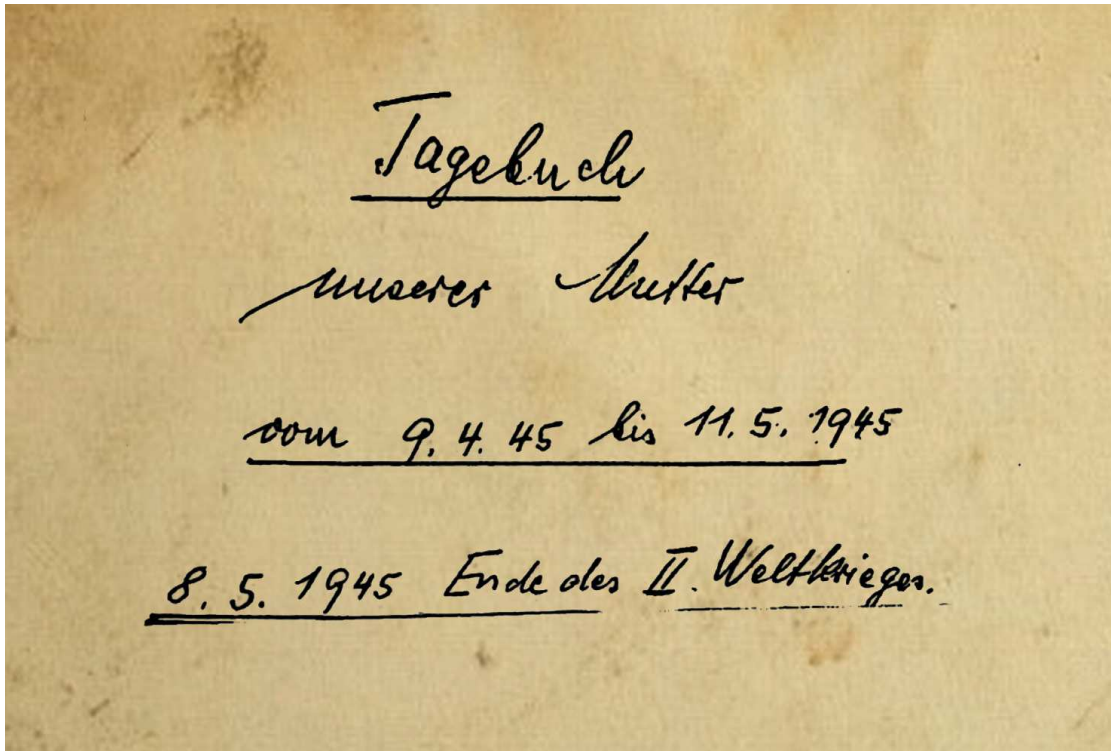




32 DAYS

INSIDE WORLD WAR II

DIARY OF EMMA ROMINGER | TRANSLATED BY CHRISTA HOVEN



This is the original note from my father when he gave me the diary. It translates to:

Diary
Our Mother
From April 9, 1945 through May 11, 1945

May 8, 1945 End of World War II

Special Thank You

I would like to thank some of my friends who have helped make this possible.

Harald Schlueter, who lives in Hamburg, Germany. He helped me translate some of the old German script. (Thank goodness someone can still read this).

Kristen Helmes, who assists me to be able to remain independent in my own home. She helped with the english translations and typing. (These old hands of mine don't type so well anymore).

My wonderful daughter-in-law Kate Conn, who also helped with typing when we weren't baking or walking my sweet doggy.

I want to thank Abby Lucero for her help with typing in between crossword puzzles.

And my son Brian, who encouraged me to finish this project so he could assemble it into this book and share it with family and friends.

Prologue

My mom, Emma Rominger, kept a diary of the last days of World War II. My father had the diary for many years before giving it to me when I left Germany for America. He wanted me, my brother Hans-Joerg, and my sister Jutta, to know how my mom felt living through this part of the war.

In this diary she talks a lot about the bombings and our enemy, the Americans (she called them “Amis” in her diary). Little did she know that I would be an American citizen one day. Her diary was written in Old German style and is very hard to read. I first translated her diary from the Old German to the modern German, which I am more familiar with. The second translation is from German to English. This whole process was much more difficult than I ever imagined. I consulted with my good friend, Harald Schlueter, and between the two of us we were able to decipher the Old German words. There are samples of each translation at the back of this book. Any words in parentheses in the diary are my own addition, for words that may need more explanation.

Her diary spans the last weeks of the war from April 9, 1945, through May 11, 1945. The official last day of World War II was May 8, 1945, but as you’ll see in this diary, there was confusion and uncertainty in my mom’s village, as this official news hadn’t reached them yet.

On April 20, 1940, my father was drafted into the German air force, leaving behind my mother and 2 siblings. My older brother Hans-Joerg was seven at

the time, and my sister Jutta was five. I was only three years old.

My mother didn't work outside the home. In this era it was uncommon for women to work as it made the family appear 'poor' if they did. In 1940 my mother spent a lot of time away from home due to her illness. She would spend time in a sanitarium (a medical facility for long-term illness) in the alps to 'take in the fresh air' and receive medical attention. The picture on the front cover is of her while at the sanitarium. Luckily, we lived in the same house as our Grandparents and they helped care for us when my mother was away.

Before the war, we lived in Stuttgart. But once the war started and our city was bombed (it was bombed so often we would regularly have to run down to the bunker for safety), we moved to be closer to our relatives in a very small farming village called Appensee. Appensee was 80 miles to the east and a couple hours away by train.

April 9th, 1945

My dearest Hermann,

Since there is no more mail going out from us, I will try to capture our experiences here in this book.

The news of the rapidly advancing Americans is overwhelming. Soon, they say, they will be in Würzburg and Bad Mergentheim. Jabos (German slang for Allied fighter bombers) are “visiting” us all day long. Crailsheim is bombed again.

