



"Led By the Spirit" by Inge Ibs

The remarkable story of a German girl who grew up
under Nazi rule, then escaped the Russian occupation
to find freedom both in this life....and the next.

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The true life story of Inge Ibs (1926-2017)



Inge grew up in the beautiful city of Dresden which was nicknamed 'Florence on the Elbe'. She fled the Russian occupation in 1947. Her granddaughter, Kim Skanson, says of Inge, "I recall the impact it had on me the first time I learned she escaped boarder control in the wee hours of the night on a milk truck. I recall her saying "I don't know how the officer didn't hit the top of my head when he checked the back of the milk truck....it was meant to be for me to get to Grandpa." Leaving her parents to start a new life in a foreign country left a void for Grandma that never quite went away...but it opened doors that she was forever grateful for. Grandma was braver than anyone I have ever met!"

Last night the full moon was in the dark sky planted by a loving Father. It looked so kind down on the sleepy nature. My thoughts wandered back to my life's story, the darkness and the lights of it. Having not talked about it for so long, it caught me emotionally and pain choked me. Time was over, for my allotted time, and I could not find my last page, my memory words. I froze in my thoughts. I could not overcome fatigue — I gave up. Since then, I walk on with my ever-present friend Jesus. The stars and the moon are still shining. The sun shines bright again. His love and grace have not changed! Nothing changed, yet I cannot go back to the moment when I let go of His help, His guidance just because of ... what?

I am a sinner saved by grace. In the stillness of the night I prayed and an answer came. Write, write, and write—that is your gift given. So, I tell my story to the lines before me. They don't demand time; they are ever patient as long as my hand is guided as before, by the Spirit I adore.

OH, WHAT JOY IS EVER IN MY HEART
WHEN I THINK WITH REPENTANCE IT STARTS!
MY SAVIOR GAVE ME FOREVER PEACE
'TIL ETERNITY SHOULD CEASE?
NO, WITH FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM
HE WILL GUIDE US THROUGH EVERYTHING.

MY DEAR MUTTI!

13th of June 2000

My heart is so very much overflowing in thankfulness to my dear parents: Pappi/Vati (Dad) and Mutti/Muttchen (Mom). Nineteen years ago (as I write this) Mutti was called home to her Maker, who had promised a place for her. Deep within me I know she is waiting for all of us to follow her. I remember her saying, "I will pray that all will be with us in Heaven, that God promised 'none should perish' and those He has given us will be with us united as spiritual being." I wonder if I will see my dearest brothers, Siegfried and Horst, by Mutti and Pappi, but the heavenly Father's promises go to those that believed. (Romans 8:38-39)

Mutti: Gertrud Elli Joost-Krieger grew up on a farm outside of the town of Willenberg (East Prussia). When she talked about her youth, it was mostly incidents of joyful or funny things. Her mom, Emma Konig-Joost was smart, intelligent and kept the household of seven children busy. She had no fear to defend against people that stole from her out of a basement larder (root cellar) that opened to the outside. The story goes that Emma told two daughters to play like ghosts and swoosh through the basement about midnight and she would watch the door to the larder. Well, it worked: "two" people fled out of that door away from the ghosts and no one ever came back to steal again. Mutti's father, Gustav Joost, was a good-humored father. After Mutti's stories, she used to walk with him over the fields to see if all is well! She said she was the only brunette and hazel-eyed in the family just like her Dad. That seemed to bond them. She loved him dearly.

Oma Emma and Opa Gustav lost the farm in 1919 due to inflation. Oma then became a realtor and moved to Marienburg, where she provided for the rest of the family!

In Mutti's family were two brothers and five sisters. One older sister Lucie, Gertrud, Katie or Käthe, Oskar, Edith, Walter, and Irmgard. Mutti was especially close to her brother Oskar. He gave her as a going away gift the most beautiful box inlaid with gold. She treasured it much and it pained her so deeply to have lost him in the war in 1916. He had a skull injury and it festered so bad that he succumbed. With Katie there was a close bond, too, because they shared a room at home! Mutti went to the Gymnasium (high school), took tennis lessons, won two prizes, a broach in gold topaz and a silver belt buckle I still have. She also took ballroom dance lessons. Her desire was to study chemistry like Madame Curry but there was no money available. All girls received a dowry as they married; it was customary at that time. Lucie, the oldest daughter, was first to marry. She married Dr. Harry Speiszingler who was a medical doctor. While they were married, he received money from Oma and Opa (Lucie's parents) to open up his practice in Marienwerder. This money was actually planned to give to the youngest daughter Irmgard as her "dowry at the time of her wedding". Dr Harry Speiszingler never paid Irmgard. There were hurt feelings, but later the three daughters of Irmgard forgave that family the old debt and became good friends with them.

BELOVED PAPPI

Väti-Pappi, how he was called later in life, was born in West Prussia, Groszschönbrück by Graudenz, where he went to the Gymnasium. His father, Jacob, was the town schoolmaster, and his mother, Marie Schicht-Krieger was the town postmaster. She gave life to 16 children, but diphtheria took many and only 6 grew up to adults. There were Alfred, Else, Grete, Rudolph, Cläre, and Erika. — Marie Schicht for unknown reasons around the age of 15 changed her Catholic belief to Lutheran. This was told about her. She was a very devout lady.

My dad, Rudolf Max Krieger, was very strong in sports (as a gymnast) and singing. He loved life! His older brother Alfred studied to be a teacher for the deaf and dumb and as soon as he taught, he helped my dad with money to study for an engineer's degree. "Rudi" belonged to a fencing fraternity and became initiated to the "Teutonen" of the University of Danzig (today, Gdansk). He loved camaraderie, and because of that, he had to leave there and go to finish studies in Braunschweig where he joined the "Germanen" fraternity; but it was on his brother's orders. Alfred was concerned about his studies! Well after a year there, he did finish and had to do an intern as an engineer in Hamburg with the greater fire department.

AN UNUSUAL BEGINNING

In time, the war 1914 started (World War I). Dad's garrison was Dresden with the Jäger (Hunter) battalion No. 13. Dad and Mom had met each other: My Mutti told me often how she met Pappi. It was in Danzig at the train depot. She went with her sister to bring her fiancé to the train, and in the train was my dad asking curiously, "who is this pretty young lady?" Someone introduced them and they exchanged addresses and later sent many postcards to each other! As a young Lieutenant he was brought to the front. He spoke of the war as a "gentleman's war" because at Christmas they quit fighting (the French and the Germans) and exchanged food or Taback (military rations). After a day or so, the war started again. If you found a French soldier wounded, you helped him, meaning saving his life, even if he became a prisoner. Dad was not long at the front. Shrapnel buried him in the trench and he was covered with dirt. He found himself wounded. He was placed with dead bodies in a semi-morgue! A nurse, "thank God", detected a movement of his little finger, so he was taken to a Red Cross hospital. His situation was grave. A wound to his head caused total paralysis — no speech was possible. His sister Else came as a Red Cross nurse and took care of him, nursed him, talked to him; finally, his movement came back, he could walk, but had to learn to speak again.

Not eligible as a soldier, he went home and met Mom again. They were engaged February 19th and married April 26th 1916, in Danzig in the Church St. Marien. Dad began to work for a firm in Leipzig where my brother Siegfried was born March 5th 1917. In late 1917, he became a superintendent to the Bouildon Hütte in Kattowitz, -which was a coal mine place.- In 1920, the Poles wanted the Germans out and had an uprising — the "Battle of Annaberg." My mom's maid, a polish girl, told my parents to flee for their safety! So horse and Leiterwagen (type of old- fashioned hay wagon) were taken with furniture and baby and themselves and they left their work and many friends during that night, direction west toward Dresden, Pappi's garrison. In Dresden they had to live with friends before finding an apartment. There were very few available as the war had ended and there were bad times. Nobody built anything — it was a standstill!

A friend of Pappi, Mr. Willi Bethke, owned the Serum Work Factory for pharmaceutical products. He helped my parents find an apartment! It was a duplex, a marvelous place to grow up in with a big fenced-in garden in front of the home, a villa, and a rose garden in back of the home for the people upstairs, a couple without children but three dogs: Schotti, Flocki and Wacki. Dad and his brother-in-law, Erich Bartsch started an Engineers' Büro Office in 1923 and hired a man (Mr. Koch) who did all the calculus for his buildings, another (Mr. Luke) did the drawings, and a secretary (Beda). The company name was Krieger & Bartsch. Mom became his right hand in the business of building anything in wood: homes, bridges, airplane hangers, barracks, etc. Later during the war, 1942, the barracks became their main source of income. He had enormous energies to keep him going.

My brother, Horst Gustav Krieger, was born at that duplex house on February 13, 1923, and now there were two boys in the family.

