

# Humphreys College

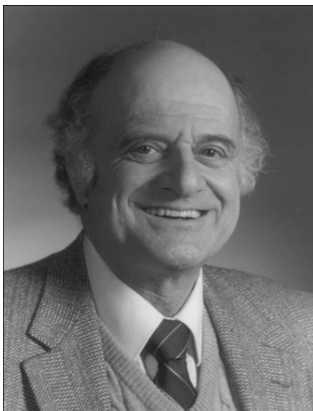
## NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT

SPRING QUARTER

JUNE 2014

### OUR INTERVIEW WITH PAUL FAIRBROOK FROM GERMANY AND PALESTINE TO THE UNITED STATES

In February, the Academic Council Workshop hosted Paul Fairbrook, former Director of Food Services at the University of the Pacific. It was an opportunity to hear about his dramatic life story. The following exclusive interview includes some of its highlights.



“I was born August 21, 1923, in Berlin, Germany. I had an older sister, a twin brother, and a younger brother. My father was a banker in Hildesheim, Germany. The bank was called Schönbach & Co. My name was translated from Schönbach into English during World War II (*schön* is fair and *Bach* is brook). Before my birth, the family moved to Berlin, and my father became a member of the Berlin Stock Exchange. We belonged to a Hebrew congregation called the Liberal Synagogue.”

**In 1933, the National Socialist Party came to power. Adolf Hitler, its leader since 1921, was appointed Chancellor of Germany by President Paul von Hindenburg. A part of the Nazi totalitarian ideology was anti-Semitism. That year, you were ten years old.**

“I did not experience any discrimination personally, although my brother and I were thrown out of the *Animal Protection Club* (*Tierschutzverein*), a boy scout-like group, because we were Jewish. More importantly, both of us were denied admission to a school my parents had chosen because we were Jewish. That alone led to my parents’ decision to immigrate to Palestine in 1933.”

#### **Why did they choose to move to Palestine?**

“While several other options were available to them (e.g., France, Holland), my parents decided for Palestine because the Nazis had made a deal with Great Britain that if it let certain wealthy Jews settle in Palestine, the Nazis would allow them to leave with a little more of their assets than it was usual. My dad was permitted to take with him about one-twentieth of his wealth. He had to sell our large house with forested backyard in Charlottenburg, a suburb of Berlin, and its furnishings for about one-tenth of its actual value. However, dad was convinced by his Zionist friends that Palestine would be the safe and prospective immigration choice. That decision turned out to be a mistake—certainly for a banker who was unable to practice his profession in a country with different customs and language.”

(Continued on page 2)

## How do you remember 1930s Palestine?

“The immigration was relatively easy for us young children. I learned to speak Hebrew, did my Bar Mitzvah in Tel Aviv, spent a summer working on a chicken farm (they only gave me the chicken necks to eat!), and often rode a donkey to visit my uncle in Ramot HaShavim, a nearby village that was founded by German-Jewish immigrants. I sold orange juice on the Tel Aviv beach and occasionally misbehaved, as any ten-to-thirteen year old would do.

## After escaping from Germany, was your father able to stay in the banking business?

“For my parents, the life in Palestine was not easy. Dad had formed a partnership with two Israeli engineers. They talked him into building a small machine shop in Ramat Gan, then a satellite town of Tel Aviv. They manufactured earth scrapers pulled by tractors, which leveled the sand for future construction. However, by 1936, when the Arab revolt against the Jews started in earnest, all orders stopped and the firm went bankrupt. In the meantime, my mother and twin brother got typhoid fever; my sister and I were quarantined for six weeks in a children’s home. We had to stay inside, except for a brief time in the evenings.”



## Did your parents think about immigration to the United States at that time?

“By 1936, my dad had decided that staying in Palestine would not be good for his family, but he no longer had any money to leave the country. Unexpectedly, a valuable painting that he had earlier sent to England to an auction house was sold. It was like a miracle: he received enough money to leave Palestine. My dad decided for the United States and to use his valuable postage stamp collection as the basis for becoming a stamp dealer. In those days, collecting stamps was a popular hobby, and he thought he could make a living in that field. Finally, on the day when the family was about to board the ship departing for Europe, I had gone into Tel Aviv to get some ice cream and almost was left with my grandmother. However, at the last moment, I arrived by bus with four ice cream cones, and my father, in his understandable frustration, threw the cones across the street. That was how we left Palestine.”

