

"My father was by that time sixty. He was pulled into the army, although they had no weapons. It was an organization called Volksturm, which was the last. They took everybody, sick people, old people, people with one arm. He was useless as a soldier."

"The worst came later, when it was all over. We had to leave our home country."

Then Claus interrupted himself to say, "Nobody will be interested in this."

"Maybe just me," I said. "But I think you're wrong."

"All right. It was a territory where all Germans were forcibly expelled. You had to leave within one hour. It became Poland. Seventeen million people had to leave. During that transfer, if you call it a transfer, two million people died. It was winter, and it was pretty bad."

"That's a story that has not been told," I said.

"It's all written, oh yes."

"In Germany, maybe. Not in America."

"Ja. You have to search for it."

"I'll bet you do. In recent years, we've heard more about the Trail of Tears and what they did to the Cherokee Indians. But for a long time you had to dig for that story too. You still have to dig for a lot of it. It's the usual. We never did those things, only the Other Side did."

"It was, how can I say it? Stalin's idea," Claus said. "Because Stalin with Hitler made an agreement to divide up Poland, and Russia would keep fifty percent of Poland in the east and the western part of Poland would come under the German government. But after the war, Stalin did not give back to Poland their part. All the Germans were moved out and Poland would take over one third of Germany, which was eastern Germany, basically Prussia and Silesia. Now it's an established fact. It's now part of Poland. A few Germans wanted to stay. One of them was my piano teacher, Richard Ottinger. I still think of him. How wonderful he was. He was also a nice conductor. He conducted oratorios in our home town, the St. Matthew's Passion, the Handel oratorios. He was such a nice man, totally unpolitical, but he didn't want to leave home, and the Polish militia shot him. I dedicated my piano concerto in his memory."

"We fled overnight. My mother died during the expulsion. She couldn't make it, carrying the luggage. She was exhausted. She died, and we left her by the side of the road. We had to move on. I walked with my elder sister and one of my older brothers. We walked about 600 miles with luggage, and then we caught a train near Prague that brought us close to Bavaria, which luckily was occupied by the American Army. Then life sort of began again, but under unbelievable circumstances. My father found us eventually through the Red Cross. He'd been in a prison camp somewhere."

"I became fifteen on April 29, 1945, and the war was over on May 6. That was my first meeting with the U.S. Army. They had V-discs and they had Armed Forces Radio Network, and all of a sudden life began to make sense again, although we had lost everything."

"I had been a lazy piano pupil. Pretty bad. I rather listened. But when I came to the west, to Bavaria, near Nuremberg, I awoke, and I said, 'Now I have to really study, for good,' and I went to a very hard-hitting teacher named Karl Demmer. He was the conductor of the Nuremberg Symphony at the time. He was very good at counterpoint and conducting. And I studied with Ernst Groeschel. The guy was a world-class piano player. But sometimes I have found that people are very content with where they are. You know, in little places. He had no urge to go to Paris or become world-famous. He was very happy there. He was number one there, and maybe he thought, I'd rather be number one here than number fifteen elsewhere."

"He made occasional records. He's now old. His records are beautiful, perfect. I studied with him, the real McCoy. The Beethoven concertos and the Bach *Well-Tempered Clavier* and *Goldberg Variations*. It got really tough. Before I was a fan of music. Then I became a laborer."

"The American culture became very dominant on western Europe through radio, records, and artists who came over. Jazz at the Philharmonic came in 1952. And Kenton, Woody Herman, Goodman, Basie, everybody came over. Like so many people, I was fascinated by the American culture, especially jazz. I had always liked jazz."

Quite soon he was playing piano with and writing for the Kurt Edelhagen band. And, briefly, he played with Chet Baker.

"Chet Baker had a piano player named Dick Twardzik in Paris. He also had an agent named Ted Napoli. Dick Twardzik died in Paris. Joachim Ernst Berendt used to be head of the radio station in Baden Baden, SWF, and he had concerts scheduled and sold, and they had no piano player. I was in Munich. He called me because I was a serviceable piano player. I knew every tune and I could play ever tune in every key. And that gave Berendt a sort of security. I played these TV shows in Baden Baden with Baker when he was there, and that was about all. I muddled through. It was nice. It worked out. He was very nice." Claus is being typically self-deprecating here. He is an excellent pianist.

"As I remember," he said, "a few days before, I bought a beautiful velvet jacket. Chet had no jacket. I wanted to give him my jacket as a gift. Inge, my wife, said, 'Listen, are you crazy?' So I didn't do that. But he was in very bad condition. As a matter of fact, he didn't even have a shirt. Well he had one shirt. But the TV photographer said to Berendt, 'We