A HAPPY CHILDHOOD

Today it's just like something drives me to write, an inner push, an inkling that time is running out. Since it's springtime, one feels that it's easier to talk about the past and my growing up years now than in fall or winter. Spring gives one hope, even though many years passed. One comes alive with its growing blooming surroundings. It's windy, sunny, stormy, rainy days. It's April, the month that does not know what it wants weather wise. Knowing I was born in the month of April does not make me moody as its weather! Yes, as my dear Mom told me, I was born April 28th 1926, at home in my parents bedroom on Chemnitzer Str. 39 with a midwife's help and my grandmother Krieger called "Ohmchen." She was the one that gave birth to 16 children but only 6 grew up to adulthood. In my growing up years I found a love toward "Ohmchen." She treated everyone with kindness. It was fun to go there and visit: the eats were excellent; the backyard swing swung me high in the air! Wow, how I dreamed to fly away with going higher and higher into the sky. Much later as a teenager, I detected her devotional book in the side pocket of her basket-weave chair. From then on, I understood her "love for all" came through her faith in God. It left a lasting impression!

As a little girl, I found a friend in Tini, Clementine Von Schuch, who lived next door to us. My mom told me that she pushed me in the buggy for little walks to get fresh air. Later on we played games together like playing school or helping her Mom peel the green shells of the walnuts that had fallen from the big walnut tree in Schuch's garden. Tini was the only child from Hans Von Schuch (a cellist) and his wife Wanda from Praha (Czech). Then there was the haus and garden keeper couple, Lachman's, living in the souteraïne (lower level). They loved children, but never had any themselves. He made wine out of rosehips that grew in the garden, a whole big fence line full of rose bushes with beautiful orange fruit. Sometimes we were allowed to taste a bit of the wine.

My memory is that I was definitely the youngest! My dear brother Siegfried was 9 years older and took me often shopping for shoes or clothes because Mutti had no time. She helped my Dad "Väti" so much in his office, their building business — all wood construction! I do remember going to Nursery school with my doll buggy and a doll with real hair which I had received as a Christmas gift; was I proud! Naturally, because no one else had something like it! Horst, my dear three-year-old brother was fun to be with. He would dress up in Tini's costumes from the opera days of her grandmother and we played and acted out many plays. What fun, heavenly times, in the beautiful backyard of Schuch's with a garden house to hide in!!!

At home, we had our pillow fights! On the other hand we were advised by Mutti to stitch, knit, or work with wood. The two of us had to work something for Christmas and on top learned poems, which we did recite to them at Christmas Eve, before gifts and singing all the familiar songs.

Christmas, growing up in Germany- the land of Martin Luther, was very similar to here. We would bake Lebkuchen, sugar cookies, Christmas stollen, and form marzipan candies. The smells all through the house were so promising of something beautiful to happen. On every first of Advent we would have an advent wreath hanging under the chandeliers with four red candles, and we would burn those around coffee time in the afternoon and sing carols. Then we would taste the first cookies. Also on the 1st of December, each child was to have his own Advent calendar and took care of opening the little windows one by one on the designated days. Christmas Eve was to be the highlight really and truly. Around 4 o'clock in the afternoon everybody was scrubbed clean and dressed in the Sunday's best.

Then the whole family would walk seven blocks to church for 5 o'clock service, which included lots of music. I felt in those moments nearer to God than any other time. Realizing He really existed was good. Walking back home, we would pass houses with Christmas trees alit, and the Christmas carols from the bell tower followed

us. There were always four trumpets telling the news of the Christ child's birth. How glorious and rich I felt to be serenaded home! There we all sat down to the typical "Carp in Blue" dinner that Mother had prepared with lots of love. After that, we cleared the table quickly and looked over our poems that we had to recite that evening. Finally, a little bell would ring and call us to enter in the closed dining room, where the Christmas tree stood all decorated and lit with lots of white candles. Next to it sat my father and mother who listened to all our different poems about the Holy Night. We gave hugs and kisses and wished a joyful time, then, we were allowed to see what the Christ child had brought us. Mom and Dad would let us have a time with the toys or clothes and then we had to sing our hearts out through the whole book of Christmas carols. My dad loved to sing! I had always quite a time to fall asleep after so much excitement. What an exciting peaceful time. Christmas Day dinner was a goose stuffed with apples, red cabbage, raw potato dumplings and lemon chiffon pudding for dessert. The second Christmas day was off to Grandma Ohmchen-dad's mom's house with exchange of goodies!

One year on Christmas Eve in 1934, my dear brother Siegfried came down suddenly with a very high fever. On the day before, he did all the shopping for Horst and me to help our parents out. He was 17 years old. Now on Christmas Day people took him to the hospital! He was diagnosed with walking pneumonia. In those days we had no "penicillin" available, so he suffered a lot of pain from all kinds of shots given to him who was only skin and bones. Mutti stayed with him, and her mom came to take care of the household. We called her "Oma." She cooked and sewed and knew how to play the piano. I loved to hear her play! This pneumonia took three months of sincere prayer to God the Heavenly Father for healing Sisi. He did not die, but finally could come home with Mutti. He needed rest, a "vacation" from the hospital. He was just not able to do much for a month. We were so happy and thankful God spared Sisi's life. Then Oma could go back to Gruenwehr, to her son's (Walter Joost) farm in East Prussia.

DAILY LIFE AT IT'S BEST

When this all happened, I had to be in the second year of school with Dr. Sparman, who taught us to sing, gardening, read, write, and addition. He showed us about Mais (corn growing) and played the fiddle for us. Neat folksongs! The years were happy years. Väti's business went well, and Mutti looked after everything. Siegfried went to Leipzig to study economics. I started the girl's gymnasium and Horst the National Politische Erziehungs Anstalt (a national boarding school training young men). We took lots of trips with Väti with the car "Wanderer." We went as a family to Poland where Pappi was born, to Danzig where he studied, to the western part of Germany. Wherever Väti had fraternity brothers or had to build, we went there — wonderful times.

My early childhood was spent in our apartment in Dresden Altstadt, Chemnitzer Str. 39. Two big office rooms for my dad, two bedrooms, one study, one dining room, one children's room, a kitchen, a maid's bedroom, and a bathroom with a hot water heater that worked by feeding it koks (coal). We took baths once every Friday evening. I remember my dad scrubbing my back and wrapping me in a big towel and carrying me to my bed in their bedroom. Our meals were always



taken in the dining room: at noon we had a complete meal and in the evening usually fried potatoes with some meat or eggs or fish, often left overs from the noon meal. Breakfast was chocolate to drink and hard rolls with jam or oatmeal, soft-boiled eggs, rye bread. Mutti sometimes had a servant maid to help her, but usually they never lasted long! She didn't have patience with them. Mutti provided the meals every morning; she went daily to the stores for fresh goods! As I grew older, I often had to go get milk, whip cream, eggs, or go next door to the bakery for bread. We had stores pretty handy; the most interesting one was the Apotheke Pharmacy. It smelled so different as you stepped through the door and everything seemed kind of mysterious in there, yet one could always find help without having to see the doctor. Once the pharmacist gave me a pink cream stick to apply to my freckles, and low and behold, they disappeared!

The garden we had in front of the apartment looked like a small botanical garden. We had so many different trees, bushes, flowers, and some lawn section; it was fun to go hide and seek in there. The caretaker did not like us to play in there, but Mom made him agreeable. I enjoyed going to nursery school for two years. First, I was walked there, later I went alone to that place. It took about fifteen minutes. What fun games we played! We had also a little juice and cookies. The hours were from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon.

Then there was a bit of a small beginning of my spiritual life — "Sunday School." I loved all the hymns to be sung and learned about our Triune Godhead, the katechism. Most of all, I did enjoy the kids. My mom loved to sing hymns and we prayed always before our meals and at bedtime.

Every three weeks Mom would send the wash out to be laundered. There was a laundry not far from us. They brought it back mangled (a roller machine that presses things), pressed, and sorted. But then there was a lot of hand washing to be done and doilies stretched out over a towel on the sofa all starched and stiff! I learned to iron hankies, napkins, and tablecloths, and slowly progressed to the starched shirts of my dad! I loved folding clothes and putting them into designated drawers. Life was so beautiful! Dad's business grew.

Siegfried was in Leipzig and then in Berlin studying economics. He became president of the International Student Body and brought English students home or Bulgarian students for visits. My brother Horst was put into a National Politische Erziehungs Anstalt in Klotzsche. He came home only on weekends. We treasured those hours of togetherness! We were so close; it was difficult to see him go back on Sunday evening! Growing up I missed my brothers, because they had some wisdom to share with me and I delighted in pleasing them and they in spoiling me. Our most precious time here, when we were all five gathered around the table at dinner-time at noon. We all would share our thoughts. Or in wintertime, in the evenings that were long and dark, Dad would tell us stories about his growing up, going to the universities, and going to war in 1914. Those evenings were peaceful, relaxing times.