## How difficult was it to obtain the United States immigration visa in 1936 Europe?

“My father had heard that of all the American consulates in Europe, the one in Amsterdam was the friendliest to Jews. He knew that it would take several months to get an immigration visa. To conserve funds, he parked his family in Slovenia; many locals spoke German and he found inexpensive lodging for all us on a small village farm in Selza, near Škofja Loka. I recall it as four happy months in the company of my mom and siblings. On Sundays, we would all attend mass at the local Catholic Church, and then I helped set up pins in the local bowling alley for a few *stotinovs*. In the meantime, my dad traveled to Amsterdam to obtain the United States visa for all of us. Finally, he sent for us to join him there.”

(Continued on page 3)

**Wasn't it risky for a Jewish family to travel from Yugoslavia to the Netherlands via Nazi Germany?**

"My mother purchased the cheapest and most direct train route, which led through Austria and Germany. She had no idea that at the German border we would be pulled off the train by a Nazi official, who yelled at us that we had lost our German citizenship and that we were not wanted there. He warned us that if we were not out of the country by midnight, we would all be put into a concentration camp. Those were scary moments, especially since we missed one of the connecting trains and knew that we would not make the deadline set for us. Mother, however, sent a telegram to the stationmaster at the German-Dutch border, and when we arrived there, a kind stationmaster acknowledged that he had received the telegram and had kept the train waiting for us. We met our dad in Amsterdam, much relieved after a harrowing and fearful trip through Germany."

**What do you remember about the stop in Amsterdam?**

"We older children were temporarily placed into a Dutch youth camp while our parents completed their visa applications. I remember helping to dig ditches to allow the waters from the Zuiderzee (a large inland lake) to run into the ocean so that the land under the lake could be reclaimed for agriculture and settlements. Before we received the visa, an American immigration official questioned my father's claim that he could support his family as a stamp dealer. Dad, however, pulled out a first-day envelope with a block of four mint stamps of the now famous *Zeppelin* and proved to him that this envelope was worth approximately a thousand dollars. The official was impressed and issued our visa."

**I am sure that the transoceanic trip was a great adventure for you and your siblings...**

"Early in 1938, we boarded a small freighter, which had about a dozen paying passengers. After a pleasant two-week voyage (the captain allowed us children to 'steer the ship'!), we arrived in New York City. Even though we had received our visa, we were first sent to Ellis Island, the immigration station in the New York Harbor. There, after a final check as to our health and father's business plans, we were allowed to disembark in Manhattan."

**By that time, you were fifteen and quite a traveler! In the course of five years, you saw Palestine, Yugoslavia, and the Netherlands. How did you feel in the promised land?**

"I remember that while our parents were looking for an apartment to rent, my sister took us three boys to see a movie—the best one I had ever seen in my life: 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.' What a thrill! My dad opened a store on Ninety-sixth Street near Broadway and became a stamp dealer. He had a large collection of his own and took other dealers' stamps on consignment. Unfortunately, one day, a thief stole half of his stamp inventory, forcing my father to close his store. He became a travelling stamp salesman. My mother had to work as a sick-person caretaker. We children got part-time jobs. I was delivering clothes for a dry cleaner, helping in an antique shop, where I dropped a Dresden porcelain vase and got fired, and shined shoes with my little box on Broadway for five cents a pair. Ultimately, after the United Nations issued stamps of its own, my father started to specialize in U.N. stamps and worked out of his home. Eventually, he made a pretty good living. My mother helped draft blueprints for Victory ships during World War II and later became a Housing Assistant for the City of New York."

**How did you learn English?**

"My mother had started to teach all of us English in Palestine and later in Slovenia. Upon our arrival in New York, we all knew a smattering of the language. At first, we learned English just by living in America. Later on, I developed writing skills while in the United States Army in the Military Intelligence Service. Since my childhood, I had always wanted to be a hotel manager. In New York, I went to the New York office of Cornell University that

*(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3)

had a hotel school. When the counselor found out that I was just fifteen, he took me to the nearest high school, to the truant officer, who immediately enrolled me. After graduation in 1940, I joined the International Geneva Association, a worldwide group of professional waiters. Some of its members took me along to work for the summer as a busboy at the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, a fancy resort place. In Washington, D.C., I joined the Waiters' Union No. 6 and worked as a hotel banquet waiter. I was also briefly employed at the Breakers Hotel in Atlantic City until I got fired for writing a damaging poem about it: *The front desk lurks right straight ahead / It seems to be quite large / There you get a room with bed / The bugs are free of charge.*"

