

Comments by Franz Kraus concerning Susan E.B. Schwartz's book about Dr. Hans Kraus

I thoroughly disagree with the interpretation of many facts and circumstances and especially the descriptions of Hans' and our father's personalities. Hans is made out to be a ruffian, manic-depressive and practically always at the edge of suicide. Nothing could be further from the real facts. He reacted violently when attacked but did not look for fights. He very rarely felt depressed and I never heard him talk of suicide. He was full of life and loved to live. He had quite a number of lady-friends, but he was not the kind womanizer or "Don Giovanni" described by in the book. He did not feel guilty because he certainly was not responsible for the climbing accident with Markus. On the contrary, Hans damaged his hands badly in a strenuous effort to hold on to the sliding rope.

The preface states that Hans had to deal with "lifelong guilt" and could never find something like "atonement and redemption." This is plain nonsense: Hans never forgot his sad experience with Markus. I lived practically my whole life very close to Hans. When I was 5 years old, he took me to the mountains for the first time before Markus' death and he continued to do so every year thereafter. When I was young, he was practically like a second father to me. When I grew up we became close friends and this relationship lasted until his death. We climbed and skied together all our lives, in Europe as well as in America. I can therefore state categorically that Hans did NOT suffer the way described regarding his mood. As a matter of fact, the reader is given the impression that Hans had suicide continuously on his mind. Nothing is further from the truth. Hans enjoyed challenges; he loved to climb because he loved nature and especially the mountains. He was very fearless, but he always used good judgment, and he never believed in suicide. Besides, in various places it is stated that Hans was an atheist. This is absolutely wrong. Hans did not believe in organized religion, but he was no atheist. His daughters were brought up in the Catholic Church with his consent. Our family did not comprise regular churchgoers. I, myself, stopped attending services when I was in my teens. And, I cannot recall anyone in the family attending services themselves. But this does not mean that any of us do or did not have a belief. One of Hans' favorite pieces of music happens to be Mahler's second symphony, the "Resurrection" (Glaube, Glaube...)

Also incorrect is the statement that Hans was a bad skier. He may not have been a very stylish skier; however, he easily handled any mountain or slope. Proof of this misrepresentation is that he was a member of the U.S. Ski Patrol.

Chapter 1. Habsburg is spelled with "B" not "P." Rudi raced on a simple REGULAR bike. High wheel bikes were no longer used at that time. They were discontinued 1880. (Read a history on biking.) The father of Rudi had a general not a grocery store. Schlesinger has only one "s". It is stated that Rudi transferred assets illegally to Switzerland before 1914. There were no currency restrictions at that time. Therefore, his actions were legal. It is stated that soon after August 12th, fighting enveloped Trieste. This is historically incorrect since Italy did not enter the war until May 1915 – nine months later! Also stated: Rudi took the family on a hiking trip to the

“Garmisch section,” obviously the wrong name since Garmisch is in Germany NOT in Switzerland. Not mentioned is that Joyce was the family teacher already earlier in Trieste.

- Chapter 3.** It is stated: When Hans returned from Tyrol to Vienna, “for all of his difficulties with Rudi.” Hans had no difficulties with Rudi at that time at all! His difficulties started only when he came back to Vienna from Trieste later, for Christmas. The book goes on: “His father would not speak to anyone for weeks.” I had the chickenpox and father sat on my bed repeatedly and talked to me as well as to my mother and sister and I’m sure also to his clients.
- Chapter 4.** Trying to show the readers how strong and tough Hans was, the author made the ridiculous statement that he herded cattle to higher meadows up 2,000 vertical feet every morning and down again every evening as a daily duty to pay for his keep at the farmers’ home. If such a maneuver would be tried—and think about how long it would take—the cattle would probably not survive more than a few days. Incidentally, cattle are taken once to higher grounds in early spring and once herded back down in late fall.
- Chapter 5.** The author states that there were times when Hans did not care whether he lived or died. This is nonsense. I know that Hans wanted to live. He was not afraid of death, but he certainly did not want to die.
- Chapter 6.** Further stated is that Hans “resented” father. He respected him and sometimes disagreed with him, but he never resented him. The author talks about Hans “soloing” to convince the readers that Hans did very difficult climbs alone. This is not true. Hans walked alone to the top of many three thousand meter mountains in the Tauern, like the Sonnblick, the Schareck, etc. with long hikes over glaciers and scrambling over rocks, but did not climb vertical rock alone. Hans always considered dangers objectively. Again is the incorrect statement that he was an atheist.
- Chapter 7.** The author remarks that Hans was “offering himself to the mountains and therefore soloed.” This is absurd. That would have been completely contradictory to the great value he placed on life and what he did with his own life. The death of Markus made him appreciate life even more. It also made him want to help others continue to have meaningful lives.

