

## **The Pre War Years**

My father, Edward Henrik Herzbaum, an only child, was born on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1920 in Vienna. His father, Dr. Alexander Herzbaum, was a doctor of chemical engineering, born in Tarnow, Poland in February 1886 and his mother, Fanny Herzbaum, nee Hermelin was born in Boryslaw near Lwow, Poland in May 1890.

A declaration form and CV filled in by my father whilst serving in the Polish 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, supplied some of the following facts about his pre-war days.

My father attended Elementary School in Vienna. In 1928 the family moved back to Poland to Zawiercie, where he continued his studies, starting secondary school in 1930.

In 1934 the family moved again, this time to Lodz, Poland where my father attended High School. He attained his certificate, presumably his matriculation, in May 1938.

Sadly his father, Alexander died from cancer in July 1937, at the age of 51.

My father and my grandmother remained living in Lodz.

After obtaining his matriculation my father was deemed fit for active National Service, but deferred this and enrolled himself at the Faculty of Architecture at Warsaw Polytechnic. He completed only two semesters before the outbreak of war.

## **The War Years 1939-1945**

In September 1939 my father volunteered to join the Polish Auxiliary Forces.

Early in September 1939, my father, together with some other auxiliary soldiers, was arrested by the Germans. He managed to escape and returned to his home in Lodz where his mother was still living.

On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1939 my father travelled by train to Lwow, in eastern Poland, to avoid being re-arrested by the Germans, as this would have almost certainly resulted in his death. I remember my mother telling me that my father's mother had urged her only son to leave Lodz for his own safety.

Sadly he never saw his mother again as she was incarcerated in the Lodz Ghetto where she died of peritonitis in December 1943 at the age of 53, information that I found out from the 'Lodz Ghetto Hospital records' on the Jewishgen database. I don't think that my father ever found out when she had died. In his naturalisation documents he states that she 'Died 1940-41 (exact date not known)'. I don't know where he got this information.

From December 1939 to June 1940 my father was living in his aunt's house under the auspices of the Soviets in the Lwow area. I have not managed to find out his aunt's name or her fate, but I assume she was one of my grandmother's sisters. My father managed to find work of various kinds, including work in a construction site office, as a skiing instructor and as a lifeguard at a swimming pool in a Soviet sports centre. However it was an unsatisfactory time for him as he was unable to contribute much for the war effort.

In June 1940, my father was arrested by the NKVD, tortured, and then sent to a Gulag, in the area around the River Volga near Rybinsk. Here he endured brutality, starvation and illness. He worked in several camps, logging in the forests, which were being cleared for the new Rybinsk reservoir, and also working at the hydro-electric plant that was being built at the southern end of the reservoir construction site.

In September 1941, following the Soviet amnesty of the Polish prisoners, which enabled them to join the Polish Army and help in the fight against the Germans, my father made his way south. He travelled from Rybinsk, through Vladimir, Ryazin and Saratov, eventually joining the Polish Army at the recruitment centre at Tatischewo.

My mother told me that my father had suffered badly from asthma as a child. He also wore glasses, as he was very shortsighted. The new Polish recruits started training to become soldiers whilst at the same time recovering from their ordeal in the labour camps. I get the impression that my father's health and sight problems made life difficult for him in the army. From late September 1941 the training continued in the southern USSR, namely in Blagoveshchenskoye, now in Kyrgyzstan. The conditions were still very poor as the Soviets were unwilling to supply enough food or equipment to sustain the Polish soldiers.

In August 1942 these troops travelled to Krasnovodsk, now Turkmenbasy in Turkmenistan and on 17<sup>th</sup> August my father and his fellow soldiers finally started out on their voyage across the Caspian Sea in an old Russian ship called Cziczerin, landing in Pahlevi, now Bandar-e-Anzali in Iran. Here they began to co-ordinate their training with the British forces.

From there the troops travelled to Kerman Shah, now Bakhtaran in Iran and then onto Khanaquin in Iraq where they continued their military training. My father, in his journals, talks about the joy experienced at having at last got out of the USSR and also the joy of having access to unlimited food. However, as the reality of what these men had been through, as well as the increasingly horrifying news from Poland, started to sink in, many, including my father, suffered from bouts of deep depression, something that plagued him throughout his continuing journey.

My father now had access to painting and drawing materials and he began to document parts of his journey with sketches and watercolours.

