

Postscript

Life must end for all of us -- we hope without heartbreak due to unfulfilled promises. Due to the medical limitations of their time, my mother and her sister, Tante Mariechen, died much too early. But they accompanied me as guiding spirits throughout my life. My father provided us with a secure childhood and followed with love our fate through many stormy years. He died in old age, after sixteen years of separation, before we could meet again,. His second wife, Tante Bezi, became an intimate friend of Daggie. Their letters -- exchanged over many years -- provide a detailed account of family events and reflect the happy turmoil in our home.

Niels and Margrethe Bohr stayed our friends for life and I hope this relationship will extend to subsequent generations of our families. Once, when we visited them in Princeton, a funny incident took place: Niels and I were sitting in Einstein's office at the Institute for Advanced Study, which Einstein had put at Bohr's disposal during his stay, when suddenly the door opened and a man came in with a little girl. Turning to his child, the man said, "Gretchen, meet the great Einstein!" Gretchen approached Niels with her hand outstretched, when the man suddenly called: "Gretchen, this is not the great Einstein!" She turned around, but I said, "Gretchen, you can shake his hand, this is the great Niels Bohr." So she shook his hand. Then her father turned around to me: "And who may you be?" I said: "Gretchen, it is not worthwhile to shake my hand." When Gretchen and her father had left, Niels musingly said: "They wanted to find the great Einstein, but they found a parasite."

Once I had the privilege of meeting the great Einstein intimately. Opa Franck and he got an honorary degree from the Technion of Jerusalem in 1954, which was awarded in Princeton. Opa took me along for a visit to Einstein's house on the

preceding afternoon. I was awed by his personality and kindness. As soon as Opa introduced me, he asked: "What has become of your beautiful thunderstorm research?" He still had in mind my papers of 1933 about positive and negative sparks, etc. I sat spellbound, while he talked with Opa for about 2 hours and subsequently he sent me a lovely picture of himself with a dedication. On the following day, the honorary degree ceremony was also memorable: there were Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein and James Franck sitting together on the first bench of the lecture room -- three great scientists and human beings (see Figure 73):

Marianne von Ritter -- my beloved first wife -- was wonderfully gifted as an artist, musician and human being; she died just nineteen years old and is daily in my thoughts. Daggie, her best friend, shared her life with me and became your beloved mother and grandmother. There was some tragedy in our lives during her last ten years caused by the present limitations of medical knowledge. The steroid drugs she had to take against asthma attacks caused disastrous side-effects: her skin became so thin that any mishap produced serious injury, and an estrangement set in to her marriage partner. Fortunately, I learned about the psychological effects of steroids some time later through a book written by a Spanish artist who mentioned their effects on his deceased wife -- and so my agonized puzzlement became somewhat relieved." As I now read her letters of true happiness written to Tante Bezi over many years, everything moves back into proper perspective.

We still made some lovely trips together during this period -- to Hawaii, to Alaska and around Norway. I had to go alone to Japan and my year in Washington

* James Franck died in May 1964 at the age of 81 of a heart attack while visiting Göttingen. His papers and Nobel Prize are in the University of Chicago's Regenstein library. Dr. Jost Lemmerich of Berlin and Professor Alan Beyerchen, of the History Department of Ohio State University in Columbus Ohio are writing a biographies.

** Dagmar von Hippel died in the autumn of 1975. The immediate cause was heart failure. The ultimate cause was, however, emphysema and the destructive effects of using cortisone for many years.

as Scientific Advisor of the Naval Research Laboratory was only occasionally shared by Daggie. But somehow we always knew that we belonged together.

In closing these memoirs, I would like to express my gratitude to all our friends and co-workers who, with their work and warmth, made my life a happy adventure.



73. Opa Franck and Albert Einstein on the occasion of their receiving honorary degrees from Israel's Technion University. Niels Bohr and Isador Rabi look on. (Princeton, 1954)