Now comes Easter. On Easter Sunday, a quartermaster (an army officer who provides clothing and subsistence for troops) arrives with retreating soldiers. They are retreating from the front with Serbian prisoners. Sunday morning, 5:30 am, we are up for our Easter singing. More soldiers are coming again to the village with prisoners. The guards are looking for quarters (so that they can sleep during the day). We have a Staff Commander of the Air Force with eight men. All the houses in our village are fully occupied since the Infantry also came with prisoners. In the afternoon one of the Jabos was shot down near us. The pilot got out of the falling plane with his parachute and our children were thrilled. In the night the men leave with their prisoners, as they can only march in the dark. Those men were replaced with eight men from the Infantry. They came to our place with imprisoned Russians.

I am bunking in with Gertrude in her room. Jutta went with Ursula to Marie’s next door.

On the main street there were many fleeing people and soldiers. One kept hearing that the Americans most likely will come soon, perhaps even during this night. We

started to pack so that each child had one extra set of clothing. The kids were all changed into clean clothes and put to bed. This was on Hans-Joerg's 12th birthday. Then comes Mrs. Offenhinter and her daughter. They want to go into our cellar with us because the Americans are so close already. The kids were all dressed and we put all the packed suitcases in the cellar. Gertrude and I continued working. The children were in the cellar and it is quiet. The children were scared to go into bed. Later they had to go to the cellar again, because there was another very loud bombing going on. It became quiet and we all laid on our beds, dressed. We could not fix dinner anymore since it got so late. Ursula had to sleep by us because Marie had a family from Crailsheim. She also had a blind woman with two daughters and a man came with his bicycle, too.

The tanks arrived in Schmalfelden at about 2 am. At 2:30 am, they were in Rot am See and at 4:30 am they were in Crailsheim. The night was very chaotic. In the morning I was still lying in bed when Gertrude came and said, "there were already two soldiers here at the house". I then got up, and as I was half asleep, I came into the room and I saw the three Hauptwachtmeisters sitting there. They stayed with us for their rest (daytime sleeping). Our room looked very disorganized because of all the packing we did. The regiment was from the artillery and the S.S. They were thrown together because they lost part of their people.

This was the best regiment that we had because they were from the artillery. They knew more than the other soldiers. In the evening they found out that they will stay overnight. We again made up the straw beds for the soldiers and for our three boys. In the evening they told us that we should not be afraid when we hear the chaos from the bombing during the night, that those are our own soldiers. The Germans are

trying to win back Crailsheim from the Americans. At 4 am they woke us up, which was very sad for us because we thought they would have to go fight again against the Americans. They came back quickly because they only wanted soldiers that worked with cannons.

Then started the magical fireworks. We heard a lot of noise from the werfer (launcher grenades) hitting the ground. In the morning, Crailsheim was again in our hands except for the airport. After the first two battles the Americans turned around and went back 4 miles. This morning they took our people and went ahead a bit. I think that the airport came back into our hands because in the morning they used the grenades again. We heard that the target was already much further ahead.

Yesterday evening they still had four or five tanks nearby, but they were driving around like they were lost because they had no line of communication. Today came a notice that the enemies were pushed back to Kirchberg. The tanks went as far as Ingersheim. There they trapped the people in their cellars while they ransacked their homes. They also took any food they could find. Apparently, it doesn't seem as if there is enough food to go around for the men. We hope that they will have to go back again. Since Saturday, April 7th, we have had no electricity. Not even the mail is running now, and you can't hear anything on the radio. From Stuttgart we haven't heard anything for 4 weeks, but soon we must have some answers. Today Jabos have been flying all day. They are probably looking for our army base. Also, a few bombs were coming down.

Now it's 9 pm and I want to finish the letter from today by candlelight. Jabos have been coming in the evening, 30 to 40 at one time. There was a big shoot-out, and one

Jabo was shot down. The artillery was shooting during our evening meal and our whole house was shaking. Unfortunately, it's been three days since we heard from the Wehrmachtsbericht (the daily Wehrmacht High Command mass-media communique and a key component of Nazi propaganda during World War II). Newspapers cannot be found. In our village we have no newspapers or telephones. A colonel who came to the village today asked if anyone had thought about the fact that we are already in the sixth year of war. Unfortunately, we are noticing this in the last few days. I already am not afraid when the artillery is shooting grenades. Sadly, I cannot sleep because of the battle. It happens in the night and in the darkness. That is probably because of the Jabos. They are watching during the days, each meter of the land, so that they won't miss anything.

April 10, 1945

Last night came our Oberwachtmeister (military rank of non-commissioned officers). He came to us because they had forgotten several things they had left behind. They had to then march to Rothenburg a.d. Tauber. They told us also that the shooting that was going on was the enemy's artillery. They shot at Jagstheim. Today, Gertrude was already in Jagstheim and bought soldiers boots. Apparently, Jagstheim got bombed a lot. Our artillery was shot at in the evening hours and throughout the night. Today again, in the early morning, they started an aerial battle between Jabos and the German Jaegers (Jaegers is the German word for "hunter"). Today there were more Jabos and the artillery of the Americans was shooting very fast and hard into the forest along the Jagst (river). Our artillery was there in the forest, and the Jabos also shot all day.

Then around 11:00 there was a big hard BOOM! So hard that our house was shaking. In Honhardt there were bombs hitting the ground. Then, in a great big smoking cloud,

one could see the Jabos going higher. Then eight bombers fell, but whether all of them fell into the village, we don't know. The first went down by Stegmeier, there were nine dead. Amongst the dead was a priest. Everybody was very upset. It's so hard because we don't really know anything about what is happening. For four weeks, we have no newspaper and now for over half a week we have had no radio. I went in the evening to go to Sandhof, so that I could hear some news. But, while I was going there, I met Gottlob, who said that since midday they don't have any electricity. At home, we soon will go to bed because we don't have many candles left. Crailsheim is burning very brightly with a very intense glow. It's a very big and bright fire. We are going to bed late because we did so much looking at the fire, it's now almost 10 pm.

