

My Previous Books:

Exposed to Winds

[Selected poems]

Construction Delay Claims

[Performance measurements]

Anecdotes of Would-be Experts

[Business experiences]

Thoughts in a Maze

[Various mysteries]

Trials and Errors

[Life experiences]

Characters

[A tribute to past friends]

Oddities

[False assumptions]

Connections

[Human beliefs & behaviors]

Conclusions Volumes I & II

[Reaching conclusions – right or wrong]

My Best Dog Days

Arthur O.R. Thormann

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I dedicate this book to my wife, Renate,
To my daughters, Nancy & Diana,
And to my grandchildren,
Garett, Megan, Samantha, and Jordan,
Who make my life worth living!
PS: I love you!

Again, my gratitude goes to my wife, Renate,
to my daughter Nancy, and to my friend
Pam Sigvaldason, for their valued advice.
All mistakes remaining are entirely mine.

Preface



*Thus, every dog at last will have his day—
He who this morning smiled, at night may sorrow;
The grub today's a butterfly tomorrow.
Peter Pindar: Odes of Condolence.*

It is not my intent to write an intensive autobiography. So far, my previous books contain a few, mainly work related, autobiographical sketches. In this book, I intend to fill in some gaps, which are mainly leisure related.

At first, I intended to write a book about my life with Renate, my wife. Later, I decided that this part of my life would leave out some important phases – like the events before I met Renate, and my time of contemplative thought processes – and I decided to include these phases.

Part I of the book starts with some momentous events of the year 1934, the year of my birth. Next, it

covers a few salient events during my seventeen years in Germany, plus my first seven years in Canada.

Part II of the book covers my original plan. It describes my life with Renate, my children, and my grandchildren, as well as some close relatives and friends.

Part III of the book describes my contemplative life, when I delved into some puzzling questions. Although many of these questions are also the topics of my previous books, I felt it would be helpful to my readers if I included some aspects of this phase in this book.

Finally, let me explain to you how I chose the title for this book. Originally, I chose the title “My Life with Renate.” Then, after deciding to add the other two phases, I changed the title to “My Life of Leisure.” However, when I thought about this title, I decided it was not catchy enough, although accurate, and I came up with “My Best Dog Days.” I could have called the book “My Best Heydays,” but this would not have been accurate, because only a few of my leisure days were actually heydays.

Dog days are normally hot and humid days, but you can also define dog days as leisure days. The latter is sufficiently unknown to make the title catchy. Besides, the year of my birth was also the Chinese zodiac year of the dog. Knowing this, and if you prefer to believe in zodiacs, you could consider all my days dog days, the best of which are leisure days, of course – again, “My Best Dog Days.”

Arthur O.R. Thormann
Edmonton, November 11, 2012

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Part I:
My Instructive Years

The Momentous Year 1934

I was born in Berlin, Germany, on April 7, 1934, one day after my father's birthday, which my mother had aimed at; she missed it, because she had not consulted me – I wanted my own and not my father's birthday.



<<< Myself, shortly after I was born – looking astonished at my bewildering 1934 surroundings!

In any case, some particularly important events, other than my birth, made the year 1934 a very momentous year.

On the political scene, Germany and the Second Polish Republic signed the German-Polish ten-year Non-Aggression Pact on January 26, which must have pleased the Polish government. (However, it did not even last six years before Germany violated it.) As well, on February 9, Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia signed the Balkan Pact, and the Austrians had a civil war from February 12 to February 16.

On March 20, Heinrich Himmler, who was already Adolf Hitler's chief of the Gestapo (SS), took

over all police forces in Germany, giving him vast power to abuse.

On June 30, the German Nazis purged Hitler's Sturmabteilung (SA), an act referred to as the "night of the long knives." On the same day, the SS took over the SA camp at Oranienburg. (Also of interest is that ten days later, on July 10, the SS killed German Social Democrat and author Erich Mühsam in Oranienburg's Concentration Camp, leaving no doubt about the aims and dangers of Germany's concentration camps.)

The May Constitution of 1934 had asserted the start of the Austro-fascist Federal State of Austria on May 1, and on July 25, Austrian Nazis assassinated Austria's Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss during a failed coup attempt.

On August 2, Adolf Hitler made sure he became the German Führer, i.e., the head of state as well as chancellor, and, six days later, the German Wehrmacht swore an oath of loyalty to him. Then, on August 19, in a quick referendum, ninety percent of the German population approved of Hitler's assumption of power.

On September 19, the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations. On October 16, the Long March of the Chinese Communists began. On December 27, Persia became Iran. Then, on December 29, Japan renounced both the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 and the London Naval Treaty of 1930.

Those were the prominent events on the political scene. Across the Atlantic Ocean, Alcatraz became a prison on January 1. John Dillinger escaped from jail in Crown Point, Indiana, on March 3, using a wooden pistol. Ten days later, he and Baby Face Nelson with

their gangs robbed the First National Bank in Mason City, Iowa. Then, on April 22, John Dillinger and two others shot their way out of an FBI ambush in northern Wisconsin. On May 15, the US Department of Justice offered a \$25,000 reward for John Dillinger. Finally, on July 22, FBI agents outside Chicago's Biograph Theater mortally wounded Public Enemy #1, John Dillinger. (He might have been better off staying in the Crown Point jail.) On November 27, a gun battle with Baby Face Nelson, resulted in the death of one FBI agent, but mortally wounded special agent Samuel P. Cowley still killed Baby Face Nelson.

On the more general-interest scene, the producers released Frank Capra's movie *It Happened One Night* on February 22, starring Clark Gable, and Claudette Colbert. It was the first movie to win all five of the major Academy Awards.

As you can see, 1934 was a very decisive Year.

My Seventeen Years in Germany

I do not remember much before mid-1938, when my parents decided to take me along on a trip to Vienna. Vienna is a beautiful city situated on the Danube River in Austria. I can still vividly remember the beautiful buildings, the lively music, and the torte and cakes served in various Konditoreien – confectionery cafés.

My father also bought me a pair of lederhosen – leather shorts – with beautiful Austrian braces, and a little toy gun. I wore the lederhosen proudly when we returned to Berlin, to the envy of my friends.

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