My dad's 50th Birthday had me in bed with "measles" and to this day I pout that I had to be in bed when the rest of the family could celebrate his special day. His constructing business grew. He often took Mutti and I along on trips to the building projects in other towns. One time the whole family went to his folk's home town. We had to cross the border into Poland to go see Graudenz, the town where Dad went to the gymnasium (high school) and on to Grossschönbrück where he was born. The town was very small; there was one store. A Polish neighbor there recognized Dad, so we had to have some kaffe and kuchen and fantastic anise cookies, but we only had a one-day pass and had to hurry back to the border (Germany & Poland). Another trip took us through western Germany. We stopped at many different towns where Dad usually knew someone like a fraternity brother, so we visited there. We did get to see the Rhine — Donau, Saale, beautiful old towns and history came alive (barbarossa). The family trips were absolutely fulfilling being together as a family, seeing and exploring things together, trying different foods and hotel beds and "wandern" (hiking and climbing), noticing how my dad was loved by his comrades. How protected I felt by Mom and Dad and broth-

ers. The world was so beautiful with friends and a car to take us. Too soon it would change, but we did not know it yet...

Dad loved to entertain. He often stopped at the Wünsche-Konditorei for baiseé, kuchen to bring home for kaffee zeit (coffee time). Around Mom's birthday on November 19th which also happened to be the goose hunting opener, he would invite his friends from the Jäger No. 13 Batallion and had a "chef" come to the house and cook for a special meal! The table was excellently decorated and set up to be inviting to guests. Mom received beautiful huge chrysanthemum bouquets as hostess having her birthday. I think she would have rather liked to have some "woman's kaffee klatch" but my dad had no understanding for that type of entertainment. So mom on her daily shopping trips would chat with neighbors and find out about different things. I guess looking back Dad was a bit selfish in doing what he wanted to do. Our family had a very strong bond. Dad and Mom were respected and loved as we three children grew up in love, and we had a lot of love to share and give away, too. I can only remember one incident of anger. My dad had some kind of business argument with a man, who tried to charge more than agreed upon after the job was done. Mom had company from her sister (which came very seldom) and husband, Martin and Edith Schade. Because of Dad's head injury, he had trouble communicating certain words and remembering details. So Mom usually helped to fill in certain words when he had business dealings. Dad was so angered about having to do the discussion without my mom's help this time. He carried a grudge so far that, "Well, we have to divorce if you pay more attention to your sister than to your husband." Poor Mom! I might have been nine to ten years old. I loved them both and as it got more heated; I dared to step between them which was a certain risk at that time. But I said, "With whom will I go? Maybe you will have to cut me and each one takes half of me!" That broke the spell of hostility, and we hugged and cried and found new peace. All is well!

Often Pappi took us on small weekend trips. I still remember going into the Erzgebirge (a mountainous region) when it snowed, to go skiing, sledding, and ice skating. Tini, our neighbor's daughter, was asked to go along. It was a time out for Dad and family time! In summer we would go the Malter Talsperre to swim, hike and have good food, especially fruit out of the orchard. Goat's milk, rye bread, and endless fruit for supper-time!

HAPPY TIMES UNDER A GROWING SHADOW...

My mind is filled with thoughts of past and present; it's racing. I would so much like the world to know what I found and what I see since my awareness of happenings comes from the life I lived under the shadow of Hitler and Communism, where the world darkened even more. It was like an ocean layer of heavy particles in the heaven above. Germany's leaders ever pressing down the people that lived there, done through the evil influences of systems supposedly working for the good of all people, but it turned out to be the opposite! Destruction of lives, people, towns, fields, vineyards, and loss of some of the people resulted from all this evil movement. We often asked, did Hitler learn from Stalin or Stalin from Hitler? Both systems fought God Almighty, destroying Believers, destroying God's people the Jews, closing churches, telling lies about evangelical believers. At the time of its happening, I felt sometimes deep in my heart: there was a growing of immorality, but too young to impress unto me a full understanding of its size. I believed the world of adults is just different from us young children slowly growing toward adult.

1933 found me in the grade school 1st grade class. We heard our parents had to vote for Hitler, Hindenburg, etc. After the Sunday when the voting took place, Inge Kalkow and I went to school discussing who voted for whom. We both liked the gentleman, Hindenburg, but it was not to be. Hitler took control with his leaders: Goring, Göbbels, and Himmler. At first, we heard how caring Adolf was; he built autobahns, ships, planes,

built up towns, built the VW, and “satisfied the workers”, even the maid of the couple who lived upstairs went on a cruise! Such things were never heard of before!

Three years into Hitler’s reign, he accepted to have the Summer Olympiad in Berlin in 1936 and the Winter Olympiad in Garmisch Partenkirchen. Those were good happenings. We all were listening to the radio and later saw the film by Leni Riefenstahl, a very talented lady. She made two movies about the Olympics. There was hope in people that we were going to be alright with this Führer-Leader. In Dresden we had the biggest garden show: flowers of all kinds, goldfish in little rivers with cattails growing. Dad built a “Coffee Eden” and a wooden bridge across Lenne Str. from the Hygiene Museum to the Gardens on the Palais grounds. During those early years we enjoyed life, went to symphonies, operas, visited museums, or art galleries. One time my dad bought a painting that my mom liked (the “dandelion” picture) without her knowledge. It was delivered to our house. Oh, how surprised she was! Dad loved Mom very much. She was needed by him as a helper in their business and household. Dad had a lot of energies and Mom was the steady, calm, understanding person of his wants! Dad loved to get ahead with hard work and discipline, but he also could take time out for us, go on a trip, or on a hot day to the Malter Talsperre for a swim and good food, or just a cup of coffee with goodies made by Mom or bought by Dad. Mom made the best plumb cake. All was so beautiful. I am thankful for every memory of them.

In between Dad looked for more land where he could store his wood and put in a workshop for the business. It was getting costly where he was, and not safe! Low and behold, he found enough acreage with a house in the midst of fruit trees, right next to woods for nice walkways and biking trails. So when I was 12, I believe in September of 1938, we moved away from my friend Tini to Heller Str. 4 in Klotzsche, now Am Grünen Grund 4. First he built a house and for the workers, a gathering place. Then dad fixed up the old villa to become a beautiful home. I had my very own room, Sisi his, and Horst his. We called it the “House in the Sun.” Once there, we had a vegetable garden, rose garden and fruit trees: quince, plum, pear, cherry, dark and glaskirschen (yellow with pink cheeks), grapes, red, white and black currants, and raspberries! Pappi had his office with Mr. Luke, Mr. Koch, and the secretary, Marianne Schilder. The wood was stored on the extra land behind the house. Pappi was happy and pleased to have the new workings so close to home! The workers could just walk down to the house with the new office and Mutti or Marianne would be able to help them. Every two weeks was payday on Friday, and Mutti and I often filled the small brown envelopes with their pay in marks and pennies.

One beautiful year, we lived in Haus in Der Sonne (House in the Sun). Mutti had her garden, Pappi had his tree roses, and we could harvest fruit galore. Mutti loved her winter garden window; she always had flowerpots in there. So attractive to see! My brother Horst could come home from school now every weekend since his school was in Klotzsche. Those were treasured moments. We enjoyed just talking, walking, taking meals together. Sometimes he would bring a friend to stay over. Our first Christmas in Klotzsche was in the wintergarden room. The house was so cozy warm with central heat. In spring 1939, I went to high school, “Alstädter Höhere Mädchenschule” in Dresden. It took one hour by streetcar No. 7. I sort of liked it, looked and watched faces, got off at the Schlossplatz (castle square) and walked to the Zinzendorf Str. to school, about 25 minutes or so. I loved my school; I had nice friends. On sport days I went for dinner to Ohmchen to eat with her and take a nap before hustling to the Sportplatze lenné strasse. Ohmchen was Pappi’s mom and we all loved her. She had a lot of wisdom and strong faith in the triune God.

Siegfried received his Diploma Kaufman (economics) from Berlin University

SO MANY QUESTIONS-SO MANY CONCERNS

In the fall of 1939, Hitler announced that he declared war on Poland and Russia. His power to blind people was immense, a strength to build up a nation and a war machine in six years, then to declare war on nations around us, and in between, damaging synagogues, putting a yellow star on all Jews. It became very confusing. For a time believing thoughts became, "Maybe he means well," but turning to "sacrificing human beings?" I will never forget my Mutti's face and tears rolling down her cheeks as she was raising the flag at the flagpole to show what ... our strength? She was saying we just had a war (1914-1918), why now so quick, for what reason?! She had lost two brothers in World War I. She was very unhappy knowing the devastation that wars cause! One never knows what tomorrow brings, but in a war it is more obvious. Where will this monster lead us? The very first day going into Poland, my brother Siegfried lost one of his friends, Wolfgang. He played hockey with Siegfried. I picture him still defending the goal: tall, blond with a broad smile. Things did not change for us for a while. Dad had contracts and was busy building. Mom had a big garden; she knew sparcity during World War I. I went to school. Dad drove me downtown to it, because I maybe could not get out of bed on time or missed the streetcar. With the streetcar it took one hour from house to school with a ten minute walk.