April 11, 1945

This night was very quiet. This morning we got a notice about Crailsheim. Family Spreng came over from Crailsheim. Crailsheim apparently is in ruins. Yesterday, the Americans decided to leave, but before they left, they were burning down all the houses. They poured gasoline on the houses and lit them on fire. The day before yesterday, the enemy wanted to go to the airport and they wanted to bring all their soldiers from the back of the battalion, but they have a new rocket launcher and used all their artillery aimed at the airport, so we couldn't use it. We hear that the enemy is in the village, they were locked in. One by Heilbronn, one here, and one in the middle. But could that be true? We cannot shop in Crailsheim. There's nothing in Jagstheim. Everything is closed. In Randenweiler, everything was sold. The bakery does not give any bread anymore. We have the new ration stamps, but we don't know what numbers are being used because we have no radio or newspaper. I wonder if the Wehrmachtsbericht will soon decide about announcing the end of the war.

How will it look at home? Right now, there are a lot of bombers above us. In Crailsheim, they say there are so many dead lying around that you can't even tell who they were. No one is here to put them in the ground. The Americans looted food, jewelry, savings books, even feather beds, etc. The Americans brought prisoners to our village and left because they had to go back to battle.

April 12, 1945

I gave a relative a letter today to give to you. I'm curious to see if you get it. At noon I went grocery shopping and while I was there, I heard that all of Württemberg has no trains running. My letter will definitely not be arriving after all. Now come new wounded prisoners from Blaufelden. All the American Army are there right now. In the afternoon came the Leibrichs (our relatives) from Crailsheim. The Leibrichs went into Crailsheim in the morning to pick up some stuff. The apartment looked like it had been ransacked. All the cabinets and closets were opened and scattered on the floor. They took all the jewelry along with them. In the evening I went to Stimpfach to listen to a radio. The news is all good. I thought it would be much worse since we haven't heard anything for so long. The mayor of the town gave notice to all the men to come at 9 am to start and clean up the town. They were supposed to bury the dead and clean up the machine gun hideouts, etc. in Crailsheim. At the same time, they were also asking everybody to work doing cleaning jobs in Honhardt.

April 13, 1945

Yesterday evening came our Oberwachtsmeister for a short visit. They had apparently forgotten that they had to go and march to Rothenburg a.d. Tauber. They also told us that the shooting during the evening dinner was the enemy, the Americans. Gertrude went this morning to Crailsheim. They're supposed to have shoes that you can buy,

since we had six pairs at the cobbler that were kaput! Also, they're supposed to have marmalade in big pails, but she found out in the meantime that the marmalade was so good that the people have stolen it. But she got some anyway because they found out that she had eight children. So, she got two pails. We are hoping that the marmalade that we now have will be enough until the fruit harvests again.

It is very quiet today and cloudy. No shooting. There are no Jabos due to the clouds and on and off rain. We couldn't find any shoes; they must have stolen them along with everything else. The biggest surprise came suddenly, our electricity was working again. I quickly turned on the radio to hear the first news that Roosevelt had died from brain bleeding. This gives me lots of happiness! Just now the chaos begins with more bombing. I'm supposed to be getting some money to support my family, there is no more money to go around. The city bank and the savings bank have no money anymore. However, they gave more than 1000 dollars away even though they were not receiving any money. It was supposed to go to families, but they must have run out.

Right now, I heard that the cobbler, Mr. Freitag, had all his shoes stolen except the wooden ones! No one was home when it happened. Mr. Freitag was selling shoes to people who did not have stamps.

It is now evening, 30 minutes until 10 pm. Gertrude is by the burial and I went to the Junker's (relatives living close by) and played a little piano. When I play, all my troubles wash away. A couple of dumb geese (a term used to describe someone who's not too smart) were trying to hide from the Americans. They are sorry that they are not in America, according to them being there is much nicer. When I hear such a thing

it makes me sick. They see everything through pink glasses. How I hate them. When they saw the Americans, they were all healthy, fat, and strong men. When our soldiers are next to them, they make us look very starved, and one can realize we are losing the war.

My health is not very well currently. If I don't eat anything, then I'm hungry, and if I eat, I get nauseous. Today was very quiet, only at 6pm they started shooting again.

April 14, 1945

The night was quiet, very little shooting. This morning they say there is meat in Stimpfach. I went right away. When I got there the pig was not ready to be sold yet. In the Rathaus (Mayor's House) I wrote myself a note on what was available to buy. Gertrude then went to Hohnhardt in a hurry before everything was gone. There will be a delivery of milk.

They were bombing the whole day. They gave updates on the radio but it wasn't good news. The news around here gets worse and worse each time, yet they still believe they are winning. Marie and Hanna Leibrich were in Crailsheim during the time when the Americans overtook it. They say that they were healed from The Americans. They have heard enough! They were allowed to leave the cellar for one and a half hours. They had to climb over the high wall in Walats Garden. If they didn't climb the wall, they would be right on the main street. Many Jabos came this evening, they were looking for weapons from the artillery. I don't even get scared anymore when I hear all that chaos. It seems one can get used to it after all, but it is not pleasant! In Crailsheim there were negros, also. In Würzburg and Tauberbischofsheim the soldiers were very evil to women and young girls, as bad as the Russians.

