

### *3. Living in KC*

Reverend Jennings and I went through the latest news during my weekly visits. I was so happy to have him helping fill that void in my life, the absence of my dear aunt Andrea created. From late in 1945, I remember Jennings' amusement, when he told me, the Western occupying forces in Germany; I.e. the U.S., U.K. and France had given up trying to prevent fraternization with the German population. Of course, that meant essentially only one thing, German girls and the occupying soldiers, and it had never been possible to prevent that. Lee and I was living proof. The U.S. alone was providing 50 million condoms to the enlisted men per month; what did they think they used them for (?).

From around that time, I also recall Jennings telling me, he had heard unofficially, it was known to army intelligence, Russians had been committing numerous atrocities in the old German territories in the East. In particular, he mentioned, apparently some 3000 civilians, mainly women and children, had been unable to get out of Marienburg, a beautiful ancient city I had visited numerous times in my childhood. The Russians had exterminated them all, after the usual "Take Revenge without Mercy" treatment, and buried them in pits. As I am writing this now, that has been confirmed. The burial pits were discovered 64/65 years later.

Marienburg can reasonably be considered the original cornerstone of German Prussia, when founded by the Teutonic Order in 1274, and so it existed until 1945 and was destroyed by Stalin, or on the orders of Stalin, with the vicious murder of 3000 remaining women and children as a final act of ignominy. Today, the remnants of this glorious city is known as Malbork, and whatever exists there, rests on the bones of Stalin's victims.

The Nuremberg trials got under way in 1945 and I followed every bit of news with keen interest. I was entirely supportive of this process, and could only have hoped every Gauleiter and every miserable little Nazi functionary also had been put on trial. Around this time as well, Laval in France and Quisling in Norway were both executed in their respective countries.

After having taken control of all of Eastern Europe, Stalin was now so bold, he tried his hand at getting control of Iran. He went so far, to set up a communist government in Iran in parts of the country under Red Army control. It took Iran years to fully get rid of the Russians.

Britain was in a dismal economical shape, and had to maintain wartime powers to manage this crisis. The U.S. forgave and wrote off \$ 25 billion of British wartime debt under the lend-lease scheme, which quite obviously was uncollectible. \$ 25 billion was a huge amount in 1945, and I could not help thinking, that was money that need not have been wasted or written off, if Chamberlain and Britain would just have kept out of the Danzig quandary, and left Hitler to go after Stalin without British-French interference.

I also remember, we talked about the unreal delusions Americans had been under concerning Russia and Stalinism all through the 1930s, and that of course continued during the war with Roosevelt and Hopkins' alliance with Stalin. "The New York Times" peculiar two decades of strident and bizarre bias in favour of Russia and the Soviet regime, facts and reality notwithstanding, had been hugely influential, but Jennings pointed out to me, this was not exclusively a preserve of this newspaper. There was a whole school of whitewashers afoot during this period. The most influential of those, was a couple of British parlour socialists, as he called them; Beatrice and Sidney Webb.

This couple had spent a lifetime in British Labour and socialist politics, where they exerted considerable weight, and were co-founders of the London School of Economics, and the publication "New Statesman". Late in life, they ventured to Russia and produced a couple of pretentious volumes: "Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?" in 1935, and "The Truth About Soviet Russia" in 1942. When they are read today, such terms as drivel and gibberish would not suffice to portray what they wrote. H.G. Wells called the couple short-sighted, bourgeois manipulators, and according to Jennings, that would be putting it generously.

Regardless of the utter lack of credibility, people such as the Webbs and Duranty, the "New York Times" Moscow reporter, were quoted and copied far and wide, and they did conspicuous damage with their mindless and de facto Soviet propaganda. There was a very general feeling and belief through the 1930s, and well up to past the end of WWII, that Bolshevism and Stalinism generally was benign, and the best, all considered, for the people of Russia. It was also felt, Europe had little to fear from Stalin and Russia at the time.

Back to the origin of WWII in the West, I remember Jennings making comments along these lines: "Churchill baited, sniped and war mongered for a decade. Without his contribution, it is very and even most likely, Halifax and Chamberlain would not have felt forced to dream up their insane "guarantees" of Poland and Romania. As humiliating as it might have been for the likes of Churchill, the policy of appeasement pursued by Chamberlain was in fact the best in the circumstances. The law in such situations is, you speak softly and you carry a big stick. Britain did in fact speak softly, until Churchill started to pipe up, but it had no stick; no army, a tiny air force and an ageing navy. It should have continued to speak softly, and it should have done more work on the stick. Had Baldwin's and Chamberlain's policy of appeasement been maintained categorically, there would have been no war in the West. Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Britain and France would have been at peace. Hitler would have devoted himself to his "Drang Nach Osten", and he and Stalin would have slugged it out for many years. The US, Canada and Australia would not have been dragged in to this useless, pointless, purposeless war. We have no one but Churchill to thank for that. The man was an obsessive megalomaniac, and he succeeded, single-handedly, in dragging his own nation and everyone else in to WWII."

Reverend Jennings' simple and concise summary impressed me immensely. As much as my aunt's views coincided with his, I have never heard anyone express it so plainly. I have

read scores of books on this subject since, and I have never been able to find anyone able to repudiate convincingly, what Jennings had to say.

I asked him: “What do you think the outcome would have been of a Hitler Stalin war, without any Western involvement?”

“I believe it would have dragged on for years, but I am convinced Russia, not necessarily Stalin, would have prevailed eventually. There are many reasons for that. We know about the climate already. The Russians can stand these winters. Hardly anyone else can. Russia had the manpower, that would have outlasted Germany even with some allies. Russia had all the resources it needed; Germany did not. In heavy artillery, tanks and rocketry Russia was well ahead, and kept improving. Much as what happened in this war, Germany would have run out of raw materials, worst of all fuel, and it would have been outnumbered unable to make up for the constant losses. Hitler would probably have been assassinated, and Stalin might have been pushed aside. This is the way this war was supposed to have run, and would have proceeded, had it not been for British hubris and interference.”

Of course I discussed all of these subjects with Lee at length, because I was naturally preoccupied with all of it, Lee not so much. His feeling was, what happened, happened, let's get on with life, but he was sympathetic to my passion for history. Once we were both visiting the Reverend, Lee asked him about the rumour, that Roosevelt should have known about the threat to Pearl Harbour in advance.

