

XVIII: LIVING THE (AMERICAN) DREAM: 1963-1970

The phrase 'American Dream' was coined in 1931 when American writer and historian James Truslow Adams wrote in *The Epic of America* that "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" regardless of social class or circumstances of birth.¹

The country then must have seemed like the go-to destination for those who dreamt big. After all, it was John F. Kennedy who had committed nothing grander than returning Americans from the moon before the end of the decade.

But a "better and richer or fuller life" could also be realised outside of America. Happiness, money, love, food, cars, whatever anyone desired could also be obtained in the UK, Holland, West and even East Germany for those who laboured. And some of those dreams came with fairy tale endings too.

And that's almost how the sixties panned out for the principal protagonists in this story. At some point in 1963 my grandmother's sister, Margot, began trailblazing her way across north America's west coast.

However, it would not be long before four-years elder sister, Nanny experienced joy and happiness in Amsterdam too, almost every year that decade yielding a family milestone. Although it began with their mother's passing in early 1962 and saw further losses along the way, come the decade's end, their and their children's livelihoods would be transformed.

The sisters' *Heimat*, however, was all but a memory. To all now, Leipzig in East Germany was simply Margot and Nanny's birthplace, where in 1963 livelihoods didn't prosper quite as richly or as romantically as in the west, particularly for that family member who had returned in 1946 and now rather endured life as a single mother. Nevertheless, in this decade too, the partitioned country left its mark on the last of Nanny's daughters.

But to the 'here and now,' we'll focus our attention on my socialite great aunt, who together with her Hungarian husband as sidekick, rode atop the venturer's wave into San Francisco's 'high society,' travelling from sub-arctic Canada where the couple had been effectively engaged in two cold wars: one against the weather, the other helping to shore up NATO's atomic arsenal in Western Europe, should it one day be needed against former homelands in the east...

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In Aug. 1959, the *Saturday Evening Post*, being one of the most widely circulated and influential magazines in the US, 'sold' the new American dream to its middle-class readers. The vision was that of a suburban home with a pool, a two-car garage as well as appliances that would fill it, from TV sets and record cabinets to washer-dryer combinations and power tools.

¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Truslow_Adams

- IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO
(IT HELPS IF YOU'VE ALREADY FRIENDS THERE!) -

When Margot and Francis departed Uranium City (UC), they left behind many fond acquaintances. Some had gone there to make a fast buck; others fell in love with the environment and made lasting friendships that tied them there as long as there was a market for the uranium that was being mined. Among the latter group were Ursula and Roman Dac, from whom the Haris's had rented a home for a number of years. When I spoke to them in 2018, they believed Margot and Francis left northern Saskatchewan in spring 1963.

According to Uranium City's local paper, the *Northland News*, Francis had been awarded Canadian citizenship five and a half years after his arrival, that is, in August 1962. So given that Margot had joined him in Canada three or so months later, she ought to have been due hers before the end of that year at the latest.

But when I asked at the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan in October 2021, the Reference Archivist answered:

*"I found one article in the issue published on March 14th, 1963, announcing people who had received Canadian citizenship, but ... all of the individuals identified were men ... Margot Harris [sic] wasn't among those listed."*²

It seems unlikely then that the couple could have gone straight to San Francisco from that remote mining outpost that had been their home since 1957. Indeed, their close friend, Frank Fulop, told me he "*thought they went to British Columbia for a while.*"³ Since they had had friends in Vancouver,⁴ the southern Canadian city might well have been their destination for as many months as was needed for Margot to receive her Canadian citizenship. They certainly deserved some holiday time, as well as a base to plan their next move, which, after an appeal to Facebook group '*San Francisco Remembered*' over the 'process required to become citizens,'⁵ probably started with a journey to the US consulate⁶ to apply for the equivalent of a 'permanent residence visa.'⁷

Skilled Canadians seemed to come by these more easily than other nationalities, as they were exempt from the quota system that was in force in the United States at the

² Additionally, Teresa Redlick, noted: "*There weren't many issues from this time period [i.e. end-January to end-March 1963]. It appears that the newspaper may have begun publishing an issue every second week instead of every week. It's also possible that there are issues missing from our collection.*" Personal correspondence of Oct. 26, 2021 via mainref@archives.gov.sk.ca

³ Personal correspondence with Frank Fulop, April 23, 2019

⁴ According to ancestry.com, the Garas's, were registered voters in 1962 whose address was Merritt Street, Burnaby, British Columbia (unchanged from that which Francis had travelled to in spring 1957)! It is located to the east of Vancouver. Hildegard by that time was a nurse's aid, Sandor a mechanic.

⁵ Posted Nov. 22, 2022. See: facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542

⁶ In 1930, the Consulate General was based at 355 Burrard Street, where it housed twelve offices and two waiting rooms. See: ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/vancouver/history-of-the-consulate

⁷ Rolando A. Salazar, whose family emigrated to San Francisco from El Salvador in 1950, answered that getting 'permanent resident visas' for those countries without immigration quotas (see following footnote) was relatively easy. Evidencing para-legal knowledge, Michal Logan agreed, noting: "*I ... don't think the barriers to legal residency for Canadians were ... particularly high ... in the 50s and 60s,*" adding, however, "*I don't think 'residency visa' is quite the right word.*" See: facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542

time.⁸ Indeed, 377,000 immigrants arrived to the U.S. from Canada alone between 1950 and 1960,⁹ and as we know already, the couple's goal as early as the start of the 1950s had been to secure Canadian citizenship first.

Gabriela Garas, the daughter of Hildegard and Sandor, Margot's Austrian friend and Francis' Hungarian pal, helped shed some light on their eventual arrival to San Francisco, telling me in 2013:

"We arrived in San Francisco in July 1962. We went ... because another couple, Gisela and Alex Kish [in Hungarian: Kiss] had moved there the previous year, i.e. 1961."

Avid readers will recall that Alex Kish had been part of the Hungarian group that migrated from England to Vancouver back in the early 1950s. But Gabriela, who was eleven years old at the time of her family's move,¹⁰ adds:

"Honestly, we left Vancouver because my Dad was in the bar too much and not working enough. My mom thought that getting out of the environment would change his bad habits. I think that Margot and Francis came a couple of years later."¹¹

This puts Margot and Francis' entry as late as mid-1964. Gabriela (who today goes by the name of Gaby) goes on to note that a friend of her parents, Julius Biro, had been willing to sponsor them. That in turn left me wondering, who sponsored Margot and Francis?¹² Also, given the pretty packet they had made in Canada, whether a sponsor was even necessary. As one online respondent pointed out, *"if they were wealthy, it would have been particularly easy"* to find a sponsor.¹³ At any rate, their visas were likely issued a few months after application.¹⁴



The Golden Gate Bridge, completed in 1937, is a San Francisco icon. It connects the peninsula via US Highway/Route 101: the 'Pacific Coast Highway' - or State Route 1 - to Seattle, Washington at the Canadian border and so almost neighbouring Vancouver. Source: San Francisco Remembered

⁸ The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act regulated US immigration. It retained a quota system for nationalities and regions and was heavily biased towards people of European origin. The Act placed great importance on labour qualifications and defined three immigrant types: i) immigrants with 'special skills' or who had relatives that were U.S. citizens [basically those exempt from quotas and who were admissible without restrictions, e.g. Canadians]; ii) 'average' immigrants (whose numbers were not supposed to exceed 270,000 per year); and iii) refugees. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_and_Nationality_Act_of_1952

⁹ In that same period, the U.S. welcomed roughly 2.5 million immigrants, 477,000 arriving from Germany, 185,000 from Italy, 52,000 from the Netherlands, 203,000 from the UK, 46,000 from Japan, 300,000 from Mexico. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_immigration_to_the_United_States#1950s. N.b. In the early 1960s, residents of Ireland, Germany, and the United Kingdom received almost 70 percent of available quota visas. See: boundless.com/blog/60s-immigration

¹⁰ Born March 7, 1951

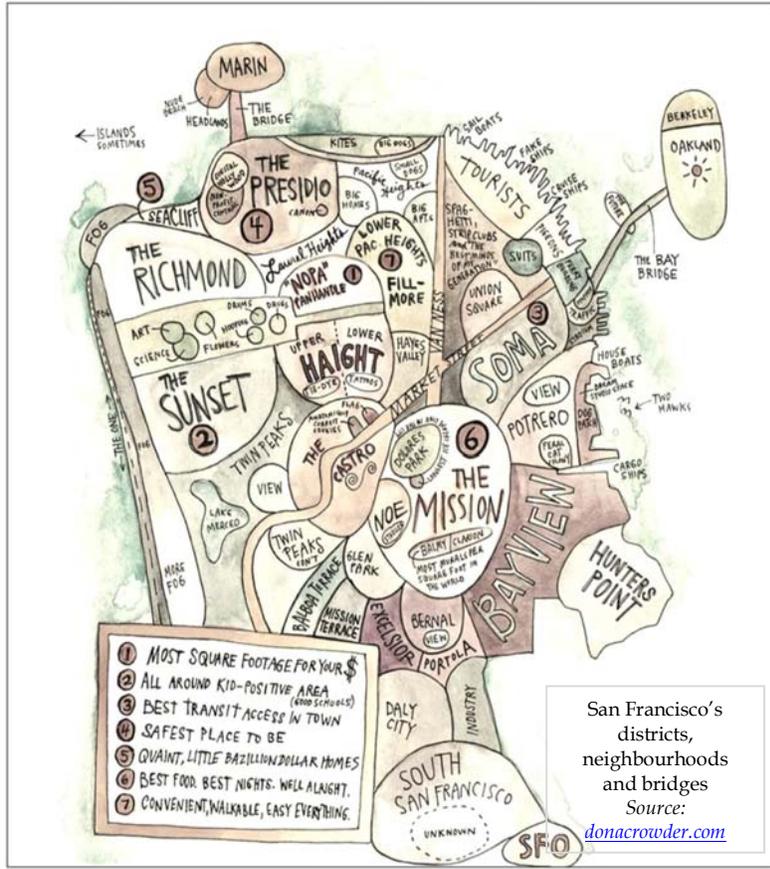
¹¹ Personal correspondence of Sept. 4, 2013

¹² Rolando A. Salazar recalled: *"One applied [for the visa], presented a sponsor in your country and another in the U.S. who took responsibility that you would not be a burden."* See: facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542

¹³ Michal Logan: See: facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542

¹⁴ Noted Mary Geraldine Daly Martin. See: facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542

With visas in hand, the couple will have entered the US under no great pressure to leave. And upon making a success of their stay, within approximately five years of legal residency, they could request American citizenship.¹⁵



As to why San Francisco had particularly been on Margot and Francis agenda, her eldest niece, my aunt Tiny (pronounced *Tini* or *Tinee*), recalled the couple's mention of it during her first visit to England in 1950, principally because it was welcoming of immigrants. Perhaps this was something they themselves had heard in turn from their Hungarian acquaintances. But the city – whose name was Spanish of course for 'Saint Francis'¹⁶ – was not only that. It was a haven for restless dreamers. And lest we forget, Francis' own niece had likened him to the Bohemian poet, Byron.

During its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, San Francisco was actually the place to be for those who eschewed the conventional American lifestyle. From moody beatniks – members of a sociocultural movement that subscribed to an anti-materialistic lifestyle¹⁷ – to political firebrands, the city was a vortex for poets, writers, actors, and a bewildering assortment of free thinkers and activists. It was also considered the capital of the 'Beat Generation,' a literary subculture movement started by a group of authors whose work explored and influenced American culture and politics in the post-war era.¹⁸

¹⁵ "After five years in the US one could apply for citizenship" noted Mary Geraldine Daly Martin.

See: facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542

¹⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco

¹⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatnik

¹⁸ Its origins lie in the mid-1950s, where the central figures, with some exceptions, ended up together in San Francisco, where they met and became friends of figures associated with the San Francisco Renaissance. See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beat_Generation

Drawn by the city's already liberal views on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, thousands of the country's youth – including some of America's most talented musicians – headed west to join the party, so that during the 1960s San Francisco produced a hat trick of rock legends: *Jefferson Airplane*, the *Grateful Dead* and *Big Brother and the Holding Company*, fronted of course by Janis Joplin.¹⁹ Furthermore, the city also had a blossoming but largely secret gay life, which meant that by the mid-sixties, gay liberation was bursting out in San Francisco.²⁰ The city was, quite simply, the wild shore of freedom, peace, love and music.²¹

I can well imagine Margot and Francis felt at ease in the 'Golden Gate City,' given the moves they had already successfully completed. Throughout her life, she had moved from one liberal city to another... Berlin in the Golden Twenties as well as Amsterdam in the 1930s, not to mention the years spent criss-crossing the United States' eastern flank to the Mid-west and as far south as Florida as member of an all-girl acrobat troupe called the *Six Rockets* at the tail end of America's Roaring Twenties – at least until Wall Street crashed.²²

Heading now herself to San Francisco, Margot was on the tail of the Rockets' sister act, the *Marinelli Girls* which had served the US west coast.²³

What had the travelling couple's arrival looked like? Once in San Francisco, I imagine Margot and Francis short-stayed with friends while they sought work, probably combining that with a spot of sight-seeing.

Margot was by now 53, Francis, 47,²⁴ ages which today make seeking gainful employment something of a challenge. However, Margot had both retail and letting experience to draw on while Francis had mined for many years prior.

But how did their 'American Dream' exactly come together? Some 25 years ago, almost back when I started this project, my mother, Margot's youngest niece, passed on a valuable clue:



1964. California Street (one of the longest), whose cable car line, the city's third, runs from the Embarcadero at Market Street through to Van Ness Avenue, less than 15 minutes' walk from Margot and Francis new home

¹⁹ See: frommers.com/destinations/san-francisco/recommended-books-films--music#ixzz1weV3jj81

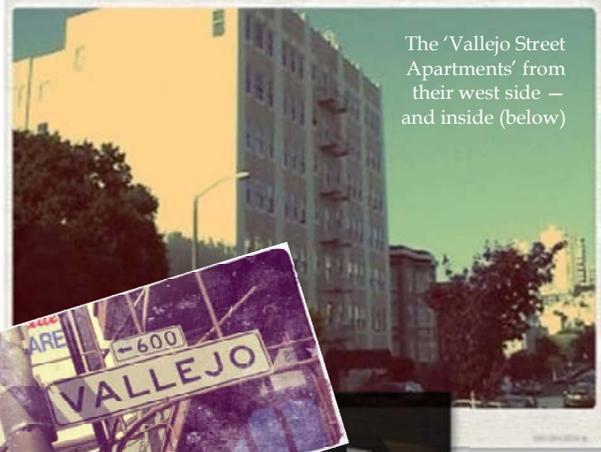
²⁰ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 103

²¹ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. xiv

²² See Chapter XII including textbox 12.7: *What happened to Broadway after the Tjvallas put the lights out?*

²³ Further reading: *Chapter XII: Sea Change*

²⁴ Born July 12, 1917



"I was watching this TV programme and they mentioned Vallejo Street. Now I remember, that was where Margot lived."

Eventually, I learned it was "seventeen fifty" Vallejo Street, which transpired not only to be the location where their fairytale began but would effectively be (all but) their end-station too.

According to my mother's older sister, Irene:

"The couple first lived there, while they started out working somewhere else."

I found the address located in a neighbourhood called Pacific Heights ('7' on the map on the last but one page), a posh residential enclave at the northern end of the San Francisco Peninsula. From there it is not much more than a half-hour walk northwest to the marina, which offers a direct line of sight to the Golden Gate Bridge.

At the same time, a half-hour brisk walk in the opposite direction brought one downtown to Union Square (close to '3' on the map), itself just south of Chinatown (which could alternately be reached by walking the length of Vallejo Street). Conversely, a 15-minute walk to the northeast brought one to the world's 'crookedest' (Lombard) street (see picture on pg. 994).

An attractive enough place to start then! And hardly the sort of lodgings one would expect 'immigrants' to move to. But after five years mining for good money and having endured six month-long winters, with jobs in hand, the couple probably no longer quite thought of themselves as such.²⁵

"Only" continues Irene "I do not think those other jobs lasted for long."

Not that the happy couple were suddenly faced with contract terminations or were called up by the Immigration and Naturalization Service for a misdemeanour of one kind or another. On the contrary, the pair subsequently waltzed into the opportunity of a lifetime.

²⁵ Local newspaper ads at the time reveal rental rates in neighbouring apartment blocks suggest ca. USD 200/month was plausible. Noting Francis earned in Uranium City the equivalent of ca. USD 815/month (cumulatively USD 45,000 over five years, based on historical exchange rates between the Canadian and US dollar), flat rental cannot have been problematic. See: fx.sauder.ubc.ca/etc/USDpages.pdf

According to real estate regulation, when a building has over 12 units, it must have a 'resident manager.' That is, someone who takes care of matters on site for the owner.

Resumes Irene:

"Not long after Francis and Margot arrived, the people who had that job left. So, they applied and got it. Margot first took over the building and then she had to involve someone to manage the repairs and so on. And then Francis quit his other job, and he took over the repair work. So, they worked together."

I guess at this point Francis decided to turn his hand to painting and decorating.²⁶

And just like that, the über cool art-deco 'palace' in which they'd started out by renting a flat in got to be home for the next two and a half decades. The 'Vallejo Street Apartments' became their responsibility alone, with the couple eventually doing what many of us tend to do nowadays: working from home! The icing on the cake was of course that they got paid for the use of the dedicated first floor 'Apartment 106,' which lay to the left of the main entrance, above the garage.

I can't but help admire the achievement, as well as the luck by which they fell into their 'American Dream:' typically, by the end of the 1950s 'apartment living' (and urban life in general) had somehow become 'un-American.'²⁷

But credit to the couple, this was clearly an opportunity too good to refuse: city centre living with myriad recreational options on one's doorstep (although in their shoes I'd have invested in suburban property and rented it out).

Fifty or so years on from Margot and Francis' arrival, in 2012, my new wife and I found ourselves bound for San Francisco on honeymoon. Trying my luck, I called that phone number which Margot had included in some of the correspondence to her eldest niece (from which I had later gleaned their address at 1750). After the awe sunk in of a successful call and a few follow up email exchanges with the resident manager (proving we were "normal people" as Mara Wallis²⁸ put it!), my wife and I not only got to see the inside of the building, but the couple's former apartment too, learning more about the kind of work they'll have been responsible for in the process.



New digs! Up the steps and to the left, brings one to Margot's and Francis' Apartment 106'

²⁶ Francis 1991 death certificate (39138/001666) indicates he spent 30 years as a self-employed painter and decorator, information likely provided by Margot.

²⁷ *Trams or Tailfins: Public and Private Prosperity in Postwar West Germany and the United States.* Jan L. Logemann. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pg. 148

²⁸ Born not long before the end of the Second World War, Mara Wallis moved to Sydney, Australia at a young age with her parents, where in the course of her education, she trained as a professional dancer. She arrived in San Francisco (not many years after Margot) and hooked up with Richard Recker, himself soaking up the city's vibe. Together they served as site managers of another apartment building until 1996, when, shortly before their contract ended, they were tipped off about the Vallejo Street Apartments.

At the time (and throughout the duration of Margot and Francis' tenancy), the building had been owned by a Jewish chap named Mason, the owner of Mason Properties (Francis' own connections to Israel might well have been to their advantage, his sister Erzsébet of course having moved there after marrying Francis best mate in March 1946).

According to Mara, Margot's duties included:



"Have a nice day at work, Honey"!

"Ensuring the building was clean and that its entrances, exits, gardens, rooftop, laundry facilities and so on were well maintained. That and keeping things essentially calm and in order for the owner, are the requirements."

With her diligent German ways, that will have suited Margot to a tee. Although that doesn't necessarily mean she'll have gotten involved in 'troubleshooting' for the building's residents when problems arose, dealing with a faulty elevator, for example, managing plumbing problems or even changing blown light bulbs, for which she was supposed to call on outside assistance.

"Nonetheless, today no couple would be hired without the handyman aspect," Mara added.

Another duty was likely to have been advertising the units, selecting the likeliest candidates to be screened by the owner and subsequently renting them out. This will have included readying those apartments for new tenants, ensuring they were well appointed (departing tenants were nevertheless responsible for leaving the apartment as they found it, that is, cleaned).

Before my wife and I reached San Francisco, to our delight, Mara had kindly gotten in touch with a former tenant, Ruth Rosenbaum.²⁹ Having lived on the fifth floor from late 1981, we hoped she might be able to pass on some personal anecdotes. We had the pleasure of visiting her during our visit too and she certainly didn't disappoint! Of Margot, Ruth told me:

"She was a wonderful and very capable manager. She was well organised and efficient."

In particular Ruth recalled an incident where she had needed to call Margot because her toilet was blocked.

"What did you throw down it?!" Margot hollered back at her.

²⁹ Ruth, 94-years-old at the time, was born in 1917 into a Pennsylvania-based Jewish family. She was the second youngest among six girls whose ages spanned 20 years (although the youngest was nine years her junior) and was born to a Hungarian mother (who passed on all but a few words) and Austrian father. Ruth's mother departed Hungary when she was very young (accompanied by Ruth's Uncle and his second wife), was married at 16 and gave birth to the first daughter within a year. Ruth herself was widowed after almost 40 years of marriage when she lost eleven years senior 'Art' in 1986. An accountant, he had his first heart attack three years into their marriage. At the time of our visit in 2012, she lived at the *Vintage Golden Gate* home for care assisted living in San Francisco.

"She treated the building as if it was her own. And she always wore a smile," Ruth added.

When it came to Francis' engagement, Ruth recalled his involvement was occasional and yes, concerned the building's painting and decorating. And because 1750 Vallejo Street wasn't full-time work, he'll have picked up additional jobs via outside sources.

According to Richard, "word of mouth and reputation will have helped in finding such jobs, for instance, in other rented apartment buildings."

It's perhaps also important to note that any physical repair work on site was always arranged through Mr. Mason's daughter (whom Margot reported to, Ruth pointed out). Most buildings have accounts at hardware stores etc. for the resident manager to charge things that are needed for the building. Therefore, Margot won't strictly have had any budget at her disposal to deal with sundry expenses (which also therefore ensured there was no conflict of interest when her husband worked on the property).

I was told that the couple neither likely benefitted a car with the position. Nonetheless, the perks were not few and far between. According to Mara:

"You are paid to keep an eye on the place, without actually having to do much of the physical work yourself."

"This isn't a hugely time-consuming job either. Most days there's nothing happening at all, and you can train the tenants to not be intrusive."

"The downside is that the telephone can ring anytime of the night," although Mara adds "We get surprisingly few evening calls. As managers we have to be here overnight. But you don't have to be available 24/7. The working hours are supposedly 6 A.M – 8 P.M."

Considering all this, one can imagine Margot had plenty to write 'home'³⁰ about — as in, to her sister in Amsterdam. But knowing her displeasure at writing, I wonder how many of the exciting experiences she inevitably must have had made it onto a postcard or into a letter.

Certainly, I asked those friends who remained in Uranium City whether they stayed in contact after the fun couple left. Frank Fulop recalls they exchanged Christmas and New Year's cards for a good length of time, while Ursula Dac acknowledged the pair "sent a card from San Francisco" (maybe that was even two or three).



Christmas Greetings
from Uranium City

³⁰ Even Margot's death certificate (#3200401003169) indicated her country of birth was Holland.

One of the city's attractions is its remarkably mild year-round climate so I suppose the first messages will have been prosaic. And if they knew how Dylan Thomas loved the city and could have read his *Letters to Caitlin* (however unlikely that was), they'll have appreciated his outlook while stuck in Vancouver in 1950:

*"... Canada, five hours away by plane, you wouldn't think that such a place as San Francisco could exist. The wonderful sunlight, the hills, the great bridges, the Pacific at your shoes."*³¹

But besides the 300 days of sun and mere 71 days of rain each year,³² fog too is a regular feature of the city's summers. "It can last three minutes or three hours. It's got a mind of its own. Its ebb and flow shapes life in the city," noted Chris Dzierman, a bridge painter in San Francisco.³³

John Miller, the editor of *San Francisco Stories*, describes the city as "a postcard town ... everybody's favourite city, where folks are happy and healthy, where cable car rides afford one sunny, breath-taking view after another, and where every night the sun sets gently over the Golden Gate."³⁴

His book – a compendium collecting contributions from *Great Writers on the City* – includes one from Kay Boyle, whose 1967 piece is entitled *Seeing the Sights in San Francisco*. She writes:



Lombard Street, 'the crookedest street in the world,' decorated with hydrangeas. Pictured a few years after Margot and Francis' arrival.

Sources: *San Francisco Remembered* and vintage.es

*"On arrival at this scenic wonderland, it will be well worth your while to leave your car or bus and stroll down the spacious, well-kept avenues that wind around and almost seem to embrace the grassy slopes. Thanks to the noted clemency of our winters, an endless profusion of gladioli, irises, roses in a variety of colors, and gold and white chrysanthemums presents a year-round breath-taking horticultural display."*³⁵

To all intents and purposes, Margot had shown that it was never too late to realise one's dreams. She had certainly come a long way since leaving her elder sister behind in Amsterdam in 1935.

Having now 'made it,' she (and her husband) were not the only ones for whom "The Golden State" was the ultimate destination. Another family had arrived in the early sixties too who themselves had called Holland home. And it is their story which is told in the textbox opposite.

³¹ *Letters to Caitlin*. April 7, 1950 by Dylan Thomas. In *San Francisco Stories*. *Great Writers on the City*. John Miller (Ed.) Chronicle Books, 2004. Pg. 21

³² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco#Climate

³³ See: nytimes.com/interactive/2022/09/14/climate/san-francisco-fog.html

³⁴ *San Francisco Stories*. *Great Writers on the City*. John Miller (Ed.) Chronicle Books, 2004. Pg. ix. (Introduction).

³⁵ *Seeing the Sights in San Francisco*. 1967 by Kay Boyle. In *San Francisco Stories*. *Great Writers on the City*. John Miller (Ed.) Chronicle Books, 2004. Pg. 251-2

18.1: The Flying Dutchmen

Remember *Snip and Snap*? Two Dutch comedians who became a hit in the late 1930s and rolled out their gig over subsequent decades dressed as two women. The pair and their show have often been mentioned since Chapter XII.

From 1950, the popular comedy duo brought their brand of reverie to Amsterdam's principal theatre, *Koninklijk Theater Carré*, in the form of a five-month annual residency.¹ That was the same theatre where Margot's brother-in-law, Cor Ridderhof, had worked as stage manager since 1932. Indeed, he and Snip and Snap were closely acquainted (as Margot had been too at the time)!

To my surprise, two worlds collided when a chap called Eddie van Halen passed away in early October 2020. Edward Lodewijk and his elder brother, Alex Arthur, were founding members of the California-based rock band Van Halen, a huge hit in the 1970s and 80s. But what did they have to do with Snip and Snap?



Well, the brothers' father, Jan van Halen (born 1920 in Amsterdam²) was a Dutch jazz pianist, clarinetist and saxophonist, who had his pick of opportunities as a young man in the late 1930s, from radio events to a circus troupe, even political rallies. Following World War II (and a spell in the Dutch resistance)³, Jan moved to the (then) Dutch East Indies where he met and married Eugenie van Beers (born 1914 and of mixed Dutch-Indonesian descent, thus Eurasian⁴) in August 1950. Political instability within the colony, however, saw the couple leave Jakarta on board the famous repatriants' ship '*Sibajak*', arriving in Amsterdam in March 1953.⁴ Alex was born two months later, on May 8, followed by Eddie on January 26, 1955. Their home at the time was *Michelangelostraat* in the *Apollobuurt* in the *Nieuwe Pijp*, just a few kilometres from Cor Ridderhof and his family, which by that time included my mother. Not long afterwards, the family relocated to Nijmegen, close to the German border, due to Jan's work in the Dutch Air Force Band,⁴ alongside which he also "played sporadically with the *Snip and Snap Revue*."⁵

As the sons got older, neither yet ten, their Pa brought them along to his performances around Holland and into West Germany, exposing them to the nuts and bolts of the music business. While the brothers were encouraged to pick up instruments from an early age, both learning classical piano before Eddie later moved on to the drums and Alex, the guitar, their mother was not keen on the idea that they would become professional musicians, like their father.

Falling under the spell of letters about the Land of Opportunity and perfect weather from family members who had emigrated to Los Angeles after the war (and put off by the overt racism they faced in Holland, where Eddie's mother "became a second-class citizen"),³ the family left the Netherlands by boat for New York⁶ in early March 1962⁷, for the promise of an American life. After a spell in New York, they reached California in early 1963 – rather like Margot and Francis.

While the bi-racial brothers 'acculturated' in Pasadena, north 'LA,' Eddie's father walked six miles each way to wash dishes and his mother worked as a maid, leading the younger van Halen to call the American Dream "a crock of shit."⁷

Still, Alex and Eddie (after switching instruments, the latter became a virtuoso guitarist) went on to form 'Van Halen' (the Americanized form of their surname), one of the biggest bands in rock history, teaming up with front man, David Lee Roth (a Jewish upstart from a family of doctors and surgeons, the son of immigrant Russian grandparents,⁸ who also arrived in California in 1963), and bassist Michael Sobolewski (of Polish heritage). They even got Jan to play clarinet on a 1982 track – a Dixie-land jazz standard first performed in 1924 – but sadly his only ever recording.



A largely immigrant bunch, they became the quintessential American rock band. When Eddie spoke at an event at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in 2015, he discussed his life and how he eventually got to live the American Dream. "We came here with approximately USD 50 and a piano, and we didn't speak the language," he said. "Now, look where we are. If that's not the American dream, what is?"³

But the brothers retained more than a passive link to their home country, continuing to speak Dutch at home with their parents up to their deaths (Jan in 1986, Eugenie in 2005), which is wonderfully evident in a 1979 Amsterdam-based interview.⁹ During that clip Eddie mentions their father's involvement with Snip and Snap, but the line that truly pique's interest is that to be found at *dirkdeklein.net*: "legend has it that one of his sons once performed in the show."⁵ Given that Snip and Snap's Carré-based shows typically ran from July until December in the 50s and 60s,¹⁰ it's not beyond the realm of imagination that Cor Ridderhof himself set the stage for one or other of those 'stars to be'.

Footnotes: see 'Footnotes to textbox 18.1' at the end of this chapter

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- CURTAIN CALL -

Margot's story is not quite the pauper to king (or rather queen) *a la* Eddie van Halen. And at least she spoke English when she arrived in California (besides Dutch). But what of the city and the land in which she had left her sister behind, decades earlier?

According to Geert Mak in his work, '*Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*,' two catastrophes hit the city in the 1960s.³⁶ The first was the loss of the Jewish population. Previously lively neighbourhoods now lay derelict. Moreover, the emancipated Jewish population had played an important role in Amsterdam's economic and scientific achievements, as well as in the political life of the city.

