

# Preface

“I expect to finish soon.” --- from *The Book of Famous Last Words*

As is the case with numerous people to whom I have spoken about genealogy, my interest was awoken too late, after my father Sigmund Fischler passed away in 1972. Although my mother was only able to provide bits of information about my father's family, she could provide more information about her own parents and grandparents.

In the summer of 1975, as we were about to leave for a sabbatical in France, I obtained information from my father-in-law Albert Herz and one of his cousins. During the spring break in 1976, I went to Strasbourg -- *matsah* in my backpack as it was still Passover -- and was able to do some research dealing with the ancestors of my mother-in-law Coralie Weill.

I was able to write up some of the results and gather a certain amount of further information, but I was unable to spend very much time on genealogy before my retirement in 2004. I then expected to be able to finish my research and to produce a more polished version of our genealogies within a reasonable amount of time. That was not to be. In the case that interests us here, that of Coralie Weill, five publications were the reason for the considerable delay and the rather large work that you have before you.

1. Pierre Katz's publication of the 1808 declarations of adopted civil names by the Jews of Alsace.
2. Pierre Katz's genealogies of the Weil/Weill families from Marmoutier and the Weiller families from Dauendorf.
3. André Fraenckel's publication of the notarized eighteenth-century marriage contracts and Roseanne and Daniel Leeson's index of the contracts.
4. The reprinting of the 1784 census of the Jews of Alsace.
5. The on-line posting by the Archives départementales du Bas-Rhin of all the pre-1912 civil documents, including the 1808 declarations of adopted civil names.

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For us genealogy is more, much more, than a listing of names and dates. We are interested in the ancestors as people, how they lived and the ups and downs of their existence. This is the approach that Eliane took in her book *Ma famille*, to which this book represents a supplement.

Here are just two of the human touches that we came across:

1. Coralie Weill, who was born in 1910, remembered being told that her maternal grandfather Godschau Weiller had died while running to *catch the train home* so that he could arrive in time for the Seder. When we found his 1905 death certificate and checked the date of Passover that year, the dates did indeed coincide. However, it would appear that he died while running *home from the train*.

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2. Coralie Weill also told us that on her father's side they were *Süskind*s. In the course of our research we learned that the last person who was officially identified as a *Süskind* was Alexandre Weill, who changed his name from *Süskind Hirtzel* in 1808. This means that this identification was transmitted orally for well over one-hundred years. In fact the Jews of Marmoutier spoke of *Süskind Leizer* when speaking of Lazare Weill, Eliane's maternal grandfather.

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Looking forward to the future there remains the following genealogical material to complete:

Our common ancestors, those of Eliane's paternal grandmother and Roger's maternal grandmother.

Eliane's ancestors on her paternal grandfather's side.

Roger's ancestors on his father's side.

Roger Herz-Fischler

Ottawa, Canada

Erev Rosh Hashanah, 2017

P.S. The usual question that I was asked when I told people that I was writing a book dealing with the ancestors of Eliane's mother was, "Which genealogical web site did you use?" My answer was, and still is, that I had absolutely no faith in any of them. These sites are merely repositories for whatever people want to put there. There never is any indication of sources -- aside from other web sites -- , not to mention documentary proof. Stating something without being able to substantiate it goes completely against what I was taught during my graduate studies in mathematics and what I practiced while writing my three research books. That is why I have three levels of caution (?, ??, ???) whenever there is doubt and why I state all the sources that I used.

In one case -- as discussed in the section on Madeleine Bloch -- I had decided to do an on-line search to see if I could "unplug" my research. This led to a long, and very interesting, search in various sources, but in the end I was unable to verify the "missing link". Indeed, as I state, it is possible that two people are in fact one and the same person, but there are reasons for seriously questioning this claim. That is why the second part of the section on Madeleine Bloch is indicated by a ■, and why the people discussed in the second part are not included in the list of ancestors which starts on page 15.