**In the meantime, Europe had become engulfed in WWII. When and where did you hear about the Pearl Harbor attack that made the United States one of the warring countries?**



"By 1941, I served as a key clerk at the Park Central Hotel in New York City. On Sunday, December 7, 1941, I was working at the front desk. It was about noon, when I heard the news about Pearl Harbor. By that time, I was eighteen. I tried to enlist—first in the United States Marines, then in the Navy, and finally in the Army. In each case, I was turned down because technically, with German citizenship, I was an 'enemy alien.' However, in late 1941, I suddenly received a draft notice and was inducted into the Army in January 1942. I was sent to Fort McClellan, Alabama, for my basic training. In the middle of it, I was dispatched to Camp Ritchie, Maryland, to the Military Intelligence Training Center (MITC). The barracks to house us were not quite ready and Sgt. Ost decided to give some of us a three-day pass. When it was my turn, he asked, 'When did you last get a 3-day pass?' I answered: 'I haven't had a three-day pass since I've been in the Army.' Surprisingly, I got a chance to go home to New York just a few weeks after being inducted. That was my introduction into the Army. I became one of the 'Ritchie Boys,' which is the name of an excellent

documentary film about that camp (<http://www.ritchieboys.com/EN/story.html>). Three months after my induction into the Army, my status was changed from being an 'enemy alien' to that of a naturalized citizen."

**What kind of training did you receive at Camp Ritchie?**

"We were trained as Interrogators of Prisoners of War (IPWs). The preparation consisted of intensive classroom instruction as well as field exercises. For example, we were dropped in the middle of a forest, with just a compass and an azimuth reading, and instructed to find our way back to the base. We learned about interrogation techniques, German and Italian army organization, including the Order of Battle—types of units, names and locations of divisions, commanders, and weapons, Morse Code, terrain and aerial intelligence gathering, document analysis, and close combat. After passing a final examination, which required us to conduct a mock interrogation and identify a number of German weapons and vehicles located in a large field, I



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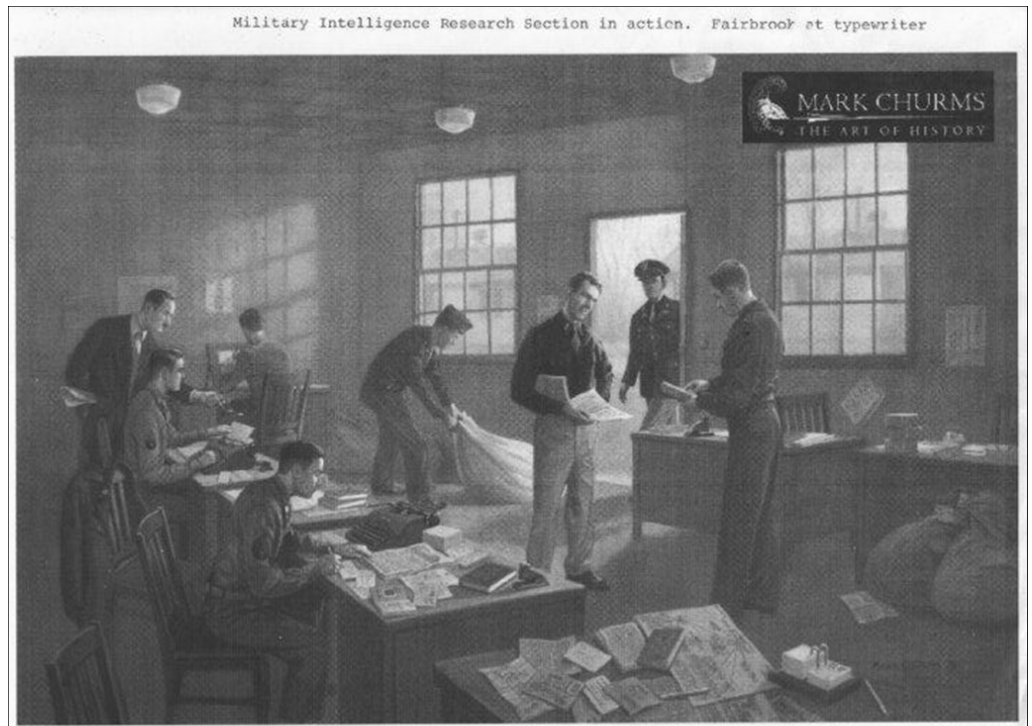
was accepted into the Order of Battle School. That was a highly specialized training program focused on teaching a small number of soldiers to translate and analyze German documents and then pass on the resultant intelligence to our own IPWs and to field commanders.”