The second was the breaking of a centuries old bond with Indonesia (the Dutch East Indies). Since 1600, Amsterdam had acted as the European outlet for trade with it, and to a large extent the city's economy was built around it. It was suddenly over when these connections were severed from the late 1950s because "the Indonesian government unilaterally abrogated the Round Table agreements of 1949" that had been part of its sovereignty deal of that year.³⁷

While industry in the rest of the Netherlands increased its employment base by six percent between 1950 and 1960, employment in Amsterdam fell by twelve percent during the same period. The tobacco auctions in the *Nes* – the European centre of the tobacco trade – vanished.

It was also quieter in Amsterdam's harbours, the Steamship Company Nederland lost its voluminous passenger traffic to Indonesia, railway stock began rusting on industrial estates, and at the end of the 1960s the harbour facilities were finally closed.

"For Amsterdam," Mak continues "these were more than catastrophes. These were enormous cultural upheavals."³⁸

Nationwide, anti-establishment activity also began to surge from the underground. Students, labour groups, hippies and more took to the streets in protest. Among the more colourful were a group that came to be known as the Provos – derived from the word 'provoke'. This was a small group of anarchic individuals who staged street 'happenings' or playful provocations.

"The movement ... was to bring turmoil to Amsterdam and was to signal the beginning of what came to be known as the Twenty-year Civil War,"³⁹ which lasted from the mid-1960s until the mid-eighties.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 298

³⁷ *Same Fate, Different Choices: Decolonization in Vietnam and Indonesia, 1945–1960s*. February 2018 *Lembaran Sejarah* 13(1):72. DOI:10.22146/lembaran-sejarah.33519. Authors: Pham Van Thuy. Online [here](#). N.b. "The Dutch continued to dominate the Indonesian economy after the transfer of sovereignty. It was not until the late 1950s that Dutch firms were seized and finally nationalized by the Indonesian government."

³⁸ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 298. N.b. "By 1969, Amsterdam only had about 100 businesses which employed more than 1000, while almost 12,000 employed less than 10."

³⁹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 288

⁴⁰ See also: 5. *Amsterdam: A Just City?* By Susan S. Fainstein in *The Just City*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011, pp. 139-164. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801460487-007>.

One of the actors was an Amsterdam-based window cleaner called Robert Grootveld who in 1962 dressed as a medicine man and entertained its citizens by defacing cigarette billboards with a huge letter 'K' for *kanker* (cancer) to expose the role of advertising in addictive consumerism.



Robert Grootveld: The Medicine Man on his campaign trail in Amsterdam, Dec. 12, 1961. Source: Ben van Meerendonk/AHF, collectie IISG, Amsterdam via [Flickr](#)

Another was Rob Stolk, a printer's apprentice and a rebel, who remarked: "All of a sudden, the people were being taken seriously as consumers ... televisions appeared, and the pictures came hard and fast. Suddenly everything you saw made you think that you weren't some bumpkin but a citizen of the world."⁴¹

In Grootveld's view, the victory of capitalism over Nazism had transformed society into a herd of "despicable plastic people" in fifteen-odd years.⁴²

Of the sixties, Geert Mak concluded thus: "In the shadow of the political and cultural violence ... The inner city of Amsterdam was running on empty."⁴³

But how did these changes affect Margot's sister: Nanny, over the coming decade, besides her family?

Despite being past retirement age, Nanny's husband, *Cor Ridderhof*, continued to manage the stage at Amsterdam's principal theatre, *Carré*, from which he supported his family. Among his daughters, the eldest, Tiny, having married an RAF serviceman, was based in Northern Ireland at least until the end of 1962, while youngest daughter, Alice, turned 12 in mid-1962 and so obviously was still schooling.

As far as Irene, the middle daughter, was concerned, having put her own 'American dream' to bed in mid-1960 at the urging of her parents (i.e. by not accepting her green card), she continued to manage the *de Gruyter* general store in *Maasstraat* (about ten minutes by tram from the family home in *de Pijp* in south Amsterdam). In the meantime, she had grown acquainted with one of those harbour workers who witnessed first-hand the changes taking place in the city at the time.

⁴¹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 288-289

⁴² *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 324

⁴³ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 297

Three years elder Klaas Sijmons hailed from Amsterdam⁴⁴ and had worked since the age of 16 as a dockworker, having started around 1952. The pair met in 1961 (the year Irene turned 22), thanks to a common interest in football, specifically the local Amsterdam club known as *D.W.S.* (the *Amsterdamsche Football Club Door Wilskracht Sterk* club).⁴⁵ There Klaas would collect bets on football results (the so-called 'football pools'⁴⁶), while Irene accompanied her father to matches, who would place his bets through Klaas.

Irene told me Klaas ultimately spent 40 years working for Cotterell,⁴⁷ a company located in the *Coenhaven/Vlothavens* at the port of Amsterdam, to the northwest of the city centre, remaining in that same job until the age of 56, when he retired in 1992. She added that throughout his employment he "*did not have to worry for his job.*" Indeed, he was also a team leader within the company.

Klaas
Sijmons:
Football
fanatic,
dock-
worker
and madly
in love



In 1963, the couple got engaged and while they made plans to get married and find somewhere for themselves to live, that spring, elder sister Tiny and family departed Northern Ireland.⁴⁸ Ostensibly *en route* back to West Germany, and this time to *RAF Wildenrath* (just across the Dutch-West German border in North Rhine-Westphalia), Tiny and her seven-year-old son, Michael, temporarily squeezed in at the family home in *Tweede Jan Steen Straat*, Walter serving in West Germany alone until married quarters became available.

When Michael and I spoke about his memories of this period he had much to say, referring for instance to his return to the Amsterdam school he'd attended during his family's previous stay in early 1961,⁴⁹ as well as being taught by the same teacher that had educated his mother and sisters. Settling into Dutch classes was no bother, he once told me, since he'd continuously spoken the language with his mother wherever they were based. Michael also joked about the weekly visits to the public baths too!

⁴⁴ Born June 28, 1936. See also: piet.ridderhoff.net/Piet/info/info-03001-04000/info-3301-3400/100/3400-informatieblad.htm (sadly offline)

⁴⁵ That 1961-1962 season, however, *D.W.S.* had the misfortune of being relegated from the Dutch *Eredivisie* ('Honour' division). Despite this, it went on to win the *Eerste Divisie* in the 1962-1963 season (and thus promotion), before championing it in the 1963-1964 season (a feat that has never been repeated by any promoted team since). In the 1964-65 season, *D.W.S.* reached the quarter finals of the European Cup (losing out to Hungarian side, *Vasas ETO Győr* over two legs in February/March 1965).

See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFC_DWS and also en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964_65_European_Cup

⁴⁶ See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football_pools

⁴⁷ Cotterell is a private storage and transport company for - primarily - cocoa beans and other agricultural commodities with over a century of experience in transport, customs formalities, warehousing and handling. See: cotterell.nl and cotterell.nl/what-we-do

⁴⁸ Neither Michael, Alice nor Irene could confirm either the arrival or departure date in Dec. 2022. However, considering a two-year postings to Ballykelly starting April 1961, departure would have been spring 1963.

⁴⁹ On Dec. 21, 2022, Michael noted: "*I recall going out as a class several times to the Sarphatipark for playtime... I believe ... the longer period was in warmer weather ... the first time was in colder weather... [when] I ...recall a time of putting coals into a round metal black stove, which was towards the front yet in the middle, of the classroom.*" N.b. *The family's previous stay in Amsterdam ran from the end of 1960 until April 1961, when the family left for Ballykelly (as noted in Chapter XVII: Love's Great Adventures Pt. 2: Cold War Accessories).*

Nonetheless, in late autumn 1963, Tina and Michael joined Walter in West Germany, their host country for the next two and a half years.⁵⁰

RAF Wildenrath was a military airbase⁵¹ that fell under the auspices of NATO's Second Allied Tactical Air Force (or 2ATAF),⁵² part of whose fleet of aircraft included a tactical nuclear strike force.

It was a station where, in the words of one former resident, one grew used to "The sound of jet aircraft punctuating every hour," as well as the sight of "Ominous radars ... rotating nearby ... monitoring the Soviet 'threat.'"⁵³ According to David Gledhill, a fighter pilot who served on site for some 15 years and published his own reflections in 2017, "with such a comprehensive array of operational capabilities, RAF Wildenrath was ... a formidable Cold War fighter station."⁵⁴ To newcomers, however, they may have been more intrigued to learn that back in November 1956, the RAF had operated a three-day airlift from its Wildenrath station to deliver humanitarian relief supplies. These were taken to Vienna for the Red Cross to distribute in Hungary during the Hungarian uprising.⁵⁵



RAF Wildenrath's Main Gate
Source: Facebook's [RAF Wildenrath](#).



RAF airfields in West Germany
Source: D. Gledhill

Notwithstanding those traits, family life there within that 'displaced British community' was much as it had been during their previous spell at neighbouring *Rheindahlen*: Walter worked as a security guard at the camp's Main Gate, Michael's education switched back into English, and Tiny did the evening shift at 'the NAAFI' (the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) night-time shop, Michael later adding "mum briefly worked in a children's nursery too."⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Regarding the family's departure for RAF Wildenrath, Michael wrote on Dec. 15, 2022: "I recall seeing ... Kennedy being shot [on November 22, 1963]... on the television."

⁵¹ Built in West Germany during the early 1950s, Wildenrath was the home of the British military airfield, RAF Wildenrath for 40 years. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wildenrath

⁵² The commander of Royal Air Force Germany (RAFG or British Forces Germany) also doubled as commander of NATO's Second Allied Tactical Air Force. See: wiki.en/Royal_Air_Force_Germany

⁵³ See: ianburden.uk/biography.

⁵⁴ *Phantom in the Cold War. RAF Wildenrath 1977-1992*. Pen and Sword Aviation, 2017. David Gledhill. Pg. 34

⁵⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Wildenrath

⁵⁶ Personal correspondence. March 7, 2023

It was fortunate that Tiny was not physically far from her parents during that period, because shortly after leaving Amsterdam, 69-year-old Cor Ridderhof suffered a heart attack, no doubt unsettling Nanny who had only lost her mother the year before. Being kept under observation at a city clinic for weeks while they determined the best course of treatment, as a result he was also forced to give up smoking.

Given the circumstances, Tiny and family frequently made the several hours and 200km journey to Amsterdam, typically completing the stretch in the family's brand new, red Volkswagen Beetle, which Michael noted:

*"evokes so many memories ... sat either in the back seat ... or in the luggage compartment under the rear window, near the engine," adding "Everything was done using the beetle; camping, visiting, appointments, etc." and "was used to visit Amsterdam many times, some as a surprise too."*⁵⁷

The family's late 1963 return to Amsterdam gave me an opportunity to understand what a Holland-based Christmas meant to the family, noting some German traditions still held favour too.

On December 5th, for instance, Michael would particularly relish *Sinterklaasavond*, part of the *Sinterklaas*⁵⁸ (St. Nicholas) nameday celebrations on the following day. During the evening, a loud bang heralded the mysterious arrival of a sack of gifts to one's doorstep. Whereas, for a week until that point, one left shoes by the fireplace overnight and awoke to find a gift and sweets in and around. Or a bundle of birch twigs tied together with which to be 'flogged' for misbehaviour!



Sinterklaas enters Amsterdam with his horse and conversely, Witte Piet(s) at de Bijenkorf, 1965
Source: [ijsgeschiedenis.nl](https://www.ijsgeschiedenis.nl)

To this Tiny added that when she was young, she would typically go with her mother to see Sinterklaas arrive in the harbour or watch him travel through Amsterdam on his horse accompanied by *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete⁵⁹) and his helpers.

By the time it was Alice's turn, she would be enjoying *Sinterklaas'* pre-December 5th appearance at the *de Bijenkorf* store, his and his helper's arrival being announced by the throwing of '*Pepernoten*' (a small, sweet biscuit) where everyone would be gathered.

⁵⁷ Personal correspondence. Dec. 15, 2022 and March 7, 2023. He adds that it was "purchased direct from the factory in Wolfsburg," while Tiny told me that after arriving: "I used to visit [Nanny's German friend] Tante Kate ... in Amsterdam, [since] she occasionally had a room available to rent."

⁵⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinterklaas

⁵⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zwarte_Piet

At Christmas, Nanny typically put up a freshly cut tree on December 24th, rather as was the custom and as she had known it in pre-1945 Germany. They would decorate it with silver and gold decorations, *schuim* (foam) and meringue-pavlova (an edible decoration that was popular in the Germany of her childhood) which Nanny loved and bought. Nanny would also insist that a few presents were put underneath the tree for the children which, as was the custom in her home as a child, could be opened that same evening. In pre-partitioned Germany, nutcracker figurines, candle-lit Christmas pyramids, *Dresdner Stollen* and *Glühwein* were all traditional. But for Christmas dinner, the custom in the Ridderhof household was rabbit or goose, which Cor would normally bring home.⁶⁰

If 1963 had brought much change for the Ridderhofs, there wasn't much let up during 1964. Cor's condition forced him into retirement (at 70!), which aside from the loss of work, for someone who had spent the last thirty years or so cycling to and from Carré won't have been easy to take, mentally speaking. The isolation also impacted his relationship with his female mate, *Antonia*, she being the widow of a concentration camp victim which he had fallen for soon after the war had ended. It was much for this reason therefore that 'Toni' paid for telephone apparatus to be installed in the family's flat.

That same year, 1964, Irene and Klaas married in Amsterdam on June 19th, an occasion attended by all the Ridderhofs and which subsequently heralded Irene's move from the family home into a petite attic conversion some 20 minutes away by foot in *David Blesstraat 20* in *Amsterdam Zuid*, above the parents of one of Irene's friends.

However, while her departure meant the family home was a little less cramped, largely due to Cor's declining health (and a quest for fewer stairs), following 32 years at their third floor flat at *Tweede Jan Steen Straat*, Cor, Nanny and Alice made an emotional - and physically tiring - move across the Amstel river to a first floor flat at *Tweede (second) Oosterparkstraat 136* on November 18th.



Above:
Nanny and Cor
Ridderhof
put on a show at
Irene's
wedding,
June 1964



Below:
The
Ridderhofs'
new home
from late
1964: The
first floor flat
above the
right-side
door:
*2e Ooster-
parkstraat
136*
- where my
recollections
of Holland
begin

⁶⁰ Confirmed by Irene on Dec. 11, 2022

As the name suggests, the street belongs to the *Oost* (east) borough of Amsterdam, with the parallel *Erste* (first) *Oosterparkstraat* bordering the ‘east park,’ the principal neighbourhood site.⁶¹

Following their move to the two-bedroomed flat, Tiny and family were keen that Nanny, Cor and Alice join them at RAF Wildenrath for Christmas 1964, not least so that Cor could experience a traditional English Christmas with all the trimmings. Michael continues the story, especially how it turned out to be the fairy tale that Christmas should be:

“Our garden at 188 AMQ backed onto a typical German forest... On a cold Christmas Eve, Nanna had remarked how all that was missing was the snow. That was how we all went to bed – with no snow due. The following morning, ‘Christmas,’ the curtains were drawn back to reveal the perfect picture postcard wonderland of deep white snow. It truly was a happy memory of sledging, snowmen, snowballs and dinner, presents and family.” Yet that also “was to be the very last ‘Christmas’ that my mother had with her father (Pa).”

Upon their return to Amsterdam, there was still opportunity to return occasionally to Carré or to mingle with its stars. Nanny and Alice for instance attended the musical, ‘*No No Nanette*’ in which Johan Kaart, Sylvian Poons and Joop Doderen performed, while old favourites and friends of Nanny, such as Heintje Davids and Rika Jansen, were present too.

And when Cor turned 71, on February 20th, 1965, his former boss and family; the Wunninks, joined in the celebrations, together with younger brother, *Oom Dik* and wife, *Tante Rie*.

Meanwhile, Alice, who was now approaching fifteen, began journeying down to Wildenrath too for spells by herself, including the Easter holidays. She then returned together with her parents on July 9th for what was a three-week spell, an occasion which also saw her helping Tiny in the NAAFI. The family otherwise seldom ventured beyond the camp’s boundaries during their stay.

Having all returned to Amsterdam on July 29th, Alice prepared to spend the summer on vacation with Tiny and family in journeying to Austria’s border with Hungary. They left on August 6th (a day before their mother’s 58th birthday), camping that night at *Neusiedler See*, a haven for nesting storks, particularly on the Hungarian side, recalled Alice.

Dames at the Door!
188
AMQ/RAF
Wildenrath.
Proudly presented by its host, Tiny (second left), with Alice (far left), Nanny (on Tiny’s right) and Irene (foreground) and friend (background).
July 1965



⁶¹ See also: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oosterpark_\(Amsterdam\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oosterpark_(Amsterdam))

The vacation was cut short, however, by a series of nationwide radio announcements four days later calling for the holidaymakers to urgently contact the German branch of The Royal Dutch Touring Club 'ANWB.'

Fortunately for all, two young boys, likely to have been scouts, acted quickly when they recognised the car's (British) license plate.

Upon reaching the ANWB, the family were advised to return to the Netherlands immediately because Cor was critically ill in hospital – his heart had ruptured no less.

They were back in Amsterdam early the following morning, that is, Thursday, August 12th. They were fortunate to see him in the afternoon too, when from his bed in the *het Burgerziekenhuis* he deliriously spoke of Carré, Alice recalled. On Friday the 13th, however, the final curtain came down at 1710.⁶²

The funeral took place the following Tuesday, which is when the hearse took the former stage manager past 'his' theatre, whose staff stood outside while its flag flew at half-mast.

If the sixties saw Amsterdam go through enormous cultural upheavals, then the city and Carré too lost a piece of its cultural heritage, not to mention experience, when Cor Ridderhof passed away (as noted in various national newspapers, excerpts of which are included to the left).

As if to underline this point, some 50 years later and in response to an 'obituary' I published at the *Wandervogel* facebook page, *Henk van der Woude*, the former *Decorschilder* (décor painter) at *Nederlandse Opera* between November 1, 1957 and 1997 posted:

*"He was already an icon among the theater technicians at the time."
(Hij was destijds onder de theater technicie al een icon)".⁶³*

Telegraaf
Toneelmeester van
Carré overleden

AMSTERDAM, dinsdag
Zaterdag is in Amsterdam op 72-jarige leeftijd overleden de heer Cor Ridderhof, in de toneelwereld beter bekend als „Ome Cor“, die bijna veertig jaar toneelmeester is geweest bij theater Carré in Amsterdam. De overledene zal vandaag om elf uur op de Nieuwe Oosterbegraafplaats ter aarde worden besteld.

Om half elf zal de stoet langs theater Carré trekken, waar namens directie en personeel van het theater een krans aan de baar zal worden gehecht.

Vrijvolk

Heden overleed tot onze diepe droefheid, na een geduldig gedragen lijden, toch nog onverwacht, mijn lieve man, onze zorgzame vader, behuwd- en grootvader

CORNELIS RIDDERHOF
op de leeftijd van 71 jaar.

Amsterdam:
E. A. N. Ridderhof-
Wilderath Tyralla
(Duitsland):
C. M. Tuck-
Ridderhof
W. R. Tuck
Michael
Amsterdam:
I. A. Sijmans-
Ridderhof
K. Sijmans
N. A. Ridderhof

Amsterdam, 18 aug. 1965.
2e Oosterparkstr. 136 I.

De overledene is opgebaard in een der rouwkamers Gebr. Pothoff, Valeriusstr. 137, Adam. Bezoek aldaar maandagavond van 7 tot 8 uur.

De teraardebestelling zal plaatshebben op dinsdag 17 aug. a.s. op de Nieuwe Oosterbegraafplaats te Amsterdam om pl.m. 11 uur. Liever thuis geen bezoek.

— Amsterdam — zaterdag is in Amsterdam op 72-jarige leeftijd overleden de heer Cor Ridderhof, in de toneelwereld beter bekend als „Ome Cor“, die bijna 40 jaar toneelmeester is geweest bij theater Carré te Amsterdam.

Left:
Any Dutchman who picked up *De Telegraaf* or *Het Vrije Volk* national paper in August 1965 could have appreciated Cor Ridderhof's loss (and not only to the theatre).

Below:
Cor's Jubilee medal from Carré, reflecting his years of service to that point in time, 1932-1957



⁶² See 'item 11' at dirksteine.com/Ridderhof/index.html (no longer available)

⁶³ *Cor Ridderhof: Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen*. Feb. 1, 2015.

See: facebook.com/PassageThroughLeipzig/posts/635883693207295

As Alice writes in her diary of his funeral:

*"It was an emotional moment. His life was so bound up with that theatre.
Of course, it was also where he met mum."*⁶⁴

Many friends and family members, several brothers included, came to pay their last respects. Margot and Francis sent their condolences too. Cor was subsequently laid to rest in Amsterdam Oost.

Cor Ridderhof's passing inevitably left a void. Despite being his junior by more than thirteen years, he and Nanny had notched up a marriage that lasted 33 years, almost the entire time she had been in the Netherlands. Suddenly, however, the family's new home of less than a year became that of her and her youngest daughter alone. And although Nanny found herself making weekly visits to Carré to collect the pension she was paid in her husband's name, she lost complete interest in the theatre.

I suppose Nanny's feelings of emptiness (and possibly purpose) may well have made it into letters she sent to her sister. Margot surely found time to respond.

For Nanny's children the loss was also great. Tiny had said of her father in November 2000 *"To me he was a wonder dad. He was my best friend."*

Irene too clearly had a close relationship with her father, bonding with him over everything from career choices to football. Even husband Klaas went on to be known by all as 'Cor.'

As for Alice, just 15 years old at the time, when we discussed his passing and the accompanying press clippings over a decade ago, tears flowed as readily as if he had died just days prior. Given her age, *Oom Dik* officially became Alice's guardian, at least until she turned 18.

Michael, meanwhile, would be the only grandchild he knew – although many more would follow.

As Amsterdam and Nanny's home seemingly emptied of her nearest and dearest, I wonder, might she have cast her thoughts to her late mother's side of the family? Although she understood they had all perished in the war, she still had cousins spread across West Germany. What is more, the daughter of her and Margot's eldest childhood-playmate cousin still resided in Leipzig, their birthplace of course. But that was deep behind the Iron Curtain...

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⁶⁴ In fact, Cor and Nanny had worked alongside one another since mid-1931 but elsewhere, supporting the so-called 1st *Nationale Revue*, a show that toured the Netherlands. But from Nov. 1931 they were both part of *Lachpillen*, which was performed at Carré from Dec. 1931 until Feb. 1932. Cor was then offered the role of stage manager following his marriage to Nanny and after trialling between July and August, took up the role formally from Nov. 1932. *Chapter XIII: Sister Act, Pt.1: The Prince and the Showgirl* explains in full their touring itineraries – and romance, which became intimate as the Carré era began, at the end of 1931.

- THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CURTAIN -

Although the Cold War, which had seen tensions rise with the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 and peak with the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962,⁶⁵ entrenched the divisions between the Eastern and Western spheres of influence more than ever,⁶⁶ the 1960's also saw a new *Ostpolitik* take shape, in which there was a growing détente between East and West.



Partitioned Germany with the inner German border. Note Amsterdam ('1') and (ca. 3-hour drive away) RAF Wildenrath, west of Mönchengladbach ('2') as well as former family haunts: Hamburg ('3'), Leipzig ('4') and Frankfurt ('5') – once home to Nanny and Margo's male cousins after their post-war flight west.

According to one former tenant, RAF Wildenrath was “on the Cold War's frontline.”⁶⁷ (At its closest point, the inner German border lay about three and half hours' drive east).⁶⁸

⁶⁵ A 35-day confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union that brought the world closer to the brink of nuclear war than any previous international crisis owing to the existence of Soviet missile sites in Cuba that were deployed following US deployments in Italy and Turkey.

See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_Missile_Crisis

⁶⁶ Paraphrasing. *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy*. German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 374

⁶⁷ See: ianburden.uk/biography.

⁶⁸ However, a major border crossing point to East Germany (and which from the late 1940s to 1990 was also officially designated for military traffic from NATO countries going to West Berlin) was northeast at *Helmstedt-Marienborn* (which is where I believe Nanny's mother – Frau Tyralla – had crossed when she returned west from Leipzig in April 1946 – see *Chapter XVI: Flight, Expulsion, Resettlement*. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helmstedt)

Beyond that almost impenetrable boundary line, which throughout the 1960s was increasingly fortified and strengthened, Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of East Germany's Socialist Unity Party (SED) since 1950 and de-facto leader of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), however, "was at the height of his power."⁶⁹

Indeed, it was thanks to the Berlin Wall's construction that the GDR had had an opportunity to stabilise its economy,⁷⁰ which fortunately for East Germans, was accompanied by "a general rise in living standards."⁷¹ After 1962, the quantity, quality and variety of fruit and vegetables, dairy products, baked goods, poultry, coffee, and wine rose steadily.

Specialty foods at high prices. One of the GDR's 'Delikat' store-fronts. Source: Twitter



For example, "Delikat stores ... sold an assortment of specialty foods at high prices. People could afford these delicacies because state subsidies kept the price of basic foods low."⁷²

However, headlines calling on citizens to "First produce, then shop" – a consequence of the resurgence of productivist ideology which also followed the wall's construction – must have seemed like a cruel joke to ordinary women,⁷³ even more so after the first *Intershops* opened their doors in 1962 – albeit exceptionally to foreigners.⁷⁴

How was the surviving Leipzig-based family member of Nanny and Margot's eldest Leipzig-born cousin, Fritz, faring under this new milieu? Vera had of course bucked the 'east to west' trend by returning to her birthplace from Frankfurt in 1946. Despite having married some years later, by 1960 she found herself divorced which meant she faced the decade ahead as a single 32-year-old mother⁷⁵ of two live-in kids ("alleinstehenden Frau mit zwei Kindern").⁷⁶

Her occupation throughout the sixties remained that of a cook, being employed in a variety of Leipzig's larger factories. Even if her eldest son, Konrad (13 in 1962) now lived permanently with his father (*Herbert Foerster*), she still had her work cut out: middle son, Herbert was eleven at the time while the youngest, Uwe was just four⁷⁷ (thus closest in age to Tiny's son, Michael who was then six).

⁶⁹ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy.* German Bundestag, 1998. Pg. 383

⁷⁰ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy.* German Bundestag, 1998. Pg. 374-5

⁷¹ *The German Democratic Republic: Studies in European History.* Peter Grieder. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pg. 59

⁷² *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic.*

Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 278

⁷³ Paraphrasing *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic.* Donna

Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 274

⁷⁴ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig.* Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1962). Pg. 68

⁷⁵ Born Sept. 13th, 1928.

⁷⁶ Personal correspondence with Vera's sons via Uwe Foerster. Dec. 11, 2022

⁷⁷ Konrad was born Feb. 12, 1949, Herbert on March 19, 1951, and Uwe, Dec. 29, 1958

This will have meant ensuring a well-planned routine which will have necessitated the eldest of the two being prepared for school, the youngest dropped off and picked up from kindergarten,⁷⁸ dinner served, homework supervised, and the both of them tucked up in bed, most likely after watching East German television's popular sign-off programme, *Sandmännchen*.⁷⁹ As Vera had no parents to rely on (nor brother, Lothar having headed west to the best of her knowledge in 1945), the responsibility was seemingly hers alone.



On Nov. 22, 1959 *Sandmännchen* had his TV premiere. He was the absolute children's favorite on East German television. Without the 'evening greeting' hardly a child wanted to go to bed. It ran until 1991. Source: [MDR.de](https://www.mdr.de)

Fortunately for the family, housing was one issue that was not a great concern to them. In stark contrast to average availabilities,⁸⁰ the apartment Vera had obtained in *Dessauer Str. 38* (see '1' on the map overleaf) in 1960 afforded the family a sitting room, bedroom and children's room, besides kitchen, bathroom with toilet plus hallway, distributed across a total living space of an impressive 95m² and supported by central heating.⁸¹

At 30 years old, it certainly wouldn't have fallen into that category of housing which Leipzig's building director, Helmut Ober had warned his fellow architects about in 1961. Namely, that "the condition of our old buildings [*Altsubstanz*] in Leipzig is truly alarming... due to [the] danger of collapse, each year we have to close down more housing than is repaired."⁸²

Whilst not a worry for Vera, housing remained a well recognized concern for young families and consumers during the 1960s due to its shortage.⁸³ But thanks to new cement factories, production of new east German housing quadrupled in six years – in 1966 alone, 29 *Plattenwerke* provided slabs for 18,500 apartments.⁸⁴ Even by 1963, some 63 percent of new housing units were being built with prefabricated components (compared to 12 percent in 1958).⁸⁵

⁷⁸ *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 181. *N.b.* Attendance of creches and kindergartens had been woeful in the 1950s due to the shortage of places: As late as 1958 it was 8.3 and 16.2 percent respectively. But by 1970 it was up to 29.1 and 64.5 percent.