Well, the house "in der sonne" was still beautiful, our home to be able to gather with joy and love. We lived away from the Big City Dresden, so we hardly knew what was happening there. With an exception: was it May 1938 on my daily walk to school, I went on a bit of a detour and came across the (only) synagogue burnt to the ground. Who would do such a thing?! It's a church for the Jews. What does it mean? Slowly it began trickling down, "the Jewish people were not to be liked." So, destroy their riches: their fashion places, their coffee's, their homes, their jobs! Let them be identified by the Star of David in yellow. At that time, even a child was pondering the "why's?" But nobody had real answers! Soon you did not see any more Jewish people and the broken shops were cleaned up and restored. Life went on. We had our own home, business, family that needed attention. Somehow, slowly, we felt Hitler's demands were not what we could agree with! There was growing distrust in the system.

THE CALL TO SERVE

Siegfried had graduated and was working with Dad at a saw mill in Rogasen that he took care of for Dad. He loved being back in Posen. (Rogasen = Deutsch Polish] = today all Poland) But as the war progressed, Siegfried followed his call before he would be called into the army. So he left Rogasen and came to train in Königsbruck and Leipzig. He could come home on short furloughs 'til the army stuck him near Breslau in a prisoner-of-war camp with quite a few English soldiers who he made friends with. His language was such a God-given gift! He could speak any language that he put his mind to.

In between, my brother Horst was taken to serve his country. Because of his training at school, he very quickly became a Lieutenant at 19 shortly before his 20th birthday. Horst had wanted to become a medical doctor and go to Africa like Albert Schweitzer. He asked my Dad at graduation time what to do and my father left the decision making up to him. So the principle of the school told the graduates "Your place is at the front!" Because of that my brother listened and enlisted. He cried, and lots of tears began to fall, for no one to see. One carried it all inside.

Pappi's business was very intense, because he had to build so many barracks for the government! So, my mom was busy too, with the office, garden, household, etc. I still traveled to school, had meetings with YM (Young Mädels), but was glad for my friends, Brigitte and Alice. We did not care much for our leaders; they seemed tough characters. Only the songs about the Fatherland were neat.

Today as I am "old," I chuckle about my mom: it was time to be confirmed, so she picked out a blue taffeta dress for me to wear, not a white one like the "Catholic girls" wear for their confirmation. Naturally, I had to be the only one in a colored dress. Pastor Huhne did not pay attention to it and I was relieved. My confirmation verse was 1 Timothy 4:8: "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promises for both the present life and the life to come". I seemed to remember it for quite some time, but thought of it again much later. We did have a nice meal, I believe it was ham, but there were no relatives present. Well, it was war, and we began slowly to sense it.

My grandmother ohmchen went to be with the Lord in February, 1941. Looking at her within all the flowers, she looked kind of pretty, but I missed her. I remember, one day she took me into her bedroom and showed me a painting of a mother and child and told me, "That is yours when I am gone and it shall remind you to be a 'good mother' later in life." How thoughtful of her!

So life went on, we did what was necessary, went to school. I missed seeing my brothers who were both in service. Dad was busy with building, Mom in the office and household. I seem to remember that we started the food stamps. One could only receive so much butter, sugar, and meat. Everything became rationed. One learned to cook differently and we had a nice garden to supplement. That helped.

The school vacation came and we were asked to work, so I worked in a nursery pulling weeds or thinning carrot seeds, or learning to bind flowers into bouquets. Usually I spent my money right there and bought my Mutti some fresh bouquets for the home. I did not mind that type of work. In between time, my brothers both became lieutenants and we got to admire them in their neat uniforms and took photos with Pappi in his uniform — "the 3 officers." My dad was drafted to the eastern front, but my mom kept sending telegraphs that he was needed in his war production business; she could not run it alone. So he did return home soon, never to go again.

In Spring of 1942 my oldest brother, Siegfried came home to heal out from injuries at the Russian front. We were so pleased to have him home for a little while; we sat down together and listened to his tales. That was the time where he told my mom, Mutti, the part of the lawn on the south side of the house was to be dug up and put into good soil for potatoes. He predicted we would need that some day. Because we were one soldier for seven miles of front it's too thin to hold. He left a pistol for Dad, Mom and me in case we had to defend ourselves. With that, he had to go back, but this time he went to Italy where he caught malaria and healed out in Cortina D'ampezzo. He became a Melderider for General Bade. He loved to serve him.

My brother Horst came home with an injury from the front in Murmansk, high up in the North of Finland. He had to heal. We visited him many times in the hospital until he could come home. How nice to be able to sit together and talk, but his stories from the front were really gruesome. What a burden he carried for his men with family and he had none, was young and had to be in charge of command in this bad war?! He wished so to be able to talk to his older brother, which was not possible, he was so far away. There was no e-mail, telephone, cell phone. So I listened to his stories but could not advise him. I did love my brothers. I felt so taken care of by them. I thank God, to have had them, but a little while! Both were back at the fronts and I wrote letters to them. They needed that encouragement - that we were there for them!

Our life went on. My school became a hospital, so I went to technicum and worked at my dad's business. Mr. Bandurski was my master and I a beginner in learning carpentry. Life went on. We had an older man, Mr. Kind, that helped my Mutti with the garden and slowly she acquired some chickens and raised some rabbits. I loved feeding those little creatures, but not the chickens. My Mutti was strong. I don't know how she could

do everything she did tackle. At least she had a lady to help her with the once a month wash! All sheets, all towels, all tablecloths, all starched shirts...

We had so many fruit trees and bushes. It all needed to be harvested and we did put potatoes in instead of the lawn. Mutti canned a lot of soups and juice from tomatoes as it was given to us, which did help because of the rationing of foods available. My dad had still lots to build, there was enough wood, but the nails were beginning to be scarce. In his foresight, he stored quite a bit in the workers' house basement. Later on that became a trade item for food at war's end and after.

THE HIGH COST OF SERVICE

How should I begin the year 1944? I turned 18 years old. Siegfried's dear friend from school days, Wolfram, sent me 19 red tulips? What a beautiful gift from someone far away at the front. The night before my birthday, I was so unhappy. I did not yet want to become 18! I even told my Mutti about it, but there was nothing one could do. The day was sunny and bright, but I was not so sunny. Sometime in spring, Pappi and I went to see Horst where he was stationed by Karlsruhe. We ate one meal together and stayed overnight in a private home. The hardest time came to say good bye! We did not know then, that this was the last hug time on earth. Back home again, we heard more rumors about the war. It did not seem to go well with the two-front war — east and west!

I noticed that I tried to avoid the fall month of 1944, the very time in August when the official came to the door to tell us, that our Siegfried was a subject of so many fallen in this crazy war. My dear father fell on his knees and prayed with me. I have never seen my dad in such a state of total succumbing to the Lord. I did not know what to think and do. My Mutti came to this scene and we cried heartily and hugged. My brother had planned to come for a furlough the next day! Mutti had saved food stamps to brighten his being home. Now all has changed. We three prayed that God in His mercy will help us to go on, and prayed God's will for my brother Horst. I remember going into Siegfried's room and looking at his shoes that I faithfully polished in his absence, to learn, to understand he will never need them anymore. My parents let me write to my brother Horst that our Siegfried lost his life. I remember that he could call home once and talked to my parents. After that we did not hear from him anymore, my letter came back. The officials came to the door to tell us Horst is "missing in action." Until my parents went to be with the Lord, they hoped for his return! Many years passed but no Horst.

FLEEING DANZIG

We started listening to the BBC on the radio. As it was forbidden, one had to be very careful that no one would find out, but at least one heard more truth than our own news. My dad sent me to stay with my cousin, Evi, in Danzig to have my teeth fixed by her brother, my cousin, Fritz Krieger, a dentist. He fixed my teeth and in between time we realized the Russians were progressing, their front moving toward Danzig and its harbor. We heard cannons. Trains were filled with refugees. Evi looked puzzled. Her husband called and told her not to worry, but the BBC was telling us the German soldiers are not able to hold the front lines! My aunt Hete, her daughter Evi, her baby Jorg, and I packed a suitcase for each and fortunately through a friend of my cousin we were told to get to the Red Cross train that will take us to inner Germany. This we did and by miracle we got on in midst of wounded soldiers.