April 15, 1945

It is Sunday. The artillery was shooting all night long. Some of them were so loud that our entire house was shaking. The whole day they have been shooting too, with not even 15 minutes of quiet. In Crailsheim everyone but the soldiers had to leave. This time apparently, they will fight. For the first time the Americans were able to come into the city, because nobody noticed them coming. I wonder what this looks like on the weekend. The time is going fast, but not fast enough. I would like to know how the "wrestling" will end. The artillery was shooting and whistling past. I didn't know if it was the Americans or if it was ours. It was ours. Now they've started with the grenades. The Americans were on the line towards Neustadt to Heilbronn. Now they're being shot at from all sides. I hope they won't come out anymore.

April 16, 1945

The whole night there was shooting again, so that our "Villa" was shaking. Once I woke up from the door rattling and I thought that it was soldiers and I screamed. I asked myself, "what is going on?" Then I noticed that it was the artillery.

Today was a busy day. At Uncle's we had Metzelsuppe (soup) and Gertrude and I helped to cut the bacon to put into the soup. We used a special machine to slice it. Towards midday, there was someone here from the S.S. They were digging all around our little town all afternoon. We could hear the Jabos really close by, they flew really low. Right away we hear the first explosion. Shortly after came the second loud explosion. Then we saw the dirt starting to fall from the ceiling inside the house, so I quickly ran outside over to our Villa. I heard Manfred yell "he is getting ready; he's letting the bombs fall". We all got down on the ground as fast as possible then some of

the tiles from our home were falling. Even a window was broken. All together there were about 16 bombs that fell. They always came down in sets of twos, along the train tracks. We had a huge piece of shrapnel come into the living room. We all ran to the cellar to meet up with everyone. Hans-Joerg was running after me. He saw how the bombs were getting closer and closer to us and ran even faster to the cellar. When he heard the explosion, he went back outside to see what was happening and a piece of shrapnel went right by his head. We were so glad when the magic (the fireworks) was over.

Today we heard that in Crailsheim, negroes and Americans were raping women and children. I'm not well at all plus I also have an open wound on a very impossible place. I cannot sit and can barely lie down; it is very shitty.

April 17, 1945

At nights there was much more shooting. I think it is getting much closer to us again. My terrible sickness is causing too much pain to lie down and sleep. Also, all the big planes flying through were terribly loud. I wonder where they are going.

April 18, 1945

Another sleepless night. The whole night hand grenades were going off and planes were flying overhead. I almost couldn't make it from all the pain I was in. Also, I was worried constantly because the shooting was very close by. In the Wehrmachtsgericht it says there were a lot of break ins happening. We were able to hold the front from Hanstedt to the southern Heilbronn. The soldiers fight in Rothenburg and they are also looting by us. The whole day the artillery was shooting, the houses were shaking again. There was a lot of formation flying going on above us. I can barely stand feeling

this sick anymore. It hurts so much to walk and I cannot sit either. I have a headache; fever and my glands are swollen. In the afternoon I went to see the sister (nurse). She gave me a shot and opened the wound, now both sides are hurting worse than before. Gertrude laughs at me.

April 19, 1945

The shooting gets louder and louder and closer to us. Over the night they were only shooting artillery. This morning they used hand grenades. Today we actually got mail but nothing came for us. Rohr got a letter from Lilo. He goes with his bicycle to Aalen. I will give him a letter that is for you and another letter to Grossvater for his birthday. Hopefully the mail will arrive on time. Until evening there was a lot of shooting. When we look toward Ilshofen we could see big clouds of smoke going up in the sky.

April 20, 1945

Friday, just like 14 days ago we got another alarm notice. In the night there was a lot of shooting and this morning there are a lot of bombs shaking the ground. At one time I thought it was our house being hit. They said it was an attack on bridges but I am not for certain. Today we started packing again and put the packages somewhere they would be safe.

April 21-23, 1945

Now the first storm has passed us and I will try to tell you about the past few days. I also hid this diary to keep it safe. The night between Friday and Saturday they shot without any breaks. The pilots were coming closer and closer but we stayed in bed. We didn't sleep until 6 am. When we got up, we took out everything from the wardrobe

cabinet and then carried it to where the animals stay at night, to the stall. Then we put all our clothes back inside the cabinet. Then we brought our beds across the street to the Mueller's basement. At 10:30 am the shooting started around Jagstheim, I think. Everybody was getting nervous. Around noon we went to the Muellers and asked him if we could also go in his cellar. Gertrude sent Ursel to the butcher in Stimpfach to get some meat. When we were in the kitchen, we could hear a shot being fired. We ran very fast to the windows, that's when the second and third shots whistled by. Then we ran as fast as we could out the door. In that moment it made a horrible loud bang, I think I will never hear again. Right away I saw the Jaegle's barn on fire. Hans-Joerg and Jutta ran through the entire property while all these shots were going off. But Christel (this is what they called me), Uli, Manfred, Rosa and I could not get out anymore. We ran to the store to hide. For about a half hour the Americans were shooting into our village. They probably wanted to find out if there were any German soldiers. After the shooting quieted down we also went into the cellar. Suddenly, Rosa came and said that from Stimpfach the American tanks are driving to Randenweiler. They were shooting a lot. We went and quickly buried our papers in the ground. Then we took our beds and put them on top of Mueller's potatoes inside of the cellar. In the evening as we were already in the cellar, we heard a lot more shooting in our village. Shots were being fired right and left. Our neighbor's roof was hit and destroyed. There were lots of fires and smoke in our village. In our house one of the window frames was hit with shrapnel from the bombs.

On Sunday, April 22 we heard the tanks going by early in the morning. I was getting our milk by the Junker's when I heard them yell "they are coming from Steinbach". We looked and saw them driving towards Steinbach on the old road to Honhardt.