⁷⁹ *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 189

⁸⁰ In 1961, one found central heating in just 2.5 percent of homes, while just one-third had a toilet, 22 percent had a bath and just 31 percent had three rooms. *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 175

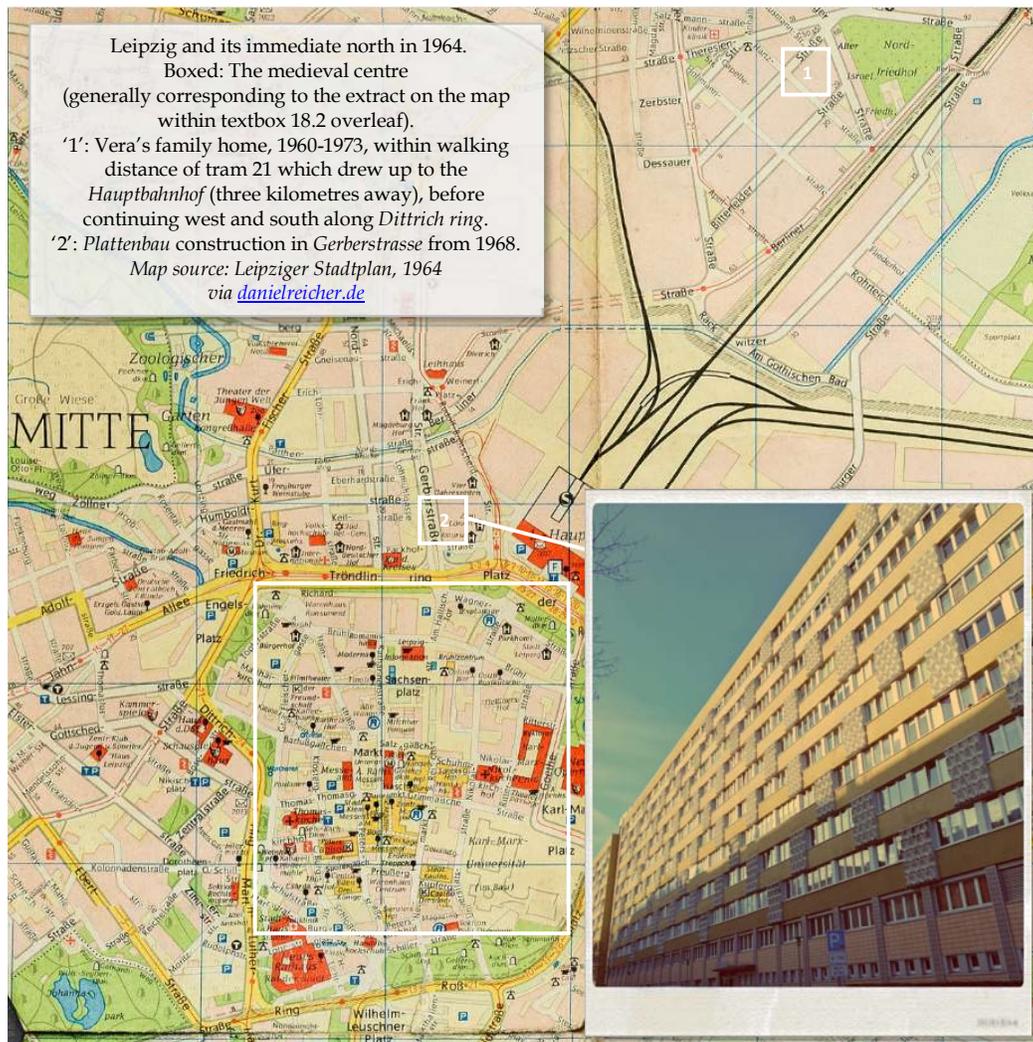
⁸¹ Personal correspondence with Vera's sons via Uwe Foerster. Dec. 11, 2022

⁸² *Three Cities After Hitler: Redemptive Reconstruction Across Cold War Borders (Russian and East European Studies)*. Andrew Demshuk. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. Pg. 369

⁸³ *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 277

⁸⁴ *Three Cities After Hitler: Redemptive Reconstruction Across Cold War Borders (Russian and East European Studies)*. Andrew Demshuk. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. Pg. 193

⁸⁵ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 130



However, even if the apartments were new, modern and desired by working class couples, 60 percent of the post-1950 apartments were further than three kilometres from the town centre.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the new towns in which they were erected experienced poor services and few cultural amenities.

From 1967, the city of Leipzig's attention shifted to town centre apartment construction and to the cityscape in general, replacing the remaining war-damaged buildings with a skyline more befitting a modern socialist city, as textbox 18.2 overleaf elaborates.

⁸⁶ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1967). Pg. 73

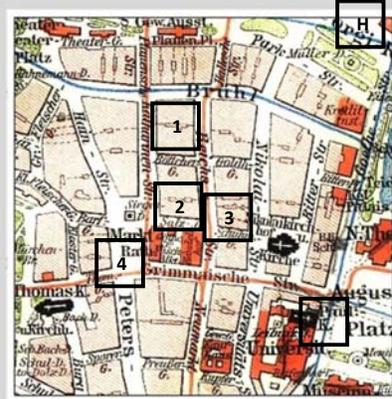
18.2: Leipzig's evolving cityscape (Pt.1) – and those spots closer to 'home'

In the 1960s, Leipzig's City Council set its sights on making it fit for the future: "A new city for a new society."^{1a} Sadly, however, this was to be achieved at expense of landmarks that recalled the city's more progressive traditions.

In 1962, for instance, the city's famed art *Museum der bildenden Künste* on *Augustusplatz* was demolished and on May 9th, 1963, it was the turn of the nearby baroque tower of the *Johanniskirche*.

The thinking in the 1960s was that "because fascism had defaced the city, fascism was to blame when socialists razed certain historic treasures that no longer in, and anyone who opposed this dogma was a fascist."^{1b}

Yet it was only following a personal inspection by Leipzig-born and bred Walter Ulbricht in August 1963 that "city leaders, demanded parking lots, green spaces and modern blocks in the historic centre to give Leipzig 'more the character of a modern, socialist big city' – on time for its 800th anniversary in 1965."^{1c}



How did this 'progress' impact upon sites of past family interest? *Brühl* for instance, where Nanny and Margot's father once charmed fur-purchasing customers altered dramatically. On June 20th, 1964, trams ceased to pass through, lines 4 and 6 (indigo line in the 1913 above map) being diverted past the *Hauptbahnhof* ('H' on the above map).^{2a} While at its western end, the reconstruction of *Kaufhaus Brühl* from January 1st, 1966, saw the installation of a curved, windowless aluminium façade heralding the *Konsument-Warenhauses am Brühl*, thereby becoming the largest shopping centre in East Germany from August 1968.^{1d}

Brühl also saw ten storey residential apartment blocks constructed in the adjacent space to the north (visible in the adjacent image's background),³ while to the south lay what from May 1969 (until 2002) was known as *Sachsenplatz* ('1' on the above map), the official designation of the derelict space (formerly hosting *Böttchergäßchen*) between *Reichs-* and *Katharinenstraße*. From September 1970 (until February 1999) it even came with its own '*Leipzig-Information*' centre.⁴ Upon my first visit in 1992, the site looked like something out of Buck Rogers, while the info centre reminded more of a Co-op supermarket.

On the other hand, a handful of positive projects also got underway. Further south at *Markt*, the *Alte Waage* was reconstructed between 1963 and 1965, filling the vacant lot opposite the entry to *Salzgäßchen*,^{2b} that passage in which Nanny and Margot's late Onkel Fritz had hosted *Cigarren Haus Hirsch* (see '2' on the map) and raised their cousins together with Tante Hedy. To the south of their former home, the *Alte Handelsbörse* was opened in 1962 after a seven-year restoration for chamber music recitals, literary events and exhibitions.⁵ Yet while the 1965 jubilee fair, '*Historische Messe um 1820*' (pictured right) was hosted in front on the *Naschmarkt*,^{2b} 'tasteless cement boxes' were placed directly north of the from 1960 (evident in the adjacent image's background).^{1d}



In another razing, *Deutrichs Hof* ('3', also pictured on pg. 1038), which lay at the eastern end of *Salzgäßchen* on *Reichstrasse* was also demolished in early 1968.^{2c} At the time a regular columnist at the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* wrote: "Leipzig is constantly becoming more beautiful and modern."⁶ Yet all it accomplished was to expand the vacant lot eyesore – deemed today "the last in Leipzig awaiting development"⁷ – that lies adjacent to the charming *Riquet-Haus café*.

To planners' credit, at least a large part of the centre was pedestrianised from September 15th, 1966,^{2d} the mantra according to the editor of *Deutsche Architektur* being that "Whereas West Germans were building 'The city made for cars' (*die autogerechte Stadt*), East Germans were building 'The city made for people' (*die menschengerechte Stadt*)."⁸

But as I walked in 1992 from the *Hauptbahnhof* to *Markt* ('4'), traversing the abovementioned places, I didn't know what to think. Was this unattractive space really where my grandmother was raised and the city to which her father travelled from 'Poland'? I felt disillusioned with the 'aesthetic plasticity,' a place in which socialism still appeared to rule, a city I knew so little about. (To its credit, the helpful staff at *Leipzig-Information* helped kick off this history project!)

Nonetheless, I was not alone in missing more 'history.' "As the post-1989 building director of Leipzig, Niels Gormsen, later lamented, such thinning of Leipzig's inner-city substance had rendered it a "shirt full of holes,"^{1d} while "To this day, one hears nostalgic comments that, 'if only Leipzig had remained under American occupation ... much of its architectural heritage might have been saved.'"^{1e} In fact, it was as early as the 1980s that, "knitting it back together became a planning obsession."^{1d} Yet, the worst, most disturbing and tragic offence – repercussions of which were to be felt in October 1989 – was still to come...

Footnotes: see 'Footnotes to textbox 18.2' at the end of this chapter

Did Vera (and her family) take much notice of Leipzig's city 'development' during that decade? When I asked her sons, they merely responded:

"Es gab wichtigere Dinge im Leben. Also, nein."

One of those "more important things in life" was surely wage labour. Having set a historic development in motion, by 1966, women in the GDR comprised 49.1 percent of the total workforce – the highest rate in the industrial world.⁸⁷ The unwanted downsides included "a rising divorce rate ..., teachers worried about unprepared pupils, demands for privately owned labour-saving appliances, and, in an economy starved for labour, wives/mothers leaving full-time work for part-time employment."⁸⁸

A hearty conversation with Vera:
Leipzig, April 16, 2016



Vera's labour habits were not explained to me in any detail, but according to Donna Harsch, a professor of twentieth-century German history, only six percent of single women in 1964 with children worked reduced hours.⁸⁹ Although "surveys showed that more than half of women workers wanted to work part-time.

Investigations by the SED Women's Commission revealed that nearly all part-timers were married."⁹⁰ This underlines just how

essential the income – and job – will have been to Vera.

And I certainly recall from my conversations with her (sadly now deceased) that she was "very proud" of her achievements and for the fact that she accomplished them "alone."

Did this work rate leave time for leisure? When I asked her sons whether their mother had spent much 'quality' or 'family' time with them, perhaps even together with their father, there was no response to speak of.

In fact, in 1965, "the majority of women spent most of their 'leisure' time cleaning, shopping, sewing, cooking, baking from scratch, and canning."⁹¹ For instance, "In the 1960s, most public laundries were located along city streets [where] waiting times remained high."

⁸⁷ Donna Harsch also notes that in 1965, as many as 79 percent of women aged 25 to 39 were employed while a second source notes female employment was as high as 90 percent in the 1960's. *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 178 and *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy*. German Bundestag, 1998. Pg. 378.

⁸⁸ *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 171. N.b. in 1964, some 46 percent of married women with children worked reduced hours, while in 1969 more than 50 percent of women aged between the age of 20 and 40 did so in Leipzig. See: *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 252

⁸⁹ *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 252

⁹⁰ *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 179. N.b. While in 1960 there just 14.9 percent of women worked part-time, by 1964 there were 24.2 percent and by 1969, 31 percent.

⁹¹ According to a survey conducted by women's magazine, *für Dich*, based on interviews at factory gates and 15 families' nine-day diaries. *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 292

Not surprisingly (and like their western counterparts), “East German women ... yearned for devices that would make their homes easier to maintain — and with good reason ... [because as late as] 1970, housework claimed 47.5 hours per week in a four-person household. Women performed 90 percent of this work. Thus, they worked a full second shift at home.”⁹²

I began to wonder, what was the effect of divorce, likely overexposure to institutional childcare and less physical contact with parents, on her own children’s psychological development? Although the 1965 Family Law had proclaimed the family ‘the basic cell of society,’⁹³ the same codex emphasised the ‘active construction of socialist society.’⁹⁴

As a consequence, the state extended its surrogating of parenting, through for instance periodicals, whose content was known to reflect the view that “child-raising was no longer a private matter.”⁹⁵ It invested in the building of a network of creches, kindergartens, schools and youth organisations, besides the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ or Free German Youth), for which youngsters were eligible from the age of 14.



“Of course they always wanted to press us into the regime,” recalled an FDJ member. The first meeting of the FDJ in May 1950 in Berlin.

© picture-alliance/akg-images.

Sources:

deutschlandfunkkultur.de and wiki.de/Freie_Deutsche_Jugend

The Foerster boys, however, had little regard for either socialism or the state, Uwe telling me that he and his brothers largely avoided the FDJ:

“Herbert & Conny gar nicht. Ich nur kurze Zeit wegen der Sportschule.” (Herbert and Konrad not at all, myself only briefly on account of sports school).

That was some feat, considering the organisation comprised about 75 percent of the young adult population of East Germany.⁹⁶

For instance, the elder pair ought to have undergone the state-influenced confirmation or coming-of-age ceremony: *Jugendweihe* (‘youth dedication’), which youngsters typically saw at 14.⁹⁷ ‘An integral pillar of state education in ... schools,’⁹⁸

⁹² *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 182

⁹³ *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 184

⁹⁴ *Paraphrasing Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. P. Betts. OUP; Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 72

⁹⁵ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 64

⁹⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_German_Youth

⁹⁷ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jugendweihe

⁹⁸ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 51–87

the occasion meant “GDR citizens received their own passport,⁹⁹ were addressed by their teachers in the formal grammatical address (*Sie*, instead of *Du*)...” while 14 also meant they were “old enough to be punished in court”¹⁰⁰ (and from 1968, to have heterosexual sex).¹⁰¹

Parents were hard pressed to resist the SED’s hectoring to commit their children to the process,¹⁰² and resisting participation ran the risk of losing a seat at secondary school.¹⁰³ Yet when I asked the brothers what they cared to share of the occasion (which ought to have occurred for them in 1963 and 1965), they blanked: not only were there no photos, but no special memories nor a reference to where it occurred. I assume it was one of their less pleasant GDR milestones. Especially if “separated from the parental home” meant literally.

Conversely, however, and quantitatively speaking, *Jugendweihe* was undeniably successful: by the late 1960s “over 95 percent of East German teenagers underwent the socialist rite of passage ... making it “a key ‘*lieu de memoire*’ of GDR culture in its own right,”¹⁰⁴ as the textbox below elaborates.

18.3: *Jugendweihe* ... East Germany’s coming-of-age ceremony

Fourteen years of age was a milestone in German youngsters’ childhood that was typically celebrated around Easter. It was also popular for the gifts that were received.

Readers might recall that Herbert and Conny’s grandfather and his brothers – together with their cousins: Nanny, Margot and brother Theo – had fonder recollections of their confirmations, which had taken place at the family villa outside Leipzig, in Machern.



Yet, in comparison with the confirmations of the 1920s, those of the mid-1960s illustrated the conflict between church and state. East Germany’s leader, Walter Ulbricht, had driven the church out of public life to the extent that Christian confirmation dropped dramatically from 75 percent to less than 33 percent by the second half of the 1950s (a similar trend occurring with weddings and baptisms).

Jugendweihe’s basic ceremony “borrowed its liturgical form and spirit from Christian confirmation. It followed a similar format of music, speeches, and pageantry. April was selected for its symbolism of awakening nature” with boys “advised to wear dark blue suits ... long associated with confirmation ceremonies.” Yet there was no escaping socialist ideology, one adolescent recounting how in 1964, the featured speaker used the word ‘socialism’ 64 times in his 20-minute oration. A cinema, school, or factory were typical locations, from which the young East Germans were put on a path to socialist adulthood, separated from the parental home and transformed into a member of the socialist community in the spirit of proletarian internationalism.

Afterwards, “The whole event was typically followed by a family meal and party, at which the teenager received gifts and blessings from family, friends and relatives,” as the image shows.

Source: *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint Edition, 2013. Pp. 72, 58, 60. Image: *Leben in Leipzig*. Christel Foerster. Sutton Verlag, 1997. Pg. 116

⁹⁹ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1964). Pg. 70. N.b. From Jan. 2, 1964, the GDR introduced new id cards indicating ‘Citizen of the GDR.’

¹⁰⁰ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 59

¹⁰¹ *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 190

¹⁰² Paraphrasing, but as reported by West German journalists in 1955. *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 71

¹⁰³ *Leben in Leipzig*. Christel Foerster. Sutton Verlag, 1997. Pg. 116

¹⁰⁴ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 52

With Vera devoted to the day job and her free time limited, combined with state pressure to nurture “the ‘socialist personality’ and ‘state-oriented citizens,’”¹⁰⁵ the SED had both interfered with private life and more broadly, notes Harsch, “changed the East Germany family.”¹⁰⁶ And while there might have been “sign[s] of ... more liberated female sexuality in the 1960s,”¹⁰⁷ as far as Vera was concerned very little changed. In principle, her divorce ought to have contributed to greater female freedom – even intimacy – but while there was an eventual successor to *Herr Foerster*, Mr. Right’s arrival occurred well after both live-in sons had flown the nest.

Thus, Vera shouldered the aforementioned responsibilities single-handedly and so I imagine she’d be the first to agree, her’s wasn’t a ‘dream’ existence. Indeed, when I asked her why she returned to Leipzig in 1946, sometime between 2012 and 2016, she answered with a chuckle, “*Good question!*”

I suppose it might have been comforting to have been in contact with her elder brother, Lothar, who himself remained in West Germany. However, having travelled there separately, and having made no known attempt to reach Vera (although like the rest of her extended family, he neither had reason to believe she was even alive, let alone back in Leipzig), I wonder whether she stopped to think much about the West, his livelihood, or ‘what might have been’ had she stayed? Particularly as the gap in economic terms between it and West Germany only continued to grow.

#####

- A FINE ROMANCE -

While Tina and her family’s lives within the West German forests of *Nordrhein-Westfalen* were a world away from second cousin, Vera, in Leipzig, not only did their years at RAF Wildenrath bear witness to the end of a Ridderhof era; they also heralded the start of a new one. Alongside Tiny’s husband: Walter, the Ridderhofs were about to grow acquainted with yet another British lad.

A month or so prior to Cor Ridderhof’s death in August 1965, youngest daughter, Alice, had been introduced to an admirer.

“*Really nice chap*” wrote the 15-year-old in her diary, adding “*Has dark hair and brown eyes.*”

¹⁰⁵ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 72

¹⁰⁶ *Vanguard of the Working Mother* by Donna Harsch. In *The Family in Modern Germany*. Lisa Pine (Ed). Bloomsbury, 2021. Pg. 172

¹⁰⁷ *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 295

John Robert Simpson was an aircraft engineer who after six years in the service, had been posted to RAF Wildenrath in February of that year. Their introductions were of course 'engineered.' However, when Alice heard that John was 24, she was sure he would have no interest in her.

But Alice's older sister was playing cupid, the course of which goes something like this:

A week or so after John's arrival, his and Tiny's paths had crossed at a station bible study meeting. Showing characteristic Christian hospitality, she invited him home for tea. That evening, John spied a photograph of Alice on the mantelpiece, and casually enquired after her.

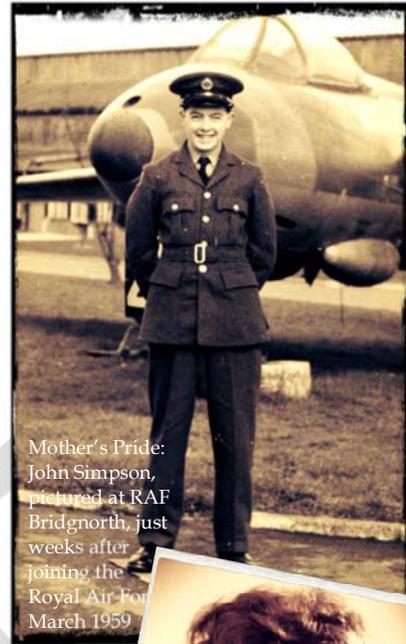
"That's my little sister," replied Tiny.

I bet the ground shook such that camp security must have thought a Soviet invasion had gotten underway. However, their first chance at a formal introduction during Easter that year went awry when John took leave before Tiny's younger sister arrived in town.

But when Alice returned in July, having just finished school, the pair finally set eyes on one another at one of the camp's churches. Once again, Tina invited John over, an occasion that saw him introduced to the sisters' mother — and perhaps more importantly, their father too. The date was July 11th.

Although Alice had no interest in hooking up with an Englishman, as her diary entry notes, that encounter got the ball rolling. The very next day, in fact, when John dropped into the NAAFI shop where Alice was keeping Tiny company to show off his pen-knife lacerated finger... Then days later he appeared again, this time at Tiny's home *"to collect some books"* (and that with 20 minutes to spare before catching an 'indulgence' flight to RAF Northolt).

Comical it was, but someone was clearly intent on leaving an impression, at almost any cost it seemed. But who exactly was this 'bull' in a China shop? His heritage is explained in the textbox overleaf.



Mother's Pride:
John Simpson,
pictured at RAF
Bridgnorth, just
weeks after
joining the
Royal Air Force
in March 1959.



Alice at 14.
As seen on
Tiny's
mantelpiece!

18.4: Meet the Simpson(s): A Brief Genealogy

"Me; only half Cornish but proud of it!" said my Dad (John) as he introduced himself in 2021 to Mike Ricks, a former resident of Uranium City and the author of textbox 17.18 who hailed from St. Agnes in Cornwall, the same place that John's mother, Martha ('*Mattie*') Tredinnick called home.

John first saw the light of day in June 1941, the eldest of three lads (see the Simpson family tree on the next page but one), each two years apart and all born in Redhill in Surrey.

Their father, Robert George born 1906 and pictured opposite (then aged 69), was at one time an archaeologist but during wartime served in the Home Guard (an armed citizen militia initially known as the Local Defence Volunteers) since he was profoundly deaf.¹



John's mother, also born 1906 (pictured left), hailed from a large family, and during her twenties and early thirties had a successful business career as an international buyer for a department store called *Bourne and Hollingsworth* (featured in textbox 15.3 on pg. 610). That saw her travel chiefly through Germany, Austria and Switzerland. However, being attracted to the humour, wit and ingenuity of John's father and having the desire to start a family – mixed with the imminent prospect of another war – the couple settled down after a simple no-frills wedding.

After World War II, the young family briefly 'returned' to St. Agnes in southwest England, long enough for the two elder sons to school there. After *Mattie* inherited (and sold) a cottage in August 1948, the proceeds were invested in '*Tyrie*', a large house in Brockweir near Tintern in the Wye Valley, a landscape formed by a meandering river that skirts the England/Wales border.

Until it was ready for moving into, the family were accommodated at John's (paternal) *Aunt Mary* and *Uncle Eric's* vicarage in Elberton near Thornbury in Gloucestershire, he being a retired wartime RAF chaplain. That lent opportunity for the boys to host schoolfriends, as well as to meet 'Granny' Simpson, as the photos right and below show.

That fairy tale started promisingly enough.

Recognising the new home's potential with the prospect of the new Severn Bridge, as soon as John's father was in full time employment (as a lab technician at Carters, 'the Ribena factory,' in nearby Coleford), the couple opened their home as a guest house (in those days even without mains electricity and water)!

"All went well to begin with" writes John in January 2023, *"until things started to unravel. First, youngest brother, Wally, put his foot through new floorboards in one of the bedrooms revealing 'dry rot'. Despite winning the court case, no compensation was paid. Then we all fell foul of various ailments. Worst of all, mum was diagnosed with breast cancer, which meant an operation in Gloucester 28 miles away and later convalescence in Wimbledon, London. Then father's job then was moved to Brentford Middlesex when Beechams bought out Carters, eventually leading to redundancy followed by a variety of less well paid jobs. Inevitably Mum's health deteriorated. At later stages we boys had to be put in foster care with friends, family or school friend's parents."*

"Summertime and holidays, however, were something of a welcome escape for us all, best of all staying with mum's youngest sister in Cornwall where Auntie Peggy ran Libby's chemist in Perran. Then in the mid-50s at 'Uncle Bill Simpson's' (he worked for British Rail) and 'Auntie Elsie' (she was a schoolteacher), together with brother Jim, in Orpington, Kent, from where we biked to the infamous RAF Biggin Hill."



Continued overleaf.

Images:

Top: '*Mattie*' Tredinnick, 1930s; Bottom: Left to right: *Mary Hatton, Wally, John, Jim and their mother. Elberton, Ca. 1948*

18.4: Meet the Simpson(s): A Brief Genealogy (cont.)

Having finished school with four ‘O-levels’ and with a talent for sketching, John was in two minds whether to continue his art studies and turn that into a professional career. Or to opt for a more stable line of work with the Royal Air Force. He continues: *“As Christmas gave way to New Year 1959, mum, seeing what inevitably lay ahead said, ‘John, you’ve got to make up your mind dear, are you going to join the RAF or not?’”*

In February 1959, he signed up (rather against his father’s wishes who made a last-ditch effort to put him off). But before that, they celebrated his would-be admission in style: *“Mum wanted to fulfil all our wishes and have a big party in the lounge with friends, music, dancing and a great big fire in that huge hearth! ‘You do the work,’ she said, ‘and we’ll have it!’ By then we had mains electricity and we managed to rig up a couple of oak cartwheel chandeliers and had a marvellous time! The only time it happened on such scale. Memorable!!”*

John’s mother died in July 1959, not long after he turned 18. She was buried in St. Agnes. His faith in God, having committed himself at a Christian summer beach mission in 1953, helped him through that trying time.

Meanwhile, his decision to join the RAF first took him to Cardiff, followed by Cardington in Bedfordshire. And within a week, on a troop train to RAF Bridgnorth in Shropshire for an 8-week induction (where the photo on the last page but one was taken). After spending Easter at home (during which time he bought a 1934 Austin 7 for a tenner), he left for 8-10 weeks technical/trade training as an aircraft mechanic at RAF Weeton (near Blackpool). Whitsun (May 17) afforded another short break while from August 1959 he was sent on his first formal multi-year posting to RAF Little Rissington, close enough to home in the beautiful Cotswolds.

During that time he stripped and refurbished the car to create an Austin 7 ‘Special’ – one of those subsequently oft talked about accomplishments which he drove up and down the country as time permitted. John returned to Weeton in October 1962, followed again by a visit to Little Rissington. It was then on to Cambridgeshire and RAF Oakington until 1965.

And then came the posting to RAF Wildenrath for what was his first visit beyond the British Isles. To an extent he felt he was treading in his mother’s footsteps. But close Cambridge-based friends, the Blunts gave him another mission: *“Find a nice German girl!”*

If John’s career course had been set before his mother’s passing, how did his brothers fare? Jim was also all set, taking off with the Merchant Navy (a fleet of sea-going UK commercial vessels) after a spell with the local Forestry Commission. He sailed the world for 18 months before getting married in April 1964 at St. Briavels.

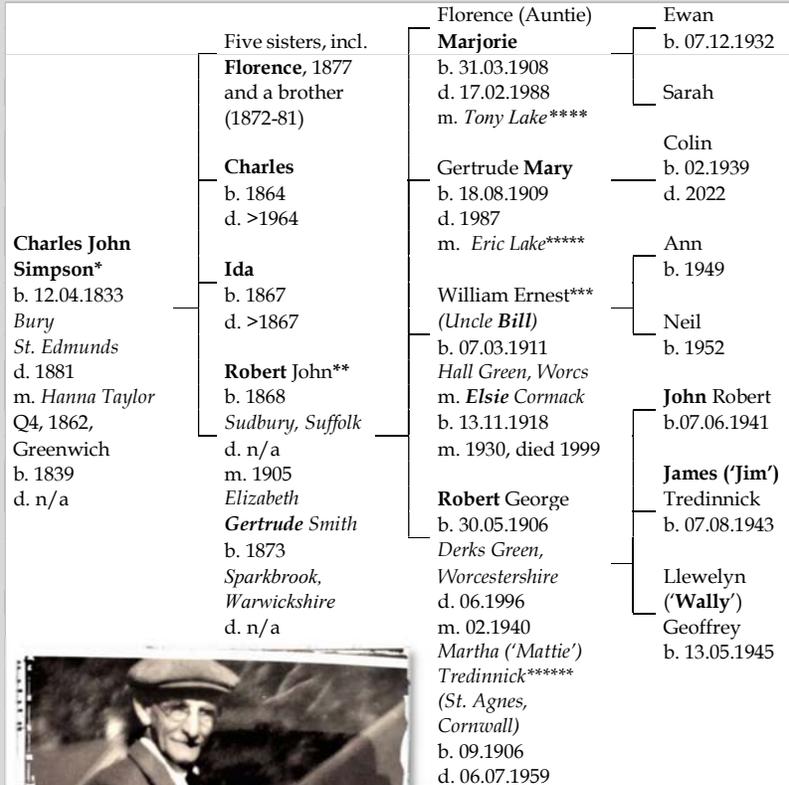
“For Wally, being only 14 in July 1959 it was so much harder being there alone. Especially after Mum collapsed and was taken to hospital.” Sadly, he remained in care, the boys’ father remarrying in 1960 or 1961. *“I would rather not reflect on my early days,”* Wally told me in 2023, there being little love lost between him and his father. *“Best left alone,”* he added.

Several generations of the Simpson family tree based on searches of FindMyPast.com in 2016 are shown below, those details being drawn from the population census of 1841 and 1911 (the latter of which surprisingly omits any mention of Aunties Marjorie and Mary)!



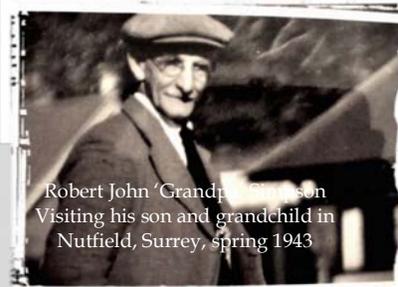
Images:
John’s Wye Valley sights, according to his paintbrush: Upper top: Wye Bridge, Monmouth. Lower top: John’s bedroom view of Brockweir from Tyrie, July 3, 1955. Bottom left: Robert George Simpson, summer 1975.

18.5: A Simpson Who's Who



* Charles John's father, Tho(ma)s, was a schoolmaster. According to the 1841 census, the CJ Simpson household at Babergh Heath, Great Waldingfield, Sudbury, Suffolk, England numbered eight, he being one of five siblings, where Charles was the second youngest, he being brother to at least two sisters.

** According to the 1911 census, when Robert John was 42, his profession was that of a designer for a chandelier manufacturer, although his grandson, my father, recalls he designed the gates of a London bank. The family's home was Iverugin Robin Hood Lane Hall Green, Yardley, Warwickshire, England. That home accommodated a 19-year-old female servant, Caroline Pickard, as well as widower, Hannah Vincent Smith, a 57-year-old monthly nurse.



Robert John 'Grandpa' Simpson
 Visiting his son and grandchild in
 Nutfield, Surrey, spring 1943



Gertrude 'Granny' Simpson cradling Jim,
 opposite daughter-in-law, Mattie,
 wrestled by sons John and Wally to her
 left and right respectively. At Thornbury
 near Elberton in Gloucestershire Ca. 1946.

According to John, his father seldom talked about his own family background, although he recalls that his grandfather and grandmother possibly came from Essex to visit their family at 'Arbutus' in Nutfield, Surrey, which according to the reverse of the adjacent photo was spring 1943. It is not known when they died, however, their siblings, Ida and Charles, by then over a hundred, were visited by John's father and second wife between 1964-1967.