The train was rolling along. We escaped the enemy, but left many friends and earthly treasures behind! Treasures like the graves of family, the cared-for houses and people, memories of youth and happy peaceful days! What a blessing it was to us three women and the baby, that special telephone call of a dear friend, a

nurse with a helping hand that changed despair into hope. All she said was take a suitcase each and the baby. Go to the outer Depot. There is a Red Cross train loading wounded soldiers. Board it. Talk to nobody and find a place to sit and keep calm. We reached that train somehow. It is hard to recall how with my aging aunt who could barely walk, my cousin Eva with her baby, and I who was packed down with a diaper bag, two suitcases, my purse, and a heavy winter coat because it was February the 2nd and cold; but here we are sitting in safety in a train going home! Home? We left home! Going somewhere where there will be no enemy, just our own people. The train left. It was late afternoon. Slowly the wheels began to go faster under our seats. One could feel the vibration. It told us we are moving. We are leaving a once beautiful place now surrounded by gunfire and lots of people trying to get away on bicycles, horse and wagons, pushcarts, etc. Everybody hastened to run from destruction into a safer zone. Our thoughts were mixed, anxiety chased hope and back to anxiety. Yet the steady movement of the train lulled us into a peaceful feeling. As long as we are still alive, we can help ourselves and others.

Slowly we began to make conversation with our young wounded who shared the compartment with us and the whining, whimpering baby (Jorg). They were young Dutch boys who were drafted into the SS under false circumstances, now wounded on the way to . . . where? They felt they could not go home because of the SS number taken. They will not be liked anywhere and are only 19 years of age. It was like a dead end for them. It made us return to thoughts of our own feelings toward these helpless boys, about the war that brings so much suffering, unspoken heroism, tears, and sometimes but less and less often, laughter. The train stopped. We were very fortunate to get some milk for the baby and some crackers for all of us! Then we rolled on. By now we were all exhausted and seemed to fall into a quiet slumber still with the ear turned toward extraordinary noises that disturbed us.

In early morning, I was awakened and stood up to stretch my lowly aching body that sat for hours on this hard wooden bench squeezed between now "my neighbors of this compartment." Oh, look out the window; what beautiful blue sky is unfolding. Lord, it belongs all to you and not to us. I was thinking very humble thoughts, believing if anybody could bring us safely home, it is Him, our most powerful God. By now we all felt joy that somehow never shone so bright to give us so much hope and peace in us!

But within seconds, this mood changed to a "what is that?" Look out to the west. There are beautiful silver planes coming. Oh, no! They are descending on us? Our Red Cross train? No, you're foolish to say that, but at the same time, the train slowed down to a halt and people sprang out, jumped out calling, "Hit the dirt, the ditches. Hide!" It all happened very fast. My aunt and cousin hysterically started to run and scampered along. Out of nowhere something made me say to them, "Stop! Lay down!" Then I covered them quickly with my winter coat as if to protect them from evil. After I saw all were tucked under, I lay down beside them and watched over them. As we waited, we heard screaming and crying and glass breaking from the gunfire of the once-beautiful planes. Those sounds meant only destruction for all of us! Two waves of fire descended on us. Afterward, we saw the dead, the frightened, who ran into the open fire. Many more people were hurt now and after the attack everybody helped everybody.

We felt blessed again in our compartment. Our windows were not broken like others, so we did not have to feel the cold of winter coming in. Nobody was hurt, but this new experience of unforgiving war actions made us all quiet. We had new fear in us and anxious questions like: "will we see our loved ones ever again? Will this train be repairable so that we can move on? Will that stomach only be quiet? How will it all end for any of us?" The train did roll on after a delay of only two hours, which seemed much, much longer.

After a long trip around burning cities, we came to a very small town in the middle of the country. There we were told to get off and transfer into different directions. With many stops and starts and train changes without food, we arrived at my parents' town. We three ladies and the baby, found a home; but what about those young wounded soldiers from a neighboring country caught in the web of a terrible war? What about us here in the land of plenty? We saw how political hypnotism works. Will it take our found freedom? Will we be short sighted to notice no change? Have so many lost their lives for a now new wave of destruction coming upon us, only from within this time? I guess I will always wonder why people cannot be more aware of the evil, that they once fought for and now ignore.

My dear parents were glad to see us, so Tante Hete and Evi with little Jörg were bedded and fed, but after a short time my cousin Evi wanted to move on to her in-law's house in Thuringen where she could wait for her husband. So tickets for the train were bought at the Dresden train depot and we brought them with their meager belongings there to say good-bye. There seem to be so many good-byes in this time of war and one always wondered about "ein wiederschauen." A few days after that my Aunt Irmgard came with her three daughters: Sibylle, Sabine, and Holle. They had to be put into the biggest room, Dad's study. It was crowded for them, but they did not mind after losing their home in Königsberg and their dad somewhere in Russian prison.

OUR BEAUTIFUL DRESDEN UNDER ATTACK

From then on it seemed one was not able to plan anything. As my school became a Red Cross hospital for soldiers, more refugees came from the East to Dresden, places got filled up, so many parked in any green area, small parks, bigger parks, wherever there was room with their belongings, wagons, carts, etc. Just then the enemy decided to bomb our town, the beautiful Florence on the Elbe River without industry or the like! February 13th 1945, my brother Horst's 23rd birthday. I looked outside into the night that was lit up with Christmas trees all lit up over the river Elbe, and then planes followed with the first wave of bombs!! After the first attack the fire fighters went from the outside areas into the city to help the poor fiery town, but just then, the planes returned with more bombs! In between time we stayed in the basement, but people came to the door looking for help and a place to stay. Mom handed out water for the thirsty, coffee for the cold. It was coffee made from roasted grain; we had no beans. It seemed everything was settling down to questions of what now? Then young soldiers were called in to help the bombed town of Dresden, shortly after they went to go and help. The very town of Dresden was bombed a third time.

I write this like a sort of an automatic happening; it was all so weird. One's thoughts were: "Why this town with hospitals and refugees?" I remember standing with my father and cousin Billa (Sibylle) on our balcony looking at the town of Dresden that was now an inferno, a huge lake of fire and winds bolstering the fire to destroy everything in its way. Something terrible was happening and you could only look helpless at this sight. Dear God, help the people that lived down there, in a once beautiful city, now fiercely burning down. Could this be an example, warning of what hell might be like?! Horrible thoughts! We lost our sons, brothers, now we lost a lovely city to destruction; what will be the future? More destruction to come? Nobody talked much, everyone into their own thoughts, despair and still trying to live life as given. One could not help think about all the people we knew in the city. "What happened to them?" After the bombing of Dresden, the following morning at 11:00 am came the mailman like regular, like nothing happened! I could not get over this routine behavior... People died, lost their homes, and the post office still worked in our suburban area. German discipline? Or was it a need to keep going as we pondered what happened to us with this Führer? Did he sell us a barrel of goods? There were no goods to be had!

One week after the devastation, I asked my dad if I could go and look for our friends. He let me go, so with the Streetcar as far as Neustadt (only goes in the northern part of Dresden) I could go, but from there I had to walk. I went across the Albert Bridge and came through ruins, burnt obstacles, unto the Postplatz, an open area where there were burnt mummified people stacked in a huge pile with a white powder lime sprinkled over all. My heart sank within me. So I went on the street where my beloved teacher Ms. Napravnik lived. Her apartment house stood bare as a ruin blackened by the fire and in front in the street lay a long row of charcoaled once human beings. I needed to pray for those burnt ones though I could not know who they were. They were unrecognizable, once living beings- and now? I began to realize I could not find anyone this way. Tears rolling down my cheeks, I walked in the direction of home, over and over asking God why? Phosphor bombs were sent and when they detonated on the ground, the phosphor spilled over into the basements where people had gone for shelter and burned to a crisp. That is what we found out, why all these charred skeletons. I cannot forget the sight nor the emotions that went with me — the ugliness of war. The unforgiving enemy who risked their own lives to do this destruction!

I shared these impressions with my dear hurting parents, still trying to comfort each other, because of their own losses; their hopes gone that their sons would inherit the business and help their father working. Dad's, Pappi's, energies seemed on hold. Mutti was the one to take care of things more and more: the business, the house with refugees with one kitchen, and taking turns cooking for the families.

A NEW ENEMY

Finally the "war," Hitler's war, was over May 16, 1945. Like taking a deep breath it was over, but we saw some Americans with trucks racing through the little town and then there was a very quiet time, nobody knew what will happen!?! The Yalta agreement was signed and with that our "death sentence;" we were taken over by the Russians! Slowly the Russian troops were advancing. First we thought the Americans are back, because of the trucks they drove- all provided by the U.S.

