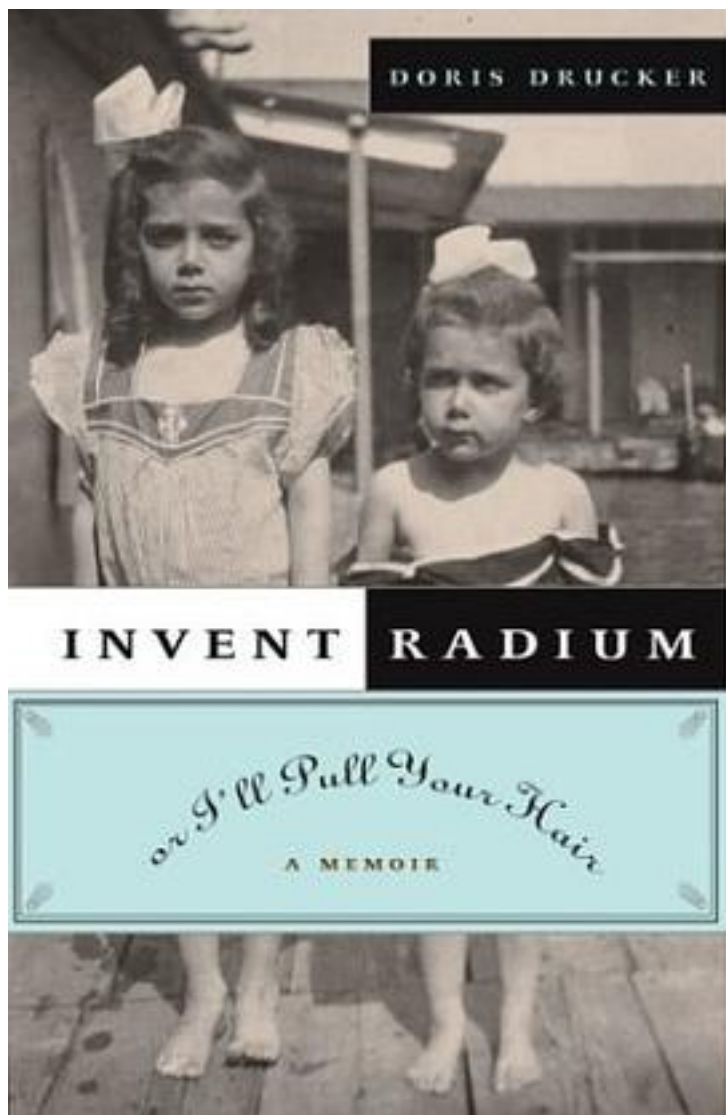


# Invent Radium or I'll Pull Your Hair



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And don't forget, once you are married to a Rothschild you can become a famous woman," Doris Schmitz's mother told her. "Be another Madame Curie and invent radium! You'll be famous!" Doris reminded her that radium had already been discovered. "Don't argue," her mother said. "You're going to invent radium or I'll pull your hair. You're just being negative, like your father." Rothschilds and radium were the boundaries of Doris's childhood. Born and raised in Germany in the early twentieth century, she grew up in an upper-middle-class household that struggled to maintain its bourgeois respectability between the two World Wars. Now in her nineties, Doris Drucker (she met her husband Peter - of management fame - in the 1930s) has penned a charming memoir that brings to life the Germany of her childhood. Not a prelude to Hitler and the Holocaust (she left Germany in 1932), the memoir is rather a personalized glimpse of history, one that weaves larger events into the day-to-day life of a young girl in a relatively apolitical family - seeing the Zeppelin, negotiating her Prussian mother's plans for her, ski trips and hikes, the schools she attended, her father's struggles to support the family, and all the stuff and drama that make up a childhood. Drucker's energetic storytelling, eye for the telling detail, and sly humor draw the reader into her portrait of the way that many Germans went about their lives during the first part of the twentieth century. Excerpted in the Atlantic Monthly in 1998, *Invent Radium or I'll Pull Your Hair* will be recognized as one of the few memoirs that bears witness to this rich milieu, a memoir both emblematic and intimate.

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