*** Bill and Elsie later lived in York

**** Auntie Marjorie's husband was one time Mayor of Sudbury.

***** Eric Lake was the brother of Tony Lake, i.e. Two brothers married two sisters. Both were vicars.

***** Mattie's father was John Tredinnick, a widely respected local businessman – auctioneer, house builder, shipping agent, local preacher and grave digger, while her brother, 'Uncle Dick' ran Trevellas Garage and once a taxi service (his son ran Peterville Garage). Another brother had a farm while the youngest sister ran Libby's, the Chemist Shop, in Perran

The timing of John and Alice's meeting couldn't have been more fitting. On the one hand he was introduced to Alice's father before he passed away, meaning he could appreciate Cor's importance to the sisters as well as being able to relate to a person(ality). On the other, John could empathise with Alice, having lost his mother as a teenager just as he began his working life. Being a shoulder to lean on, Alice's trust in him grew. In that sense, they were soul mates almost from their acquaintance.

Following that summer of ups and downs, Tiny arranged Alice's return to RAF Wildenrath, this time to spend a month nannying for an English family from October 11th. Moving in with Tiny, she was no great distance from John's digs. Their 'playground' over the coming weeks (and months) is described in John's own words and summarised in textbox 18.6 overleaf.

I could imagine that if Margot had by chance returned to Europe after their spell in Canada and visited Tiny and family there, she would have surely noted the station's similarity to Uranium City, being a single-purpose camp site whose personnel, likely not to have been dissimilar in number, were all tied to the same employer.

That said, looking at the camp's layout in the map overleaf from the 1960s and then today via Google, the former RAF site has clearly fared a lot better than its Canadian 'counterpart' in the intervening years.¹⁰⁸

With Alice's introduction to John, Nanny may well have wondered whether her youngest daughter was set to follow in Tiny's footsteps — or was being set up to. Not that she seemed to object, however. To be fair though, she had concerns of her own. Suffering from kidney stones around the time of her husband's death, November ultimately saw her in hospital (ironically the same in which Cor had died) for their removal. *"She began to think she was at the end of the road too!"* recalls Alice.

Those circumstances, however, saw John surprise Alice by chaperoning her to Amsterdam to visit her mother in hospital.¹⁰⁹ And with her operation slightly delayed, given that it was John's first visit to the city, Alice took to showing him the sights.

"Everybody was surprised to see me with John!" the teenager confides to her diary,¹¹⁰ while in later conversation she notes how he *"was also able to show his gift for repair work when the handle of the bathroom door came off and he fixed that on the spot."*

He was obviously causing a stir, although if there was a price to pay for leaving that lasting impression, it was that they missed the train back to Wildenrath!

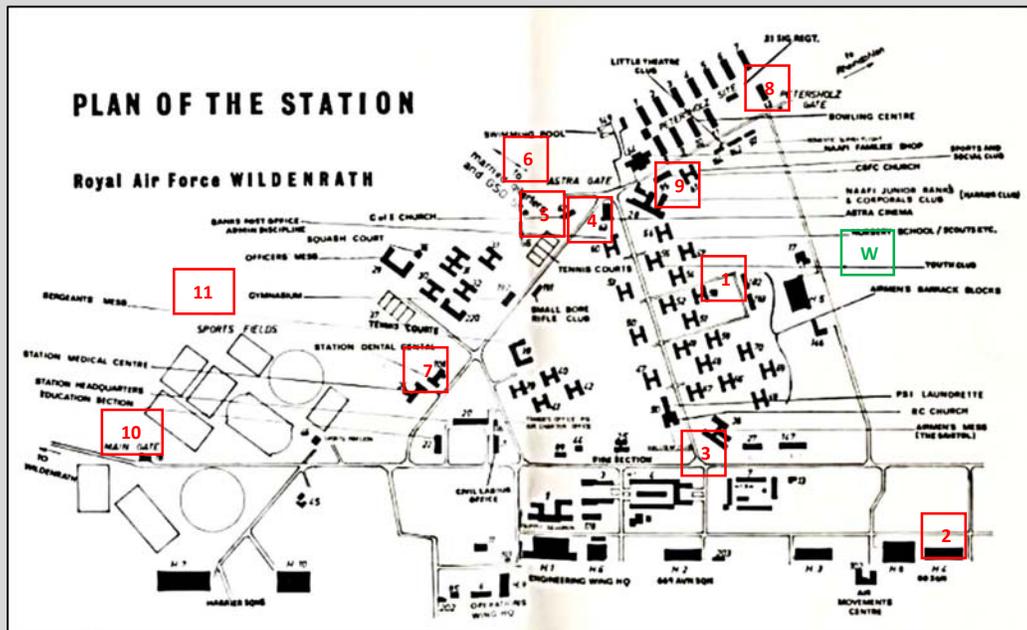
¹⁰⁸ Although RAF Wildenrath closed as a flying base on April 1st, 1992, the housing areas remained in use, providing overspill housing for RAF Brüggen, after which it was used to accommodate other UK military personnel until the end of September 2012, when the land was formally handed back to German local authorities.

See: baor-locations.org/RAFWildenrath.aspx.html as well as: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Wildenrath.

¹⁰⁹ Personal diary entry. November 12, 1965

¹¹⁰ Personal diary entry. November 13, 1965

18.6: "In My Own Words: RAF Wildenrath and Beyond." A Former Resident's Perspective



"I was based in the Airmen's Barrack Blocks, where from my room ('1' on the accompanying map), I looked out east onto the neighbouring woods ('W' on the same map). I worked for the Comm Squadron - later 60 Squadron (see '2') maintaining Percival Pembroke transport aircraft that (as non-combat aircraft) exercised the right of access to Berlin during peacetime along three air corridors, but also to Wiesbaden, Fontainebleau, the UK and elsewhere.

To get to work, we had our (10 minute) rat-run through the woods, which was particularly handy when the Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) exercises sounded in the dead of night while at the other end of the airfield the aircraft and crew were armed and ready for take-off – east!

The Movements Centre, which lay next door to Comm Squadron, was the civilian arrivals and departure lounge for all other personnel entering from and returning to UK. This meant Vickers Viscounts and early short-haul passenger jets like the BAC-111s were in use at RAF Wildenrath, but also the first experimental Harrier jump-jets.

When not short-cutting, the more civilised way to work was along the main driveway, which took us south past the Roman Catholic church, opposite the Airmen's Mess on the corner ('3'). Heading in the opposite direction, north, we'd pass the American PX store [formally the U.S. Army's Post Exchange, part of the Army & Air Force Exchange Service, retailer in U.S. Army and Air Force installations worldwide] on the left, where everything was dirt cheap while boxes of King Edward cigars were commonplace. I bought my first seat belt kits there – they were just coming in, in 1966.

That road continued where at the junction lay the Astra Cinema ('4') to the left. Across the road, nestled by a brook and conifers, was the Church of England (C of E) ('5') – very picturesque, especially in winter snow. Opposite the cinema, at Astra Gate ('6'), was the entrance to the camp's married quarters (see adjacent image), where Tiny and Walter were based, at 188 AMQ on the right somewhere."



Continued overleaf

18.6: "In My Own Words: RAF Wildenrath and Beyond." A Former Resident's Perspective (cont.)

"Indeed, it was Walter who I met the day after I arrived at RAF Wildenrath. He knew Flight Sergeant, Arthur Verrall, who I had made a beeline for because of his involvement in *SASRA: The Soldiers' & Airmen's Scripture Readers Association*. He was therefore part of the camp's bible study group which Tiny also belonged to. Arthur, Jean and their son, Mark, became good friends of ours. They lived up on the left somewhere, near 'Station Dental Central' ('7').

Back to Astra Gate and the road that led northwest to the Petersholz Gate ('8'), first on the left was the swimming pool and opposite that (on the right) was the Church of Scotland and Free Churches or CSFC ('9'). We would attend both that and the C of E, depending on what was on, but mainly the CSFC. And close by was the popular NAAFI Kiosk where Tiny worked (and she also ran a small gift shop). She was obviously an attraction, always sweet and charming! Son, Michael's school was in huts that were opposite the NAAFI, where the outdoor swimming pool was (just north of '6').

Beyond Petersholz Gate lay the outside world, including the village of the same name (where one found godsend-like pots of paint to make good window frames damaged by curtains set alight by portable modified immersion heaters!! — *sic!*). This was also the route to NATO Headquarters at *Rheindahlen* (about 15 minutes away by car) while about twice that distance was *Mönchengladbach* [the nearest urban neighbour, a small city with a population of around 150,000 inhabitants in 1965 and which lay mid-way between *Düsseldorf* and the Dutch border, west of the Rhine].¹ En route to Rheindahlen was *Wegberg* Hospital and its egg-shaped *Grenzlandring* (once a famous but short-lived high-speed racing circuit).²

The camp's principal exit, the Main Gate ('10'), was on the west side of its east-west axis [which today is the Friedrich-List Allee], and where Walter worked at the guardroom (among other places). To the north of that axis lay the Sports Fields ('11'), where I famously won a silver cup for (coming last in) the 1500 metres!

Beyond the Main Gate was a small junction where one could turn right to *Wildenrath* village or left to *Wassenberg*, which is where we used to buy our supplies of *Schinken* and fresh bread rolls. Wassenberg was also a popular weekend route (by bike, before my best ever 'Half-crown times two' VW Beetle investment in 1966 which included an exciting trip to *Wolfsburg*, close to the East German border. I used to head across the *Birgelen* (Netherlands) border post and on through the asparagus fields, an hour or so ride to *Roermond* — a route I loved to cycle with my very comfortable, large, soft-tyred bike with its cool back-pedal brake!

On my first Whitsun weekend in West Germany (June 5-7th 1965), however, I cycled the five-hour ride to *Monschau* (through *Erkelenz*, *Jülich*, *Düren* then past *Aachen*), nestled up against the Belgian border, taking in all the bullet-scarred walls and German-laid concrete blocks ('dragon's teeth') of the 'Siegfried Line' [i.e. square-pyramidal fortifications of reinforced concrete used during the Second World War to impede the movement of tanks and mechanised infantry employed extensively along the so-called *Westwall*].³

I managed that with my little two-man tent and cooking gear strapped to my bike, enjoying a few days in that very popular *Nationalpark Eifel* beauty spot for service personnel, part of the *Eifel*, a low mountain range in Germany and East Belgium.⁴ What an adventure that was for little ol' me!

And then came Mum!"



Wikipedia References:

1. [de.../Mönchengladbach#Einwohnerentwicklung](#); 2. [en.../Grenzlandring](#);
3. [en.../Dragon's_teeth_\(fortification\)](#); 4. [en.../North_Eifel](#)

Images:

Previously: [RAF Wildenrath's Officers' \(not Airmen's\) Married Quarters](#).

Source: [baor-locations.org/RAFWildenrath.aspx.html](#)

Above: *Dragon's teeth near Aachen, Germany, part of the Siegfried Line*. Source: [commons.wikimedia.org \(curid=64893\)](#)

Following Nanny's operation, it was Tiny's family's turn to travel to Amsterdam, while Alice kept 'house' at camp Wildenrath. Recalled Alice when she got back to Amsterdam at the end of November, "*Mum did look poorly.*"¹¹¹

On that occasion, John made Irene's acquaintance too, visiting her and Cor in their attic flat, where the 'Ridderhof suitor' recalled most notably "*there was not even a toilet!*"

"*Yes!*" confirmed Irene "*There was no toilet. We had to go downstairs*"¹¹² – namely, to her friends' parents' apartment.

I wondered after this amusing moment whether Alice's admirer could ever see himself moving to or living in Amsterdam?

"*Never!*" was his unequivocal reply in 2022 (but not because apartments came without toilets, I believe). Rather, he had other plans. Besides which, his terms of engagement were to 1971 while the remainder of his service would not likely see him posted abroad again, he told me.

So, if for John it was clear his destiny was in the UK, what about Alice? She told me:

"*Unlike Tiny, it was never my intention to leave Holland.*"

So as Christmas approached, the couple's longer-term prospects looked uncertain to say the least. They were neither an 'item' yet and with Alice's nannying stint at an end, in principle she was bound to Amsterdam even before the festive season got underway (what is more, she was invited by the family she had been supporting, the Bradleys, to continue her nannying in the UK, but only declined) due to her mother's recovery.

Factoring in Tiny and Walter's foreseen return to the UK in spring of the following year – his second spell with the RAF already drawing to an end – Cupid's return seemed altogether necessary!

And return it did, their son, Michael, reminding me as recently as December 2022:

"*Regarding the subject of love, you'd need my mother. Remember that it was she that was match maker to your mum and dad!*"¹¹³

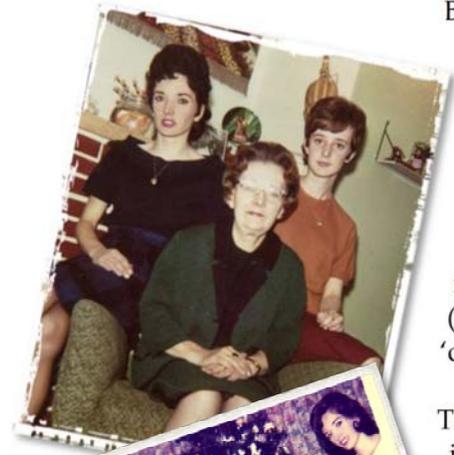
Having returned with John to Wildenrath, on December 15th, Alice was back in Amsterdam assisting her mother, following her discharge. Nanny, however, was still very weak, rarely ate and spoke mostly of her late husband. To comfort her, "*Carré sent a nice basket of fruit.*"¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Personal diary entry. November 28, 1965

¹¹² Personal correspondence. May 15, 2023

¹¹³ Personal correspondence. December 21, 2022

¹¹⁴ Personal diary entry. December 17, 1965



Christmas 1965 inside 188 AMQ among - by now - very familiar faces. N.b. in the bottom photo one can just make out family friends Luis and Karin

Being home and in Alice's company though must have done Nanny the world of good because within a week she was that improved that she herself joined Tiny, family and friends across the border that Christmas.¹¹⁵

Surrounded by her daughters, she put on a brave face in the absence of her late husband. She surely cracked a smile too when Tiny pushed John and Alice under the mistletoe! Helped along by date nights at the Astra cinema (where Tiny occasionally ushered),¹¹⁶ the two became a 'couple' that Christmas.

The New Year got off to a good start too, Alice having been invited to undertake a new round of childminding for another family at RAF Wildenrath (John meanwhile took to the ski slopes in Bavaria). In mid-March, however, following a tip-off from a friend, Alice was called for an interview by Dutch bank: *Mees and Hope*, and so said farewell once and for all to RAF Wildenrath. A successful medical followed and then job offer to serve as a wire transfer clerk, a position which kicked off in Amsterdam on March 28th.

From John's perspective, the RAF campsite must have grown a whole lot quieter at that point, even more so after Walter, Tiny and son concluded their tour of duty and returned to the UK in early April, Michael noting they short-stayed at the Union Jack Club where, "On a black & white TV in the main seating area, I saw my very first Doctor Who episode: 'The Toy Maker.'"¹¹⁷

Alongside this he returned with an abundance of camp memories too, recalling to me in writing about dens in eerie woods, piano lessons from a German gentleman, participating in boys' well-to-do group, Cubs ("DYB, DYB, DYB and all that"), watching 'Dr Who and the Daleks' at the Astra cinema in 1965, riding with one or two other boys on the back of a German coal lorry whilst delivering to the married quarters, transient school friends, setting off stink bombs in class and cycling to lessons on Alice's old green bicycle before "a lesson for all proceeded on the workings of said bicycle."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ When Tiny "visited mum after she had her kidney stone surgery, they met up with a former neighbour from Jan Steen Str. He (Louie van Toll) had lost his wife and so she invited him and their little girl (Karin) over for Christmas for several days. Maybe he then brought mum over for Christmas," writes Alice on January 5, 2023 (later adding that she herself may have travelled alone by train. Or that possibly another neighbour drove her and her mother down before returning that same day to Amsterdam).

¹¹⁶ Personal correspondence with Michael. March 7, 2023

¹¹⁷ Personal correspondence. December 15, 2022. N.b. According to the IMDB [here](#), it first aired on April 2, 1966.

¹¹⁸ Personal correspondence. March 6 and 7, 2023.

As for the ever-resourceful Simpson, he abounded with contingencies. Reflecting the popular wave of consumption in West Germany at the time, John ordered himself a new set of (four) wheels (and it should be said, a status symbol for many a German),¹¹⁹ which obviously simplified getting to and from Amsterdam.

He journeyed up to visit the working girl for the Easter weekend too (following a fortnight's vacation there in early February, red roses having marked Valentine's Day). And as the Simpson charm worked its magic, Nanny, recognising the decent chap he was, (hire-) purchased a *Blaupunkt* radio for his VW Beetle which was collected in May. In return, Dad applied himself to pick up all the Dutch he could. He was clearly keen on sending all the right signals!

But perhaps his sixth sense regarding Amsterdam itself was well placed because while the city was always exciting, it was also becoming slightly unsavoury.

In the summer of 1965, the Provo phenomenon had begun to dominate Dutch news, not least because it had declared Amsterdam 'the Magic Centre,' the place from which a new consciousness would come into being. The crowds at its happenings had now grown exponentially.

"Youngsters started to show up in Amsterdam from other parts of the country," observed Roel Van Duijn, a Provo founder and the main instigator of a protest in 1960 to block traffic in a busy intersection in the Hague after learning the Dutch government was going to allow American nuclear weapons to be stored on Dutch soil.

"All of a sudden they had long hair. It was so surprising to see. This was 1965 – you didn't see this sort of thing in Berlin or Paris until 1967," he continued.¹²⁰

The Provos advocated "White Plans." The White Chimney Plan, for instance, put the problem of air pollution on the political agenda, seeking to impose fines on polluters.¹²¹ Another was the White Bicycle Plan, the first ever shared-bike scheme that at the same time also advocated a car-free inner city (more about which is included in the textbox overleaf). A third was the White Rumour Plan, which spread the word around Amsterdam that LSD was about to be dumped in the city's water supply.¹²²



Woman at work: Alice, ca. 1966.
Note especially the family
heirlooms on the writing bureau
(built by her father)

¹¹⁹ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy.* German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 376

¹²⁰ Cited in *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City.* Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 323, 328

¹²¹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City.* Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 292

¹²² See: [alchetron.com/Provo-\(movement\)](http://alchetron.com/Provo-(movement))

18.7: The White Bicycle Plan

According to Pete Jordan, author of *In the City of Bikes. The Story of the Amsterdam Cyclist*, “The 1960s was not a kind period for Amsterdam’s cyclists. The sort of mass motorisation that had swept the United States four decades earlier now overwhelmed Holland’s capital; from 1960 to 1970, the number of automobiles in the city quadrupled.”^{1a}

There was also a massive rise in the number of scooters, and “Another dangerous nuisance was the bus drivers who manoeuvred their vehicles through the traffic with little regard for those on bikes.”^{1a}

Not only did the great many cars in transit pose hazards for the cyclists (collisions and traffic deaths rose dramatically); so too did the number of immobile cars. With few off-street parking options, parked cars were strewn everywhere ... A single parked car occupied as much space as ten parked bikes. As a result, many of the city’s squares – *Leidseplein*, *Rembrandtplein*, *Nieuwmarkt*, for example – sites that for centuries had served as places for public gatherings and/or outdoor markets – became ad hoc parking lots. The epidemic of sidewalk parking, bridge parking and double-parking hindered cyclists both while riding their bikes and when looking to park their bikes.^{1b}

Cyclists’ concerns, however, mattered little to those who ran the city.^{1b} But H. Tielrooy, chief inspector of Amsterdam’s traffic police recognised “The busyness is becoming greater and greater ... Under such conditions ... cycling nowadays is tantamount to attempting suicide.”^{1c}

The city’s downtrodden cyclists were being pushed to the margins, but one tiny group of Amsterdammers in the 1960s would step forward to extol the virtues of urban cycling.^{1c}

The Provos’ *White Bicycle Plan* spawned what today is probably the most sophisticated urban bicycle system in the world, with dedicated bike lanes, traffic lights, parking garages and an elaborate system of bike etiquette.²

It began, however, with a handwritten flyer entitled that was pasted to walls around the city from July 27th, 1965. It included the text: “The White Bicycle is the first free, collectivised means of transport. The White Bicycle symbolises simplicity and cleanliness in contrast to the gaudiness and filthiness of the authoritarian auto.”^{1d}

In principle, a fleet of white bicycles was to be made freely available to all who wanted to use them. They would be available, unlocked, at points around the city. Residents would hop on one, ride it to their destination, and leave it there for the next person.^{2b}

In fact, public-use bicycles had been proposed as early as 1958 by the Dutch author, Hugo Brandt Corstius^{1e} (known for his achievements in both literature and science but also columnist for *Vrij Nederland* and *de Volkskrant*).³ The police, however, confiscated the shared bikes, on the grounds of a 1920 statute required bicycles parked in public spaces to be locked (and never gave them back).^{1f}

Despite not being a big success at the time, Roel Van Duijn’s ideas and effort helped initiate urban bicycle programs in cities around the world^{2c} – ultimately becoming successful once safety and security measures diminished the threat of theft and vandalism and assured customers quality bikes were available per rental and public funding was made available to stave off rising vehicle use and their negative effects in cities (the pioneer and arguably leader among those service providers probably remains *nextbike*, founded in 2004 and based in Leipzig)!

Sources:

1. Pete Jordan. *In the City of Bikes. The Story of the Amsterdam Cyclist*. Harper Perennial, 2013. Pp. 293 (1a), 294 (1b), 296 (1c), 297 (1d), 299 (1e), 301/2 (1f)

2: *Amsterdam: A History of the World’s Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 334 (2a), 327 (2b), 334 (2c)

3: See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugo_Brandt_Corstius

Image:

The infamous white bike. Cor Jaring/Stadsarchief Amsterdam (010004008047). 19-3-1966. See: journals.sagepub.com



Being the outsider, John tended to take little notice of the Provos' campaigns, while Alice reminded me that her home in the *Oosterparkbuurt* (i.e. the Oosterpark neighbourhood) was far enough removed from those city-centre happenings to be able to turn a blind eye.

The Provos gained international notoriety in early March 1966 when they protested at the marriage of Princess (later Queen) Beatrix to Claus von Amsberg, a German nobleman who had been in the Hitler Youth and served briefly in the *Wehrmacht* during the war.

"How dare she! In the city of the February Strike!" was the general response (for the younger generation had long overcome the shame of Amsterdam's past and only remembered its heroes).¹²³

Protesters jeered the wedding couple as their procession rolled through Amsterdam, and bystanders chanted "bring my bicycle back" – a reference to the many bikes commandeered by the retreating German soldiers in 1945.

The event was broadcast live to the world, but what most saw of it was street chaos rather than the royal couple.¹²⁴ Apparently. Because Alice herself watched it from West Germany, although she recalls little of the commotion the Provos set out to cause. Nonetheless, the royal wedding marked a turning point in the Provo movement: a critical mass of Amsterdammers in effect joined Provo.

Gijs Van Hall, Amsterdam's mayor and a member of the resistance during the war, was to some extent caught in the middle, trying to mediate between free expression in his city and distant superiors – in this case the national government in the Hague – who wanted the 'nonsense' to end. Soon after the wedding he was forced out of office. In June 1966, the Provo went on to win five seats on the city council.¹²⁵

It was during this period that tolerance towards drug use and homosexuals also emerged in the Netherlands. As early as 1946, Dutch gays had formed the world's first organisation to advance gay rights. Benno Premsele emerged the leading voice, when at the end of 1964, he appeared on television to promote public awareness of the reality and normalcy of homosexuality.

The appearance turned out to be a landmark not only for homosexuality but for Dutch television and for the post-war absence of civil rights. From Premsele's point of view, "The problem of sexuality is the problem not of the homosexual but of society. Just like the problem of anti-Semitism is in the end the problem not of the Jews but of non-Jews. And it's the same with the problem of women's emancipation, where it's actually men who are the problem."¹²⁶

¹²³ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 293

¹²⁴ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 295

¹²⁵ *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 330, 329, 331

¹²⁶ *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 319, 320

Having made a full recovery from her operation, Nanny had found her feet, getting herself a job as a *schoonmaakster*¹²⁷ (female janitor) in a nearby bookshop on the opposite side of the Amstel. Then, as spring rolled into summer, she was invited by John and Alice to accompany them on various excursions: Rotterdam, for instance (see adjacent photograph), followed by England in September.

Right:
We're too
sexy for our
shirts: Out
and about
beyond
Rotterdam.
July 11, 1966.



Below:
Nanny's
back! After
nearly four
decades
away, the
former
acrobat
returns to
London for
an audience
with...
September
1966.



Perhaps Nanny was tickled too by the fact she could return to the UK, the last visit having been way back in early 1928 and at the height of her and Margot's touring days as acrobats, when the Six Rockets had shared the bill at the London Palladium with Sophie Tucker, 'The Last of the Red-Hot Mamas.' That was not long before the sisters sailed on to New York for three more years in the US (which incidentally left me wondering whether Nanny even noticed Sophie Tucker's passing on February 9th, 1966).¹²⁸

Theirs was certainly a full itinerary. Besides the sights of London: St Pauls, the Tower and Oxford Street, they also caught up with Tiny, family and the new addition (a poodle called *Sasha*) in RAF Bovington.¹²⁹ Of the return, Michael told me:

*"Dr Who! That was my number one reason for wanting to move back to England. And to see the Daleks!"*¹³⁰

¹²⁷ See: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/schoonmaakster

¹²⁸ See: bbc.com/news/magazine-35505532

¹²⁹ Their address was: 11 Austins Mead. See it here on [Gmaps](https://www.google.com/maps)

¹³⁰ Personal correspondence. December 15, 2022. *N.b. Of Bovington, Michael adds: "I recall ...I was about to go out to play but ended standing up the entire time, leaning against the kitchen/sitting room doorpost watching the [Jul. 30] 1966 World Cup. I'm glad I did."*

During their visit it also emerged that Walter's spell of RAF rotations were approaching their end with 22 years being about the maximum one could serve in 'the forces.'¹³¹ The expectation was then that with 20 years on the clock, before long he'd be looking for a new job. At least there was time to prepare.

Overall, however, I imagine that was music to John's ears, since, with a marriage proposal being the obvious next step, what could be more comforting to Alice than to know Tiny might be 'nearby.' In a year or so, John himself would return to the UK for the last spell of his RAF term too.

Yet how much more thought provoking might that family gathering have been, had Tiny returned to the UK just a little earlier in the new year and picked up the *Islington Gazette*, only to stumble on the obituary of a local London businessman named 'Paul Tyralla.' That is, a chap sharing the same name as her maternal grandfather, namely that soldier who never returned from the first world war battlefield to greet his wife and daughter, Nanny, in December 1918. The past would literally have come face to face with the present and in so doing, delivered a fairy tale ending to what might have been a decades-long 'missing person's' story.

However, it was only after the Islington-based gent had passed away, that Tiny led our historical lineage to England. And while this particular Tyralla was ultimately no relative, his story is every bit worth the read that his namesake's is (between Chapters IV and VIII)!

On with that late summer 1966 vacation, mobility was most certainly the motto of the day, since time was also found to complete a visit the west country that included a stay in Bristol. Drop ins to John's brothers, Jim, who together with wife Mary now lived in a cottage in Tintern accompanied by their first-born, almost year-old Richard, and Wally, who worked in Monmouth's timber mill and lived in Caldicot.

On their return to Tiny's, they also visited John's father to the northwest of London in their tiny house in High Wycombe, together with his new wife, Julie – and all four half-brothers! And of course, Alice was introduced to that family of six who had given John such good advice before he left for West Germany (Alice deeming them "really friendly" which must have signalled their approval)!

There was a further surprise yet in store when the travellers missed the return ferry on September 23rd (somewhat repeating that earlier occurrence when John took Alice on their first international journey, readers might recall)! Ultimately, the three of them caught a ferry to Calais.

¹³¹ Personal correspondence, December 15, 2022.

18.8: Paul Tyralla: Back in the News?!

On February 6th, 1966, Paul Tyralla, of 86 Russell Court, London died. According to the *National Probate Calendar* extract shown below and retrieved from *ancestry.com*, he was worth GBP 118,155, no small amount in those days (my parents' first home was purchased for GBP 3,500 in early 1971).



Two years prior, in May 1964, an article (shown above) had been published on that same gentleman in the *Islington Gazette*. He was the founder of the "Flit" Slide Fastener Company located in the centre of London at Clerkenwell Close. The article (just legibly signed by Paul Tyralla) commended his rewarding of those employees who had dedicated five or more years' service with a five-year bonus of up to GBP 300 (ultimately around 50 staff). According to the newpiece, his company had been in business since 1908.

I was fortunate this information reached me at all, although it was thanks to a young London-based man who not only discovered this project's website (*wandervogel.org*) and Facebook account (@*PassageThroughLeipzig*) but also after discovering the clipping among some of his family's heirlooms – his great grandfather and great grandmother having been close friends of Paul Tyralla.

Ben Udall, who is completing his own genealogical research, got in touch via Facebook, saying: "My dad tells me that 'Pawel' was very poor, living in one room in a house in Islington when my great-grandparents first knew him in the 1920's. He used to eat and spend time at their house, 103 Brookside, East Barnet. We think he actually moved in with them, according to the 1939 [population] Register. We also believe he was interned for a short period at the beginning of WW2."

"He and my great-grandfather, (both exempt from call-up as they were engineers) made their fortune buying up machinery from bombed factories in London, first digging it out and then refurbishing it and selling it on. Paul bought a building in Clerkenwell Close that he used as workshop or factory up until his death in Cape Town, South Africa in the 1960's. He also acquired a lot of residential property during the war - over a hundred houses in the Barnet area."

What is even more interesting perhaps is that Ben's great-grandparents smuggled currency to Paul Tyralla's family in Germany immediately after the war. "They travelled by train through many bombed-out towns, which shocked them."

As a small boy, Ben's father met Paul Tyralla at the factory in 1962 or thereabouts. By that time, he had a chauffeur-driven Austin Princess and spent the winters in South Africa. "The factory was grim," he adds. "He never spent any money on it." Nonetheless, he left it to his nine longest-serving employees when he died, leaving Ben's father and brother a few 100 pounds each too. His properties meanwhile were sold to pay death duties.

Paul Tyralla never married, according to Ben, although he reputedly had a number of girlfriends. "And as far as we know he had no children."

So who was this Paul Tyralla, and was it indeed Nanny's Silesian-born father? In January 2017, Ben had introduced himself with: "Hello, I came across your great-grandfather, Paul Tyralla while researching my own family history. Are you certain he died in WW1, because I think otherwise..."

Well, after my own extensive research I could certainly confirm 'my' Paul Tyralla had died in world war one (even if only a corpse had been found). But at the same time I could confirm that the Paul Tyralla he referred to wasn't my great grandfather. How? Well, the full answer is summarized in textbox 8.7 within Chapter VIII on page 201, and although Silesian-born, his birthplace was another part of the province. That meant I could also colour Ben's knowledge regarding 'his' Paul Amandus Tyralla's younger life and journey to the UK, besides his internship during world war I.