When we heard of the advancement of the Russian troops, women were scared by such terrible rumors about them. In one of these early days my cousin called who was a refugee by my Uncle Erich and Aunt Grete with her mother in town (Dresden). So I tried to convince her to come and stay with us, since the streetcar was still in operation! We waited, but she did not come. During that night some of the Russian soldiers came and ransacked through the apartment houses. People out of fear pointed to my uncle's apartment where there is a young girl. Anemarie was an organist, so talented that we thought she will become quite famous, but the soldiers found her, used her, and her sensitive being could not take it. She jumped out the window to her death! What loss! Many tears were cried over that girl's death. I still feel often that I should have gone in and picked her up myself and brought her to us, who had good hiding places.

The Joy over the End of the War was short lived, with the Russian troops settling in and all around us, it became evident the "System" takes over. We did not realize how many neighbors catered to the new communist system!

One could not understand the "change" in people. Once they were neighborly, friendly, on good terms, now suddenly my Dad became a Kapitalist, a dirty rich guy. My Dad had really nothing to work with since war's end. We made doors and windows to restore burnt ones. The Russian soldiers came and wanted heavy wooden boxes, so they could ship home what they acquired here, for their hungry families back in Russia. Dad and Mom struggled, the house full of three extra families and food was scarce. The rations became smaller than in war times. The daily life became a puzzle. What can one do, where shall we go, will this end or become worse? Two more rooms upstairs were taken from us, where they placed two Russian Capitanos to

live in. It was a situation to be alert and careful in moving about. Mom as an old Matka dealt with them when it was needed.

The daily routine became daily toil for food, we traded things, we swapped, and we gleaned: like Ruth for Naomi, the fields of farmers, that often chased us away. At that time “confusion” showed its ugly head, who to believe, who to trust, what was said, was it another lie? Our mental spirit wore down. Often we began to question “Where is our heavenly Father? Why even though we prayed did you take our happy boys, Lord? Why the bombing of the most beautiful old city? Why could not the Americans stay, as they came through with kindness? Why had the Russians been given such a pretty area, just to destroy it?” Hitler’s times were bad, now communism moved in with a darker cloud cover over all that East German land and their people, all smiles gone; jealousy, hatred towards anyone that owned a little, because I guess so many lost so much and the country became very poor. All trust toward each other was lost — gone!

Slowly we found old friends that survived the bombing. The sun would shine and Mom took care of a nice garden, full of fruits and veggies. The Russian soldiers came on a big truck to pick our cherry tree, that was located next to the fence, but she blew a whistle and lo and behold the Russian soldiers fell into their truck out of the tree to drive away. We never had another incident like that happen again.

Dad’s business became more a carpentry with four fellows working and I helped, too. He thought if I learn the trade, I could take over someday for him and build up what came down through this take over that we hoped would not last long.

Many people started talking about leaving and going further west. I was trying to learn Russian in the school where they gave classes, so that one could understand better when Russians came and wanted something done, to tell them how much it costs, etc. It did help to understand some.

Winter came and went. Another year started again and everything was still grey, nobody smiled, nobody shared, everyone stuck to their own premises. The cloud of communism was penetrating all our lifestyles. Everyone became careful of what to say or do, actually quite like under Hitler, only with a new language.

The little Lutheran church up the hill from us had been carefully meeting with older deacons and elders, but there is still no pastor. Ever since Pastor Hübner was called away to serve as chaplain (under Hitler) we never heard from him anymore. Again one of those many incidents that have lots of questions but no answers!

The Russians settled in with Army families in houses and you saw them get around. They went on the streetcar to different areas and if you had a wristwatch on, they ask you to take it off and give it to them or they just took it. (We called it Uri, Uri Zapzerap — Aufweidershen!) Yes, there was a lot of stealing going on and young girls better stay at home, not to be seen. Vodka flowed freely. One of our Capitanos was a medical doctor who told my mom that they won the war because Stalin promised them always vodka and bacon to live on. We believed they won because of all the trucks from the U.S. Many soldiers in the beginning were seen with socks on as they arrived, and after a few days you saw them with boots, which they got from the quarters of our army that did not exist anymore.

A FEARFUL FLIGHT TO THE WEST!

My aunt and her three daughters suddenly heard about their dad coming home from Siberia, where he was held prisoner of war. Shortly after, he stood before us a skeleton of a man. He needed some rest and love and slowly better food that he never received as prisoner of war. My aunt was very concerned for his health

and for her daughters and slowly made plans to go to West Germany. At that time many fled and slowly the borders were more and more patrolled by Russians.

So one day, uncle, aunt, and cousins packed up and left our house. They stopped halfway by train in Delitsch to see some other relatives who fled the war from East Prussia, who stayed on a farm and helped the old farmer to finally inherit it. They always stayed there, even under communism, but first they helped the Brandt family over the border which was not too far from them. All went well, thank God!

So my dad began to think, too, if it would be better to leave and “go west young man.” In this case it was I who received a pass to the west to visit some friends and take it as a vacation trip.

COULD HE BE THE ONE?

The day came and I went on the train going to Dad’s friends in Ulm in the American zone. They were kind, but had so many people from the eastern lands. That made me travel on to Murnau to see a very dear friend who welcomed me. We talked about the past, wondering what will the future hold for us? Not far from Murnau was Garmisch-Partenkirchen where I went to see my classmate Gisela, who was bombed out with her sister and mother in my hometown of Dresden. They invited me to stay for the few days that I had left, before returning to my Dad and Mom. This was all two years after the war ended and one could see a little progress in the area where no bombs had fallen. Houses received some new paint, it was a tourist town and many rented rooms like a B&B. Besides that, it had become a recreation center for the U.S. forces. Because of that there was more traffic on the street. Gisela and I took many walks, the weather was pleasant and it felt so good to see the hills, alms, meadows, and Alps. I thought back to where we lived and felt it was like night and day. Under the Russians and their communism everything became dark, grey, dirty, and hopeless. Under American democracy everything blossomed. One day strolling along, Gisela met Fritz, a German who could go into the American movie house! He worked in the American Recreation Center and could go into the movie house at the center. He did invite us to the movies that evening and served us some chocolate to drink. We talked and told of stories. At the end we exchanged addresses and parted.



That night at Gisela Schuster’s, I could not sleep. I tossed and turned, fell asleep to dreams of bells ringing. It was all so strange. The very next day I had to board the train to go back to Mom and Dad. I am sure they missed me, being the only child they had left. Mixed feelings were with me on that trip; it looked so much more promising for a future in West Germany than back home. Well, sometimes it’s just to wait, wait for what God has for us- where to walk, what to see, what to learn.

On the train back to Dresden, I could not have enough answers to my questions! Now when I met a very nice young man, much thought and many emotions became stirred up. What would my brothers say; is he the one? The first glimpse I received of him was at the Garmish Depot: I walked towards it trying to find a city plan to find an address I was supposed to go to. There Fritz came from the depot looking around. It was just

easy to ask him for the street. He could tell me where it might be and we parted to meet again later with Gisela who knew him. Coincidence?! Puzzlement kept my mind humming along with the wheels of the train lulling me in thoughts.

I began to miss my brothers more and more. I felt so alone to maybe have to decide on something without them. Oh how I miss them! I had such wonderful protection through them. Yes, God was there all the time, but why did He not leave us one — one son, one brother! Now God seemed more distant than ever before. Or is this meeting of Fritz, the answer to some of our questioning to God?

As we seem not to be able to do anything on our own, it just seems to happen. Mom met Dad at a train depot. I got a glimpse of a young man and directions given at a train depot. Coincidence? To meet the young man again through my friend Gisela?! Here I am sitting in the train going east — East is something “beautiful,” the sun always rises east, but East is also where communism lives and arises with restriction and claws after people’s freedom, with false promises, just like under the Nazi Regime. Lulled by thoughts, I got home faster than I thought, anxious to tell my parents about the trip and the beauty of the Alps and colors everywhere, not like at home: grayness and dingy looks!

ADJUSTING TO COUNTLESS CHANGES

Life back home took on a certain “bearing with.” Many people tried a new way of existing. The war was terrible. The Nazi’s were gone and now we have an even worse situation. So many wanted to be pussy footing the new regime and found out the new regime ruled with a strong, no pardon hand. Jails became filled with good older men who had been serving the government people under the old system. Many died there never to be seen by their families. One heard of so many tragic stories, it seemed nobody had even one happy story to pass on, to liven up a bit. When a former soldier returned home, it was a miracle and nobody rejoiced. It would be kept hidden from the public eye. There were many eyes that looked for climbing the ladder under communism to be able to rule with the new system and maybe find some advantages!

My dad was looked at as a capitalist because he owned his own business, as small and nearly collapsed it became from building big buildings to just making doors and windows here and there, lots of wooden boxes for Russian soldiers to send stuff home to Russia from the war torn East Germany that had nothing!