Jennings replied: “My dear boy, let me recite for you Jennings' Law: “The greater the conspiracy, the smaller the brain”, and of course it works either way: “The smaller the brain, the greater the conspiracy”; it never seems to fail. And let me assure you, it applies entirely to this ridiculous and sleazy rumour.”

The Reverend Jennings was for me like a surrogate parent from my mid to late teens. He knew so much, and he shared it without hesitation at any time. I was the main recipient of this generosity, but Lee enjoyed it as well from time to time. I always have to think back to the moment, when they encountered me sitting at the little makeshift café table in Berlin, and how Jennings had taken the time and effort to converse with me, a young, lost, teenage kid, who should have been of no concern or interest to him. It was as if preordained I should receive his attention and care.

By late 1945, our life had settled into, what became our eventual routine. That included, almost invariably, one weekly movie, typically the latest product of the Hollywood entertainment industry, and for Lee a great deal of devotion to, what in America is known as football, as well as baseball. In my childhood, we played a couple of games resembling baseball, and I could certainly relate to that, but American football will to my dying day remain something alien and mysterious, I have never been able to understand. It is curious how soccer became a universal sport elsewhere, but not in America.

As much as I initially enjoyed the movies, and the relative freedom of expression they embodied, it did not take very long before I started to find them boring, and at times excruciatingly boring. By now, some 60+ years later, it is seemingly starting to dawn on

more and more people, that 95%+ of what Hollywood produces is pulp; forgettable, predictable, boring gibberish of no redeeming value, and so it was in 1945.

However, to have voiced such an opinion in 1945, would have been tantamount to sacrilege, and I perceived as much. America worshipped Hollywood. It was something akin to a national pantheon, and the means by which the country asserted and validated its culture, ethos, even ethics. It reminded me of a latter day deity or oracle, where followers, reporters and the media, would seek the opinions of Hollywood performers on weighty issues of the day, and they still do.

Of course, Hollywood was also a hard nosed and a very profitable business, and it is this combination of an enduring and effective wellspring of profits and American pantheon, which has made it so stable and permanent.

Without the slightest concern for other countries' culture, history, traditions or literature, Hollywood would routinely beg, borrow or steal subjects of potential interest and turn them into profitable features remade in Hollywood, mainly with American performers, an American slant and the producing country's stamp of approval.

I did not hold these views in late 1945, far from it, but the basis for these feelings originated at that time, and I knew, this was not something I could discuss with my sweet and adorable lover and husband. I was reasonably certain, that would have upset him profoundly.

Also, from that time, I started to form an impression of what I call the American culture of spectation and vicariousness. There is no such word as "spectation", but since the act and function of spectation clearly and obviously exist, and is a huge part of life in America, we will have to start getting used to the adjective form of spectator and deal with it. I will get back to that later in more detail. At this point, I want to mention some really amusing and endearing aspects of my husband's personality, for which I will always love him.

During 1943/1944 lots of simple, ordinary consumer products ceased to be available in Germany, including, not surprisingly, women's sanitary napkins. My resourceful mother made up a kind of "female diapers" out of the remnants of old terry cloth, which we changed frequently, washed and reused. When Vodkin spirited me out of my childhood home, they and so many other things were lost to me, but I managed to recreate something similar in the house where we stayed, before we moved on to Berlin.

Lee made the acquaintance with my diapers during our passage across the Atlantic, and I told him the story of how they had come into existence. He was very interested and very sympathetic. He did not show the slightest discomfort or disgust with anything to do with the female menstruation, and even helped me wash them! In this respect he was unusual. Nearly all men I know of, wants nothing to do with that part of the female physique and many display a clear aversion to it. Girls and women act accordingly and keep that part well away from their men.

Not so my sweetheart. He loved to wash me and soap me. He insisted on trimming my

body hair, including my pubic hair, which frankly embarrassed me the first time he did it, but I soon got used to it. He asked me not to remove the hair under my arms, and not to shave my legs. He liked normal body hair on girls.

When we reached Kansas City, my adorable husband bought me tampons, and told me, when my next period was due, he would show me how to use them, and that my life would be so much easier with regard to menstruations. I looked at those small things several times and wondered how well that would work, but I trusted Lee knew what he was doing. Much later, he told me Lola and Nicky had taught him well.

When the time came, I let him know, it felt like I might get my period during the night. He laid me down on the bed, after our shower. Then he opened my legs and my nether lips very gently and affectionately. He sweetly licked me there, something he did very often anyway, and then he applied lanolin cream inside my pussy and on the sides of the lips. The little tampon slipped in easily, when he placed it there and slowly pushed it in.

It felt strange and foreign, but I soon got used to it, and when I saw how effectively it worked, I thanked the good lord and my sweet husband, for American technology. Now, tell me, how many young husbands would have done anything so tender and sweet, and that was in 1945! I could put up with a lot of Hollywood pulp in return for that kind of love and care.

Towards Christmas 1945 I was very busy baking cookies for everyone we knew. Renata's family cookies were already much in demand, and this was something I could do for the whole family at limited expense to us. One thing was very much on my mind. I wanted to give my sweetheart husband some nice present, but I had no money of my own and in any event, anything I could buy for \$\$ would not be as personal as I wanted.

I asked Lee's mum to help me think of something, and after talking over some ideas, she asked me if I could knit. In fact I could, and I had indeed knitted various small things in the past including scarves, leg warmers and other good things. In no time, she dug out an excellent book with all kinds of patterns, plans and instructions from which I chose a nice warm vest. Lee's mum even gave me all the wool I needed, of which she had plenty as well as needles and anything else I wanted.

I saw no point in trying to hide from Lee what I was doing, besides I needed to try it on him from time to time, and he was so delighted, I ended up making him two really nice warm vests for winter. He wore them forever, and I told him, he could thank his mum for them more than me, because it was her idea and she had given us all the lovely yarn. Christmas was a big family festivity for the Prentices and traditionally celebrated in Lou Ann's big home. Lee and I usually stayed in the villa for 2 or 3 days and also helped out as best we could. It was always a heart warming event for me, because so many aspects reminded me of my own lost home and family.

As much as Lee appreciated my Christmas present, and he certainly did, what he really would have liked, would have been for me, as Americans say, to have a bun in the oven!