Said Ben after all became clear: "I never thought there could be two 'Paul' Tyrallas, because it was such an unusual surname even in Germany, let alone being of an incredibly similar age."

TYRALLA Paul Amandus of 86 Russell Court London W.C.1 died 6 February 1966 at Cape Town South Africa Probate London 14 June to Joseph Misselke company director Lindley Robertson Armitage chartered accountant and Heinz Ulrich Lachmann solicitor. £118155.

Sources: *Islington Gazette* May 29, 1964 (No. 70, Issue 18,644), Pg. 1; *ancestry.com*; and findmypast.co.uk

Over the last of that continental year 'together' the couple continued to see each other often. If not weekend visits in Amsterdam, then elsewhere, for instance *Koblenz*. Or they telephoned, wrote and exchanged audio tapes.

In December 1966, they attended the Dutch stage production of 'Fiddler on the Roof', Nanny braving her demons for an emotional return to Carré, not only her late husband's employer but that theatre where she had performed between December 1931 and February 1932.¹³² But once was enough.

From 1967, Alice subscribed to an English course (in which she finished top of the class come July, "surprise surprise" she writes in her diary). In February, she chose to follow the same Christian faith that John had committed to, and in May, the pair holidayed far and wide, visiting Barcelona, Geneva, Heidelberg as well as Rheindahlen for a little nostalgia.

It must have been heart-wrenching, even if not unexpected, when in early July, John shared the news that he'd be leaving West Germany in September. He'd be South Wales-bound, which as Alice noted in her diary was "a rather a long way from the Tucks." Their talk about getting engaged probably helped to placate any fears that she might be deserted.

During those last weeks before John's departure, Alice occupied herself with preparing to celebrate Nanny's 60th that August – almost two years since Cor's passing.

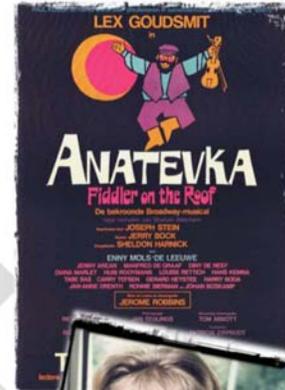
The following weekend John returned to Holland. Yet despite the promise of a big moment thanks to a romantic dinner in *Amstelveen*, his marriage proposal did not materialise. A week later Alice wrote in her diary:

"Got a letter from John saying he was going to ask me last weekend but had changed his mind! So, no engagement before he goes back to the UK."

Without champagne, John said his farewell with:

"21 roses, one for each month we've been together! I shall miss him so much" Alice's diary revealed that Sept. 5th, 1967.

Patience was obviously going to turn out to be a virtue as far as this relationship was concerned!



Anatevka premiered at Carré in 1966 and was subsequently performed 586 times. Source: secondhandscnqs.com/live-show/414



Passenger without a ticket to ride: Alice, June 11, 1967, not long before John announces his BR-exit



A dame with a room full of flowers: Nanny's 60th birthday, Aug. 7, 1967 in Oosterparkstraat

¹³² See Chapter XIII: Sister Act and Pt. 1: The Prince and the Showgirl. Pg. 457-459

In preparing to head off, John surely reflected on an incredibly exciting two and a half years in continental Europe, although it's an awful pity that his mother wasn't able to share the reflections he brought home, which as time proved, would be lost on his father. Leaving West Germany for RAF St Athan, I suppose John could have wondered what direction life might have taken, were he not posted to RAF Wildenrath.

In any case, distance made the heart grow fonder and once John was back in Amsterdam, he wasn't taking any chances! He returned to the Netherlands on December 16th and proposed to Alice the following day.

One person who might have had a little less cause to celebrate was Nanny, the inevitable outcome being her daughter's permanent move to the UK. But as Tiny recalled to me:

"Nanny thought it was ok: The men were nice and kind and that was the most important thing."

Thereafter, attention was focused on the big day, slated for that same date Nanny and Cor had wedded: July 27th, and for sure, in Holland.

Some memorable anecdotes follow. In mid-January, for instance, Alice notes in her diary that she *"Had a nice pay increase but of course the taxman takes a nice slice too."* Obviously, a pay rise will always be handy for soon-to-be newlyweds. But I wonder whether the bank wasn't hoping their employee of two years would move up through the ranks.

Alice has her doubts: *"There were three or four of us girls in that corner, all of whom had greater ambition than me."*

Alice's diary also notes that she was saving hard, and indeed, come mid-May had put aside around 1000 Dutch Guilders. Today, May 18th, 2023, that's the equivalent of about EUR 3,000.¹³³ *"Won't be there for long, so many bills"* she wistfully adds, however.

Some would argue this frugality is typically Dutch but in my last chapter I also note the tendency to save, in the sense of anticipating consumption, was typically German.¹³⁴

But Ben Coates, who spent five or so years in Holland from late 2010 until he published, *'Why the Dutch are Different'*, shares his impression that "overall the Dutch ... [have] a strong inclination to frown on conspicuous consumption." In the next sentence he comically notes their word for debt, *'schuld'*, means guilt, while acknowledging "Dutch thrift had deep roots in the Protestant work ethic."¹³⁵

¹³³ NLG 1000 amounts to around NLG 6,164 in today's terms according to <https://fxtop.com/en/historical-currency-converter.php> which was then converted to euros at the same site, yielding EUR 2,797 precisely.

¹³⁴ see Chapter XVII: Love's Great Adventures, and Pt. 2: Cold War Accessories. Pg. 950

¹³⁵ *Why the Dutch are Different: A Journey Into the Hidden Heart of the Netherlands*. Ben Coates. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2016. Pg. 162, 163

John's Easter visit¹³⁶ put the last preparatory pieces in place for their wedding (and saw him ferry Alice's plants back to the UK). Afterwards, he sold his Austin 7 (at a 300 percent profit he told me), chipping in cash for the big day from his side.

But if that was all heartening progress, one can only imagine Alice's disappointment when her big sister wrote her (as late as June) that she and the family wouldn't travel for the wedding because "*They haven't got the money.*"

"Very disappointed and upset about that," Alice wrote in her diary, adding *"nearly passed out in the bathroom and hit my head on the wall."*

With John and Alice's announcements in December of the last year, it would have been quite characteristically un-Dutch to have been out of pocket, especially given the big day was the culmination of Tiny's matchmaking three years prior.

Yet despite that setback, it all came together on the big day, Tiny and Michael joining the party too on July 22nd. A full schedule lay ahead: Alice finished at the bank on the 23rd, John arrived on the 24th, and even Wally on the 25th.

As a matter of precaution (or to add some humour along the way), John was forbidden from meeting his brother at the airport ("*there were concerns the bridegroom might get cold feet and do a runner!!*"), Tiny collecting him and hosting him for a lovely couple of days in Amsterdam, showing him the sights.

And so, despite the nerves and summer heat, Alice – having just turned 18 – and John were married on Friday 26th July, 1968 (ultimately the 27th was unavailable it being a Saturday): a *Ridderhof* (or 'courtly' knight) was married at the *Prinsenhof* (the 'Court of Princes'¹³⁷), then Amsterdam's City Hall and today The Grand hotel.

More wedding pictures were taken in the *Oosterpark* (which turned out "*quite good*" Alice later wrote in her diary), before John brought that "*nice German girl*" home, flying one-way to London Heathrow (where their now dear friends from Cambridge surprised them) before heading on to the Channel Islands for a week.

Since that date the couple have formally clocked up a 55-year partnership, almost 58 years if one counts their mistletoe encounter! As the remaining chapters will show, it wasn't always the stuff of fairy tales and romance. But even if Alice had never dreamt of such an ending, what followed was for all intents and purposes, their take on the American Dream.

Although Nanny may have thought life was going to grow dull without two of her daughters close by, a little earlier in spring that year she became a grandmother again when Irene gave birth to her first son (whose name referenced both mother and grandfather's). And like his grandmother and younger aunt, '*Rene Cornelis*' was also born premature, arriving one month early on March 8th.

¹³⁶ From April 6-16, 1968

¹³⁷ After serving as a convent, from 1578 it was used as lodging house for esteemed guests of city officials, such as members of European royalty. See sofitel-legend-thegrand.com/en/history.html and [nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prinsenhof_\(Amsterdam\)](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prinsenhof_(Amsterdam))

The year of 1968 had many positives for the family as a whole. And while the days and months that followed for Nanny were perhaps somewhat reminiscent of the loneliness she felt after Cor died, there was a silver lining in that particular cloud when Irene and Cor moving 'down the road' to Bankastraet, 18 shortly before Rene was born, in Amsterdam's *Indische Buurt Oost* (i.e. Oosterpark).



Wedding Day Mirth:
Smiles at Amsterdam's City Hall along the *Prinsengracht* canal, a seven-minute walk from Theater Carré: Nanny (in lace dress and matching coat purchased by Alice) had many reasons to smile: Not only had she just received an all-new set of teeth (hence the broad grin), but Tiny and Michael were back in Amsterdam while Irene had made her a grandmother again (to another boy)! Sadly, the ring John wears was stolen when the family home was broken into in 2011.

City hall image:
commons.wikimedia.org



As for the city which for Nanny had served as home once she retired from the stage (and Irene since 1939), there remained few dull moments there, Amsterdam's reputation as the centre of the new liberalism being cemented through two events in spring 1969 that rounded off the decade.

The first began with the University of Amsterdam's students demanding a say in all university matters. Nothing so odd about that on the surface. However, when the president rejected the demand, 700 students staged a sit-in, action which brought home to many the starkness of the generational divide. "That shook the city internally," writes Russell Shorto in his *'Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City.'*¹³⁸

The second event took place between March 25th and 31st, 1969 when former Beatle, John Lennon, together with Yoko Ono, occupied suite 902 of the Amsterdam Hilton and taped handmade posters to the windows: BED, PEACE said one. HAIR, PEACE said another. The couple's 'bed-in' (their idea of a honeymoon but probably their take on San Francisco's earlier 'Human Be-in') brought journalists from all over the world.

While it didn't do much for world peace, according to Shorto it "rebranded Amsterdam globally as the liberal capital of the world," ensuring it came out of the 1950s and 1960s with a renewed commitment to its liberal heritage.

In fact, "in Amsterdam, the 1960s didn't end", continues Shorto, since "Roel Van Duijn became a member of the Amsterdam city council in 1969 [and] remained in city government for the next thirty years."

In effect, "the city's establishment became 'Provo,'" with the 1960s having "extended and sped up the process of change that the war had brought about."

And so "The counterculture became Amsterdam's dominant culture. And it's still that way," says Jan Donkers (a young correspondent for VPRO Radio who would go on to become a renowned Dutch pop journalist¹³⁹ and whose shows continued to be aired in 2021.¹⁴⁰).

Such is the long legacy of the famous Dutch tolerance that dated back to the Union of Utrecht.

Yet two of the Ridderhof girls had turned their back on it and flown the nest.

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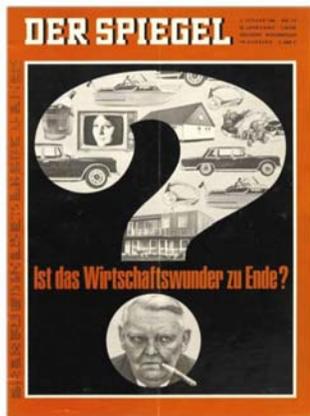
¹³⁸ *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 331

¹³⁹ Cited in *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 334

¹⁴⁰ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Donkers

- LOOK EAST -

The Jan. 3, 1966 cover of *Der Spiegel* practically mirrors that of the Aug. 1959 *Saturday Evening Post* (see pg. 985) but without the optimism, asking conversely "Is the economic miracle over?"
Source: hdg.de



When John left West Germany in September 1967, it was at the height of a severe economic and structural crisis triggered by the onset of coal mine closures from 1966 in the industrial Ruhr.¹⁴¹ Its consequences spread countrywide,¹⁴² such that the following year, West German national product and industrial production both fell for the first time in the new republic's history.¹⁴³ That autumn saw a change in government; a temporary Grand Coalition of the CDU/CSU¹⁴⁴ and the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) with the intent to bring about real economic growth once more.¹⁴⁵

Shortly before his departure, John and colleagues crossed East German territory in the planes he typically serviced – a possible undercover operation that if picked up by the Soviets, ran the risk of capture and interrogation should they have been forced down by its MiGs.¹⁴⁶ He recalls:

*"On up the air corridor to Berlin – you soon worked out why some of our Pembrokes were so well equipped with their sideways, downwards and oblique facing powerful cameras"*¹⁴⁷

This was because, "In addition to their usual task ferrying passengers and priority freight around Germany and to the UK," three 'fit' Pembrokes also engaged in a covert intelligence role ... along the Berlin Corridors under Operation Hallmark" having been " ... specially modified with cameras in the cabin."¹⁴⁸

"For miles and miles, the terrain was just brown mud, and one could see tank tracks everywhere!"

I expect the crew had actually flown above East Germany's National People's Army's *Letzlinger Heide* training area which lay to the north of Leipzig and along the central corridor to West Berlin. It was here that "Soviet forces exercised their capabilities regularly," according to David Gledhill in his *Phantom in the Cold War*.¹⁴⁹

"Plus, the weather gave the impression of mystery; mostly shrouded by low cloud... that sunless landscape struck me as so dismal and sad."

¹⁴¹ See also: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationalisierungsverband_des_Steinkohlenbergbaus

¹⁴² *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy.* German Bundestag, 1998. Pg. 375, 382

¹⁴³ *Economy and State in Germany in the twentieth century.* Richard Overby. In *Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History* edited by Ogilvie and Overby. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 268

¹⁴⁴ The Christian Democratic Union of Germany and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria

¹⁴⁵ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy.* German Bundestag, 1998. Pg. 384

¹⁴⁶ *Phantom in the Cold War. RAF Wildenrath 1977-1992.* Pen and Sword Aviation, 2017. David Gledhill. Pg. 34

¹⁴⁷ Personal correspondence. March 7 and 8, 2023.

¹⁴⁸ *Phantom in the Cold War. RAF Wildenrath 1977-1992.* Pen and Sword Aviation, 2017. David Gledhill. Pg. 28, 33.

¹⁴⁹ *Phantom in the Cold War. RAF Wildenrath 1977-1992.* Pen and Sword Aviation, 2017. David Gledhill. Pg. 33

"On landing at RAF Gatow on August 23, 1967, you could hear tanks on their firing ranges and from visitor reception (you were not allowed to wander around), you could see East German guards training their binoculars on us. Somewhat chilling! On leaving Berlin a couple of hours later, flying out in a south-westerly direction, all you could see were the bombed-out skeletons of the city's suburbs for what seemed miles."

John surely recalled how his brother-in-law, Walter, was similarly unimpressed, having been posted to RAF Gatow over a decade earlier.



A quasi-military border policeman Volkspolizei standing guard at a bridge linking East and West Berlin in 1961. Source: coldwar.unc.edu

I was fortunate enough to learn of another former RAF Wildenrath resident's impressions from a separate but similar mission to Berlin:

"I first went there in 1968 on a family vacation (which might've been a thin disguise for military business at RAF Gatow). There was still a lot of World War II rubble, and a lot of bullet-riddled architecture. It was a scarred and spooky city."

"The 'Wall' had only been constructed seven years earlier ... snaking between the reconstructions, punctuated by watchtowers and flanked with coils of barbed wire."

"My young brain was curious about a large number of amputees, and the truck-loads of rubble being heaped up into an artificial hill (later known as Teufelsberg)."

"Distinctly memorable."¹⁵⁰

Although John's rank didn't allow it, certain station personnel, including RAF "officers were able to visit Berlin to experience life in both East and West Germany" where "Bargains were to be had given the poor performance of the *Ostmark* over the *Deutschmark*..." This meant "Luxury household goods could be secured at bargain basement prices."



For foreigners only: *Intershop* was a chain of government operated stores across East Germany in which only hard currencies could be used. Source: gettyimages.fi

Continues Gledhill within his account of his experiences at RAF Wildenrath between 1977 and 1992, "such visits gave Wildenrath personnel a very clear impression of the differences over life in the opposing power blocs."¹⁵¹

Instead of his 'flying' visit, let's suppose John was an officers who extended his business beyond Berlin to a curiosity visit to his mother-in-law's birthplace, that summer of 1967. What would he have seen and what stories would he have returned with, even moreso if Nanny had kept in contact with Vera?

¹⁵⁰ Via Wandervogel webpage: March 9, 2023. Online [here](#).

¹⁵¹ *Phantom in the Cold War. RAF Wildenrath 1977-1992*. Pen and Sword Aviation, 2017. David Gledhill. Pg. 36

Harald Fritzsch, a world-renowned physicist who was yet to complete his *'Escape from Leipzig'* recalled at the time, for instance, it: "was ... much more cosmopolitan than the capital: ... Twice a year there were fairs ... which attracted many visitors from Western countries." In East Berlin on the other hand, "the capital was too much under the control of the party leadership of the SED (the Socialist Unity Party) and of the state security services."¹⁵²

But to ordinary East Germans, the second half of the 1960s was improving and continued to do so, especially when measuring well-being by the West German standard. "The dream of a mechanised private sphere entered the realm of practice," which meant that after 1965, "production of household durables and synthetic fabrics ... leaped upward. Between 1965 and 1969, private consumption rose at twice the rate of 1960 to 1964 and grew faster than income. From vacuum cleaners to refrigerators to televisions, earlier luxuries became articles of everyday life."¹⁵³ Reflecting this growth in consumption, Leipzig gained 19 new *Kaufhallen* (department stores) by 1970.¹⁵⁴ Was the American Dream within touching distance of Leipzig?

In 1966, store opening hours were extended to 8pm in cities, which is also when the regime introduced the nine-hour day and five-day week.¹⁵⁵ Although every second Saturday was work-free in 1966, from August 28th, 1967, working Saturdays were done away with altogether¹⁵⁶ (although according to Vera's sons, "*man konnte auf freiwilliger Basis arbeiten*", i.e. that is, Saturday working was voluntary, suggesting that she was not obliged to labour even before the rules changed). Alongside these advances, holiday entitlement was raised to 15 days.¹⁵⁷ Sadly, however, neither of her sons were ready to reflect on what this meant for their family.

Knowing that neither economics, politics nor East Germany interested Nanny or her late cousin's daughter, the Amsterdam-based 'Leipziger' might have cocked an ear in the direction of the *Heimat* when the city's *Zentralstadion* played host to Holland on April 5th, 1967, with the East German national team eventually running out 4-3 winners.¹⁵⁸

A UEFA Euro 1968 qualifier, the game must have been pure theatre, Holland going two goals up after 12 minutes and taking their lead into the break, before the East Germans routed their opponents, scoring four second-half goals (despite the Dutch re-taking the lead at 2-2), the last five minutes from time.¹⁵⁹ Remembers Irene Ridderhof, "*Yes, Cor and I saw a lot of games, we liked football. But I do not remember that one.*"¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² *Escape from Leipzig*. Harald Fritzsch. Wspsc, 2008. Pg. 32

¹⁵³ *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 274-5

¹⁵⁴ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1970). Pg. 76

¹⁵⁵ *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*.

Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 283

¹⁵⁶ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1966 and 1967). Pg. 72, 73

¹⁵⁷ *The German Democratic Republic: Studies in European History*. Peter Grieder. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pg. 64

¹⁵⁸ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zentralstadion_\(1956\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zentralstadion_(1956))

¹⁵⁹ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1967). Pg. 73

¹⁶⁰ Personal correspondence, April 6th, 2023.

The qualifier was not likely televised, *DDR Fernsehen* having only launched afternoon and evening programming in 1967.¹⁶¹ But I was surprised that neither of Vera's sons: Konrad (having not long turned 18 at the time) and Herbert (having just turned 16) gushed memory of it when asked, because they would have surely savoured the win: younger brother, Uwe (eight at the time¹⁶²) adding:¹⁶³

"Both were gifted footballers. Conny (the elder) was at BSG Chemie Leipzig while Herbert was at 1.FC Lokomotive Leipzig."

Their engagement (subsequent to their *Jugendweihe* I suppose) was likely linked to the reorganisation of East German football in 1963, which set out to foster the development of talent for the country's national side. BSG was based in *Leipzig Leutzsch* in the *Alt-West*, which, as a result of the shake up, saw it win East Germany's *Oberliga* in the 1963/4 season.¹⁶⁴

Herbert meanwhile made in-roads at *1.FC Lokomotive Leipzig*, formed from a reorganization of local clubs in 1965 (which also led to it being assigned to a publicly owned enterprise as its 'sponsor,' in this case *Deutsche Reichsbahn* – the East German state railways). The club's fortunes improved as a result too, but they were unable to capture the top honour in the GDR with a losing final appearance in 1967 ('*Loksche*', based in *Probstheida* in *Südost Leipzig* nonetheless won the *UEFA Intertoto Cup* in 1966¹⁶⁵).



The elder Foerster brothers "were gifted footballers" who both apprenticed at leading Leipzig clubs in the 60s
Sources: [BSG](#) and [1.FC](#).



In another space and time, those brothers would have had plenty to talk about with Irene and her husband, Cor, John might have reported.

Not long after their 18th birthdays, Konrad and Herbert's footballing days will have been interrupted by 'Grundwehrdienst' – or military service. Conscription, which had been introduced in early 1962, gave the ruling SED the perfect opportunity to extend its ideological influence over young males (while the Lutheran Church did its best to shelter those young people who for reasons of conscience did not wish to serve in the military, helping to establish an alternative civil service from the mid-1960s called *Bausoldaten*).¹⁶⁶



The Foerster brothers were also National People's Army (NVA) soldiers – and future reservists – who completed their military service, a decade before these chaps did, in Oct. 1980.

Source: [d-d-r.de](#)

¹⁶¹ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1967). Pg. 73

¹⁶² Konrad, being born in 1949, turned 18 on Feb. 12, 1967. Herbert, having been born in 1951, turned 16 on March 19, 1967. Uwe, born 1958, turned 9 on Dec. 29, 1967

¹⁶³ Personal correspondence. Dec. 11, 2022.

¹⁶⁴ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BSG_Chemie_Leipzig_\(1950\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BSG_Chemie_Leipzig_(1950))

¹⁶⁵ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1._FC_Lokomotive_Leipzig#1._FC_Lokomotive_\(1966-1990\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1._FC_Lokomotive_Leipzig#1._FC_Lokomotive_(1966-1990))

¹⁶⁶ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 77

When I asked the brothers whether they might have served as ‘civil construction soldiers,’ they only knew that military service was compulsory. In fact, “the GDR was the only country in the Eastern bloc where one could refuse military service in this way.”¹⁶⁷ Engaged for 18 months, Konrad ought to have completed his service some time in 1968, Herbert in 1970.

Football and military service aside, at the end of 1967, Leipzig’s City Council finally concluded its town centre re-development programme through to 1975, part of a response I expect to SED chief Ulbricht’s multiple criticisms of the slow pace of the rebuilding of Leipzig’s city centre.

Its focus was to be on *Karl-Marx-Platz* (formerly *Augustusplatz*), the *Markt*, *Wilhelm Leuschner Platz* (formerly *Königsplatz*, a short stretch from the former Hinsch family hub at *Roßplatz*), the northern ring and *Strasse des 18. Okt.* to the southeast.

The programme’s adoption also paved the way for the approval of a demolition programme, which contributed to a host of valuable buildings ending up as rubble,¹⁶⁸ – which prompted the ostracised and maligned author, *Erich Loest*, to reflect on 1968 as “*A terrible year*” in his 1987 novel, *The Monument*.¹⁶⁹

In March 1968, therefore it was the turn of the (second) *Gewandhaus* orchestra hall, that former ‘playhouse’ of Vera’s late grandfather, Fritz Hinsch (also therefore Nanny and Margot’s uncle), to be levelled.

Deutrichs Hof (centre) at the eastern end of *Salzgäßchen* (right) facing *Reichstrasse* (to the left) in 1952, with *Riquet-Haus café* (to the right), more or less photographed from where Fritz Hinsch’s *Cigarren Haus* once stood.
Source: wiki.de/deutrichs_hof



That itself followed the razing of the perfectly intact Renaissance marvel, *Deutrich’s Hof* a month earlier (pictured above but see also textbox 18.2 on pg. 1009), to which a columnist at the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (LVZ) claimed all his readers celebrated “that Leipzig is constantly becoming more beautiful and modern.”¹⁷⁰

The worst was yet to come, however, Loest (a former LVZ correspondent himself) damning the “*dreadful Merry Month of May*” in the abovementioned novel.¹⁷¹ The galling sequence of events leading up to the demolition of the famed *Paulinerkirche* on *Karl-Marx-Platz* that month – and lingering trauma – is described in the textbox overleaf.

¹⁶⁷ *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP, Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 77

¹⁶⁸ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1967). Pg. 73

¹⁶⁹ *The Monument*. Erich Loest. Secker & Warburg, 1987. Pg. 194

¹⁷⁰ *Demolition on Karl Marx Square. Cultural Barbarism and the People’s State in 1968*. A. Demshuk. OUP, 2017. Pg. 118

¹⁷¹ *The Monument*. Erich Loest. Secker & Warburg, 1987. Pg. 194

18.9: Leipzig's Evolving Cityscape (Pt. 2) – The Paulinerkirche, farcical 'public engagement' and legacy

One of the last tragedies amid the city's rampage with the wrecking ball was the dynamiting of the Gothic-fronted *Paulinerkirche* (just legible as 'K' in the white box within the map on pg. 1009) and the adjoining university building, the *Augusteum* (see image right). The church had been named the '*Pauliner*' after the arrival of Dominican friars in 1225, although one of Leipzig's most-famous, Martin Luther, had converted it to a Protestant church as early as 1545.^{1a}



Surviving the war practically unscathed (unlike the *Augusteum* next to it – even if its edifices were marked for restoration),² the church was a thorn in the SED's eyes because it was the traditional meeting place of opposition groups.^{3a} Thus, when Paul Froelich,⁴ the First Secretary of the district leadership in Leipzig (*Bezirk*) ordered the rebuilding of *Karl-Marx-Platz* ('*Augustusplatz*' until 1953) following Ulbricht's personal inspection in 1963,^{5a} to create "The most beautiful square in all of Europe,"^{3a} those two historical structures facing it were obliged to make way for "their gleaming campus of the future."^{5b}

Public opinion, however, was at odds with this view. It was first courted in the decade after the founding of the GDR in 1949, with press publications and planning exhibitions drawing optimistic public participation and proposals, because most plans generally foresaw moderate reconstruction of the historic core alongside startling modern feats that people desired, such as the oft-envisioned underground rail tunnel.^{1b}

Yet when Leipzig's Second planning Exhibition: "*We're Building Our City – Everyone is Helping*" took place between October 15th and November 1st, 1960, planning objectives were overthrown in favour of sweeping modernist dictates that implied not only the levelling of damaged monuments but also intact architectural treasures. Public astonishment at those disclosures concerning *Karl-Marx-Platz* subsequently incurred a massive letter-writing campaign.^{1b}

"Henceforth, the official communist ideal of a public forum, of involving the people in state-led planning, was a farce put forth in propaganda articles and tracts that claimed glowing popular endorsement for socialist modernity," noted Andrew Demshuk in 2017.^{1b} Over concern for public dissent, Froelich declared in 1963 that all "recommendations are to be prepared internally and not discussed in public."^{5c}

In October 1963, a politburo resolution insisted upon demolishing "every old structure on the western side of Karl Marx Square."^{1c} Yet it took until May 23, 1967, Ascension Day, for the square's new layout and the demolition of the church to be approved by a decision of the SED-led city administration and that of the university's.² "Their entire meeting was an assembly of buggers" recalled university student Harald Fritsch.^{3b}

Quite clearly it was the authorities' fear of the public that ultimately prompted the frantic preparations toward demolition,^{1d} because a week later, the Church was dynamited under heavy police presence. "For the students, police confiscation of cameras used to photograph the church was 'brutal'"^{1e} while protestors against the blasting operation were arrested.



Continued overleaf

18.9: Leipzig's Evolving Cityscape (Pt. 2) – The *Paulinerkirche*, farcical 'public engagement' and legacy (cont.)



Once the debris had been cleared, work on the '*Uniriesen*' (the aluminium 'book' tower facing Karl-Marx-Platz – see stamp image left) got underway in 1969,^{6a} while the early 1970s' "oblong box with monotonous panels and windows" beside it made laughable Leipzig mayor Walter Kresse's slogan from an October 24th, 1960 meeting at the Second Exhibition: "The Opera [with its aluminium pillars and window frames applied as a cost-saving measure amid the thoroughly chaotic construction] is beautiful, but the University will be even more beautiful!"^{1f}

Sadly, aluminium and chaotic construction went on to form a standard motif for the entire square.^{1f} But, even before those results were seen, the objections continued. The first official protest occurred on June 20th, 1968, when, during the *International Bach competition*, a banner was ingeniously unfurled in the *Kongresshalle* above its stage^{6b} demanding "reconstruction" (*Wiederaufbau*) – see image below. Harald Fritsch's endeavour (epically described in his own adventure-filled book *Escape from Leipzig*) resulted in "over ten minutes resounding applause in the presence of attending party leaders."^{1d}

Farther afield, "an East Berlin gardener [whose hometown was Leipzig] wrote to the DDR State Council that the demolition had so saddened him that he was leaving the FDJ [*Freie Deutsche Jugend*] after thirteen years of membership, [declaring that] ... "Without a doubt, the demolition contradicted the will of the majority of the entire population, not just in Leipzig, but across the German Democratic Republic."^{1g} Saxon geologist, Heinrich Douffet, was another who objected, writing to the German Cultural League on June 1st, 1968 to ask: "Of what use was the Leipzig [demolition] to anyone?" to which he himself answered 'In the end, only to enemies of the DDR.'^{5d}



The gathering of the helpless thousands at the razing of the *Paulinerkirche* was "the largest mass protest in East German history between the 1953 uprising and 1989 revolution [that] ended with public disillusionment about official objectives, and resurfaced as a trauma and grievance when Leipzig became the capital of the 1989 revolution."^{5e}

Sources:

1. *Demolition on Karl Marx Square. Cultural Barbarism and the People's State in 1968.* A. Demshuk. OUP, 2017. Pg. 39 (1a), 11 (1b), 68 (1c), 12 (1d), 132 (1e), 66 (1f), 169 (1g)
2. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulinerkirche,_Leipzig
3. *Escape from Leipzig.* Harald Fritsch. *Wspc*, 2008. Pg. 39 (3a), 41 (3b)
4. See also: [saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Paul_Froehlich_\(1913-1970\)](http://saebi.isgv.de/biografie/Paul_Froehlich_(1913-1970))
5. *Three Cities After Hitler: Redemptive Reconstruction Across Cold War Borders (Russian and East European Studies).* Andrew Demshuk. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. Pg. 218 (5a), 189 (5b), 216 (5c), 309 (5d), 302 (5e)
6. *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig.* Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1969). Pg. 75 (6a), 74 (6b)

Images:

Previous page top: The western side of Karl-Marx-Platz in April 1952: Augusteum and University Church. StadtAL BA 1991/33499. Source: *Three Cities After Hitler.* A. Demshuk. Pg. 222 (Fig. 4.15);
 Previous page bottom: The *Paulinerkirche*'s collapse on May 30, 1968 at 1000. Source: skyscrapercity.com [here](#);
 This page top: Karl-Marx-Platz with the completed university tower and lacklustre main building. One of a series of stamps celebrating '20 Jahre DDR (I)' issued Sept. 23, 1969. Source: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Briefmarken-jahrgang_1969_der_Deutschen_Post_der_DDR
 This page Bottom: *Kongresshalle* banner: Source: welt.de.