Then they drove by Helen Baumgarten towards the Schindhoelzle. Thankfully they were not heading towards us anymore, but at noon Americans came to the village. They are taking over the Marie's, the Mueller's, the Boeg's, the Kele's, the Bolze's houses and the Yonker's barn. They took over these houses to live there and use the kitchen as they needed it. The owners couldn't go into the rooms that were being used. By the Mueller's they made a lot of fried eggs. They picked up a whole basket. They rummaged through the living room and floor from the bottom to the top, no drawers were unopened. They were playing with the inflation money and the children's toys. They made themselves right at home. Everyone had to give them their radios, guns, cameras, etc. Since we had no electricity, we were allowed to keep our radio. They are supposed to give everything back when they left. If we wanted to go out of our village, we had to have a permit from the captain that said you were allowed to leave. Uncle Karl was made the mayor. By the afternoon there were already the first complaints in our village. The Hellnchen's and the Jaegle's also had to take soldiers into their homes, as the soldiers were looking for things in their homes, too.

April 24, 1945

I slept with my children in our little house. Gertrude slept in the cellar again because Mueller's would rather have someone there than it be empty. At night the soldiers raided the Mueller's house again, seems that they were looking for money. Some of the soldiers you could understand what they were saying. The children got a little chocolate and cookies from the soldiers. In the afternoon they left again, you should have seen how they left the rooms. They left cigarettes, paper, and dirt all over the rooms. We had a big clean up job! At the Mueller's they took their savings books plus cash, all together it was 20 thousand! They also took an expensive watch. By Peter

Bauer's they are missing the radio and 65 eggs as well as a lot of canned goods. At Schneider's they took his harmonica and miscellaneous things. At the Walter's they took 2 of his carpets. By the Gross', in Randenweiler, they took three beds along with them when they left. By one of the farmers, they let the corks out of all the barrels, then they put gasoline over them and burned them down.

Also, by the Schneider's the wood that they didn't need they burned. All ovens in the houses were lit day and night even though they left all the windows open. At 30 minutes before 7 pm no one could be out on the streets. Mrs. Reichelt who made herself ready for the Americans, left early on Tuesday to go to Crailsheim without her permit. The Americans are looking for her and I am so happy they are. Gertrude was in Stimpfach and saw the aftermath of eight houses and 10 or 15 barns that were burned down. The Stimpfacher had it worse because they couldn't go out at nighttime. They had to stay inside from 6pm-7am. They are also not allowed to go into their own homes. They could only go where the animals were kept. Also, people that travel by foot must always walk single file. In the beginning they only allowed two people at a time.

April 25, 1945

How terrible is it when you cannot even listen to a radio? We would love to hear or see what is going on in the world. The Americans told us that in Berlin they have a lot of shooting right now. I heard that the ring that goes around Stuttgart is locked. I just hear all of this; I don't know what is false and what is true. We are happy that our grandmother didn't have to live through this. Everyone who lives in Appensee is allowed to go wherever but only within a 6 km radius. If we wanted to go to Stimpfach we had to have a permit. In the evenings after 7 pm and mornings before 6 am we

cannot be out on the streets. Cameras, rifles etc. are to be brought to the Americans, and we can only buy bread. The food in the stores is being taken by the Americans and money is hard to come by.

Today a colonel came through our town, they were stopped out on the street and suddenly there was shooting above the acres. A few of the guys are sitting in the trees and sometimes they are shooting and other times just watching. Why did they shoot? Then the cars drove away. They still haven't found Mrs. Reichelt and it is possible that she was taken already. I'm ok with whatever happens to her. She couldn't possibly know they were looking for her.

April 26, 1945

Today, Reinhold the butcher, killed a calf. Mrs. Offenhauser bought the calf from Boeg and then Gertrude went to Honhardt to get a permit. It's very quiet by us right now, only on the main street there is lots of traffic. We know why the guys were shooting into the woods, there were a bunch of German war prisoners that had run away. Since the guys are afraid of the woods, they shoot instead of going to chase them. A bunch of dumb idiots. Every now and then we get German soldiers in normal clothes, they are trying to go home. I'm getting another 4 or 5 open sores, everything is so painful! I can barely walk anymore.

April 27, 1945

This morning Gertrude went early at 8:00 am to Jagstheim to get meat. Around 4 pm she came back without any meat. Reinhold had already sold the calf. He told us that Dorsch didn't bring his weapons and had to dig a big hole by hand while someone was watching him do it. He's lucky that he didn't get shot.

By Probst in Steinbach the Americans were cutting up all the clothes and throwing the furniture out the windows. In Reifenhof they took along food for 500 - 600 men. Mrs. Reinfelt came today and said they are not allowed to go out of Crailsheim. By the Leibrich's and Frank's everything was burned down, this was the biggest fire they had. There were not enough people to carry the water to put it out.

April 28, 1945

Now every day is the same. Gertrude went to Honhardt, the shopping is very difficult. It has been four weeks since we had any butter, but our Aunt gives us some occasionally. Today we got meat on our cards, now we have a lot of meat to prepare. My sores are so terribly painful. We found out that Gottlob had to take in two soldiers into his house that were ranked as direct hit shooters. By Bolz, the barn was hit very bad. Today father has his birthday and the whole day our kids were talking about it. By the Mueller's, a civilian came and asked if he could work there and they are keeping him for the time being.

The nature outside is beautiful, the trees are blooming and lilacs are everywhere. It has been getting so cool and, in the evenings, it has started to rain and snow.

April 29, 1945

In the mornings there is snow on the roofs. The leaves are still not dead.

Right away in the morning we had two civilians wanting to know the name of our village and how to go further. They are looking to go to another town. They came from Stuttgart. They told us that Stuttgart was taken over without a fight. I wonder if this is true. There are lots of rumors going around these days. One of them is that Hitler was found and given to the Americans and Goehring shot Hitler. Then the

Americans fought together with the German armed forces against the Russians. The S.S. kept fighting, one thing after another. Hitler was also shot; I wonder if this could be true? If only we could have some electricity soon. It most likely wouldn't give us the radio in German.

