

May 3, 1962.

Dear Bob:

I have your note inquiring about our family's background. Complete information would require more time and research than I can spare. Here are a few highlights that come to my mind:

I'm not much on genealogy, so I can't get far behind my grandparents to describe our family tree. Besides, it would look like something between a Mexican cactus and a poison oak bush. Personally, I consider the line of ascent much more important than that of descent.

Derivation of the name "Falk": It is only in recent centuries that any but the upper classes were permitted to use family names. When that came about, it was customary to take names from one's occupation, from the neighborhood, from physical characteristics, etc. Falk, a common northern European name, is one of the many corruptions of "falcon", a hawk, and probably was taken from the shape of one's schnozzle.

My father, Jerome Falk, came to California right after the Franco-Prussian war because he didn't want to become a German subject. His mother died in middle age: his father, a distinguished looking man, survived her many years. He was a livestock dealer and trader. Dad left behind his youngest brother and three sisters named Palymere, Valerie and Coralie (their names as French as boulanger); their descendants still live in France and Switzerland. His oldest brother had preceded him to California and a younger one came later. Both engaged in general merchandising in interior towns; their descendants still live in these parts. Your dad should be able to fill in on these details.

Dad came to San Francisco and lived here until his death at the age of 56. He was an expert in fancy imported groceries and a particularly fine judge of wines and liquors. He married my mother, Jennie Lindheimer, and they begot four children- your grandfather, Emile, the author of this article and Aunts Sadie and Florine. Dad was a sweet, gentle man who had everybody's respect and love. He was a devoted husband and father.

Now the Lindheimers: My maternal grandfather, Meier Lindheimer, was born in Frankfort-on-Main in 1829. I only know one thing about his forebears, viz., in the museum at Frankfort there was displayed prior to World War II (it may still be there) the first financial document of record involving the famous House of Rothschild. It was a promissory note, whereby Meyer Rothschild, founder of the famous clan, promised to pay one Meier Lindheimer (my grandfather's grandfather) the sum of one thousand thaler. There is no evidence that note ever was paid; if collectible I would undoubtedly be the richest man in the world (including, of course, compound interest). Long ago I thought of bringing suit, but as the lawyer I consulted required a down payment of \$15. I was obliged to abandon the project.

Grandpa Lindheimer was an adventurer. He ran away from home at the age of 13; shipped as cabin boy on a German sailing ship. He deserted it at Baltimore; found his way to New York and apprenticed to a bootmaker. Later he met my grandmother there (she came over as a child with her parents). Her maiden name was Helena Maier. Her family came from a small town on the Rhine (Kundesblum...probably spelled incorrectly).

Shortly after gold was discovered, my grandparents came to California via the Isthmus of Panama. They shipped from New York to what is now Colon; carried their meager belongings to the Pacific side. It was a long walk, for the straighter, modern Panama Canal is now 50 miles long. They reembarked on another vessel on the Pacific side and came to San Francisco. Grandpa opened a bootmaking shop, making boots for the miners for \$75. a pair, gold dust. He did alright but he hated the work- it was too confining. He wanted action. So he joined the San Francisco police force (he was its 13th man) and served as a peace officer for 45 years, dying at 94.

He was a big, vigorous man with a hasty temper and a heavy hand..but he did have the biggest heart of any man I ever knew. Money, to him, was just a commodity to be disposed of; he never refused to help anyone in need, even down to his own last dollar. He financed meals and board for more down-an-outers and ex-cons than the National Probation Society does to-day. I believe he had more friends from every walk of life than anyone in San Francisco.

He was a great story teller and would regale his friends with his endless experiences, rarely repeating himself. Like all good tellers of tales, he drew a long bow; but his actual adventures really were unlimited. Like many early Californians he was a prime whisky drinker, but I have never seen him under its influence. He just could take it.

He had a married sister in San Francisco with a large family. One of his brothers was a successful wholesaler in New York; another even more successful in Chicago. Both had large families.

When grandpa came to judgement, I'm certain his limitless acts of kindness, charity and helpfulness far outweighed his many human failings. He had a good balance to his credit.

My maternal grandmother was a real housefrau. She lived entirely for her family. There were three sons and four daughters; all sons and one daughter died early in life, victims of the many epidemics that swept San Francisco in early days. My mother and the two remaining sisters lived to ripe age; all raised families in San Francisco.