The *Paulinerkirche's* demolition was the culmination of a series of Leipzig events that revealed not only the local, but district (*Bezirk*) and state's disregard for public opinion. As one astute citizen attending the autumn 1960 Second (planning) Exhibition noted in the visitor books (citing *Rosa Luxemburg*, the first world wartime revolutionary socialist):

*"Democracy is the recognition of the opinion of others who think differently.' That should not be forgotten with a destruction of the University Church."*¹⁷²

John would not have observed many of the aforementioned demolitions, since his 'visit' occurred shortly before they took place. However, that May 1968, it was not only the *Paulinerkirche* that collapsed but people's trust in the authorities for having betrayed their views. As remaining public hope in the regime failed ... profound cynicism and disengagement took root, producing a sharp disconnect between state and citizens, with public discontent going underground for the next two decades.¹⁷³

Even if a month earlier, on April 6th, 1968, some 94.49 percent of voting East Germans had approved the GDR's new constitution,¹⁷⁴ Peter Grieder, lecturer in twentieth-century history reminded, "This was anything but a free vote."¹⁷⁵

The citizens of Leipzig were neither alone in their lively public activism and attempts to rebuild their cities, both physically and socially. Some like world-renowned physicist, Harald Fritzsich (see the preceding textbox) took heart from more progressive enlightenment elsewhere.¹⁷⁶

In Czechoslovakia, for instance, its leader, Alexander Dubček strived to achieve 'socialism with a human face'. His attempts had begun promisingly enough in the spring of 1968, leading events to be dubbed, the 'Prague Spring.' But when Soviet tanks arrived and its troops marched on his supporters on August 20-21st, the eight-month spring and "final flowering of hope for change across much of the East Bloc,"¹⁷⁷ turned into a 21-year Russian winter. The effect was to freeze experimentation and innovation in economic and political liberalisation across the Eastern bloc,¹⁷⁸ contributing to a particularly fraught moment in Cold War history.¹⁷⁹



Students' sit-in to support the 'Prague Spring.' Czechoslovakia, 1968
Source: Getty via [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

¹⁷² *Demolition on Karl Marx Square. Cultural Barbarism and the People's State in 1968.* A. Demshuk. OUP, 2017. Pg. 53, 54

¹⁷³ Paraphrasing: *Demolition on Karl Marx Square. Cultural Barbarism and the People's State in 1968.* A. Demshuk. OUP, 2017. Pp. viii., 12.

¹⁷⁴ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig.* Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1968). Pg. 74

¹⁷⁵ *The German Democratic Republic: Studies in European History.* Peter Grieder. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pg. 64

¹⁷⁶ See 'Spring in Prague' in *Escape from Leipzig.* Harald Fritzsich. Wspsc, 2008. Pg. 31-37

¹⁷⁷ *Demolition on Karl Marx Square. Cultural Barbarism and the People's State in 1968.* A. Demshuk. OUP, 2017. Pg. viii

¹⁷⁸ *The German Democratic Republic: Studies in European History.* Peter Grieder. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pg. 62

¹⁷⁹ *Demolition on Karl Marx Square. Cultural Barbarism and the People's State in 1968.* A. Demshuk. OUP, 2017. Pg. viii

And despite the economic progress East Germany had made to this point, and the regime's sunny rhetoric of a new tomorrow for its grateful *Volk*, society continued to be beset by shortages. That same year, 1968, its own economic reforms went sour, and from 1969 to 1971, investment in consumer industries plummeted while financing in electronics, industrial tools, computing, and industrial petrochemicals leapt, leaving an already noticeable impact on health and also the environment. Unbeknown to the authorities, "This tilt would prove to be the swan song of old communist productivism."¹⁸⁰

The
downside of
1960s'
industrial
petro-
chemicals:
Leipzig's
new town
hall full of
grime in
March 1990.
Source:
Bergmann via
[facebook.com/
Leipzigalbum](https://www.facebook.com/Leipzigalbum)



My impression of the Foerstes is a preference then (as today) to turn 'away' from political events and social progress of the period. Instead of being drawn to city affairs, the family kept itself at a distance, avoiding any real form of civic participation. The same could also be said of their interest in east German ideology. Sport was perhaps the easiest way of 'complying,' while at the same time averting convention.

In asking the brothers whether there was anything else they might like to share regarding the decade, "*Muss ich noch recherchieren,*" was Uwe's vague reply. That suggests all that was worth saying had been said – or cared to be remembered.

It is unfortunate that the quest for answers is hindered by the fact that the brothers seldom speak to one another, which I daresay illustrates the state's success in destroying the private sphere that was the family and to an extent answers my earlier question on individual psychological development. To be fair, come the end of the decade, Uwe would turn 12 in December, while his elder brothers were already young adults past military service,¹⁸¹ which surely also contributed to the distance that is notable between them today. Vera herself turned 42 in September 1970.

Clearly then, the Foerstes world had grown far removed from that of Leipzig's 'descendants': Margot, Nanny and their children, in regards to which one could also coin John's reflection on 1967 of a "*sunless landscape ...*" that was "*... so dismal and sad.*" Certainly, when comparing with the Tyralla line of Hinsch's (i.e. Fritz Hinsch's sister), it seemed there was a lot more joy and comfort in the West as opposed to the East. And as we already know, it would stay that way for several decades to come.

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¹⁸⁰ *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic.* Donna Harsch. Princeton and Oxford, 2007. Pg. 283

¹⁸¹ In 1970, Konrad turned 21 (February) and Herbert, 19 (March)

– BACK IN THE U.K. U R! –

On August 2nd, 1968, Alice and John arrived in the Welsh capital, Cardiff, fresh from their honeymoon. There, in an inner-city district just west of the town centre known as 'Canton',¹⁸² they settled briefly into a sunshine-filled flat that John had secured in July.

Hubby naturally returned to the day job at RAF St Athan (where he now maintained Vulcan bombers), which lay about 30 minutes west of Cardiff by car. But for 18-year-old Alice it was an entirely different story. After an emotional send off from the *Mees and Hope* bank on Friday July 19th and with her last working day being Tuesday 23rd, there were just ten or so days between her former life in a flat shared with her mother in one of the liveliest and liberal cities in the world, and what amounted to a new life in a new home to be shared with new company on what would soon be a military camp in distant South Wales!

Fairly unusual in those days, but Tiny had done much the same fourteen years prior, so at least there was that precedent. And I guess if there was something immediate for Alice to focus on, it was the prospect of turning the married quarters they would shortly receive into a home – rather like she'd seen Tiny and Walter do at RAF Rheindahlen and RAF Wildenrath. Until then, it didn't make much sense getting too comfortable. So, with her free time, Alice went window shopping both in Cardiff and along Canton's main road, known locally as '*The Strip*'!

But first she unpacked her wedding gifts, including an electric fire from *Mees and Hope* – useful when that cold, wet and windy Atlantic weather tore up the Bristol Channel and the Severn estuary – together with a set of weighing scales, handy to bake ahead of Simpson meet and greets. Margot too had not passed up the chance to club in, sending cash with which Alice bought a barrel shaped Hoover (that accompanied me through most of my childhood). "*Only I wasn't allowed to use it because the landlady told me it would wear out the carpet!*" Alice joked.

It's a pity the diary Alice had kept was not continued after her arrival. It could have captured valuable impressions of an 18-year-old Dutch girl's first years there in the UK.

To her credit, however, Alice never felt too inhibited language-wise. "*Just a little reserved,*" John noted to me.¹⁸³ But I wondered, having been in gainful employment for some two and half years by this point, why she did not have the urge to find a job for herself, especially as the couple were in no particular hurry to start a family. After all, the Ridderhofs had all done their share of working for a living.

"Nope," my mother told me. "I didn't mind adjusting! A permanent vacation was just fine by me."

¹⁸² The name derives from 'St. Canna's Town' and refers to the sixth-century female saint after whom Pontcanna is also named. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton,_Cardiff

¹⁸³ Personal correspondence. February 25, 2023

In the meantime, there was plenty else to be doing locally. With John's brothers an hour or so away by car, the Simpsons' *Volkswagen* was a godsend. Indeed, before August was over, they had visited Wally (who had returned from Amsterdam with John's RAF uniform) as well as Jim and Mary (since joined by a second son). They also visited John's childhood home, *Tyrie*, where they got to see the work completed since it had been sold in 1965, John regaling Alice with various stories, for instance, his efforts to maintain it up to that point:

"I would drive back home from Little Rissington in the Cotswolds for weekends with the Austin Special. 'Tyrie' was still my home, even though it was 'out of bounds.' But not to me it wasn't! The house was locked but I forced a window to get in and with the electricity still 'on' would make myself comfortable. Jim and Wal were there at different times too, while I rather think Father and/or the authorities may well have simply turned a blind eye to us boys frequenting the place, because all three of us did a lot to try and keep the grass cut and the place tidied – even keeping the place looking 'lived in' when we were nearby between November 1961 and October 1962, which would help towards its eventual sale."¹⁸⁴

And then there were the memories from the time when *Tyrie* was still a real home to the family, during John's mother's final few years:

"All the time Mum bravely coped, keeping us boys occupied, tidying the garden, hedge laying in the lower orchard, maintaining water levels in the summer months and chopping plenty of wood!!"¹⁸⁵

Naturally, catching up with Tiny and family was also high on the newlyweds' agenda, eventually meeting them twice in short succession.¹⁸⁶ To begin with, they had to visit them in a brand-new location, Walter, having left the Royal Air Force on February 19th, 1968.¹⁸⁷

His exit was part of *"a round of redundancies at the time"*¹⁸⁸ that was linked to a decline and refocusing of UK defence spending in light of the state of the economy as well as events in the Middle East.¹⁸⁹

The departure itself was not unwelcome. Leaving 'voluntarily' meant a bonus payout, but more importantly, with 22 years in service,¹⁹⁰ a pension upon reaching retirement age.

¹⁸⁴ Personal correspondence. February 17, 2023.

¹⁸⁵ Personal correspondence. January 26, 2023.

¹⁸⁶ According to Alice's diary entries of August 30 and September 5, 1968.

¹⁸⁷ Specifically, February 19, 1968

¹⁸⁸ Personal correspondence with Michael. Dec. 15, 2022.

¹⁸⁹ In 1965, the UK limited its defence budget, while a further reduction was made after the financial crisis of July 1966. Subsequently, the failure to prevent the Six Day War between the Arab states and Israel in June 1967 (and costly presence East of Suez afterwards) combined with the pound's devaluation that November *"added GBP 50 million to Britain's overseas defence costs, but also compelled a further re-examination of the whole defence budget in the context of the need to reduce public expenditure."* The month Walter then departed the RAF, Britain declared its *"Defence effort will in future be concentrated mainly in Europe and the North Atlantic."*

England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 302-304.

¹⁹⁰ The starting date having been Jan/Feb. 1946, according to a verbal exchange with Tina, May 2019.

Tiny told me she also had had enough of being on the road. Michael, now 12, had his last six years of schooling ahead, to which he added:

"I recall my mother wanting me to have a steady education entering my teens."

Thus, *"the timing was propitious."*¹⁹¹

And so, the family's travelling adventures were at an end. In fact, as unlikely as it sounds, departure from the RAF marked the advent of a continental absence that endured for almost twenty years.

As for their own next career moves and whereabouts, Michael recalls his father:

"toyed with the idea of becoming a Metropolitan Policeman¹⁹² but mum disagreed.

She rather saw us settle in what was then a New Town at the time, ideal for families."

High on their list of interest was Hemel Hempstead, which in 1946 had been designated by the British government as the site of one of its proposed 'New Towns,' designed to house the population displaced by the London Blitz.¹⁹³ Its appeal to would-be residents particularly lay in its proximity to London which was just 40km to the south and easily reached via the 'M1' motorway which connects London to Leeds (most of which opened between 1959 and 1968).¹⁹⁴

Although it had once principally been an agricultural town, Tiny's new home in Hertfordshire was never going to be the farm she had once dreamt of! Instead, theirs was to be a 'new build' on a fresh housing estate in semi-developed *Grovehill*,¹⁹⁵ to the north of Hemel Hempstead. Indeed, it was so new that 'Precinct A' had only just been laid out and was being developed as part of the New Town Commission's¹⁹⁶ second wave of development in 1967-68.



Under construction: Grovehill in 1967

Source: grovehill.org.uk

¹⁹¹ Personal correspondence. December 15, 2022.

¹⁹² Servicing the Greater London area but excluding City of London. See: met.police.uk

¹⁹³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hemel_Hempstead#New_town

¹⁹⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M1_motorway

¹⁹⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grovehill

¹⁹⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_towns_in_the_United_Kingdom

Imagining there must have been quite some demand for such housing from potential tenants, I quizzed Michael over what he remembered, assuming Tiny and family will have had to apply in good time: *“Was there a very long waiting list for you to be offered 135?”*

“There must have been a list” he answered. “And I believe that because dad would soon be an ex-service man with a family, he was priority.”

He continues:

“I do remember looking at two properties owned then by the New Town Commission. It was based in Swan Court, off Waterhouse Street in Hemel Hempstead. They had a white, large, table-sized model of the first part of Grovehill downstairs in their small entrance lobby, which I, being 10 or 11 years old, would pour over in detail. They also provided a printed leaflet depicting the part of Grovehill that I now live in. I used to know all the paths and alleyways.

The two properties that my parents and I saw, were this one and another in Highfield (an adjacent Hemel Hempstead estate, which also was being added to at the same time as Grovehill). The Highfield property was dismissed immediately by us all, not just because all the properties had flat roofs only (known for maintenance and leaks), but they were even smaller than a small Married Quarter. It was the proverbial, ‘You couldn’t swing a cat’ in there. It was a slum of the future.

I remember also seeing another type of house in Grovehill, which had a staircase that was constructed in two stages, at right angles. Mum preferred a straight one. A good choice as it turned out. This house has good parking at the back, a garage and shed and is relatively away from the busy main road. Factors as a child, I did not consider but my parents obviously did.”¹⁹⁷

In due course the neighbourhood would offer a mixture of private and rented housing that was specifically intended to accommodate families and professionals. As Michael notes, houses had garages, but there were plenty of flats too, some also with garages.

To me it seemed ideal for families as well. And it turned out to be a safe space too. I could ride a bike all over without fear of meeting a car, since the inner spaces were green and pedestrianised. It was both communal and friendly, with many playgrounds to choose from. Perhaps not dissimilar to what Leipzig envisioned with its plans for urban modernisation: green but also concrete spaces surrounded by homes, flats and garages.

¹⁹⁷ Personal correspondence. March 5, 2023.

On those occasions when I visited throughout my childhood, the locale always enticed with its air of exclusivity that was almost American, thanks to posh street names like 'Turnpike Green,' 'Basildon Square' (which reminded me of a certain brand of quality writing paper) and 'Cupid Green Lane' (which always reminded me of my aunt). The road name signs, whose white text on blue backgrounds, only added to the allure (because where I grew up it was old school black letters on white backgrounds).



One of the original white on blue road name signs in Grovehill.
Source: grovehillconservatives.org.uk

As Michael reminded me, this was because "Grove Hill was run by The Commission of New Towns, which had their own rented accommodation and peculiar rules [which meant] everything was new, fresh and maintained. Years later this was all handed over to the local council, Dacorum Borough Council."¹⁹⁸ That helps to explain why today, sadly, it looks terribly rundown.

Tiny and family moved into their terraced house in Washington Avenue (another Americanism!) on February 28th, 1968, an address which has gone on to serve the family well beyond this book's envisaged timeline. Tiny and Walter meanwhile wasted no time in ensuring it quickly felt homely. In her last but one diary entry Alice notes following their visit how "They ... have bought lots of new furnishings."



New home, new neighbours. The Tucks' new home, replete with spare bedroom oft used by the Simpsons. Aug. 4th, 1968

With a new house, new jobs of course followed: Walter became a security guard working various shifts at a nearby shelving company called Dexion, while Tiny went to work full-time as a machine operator for John Dickinson & Co,¹⁹⁹ which produced the luxury writing paper, Basildon Bond, among other things (although her remit was less glamorous – but no less important – sterilised hospital paper bags that were destined to hold operating equipment and implements). Her place of work was its Apsley paper mill, about 10 minutes' drive (courtesy of Walter) south of Grovehill, where for a little over a decade she endured the monotony of pressing one bag flat after another.²⁰⁰

Adds Michael, "My dad was a family man and worked very hard for his family and my mother always new how to turn her hand to make ... money ... too."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Personal correspondence. February 28, 2023.

¹⁹⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dickinson_Stationery

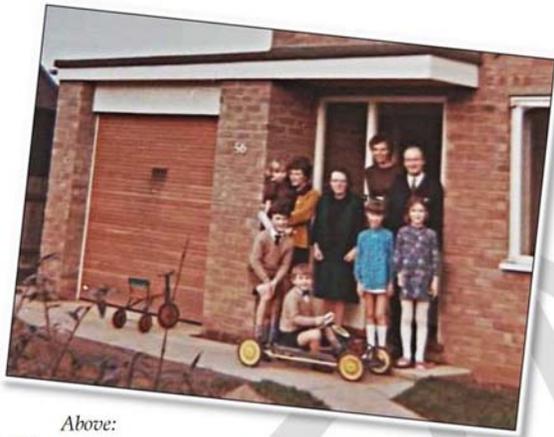
²⁰⁰ Personal correspondence. February 28, 2023

²⁰¹ Personal correspondence. December 15, 2022

With big sister 'down the road,'²⁰² Alice seldom had opportunity to grow homesick, telling me she and John "would go visit Tiny and family for the weekend ... every so often." Of course, the family's having been through the 'RAF experience' must have been of comfort too. Indeed, by all accounts, they were more often in Tiny's family's company than that of John's. Not that there was a language barrier of any sort. Simply, it rather fell to John and Alice to initiate the visits, the 'continental' hosts transpiring to be the closest family.

Digging a bit deeper, I asked Alice if she could explain why that was. I was truly surprised by what I heard:

"Mmmm. I was never really made to be felt welcome. In fact, John's father expressed an opinion that the German race were inherently flawed. Which I found quite insensitive.



Above:
The 'European' Blunts, meeting that "nice German girl" (and her mother)! Pictured here with three of their children, plus nephew and niece - on and beside the go-kart - in 1969



Right:
Crossing the threshold to their new home at 36, Starling Road - with a handshake and a grin! October, 1968

It was the Blunt family who made me feel welcome - including my mum - when we visited them. Auntie Peg and Uncle Jack were sweet too when we went there for a holiday in 1969. Subsequent visits between Hemel Hempstead and High Wycombe were challenging. It felt like going from one extreme to another."²⁰³

Finally, in October 1968, the time came for Alice and John to collect the keys to their new digs,²⁰⁴ a two-bedroomed married quarter in St Athan, Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan.

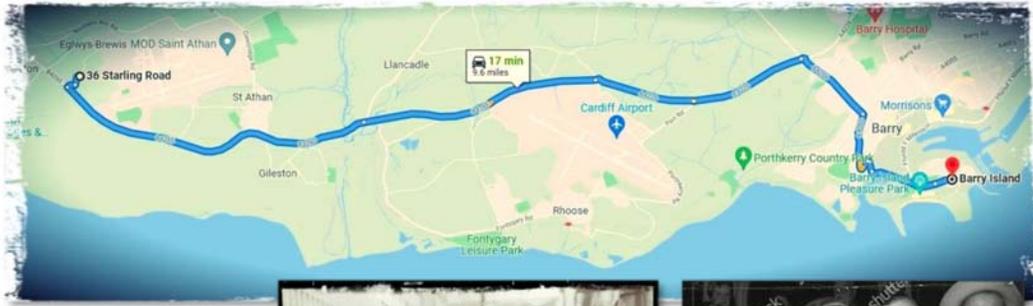
Thus, for the next two and half years - and until the end of John's RAF engagement - they made 36, Starling Road 'home.'

Although their principal family visits were complete, there's one more look-in the couple might have made, but ultimately never did, despite the destination being on their doorstep. Namely, to call in on Margot's son, Harvey. By chance, he lived in 'Barry' itself, a mere 20-minute drive (as the map overleaf shows).

²⁰² The stretch became the London-South Wales - later M4 - Motorway. See: wikipedia.org/wiki/M4_motorway

²⁰³ Personal correspondence. February 24, 2023

²⁰⁴ According to the very last entry in Mum's diary



Top:
Map showing the relative proximity of, and journey time between, Alice in Saint Athan and cousin Harvey at Barry Island.

Right:
Just married in Westminster, Middlesex. Harvey Riscoe and Sandra Butlin.
Source: Shutterstock

Far Right:
The newlyweds together with Billy Butlin and future wife, Sheila, ('Lady Butlin'). Spring, 1964
Source: Shutterstock



Yet when I asked my mother about this curious twist of fate, she remarked:

"I never thought about him, since I'd never met him."

In fact, Harvey had led a colourful life in the decade or so since his mother had left the UK for Canada in mid-1957.

His spell as a Butlin's Redcoat in *Pwllheli*, Wales between 1958 and 1962 was already documented in *Chapter XVII: Love's Great Adventures* and *Pt. 1: Dreams of Leaving*. But in spring 1964, he married *Sandra Michel Butlin*, the daughter of the Butlin empire's founder, South African-born Billy Butlin. Upon the opening of the last-built and smallest of the Butlin's Holiday Camps on Barry Island in June 1966,²⁰⁵ the couple became the managers of its amusement arcade.²⁰⁶

Not many months before that, sometime during spring 1966, the couple welcomed a son: *Barry Jonathan*.²⁰⁷ Tiny told me that as soon as Margot had learnt she'd was a grandmother, she'd sent gifts – although an inevitable let-down followed when she received no acknowledgement.

Perhaps that was because the new-born died before reaching its first birthday.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butlin's_Barry_Island

²⁰⁶ See: gowr.co.uk/all-water-rats/v/539

²⁰⁷ Born in Q2 1966. Source: ancestry.com (tbc)

²⁰⁸ During the last quarter of 1966. Source: ancestry.com (tbc)

Evidently, Tiny knew how to reach Harvey and must have kept occasional contact with their cousin,²⁰⁹ although as far as Alice recalls, she never visited either him (or them) in South Wales.

It is a curious thing that Harvey and Sandra's association receives no mention in *'The Billy Butlin Story,'* his autobiography. Indeed, the only time his daughter receives any reference is as one of three children to his second wife. Like her brother, Sandra was packed off to boarding school between the ages of five and 18 and was seldom welcome company, when home for the holidays.²¹⁰

Harvey himself went on to become a member of the entertainment industry fraternity and London-based charitable organization, the Grand Order of Water Rats²¹¹ and in 1968 was recognized 'Rat of the Year.' According to his 13-years younger sister, Patsy, he was proud of his award and loved being a member.²¹²

Newspaper clippings indicate that Margot's former husband meanwhile had continued to work as an impresario, *'Johnnie Riscoe presents'* typically gracing the top of many a playbill. The November 1968 advertorial shown below²¹³ adds that the performer-turned-businessman had "a number of shows round Britain's coast, i.e. Margate, Great Yarmouth, Ayr, Pwllheli, etc. and is responsible for the booking of many star artistes."



Top left: Margot's ex: Johnnie Riscoe: Showman, impresario, former King of the Grand Order of Water Rats and 1968 President of the Vaudeville Golfing Society Source: [Flickr](#)

Far left: Johnnie Riscoe's mother, Rae Crowe (died 1961), shown here in the front row on the right, together with her Thompson (Tompofski) siblings. Leeds, the 1950s. Source: Peter Gadsdon

Bottom left: A gaggle of British celebrities including (from left to right): Ben Warris, Sir Billy Butlin, Unknown, Johnny Riscoe and Colonel Basil Brown (the director of Butlins entertainment). Brighton, 1959 Source: [Butlins-memories.com](#)

²⁰⁹ The last meeting with Harvey's father, her uncle, was a brief stay in early 1954, following Tiny's wedding. Prior to that she also met Harvey in mid-1950, lodged with the Riscoes at their invitation. See Chapter XVII, Pt. 1.

²¹⁰ *The Billy Butlin Story. "A Showman to the End"*. Sir Billy Butlin. Robson Books, 1982. Pg. 250-251

²¹¹ *Rats* spelled backwards is *Star*, while *vole*, (a water rat), is an anagram of *love*, The Order's agenda is Brotherly Love, their motto: Philanthropy, conviviality, social intercourse. See: [wikipedia...Grand Order of Water Rats](#)

²¹² See: [gowr.co.uk/all-water-rats/v/539](#)

²¹³ See: [flickr.com/photos/bradford_timeline/16585376276](#)

Johnnie's continuing support to the Butlin's holiday empire was part of an association which lasted until the 1980s.²¹⁴ Imagine my surprise when he too receives little more than a passing mention in Billy Butlin's book.²¹⁵ Speaking to Patsy, she confirmed the two were close chums, albeit rather either side of Harvey's marriage to Sandra²¹⁶ (because within the decade – if not shortly after it – their relationship fell apart, Sandra remarrying as early as 1971).²¹⁷

With the Ridderhof sisters beginning to settle, what sort of Britain had they moved to? What had happened since the previous generation's migrants, i.e. Margot and Francis, had departed its shores?

The year they left, 1957, the most clamorous national problem was the growth of unemployment. In a sector well known by Margot at the time, forlorn cinemas were being turned into betting shops and bingo halls²¹⁸ (although others, including that where she had once worked, the Leeds Odeon, would instead host more screens after remodelling in 1969 and 1978).²¹⁹ However, unemployment figures continued to worsen until January 1963.²²⁰

Yet as the swinging sixties got underway, the economy began to expand, which not only contributed to full employment but also a well-paid labour force. This led to a vigorous, growing nation with a high proportion of young people that began adjusting itself to the ever-shifting conditions of the twentieth century world, influenced, for instance, by mass publicity and the blare of the advertisement, on a pattern similar to the U.S. This in turn led to spending on cars, TV sets, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and electronic gadgets²²¹ (which Tiny's house became a haven for and eventually came our way, once they were replaced)!

The more rounded image of Britain in the sixties therefore (as in the US, West Germany and elsewhere) was one where society enjoyed a higher standard of living, better housing, longer holidays, shorter working hours, more foreign travel, and indeed wider facilities for leisure and recreation than ever before (consider simply the successful Butlin's Holiday camps). The decline of cinema in favour of television was not necessarily a cultural loss, while the publication, sale and library provision of books continued to increase. Besides new towns, there were new schools, new universities and even new cathedrals.²²²

²¹⁴ Personal correspondence with Rocky Mason, who knew the Riscoes well. July 14, 2011

²¹⁵ And at that, in the context of late 1970's charitable work with the Variety Club and associated golf tournaments. *The Billy Butlin Story. "A Showman to the End"*. Sir Billy Butlin. Robson Books, 1982. Pg. 269. N. b. According to the November 1968 clipping above (retrieved from flickr.com – see footnote 213), Johnnie was President of the Vaudeville Golfing Society. Over a year earlier, however, Johnnie was already involved in golf, being seen in a ten-minute video clip entitled "'Show Biz' Golf at Brighton' in which he frolics with various personalities including Harry Secombe, Stanley Baker, James Carréras and Derrick Pillage, besides an oversized golf ball and trick clubs as they drive off the first tee. See: britishpathe.com/video/show-biz-golf-at-brighton.

²¹⁶ Personal correspondence with Harvey's younger half-sister, Patsy Martin. April 25, 2023.

²¹⁷ Sandra Butlin married Roy Williams in 1971, who according to walesonline.co.uk, had "worked at Butlins for 27 years...The couple, who had a daughter, Coral, ran the arcades together. Sandra died in 1976 at the age of just 34." See: walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/hi-de-hi-icon-time-2418828#amp-readmore-target

²¹⁸ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 260

²¹⁹ See: cinematreasures.org/theaters/1717

²²⁰ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 263

²²¹ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. D. Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 282, 274

²²² *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 282, 281

Teenagers too had newfound wealth to splash on LP records, scooters and cosmetics. However, this affluence was also spent on striptease bars, alcohol and tobacco, as well as betting and gambling. Criminologists pointed toward the possible links between society of this kind and the alarming rise in juvenile offenders, illegitimacy and prostitution.²²³

At the same time, there was a growing influx of immigrants from the UK's Commonwealth – decolonisation being a feature of British foreign policy in the 1960s²²⁴ – besides those of Irish and continental European origin (like Alice and Tiny). Yet those numbers were being tempered by the emigration of skilled scientists and technologists, who like Margot and Francis, were headed to the US and the Dominions.²²⁵

Not long after Tiny and Alice moved to the UK, Britain went on to experience an explosion in wages between 1969 and 1970, with both weekly wage rates and average earnings increasing by 13 percent. Consequently, inflation began to creep up due to the lack of corresponding growth in productivity, and so unemployment returned to 1963 levels.²²⁶

When it came to European integration, despite Britain's relative aloofness to the process in the early 1950s, in January 1960 it established the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), setting off the prospect of a rival Western European trading bloc to the European Economic Community.²²⁷

In 1961, it even applied to join the EEC or 'Common Market',²²⁸ Edward Heath as chief British negotiator rallying "We now see opposite to us on the mainland of Europe a large group comparable in size only to the United States and the Soviet Union, and as its economic power increases, so will its political influence."²²⁹ Although negotiations went on throughout 1962 with considerable success, in January 1963, France's General de Gaulle abruptly demanded their end, his fear being the US's influence via Britain. It was a snub which the ruling Conservative party (by then under Harold Macmillan) never recovered from,²³⁰ Labour winning the next two elections to run the country between 1964 and 1970 under Harold Wilson.