Well, that was not happening anytime soon it seemed. As willing as I was, and as hard as we tried, of that there was no sign so far. All I really knew about fertility was essentially what my mother had told me, that teenage girls are very fertile and at great risk of pregnancy, at the slightest exposure to sperm!

I did not particularly want to think about how much exposure I had had to that during the preceding year, at least not the first half, and Susan, Lee's sister assured me, it often took a couple of years before a young girl's body "settled down" to conception and child bearing. She was very sweet and supportive and told me, it had taken her a couple of years to conceive.

During Christmas numerous people and family visited, and it was the first time since our wedding I saw the family friend Clarence. He had been a good friend of Lee's dad and he was the one who had been able to find a recording of the waltz I wanted so badly for the wedding, so I felt a debt to him and promised him some of my cookies, when I next made a batch.

Clarence was in his late 40s I think, very sociable, known by anyone and everyone, widely travelled, and politically somewhat influential. He was a director of the local museum of art, a director of the main library, involved in theatre and performing arts, and he wrote occasional newspaper columns. I think it was called something like "A View from the Heartland", and it appeared nationally.

I found him fascinating, my dear husband less so. Lee called him sexually ambiguous, which no doubt was true, and being a true Reinhart, that would not bother me. Lou Ann told me at a much later date, Clarence was a perpetual closet gay. She had to explain to me in more detail, this is one of those who will never come out of the closet! At that age, I did not know enough about those finer points, and it only elicited all that much more sympathy from me. He was very hospitable and our shared interest in art soon drew us together. He promised to invite us to a vernissage of the best contemporary American art expected in the spring.

During November-December, I had started to talk to Lee about my need to get started on some meaningful activity, besides just waiting for conception, obviously beyond my control. By then, I felt comfortable with my command of the language, and everyone commented on how well I was doing. If I wanted to work, all I could aspire to, would be something menial. That wouldn't really serve much purpose. So I was thinking along the lines of some kind of study. Nursing seemed like a possibility.

Lee was not resolutely against that idea, but he was not very positive about it either. Susan was somewhat doubtful. She said: "It is a labour of love; it's hard and not really all that rewarding. The main benefit, I think, is all that you learn and experience, and can apply to your own life and family!" I had a feeling she was probably right about that. Lee's mum and Lou Ann were out rightly against it. I remember Lou Ann saying: "You have to wash naked men, and they will not keep their mitts off you. The nurses even complained about my husband, when he was in the hospital, and claimed he was putting his hands under their skirts!"

I left it at that for the time being. Now they all knew, I needed something meaningful and purposeful in my life, but I could wait a month or two, to see if anyone could think of something good that really might fit me. Meanwhile, I lived a cherished life with my adorable husband. I got up with him early and we had breakfast together. Then I did some house cleaning, fed Max and gave him clean water, often I did some laundry. Lee's work clothes got very dirty. Then, most days, I went for a brisk walk with Max, which he loved. Occasionally we would stop by a market and shop for fresh fruit and vegetables on our way home. I did not eat much for lunch, usually just our own bread with cheese, raw carrots and lettuce, things like that. After lunch, I read the newspaper thoroughly from cover to cover. That was how I taught myself English vocabulary. I kept a good dictionary and even a thesaurus beside me, and as I encountered new and particularly interesting words, I explored them and their roots and wrote them down in a running note book I kept. At night, I would then examine their colloquial use in more detail with Lee, and he would teach me the finer details of sense and connotation as it applied. We had a lot of fun, and I know, even he, learned something from that.

One or two afternoons I walked over and visited with Reverend Jennings. He always seemed to broaden my horizons and my world view. He knew so much about history and culture and he was so willing to share it. It was always delightful for me. Other afternoons, I baked bread and cooked. Lee did not mind, that I cooked a lot of stews of different kinds, Irish, Hungarian goulash, French cassoulet with flageolet beans, Swedish with meat balls and so on. I always mixed lots of varied vegetables including kale, parsnips, celery root, parsley root and many other good things. That way we could have leftovers some days, and Lee did not mind that either. He really was very agreeable.

On a Friday night, I think it was, late in January, Lee's friends Jack and Gary and Gary's girlfriend Jen spent the evening with us, and that became a happy routine from then on. Jack was a funny, wise cracking guy, and like Lee, with an eternally sunny outlook on life. Some times, just watching and listening to those two, was very entertaining. They could also be slightly smutty and profane, but that never bothered me. Deep down, there was no harm in that. Gary was a good, solid citizen, friendly, helpful, someone you felt you could ask for support if you needed it. Jen was nice, plain, unpretentious and what I thought of as pragmatic. She worked in a medical office "for now" as she put it. She became the one who solved my quandary of what to learn and study. I asked her what she thought about my idea of nursing, and she did not support it.

"Renata"; she said: "You are too smart for nursing! You can do better than that. Don't get me wrong. Nursing is very honourable, even unselfish. I have the greatest respect for nurses. Where would we be without them ?, but there are other parts of healthcare worth considering. Do you know anything about nutrition ?"

"You mean like, selecting food, cooking, what is good for you, things like that ?"

"Well, yes, those are the very basics. Nutrition involves analysis of diets, foods, what people eat, and what they should be eating! Also, the essential food elements like minerals, vitamins, lipids, amino acids and where they all come from."

"Yes, I agree, that sounds very interesting. I would love to know more about that. My

grandmother taught me so many things, that would help me form a basis for such a study.”

Jen promised to try get me some information in due course, and she did warn me, this was something of a more academic nature, than nursing would have been, but, she insisted, it was well within my reach. I was very grateful to her. Hers was by far the most constructive suggestion anyone had made so far. Lee was somewhat noncommittal, but interested. I was as enthusiastic as the 16 year old kid I was, and I think Jen was kind of wondering about my age, but she never said anything. I also kind of got the feeling, this was a subject Jen herself was very interested in, but for one reason or other, had not decided to actually study, at least not yet.

Lee told me I had to realize I would need to take an American high school leaving exam, in order to get accepted, and in that he was of course entirely right. He promised me to look into that, and that sweet husband of mine came back with news a few days later, I would be able sit for the exam that coming May/June, and that I could study at home with his help, using his old school text books, which he had all kept. Most delightful of all to me personally, it was at Lee’s own old high school this would take place! That gave me such a feeling of belonging, as if I was putting down roots of my own.