In March 1943 the Polish soldiers continued on their 'travels' to Habbaniya in Iraq and then in September 1943 to Nuseirat in Palestine. In February 1944 they moved to Quassasin in Egypt and then onto Port Said.

At this point in time the Polish soldiers were fully trained, but had no idea where or under whose command they would be fighting. On 18<sup>th</sup> February my father and his fellow soldiers started their voyage on the M.S. Dilwara. They eventually landed in Taranto, Italy where they made preparations to join in the Italian Campaign under the command of the Eighth British Army.

During the Italian Campaign my father was still troubled with depression and self-doubt. I think the romantic ideas of fighting for his country were wearing thin and the realities of war were leaving their mark. My father describes the first casualty that they were exposed to with shock. Later death became such an everyday occurrence that it was hardly noted. The exception was at Aquafondate in early June 1944, after the Battle of Monte Cassino, when my father visited the cemetery there and saw the names of men that he knew well, who had given their lives for 'the cause' and he pondered on whether it was all worth it.

The fighting continued with the Adriatic Campaign including the Battle of Ancona. The Polish troops under General Anders continued to excel as a fighting force and were greatly complimented by the British leaders both political and military.

For my father, his fellow soldiers were the most important people in his life at that time, and he talks, in his journals, about comradeship and the fact that this

closeness between the soldiers transcended class and religion. These were men who relied on each other completely and helped each other through the traumas of war.

Although Jewish by birth, my father was an atheist and I believe that he thought of himself primarily as Polish. Religion itself was not important to him, but he held high moral ideals and lived his life by them.

### **After the war**

After the war my father, with many others, was given leave to study in Italy, whilst decisions were made as to what was to be done with the Polish soldiers who did not wish to return to their now communist-run country.

My father chose to continue his study of architecture, which he did at the University of Rome between March and September 1946.

Later in 1946, many Polish students were transported to the UK. My information for this period of my father's life comes from some beautiful dated drawings he did during his travel from Naples, Italy to the UK. He travelled on a ship called the S.S. Marine Raven, which left Naples in October 1946.

The rest of my information comes from a Home Office file containing my father's naturalization application file, which was released on my request from the National Archives in London. This file indicated that the ship arrived in Glasgow in early November 1946 and that my father was then transported to an army camp near High Wycombe.

My father was then given further leave to study architecture at the Polish University College, London where he commenced his studies in September 1947.

From some privately written notes in one of my father's notebooks I got the impression that he was leading a rather lonely life living in a number of bedsits in London during this period.

In 1949 my father registered a change of name, from Herzbaum to Hartry, at the National Registration Office, Kensington, London. His cousin Ted, who had escaped to the United States and joined the army there, had already made the same change of name. I think that not having an easily recognisable Jewish name would have

made life easier for my father. I assume that this was because of the problems associated with the Zionist movement at this time.

In June 1950 my father successfully finished his studies and was also accepted as a member of the British Institute of Architects. He found work as an architect's assistant at the London County Council.

In 1952 my father gained British Nationality.

In 1956 he married my mother, a Polish Catholic, at the register office in Kensington, London.

After working in several architect's offices, in the early sixties my father started a partnership with two other architects and I believe that they were having growing success. Sadly my father died in February 1967 and the business was dissolved.

### **Our recollections of my father.**

My recollections of my father are rather hazy, probably because I was only 10 when he died. I called him Edek, not Father or Dad, because my sister, who was my mother's daughter from a previous marriage, felt more comfortable calling him Edek and when I came along we stuck with that.

I remember that he was a shy, quiet man, not very keen on social occasions, but a stickler for discipline and respect for one's elders.

I know also that he was ambitious and driven. As well as working hard during the day, he would quite often work all night on a submission for an architectural competition.

One of his greatest passions was skiing and he had an immense love of the mountains. From an early age he took us on family skiing holidays to Austria and Switzerland. We always travelled by car and were thus lucky enough to see some truly amazing landscapes on these journeys.

His other passions were cars and aeroplanes. He loved to drive fast cars and also admitted that he was not a good driver. The result was fairly regular 'mishaps' with the car.

One of his hobbies was making customised aeroplane models, some of which I still have in the loft. He was meticulous with their accuracy. During the war he contributed to some of the graphic sections of the wartime magazine 'Uwaga Nadchodzi!' with instructions on the identification of aircraft, both friendly and enemy.