²²³ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 274-5

²²⁴ Conversely, "the new Western European Community was partly designed to protect – not do away with – their colonies abroad." *Project Europe: A History* by Kiran Klaus Patel, reviewed by Paul Betts of the University of Oxford. *German History. The Journal of the German Historical Society.* Vol. 39, No. 1. Oxford University Press, March 2021. Pg. 140

²²⁵ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 279

²²⁶ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 301

²²⁷ Formed together with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 272

²²⁸ "An originally modest association of six Western European states ... [established March 1957 under the Treaty of Rome that] has managed to end up standing in for 'Europe' as a whole in the public imagination."

Project Europe: A History by Kiran Klaus Patel, reviewed by Paul Betts of the University of Oxford. *German History. The Journal of the German Historical Society.* Vol. 39, No. 1. OUP, March 2021. Pg. 141

²²⁹ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 272

²³⁰ According to a senior party official in 1965 cited in *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 264

The European issue lay relatively dormant for Great Britain following de Gaulle's veto. However, because it was believed by its supporters in 1967 that membership could provide the necessary stimulus to Britain's then stagnant economy (see textbox below), the decision to re-apply to join the EEC was announced May 2nd. De Gaulle remained opposed and besides him, a clear majority of the British people were against the decision prior to the 1970 election too²³¹ (after which power reverted to the Conservatives, led by Edward Heath).

18.10: From 'Backing the UK' to 'Back in the U.S.S.R.'

While determining the section header, i.e. '*BACK IN THE U.K. U RI!*' I made an interesting discovery. Did you know, for instance, that the Beatles' hit record, *Back in the U.S.S.R.* – in which they pay homage to the Beach Boys – began life as a ditty composed to help breathe life back into the UK economy?

Musical maestro, Paul McCartney began writing the song in early 1968 as '*I'm Backing the UK*,' inspired by the '*I'm Backing Britain*' campaign, which had gained wide national support in January 1968.

The campaign itself was a response to the fact that the British economy was challenged in 1967 by the pound's 14.3 percent devaluation on November 18th, 1967 (falling from USD 2.80 to USD 2.40 as a result) besides an ever-increasing deficit in the 'balance of trade' between exports and imports.

The campaign itself began innocuously enough when five secretaries based in Surbiton volunteered to work an extra half-day each week without pay to boost company productivity and in turn the British economy. After successfully urging other company branch staff to do the same in a post-Christmas/pre-New Year invitation, the secretaries got together on January 1st, 1968 with the company's managing director and hit upon the slogan. Come January 3rd, a full-page advert had appeared in *The Times*. Taking off spectacularly, *I'm Backing Britain* became a nationwide movement within a week. But after a few months without any noticeable effect on individual companies or the economy in general, interest flagged amid much embarrassment about some of the ways in which the campaign had been pursued and supported.



Mike Love of the Beach Boys recalled McCartney playing the tune on acoustic guitar over breakfast when they met at a meditation retreat in Rishikesh, India in February 1968. Veering away from the campaign, the song had already been re-titled '*Back in the U.S.S.R.*', the intent being to spoof the typical American international traveller's contention that "it's just so much better back home." At this point Love suggested the bridge section focus on the 'girls' in Russia, in the style of the Beach Boys' '*California Girls*.'

Thus, besides his happiness on returning home, where "*the Ukraine girls really knock me out*" and the "*Moscow girls make me sing and shout*," McCartney sings about the female population of the Soviet Republic of Georgia.

The opening track on the band's November 1968 album, '*The Beatles*' (also known as the '*White Album*'), it went on to draw controversy owing to the Beatles' sympathetic portrayal of the USSR, given that it was just three months after the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia, prompting condemnation in the West from both the New Left and the political right.

Furthermore, the song was eventually recorded as a three-piece, Ringo Starr – having grown tired of McCartney's criticism of his drumming on the song and of the bad atmosphere generally – walked out of rehearsals on August 22nd, with intent to quit the group. Those same tensions continued throughout the following year, leading eventually to the band's break-up. To Alice, however, that news was of little consequence, her following of the band diminished by changing priorities.

Sources: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I'm_Backing_Britain (including the *I'm Backing Britain* badge image); [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beatles_\(album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beatles_(album)) and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Back_in_the_U.S.S.R.

Image: Paul McCartney, Donovan, and Mike Love (Bettmann/Getty Images via cheatsheet.com)



²³¹ England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 310, 311

In some respects, Britain had enough on its plate with the eruption of communal violence within its own 'federation' in August 1969 in Northern Ireland, without lining up to join another in which it might be less than a driver.

Yet even if relations were frosty between Britain and the EEC, ties between Nanny and her daughters were seldom tempered. And so within months of Alice's arrival to the UK, her mother returned to the island, spending Christmas 1968 at Tiny's before being collected by the Simpsons to spend a number of New Year weeks with them in St Athan, where Dutch typically remained the *lingua franca*.

Despite the occasional snow, they got out and about, showing her the Wye Valley (an 'Area of Outstanding Beauty' today) as well as John's one-time digs at the Elberton Vicarage (before it was demolished at the expense of the mining lobby).²³² Aside from the winter weather, Nanny disliked Alice's tendency to introduce her as a 'German.'

Nonetheless, that was to be the first of many such visits over the coming years — usually arranged and paid for by Tiny. A check-in from her side on Harvey or even former brother-in-law, Johnnie Riscoe, with whom she'd shared many a laugh during the 30s, however, was never on the cards.

The 'Ridderhofs' travelling was neither one way, Alice returning to Amsterdam for a week in June 1969 (not long after John and Yoko's 'bed-in'), before her best friend Batja joined her in South Wales. Even Nanny was back in the UK a little later, this time visiting sites of interest to Tiny and Walter, such as Rye (see adjacent photo), where her late husband, Cor, had given Tiny away to be married. Irene and Rene also joined the party! Shortly after, John and Alice were joined by a new family member: Daniel, the Labrador, in August 1969 before Nanny moved to St Athan in September.

Upper left and right: Christmas 1968 and New Year 1969 (right).

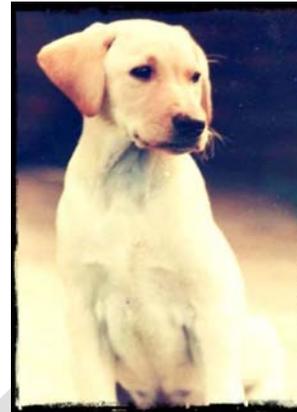
Bottom left: Return to Rye, July 1969: Nanny preferred summertime visits as she didn't like the cold.

Bottom right: Cardiff, cca. Sept 1969



²³² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elberton,_Gloucestershire#Quarry

The following summer Alice and John had bigger news to share, when during the UK's August 1970 bank holiday and in the company of Alice's siblings, the couple announced they were expecting their first child. However, a celebratory holiday at nearby Butlin's was the last thing on their minds, the couple preferring to drive no farther than Scotland, Daniel ultimately being the better traveller than Alice!



New Simpson family member: Daniel as a puppy

Nanny must have wondered whether there might be a granddaughter this time around. But I'd pay a fortune to know what younger sister Margot thought after she got wind of the strong and growing UK contingent.²³³

A degree of amusement perhaps, now that she had two nieces in the UK and married to Englishmen. But twinges of regret perhaps too within a passing daydream, recognising for instance that if she'd stuck around another decade, she'd now be the UK-based foreign aunt to Alice and Tiny (much as the latter was to me). Nanny too would have had even more reason to visit the UK then. I imagine Margot began to feel a European visit was long overdue.

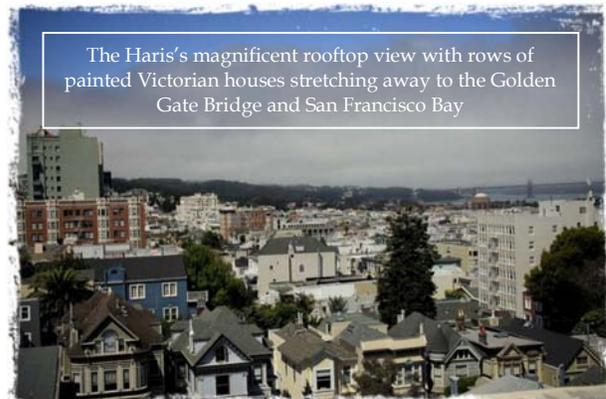
Nonetheless, while the UK paid host to Tiny and Alice's visions of the future (which meant the Tyralla legacy remained firmly European), it was Margot who went beyond the traditional Wandervogel realm, by moving to North America.

Conflicted or not, I imagine those dreams being realised in San Francisco might at times have felt bitter-sweet. Especially because, unlike Margot, Nanny would never be short of legacy. Neither did she have to travel very far to catch up with family, despite the distance.

#####

- DIGGING THE SCENE (AND THE AMERICAN DREAM) -

At home in San Francisco, in Margot and Francis' shoes, I'd have been a regular to 1750 Vallejo Street's rooftop terrace, watching the mid-summer sunset with a glass of beer or wine in hand while reflecting on the lifetime's journey completed between sips. In Margot (and Nanny's) case that began with them barely into their teens in the 1920s, the pair of them being just old enough to sail into the US without a guardian. For Francis, it was two decades later that he left his homeland.



²³³ Tiny confirming in 2019, "I always liked to stay in touch with Margot."

For the time being, however, a return to the ‘old world’ and a visit to family would have to wait until the pair had clocked up five years of residence – although that needn’t be continuous²³⁴ – before completing the necessary citizenship applications. Naturally they would not willingly jeopardise that process (nor their ‘too-good-to-be-true’ occupations) by travelling out of the US (to somewhere like Hungary), only to find themselves unable to return. Such a visit could wait until they had US passports.

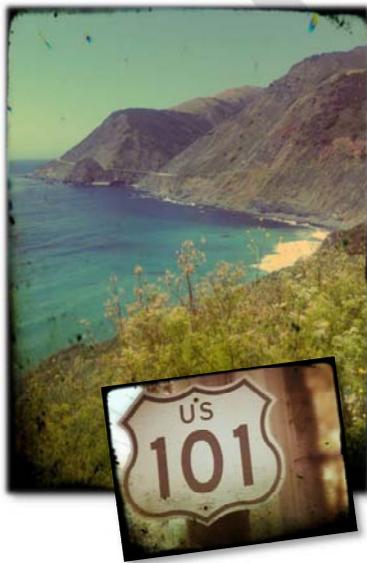
Until then, with supposedly “two weeks’ paid vacation a year... that must be taken in one-week slots” (according to the resident manager in 2012), I imagine Margot and Francis might have spent their first few vacations travelling a little closer to home. After all, California is the ‘nation state’ full of shimmering surf, sun-blown palm trees and well, golden sun.

How ‘close to home’ remains a question I may never know the answer to. The US is big, and even if Los Angeles is ‘down the road,’ it’s still a day’s drive south. One could also head due east and visit Yosemite National Park or to the north where old-growth temperate rainforests and giant sequoia redwood trees provide a marvel that in 1968 became Redwood National Park (and where in neighbouring state parks, scenes for Star Wars’ *Return of the Jedi* were filmed).²³⁵

I was of course curious to know whether Francis and Margot had a vehicle at their disposal. After all, living without a car wasn’t very American: in 1965 there was one car for every 2.6 Americans, while a stunning 24.3 percent of families owned two or more automobiles.²³⁶ Certainly, however, when I spoke to Ruth Rosenbaum in 2012, she recalled “*He may have had a truck,*” (which for a painter/decorator would make sense). At the same time, Ruth confirmed “*Margot didn’t drive.*”

With Los Angeles being the last leg of that infamous ‘Route 66,’ and given the wondrous scenic 71-mile ‘Big Sur’ stretching south, literally from Margot and Francis doorstep along US Highway/Route 101, I know where I’d be heading during my free-time!

Speaking in 2012 with Richard Recker, the then resident manager’s partner, he told me with a grin that another perk of being at 1750 Vallejo Street was that of living in a nice part of town: A neighbourhood that is residential, quiet and private. Amid the parks, businesses, schools and hospitals are homes that have been there since the mid-to late 1800s. Once known as part of San Francisco’s ‘Western Addition’, Pacific Heights – together with Presidio Heights to its west – have evolved into the city’s most exclusive neighbourhoods with its painted Victorians, châteaux and mansions.



California must-see: ‘The Big Sur’ US Highway /Route 101: the ‘Pacific Coast Highway’ could be picked up right outside Margot and Francis’ front door!

²³⁴ “You had to establish residency for five years and could not go out of the country for more than one year or you would lose your visa” noted [Rolando A. Salazar](#), who applied in 1966. See: [facebook.com/groups...2350116288523542](#)

²³⁵ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redwood_National_and_State_Parks](#)

²³⁶ *Trams or Tailfins: Public and Private Prosperity in Postwar West Germany and the United States.* Jan L. Logemann. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pg. 166

Those are more high-brow than mainstream and have long fascinated and awed residents and visitors drawn to its beauty and architecture.²³⁷ Textbox 18.11 has more on those buildings neighbouring the Vallejo Street Apartments – and their tenants.

18.11: High Society Homes and their Residents

Opposite the Vallejo Street Apartments at 1737 and built into the hill lies a replica of a 14th century French Normandy brick castle! Writes a *San Francisco Chronicle* correspondent: "One thing about living in a castle – it looks great on the holidays. With candles flickering in the narrow windows and a spiral staircase to decorate, there's no problem creating a fanciful atmosphere. In fact...people regularly stop their cars in the 1700 block of Vallejo Street to gawk."¹

The Vallejo Street Castle is in fact part of a six-home complex built in the 1920s around a small private courtyard that evokes something out of Grimm's Fairy Tales. The spiral staircase winds up two levels, stopping just before the tower room, which can be reached only by ladder. It was once the home, studio and brainchild of Digby Brooks, a little known art-metal craftsman who worked in San Francisco from around 1910 through the 1930s.²

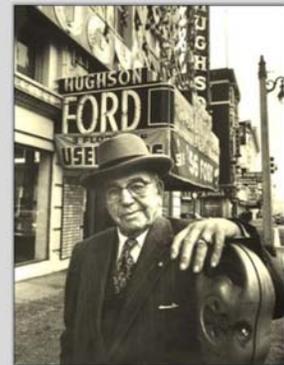


Not long after Margot and Francis arrived, the *Chronicle* reported on July 8, 1964, that *Suzanne Pasmore Allen*, the pianist member of the famous *Pasmore Trio*, who together with her sisters had studied music in Berlin from 1905-1908 and subsequently toured Europe and the US, had just died at Vallejo Street 1737.³ (She was in fact Digby Brooks' former wife, the pair having married in 1917, divorced in 1940 before he died in 1947). Had Margot by chance exchanged a few words with either of the Pasmores, their residence of Berlin wouldn't have been the only thing they had in common – the sisters' father, a composer, an organist and a choral director had lived and studied in Leipzig,⁴ also publishing there in the year Margot's mother was born!⁵



One can also turn right from Margot and Francis' building where its neighbour at 1772 Vallejo Street is the Italianate mansion. At the time of their arrival, it was home to the artistic Alice Burr and her sister Marian. "One of the best preserved of the period in town," it even included a ballroom under its mansard roof⁶ and wine tasting room in its basement.⁷ The sisters' banker/merchant grandfather had been mayor of San Francisco in 1856 and built the handsome, square, wooden residence in 1875 as a gift to their father. Although "the 1906 earthquake...shook the house off its foundation... with the aid of 93 jacks it was hoisted back in place again."

Even within their own building, Margot and Francis couldn't have failed to bump into automotive pioneer, dealer and local do-gooder; William L. Hughson.⁸ He had stories to tell too, having arrived in San Francisco in 1889, he was a twice-widowed New Yorker, who, together with his business (he was the first Ford dealer in the 'Bay' city), had survived the 1906 earthquake. He was also known to be a keen advocate of trans-bay bridges according to the *Chronicle*, which reported his death in spring 1967.⁹



Hoping to gain a little more local insight regarding the Vallejo Street neighbourhood that Margot and Francis now called home, in the absence of a Pacific Heights newspaper, I searched back issues of the *San Francisco Examiner* and *Chronicle* online. I was delighted therefore to discover the locale was no stranger to high society afternoon tea parties and 'musicales.' One was even featured in the 1968 neo-noir action movie thriller, *Bullitt*, Mrs Edmund (Kate) Morrissey sharing her Vallejo Street home and afternoon tea in between Steve McQueen's traversing San Francisco, including that renowned car chase that seemed to last forever.



Thus, Margot and Francis had truly found themselves living among the "Pacific Heights socialites"¹⁰ A question I'd be grateful to have answered is, how keen were the couple to connect with fellow natives?

Footnotes: see 'Footnotes to textbox 18.11' at the end of this chapter

²³⁷ *San Francisco's Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights. Images of America.* Tricia O'Brien. Arcadia Publishing, 2008. Pg. 7-8. See: [amazon.com/Franciscos-Pacific-Heights-Presidio-America/dp/0738559806](https://www.amazon.com/Franciscos-Pacific-Heights-Presidio-America/dp/0738559806)

Right:
Pacific
Heights'
Socialites!



Below:
Local
hotspots
where a
couple that
loved to
dance and
play cards
might have
gone in the
late 60s – on
Broadway
(one block
south of
Vallejo Street)

Postcard
source: [San
Francisco
Remembered](#)



According to stories passed on via Margot's nieces, the couple certainly had a penchant for social events – rather continuing where they left off in Uranium City, as it were.

The adjacent portrait picture looks to have been one such moment captured at 1750 Vallejo Street before the pair headed out for a night off. I was fortunate to have been sent it by Gaby Garas who believed it was taken in the late 60s or early 70s, to which she added *"its Margot doing her Debbie Reynolds impression."* At any rate, it was Christmas time!

Recalling also Margot's fondness for *"a good game of cards"* and Francis' *"love... to dance, especially the jitterbug [and] jive,"*²³⁸ I turned once more to members of the 'San Francisco Remembered' Facebook group and asked where the couple might have headed.

Enthusiastically, members reported that the hotspots at the time had been around North Beach towards the Embarcadero where the Playboy Club, The Tonga Room at the Fairmont, and Basin St. West were to be found. Another told

me that she *"used to dance at the clubs on Broadway in the mid-60's – Peppermint Tree, El Cid, Condor Club and Galaxie,"* adding: *"Some of those clubs are gone, and the ones that are still around are topless [bars]."*²³⁹

Although on those occasions the Haris's might well have been heading downtown together with the Garas's and the Kiss's, Gaby recalls *"there was a falling out between my parents and the Kish's and the Harris's."*²⁴⁰ Certainly there was, by my reckoning, a fair physical distance between them too at the time, because since 1966 Sandor and Hildegard were as many as 50 miles (90 minutes by car) southeast of Pacific Heights, at the southern end of San Francisco Bay,²⁴¹ while concurrently, Alex and Gisela Kish (now parents to two young daughters) had put down roots in Daly City, about 11 miles or 30 minutes southwest of Vallejo Street by car.²⁴²

Between the cardplaying and dancing, and with only adult gripes to tend to during the daytime and being youngster-free during the evenings, Margot and Francis must have often dined out too.

²³⁸ Personal correspondence with Ursula Dac. Aug. 30, 2018.

²³⁹ Contributed by [Sherry Halverson](#). See: [facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2346943748840796](https://www.facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2346943748840796)

²⁴⁰ Personal correspondence, Dec. 21, 2022

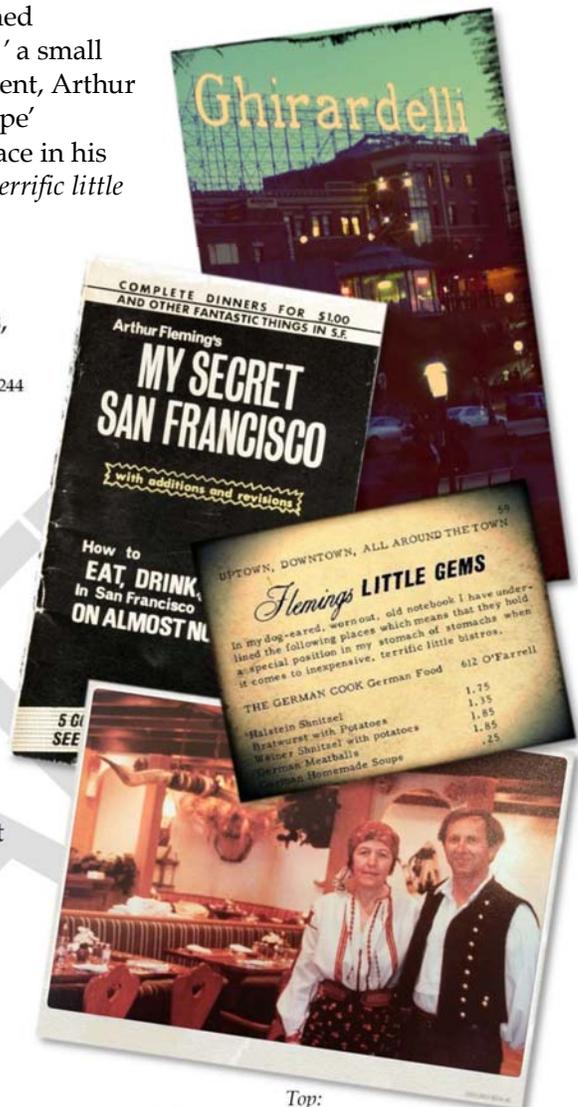
²⁴¹ 1966 was a year in which the family also changed homes, according to research completed at ancestry.com around 2012, moving with their teen daughter out of San Jose (but nonetheless staying within Santa Clara County. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Clara_County,_California

²⁴² Gabby Kish was ten in 1966 while Jackie was four years old at the time. Personal correspondence with Gaby Garas, Dec. 20, 2022. *N.b. Footnotes within 'Book [Ch 18 - Scrap]' contains details on how to reach the Kish's.*

I was delighted therefore when the aforementioned Facebook group recalled 'My secret San Francisco,' a small booklet that was published in 1967 by local resident, Arthur Fleming.²⁴³ Essentially, it's his 'back of an envelope' scribbles on those diners which hold a special place in his "stomach of stomachs when it comes to inexpensive, terrific little bistros."

I can imagine then if Margot craved *Wiener Schnitzel*, *Bratwurst* or homemade German soups, then she'll have dragged Francis to 'The German Cook', a half-hour walk *en route* to Union Square.²⁴⁴ Or if it was Hungarian cuisine that Francis was after, *palacsinta* (pancakes with either meat or sweet fillings) were to be had from August 1965 at 'The Magic Pan,' also in the vicinity of Union Square (25 minutes away including classic cable car ride).²⁴⁵ I daresay he enjoyed speaking with its founders too. Paulette and Laszlo Fonó had fled to the US in 1957 after the failed anti-Communist uprising in Hungary. I can just picture Francis rolling back the years with the couple who, in a moving 80-minute interview from March 2016, remark that it was their Hungarian customers who tended to be the most critical!²⁴⁶ In 1967 the Haris's could get pancakes about 15 minutes northwest in the opposite direction, i.e. the disused chocolate factory that was now Ghirardelli Square²⁴⁷ (towards the 'Marina' District - see map on pg. 988). Then 'Paprika's Fono' joined the Magic Pan, decorated "just like home in Hungary" but with a wonderful view of the harbour (for engineers, the second Magic Pan's use of a Laszlo Fonó-patented 10-pan crepe-maker capable of turning out 600 perfectly cooked crepes per hour must have fascinated).²⁴⁸ Finally, eleven blocks east at 635 Vallejo Street was the 'Gloria Sausage Factory Delicatessen,' which was described as being "run in the grand manner ... of yesteryear" and praised by Fleming for its enormous selection of cheeses and meats imported from all over the world.²⁴⁹

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Top:

Ghirardelli Square, at the Bayside and overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge, is considered the first successful adaptive reuse project in the country.

Middle:

Spoilt for choice. San Francisco offered cuisine catering to just about anybody's palette, with Arthur Fleming's favourites being introduced in this handy little page turner, published 1967.

Bottom:

Paprika's Fono and its founders

Sources: San Francisco Remembered and memoryproject.online/paulette-and-laszlo-fono

²⁴³ See: cardinalfang.com/2015/11/my-secret-san-francisco-1967.html?m=1

²⁴⁴ At 612 O'Farrell Street. See 'Union Square' marked on the San Francisco map on pg. 988.

²⁴⁵ At 3221 Fillmore Street.

²⁴⁶ See: memoryproject.online/paulette-and-laszlo-fono

²⁴⁷ At 309 Sutter Street. See: restaurant-ingthroughhistory.com/tag/magic-pans

²⁴⁸ Its full story is here: losttables.com/magicpan/magicpan.htm

²⁴⁹ *My secret San Francisco. How to eat, drink and swing in San Francisco on almost no money.* Arthur Fleming. 1967. Pg. 9

BEYOND PACIFIC HEIGHTS

If the couple had any doubts as to whether they had chosen the right place to ‘retire to’, the resident managers of the Vallejo Street Apartments in 2012 assured me they not only picked a great spot but couldn’t have picked a better time.

Indeed, the year (and season) of Francis’ fiftieth birthday (July 12th, 1967), was perhaps the most memorable of them all, San Francisco playing host to the so-called Summer of Love, the culmination of demonstrations for a new society that had been spreading throughout the city since the early 1960s²⁵⁰ (the anti-materialistic Beatniks having used the city as a base since the mid-50s).

According to David Talbot, “No [U.S.] city would go through more convulsions than San Francisco as it processed the 1960s,”²⁵¹ Lewis H. Lapam in his 1979 short story, *Lost Horizon*,²⁵² referring to: “the revolutions coming out of California ... the free-speech movement at the University of California at Berkeley ... the so-called sexual revolution ... the counterculture and ... ‘revolutionary life-styles’.”²⁵³

Such was the magnitude of those changes that Jerry Garcia of the Bay Area-founded rock band, the *Grateful Dead* predicted at the end of the 1960’s that “America would struggle to absorb the convulsive changes of the previous five years ... for the rest of his life and longer.”²⁵⁴



Demonstrators cheer the civil rights employment settlement with auto dealers, 1964. Source: San Francisco History Center, SF Public Library. Online [here](#)

Starting almost with the supposed moment Margot and Francis arrived in San Francisco, i.e. March/April 1964, civil rights protests had broken out along ‘Auto Row,’²⁵⁵ a stretch of Van Ness Avenue about a mile up from the Vallejo Street Apartments (itself just a block up from Van Ness).²⁵⁶ On that occasion, tens of thousands, mostly African American and white youth, staged a vigorous civil rights campaign, demanding that blacks be given equal treatment in their hiring by auto dealers.²⁵⁷

By 1966, the Golden Gate City had its own version of Amsterdam’s Provos²⁵⁸ too: ‘The Diggers,’²⁵⁹ whose credo was to create a variety of services for the army of young castaways that began pouring into that neighbouring district southwest of Pacific Heights known as Haight-Ashbury. Centrally located, it was easily accessible from downtown San Francisco but also lay adjacent to the Golden Gate Park (see map on pg. 988).

²⁵⁰ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 16

²⁵¹ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 107

²⁵² First published in *Harper’s Magazine*, February 1979. See: harpers.org/archive/1979/02/lost-horizon

²⁵³ *Lost Horizon*. Lewis H. Lapam [1979]. In *San Francisco Stories. Great Writers on the City*. John Miller (Ed.). 1990. Pg. 194.

²⁵⁴ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 107

²⁵⁵ During the 1920s, Van Ness Avenue became known as San Francisco’s ‘Auto Row’ as many car dealerships and showrooms, including the aforementioned William L. Hughson, opened on the street north of Civic Center. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Ness_Avenue

²⁵⁶ Named in honour of the city’s 1855-1856 mayor, James Van Ness and son of Dutch-American Cornelius P. Van Ness. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Van_Ness

²⁵⁷ See: foundsf.org/index.php?title=Auto_Row_on_Van_Ness

²⁵⁸ Formally founded 25 May 1965, see: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provo_\(movement\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provo_(movement)), gaining international notoriety in March 1966

²⁵⁹ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diggers_\(theater\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diggers_(theater))

Lying just three miles from the Vallejo Street Apartments, its elaborately detailed, nineteenth century, multi-story, wooden houses became a haven for hippies due to the availability of cheap rooms and vacant properties for rent or sale.²⁶⁰ There were also food giveaways, free clothing stores, street theatre and 'ticketless' concerts in the park, all of which were later termed San Francisco values, in line with the counterculture of the 1960s.²⁶¹

I daresay such differing interpretations of the American Dream – alongside the news emanating from Nanny's Amsterdam – might just have given our adventurers food for thought – if not words and sentences when pen met paper (Nanny's telephone never served the pair, as far as Alice recalled). In a sense, they had the best of both worlds: comfort living, with a flavour of the unconventional.

18.12: Neighbouring Vaudeville Remnants

If Margot and Francis' curiosity hadn't been piqued by the anti-establishment happenings in the Haight, they might well have wandered an hour, ridden the public transport or hopped in the truck to savour the atmosphere or experience a moment of nostalgia at its one-time vaudeville Haight Street Theater which lay at its intersection with Cole Street.

Opening in 1910,^{1a} at that time it had served patrons with perfect acoustics that enabled a whisper to be heard from the stage anywhere in the house. In the twenties it converted to movies and went on to see duty during war and peace until the early 1960's when the changing racial ethnic and economic patterns swung toward inter-city urbanization, uprooting the previously homogeneous neighbourhood.²

After a brief spell in 1964 as a Black Abyssinian Church,² new owners transformed it into a novel experimental gay theater.³ That too was short-lived, lasting barely a month.^{1a} Around May, the renamed 'Haight Theater' was boarded up.^{1b}

A revival of sorts occurred from 1966 to 1969, which saw it relaunch as the 'Straight Theater,' having been rebranded as a rock concert venue and occasional residence for bands such as the *Grateful Dead* (July 23 and Sept. 29/30, 1967) and Janis Joplin's band, *Big Brother and the Holding Company*.^{1a} And even when it wasn't hosting clandestine shows, it still played movies, being the first Bay Area theatre to present the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* musical film (originally released in late 1967).

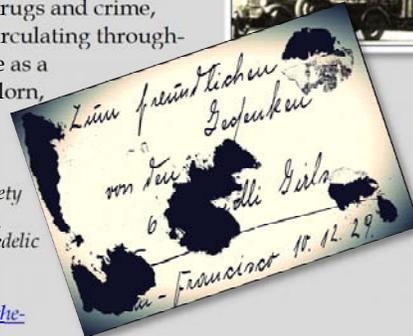
By 1970, however, the venue was permanently shut down, abandoned due to the increased presence of hard drugs and crime, which rather ruined the scene. Despite proposals circulating throughout the decade to renovate and repurpose the space as a community centre, the venue lay shuttered and forlorn, eventually being demolished in August 1979.⁴

Sources:

1. See: cinematreaasures.org/theaters/1951/: 1a: referencing *Variety* magazine; 1b: cinematreaasures.org/theaters/1951/photos/90535
2. *The Straight on the Haight*. A true life saga from The Psychedelic Era of Love. Drugs and Rock and Roll. Reg E Williams, 2006. Online at: thestraight.com/book.html
3. See: hoodline.com/2015/07/from-haight-theater-to-goodwill-the-history-of-1700-haight-street
4. See: foundsf.org/index.php?title=Straight_Theater_demolished
Image: *The Haight Street Theater in 1940*. Source: cinematreaasures.org/theaters/1951/photos/188805



Bygones:
Nanny and
Margot in late
1930. Location
unknown but
more likely
Florida than
San Francisco.



