

I was born in the year 1925 in Hamburg, Germany, first-born son of parents of rabbinical origin on both sides: Reform on my mother's and moderately Orthodox on my father's side. From the age of eight I experienced, though not very deeply, the rise of Hitler and the Nazi regime while attending one of the oldest Jewish schools in the Western world - the "Talmud Tora". Our somewhat uneventful life in Hamburg, a city known for its relatively liberal atmosphere, came to an abrupt end in August 1938 when my mother, with remarkable foresight, decided from one day to the next to take the family on the next train to Amsterdam, Holland, - leaving behind all our belongings (my father was already abroad).

From there we crossed the Channel to London, England where I spent the next ten years, experiencing the outbreak of World War 2 and, later, the almost nightly attacks by the German Air Force. My schooling continued at two schools in Finchley, a part of London, and then continued with studying for my B.Sc. in Chemistry at The Polytechnic, an external college of the University of London, finishing (after two years instead of the usual four) with an Honours degree a few months before the end of the war (one of my final examinations took place during one of the last V-2 rocket attacks on London when all the participants had to take shelter without supervision - not surprisingly everyone passed with distinction).

Then came the end of the war (VE day was the most exhilarating day in my life), followed by 3 years of working for 3 chemical firms in London and nearby. At the first I spent a whole year travelling for an hour each day and each way all by myself (to the far East of the city) because the firm's main product was a particularly malodorous substance (isovaleric acid). At the second I made my first important discovery (which was immediately appropriated by my boss as his own) through being able to read Beilstein's handbook. By the time of my third job I had become a Zionist (in fact this was at Prof. Chaim Weizmann's private laboratory in London and that through a chance acquaintance with my future doctoral supervisor, Prof. E.D. Bergmann). All through this period I was unsuccessful trying to further my studies, being unable to find a university position, all (justifiably) having been taken by returning ex-servicemen. After this I went through a short spell of real Zionism - working on a Hachshara farm in the south of England; and shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel (May 1948) came to this country via Paris, Marseilles and Haifa, the last lap on an old DC-3 plane (which crashed on the following flight), together with a dozen other volunteers who like myself had enlisted in Machal - the Israeli Army Volunteers from Abroad unit

After a short stay at the army base Tel Litvinsky I contacted Prof. Bergmann at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovoth and was transferred there to the Hemed unit of the Israeli army, where my immediate superior was Prof. Ephraim Katchalski-Katzir, later to be President of the State. Towards the end of 1949 at the end of my army service and after a short return to visit my parents in London I returned to the Weizmann Institute and began my doctorate work under Professor E.D. Bergmann which was to take until the year 1952. During those years I hardly saw my supervisor except at night time; and it was not until forty years later (1992) that I began to learn the reason: all those years and until the 1960's Bergmann had been the moving spirit behind the execution of the atomic energy project in Israel.

At about the same time when I began my Ph.D. work I met in Jerusalem at a family celebration my future wife Rachel (nee Levison). She was called up for army service the following year and served as chief announcer of the newly formed army radio station Galei Tzahal. After this, in 1952, we were married in Jerusalem and had a close and loving relationship for forty years (not least because we were both trilingual (Hebrew, German and English)) until her sudden death (of a heart attack) in 1992.

A few months later we moved to Glasgow, Scotland, where I had applied for and was offered an I.C.I. Fellowship at the University. Glasgow was then still a dark and heavily polluted city, but we used every opportunity to escape to the Scottish mountains, and I had a very successful and productive year at my work. We then travelled by ship to New York where I worked as a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University under the inspiring guidance of Prof. Gilbert Stork until 1955. Rachel worked part of the time at the delegation to the U.N. at the Israel consulate.

At the end of 1955 we returned to Israel where, at the suggestion of Prof. D. Ginsburg I decided to accept an offer to work at the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry. We decided to live at the "Shikun Hatechnion" in Ahuza, a group of Swedish wooden houses in one of which I live to this day (2008). These were originally erected by the Technion to accommodate staff members, mostly physicists who had left the United States for political reasons (Senator McCarthy).

Our son Ron was born in 1959. He studied medicine at the Hebrew University and then molecular biology at the University of Cambridge, England. Today he lives in Modiin, Israel and is both a pediatrician in that city and head of the department of Tissue Typing at the Tel Hashomer hospital near Tel Aviv. He is married and they have two children.