I remember it like it was yesterday: I am sitting in the back seat of a sedan, Tim is driving, Bob Dylan’s harmonica is screeching seemingly endlessly through the speakers right next to my head. I am a first year Master’s student who just moved from Germany to the United States a few weeks back, driving to Atlanta to attend my first ASP meeting in 1993. Not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that one day I might stand in front of you, this illustrious crowd of friends and colleagues, to accept this award. Tim, thank you very much for the introduction. My sincerest thank you also to the individuals that nominated me, and those that supported my nomination. Thank you also to the H. B. Ward Medal Committee. I am up here flooded by a complete dichotomy of emotions: pure panic and apprehension, and sincerest gratitude and elation.

In preparation for this moment one involuntarily submits to a certain degree of introspection and retrospection. My recollections of the series of circumstances and events that had an impact on my becoming a parasitologist are not unique, since, like for many of you in the audience, they involve a certain degree of serendipity. Unusual might be that my path originated not in North America, but in Germany. I wracked my brain about the source of my interest in the natural world or the early influences that lead me to choose biology as an academic focus in high school and university—without resolve. My mother argues that my interest in the natural sciences is genetic. “We have many doctors in the family” she reasons. I might argue it was more of a subconscious choice, a culmination of experiences and passive exposures. But really, your guess is as good as mine.

Maybe growing up in the maritime region of Germany had something to do with it. Most of my early childhood, and that of my 2 younger siblings, Katharina and Christian, was spent in northern Germany, Lower Saxony to be specific, located approximately 50 miles inland from the North Sea. My mother, Gerda Jensen, was a nurse; my father, Helmut Jensen, an officer in the German Air Force. My father was more of the left-brain type, while my mother was the nurturing soul of the family. I spent my summer holidays at my grandmother’s who lived a mere 10 km from the North Sea, puttering around the house or in the garden. She spoiled me with my favorite foods. A particular favorite was eel that she would buy fresh at the local farmers market, put in a bucket with salt, let wiggle to death, cut up into 2 inch-long pieces, and fry in butter.

In 1977, my father was transferred to Fort Bliss, an Army base in El Paso, Texas. The German Air Force Command had operated an Air Defense school at Fort Bliss since 1956; it closed in 2013. I was 6 yr old then, Katharina 2, and Christian 6 wk. We would stay in El Paso for a period of 3½ yr. It was always sunny, warm, if not hot, and we would go shopping or for Mexican food in Ciudad Juarez. I attended the German School on Base, which had grades 1–4. My most vivid memories are of our family's numerous 4–6-wk-long road trips in a Ford LTD station wagon pulling a small trailer. Destinations included all the major national parks and Mexico. We drove as far south as Acapulco in the west and Chetumal in the east. In retrospect, this was a true testament to my parents' sense of adventure.

After El Paso, we moved back to the northern part of Germany, near Bremen, a town called Delmenhorst. My middle school and early high school years were pretty uneventful. My parents both worked; we kids went to school. I attended the Max Planck Gymnasium from grade 7 through 13, among a graduating class of approximately 100 students. After school and on the weekends I was an avid team handball player and referee. To earn some pocket money, over the years, I had various jobs, including working in a local bakery selling cream pies, picking strawberries, and working as a cashier at IKEA. In 11th grade, we had to choose 2 Leistungskurse, that is, subjects with more lessons each week and that have a proportionally greater impact on the final Abitur (high school exit exam) score. I chose Biology and Mathematics. I mention this here because the choice of the latter

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