The story about the possible danger of an avalanche is completely inaccurate. It is true that I taunted my brother saying something along the lines of “Oh, you are just old and scared.” However, I made such a remark when Hans did not wish to climb the Crozzon del Rifugio in the Brenta, not before we experienced the avalanche danger. We simply HAD to cross the slope of the Bachfallen Ferner in order to get down. There was no other way. It was Hans who walked first, not I. And we both stopped when we

heard the ominous sound of the snow breaking. Hans said we had to ski diagonally across downhill, that he would go first and that I should follow him at a distance so that we would not get trapped together.

Hans fell about one hundred or two hundred feet away—not down. He fell about 20 feet down when he skied over a rock-cliff. Contrary to what is reported, Hans did return to the Oetztaler Mountains, later with Madi.

Chapter 8. Hans did not “pull out his guitar in a mountain hut” because he never carried one while he was hiking or climbing. Think about the bulk that would have been for him to carry on his back. “Rifugios” usually have guitars available. At least they used to.

He did not sing “Italian, doleful love songs” but folk songs from Italy, Austria, America and even France, which covered all kinds of moods not just “doleful” ones. He was not totally depressed as depicted in the book.

After Hans’ experience of the fall on the north face of the Cima Grande di Lavaredo with Comici, he did NOT return, as stated, the next weekend. He actually came to Trieste and visited with me where we did some climbing together in the Val Rosandra. Hans did not return to the Cima Grande until 1949 or 1950 together with Gino Solda when he successfully climbed the North Face.

Hans did not consider rappelling foolish. Emilio Comici did NOT die rappelling. He was surveying the rock above him to ascertain whether or not it was easy enough for his girlfriend. He leaned out in order to look up, holding on to a thin rope, which unfortunately broke thus making him fall to his death.

Hans was not “angst ridden.”

Chapter 10. The dates about Hans’ marriage to Susanne Simon are confusing: First is the incorrect statement that he married her in the late 1930’s and then the next paragraph states they were married by 1941. When I entered the military in early 1942, (not infantry but military government) they were not married. I remember seeing Eric Simon and Susanne Simon together with Hans at that time.

Chapter 11. The famous doctor in Vienna was Dr. Boehler, not “Bohlen.”

Chapter 12. When Schuschnig made a broadcast after having submitted to Hitler at Berchtesgaden he said that he had to give permission for the German troops to march into Austria. The broadcast ended not with the Austrian national anthem but with Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden” quartet. (I personally

listened to it.) Hitler invaded the Sudetenland in March of 1939, not September. He invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia in September.

Chapter 13. To say that Hans showed no interest in cultural activities like museums, theatres, dance, etc. is outright ridiculous. Hans loved classical music and works of art of all kinds. He played the violin quite well. For years, we had a subscription at the Metropolitan Opera together.

Hans did not execute any financial arrangements for the family. That is absolute nonsense. The family ended up in Larchmont, New York due to the suggestion of personal friends of Rudi and Ella's (Mr. and Mrs. Graf). The entire family obtained our American immigration visas from the American Consul in Naples on the basis of the financial guarantees of my father.

It was not my father but a good school friend of mine, Rudi Pfeifer who, as member of the SA managed to transfer all our furniture for us. He succeeded because he claimed to the authorities that he was going to move into our Hietzing house.

Rudi's one brother and sister-in-law turned down father's help because they unfortunately thought they would be safe since they lived in Prague, not according to the book, in Austria.

Chapter 14. Cousins in London? I am unaware of any relatives we had in London.

The name of the boat was the Conte di Savoia, not Biancamano. I know that because my wife Elena arrived in the U.S. on the same ship later. Besides, the rest of the family and I were at the pier in Naples when Hans sailed to the U.S.

The statement that my father was reminding HANS that he made a dumb choice by foregoing the family business in order to become a doctor is completely wrong. On the contrary, my father was happy that Hans had a viable profession as the family entered the New World.

To the best of my knowledge, my brother and father fought "bitterly" only once, namely when Hans decided not to join the shipping business in order to become a doctor. They enjoyed a normal father and son relationship just as I did with the same father.

Chapter 15. He did not sublet space in another doctor's office. He rented space in a professional doctor's building at 56th and Sixth Ave. He did not give up his boarding house, and sleep in his office. I know this because I visited him at 14 East 73rd together with my wife Elena who helped out as his receptionist at that time. Sisi did not work for him until much later. I also know as a

fact, that father lent Hans money to help him start the private practice and that Hans later returned all this money to father.