Every year the family would be dragged to a round of annual airshows in the UK such as the Biggin Hill Airshow. I'm afraid none of us shared his passion and I hated the loud noise.

My father also loved photography and would develop and print his own black and white photos. I remember the fascination I felt when I was allowed to stay up and watch. The dark room, lit only by a red light, and the magic of the image appearing on the blank paper.

Whilst still at school, my sister was invited to a fancy dress party and she decided to go as a falconer. My father made her a paper sculpture falcon to go with her costume. I was keen on cowboys and Indians and he made me a paper sculpture cowboy hat.

One of the most amazing things he made was a pair of marionette puppets that were fully articulated and exquisitely made. Sadly I don't know what happened to them and I can't find any photos of them.

Around 1960 we moved into a half-finished house in Surrey, UK, that my father and mother, also an architect, had designed and built. At that time the house had no windows or doors and the garden was full of mountains of rubble and soil. I loved it and thought of it as a giant playground. The house was featured in several Architectural magazines and I think, when finished, it was my parents pride and joy.

I asked my sister about her recollections about Edek and she sent me this email.

'When I first met Edek, at Gelli, [South Wales] when he came to visit with Mama, I was terrified of him and would hide so that he wouldn't see me - we lived a very isolated life there! Eventually, after several meetings I think, I was persuaded to get into the MG, and gradually I overcame my fear.

Edek was always very kind to me, although as you already mentioned, he had a firm belief in imposing rules and sticking to them, i.e. bed time at 7.30 pm regardless of circumstances and only 1/2 hr TV watching, even if the programme was 40

minutes long.

He loved the good things in life, good design, music, films, books, and was genuinely intellectual. I actually enjoyed being taken to Biggin Hill airshow. He also took me to Wimbledon and to the cinema. During my summer holidays when he and Mama were both at work, he took me with him to his office in Cromwell Rd., from which I could go to the Science Museum, V & A etc. The practice secretary, Gwen, used to try to entertain me with supplies of stationery & pencils.

Apart from the interests you have already mentioned, he also loved playing tennis (he was pretty good), swimming - I remember him taking me swimming quite often. He liked James Bond films and he embraced Englishness wholeheartedly. He spoke English without any trace of an accent, and loved the English sense of humour and quirks of language. He often tried to persuade Mama to cook dishes that he remembered from his childhood like knedle with apricots and mushrooms (grzyby) but Mama never seemed to make stuff as he remembered it. When we lived in Teddington, he insisted we went to the new curry restaurant when it opened (Mama had never eaten curry before then and I don't think she ever got to like it) and after that, there was a regime of weekly visits to a restaurant for lunch. I remember one occasion when we went to a smart shop to buy new clothes for Edek. He bought 2 really nice jackets and some trousers.

I don't think he had any interest in politics, which led to conflict with Babcia [our maternal grandmother] who was massively interested. Everything that we had at home culturally (books, records, attitudes) came from Edek. He was interested in everything modern and am sure would have totally become obsessed with modern technology and had the latest gadgets.

He was very untidy by nature. He never helped on the domestic front, although he worked hard in the garden, laying all the paving slabs at Pipidowek, and in Teddington he cast his own slabs from concrete. He made some items of furniture (still around - the chessboard table and wooden slat benches).

Every year he designed our Christmas card. It used to drive Mama mad when he spent his weekends fiddling about with his car or making plane models but I think he probably liked to retreat, on his own, into his own areas of interest, rather than become a house husband. He absolutely loved the cats we had and the dog, Lee, our 1st Chow. He was totally devastated when she died.

I think he had a tremendous appetite for life. I don't think he was that shy, just very selective about who he wanted to spend time with, and unwilling to spend time with people he regarded as uninteresting.

He had unending intellectual curiosity, was obsessively interested in new

architecture. I remember when we drove through Europe we had to make detours (particularly in Germany actually), so that he could see new buildings. Mama was far more reluctant to spend time in Germany or encounter Germans than he was. In retrospect I think he shut off the wartime years in his mind, didn't want to think about them, or bear any grudges or seek any kind of retribution. It was a chapter he tried to absolutely close and I never heard him talking about it.'

After a brave fight against cancer my father died, at home, in February 1967.

He is sadly missed.