### Where did you serve after the Camp Ritchie training?

“After five months at Camp Ritchie, I was transferred to a small group of intelligence analysts entitled ‘Military Intelligence Research Section’ (MIRS) and sent to a secret camp named ‘P.O. Box 1142.’ That camp was located between Alexandria and

Mount Vernon in Virginia; historically, it was a Civil-War camp named Fort Hunt. This was the time when stacks of captured German documents were brought from our invasion of North Africa in the fall of 1942. Our job was to analyze the documents and to convert the information into a book called ‘The Order of Battle of the German Army’; it was commonly referred to as ‘The Red Book’ because of its red cover. There were eighteen of us non-commissioned unit members (mostly German-Jewish refugees and a few German Americans). We were fluent in German and

all except two of us had a college education. There were four officers, two of whom were British, attached to our unit from the War Office in London. Each of us was assigned to write a specific chapter for the ‘Red Book,’ e.g., types of units, histories of corps and divisions or identification of high-level commanders and their assignments. There was also a chapter on the Hitler Youth and one on the fanatic Nazi units called the *Waffen SS*. We analyzed soldiers’ pay books (*Soldbücher*), military newspapers, captured tables of organization and military orders. For example, we translated the actual orders given by Hitler to his generals in preparation for war on the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa), Norway, and Crete. We were located only about twenty miles from the Pentagon and often had to go there to brief high-ranking intelligence officers. When the Allied forces invaded Normandy on D-Day (June 6, 1944), ‘the Red Book,’ I was told, was of great help to our IPWs and field officers trying to get information from German prisoners. Shortly after D-Day, several of us were flown to London to help the British Intelligence Services with the huge number of captured German documents. We returned to ‘P.O. Box 1142’ in September. Our superiors in the Pentagon needed us to continue the work for them because most of them did not know the German language. After VE Day in May 1945, all of us were transferred back to Camp Ritchie. The place was renamed ‘German Military Documents Section’ because it catalogued and indexed those documents. This was a relatively easy, but not very interesting job, and I was glad to get my discharge in the following May.”



(Continued on page 6)

### **For you, the war was over...**

“Once a civilian, I was ready to attend college under the G.I. Bill. Most of my war buddies in the Military Intelligence Research Section were college graduates. They all urged me to follow their path. I spent the summer of 1946 at Laval University in Quebec taking a French language course. Then I applied to the Hotel School of Cornell University, but I was turned down for lack of space. One of my Army buddies, David James, was a professor of French Literature at Brown University; I applied there – also unsuccessfully. As soon as I got that rejection letter, I took a train to Providence and convinced the Admissions Office at Brown University to accept me. I started out as a business major, but a classics professor and his course in Greek Literature in Translation turned me on. I switched and graduated from Brown in 1950 with a B.A., *magna cum laude*, in Comparative Literature. As a student, I met my future wife Margaret Vogt, a graduate student in English at Pembroke College; both of us attended a *Seminar in Victorian Literature*. We got married in 1951.”

### **Greek and Victorian Literature... Comparative Literature... Yet, professionally, you returned to the field of hotel and food services.**

“After a brief stint at AC Spark Plug, Inc., in Flint, I was hired by Michigan State University as a Food Controller while attending graduate school. From there, we moved to De Kalb, Illinois, where I served as Manager of Auxiliary Services, including Food Service and Housing. In 1959, with four children and a small dog, we moved to North Haven, Connecticut. There I worked for three years as Dean of the (now famous) Culinary Institute of America. Then I opened my own firm, ‘Paul Fairbrook Associates,’ and became a consultant specializing in college and university food services. Subsequently, we moved to Chicago. One of my clients was ‘Expo ’67,’ the World’s Fair in Montreal.”

### **When did you move to Stockton?**

“In 1965, I was recruited by the University of the Pacific to take charge of its dining services along with the housing and bookstore. My wife Margaret passed away in 1968. A year later, I married my present wife Peig, who had come from Ireland to visit her sister. I adopted her four-year-old son Colman, and she helped me raise my four teenage children. In December, we will celebrate our 45<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.”