Regardless of my prospects for a nutritional education, I really wanted to get started on the high school studies right away, and that was what I did. It also felt so good to pick up, where my life so capriciously had been interrupted. I was going to be a school kid again, at least in some ways. Slowly and surely, traditions and conventions were entering my world, and I think I needed that. As much as I also had enjoyed being 3 years ahead of the usual standards of life, living and making love like an adult, having been a bride at 15 unknown to everyone, I also felt I had missed some light-hearted and carefree years all thanks to Stalin, Hitler and Churchill. In your mid teens you often dream of adulthood. It goes to show, you have to be careful, what you wish for.

I am by nature energetic. I can’t lie around or remain idle for very long. Lee would some times say: “Relax Renata; you make me nervous with all your energy.” But he also appreciated it and often said so. And now that the objective had been clearly identified, I went to work on my lost high school education, like my life depended on it. I studied morning, noon and night, and I loved it. Lee checked my progress and helped me. He felt I was doing very well, and if I kept it up, I should have no difficulty getting good grades. From that time on, we were together with Lee’s friends and Jen regularly, more often at our house, because we were in a house and had the space. They also liked our place and had been visitors there in the past. Quite naturally, Jen and I tended to get involved in womanly discussions and concerns, while the guys talked sports, politics and other “manly” things. From time to time, I would overhear bits of their conversations, and I would then later ask Lee what they had been talking about.

I was careful not to overdo that part, because I well knew it can be very annoying to be pestered about things like that, but I claimed I needed to learn as much English conversation as possible, and that every bit helped! That could on occasion lead to very amusing exchanges. Once one evening, Jen and Gary had left earlier, and when Jack was



on his way out, I overheard him say to Lee something like: “Be good, and always keep a cool tool!”. I could make no sense of that, as much as I tried. I had to ask Lee.

“Lee, tell me, what does that mean: keep a cool tool ?; I heard Jack tell you that,” I asked him. Lee laughed and laughed for several minutes before he responded. “You were not supposed to hear that. That is a secret greeting among guys” he claimed, still smirking and laughing. I pouted. That wasn’t fair. Now he was having so much fun at my expense, and he wouldn’t even tell me. Anyway two can play I thought, so I said to him: “That is not fair. If you will not tell me, I will have to ask someone else!” That did it. He laughed some more, and said: “No, I don’t think this is such a good idea, I better try to tell you, I think.”

“It is a raunchy expression among guys, girls should not be exposed to”, he said rather high-mindedly. “I figured as much,” I said, “but I need to know exactly what it means, so I can avoid making mistakes. How would you like it, if I said to Jack or anyone else: keep a cool tool?” That brought forth another attack of laughter from Lee, and he said: “Good grief, that could surely lead to misunderstandings. I will try to explain it, I promise!”

“Tool in this context refers to a guy’s penis, the dick. It is a silly slogan but some guys really like it. It seems to make them happy to use it. Perhaps it is an expression of their main focus, a perpetual Freudian slip, or something. So you see, it is better, if you do not use it, or ask anybody about its meaning.” Then he laughed some more. I thought about it, and how you have to be careful how you express yourself in English, then I asked Lee: “Would it be something like, if I said to a girl or woman: keep a warm pussy!” He broke out in laughter again: “Yes, absolutely, but for goodness sake, do not do that, because it would be misunderstood. There is no such slogan between girls, to the best of my knowledge, and a girl would assume it to be a come on, to have sex with her, I think.”

So there, so much for gender equality in 1946. Today, I guess girls could say things like that to each other, if they were as genitally focused as our friend Jack was back then, and it is really not such a bad thing to say, if it makes you happy.

This was not the only amusing experience I had with raunchy parlance. My dear husband did not use salty language so I got no priming from him. Once I was out walking with Max, I encountered some school boys engaged in a loud argument. One of them repeated over and over “Fuck you!”, and I wondered if it had any real meaning, or if it was just some kind of expletive or curse or whatever. I thought of asking the boys, what exactly it meant, because of my natural curiosity, but decided to wait and ask Lee. He had a good laugh about my initial inclination to ask the boys, and assured me I would have broken up their loud argument, if I had asked them. “In fact, that would have made their day, to give you a detailed explanation of “fuck you”, of that you can be sure”, he explained, and I could see why. Those were among the ways, I learned the finer details and connotations of the English language.

It took me a while to get used to the idea, that Kansas City is so much farther south than where I came from, in fact more like southern Spain and Italy, and that certainly helped to account for the fairly mild winters and the mixed precipitation. I already knew the summers

are hot and often humid, often very hot. That took some getting used to for me. Another thing are the tornados, and that I found to be both frightening and unsettling. I was familiar with terrific thunderstorms in summer, and lightening, which with some frequency, put farms and homesteads to the torch, but tornados was something I could barely comprehend. Lee assured me, that for reasons unknown, tornados very rarely if ever descended on our city, but you had to be on the look-out if you were in the country during the tornado season.

During much of 1946, USA was very taken up with all kinds of aid to Europe. Clothes were collected, and in New York alone, it was reported 2-1/2 million lbs. of garments and clothes were donated during February. There were elaborate plans afoot for food relief of Europe, for which Truman issued orders. I felt generosity seemed to know no limits in the way USA was helping these countries, for which it bore no responsibility.

Britain meanwhile was relinquishing control of its crumbling colonial empire and other areas it had been governing. In so many cases it was mishandled and mismanaged, worst of all in Palestine and India. In each of these areas, Britain sought, as it were, to supervise and control the process, to no benefit of anyone, least of all the former colonial power herself, and Britain suffered the consequences. It was very costly in losses of manpower, funding and prestige. Both in India and in Palestine the final outcome was open war, much of it caused directly by the British mismanagement. It was as dishonourable as it was discreditable, and could have been avoided.

In all fairness to Britain, it should be pointed out, during those years, it made a generous and positive contribution to stabilize a number of other countries most notably Greece, where Stalin and Russia made every effort to undermine a fragile democracy. The Greeks owe Britain and subsequently USA a major debt for all the aid and support that was provided during the post WWII years, something which today seems so conveniently forgotten.