Mom struggled with her health, because she cooked and gave us always more to eat: so that Dad could “think better,” and because I as a growing girl needed it! When she became ill, malnutrition put her to bed: paralyzed — agonizing pains, morphine tablets to let her overcome the pains. One could not touch her, with a sheet she would be lifted to the other bed, to be refreshed and clean and after a day changed back from Dad’s to her own bed, etc. Puzzling for me, and now feeling so alone, my Dad did not, would not accept her ill and did not come to see her. Friends of dad (Dr. Bethke a Chemist) sent eggs, sugar, and red wine and other foods like chicken. My aunt Irmi was the dearest helper, who needing help herself, just helped me with this bedding situation. Slowly after feeding Mutti broth and mashed potatoes, she enjoyed, she learned to sit up. That’s when we gave her the chemist friend’s recipe to gain strength: it was a glass of red wine, 1 egg yolk, and 1 tablespoon of sugar, stirred, taken by teaspoons full every morning and that was all. Slowly Mom could sit in a chair, exercised her feet and legs to be able to learn to walk again! She would not overcome this dreaded disease only with the help of our heavenly father, in who she totally trusted!

My dear Dad was so pleased to have his very own helper, my Mom, restored to health. But now we watched her, so that she received enough nourishment, which was an everyday puzzle!

Life pattered along, Dad had to give up the big Hall (giant workroom) to a bombed out Communistic company — state owned — and they started to produce X-ray tables. These people were not very nice to my Dad, who still had a carpenter shop and saw mill place and workers' (lunch) house. He started smuggling nails that were hard to find, even with money, from the firm to the basement of the house. We stored lots of wood in the yard and house for the heating system, mostly Mom's ideas.



A SAD AND FRIGHTENING GOODBYE

In between time I received letters from Fritz Hermann encouraging me to come and make a break from the East, be the first one of my family. Everything seemed so uncertain in this eastern zone run by Russian rules! So my dear parents discussed with me what to do? My Dad had addresses in the American zone. My cousin was asked if they could help me to the border and give me some kind of help. Therefore, I had no visa to go West, only my driver's license and my birth certificate. They agreed to help, that meant leaving home- where to? Oh, one had vague ideas, but really not — it was like stepping into a dark mysterious room and maybe finding some light in it.

So I packed light, some clothing, treasured books. In between time my cousin Evi called. I should come to Saalfeld and her husband would help to find a connection to go to the West. Germany was broken up in sections: the East was made Russian control, the southwest became under U.S. control, the Northern area under British, and there was some area given back to France.

We lost a horrible war; we lost our sons, cousins, now we were living under the heavy cloud of a different dictatorship. One struggles to exist, jobs are scarce, jealousy has raised "her head" toward all those that have a little more. The former enemy is strutting about and living in homes where the people were asked to leave. Through it all Dad's roses in the garden are still blooming, the garden produces that my Mom had tended so faithfully to. The three of us clung so close, it's still not to be understood that my brothers would not return. But would one want them to come back to this ugly life with such depressed lifestyle? Where is our heavenly father? He seems so far away. My plan is to leave my parents to uncertainties(?) to leave my home, my

“Saxony,” the small country I loved so much, with its mountains, woods, hills, waters, lakes and vineyard along the Elbe River, asparagus fields, strawberries, cherries, apples, raspberries where everything was once so plentiful. Well, fall is upon us and we need to look at the future, Dad said, when there might be a way to exist with hope, in this hopelessness right now.

This was another goodbye! My life was packed with goodbyes, every time I had to bring a brother, a cousin, an uncle to the train depot, a good friend going to war never to return. I did not ever want to know the numbers, it became more difficult as time went on and Dad always sent me as if hoping it would be a good sign. But no one returned from the monster war; they were all taken, gone, no graves, no loved one given a funeral, etc.

It seems certain memories were pushed back into storage because of internal pain. My memory of leaving Mom and Dad, Mutti and Pappi, is gone. There is no recollection of anything. I only recollect the arrival by train in Saalfeld and my dear cousin Evi who embraced me to take me to her home with her young son and mother, who we had traveled together from Danzig Gdansk to Dresden. It was nice to see them again now reunited with her husband.

There seemed to be no problem finding a guide over the border to West Germany. We had a meal together and after that off to the appointed place to meet the guide. He was quiet, asked for the money, and off we went. Everything seemed so unreal, like in a dream and yet I had my bag, purse, small suitcase with me and walked without a word onto an incline, where we walked along the height and could overlook a road further down in a valley. The guide told me where I had to go and left me, because in the distance were some Russian soldiers, and no one wanted to meet up with them- it would mean trouble. My heart was beating fast, as I felt deserted, my steps increased in speed, yet I had to slow it, so that I would not be noticed as “running away.”

The town came in view, the address given by my people was found, but they turned me away and told me to try the Hotel because the night was coming and nobody was allowed on the streets after 10 PM. Some one watched out for me, the bizarreness of it all. Yes, they had a room if I did not mind another “lady” with me. I paid for it and asked how I could get across the border then, (this town was in between — east and west border). She told me about the milk truck, where to meet it and to ask the driver to take me further through the posted border patrol. How I found the house and the truck is beyond my understanding in a strange town. I went to my room: the “lady” was in bed. I layed on top of the other bed. I know I dozed off a bit, then to suddenly see a person on my side at my purse.” I ask politely if she needs help or the light on, she said no, went back to her bed. After that I slept no more, which was good.

Then by 2:40 am I had to meet the milk truck. He arrived; two men loaded the milk cans. Then, I stepped out of the shadow of the house given and asked if there would be a chance to go with them? They really did not care to do it, they never got paid by anyone they took, but somehow they explained to go in front and lay down between the milk cans. They covered me up with a tarp and I was not to move or cough or let any peep out, then they drove off and I heard we stopped and someone pushed a rifle butt onto the tarp and hit the milk cans. It must have been the border patrol or Russian soldiers. They gave the okay to go on. We drove to the next bigger town, the men let me off at the train depot and told me to get my ticket quick and then wait in the restroom ‘til the train comes. That way I would not get entangled in being sent back through some authority. So, I did just that with a fast beating heart, wondering if I look suspicious — or fit into the surroundings. The train came. I got on, found a place to sit and relaxed a bit. Soon after I needed to show the ticket and a little while later came my “controlle” inspection with an American M.P. soldier who wanted my passport. As I fiddled for it in my purse, I got real red in the face. He was kind enough to say, “I come back for it!”

Somehow I knew he would not. Thank God for mercies given to me by an American G.I., my very first colored person that I have seen in my life. I felt thankful, oh, how thankful! Slowly hours passed and the countryside was going by, it took me further from my home with Mom and Dad in it. How are they doing? I made it to West Germany, quite a distance from the border. What will life have in store for me? How will God lead me? He sure helped me thus far.

In Munich I had to transfer to the train to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and again somehow I found my way to the departing train and from then on, I do not know or remember much. I felt exhausted and tired; the train lulled me to sleep. It seemed to take so long to get to Garmisch-Partenkirchen. There were many stops along the train route, but finally the depot of Garmisch-Partenkirchen was in sight. It stopped. I left the train with my suitcase and bag and purse feeling chilled in the damp air that embraced me.

Across, lights burned brightly at the Billeting office where Fritz worked and he was there, because he had to wait for the last train to come before he could close up the office. There I was and there he was, glad to see each other and yet kind of strange, excited but far away from home, a border between my parents and friends. Now what will the ??welcome?? of this life bring? First Fritz brought me to the two rented rooms for me, with a lovely family in a typical Bavarian type wooden house. Suddenly I was alone in total strange surroundings, but the rooms were "gemutlich" (sort of cozy) and gave you a welcomed feeling. I found the bathroom next to the entrance, a sink in the hallway to wash up, sort of open for anyone to be noticed that passed through! That meant late at night you do your washing up or first thing early in the morning.

After finding everything and how things work, I fell into a strange bed behind a divider curtain between the two rooms. Then came night, a new day, and new surroundings. The owner of the home, Mrs. Hetzer, was very kind. They were also from behind the "Iron Curtain." I never met the husband who made a home someplace else. It all took time to learn about shops and places. Here and there Fritz would come and check up on how things are doing as I explored Garmisch. He found out I could apply for a job; to have the right to be able to stay in Garmisch-Partenkirchen I needed to work. Then I could receive papers for the permanent stay in town and West Germany. Believe it or not because of my carpenter training I found a job with a woodworking place. It was interesting to be surrounded by the smells of wood, glue and sweat. The man that was the owner was patient and kind, but the understanding minimal; they all spoke Bavarian dialect, but I tried my best.

A telephone in the upstairs living quarters at the Kuntze family let me call my parents from there to tell them how I settled into a routine and find out about them. They still had many people, refugees, living with them. Business was minimal for Dad.