Susanne and Hans were not married in Europe. Therefore, she did not join her “husband” in New York, as Hans was not her husband. In New York, Hans was a single man. It is unfortunate that Susanne was never interviewed for this book.

I have never been a Swiss citizen. Before becoming an American citizen, I held a Czech passport.

Chapter 17. To reiterate, Emilio Comici did not die rappelling.

Chapter 18. *Wulst* is a fatty abdomen, not breasts.

Chapter 19. Again, Hans Kraus was not an atheist.

Chapter 23. Dehne’s name was not Anstel but Ernstl.

Who is the married woman who was so important to Hans? Since she is depicted as so important to Hans, why not name her specifically?

Again, nonsense about the love-hate relationship between Rudi and Hans. That is really absurd. Father bought Hans a beautiful “Zeiss” microscope and at different times three motorcycles as an indication of how father “mistreated” Hans and why Hans “hated” our father. Besides, father went on little hikes together with us in the Wienerwald and even tried rock climbing on the Stadelwand Grad of the Rax Mountain near Vienna.

The quote about Rudi saying Hans was just an exercise teacher is correct but it was said in jest, not in anger.

Chapter 25. Rudi Kraus died in 1951, not in 1952. And Rudi did not disapprove of Hans' life until the end. That is not the truth. There were not "many years" of friction. There were only a few months of friction when Hans decided to become a doctor.

Hans' difficult climb and fall happened after Hans and I buried our father's ashes, and not before.

Chapter 32. Madi Kraus' family, the Springer-Millers, was not from Stowe. Her parents were from Europe, and immigrated to the United States and lived in Pelham, New York where Madi grew up before moving to Stowe with her father's retirement from the advertising business. Madi attended Bennington College, not Middlebury. Mary Kraus also attended Bennington.

Part III

Chapter 45. There are contradictions: The author states that Hans was a well-known doctor in New York. Later she states that Hans' practice "finally" took off in 1964. He was well established long before then.

Chapters 46-47-48. The office, by the mid-sixties, was on 57th at Park, (one flight up) – and NOT on Central Park South. I used to have lunch there with Hans for many years.

Regarding Hans' sailing, he may not have been the captain but I know from our good friends who taught him how to sail that he enjoyed taking over the tiller and that he enjoyed rough weather. However, I was not there, contrary to the claim. I heard about these incidences but I did not witness them. Hans enjoyed sailing for a number of summers until he was unable to travel abroad.

Chapter 50. To the best of my knowledge, Hans never had emphysema.

Chapter 55. To reiterate, Hans was like my second father when I was a young boy; however, he was not my father. Hans took his responsibility as an older

brother very seriously, and acted accordingly. It was a role he enjoyed. I had a father whom I loved, respected and admired just as Hans did. As I grew up, our old and young brotherly relationship grew into a close, lifelong friendship. In fact, Hans was my best friend.

And finally, Madi, not I, was the one who placed the headset on Hans to enable him to listen to his beloved Mahler in his final moments. I held one of his hands while his daughter Ann held the other.

Now, I personally know nothing directly about the very many medical achievements of my brother. I know everything by hearsay, primarily from Hans and, of course, from others. I therefore do not wish to make any specific comments other than to say that I find it most regrettable that the author did not have a good word for Dr. Edward Rachlin, who worked in cooperation with Hans in his office for many years. He is still one of the few doctors who treat patients using trigger point injections like Hans did.

My father is described as a hard-boiled, overbearing tyrant. The fact is that my father was a well-meaning, strict parent with deep love and concern for the well-being of his children. My father was a successful businessman. As was customary in those days, he expected his sons to sustain and expand upon what he had created. Particularly an eldest son was presumed without question to consider of uppermost importance the welfare of the family over personal interests. He naturally was disappointed, and angry for awhile when Hans decided to become a doctor instead. Nevertheless, while he and Hans had arguments about this particular issue, there never were any sustained, long-term hard feelings. My brother loved our father and certainly never hated him as the book maintains.

There are continuous references to my family as “wealthy” as though we were Roosevelts or Astors. We were not wealthy but comfortably middle class.

Summing it all up, it is my impression that the author tried very hard to make her book as exciting and as interesting as possible by inventing fictions in the “biography” and by portraying Hans as well as my father as imaginary figures, mixed up with non existing problems between the two.

Finally – and this is really not important – but I find the many referrals to Hans’ “cojones” in bad taste. Besides, I am rather sure that the men who referred to this part of Hans’ anatomy used the word “balls” rather than “cojones.”