April 30, 1945

There are a lot of soldiers going back and forth on the streets. These are German soldiers that still must fight and I feel sad for them. It is just a little street and there are tanks, cars, and ammunition. Our soldiers cannot help with the tanks. A few weeks ago, Lanz said that our enemies want to come to Germany alive. One would really like to believe that, but how can that happen? They wouldn't be allowed to leave Germany alive. One wants to believe so badly, but how could that happen without the German's being killed. There would be a large amount of our soldiers killed. I believed this until now, and because I believed this I was attacked, as if I alone was the reason, we had the war. One cannot expect anything else from these dumb geese.

May 1, 1945

The first of May is a holiday in the peace time. Today we got our papers that we had buried in the ground. I have been looking for my yarn for the last 14 days so I am able to fix the socks. I packed it away so that I could use the container for the papers that we had to bury. Also, today Gertrude dug her papers out. She ended up having my yarn with her papers. It seems that one of the children thought that goes together. I must dry out all this stuff because when it was buried it rained many times and even snowed. Aunt Marie and Emma have a birthday today. We want to see Aunt Marie later to congratulate her. We won't sing, because they didn't like the Easter singing we did.

May 2, 1945

Every day we get different rumors such as, The Fuehrer (Hitler) fled to Ingen even though the Ingeness didn't want him.

On the street there are terrible noises, there are a lot of tanks. In Augsburg they are having a terrible battle. I wonder how it looks on the east front. At Dorsch in Steinbach, the Americans found all sorts of things. Dorsch had built a bunker with the help of some people from other lands. He had a lot of wine, champagne, liquor, and money! The foreigners told the Americans about the bunker, they blew off the door with hand grenades and went in there and partied hard. Mahler's also got three bottles of champagne from the Americans. In Sonnenwrit a lot of people are angry at Dorsch because he saved 5000 liters of wine in the cellar and 20 to 30 thousand liters in the barrels. The Americans gave the bottled wine to the people that lived there but the opened wine was drunk mostly by the negroes. After they were done with the drinking, they came after the German women. The wine was not kept in the house cellar and it was lying in the sun, and now all is kaput. At Hans' in Stimpfach they also took the barrels outside and they just let the wine run out. A few weeks ago the containers stood in the heat and there was no water for the injured to drink. Now the army emptied the barrels all the way and took all the money and jewelry with them. That makes me happy.

May 3, 1945

Today we got the food coupons. We also got bread, meat, and butter. There is nothing else we can get now. One soldier came to the Mueller's house and wanted to stay the

night. He got notices which said that Hitler was shot at the defense department.

May 4, 1945

This was a sleepless night. I still cannot believe what happened. Today it was said that Donitz is now making deals with people. Our poor fatherland. What will happen to us and our children? How will it be with all these stories and how can we build up again. This morning we still had a lot of automobiles in the street. Now it is quiet the whole afternoon.

May 5, 1945

Again, today it is still quiet so that one gets to be worried because we don't know what is going on. Again I am lying in bed for the fourth day.

May 7, 1945

Now I am up again. There is no more shooting anywhere. Russia must leave Germany. Who believes it? The soldiers in the West were let go and how will it be in the East? Today I was at Sister to get shots. There I got sick for the first time from all the shots. Us immigrants shall now get butter from the farmers. But we get ours from our Aunt and from Rosine. The other immigrants didn't get anything.

Rosine gives to Fr. Sennfee but the other farmers give nothing. Hope that the time comes again when the farmer will be happy if we buy his food.


May 8, 1945

Today I was at the Wagner's. During the war all of our Crailsheim family stayed there. Of the Frank family all four were there. They also brought with them a women

who was living with them. Fraulein Meister together with Sonnenwirg, Louisa, and the cat. That's too much. Fritz and Maria were not exactly excited about it. The Frank's did not bring anything except sugar, flour, oatmeal, cream of wheat and pudding. All their belongings left behind were burned or stolen. Also stolen was much wine, liquor, and schnapps, as well as preserved foods. Before we had nothing and now it's a problem.

May 11, 1945

Every day is the same. Many soldiers in civilian clothes are going through our village. Sometimes we have some for guests. If you my dear Hermann could one day find us here? The armies are coming through in tanks during the day. All the soldiers between 20 and 36 years old shall still add a half a year to their prison time in France. At the Mueller's there is a great problem within the family. I am happy you can come home. In Stuttgart the French soldiers are the worst. I hope they don't stay there.

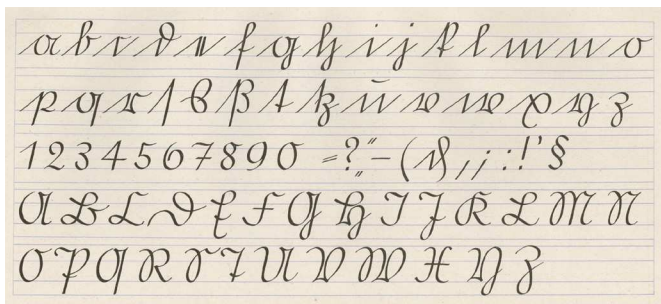


Epilogue

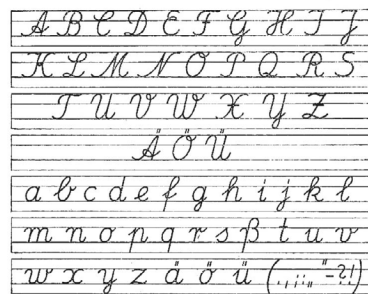
Once the war ended we travelled back to Stuttgart. Many of my family members walked back home. It probably took them two full days to walk that whole way. My mother was too sick at this time to walk with the others and I was too young to remember how we made it back ourselves.