In USA during 1946, an improbable number of strikes occurred, and not some minor inconveniences. It was as if every major segment of the economy was beset with wage and benefit disputes. From my point of view, it seemed very obvious, the strikes ultimately were against the general public and the community at large, because the unions, de facto, were monopolies and cartels, which employers could not block or even stall. There seemed no clear understanding of that in the country at the time. It was as if it was felt, the unions were entitled to do whatever they could get away with, after the dismal years during the 1930s. I felt there was a lack of leadership in this regard, but what did I know, a little teenage refugee from Prussia.

One unique aspect of American society and culture, is the attachment to firearms, and that was something I started to understand around that time. Just following the news regularly, as I certainly did, it would not have taken anyone very long to realize, guns and firearms were involved in criminal activities in USA to a greater extent than I had ever heard of in Europe. Stores and banks were being held up with the use of guns, domestic disputes could involve guns, there were kidnappings using guns, not to mention professional gangsters,

organized crime and mafia activities all based on control and widespread use of guns.

Lee had early on told me, most households, ours included, owned at least one gun for defensive purposes. Lee was by no means some run of the mill firearms enthusiast, as so many are. He merely stated the obvious, when everyone has access to guns and gun ownership, you are defenceless, for example, in case of armed robbery or break and enter, trespassing and any number of other threatening situations; a universal logic, as it were, which assured, there would be no change in the firearms laws in USA anytime soon.

From my point of view, all guns would have to be confiscated, and very severe penalties would have to be placed of any future gun possession, but Lee assured me, that simply would not happen. "Too many Americans worship their guns, beyond anything else, including motherhood and apple pie! It is just that ingrained in the psyche of the common people. No democratically elected government in this country would ever be likely to have sufficient support, to terminate gun ownership, as much as it might want and wish to do so. Dad told me that years ago, and nothing I have heard or seen since, has contradicted that."

This became a subject of concern and apprehension to me ever since; something I often thought about, and the immense damage and lasting harm this firearms worship was doing to everyone, individuals, children, families and the fabric of society and nation. Very early on, a feeling arose in me, believing the reverence and devotion to firearms in USA, and anywhere else for that matter, can change only if and when people, by way of entirely democratic means, elect a majority of female legislators and heads of government. Then this evil malediction could and most likely would be changed, and only then. That is what it would take. We would need to work towards that.

I think most people, happily and contentedly, do not concern themselves overly with such issues as the rights of unions to paralyse communities and country, the right to bear arms, when and if to wage war, major economical dispositions of governments, foreign relations, and a host of other details. With me, it was a compulsion, probably rooted in my childhood and the adults I was surrounded with as I grew up. I could never get away from it. I had to concern myself, I had to analyse, I had to understand, what was going on in locality, community, society, country and world.

It variously annoyed and amused my husband at times, when I sought to involve him in discussions about issues I found compelling and of essential concern. We often talked about Stalin and the damage Russia was inflicting everywhere. I seem to remember Lee saying something like: "We thought Hitler was the beginning and the end of all evil. Now, we are slowly waking up to the fact, Russia and Stalin may be just as bad. As Reverend Jennings told us, it was a critical error to back one against the other."

Around April, I think it was, I heard Jack mention something to Lee about "Morgan's", and I got the impression, it was exciting, but also with a touch of something illicit and conspiratorial. I was not meant to be part of the conversation, that much I gathered. So, as soon as we were alone, I went after my husband: "Lee, what is Morgan's and what is so

sensational about it ?”

“Who says there is anything sensational about it ?”

“You two. I saw Jack’s face, when he told you. He reminded me about a naughty boy on to something!”

“You are too much. You always know what is going on, don’t you ?”

“Only if it is obvious, I think”

“I guess it must have been then. It’s true, Jack is very keen on it.”

“So, what is Morgan’s then ?”

“It is a roadhouse about 1-½ hours drive from here.”

“What is a roadhouse ?”

“I think it used to be understood just to be a very simple inn or tavern in an out of the way place along a road; something like that. Today, a road house is usually thought of as a kind of racy nightclub operating far outside the usual reach of interfering authorities, with gambling, sexy ladies, dancing and whatever follows from that!”

“You see, I knew it. I was not wrong about Jack looking like a naughty boy on to something; right ?”

“Yeah, of course you are right. I don’t deny it.”

“Have you been to Morgan’s before ?”

“A couple of times, before I went in the army. It kind of grew out of one of the big clubs, that used to operate here in the city. When the authorities started to make life difficult, they moved out in the sticks, where they would not be bothered, and this is in Kansas, not in Missouri.”

“So is it a really wild place ?”

“Yeah pretty wild, but we liked it. It is very entertaining and sexy, and there is also lots of gambling, but we have no interest in that.”

“Sounds good. Tell me more!”

“Well, they have some of the most beautiful working girls to be found anywhere, and they dance nude, walk around nude and hold draws for an hour with the girl up for the draw. This happens only once in a while. That is why Jack wants to go for the next show.”

“That sounds wild all right. What does that mean, to hold a draw for a girl ?”

“It is held in a very large bar, you could even say it’s like a ballroom. When you enter, you are given a number, and you write that number in the corner of a one dollar note, and you enter that in the pool. They have a minimum, and when that is reached or exceeded, the girl picks the winning dollar note and calls out the number. The winner gets to spend one hour with her. I know it sounds crude, even vulgar, but it really isn’t. The girls love it. They prance around as if they were prima donnas at La Scala or the Grand Opera, and they enjoy every minute of it. They circulate among all the people, caress the guy’s cheeks and faces to encourage them to bet more, and many do. Some put in 5 or even 10 one dollar notes, if the girl is really hot. The girls you encounter there plain and simply love men. There is no other way to describe it. They love what they are doing, and they even say so themselves.”

“Amazing! I have never heard of anything like it in Europe, but that may not mean much. It may indeed exist, but I have never read or heard of it. Did you bet on any girls, when you were there before ?”

“Yes I did, but I never won. There are other girls there you can spend time with, but I didn’t do that either. I was happy just to be there for the entertainment, and it is about the best I have ever experienced.”

“Lee Prentice promise me, you are not going back there without me!”

“I promise honey bunny, but are you really sure, you would want to come ?”

“Absolutely! I wouldn’t want to miss it for anything in the world. If this is even half as good as you have described it, it is awesome and significant, not to be missed. I would love to go there with you!”

“Actually, I am happy about that, because Gary wasn’t going to go, because he was sure Jen wouldn’t be caught dead there. When we see them later this week, try to convince Jen to come. Then we can all go together.”

