



Hilda Homer, Henry's only sister, added further memories of her youth, of the years in Koenigswinter, and of their parents:

ADELE HARTUCH



The mother (of Hilda and Henry) was one of 12 children. Her father died when his youngest child was 2 months old. Hilda's mother Adele Hartuch went to work in

a shop at a young age. She sold lace. Her family was religious. Her first boy friend was a gentile and she didn't marry him. When she was 27 she met Albert Cann, who was 35 years old at the time. They married and moved to



Koenigswinter, a small resort town on the Rhine. They were one of three Jewish families and their two children were the only Jewish children in town. On holidays and some Sabbaths 12 Jews from 7 surrounding towns gathered to worship. Sometimes they spent the high holidays with the mother's sister in Luxemburg.



Hilda (who is 2 years older than Henry) remembers her mother as a business woman, a good mother, a religious, superstitious woman. The home was Kosher.

Albert adored his wife, and she "ran" him. She helped him with the 2 shops that were adjacent to the house (a retail shoe outlet and a shop that sold leather.) Every afternoon, before dinner, Albert and his wife went to the bedroom for an hour and closed the door.

Henry was closer to his mother and Hilda to her father.

Hilda remembers the end of WWI. When the armistice was signed the German troops had two days to cross the Rhine before they would become prisoners of war. 2 pontoon bridges were quickly constructed near Koenigswinter and thousands of troops walked, limped, shuffled, and staggered through the town. Albert Cann set up a refreshment table in front of his house. He had no bread so he served marmalade and treacle. 3 soldiers were bivouacked in the Cann home for 6 weeks. One carved wooden furniture and assembled it without nails. (Hilda's son John still has it.)

Hilda recalls soldiers refusing to eat the military pea soup. They fed it to her chickens.

She went to convent school. The Sister sent her home when they stopped studying the Old Testament and started on the New Testament. Hilda went to college at Bonn for a year. This was unusual for women, in those days. Her father

encouraged her. Her mother opposed it and feared lightning would strike the train that carried Hilda to Bonn.

Hilda's mother died of breast cancer at the age of 46. Hilda would not have been able to marry out of the faith were it not for her mother's tragic death. In 1931, Hilda met Robert Homer, a Methodist from Lancaster England. She was 17. He was 27. He came to Koenigswinter that summer with Cook's tours. She spoke English and befriended him. He fell in love with her.

Robert later told Hilda that before he met her he never smoked, drank liquor, or kissed a woman. She introduced him to Rhine Wine.

They wrote each other during the following year. She wrote in English. He corrected her letters and returned them with his own. He returned to Koenigswinter the following summer. Hilda found his accommodations better and cheaper than those of the Cook Company.

The following October Hilda visited Robert in England. She wanted to be certain he was who he claimed to be. Her father insisted she have a return ticket with her, in case of problems.

She met Robert's brother, the parson. Robert's sister, a 47 year old spinster, was their constant chaperone. She made certain the couple was never alone during the entire fortnight.

Hilda and Robert married in 1933, in Cologne. The mayor of Koenigswinter presided. She was 19. He was 29. They moved to Lancaster where he sold insurance. (After WWII he was in charge of a segment of the civilian population in Italy.) It was an excellent marriage. They were good friends, and they enjoyed sex. She was active politically (in the labor party) and in various union organizations. (I told him I would never be unfaithful, but I had to go to my meetings in the evenings. He trusted me.)

They had 2 sons, John, who is in Hotel management in the U.S., and Ralph, a professor who lives in Essex. She nursed both sons. She refused to let teachers spank them. She believes in God. She doesn't sin and feels that religion "gives you guilt."

In the late 1930s the mayor of Koenigswinter wrote to her in England. He said the Nazis had closed Albert Cann's store and bank account. Albert and his older spinster sister Rosa just sat in their house. Neighbors and friends brought them food. The mayor suggested that Hilda bring Albert to England.

With Robert's help, she posted bonds for a total of 7 Jews from her home town, including her aunt, Henry, and the Leopolds. Each Jew she brought to England required a 250 pound bond. When Hilda ran out of assets, she persuaded a non-Jewish neighbor to post a guarantee for 2 people, promising the neighbors they would never have to pay a cent.

I was whisked across the Pennine hills of northern England from Yorkshire to Lancashire where I was to spend my formative years. My father had accepted a superintendent position with the Refuge Insurance Company in Accrington and our family followed him to the new location.

Our household consisted of my father, mother, brother (three years my elder), mother's father and his sister. Father had married mother in 1933 when he brought her to England from Germany. They, in

Hilda got a job as a cashier for an electrical company and worked for 32 years to supplement the family income.

Robert went to Cologne to accompany Albert Cann and his older sister back to England. They lived in Albert's house until they died.

(Robert lived to be 80, his sister died at age 94. Robert learned German and spoke German in his home.

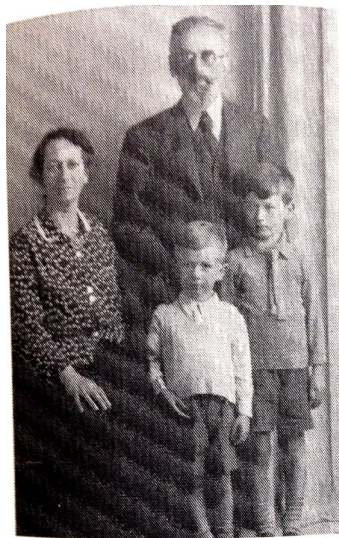
ALBERT HENRY ROSA RALPH HILDA JOHN



ROBERT HOMER



Robert Homer 1903-19



Rosa Cahn (1880-1974,) Albert Cahn (1877-1957) and John & Ralph Homer



Hilde Homer