I don't remember how long my mother stayed at home (or if she did at all) since she had to go into the hospital for her illness. I was able to see her at the hospital in her final days, and was one of the last family members to get to see her alive.

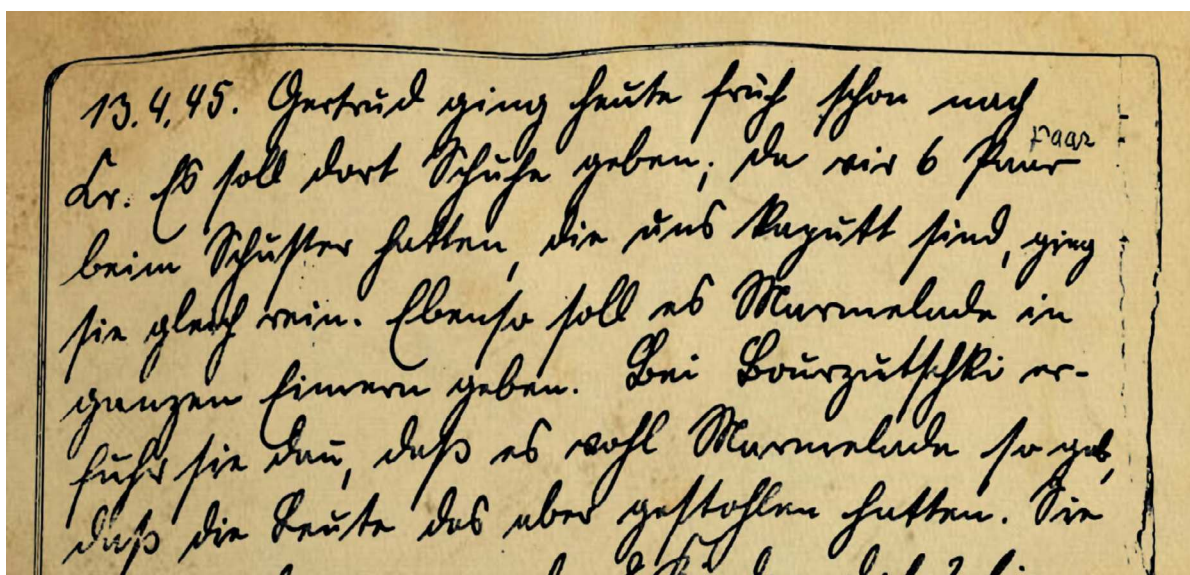
Our mother died in 1946 leaving us children, Hans-Joerg (13), Jutta (11) and Christa (9). She suffered from tuberculosis of both kidneys and had leukemia. It was difficult to read about how she suffered from illness and the worry she felt about what would happen to her husband and children.



Offenbacher Schrift circa 1927.



Deutsche Normalschrift.



A scan of my mother's original diary.

13.4.45
 Gertrud ging heute früh schon nach Carlstein, es
 soll dort Schule geben, da wir 6 ^{Beim} paar Schwestern hatten
 die ganz kaputt sind, ging sie gleich rein. Ebenso soll
 es Marmelade ~~geben~~ in ganzen Eimern geben. Bei
 erfuhr sie dann, daß es wohl Marmelade so geht,

To make the translation process easier I slowly went through every word of her diary, identifying the letters from the old script, and first translated it into the German script I grew up with (scan above). I then translated this updated version into the English version used in this book.



*This is a photo of our family in front of our house in Appensee in 1943.
L-R: Uncle Karl, Manne, Uli, Jutta, Ursela, Hans, Mutter, me, Tante Gertrud, Helmut and Roland.*



*Front entrance of our house in Appensee with our rabbits in their cages.
They were sometimes our pets and other times our dinners.*



The front view of our small town of Appensee. My Grandfather was born in the house on the far left and my Grandmother was born in the white house on the far right.



Appensee (from the back of the village).



My Grandfather's house in Appensee.



My Grandmother's house in Appensee.



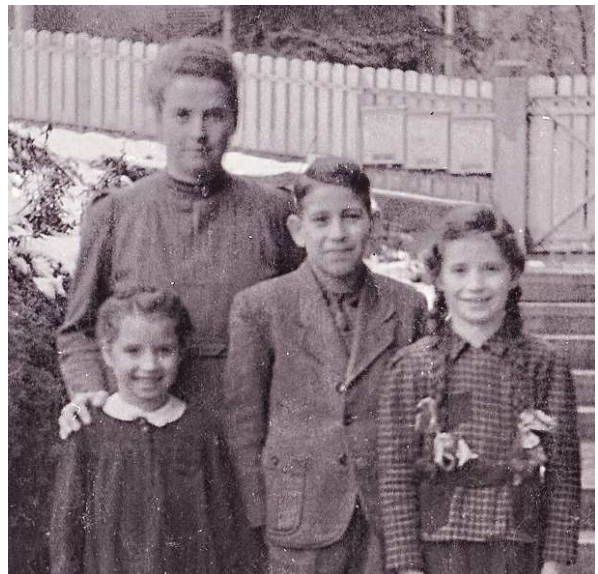
My father Hermann Rominger.



