

WECHSLER'S WITH A "CH"

Whenever I asked my father, if we had Jewish roots, he would explain that Wechsler with a "ch" was Christian and Wexler with "x" was Jewish. This was no issue until we moved to the US. All of a sudden, I was asked if I was Jewish. Growing up with the "ch" story, I had no reason to question his story and so I used his exact words, whenever I was asked. I overlooked raised eye brows and overheard "ooooo-kay"s when uttering my answers.

When I entered college and decided to join a sorority, I was rushed out of my comfort zone. We had three Jewish sororities on Campus and visited them during the first round of Sorority Rush. They seemed very interested in my membership, even though I was catholic. Whenever I retold my father's "ch" story, the sorority members looked at me, like a mother patiently listening to her child's exaggerated account of a field trip. And invited me back. And slowly it dawned on me, that there was a hook to the story.

In my course "Fundamental of Psychology" I first heard about the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) and the man who developed it: David Wechsler. David Wechsler was a Romanian-American psychologist, was born into a Jewish family in Lespezi, Romania and emigrated to the USA with his parents as a child. After hearing that, my "ch-bubble" finally burst.

I stopped using the "ch story" to explain my roots and began wondering myself. As the years went by, I met more Wechslers with a "ch" who had Jewish roots. I reasoned, that my family may have had Jewish roots, however, going all the way back to the middle ages. As a lot of time lapsed between the Middle Ages and the present, I assumed, that this was why my father had no knowledge of a possible Jewish heritage. A comfortable way of explaining the inexplicable at the time without having to question my father's story any further.

The older I got, the more uncomfortable I got. I began questioning my roots, my nationality and most important of all, the "ch" story. A talk show on German TV was the actual turning point. I tuned in to a show in which literature experts were discussing the latest publications. One of the experts was Marcel Reich-Ranicki, a German-Polish author and publisher with Jewish roots, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto. Hearing him speak, watching his gestures, I felt I was watching my father's look alike. And my comfortable "middle ages explanation" began to tweak, like a dress from slender years gone by.

After my father's death and my first successful genealogical journey into the past of my great grandmother's family, I was ready to tackle the Jewish question. After a few day's of online research, I came across the website www.genteam.eu and discovered a transcript of the marriage between Hermann Wechsler and Eugene Engelhardt, my great grandparents. With the help of some Austrian family historians, I was able to get a hold of the original marriage

registry entry as well as birth records of their first two children. And with these documents I finally had the confirmation, that my Wechsler's with a "ch" had a Jewish background. Hermann's confession was listed as "mosaisch", meaning Jewish. His parents were Israel Wechsler and Rosina Camerini. Further research uncovered, that Hermann's parents, had met and married in Trieste in 1864 at the Synagogue of the Jewish Community of Trieste.

Sources

Austria, Evangelical-Lutheran Church Records, 1848-1900. Stadtkirche Wien, Vienna. familysearch.org (accessed 05.10.2015)

Estate of Hermann Wechsler. Special Court for Germans and Austrians in Egypt. Case #37 of 1916. Archive: The National Archives, Great Britain. FO 856/56.

Marriages Records 1866. Jewish Congregation of Trieste, Italy. Archives of the Community Ebrei di Trieste. Digitized copy 2012.

Ziviltrauungen in Wien zwischen 1870 und 1920. Laufnummer 1656: Wechsler, Hermann; Engelhardt, Eugenie. 20.10.1894. Transcribed by Dr. Anna Lea Staudacher. www.genteam.at. (accessed Oct. 2011). Original Archive: *Zivilmatriken. Eheband 3.* Vienna. WStLA, Zivilmatrik, B3: 1656/1896. State Archives, Vienna.

Sterbebuch 1895-1897. Lutherische Stadtkirche Wien. Ev. Kirche A.B. Wien-Innere Stadt. www.matricula-online.eu.

Taufbuch 1895. Lutherische Stadtkirche Wien. Ev. Kirche A.B. Wien-Innere Stadt. www.matricula-online.eu.

Taufbuch 1896. Lutherische Stadtkirche Wien. Ev. Kirche A.B. Wien-Innere Stadt. www.matricula-online.eu.

Names

HERMANN ANDREAS WECHSLER (1925 Alexandria, Egypt - 2008 Langenberg, Germany).
My father, son of Otto Joseph Albert Wechsler and Rosaria Laurenzia Josephina Borg.

HERMANN WECHSLER (1866 Alexandria, Egypt - 1916 Alexandria, Egypt)
My great grandfather. Son of Israel (Giacomo) Wechsler and Rosina Camerini. Husband of Eugenia Engelhardt and father of Otto Joseph Albert Wechsler, Rosina Wechsler, Bruno Hermann Wechsler and Egidia Rosina Wechsler).

ISRAEL WECHSLER (1834 Jarosław, Poland -).
Son of Leib [Jehuda] Wechsler and Rukhel Raibach. Married to Rosina Camerini, which whom he had seven children: Annetta [Eugenia], Marco, Hermann, Susanna, Egizia, Sophia, Rachel.

ROSINA CAMERINI (1839 Senigalli, Italy -).

Daughter of Solomone Moise Camerini and Susanna Leoni from Senigallia in the Marche, Italy. Sister of Salvatore and Anna.

© 2020 EGIZIA FAMILY / Barbara Ras Wechsler