I prepaid a 50-word reply. I assume that, if they have received my cable, they are not permitted by the Russian authorities to reply. . . . I, too, am terribly disturbed and heartsick over the probable fate of Esste, Sari, Anush and the children. We can only hope and pray that by some miracle they will turn up alive and well." Jack then told George, "I can appreciate the mental torture you are undergoing as a result of tragic happenings and uncertainties regarding our family. You must pull yourself together, however, for the sake of those loved ones who are still living." Jack also began sending packages to Hungary. In March, 1946, he wrote to George that he had sent an "11-pound package consisting of coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate, soap and saccharine. I also hope to send them a 60-pound shipment of clothes, shoes, etc. What they can't use, they will no doubt be able to barter for food or labor."

George went to Hungary and succeeded in rescuing Paul and William and lea. He brought them to London, so that the remnants of the Heinrich Grunberger

family were now established in Great Britain.

World War II remains too vast to be fully comprehended, even from a half-century's remove. There are persons like Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg who gambled their lives day after day to save Jewish victims. In a certain sense, Jack Greenberger's rescue efforts rank with those of Schindler and Wallenberg. While Jack did not gamble his life, he was equally dedicated. His love for Mathilda, Ethel, Adolf, Julius, George, Paul, Vilmos, Anush and all the others of the clan was a humanitarian imperative kindred to that which motivated Schindler and Wallenberg.

Jack Greenberger and George Grunberger became more than uncle and nephew. They became friends. They revered each other. The high points of their lives were the visits they exchanged between their countries, going back to Jack's first return to Hungary in 1924.

Between these high points there were other high points -- the letters they exchanged and their common bond in struggling to rescue and nurture loved ones caught up in the maelstrom.

Tolstoy, Toland or Wouk could well have written about World War II in terms of the Grunberger clan. Jack and George would be the protagonists. They each became successful materially and intellectually. Before their successes, the one suffered as a child all alone in New York, the other -- a physician and a rabbi -- dug ditches in Southwestern England to prepare against the expected Nazi invasion.

These two men had separated when one went to America and the other to Germany, Switzerland and England, but their paths almost converged in 1939 through the instrumentality of their Jewish religion. One had fled from a fierce maternal dedication to extreme Orthodoxy. The other had become pious and scholarly. In Germany and the occupied countries, millions of European Jews were about to encounter their fate in the Final Solution. Across the Atlantic, the religion of the two men became a legal issue, and it was the petty American bureaucracy, wrestling with Section 204(d) of the U.S. immigration quota law, that sealed their separation.

Both men were dedicated to their families. Both responded to an inbred humanitarian imperative. One rescued Ethel, Adolf and Julius. The other rescued his brothers Paul and William and William's wife lea. One man had a family of two daughters and their offspring, the other a family of two sons and their offspring.

Both men are loved and missed.

On the scale of the individual persons who coped with the colossal events of the 20th Century, Jack and George are heroes.