Grandma was scrupulously honest; she spent sparingly and abhorred the very thought of owing anyone anything. Her single vice was buying lottery tickets in the hope that some day she would hit the jackpot and thus provide for the security her husband's extravagances denied. She never cashed in more than \$5. She died aged 83.

Grandma had three sisters who lived in San Francisco with their families. One with her husband (they were prosperous) once owned and ran the famous "What Cheer House", a hostelry of Gold Rush days. They acquired it several decades later. Another of the sisters married a rascal. He was treasurer of one of the frontier counties of Nevada, and one day he disappeared with the treasury (reputed \$80,000) and beat it for parts unknown. Unfortunately, the lynching party that pursued him was a little late.

My mother was a doll. She was keenly intelligent and had an ever-present sparkling sense of humor. She ran the home and ran it well; loved my father dearly and did her share to outsize their many vicissitudes. She reared her children carefully- never harshly but through love and respect. Such virtues as we may possess- such degrees of sound character, integrity and regard for our fellows are due largely to her teaching and example.

That's the story. No doubt your mother will post you on her family tree and I hope for the sake of color and balance it also discloses an occasional horse thief or the like.

Speaking of horses: my father who loved them taught me to drive almost as soon as I was able to walk. There were no automobiles in those days and horse stealing was a rarity, so we heard much less of juvenile delinquency. While I drove on every occasion, I couldn't afford to buy or keep a horse until much later in life. But one day I lent my entire savings, \$20., to a friend who owned a racehorse who never came in the money. Nevertheless, the horse had to eat and my friend didn't have the wherewithal. When I told my father about my investment, he shook his head dolefully and gave me this sage advice (it was not original) which I pass on to you: "Never lend money on anything that eats".

I hope this will help with your essay. If not, I'll dig further in the archives and endeavor to produce some more exciting characters.

Best wishes.

Uncle Adrian

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

ADRIEN J. FALK, PRESIDENT
BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT DISTRICT

Mr. Falk is serving his seventh term as president of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, having first been elected to the District's top post by his fellow directors in January, 1960. He has served as one of San Francisco's four representatives on the District's Board of Directors since the District's creation by the Legislature in 1957.

A native of San Francisco, Mr. Falk has long been active in civic and business organizations in California and the Bay Area. He is a past president of the California State Chamber of Commerce, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, the San Francisco Board of Trade, Community Chest and the San Francisco Board of Education.

He also has held high positions with such other organizations as the Bay Area Council, San Francisco Better Business Bureau, Mount Zion Hospital, United Bay Area Crusade, San Francisco Employers Council, U.S. Senate Advisory Council on Social Security, California Independent Colleges Foundation, University of San Francisco, San Francisco State College and many others. In 1941 he was campaign chairman for the National Jewish Welfare Fund.

Now a business consultant, Mr. Falk retired in 1956 as president of S & W Fine Foods, Inc., a firm with which he was associated for more than fifty years. During that time he held various positions with the firm, including those of sales manager, director, vice president and general manager.

Mr. Falk was educated in the San Francisco Public Schools, and later completed courses through the University of California Extension Division. He received an honorary doctorate of laws from the University of San Francisco in 1953, and also has served as a Regents' Professor of the University of California.

###

March 1966

January twenty-third
1947

Dear Ann and Ralph:

We received the official notice of the arrival and naming of Ronald Allan Falk. It sounds euphonic and aristocratic, and I hope he will grow up to all its implications.

You appear to have gone in for quite a series of alliteration, viz., Ralph Alfred Falk, Robert Adrien Falk, and Ronald Allan Falk.

No doubt you will want to perpetuate the custom and, as it must be quite a strain to whip a name with such limitations into shape in a moment of crisis, I offer the following for future use:

Royal Airforce Falk
Royal Academician Falk
Rollo Acheela Falk
Roshier Aguinaldo Falk
Rutzer Aqueduct Falk
Raoul Aschleck Falk

As a further thought, if a new arrival should run to overweight and give indication of either histrionic or sexual impulses, you might name him Roscoe Arbuckle Falk. I haven't mentioned girls because you seem to lean in the opposite direction. However, there is always a chance that a girl may appear on the scene, and in such an emergency I offer:

Rosie Apple Falk
Rifka Apoopo Falk

This ought to keep you busy for awhile, so with best wishes for the health and happiness of your entire family, I am

As ever,

Uncle Adrien