Inspired? Margot and Nanny's acrobat troupe, *The Six Rockets* never played San Francisco's theatres, unlike their sister-act: *The Six Marinelli Girls* who visited on December 10, 1929. Sending well wishes in German it read: "Zum Freundlichen Gedenken von den 6 Marinelli Girls. San Francisco, 10.12.29"

²⁶⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haight-Ashbury

²⁶¹ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free

Press, 2012. Pg. 36, 37. See also:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterculture_of_the_1960s

But for those happy to go with the flow, Haight-Ashbury sites also offered a trip down memory lane, with the Haight vaudeville theatre's passage through time being reflected on in the previous textbox.

The year which followed got off to a heady start. On January 14, 1967, the so-called *Human Be-In* celebration took place in the city's Golden Gate Park Polo Fields (see roughly that part of the map marked '1' on pg. 989).²⁶² The event was intended to mark the coming together of every tribe in the new emerging America, while in the months afterwards, the national media spread the message: San Francisco was the open-armed mecca of the new consciousness.²⁶³

When San Francisco became the nexus of hippie culture in the 1960s: The Jan. 1967 Human be-in. Source: allthatsinteresting.com



During the Summer of Love as many as 100,000 individuals, mostly young people sporting hippie fashions of dress and behaviour, converged on Haight-Ashbury. Encompassing hippie music, hallucinogenic drugs, anti-war, and free-love, it was part of a social phenomenon that occurred across the West Coast of the United States.²⁶⁴

Certainly, the event left an impression on then sixteen-year-old Gaby Garas:

"I remember going to Haight/Ashbury where the 'Flower children' lived", still picturing to this

²⁶² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Be-In
²⁶³ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 22, 31



The Summer of Love, 1967 Source: allthatsinteresting.com

day Summer of Love visitors "with the flowers in their hair, the dyed shirts and walking barefoot."²⁶⁵ Also, "I loved the Beatles and had collecting cards. I had them all over the wall in my bedroom."

I suppose then when George Harrison and his wife visited San Francisco at the height of the Summer of Love that caused a stir too. He though was less than impressed.



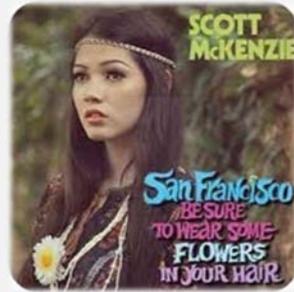
George Harrison plays for a group at Golden Gate Park during his visit in 1967. Source: allthatsinteresting.com

"I went there expecting it to be a brilliant place," he said. "But it was full of horrible spotty drop-out kids on drugs ... a lot of bums and drop-outs, many of them very young kids who'd dropped acid and come from all over America to this Mecca of LSD ... It wasn't what I'd thought — spiritual awakenings and being artistic — it was like alcoholism, like any addiction ... That was a turning point for me," Harrison continued. "That's when I went right off the whole drug cult."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_of_Love
²⁶⁵ Personal correspondence. Dec. 20, 2022.
²⁶⁶ *Flowers in Their Hair*. Andrew Ferguson. *The Washington Examiner*. Aug. 11, 2017. Online here.

Although Gaby's parents held little interest in "the modern music of the time [–] they loved Elvis Presley and Dean Martin. And ... Hungarian gypsy music,"²⁶⁷ neither they nor Margot and Francis could have missed the event's anthem, 'San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)' which was an instant chart success in the US, the UK and much of Europe.²⁶⁸

The Summer of Love's anthem was written by John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas.



Music was very much at the heart of the city's magical transformation during the 'enchanted sixties,'²⁶⁹ rather reflecting the cultural dialogue that went on between it and London over the entire decade. The Beatles, Kinks and Rolling Stones were part of a British invasion that kicked off in

1963.²⁷⁰ "The music, art, fashions, comics, drug experimentation, sexual innovation – it was all driven by a creative interplay between the two cities".²⁷¹

A year prior to George Harrison's visit, the Beatles were in town to promote their just-released Revolver album in August 1966, using the occasion to perform their last live show of their final tour at Candlestick Park. It was at the same time that the Los Angeles-based Beach Boys, through its head man, Brian Wilson, had been inspired by the Beatles' 1965 album Rubber Soul to better that with what he intended to be "the greatest rock album ever made."²⁷² But as the textbox below reveals, there were some crushing consequences too.



When the Beatles turned up in California in mid-1966, Beach Boy Brian Wilson knew the heat was really on!

18.13: Californian Rhapsody

When the Beatles released *Revolver*, the Beach Boys' current album was *Pet Sounds*. The album's third single, the melancholy *God Only Knows* was issued in July 1966, Paul McCartney subsequently calling it the greatest song ever written.

Pet Sounds was – and remains – an unparalleled achievement in popular music considering its emotional content, its reception as a 'complete package,' and the relatively unsophisticated recording equipment available in 1966, leading to its principal author and architect, Brian Wilson, being established as the foremost composer and producer at the time.

The next single, the 'pocket symphony,' *Good Vibrations*, which followed in October 1966, might well have been included on *Pet Sounds*, were it not for Wilson putting it aside for greater attention later. An immediate critical and commercial hit, its appeal together with *Pet Sounds* as art records to the emerging hip generation was without question. With *Good Vibrations*, the band surpassed everything current in popular music. "They've found the New Sound at last," claimed one British paper.

In a popularity contest hosted by the UK's *New Musical Express*, the band were named the number one world vocal group, pipping the Beatles (who by then had decided to quite touring) by a hundred votes. On a UK tour that autumn, it was the Beach Boys who were greeted by screaming mobs tearing at their clothes.

Brian Wilson was undoubtedly in the midst of a creative snowball. He had unlocked a door and entered a room where nobody had been before – or has gone since, writes David Leaf. And in response to the British invasion, he and lyrical partner, Van Dyke Parks, desired to bring forth something very American and in its humour and wide-ranging subject matter, create something radically different from the music being made by their contemporaries.



²⁶⁷ Personal correspondence. Dec. 20, 2022.

²⁶⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_of_Love

²⁶⁹ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 61

²⁷⁰ *Van Halen Rising: How a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal*. Greg Renoff. ECW Press, 2015. Pg. 13

²⁷¹ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 90

²⁷² *The Beach Boys*. David Leaf. Courage Books, 1985. Pg. 76

18.14: Californian Rhapsody (continued)

That project went on to be known as ‘Smile’. It was to be recorded in the same vein as *Good Vibrations*, based on short, interchangeable musical fragments. As a result, the word spread from Los Angeles to London that Brian was creating a new batch of mind-blowing musical experiments. Indeed, when McCartney and Wilson met during those sessions, Brian blew Paul’s mind with his music and eccentricity – the Beatles’ *Sergeant Pepper’s* record being hardly at the beginning stages.

Smile was a significant step ahead of *Pet Sounds*. As Beach Boys’ drummer, Dennis Wilson (pictured above with Brian), put it in 1966, “It makes *Pet Sounds* stink. That’s how good it is.” In *Smile*, Brian was creating a teenage symphony to God: his own American gospel from a Southern California point of view. Such was his progress that parts of the album were ready by the autumn, with Capitol records completing the artwork and planning a release before Christmas 1966.

The long player, however, went on to become one of the greatest unreleased rock legends. One of the reasons for that being the Beach Boys’ perception that Brian had created something that was not within the framework of the band, members of the band deeming it too experimental. Ultimately Brian put family first – at the expense of his own artistic expression and progress.

Had *Smile* been released, it would have been a major influence in pop music: as significant if not a greater influence than the Beatles’ *Sergeant Pepper’s* eventually was. Considered the ultimate in production upon its release in late May 1967, David Anderle (the Beach Boys business associate at the time) noted: “Everybody started making records that sounded like *Sergeant Pepper’s*... The concept of an album was created... Put it on in the beginning and it has a movement all the way to the end.”

Anderle claims *Smile* would have been even more startling. But as a result of it (and Wilson’s) withdrawal, his period of creativity “burned and died with supernova brilliance.” When his dream was shattered, so was his artistic *raison d’être*, and he embarked on a battle with his own personal demons (a story that has since been turned into the subject of several movies and documentaries).

One Beach Boy refers to Brian’s challenge being the production race between them and the Beatles. Brian was after all writing, producing, performing and engineering. He was known to be grumpy about Beatles’ releases if they were good. He’d say, “Yeah, well,... I can do as well as that.” But when he first heard the song ‘*Strawberry Fields Forever*’ in February 1967, he allegedly pulled over in his car, broke down in tears and said, “They got there first.” [See: medium.com/cuepoint/]

With *Sergeant Pepper’s* release, the arrival of San Francisco psychedelia and the ‘Summer of Love,’ the Beach Boys became incredibly passé in a remarkably short time. They had one final chance to create a bridge to the new ‘hippie’ audience, playing the Monterey Pop Festival in June 1967: the birthplace for a new set of musical leaders such as Jimi Hendrix.

But the Beach Boys spurned the perfect opportunity to demo *Smile* and make their peace with the San Francisco consciousness, alienating instead the hip audience that had just begun to accept them because of music like *Pet Sounds* and the lyrically Flower Power-inspired *Good Vibrations*.

The summer of 1967 was a turning point for the record industry too. By the autumn, the artist had finally become important, and it was they who were beginning to call the shots. Brian, who had always been ahead of most of the rock world in his creative thinking, now fell behind it.

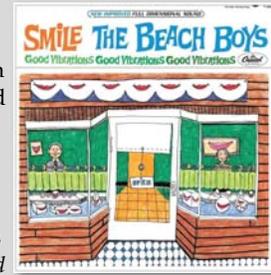
As a result, the band vanished into obscurity and became a nostalgia act, Brian’s creative genius and the fans’ hunger for its return becoming his Achilles heel. Had they performed and released *Smile*, however, the Beach Boys might well have surfed the wave of change through 1967. The album would have been the year’s soundtrack – together with *Sergeant Pepper’s*. Stateside, the love might have been all theirs to share that summer.

Source: *The Beach Boys*. David Leaf. Courage Books, 1985. Pg. 76-122.

Images: Brian and Dennis Wilson, pulled from tumblr/gallery.xyz/post/10053525.html and [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smile_\(The_Beach_Boys_album\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smile_(The_Beach_Boys_album))

Epilogue: Brian Wilson’s ‘Smile’ was eventually ‘completed’ and released in 2002 to universal acclaim, earning him his first Grammy Award. Then, in 2011, the original Beach Boys’ recordings were sequenced and released as The Smile Sessions (a five-CD box set), according to Wilson’s ‘template.’ Today, decades on from its conception and issue, it remains infinitely more listenable, profound and layered than anything else I’ve ever heard. While it may not have seen the light of day in 1966, the influence of its headline tracks, Good Vibrations and Heroes and Villains (released in July 1967), can be heard in movement-based songs like the May 1968 Billboard hit, MacArthur Park (that coincidentally also featured a number of the Smile/Pet Sounds musicians). N.b. ‘Completed’ is a term that must be used very loosely, there being a belief that Smile’s fragments represent a ‘sonic menagerie’ or labyrinth, an epoch rather than an album. And due to the wealth of fan-created mixes it inspired, some commentators cite Smile as the first ever interactive album, whose sequence will always be subject to debate. Which in a sense represents just one additional illustration of the extent to which it was ahead of its time. Further reading:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smile_\(The_Beach_Boys_album\)#Unfinished_state_and_interactivity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smile_(The_Beach_Boys_album)#Unfinished_state_and_interactivity) plus [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smile_\(The_Beach_Boys_album\)#Hypothetical_release_scenario](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smile_(The_Beach_Boys_album)#Hypothetical_release_scenario)



In his oft-cited book, *Season of the Witch*, David Talbot acknowledges that there was “always a dark shadow around the San Francisco rainbow,²⁷³ which became apparent in the Haight-Ashbury when it could not accommodate the rapid influx of people.



When the party's over. Source: allthatsintoresting.com

The neighbourhood scene quickly deteriorated with overcrowding, homelessness, hunger, drug problems, and crime. Although many left in the autumn to resume their college studies (on October 6, 1967, those remaining in the Haight even staged a mock funeral, Digger happening, “The Death of the Hippie” ceremony), the Haight-Ashbury continued to decline after 1968 due to hard drug use and a lack of policing.²⁷⁴

In 1969, protests were not uncommon sights across the city of San Francisco as a whole. There were anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in April and then

November, inviting Nixon to “Give peace a chance.”²⁷⁵



Anti-war demonstration, November 15, 1969, San Francisco Source: Synergeticpress.com

There was a protest against wearing bras in August outside a downtown San Francisco department store. On November 20th, 89 Native Americans began a 19-month long protest occupying the island of Alcatraz.²⁷⁶



Anti-bra protest outside a San Francisco department store on August 1, 1969 Source: reddit.com/r/TheWayWeWere

By “the 1970’s, the city was at war with itself, beset by grisly crime and political violence.”²⁷⁷ But that’s a side-story for another chapter.

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²⁷³ *Flowers in Their Hair*. Andrew Ferguson. *The Washington Examiner*. Aug. 11, 2017. Online [here](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/flowers-in-their-hair).

²⁷⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haight-Ashbury#Hippie_community

²⁷⁵ See: foundsf.org/index.php?title=Moratorium_1969

²⁷⁶ Alcatraz penitentiary had been closed on March 21, 1963, and the island declared surplus federal property in 1964. Therefore, the protest group,

Indians of All Tribes, claimed that, under the Treaty of Fort Laramie between the U.S. and the Lakota tribe, all retired, abandoned, or out-of-use federal land was to be returned to the Indigenous peoples who once occupied it. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupation_of_Alcatraz

²⁷⁷ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. xiv

On the face of it, it sounds as if the city wasn't the go-to destination it once was. Indeed, Talbot remarks that the city "was no longer only a haven for the country's restless dreamers but also for its wrecked and ruined."²⁷⁸ However, with the decade's end approaching, Francis and Margot had chalked up the requisite five years of U.S. residence which meant that come the summer of 1969, the pair could finally apply for citizenship. Efforts to retrieve their certificates, starting with Margot's, proved to be unsuccessful.²⁷⁹

Nonetheless, my enquiry to *San Francisco Remembered*, helped fill in several blanks. Michal Logan, for instance, had noted that under the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act,²⁸⁰ naturalisation was a fairly straightforward process. That is, "Not the bureaucratic backlog of today at least."²⁸¹

There was a twist, however. Their application would have taken place under the new²⁸² 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, which had reformed immigration policy and now gave preference to immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere.²⁸³ In fact, the proposed turnaround was in no small part thanks to the growing strength of the civil rights movement and the burgeoning counterculture, which sought to pull society away from racial and ethnic discrimination and from the policies that had typified the post-World War II establishment.²⁸⁴

As far as I can deduce, however, the couple had little to be concerned with, I believe because they were admitted to the US under the former Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Via *San Francisco Remembered*, Mary Geraldine Daly Martin underlined that by 1969 not much had changed in comparison with the previous regime.²⁸⁵

Conveniently, there was an Immigration and Naturalization Service office on San Francisco's eastern side in Sansome Street, a few blocks south of where it meets the east-west running 'Broadway' (which runs parallel, one block south of Vallejo Street).

²⁷⁸ *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. David Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 124

²⁷⁹ On Nov. 23, 2022, a request for copy of Margot's 'naturalisation' certificate was submitted via genealogy.uscis.dhs.gov/#/search. A case ID: GEN-10251965 [Agency Tracking ID 10251965G5043420201] was assigned, however the lack of progress was followed up resulting in a confirmation from Donna at Genealogy.USCIS@uscis.dhs.gov on Nov. 27 which stated: "Our office only processes requests for ... records [which] fall between ... [1906-1956]. You will need to contact your local immigration office or search for more information on the USCIS website: uscis.gov/ or uscis-casestatus@dhs.gov" (see also archives.gov/research/immigration/naturalization). Two possible contact addresses regarding the eventual expansion of that date range include SanFrancisco.CommunityRelations@dhs.gov (2010) and SFSJ.CommunityRelations@uscis.dhs.gov (2020)

²⁸⁰ See: govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-66/pdf/STATUTE-66-Pg163.pdf?fbclid=IwAR29EilqbtfkTmirHJSvEexXt-hmL1bkjTQabBIV_7MqfkZMjuDUI37zFhs

²⁸¹ "Once here legally by whatever method, just five years of residency would qualify someone to apply for citizenship -- and from there, it would have been pretty straightforward, I would think." See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_and_Nationality_Act_of_1952

²⁸² Since the 1920s US immigration policy had strongly favoured northern European residents meaning that only 5.4 percent of the United States' population was foreign-born by the time of the 1960 census (see also footnote 8 on pg. 987). However, at the time of the couple's arrival, public opinion had been moving against the so-called national quota system. See: cato.org/policy-analysis/brief-history-us-immigration-policy-colonial-period-present-day#reopening-immigration-system-1965-2000 (referring to "Table 1. Nativity of the Population and Place of Birth of the Native Population: 1850 to 1990," U.S. Census Bureau, March 9, 1999).

²⁸³ The new act replaced the former national quota system although its categorisations remained not dissimilar to those under the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act. See: cato.org/policy-analysis/brief-history-us-immigration-policy-colonial-period-present-day#immigration-nationality-act-1965

²⁸⁴ See: history.com/_amp/topics/immigration/us-immigration-since-1965

²⁸⁵ Furthermore, "The process was similar to today, however it was simpler and the waiting times were not as long." See: facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542

The east-west running 'Broadway,' which itself runs parallel and one block south of Vallejo Street



Right: The Immigration and Naturalization Service's office at 630 Sansome Street. Aug. 1964. Source: digitalsf.org



Middle right and below: The eventual prize – a US passport and a citizenship certificate of 1952. Source: collections.usimm.org

In practice, Margot and Francis will have submitted an application form, been fingerprinted and had their pictures taken.²⁸⁶ Then, after a few months, one received notice to report for an oral examination, in lieu of which pamphlets or books will have needed to be studied to pass a test.

*"The exam consisted of questions about our form of government, who was President, how many senators did each state have, etc."*²⁸⁷

It is unlikely that Margot and Francis will have needed to involve many other acquaintances in the process.

For instance, they *"didn't have to present witnesses"* although one applicant told me via San Francisco Remembered he *"had to go with a sponsor who may have been asked" (to back up his) "good moral character assurances."*

After passing their exams, Margot and Francis will have been sworn in at the city's courthouse, *"Dressed up for the ceremony ... so proud and happy to become citizens!"* continues Betty Cooper.²⁸⁸ I daresay they'll have beamed as Francis had in 1962 in Uranium City's *Northland News*.

After swearing in, the couple will have requested a passport, much *"like everyone else, by applying and providing evidence of citizenship and pictures for the passport."* It must have felt a very fitting end for Francis to cement himself to San Francisco, not least because the city patron saint is another Francis: that of Assisi!

Following the crowning moment of their American dream, the couple could begin planning a return to continental Europe, to visit what remained of family as well as old haunts in Holland, England, Hungary, Israel – even divided Germany. In preparing for that, they might have been surprised to hear that *"In the three years since the wedding of Beatrix and her German beau, the rest of the world had caught up with Provo Amsterdam."*²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Recalls Rolando A. Salazar, speaking about his experience in 1966. See: [facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542](https://www.facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542)

²⁸⁷ Informs Betty Cooper. See: [facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542](https://www.facebook.com/groups/remembered/posts/2350116288523542)

²⁸⁸ For interest, explanations of citizenship vs naturalisation can be found here: legaldesire.com/citizenship-certificate-vs-naturalization-certificate

²⁸⁹ *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 331

I imagine they'd have countered that San Francisco was where the counterculture started, having been there and seen much from their doorstep. But at the end of 1969, the more pertinent question for them perhaps will have been, who to visit and where to go first?

#####

- DREAMTIME?* -

* *The time of the creation of the world, by the ancestors out of their own essence.*²⁹⁰

Turning 58 in late 1969, Margot, together with husband Francis, had fulfilled their American dream. They had a comfortable life in an urban community that had faced little if no oppression and whose liberal values were not dissimilar to those of cities she had left behind in Europe, particularly Amsterdam and Berlin in its heyday. It was the conclusion of a fantastic journey that had had a perfect outcome that neither could complain about.



If America's 'greatness' ever needed underlining, its succeeded in sending a man to the Moon that also ensured it won the space race which also proved its technological superiority. July, 1969
Source:
[en.wiki/Apollo 11](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo_11)

Beyond San Francisco, for the most part family members thrived too, whether they were in the UK, Germany or Holland. Unlike Margot, Nanny had stayed in Amsterdam, accompanied by her daughter, Irene. Among her children, Tiny had settled in a new town and neighbourhood in the UK, where her new-build home was situated in what may be described as the capital city's green belt. Although it was yet to happen, Irene and Cor too were searching for a house with a garden, if not in Amsterdam, then not in proximity to the capital.²⁹¹

Curiously, both Alice and Harvey also were within the shadow of their capital city (all the more remarkably within each other's shadow too). That neither were seemingly aware of one another, however, highlights the 'disconnects' that occurred between family members due to differing priorities and time-zones, unaided by distance and the high cost of telecommunications.

In the politically far-off distance, behind the Iron Curtain, the daughter of Nanny and Margot's eldest cousin, Vera, shouldered the biggest challenge in comparison with her second cousins: Tiny, Irene and Alice.

Barely into her thirties, supposedly an example of East Germany's 'liberated' woman, she found herself divorced, holding down a succession of jobs, and serving as a full-time single mother to at least two of her three sons. Her challenge was exacerbated by the fact that the East German state was not only keen to exert its influence on her youngsters' upbringing but to surrogate parenting, de-privatise the

²⁹⁰ From Australian Aboriginal mythology. See: en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Dreamtime

²⁹¹ Personal correspondence. May 15, 2023.

family and undermine it as an autonomous social unit – and her authority within that.²⁹² I guess one need not wonder why there are no family photos to share or it remains a challenge for her sons to collectively recall their past.

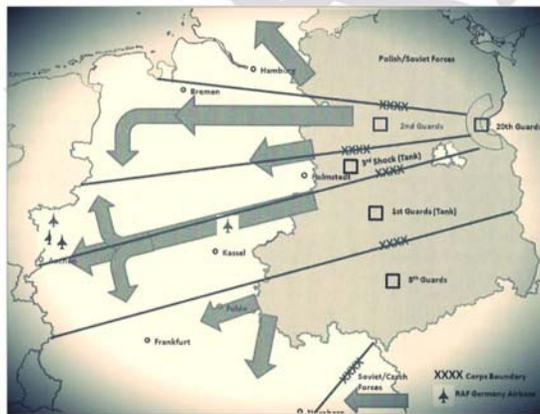
Those existences were of course further challenged by the more or less permanent shortages of goods and services. Housing was one thing she didn't have to worry about, being just a tram ride from the city centre. But at the same time, Vera and family look to have shunned Leipzig's 'new town' aspirations and the cement and concrete developments of the 1960s which were thrust upon it by Leipzig's 'own,' Walter Ulbricht.

That said, were the paving slabs and prefab *beton* of *Sachsenplatz* very much different to that of Grovehill which went on to become my playground in the early 80s?

I suppose Margot, Nanny or Vera's more immediate family that fled west after the war will have reflected with her on how dreams could be more easily fulfilled there than in the cosmopolitan city where this story starts. But its thanks to Vera's about-turn in 1946 that our family retains its connection to Leipzig. At the same time, being resident of a Warsaw Pact state and isolated behind the Iron Curtain does not seem to have perturbed her or her family. She did the best she could with what she had and unknowingly, alongside the other many female protagonists in this story, exemplified 'girl power': independence, confidence, strength and empowerment.²⁹³

It's a curious thing though that 'Germany,' in no small part thanks to the Cold War, had a last surprise in store that decade for Leipzig's 'descendants.' Namely, after drawing Tiny and family back to the land of their mother's birth, its history and its consequences brought Alice West Germany and the Englishman who'd go on to become her husband.

The expected lines of advance for a Soviet invasion of Western Europe.
Source: D. Gledhill



According to David Gledhill, author of *Phantom in the Cold War* and former resident of RAF Wildenrath "those who served at the Station contributed significantly to preserving peace through skill, determination and perseverance."²⁹⁴ Even if John's role was all but a cog in a very large wheel, he also played a part in ensuring European security that at the same time helped fulfil these families' dreams.

By the time the sixties were over, however, 'Germany' had fallen well off the 'emigrant' families' radars. Yet interest would return within a generation. The question is, was that to have been expected?

²⁹² *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Paul Betts. OUP; Reprint edition, 2013. Pg. 64

²⁹³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girl_power

²⁹⁴ *Phantom in the Cold War*. RAF Wildenrath 1977-1992. Pen and Sword Aviation, 2017. David Gledhill. Pg. 261, 34

Footnotes to Textbox 18.1: The Flying Dutchmen

1. See: resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn5/sleeswij
2. See: alchetron.com/Jan-Van-Halen
3. See: musicoholics.com/backstage-stories/remembering-eddie-van-halen-the-real-guitar-hero
4. See: indischhistorisch.nl/derde-pagina/amerindos-2/amerindos-eddie-and-alex-van-halen-into-dutch-rockers
5. See: dirkdeklein.net/2017/04/12/the-show-must-go-on
6. See: wikitree.com/wiki/Van_Beers-6
7. See: vhnd.com/2014/02/22/aap53/
8. See: ethnicelebs.com/david-lee-roth
9. See: youtu.be/BMkXcNaKOIo. N.b. "During Van Halen's early days," wrote Alva Yaffe in *Remembering Eddie Van Halen, the Real Guitar Hero* (see #3 above) "When Eddie and Alex got into occasional – and typical – sibling fights, the two would naturally lapse into Dutch, using swear words and all in their mother tongue." "It was one of the strangest things I've ever seen," Noel Monk, their one-time manager, recalled of those moments. "These two ordinarily placid rockers, who usually spoke in a sort of pothead-surf [jargon], suddenly nose to nose, spitting and snarling and growling at each other in a foreign language, as if they had become possessed."
10. 100 jaar Carré. Han Peekel, Fridtjof Meerlo en Han Santing. Loeb Uitgevers B.V., Amsterdam. 1987.
11. Van Halen Rising: How a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal. Greg Renoff. ECW Press, 2015. Pgs. 2,3,4,5
12. See: facebook.com/PassageThroughLeipzig/posts/3138991306229842

Images:

Top: Alex (left) and Eddie as toddler musicians in the Netherlands. Source: #3
 Middle: Biographical survey completed for fan magazine showing a young Eddie van Halen (Source: Providence unknown)
 Bottom: Jan van Halen jamming with Eddie. Source: twitter.com/VolfVanHalen/status/1316064729949851655

Footnotes to Textbox 18.2: Leipzig's evolving cityscape – and those spots closer to 'home'

1. *Three Cities After Hitler: Redemptive Reconstruction Across Cold War Borders (Russian and East European Studies)*. Andrew Demshuk. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. Pg. 215 (1a), 294 (1b), 218 (1c), 220 (1d), 18 (1e)
2. *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. (1964). Pg. 70 (2a), (1965). Pg. 71 (2b), (1968). Pg. 74 (2c), (1966). Pg. 72 (2d)
3. Demolished in 2007. See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brühl_\(Leipzig\)#Nach_der_Wende](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brühl_(Leipzig)#Nach_der_Wende)
4. See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sachsenplatz_\(Leipzig\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sachsenplatz_(Leipzig))
5. See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alte_Handelsbörse_\(Leipzig\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alte_Handelsbörse_(Leipzig)).
6. *Demolition on Karl Marx Square. Cultural Barbarism and the People's State in 1968*. A. Demshuk. OUP, 2017. Pg. 118.
7. See: immobilien-aktuell-magazin.de/topics/deutrichs-hof-leipzig-zentrum-neu-bebaut
8. *Die Zukunft der Stadt beginnt heute. Deutsche Architektur*. Gerhard Krenz (Ed). Pg. 10-11 cited in *Three Cities After Hitler: Redemptive Reconstruction Across Cold War Borders (Russian and East European Studies)*. Andrew Demshuk. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. Pg. 16 [referencing footnote 46 on pg. 438].

Images:

Sachsenplatz: Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, Inv.-Nr. F/2043/2004, Fotograf: Herbert Lachmann. Retrieved [here](#).
Leipzig Historische Messe um 1820 auf dem Naschmarkt Jubiläumsmesse 1965 Kat. Leipzig. Retrieved [here](#).
Map: Leipzig innenstadt, 1913. Retrieved [here](#).

Footnotes to Textbox 18.11: High Society Homes and their Residents

Sources:

1. *Offbeat Places to Live: Homes that stand out from the crowd. People by Design*. Sylvia Rubin. *San Francisco Chronicle*. Dec. 28, 1983. Pg. 36
2. See: newfillmore.com/2015/06/03/the-castle-on-vallejo
3. Suzanne Allen. *Obituaries*. *San Francisco Chronicle*. July 8, 1964. Pg. 26
4. See: sfgate.com/news/article/The-Pasmore-sisters-Make-room-for-women-3375248.php
5. Indeed, in 1883, Breitkopf & Härtel of Leipzig published Henry Bickford Pasmore's *Sechs Lieder für 1 Singstimme mit Pianoforte, no.*
6. See: lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=135313
7. Millie's Column: Good-By to a Great Lady, Millie Robbins. *San Francisco Chronicle*. Dec. 9, 1968. pg. 26
7. From the Facebook group 'For The Love Of Old Houses.' See the specific post [here](#)
8. See: researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/data/52913065
9. William Hughson Is Dead at 97. *San Francisco Chronicle*. April 17, 1967. Pg. 6
10. *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love*. D. Talbot. Free Press, 2012. Pg. 105

Images:

Top Right: 'Digby's Castle' complex at 1737 Vallejo Street, opposite the 'Apartments.' Source: sfgate.com
 Middle Left: The Italianate mansion at 1772 Vallejo Street. Source: See #7 above. N.b. Look carefully beneath the crown of the trees on the right and one can spot the dark grey marquee that belongs to 1750.
 Middle Right: William Hughson: Down the road at his "Hughson Ford" premises at 1400 Van Ness Avenue. Source: [Shutterstock](https://shutterstock.com)
 Bottom Left: When the movies came to Vallejo Street. Source: *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, March 10, 1968.