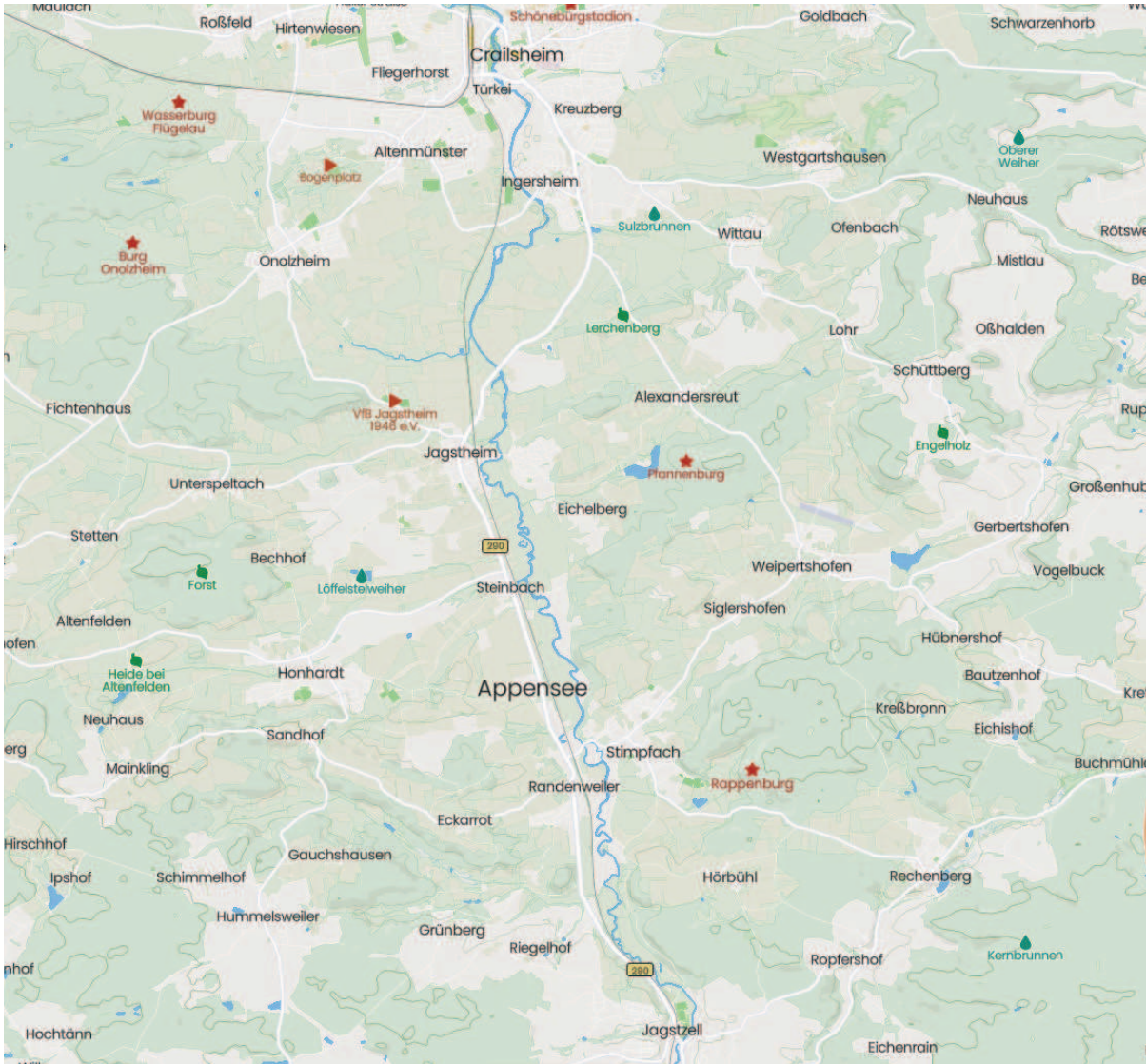
My mother Emma Rominger (Schmidt).



Their wedding photo.



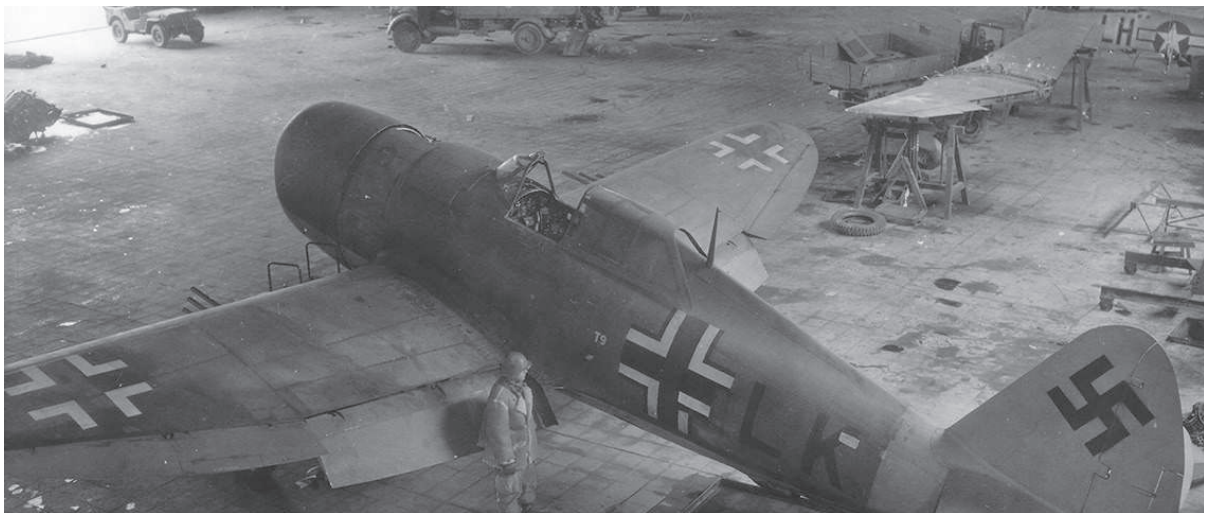
My mother and her children (me, Hans, Jutta).



Map of Appensee and many of the towns mentioned in the diary



One of the Jabos we would regularly see and feel bombing our villages.



The German version we called Jaegers (hunters).

The End