### **Many Stocktonians are well aware of your long-term involvement in St. Mary’s Dining Room and other volunteer activities.**

“After my 1985 retirement from UOP, I continued my consulting practice. In 1980, I published *The College and University Food Service Manual*, which became an instant success since no book of its kind had been published before. This was followed by three more books, the last of them, *Catering on Campus*, in 2004. These publications led to my consulting and training assignments at over one hundred colleges and universities. I stopped my consulting practice three years ago. My last job was a pro bono consulting at the American University in Bulgaria. I am spending my retirement as Program Chair for the *Weber Point Coffee Club*, lining up speakers for our weekly Friday Speaker Series. I am also active in the *Sons-in-Retirement* organization, writing biographical sketches about new members. As you mentioned, I have been involved in the St. Mary’s Dining Room activities for several decades. To maintain my intellectual curiosity, I joined *OLLI@Pacific*, a program for retired people. I really like its slogan: *Everyone age 50 or better can join.*”

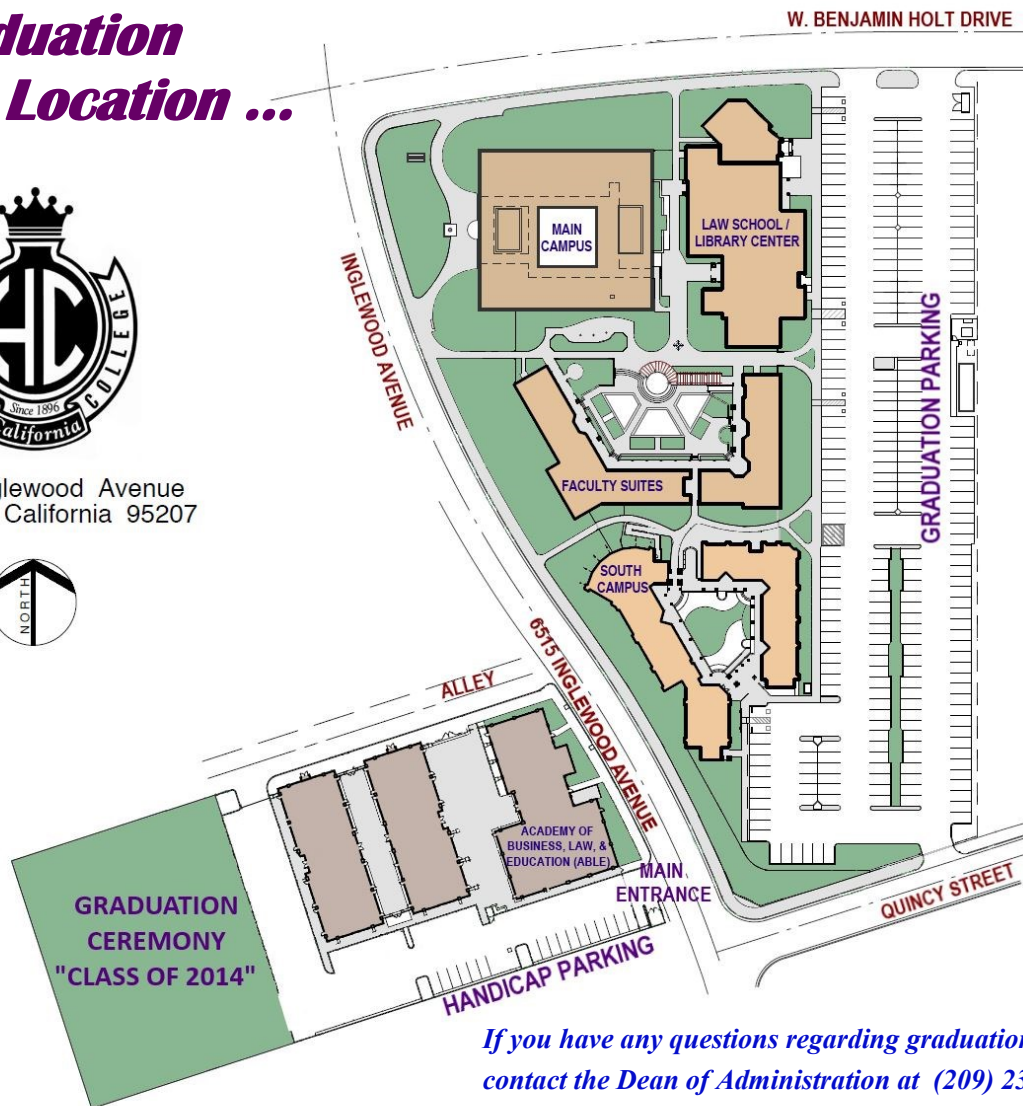


~Stanislav Perkner

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*If you have any questions regarding graduation, please  
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Humphreys College Newsletter *Supplement*, June 2014

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