“O.K., but it suddenly occurs to me: are there any women there at all, or is it all men ?”

“No, there are actually lots of girls, I think between ¼ and 1/3 are girls and women. They like the entertainment too. There is also dancing, there is a dining room and of course the gambling. There is even another bar, separate from where the show takes place.”

“Is it in any way risky. Could we get arrested ?”

“For now, it is considered very safe. The county where Morgan’s is located is not well to do. They need every nickel they can earn. Morgan’s have got all the local powers to be on their pay roll, and they are known to make substantial donations to most of the local churches. That goes a long way. You can be sure of that.”

“I will talk to Jen. I will plead with her, to keep me company! The worst that can happen is that she refuses.”

We left it at that. I couldn’t wait for this experience. To me, this would be like the closest I had ever been with, what we in Germany call jedermann, that is to say “every man” or the common man, to share and experience, what they enjoy and how they enjoy it.

Jen was astonished I was going, when I told her. I explained to her, to me this was a cultural experience. It was part of life in the country and to me, as valid and as unique (actually a lot more so) as any Hollywood movie, except that this was live and real, not some plastic figures from central casting. I told her, if you had to pay theatre tickets in Paris or London to see some trendy play, or an old one, you would not be better entertained than at Morgan’s. I assumed a lot to convince her, but based on Lee’s description, it sounded very interesting.

In the end she agreed to come. She said something like: “Well, if you put it that way.....” The boys were ecstatic. Now we could all go. They all thanked me for convincing her, and Lee said: “You were amazing. No one could have convinced her, but you. It is going to be so much fun.”

Morgan’s also had motel rooms, and the boys booked us a large room, so we could stay overnight. They said this show went on to very late, and they didn’t want to drive back during the night. We left right after everyone finished work Friday night, and I think we reached Morgan’s at around 7.00/7.30 P M.

On the way we passed through very sparsely populated parts on secondary roads. It became a mainly wooded landscape with gently rolling hills and a sort of wide valley. To my surprise I noticed French names, Louisburg, La Cygne, and Lee told me, there was a place further south called Frontenac. I also saw Boicourt and others. Lee told me the area had

apparently been settled by Acadians from Canada way back in time.

Morgan's was in a clearing, otherwise all surrounded by shrub and forest, and near an intersection on an unpaved stretch of road. There was a fairly long building housing a typical country store with gas pumps in front along the road, all other buildings were in back of the store. On the front door of the store, there was a very simple name plate: "Morgan's", nothing else, except the name on the gas pumps.

To the left of the store, there was a wide driveway, unpaved as all grounds around Morgan's were, and further back several buildings came into view barely visible from the road. You got a general impression of orderliness, but low key and low profile. A bit further to the back on the left, there was a building looking like an old barn, but well maintained. There was ample parking straight ahead and a couple of young guys telling us where to park.

Jack had been there most recently, and knew his way around. He took us to the motel building and we went to the room they had booked. It was very simple, but spacious facing the forest behind the building. It had two double beds and a fold out cot, which would serve our needs fine. There was a smell of forest and pine, reminding me of our lovely woods at Grunerhof in my childhood. I immediately liked it. Then we went to the dining room in another building, well filled up with regular patrons already. Jack told us many of them were regulars, who came for the gambling. We were soon seated and I think I had a hearty bowl of chilli with red beans and ground beef or something like that. The décor was comfortably folksy, country style, with nice red and white checkered table cloth, and the girls serving were happy, cheerful, never giving the impression, they were working in some den of inequity or otherwise criminal enterprise. I was very encouraged.

Some time past nine we went to the big bar or party room, as it was variously referred to. It was a large rectangular kind of dance hall, with a high ceiling, and we entered from the end facing towards the dining room. On the right, as we came in, there was a very long bar with stools all along. At the end of the bar, there was a door leading outside and on the other side a small elevated stage in the corner. Along the opposite wall, there were large windows facing towards the back of the country store, but they were all covered with heavy, gold rimmed carmine coloured curtains. At the far end, there was another stage for a band, and in front a dancing area. The bar was elaborate with polished brass railing and various decorations. Along the walls, there were historical pictures from the region of various kinds. Most of the floor was set with tables, most seating 4, but also quite a lot of round tables of about the same size, where 5 or even 6 people could squeeze together, and that was what we did.

The place was already more than half full and people were in high spirits. The bar was nearly packed. The waitresses were all young, comely and scantily attired in very short, flared skirts, with very simple white shirts un-buttoned about half way and no bras. They were quite clearly part of the entertainment. Lee confirmed as much. There was a sort of half band playing, soon to be fully manned, and there were people dancing jitterbug or something like that. Lee insisted on trying to teach me that, and I had to oblige. I wasn't

very good at it, but it was fun anyway. Jen and Gary were very good, and I tried to follow what Jen was doing.

Around that time a chubby, jovial little man appeared, who proceeded to introduce everybody, the band, the bar tenders, even several of the waitresses. Lee told us, he was one of the Morgan brothers, of which there were a couple, but also cousins, and other family. He was very amusing and entertained us for a while. He told us, he knew we were all there just for a little innocent gambling, and that none of us had any interest in girls and sexy entertainment, which of course met with derision and laughter. He then proceeded to introduce the girls, who were up for the draw.

I can't remember their names, and even if I could, I would not mention them here. That is simply not relevant. The 1<sup>st</sup> girl, we were told, was 19 years old, same as my "official" age, a few inches taller than me and a few lbs. heavier. She was supposedly honey blond, with thick hair down to her shoulders. That was about it. The place by then was packed, with people drinking and smoking. People smoked like chimneys in those days, but windows had been opened, and there was a reasonably good flow of fresh air.

The young girl made her appearance through the side door at the end of the bar, and ascended the little corner stage. She was wearing an oversize men's lumberjack shirt, which just, just covered her hips, and nothing else. She laughed, she smiled and carried herself with complete self-confidence. This was her show, she loved it and the more attention she could garner, the better. Our good inn keeper then reminded us on how to wager, as if everyone didn't know, and the show got under way. The girl unbuttoned the shirt and hung it up on a coat hanger on the stage. She was truly a picture of health and beauty, and she was proud of her good looks, without any indication of conceit, just the happy natural extroversion of a young naked girl in her full glory. Her shoulders, arms and lower legs were well developed, indicating plenty of physical activity during her childhood and youth, and all her proportions were near perfect. Any artist could have used her for modelling with great benefit.

