

Dear Beth Jenny,

Please forgive me for the delay in answering your questions. I will do so now, however, and I know there is still time.

1. I was born in Leipzig, Germany.

2. My father, Stefan Bravmann, grew up in a village in Bavaria. He was one of 6 children, the oldest son. His father was a "shochet" and my father grew up in a very orthodox Jewish home. When my father was 19 years old, his father died and my father left the village in order to find work, so that he could help to support his mother, who was now a widow with 5 children. My father worked himself up to become a director in a very prominent German insurance company, Nordstern, which is actually still in business to-day.

My mother's family moved to Stuttgart, also from a village, when she was 6 years old and so she grew up there. Her family was much better off than my father's family. Her father, together with several of his brothers was a partner in a big department store business, which had been founded by his oldest brother. The brother had left the village at the age of 14 in order to make his way in the world, and he was very successful. My mother's family lived in Wuerttemberg a kingdom up till 1918, when Germany was defeated in World War I and all the kingdoms within the German federation became states (or Laender in German), as they are still to-day. To-day the old and the new castle of the former kings of Wuerttemberg still stand in Stuttgart, rebuilt after the destruction of World War II.

When my parents married, they settled in Leipzig, which is where my father was employed by the Nordstern insurance company and that is where I and my brother were born. Unfortunately, my father died of a stroke very suddenly in May, 1934, when I was 7 years old and my brother was 5 years old. My mother moved back to Stuttgart then, since that is where her family – mother, sister, aunts, uncles and many cousins – were.

3. I was never imprisoned during the Holocaust.

What happened was that, after November 9, 1938, when all the synagogues were set on fire in Germany and when many Jewish men were taken off to concentration camps, all German Jews finally understood that they were in great danger in Germany and everyone who could tried to leave the country and go to another country. However, that is only possible, if there is another country that will allow you to enter. Unfortunately, my mother did not find such a country at that time and so she took the selfless and courageous step to send her children to safety in England, where she had found two families who were ready to adopt my brother and me. So, in March 1939, we left Stuttgart – my whole class from school came to the station to see me off. (I went to a Jewish school in Stuttgart and I was heartbroken to leave all my friends and family) The train took my brother and me to Frankfurt, a town which was not very far away, and there we spent the night with cousins of my mother's. The next day, children from other parts

of Germany joined us and together we took another train to Holland, where we embarked on a ship for the overnight journey to England.

We arrived in Harwich the next morning and were taken by train to Liverpool Station in London and there, in that big waiting room, we joined the couple who had agreed to adopt me. They welcomed both my brother and me very warmly and drove us north, to Manchester, where they lived. My brother was adopted by my guardian's brother and his wife, who lived just 5 minutes' walk away. The family who adopted me had a daughter just one year older than I and we both went to the same school. My guardian sent me there, even though it was not free of charge and, altogether, my adopted family always treated me the same as they treated their own daughter. They were generous, kind, educated people and their daughter and I are still good friends to-day.

In September 1941, we got the wonderful news that my mother had managed to escape from Germany and that she had arrived in New York, after a journey in a closed railway car from Germany, through France and Spain to Portugal, where she embarked on her ship in Lisbon. My mother stayed with a cousin in New York for some weeks after her arrival, where she was able to recuperate from the ordeals she had suffered in Germany, where she had been forced to give up her apartment and move into a building where only Jews lived and from which they were being deported at night. She had to wear a yellow star, so that everyone would recognize her as a Jew and Jews got very few food rations. She never told me about this, but I have learnt about it.

4. In March, 1945, my brother and I set sail from Swansea, Wales (in the British Isles) for New York. We came on a banana boat, which had 45 passengers, and which travelled in a convoy, as protection from German submarines, since World War II was not yet over. The journey took 14 days, and in the end the convoy was split into two parts and our ship went to Halifax, Nova Scotia. There we were put on a train to Montreal. In Montreal, very caring Jewish ladies met us and provided us with sandwiches, for we were not allowed to leave the train, since the Canadians did not want to risk our remaining in Canada. Our train took us south along the Hudson valley and we saw the big ice chunks floating down the river. It was a very beautiful trip. Eventually, we arrived in New York, where our mother was waiting for us. She could hardly recognize us, since we had grown up during the 6 years of our separation.

At the time, my mother moved from her one furnished room to two furnished rooms in another apartment, which we shared with 6 other people. I was 18 when I first came to America and I had left Manchester in the middle of the school year. One of my mother's cousins ran an export company in New York and I worked in his office as a junior secretary. I very much missed my studies and, after work, I would go to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street library and read French literary works from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In those days, the city colleges of New York were free of charge and my mother cared enough about me that she took the humiliating step of reminding 7 of her cousins of their earlier promise to enable her children to get an education and they agreed to help her each month. My mother herself worked in a leather goods factory, but she did not earn enough money to afford

the two furnished rooms and the additional costs for food, now that her children were with her again.

In the Fall of 1945, I was admitted to Hunter College, with advanced credits even, which were given to me for my last two years of studies in the Manchester High School for Girls.

5. While I was in college, I worked in the office of a butcher's shop on Thursday afternoons and all day Saturday, and I went baby sitting every Friday and Saturday night. During the summers, I worked as a chambermaid in a resort in Connecticut. This was a wonderful job, because I had no expenses and could save all my earnings, so that during the year I could pay for my own expenses to some extent. Also, I loved being in the country, which is where the resort was.

6. After I graduated from Hunter College, I received a full scholarship to take my Master's degree at Smith College, in North Hampton, MA. That is a wonderful college, but it was very hard work to finish all the work for my master's degree in one year, including the thesis! Smith College gave me another scholarship so that I could spend a year studying at the Sorbonne, in Paris, since French was the subject I had been studying. My year at the Sorbonne was wonderful. I lived at an international dormitory in Paris, the Foyer International. There each foreign student shared a room with a French student, which was such a great way to practice French and also learn a lot more about the French way of life. My roommate and I remained friends for many years until she moved and I was too slow to write and so my letters were not forwarded. Both Hunter College and Smith College were only for girls when I was there, and the Foyer International was also just for girls. To-day, Hunter College is co-educational -- and it is no longer free.

When I finished my studies at the Sorbonne, I joined an international work camp in Germany, where young people from various countries were living together and helping to build houses for the many refugees who were coming from the East. I also went back to my home town of Stuttgart and got a warm welcome from the lady who used to be our maid when I was a child. She had married and had two children and, fortunately, her husband had returned from the war. With her help, I found a job working for the American air force, stationed in Wiesbaden, which is not too far away, for I wanted to earn enough money to pay for my return journey to America.

Eventually, I returned to New York. My mother had found an apartment of her own and I found work in the office of an international social welfare organization. After some years, I married and had three daughters, one of whom is Michael's mother, who might become a student at your school. When all my children attended school, I went back to college and studied library science, since I needed to have a profession if I did not want to spend the rest of my life working in an office. It turned out that library science was a very interesting profession and I spent 20 years working as a business research librarian until I retired.

Well, this has turned out to be quite a long account. I hope it is not more than you bargained for!

With kind regards – and I am looking forward to meeting you and the students and seeing your wonderful school.

Sincerely,

Lore Prag