As soon as she dispensed with the shirt, there was loud applause, catcalls and whistling. The crowd was very enthusiastic. The girl proceeded to walk around on the little corner stage, she raised her hands over her head and took up various other positions, so we all could admire her from every angle. I felt a curious empathy and rapport with her, and I could not help feeling, it might be nice to be up there with her together, without clothes receiving the admiration and homage of the crowd. It was also as if this brought me back in contact with some dark, forgotten experiences from my earlier life, I should rather not be reminded of. I put my arms around Lee for security, and the sweet guy he was, he turned towards me and kissed me. He later told me, he perceived a little insecurity from me at that very time.

The girl then descended from the stage, and made her way out among the crowd moving fairly swiftly. She put her hands on the heads or shoulders of any men she passed in an affectionate familiar way, and they all loved it. She urged the men to bet and wager well and often, laughing and teasing them. At our table, she mussed Lee's hair and stroked

Jack's cheeks with both hands. She smiled sweetly to me and Jen, and reminded me of some of the older girls Heike and I used to go swimming with in our lake at Grunerhof. There was nothing affected or phoney about her. She was just a delightful and agreeable young girl, who enjoyed being admired nude and making good use of all her sexual energy.

When Lee brought me to America, there were a lot of "adult" issues, I didn't know very much about, and so his feelings and opinions about many things, also became my points of view, and the more interesting of those dated back to Lee's dad and the sex friendly times in Kansas City, when Lee and his friends were growing up. In that respect, I became introduced to liberal and amiable feelings towards nude entertainment, working girls and the so called "paid for dating", which they all had availed themselves of, and I also came to view just as natural as any working girl would have. I myself came from a very liberal background, so all of this was very inherent to me.

These are among the reasons why I found this entertainment affecting and captivating, where I am certain the vast majority of Americans would have considered it below their dignity to take part in, save perhaps a few million sexually frustrated men, who only would have attended on the sly. Over the years, I told numerous women about this delightful experience, and the majority, by far, were horrified and uncomprehending. Sin, shame and guilt persist as the main American attitude and approach to sex.

Dollar notes were being prepared at many tables, and our friend Jack happily wagered a couple of \$, but Lee told me Jack actually preferred dark haired girls so he would probably get more serious later, if and when one was introduced. It wasn't long before the bets stopped for the blond girl and she picked a winner. He turned out to be a man in his mid thirties, we later learned, who was visiting from Chicago. The young girl happily marched off with him, not even bothering to button her lumberjack shirt.

The next girl was introduced as a 28 year old dark haired beauty, closer to my height, with beautiful skin and very fine features. She entered, and she was indeed very different. She wore a simple colourful frock, held together with a belt and nothing else. Once she loosened the belt, the garment simply opened, and she wore nothing underneath. It was kind of a dressing gown-dress, and I had never seen anything like it. It was very stylish and I made a mental note, to look for something like that for myself some day. The boys at our table were very taken with her, Jack in particular.

She had very dark hair, softly curled and neat to just below the nape of her neck. Her skin was, as promised, a lovely light even tan with an olive tint, her figure willowy and very attractive. Jack was eagerly writing on \$ notes, he had his hopes up. This girl's movements on the little stage were somewhat less provocative than her younger predecessor, but of course, she was just as nude, and certainly just as seductive, in some respects even more so. When she made her way through the crowd, she was as amiable, but somehow a little more private also. As nude as she was, she managed to maintain an air of mystery to a degree, which I found impressive. She moved quite fast, but went to every corner, smiling sweetly and encouraging the wagering.



When she came to our table, Jack turned towards her and looked as if he would like to put his arms around her then and there. She bent a bit towards him and made a slight kissing motion with her lips. We could all see Jack was just about to faint. He was seriously smitten. Then he got up to go and deposit his \$ bills, and as soon as he left Lee said: "Let's try help Jack!" Both he and Gary got \$ bills out and furiously scribbled Jack's number on them. I think they managed to do about 5 each, and when Jack was on his way back to the table, Gary brought the ones they had prepared through the crowd and then went to the toilet. Jack did not perceive anything.

I had a feeling this little intervention just might make the difference. Not that it was something you really could count on, but it would certainly improve the odds. The \$ bills were deposited in a closed box with a hole on top just large enough to put a hand through. First the box was shaken sideways and upside down, and then the girl quickly put her hand down in the box and took hold of one note. She handed it to the chubby innkeeper, who read the number out loud. And wouldn't you know it, our Jack was the winner! He was ecstatic and immediately got up waving one arm triumphantly. The girl also appeared to be very happy with this outcome. He left us right away and joined the girl. They kissed right then and there and the crowd roared approval. Then the girl collected her colourful frock and they were off.

We were all so happy with this outcome and drank a couple of toasts to their happiness. Lee said: "I think this is going to stretch to a lot more than an hour!" He then explained, the girls are entirely free to do as they wish. They have to provide one hour, but if they are in the mood for it, or otherwise inclined, they can stay as long as they like. In fact, the first girl, was back in circulation shortly after one hour, now dressed in a short summer dress. She danced and socialized for a little while, and then left with another patron. She repeated that for at least a couple of times, and from all appearances, she was enjoying herself to the hilt. Jen commented: "That girl has got lots of energy and knows how to use it!"

About 15 years later, I was visiting Paris and staying at a small old L shaped hotel, where you could practically look into rooms in the other wing, if guests left their windows open. Two young girls from Finland, about 18-19 years of age were in a room one floor below and always left their window wide open. You could see essentially everything in the room from my window including the bed. The girls spent the entire day copulating with young men they brought up from the street, mainly Moroccans. As soon as they had worn them out, they were shown the door. The girls then quickly washed themselves, put on some semblance of clothes and went back to the street to collect another pair of bucks, who immediately were put to work. The girls were concerned with one thing only. If they had charged for what they were doing, they would have returned to Finland with a pot of money. They reminded me about that 1<sup>st</sup> girl of the night at Morgan's that night. There was no limit to their sexual energy.

After Jack so happily took leave of us, there was a pause in the proceedings and we danced to the band for a little while. Then the next girl was announced. She was a very tall, statuesque, light skinned black girl. She was absolutely stunning, even regal. She wore a simple, near floor length long evening dress in a beautiful vermilion red colour. Jen later

admitted to me, this was as good as theatre, or even better.

I think she was in her early twenties, 22-23, something like that. Her smile was subtle befitting her bearing. She left no doubt who was in charge, even though she proceeded to remove her dress, and that was amazingly easy. It was bare to well down her back, so it essentially hung on her shoulders, and when she pulled it off her shoulders, it just slid off her to the floor. There she was in all her glory. Her breasts and hips were high and strutting, with a look of strength and health. Her back was straight and she held her head high. There was a look of challenge in her eyes, the way she looked at the men.

She made her way through the crowd slowly and did not mind the men touching her. She was also provocative, often bending down and rubbing her breasts on the heads or faces of men, and laughing uproariously at their embarrassment. And she became more motivated as she went on. Near our table, she took one young guy and put his face between her breasts, while she rubbed him back and forth. The crowd loved it, laughing and hollering. I could not get over how she actually enjoyed men touching her. I even saw a man sliding his hand between her legs and she happily squeezed his hand. It reminded me of what Lee had told me, quoting his dad: "In a totally open and free culture, it is the human female, who pursues the male for sex, not what we are used to...." I remembered it word for word. It had made a profound impression on me.

This magnificent human female was by far the most entertaining of all the girls we saw in action. She carried on for a while getting bolder and bolder. At one point, she straddled a strong young guy, sitting down on him, rubbing her breasts in his face, and putting her arms around him. No one present seemed to be scandalized. Even girls and women in the crowd approved and applauded. It was amazing, kind of like fundamental human dynamics acted out right in front of us. I loved it, and I remember every detail to this date.

Another element of this display dawned on me later that night. Much of what this girl did with the men, I actually did with Lee. I had never thought much about that, and it kind of stunned me. I came to realize, I was often the intimate provoker in our relationship and it made me wonder, if Lee had any mixed feelings about that. I felt I had to ask him about it as soon as we were alone.

Anyway, the black girl so far, got the highest number of bets, and fortunately picked a winner, who was young and strong. She also returned later for additional dates. What a girl, what a woman! It was as if she acted out, something everyone deep down would like for themselves, something dating back to prehistoric humanity.

The next girl was a complete contrast. She was small, no more than about five feet, but with surprising strength and agility. Her hair was dark, straight and reached about half way down her back. Her skin was kind of ivory white and her body hair was strikingly plush and dark on the white background of her skin. She had a strong, yet smooth and sleek body, reminding you of an Olympic swimmer.

She wore a kind of very simple cream coloured tunic, which she dispensed with promptly

as she ascended the little stage. Then she did some of the gymnastics, I was very familiar with. She walked on her hands. She did splits upside down to great applause, and other displays, to the extent the confined space allowed. Then she made her way out among the crowd like the other girls.

The men now also openly touched this girl, encouraged by the black girl before, and this girl did not seem to mind it either. In fact it seemed to arouse her. At one point, several men had their hands on her, and all she did was to raise her arms in the air and sway with their groping. Then she quickly slid away and availed herself of other encounters. At one point, the band struck up a popular tune, and the girl danced impressively on the dance floor. Later, some patrons had her up on their table, but only for a couple of minutes. This girl also did very well, and somehow, she came across as the most openly erotic of all the girls. After she picked her winner, there was another intermission with dancing, and fresh drinks could be served, which often was difficult, while the girls circulated.

By then Jack had been gone for the better part of two hours, and we were all joking about what he had gotten himself involved in. Jen was saying: "She is wearing him out, and making demands of him he can't fulfill; or may be they are playing poker in bed!" and other silly things like that. Anyway, around that time, Jack showed up grinning from ear to ear, hand in hand with the girl. They both joined us at the table, and Jack introduced us. I really liked that we got to meet her, and I found it captivating how her and Jack in these circumstances and in so short a time had found obvious mutual sympathy and fondness. It was as if the entertainment of that night knew no limits. She was very pretty in a more refined way than most of the other girls there, but she had nothing but good to say about both Morgan's and the other girls. She was of mixed Hungarian and Croatian extraction, and her parents and siblings had managed to get to USA in 1938 with the help of an uncle in Cincinnati. She had studied law at university for some years, but had run out of money and had seemingly drifted into this vocation a few years ago. Her specialty, she told us, was trade shows and conventions, but at this time of year Morgan's was a good place to spend some time.

After a while, Jack and her left again, and we did not see them before breakfast late the next morning. We danced, drank some more, watched more girl performances and they got saucier and saucier as the night wore on. I think we finally left well after 2.00 A M, happy and well tired. Apart from Lee's and my wedding, I think this was about the most entertaining night I had ever experienced. I never saw anything immoral, obscene or even indecent about any of this. Every living soul present enjoyed what took place. Clearly the girls enjoyed it on many levels. They loved exhibiting themselves, that was overtly obvious. I could even feel and relate to it myself. They loved the attention and the interaction with the men, some subtle others blatant. And, according to my quick calculations, they were well remunerated and could actually save something for a rainy day. Most interesting, perhaps, they all regularly received proposals of various kinds, and many ended up actually marrying patrons they met. I am convinced, the world would be a happier place, if there were roadhouses like Morgan's around every town in the world.

When we got to the room, we urged Jen and Gary to use the bathroom first, and we reminisced about the eventful night. I told Lee how grateful I was, to have had this experience. For me, this went way beyond, just watching some human beings acting out their needs and desires. It was real, unbiased, uninhibited, fundamental humanity, without the constraints of phoney morality. I asked Lee if we could visit Morgan's again in due course, and he promised me we would.

Jen and Gary went to bed and were asleep in no time. We went in the bathroom and showered, because we stank of tobacco smoke. I couldn't keep my hands off Lee and we had a much needed love making in the bath tub. We both agreed, we had been in a state of arousal most of the time. That was just the perfect end to that eventful night. Next morning, Jen claimed she had heard us, but I suspect she just assumed, what we were doing, not that it mattered anyway.

We had a grand breakfast the next morning with Jack and his new girlfriend. She was going to come with us, but she was going to have to sit on Jack's lap in the car, which they didn't mind in the least. She was going to stay with Jack for a week or two and then return to Cincinnati, to try resume her studies. Jack was going to visit her there as soon as he could take time off. What an eventful night. I wish my beloved grandmother had been alive. I would have told her everything about it.