BRIGITTE

In between time I met Brigitte who became a dear close friend. She roomed upstairs in a dormer room, cozy but crowded; so we saw each other more and more in my two rooms with more space! We began to share food, stories, and helped each other where we could! She was a photographer and went around to farms to take pictures of families, and often got paid with food and no money, because after the 2nd World War money was scarce. One could buy food, but clothing or other household things were not available. It was more or less a very quiet struggling time of adjustment to life after the war: the American soldiers' presence, and for my parents, the Russian soldiers' presence as we lost the war. Brigitte lost her brother Fritz and I lost my two brothers, so we comforted each other. After I received my documents for staying in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, West Germany, I quit my job with the carpenter shop. Dad could still send me money until I can find something better. Brigitte had a little three year old girl, Kristina, with blond hair, blue eyes and very fun to be

with. Her mom could go and do her job, and us two got along just fine. Fritz came to see all of us here and there, took us for a ride in a jeep into the surrounding little towns. He blessed us with “catsup” from the PX that we could eat with noodles; what a delicious treat! !!! Yes, our meals were often more than simple. Thankfully we knew how to make do. Brigitte and I really began to love each other and Kristina also. We formed our own little family away from home.

Bitti was originally from Berlin, so we were both immigrants to Bavaria as we were Prussians! We would go hiking up Kramers Mountain or walk along the Loisach River or go uptown and look into stores, look at the “kaffees,” that we could not afford to go into. Our first Christmas came and somehow we had a goose given. I tried to cook my first goose in the kitchen that was occupied by the cook for the Kuntze family upstairs. Olga was kind enough to help me with pots and pans and instructed me about the pitfalls of baking it, etc. Thanks to her, we had a lovely goose, potatoes from Bitti, and red cabbage to go with it. What a Christmas feast at Christmas Eve, Bitti, Kristina, Fritz and I. My dear parents did not eat that well that day. It made one always feel sad and I noticed the distance so much more.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUNG FRITZ AND FAMILY

In winter, Fritz often had tickets to the ice hockey games. One walked mostly to all places. We hiked unto many beautiful alms and mountains of this alp region. On sunny days one could see the Alp Spitze and Zugspitze, the highest mountain of the German Alps. Oh, the whole area was so beautiful with hills, woods, and lakes. Bavaria had a lot of old history. It had kings, especially Ludwig that spent all the people’s money on building castles like Linderhof and Neuschwanstein. They were very close to us. There was also cloister Ettal and Oberammergau with its Festspiele of the Gospel played in open air theater every 10 years with the people that lived right there in Oberammergau. One could see some people taking part in the play by growing beards and long hair like at Jesus times, going around living their lives. One could buy lots of souvenirs, many beautifully crafted wood pieces, cuckoo clocks, pipes for smoking, or plates, but the prices were not good enough for our pocketbook! I missed my Mom and Dad. We kept a steady correspondence encouraging each other, not knowing where it will lead us. They were glad to know me to be with Bitti, Kristina, and dear watchful, helpful Fritz. He liked fishing in the Loisach River where he could catch trout. What a treat for us to have fresh fish instead of herring! In those days we were easily pleased, enjoyed every small change of routine eats like noodles with Ketchup. But we acquired a taste for ketchup from the PX and it cost little.

Bitti started dating an American captain (medical doctor). So I took care of Kristina on those times away, but soon he started even coming to the house to visit us. They became glad to have met each other and were content to go on sightseeing trips, movies, golfing, and we were so happy Bitti found someone very kind, gentle, an understanding man. He found out his grandfather Rothe emigrated from the Mosel area Koblenz to the United States! “Coincidence or God’s leading?”

The next Christmas Fritz took me home to meet his family. He filled up the car with goodies and Bitti stayed with Clarence Rothe at the apartment with Kristina. We drove up to Northern Germany, through Hamburg unto Brunsbuttel with the Fähre crossing over the North-Ost sea canal to Marne, his hometown. What a quaint little town. The church tower sticks out of the lowlands that were won back from the North Sea, through dykes under Hitler’s reign. We saw lots of sheep grazing on the dykes and cows grazing in lush meadows, but then temperatures seemed damp and cold up there, the North winds did not help the chills one received. Some people were friendly, especially Tante (aunt) Lene Schwarz, Oma Ibs and the boys Peter and Karl and helpful Ernst. Vater Ibs was more stern, and did not speak much, but all talked mostly low German, so my ear had to adjust to the language or dialect. Yet I enjoyed every moment to be with that family, uncomplicated, beautiful, erect walking people.

On Sundays, (it was Christmas at the time we were there) we went to church, a very beautiful styled church. The wooden cross on the altar overtook all of the altar. It forced you to think: to the cross I cling, through Jesus blood we become restored to God's love. Oma lbs shared our faith -her total life depended on God. She was divorced very young way back when it was a shame! After her divorce, she worked several places and finally came to help Fritz's father raising his two boys after their mom, Anni lbs went to be with the Lord. Oma was an excellent cook. We learned from her practical ways. We both had a lot of love for each other. We bonded.

Back in Garmisch, Fritz and I went carousing, did some more sightseeing, and enjoyed our youth, with a hope of tomorrow.

Later on Bitti and Clarence Rothe went to see "Spatzi," Bitti's sister-in-law in Munich. On the way home they had a terrible car accident and Bitti landed in the hospital. Clarence was released, but Bitti was several weeks to be in intensive care. When she could come to Garmisch again, she got married in Kloster Ettal in May, and in the month of July, she went to be home in Green Bay, Wisconsin, with Clarence, Kristina, and being pregnant with Michael, what a Joy! "Mrs. Brigitte Rothe, wife of Dr. Clarence Rothe!" That was when I moved to Partenkirchen, Gsteig str. 6 to the house of Dr. Pette, surgeon in the Hamburg-Eppendorf Clinic to take care of the house and cook for their son Jan, who was in high school. I had a neat room for myself. Alone more or less, I went a lot more to walking, up the alms near us, or down to a chapel that many Catholics used. The Bavarians had many crucifixes along the roads, or small chapels with ornaments decorated. I never had the desire to enter it, but just walking to it gave me a goal and I thanked my Father in Heaven for the beauty of his creation, the Alps, the snow-covered mountains, the woods, the waterfalls, the rivulets, and even the people, that surrounded me, to be free in West Germany. But how about Mom and Dad still in East Germany under such poor conditions, will we be together? I heard of their struggles under the new Communist regime rules, and those many people that crowded the house, that they never had before the World War II and the Bombing of the City.

Still I always hoped for them to come to the West Germany, but they were still hoping for my brother Horst to come back home, since he was only missing in action! Fritz had his job and every so often we would do something together like going to a soccer game or to the ice palace for ice skating. We even invested in ski boots and skies. The Pette family was very nice and I could even have Oma lbs with Peter and Karl there for a visit and eats, as they came to see Fritz-Herman in Garmisch for a visit. That was such a fun time. Yes, after all the tough times, this was nice. Now food was more available, expensive, but to be had!

HAPPY TIMES IN GARMISH-PARTENKIRCHEN

Garmisch-Partenkirchen! Living within the beauty of this Bavarian area that God graced us with, were luscious valleys, dark green woods, green alms and its white mountains crowning it. How can one not be touched by those views? My life felt elevated after so much sorrow and pain from the war time and even after. I really began to heal as feelings of hope blossomed; and that steady Fritz came and went to see if everything was good with me. I took a job as a telephone operator in the Hotel Wiggers and met all kinds



of people, those who came mostly for winter sports or for hiking. I felt young, protected and happy for a time (one did not look back). Often thoughts of my dear Dad and Mom came as I wondered how those two were doing. The mail exchange was good, sometimes getting phone calls on Pette's phone, but there was a terrible "border" between us. We missed each other and hoped for a reunion "sometime in the future" which kept us going!

If I would not have had Fritz, the Pette family and all my caring friends, I think life would have been much harder without Brigitte, but somehow I knew inside that God takes care of matters concerning us!

Fritz's mom came with Peter and Karl for another visit. What joy to connect with family. We did not do much, but had picnics on the alm, climbing and laughing a lot, that I remember. There was no big engagement party. Fritz and I just knew we belonged (together) and slowly we talked about his going to the U.S.A.! I blocked that out of my mind many times. How could I leave here, my home away from home?

It is interesting that in Partenkirchen a wind from the mountains bore down on us in the valley, which they called the "Foehn". With its' onset I began to suffer a lot of sinus headaches. So a doctor removed a little bone part in my upper nose and after the wound healed I had no more sinus headache pains. I could breathe freely through my nose, although in cold weather the "cold" kept coming right into the upper forehead, brrrrr... But even that I learned to accept! It was certainly better than the sinus pain!

Germany in the west was recuperating after the collapse of the war with the economy being boosted by the US Marshall Plan to help rebuild this country. The Russians, doing the opposite, decided to destroy even more in the east. They removed train tracks and many other things, like the autobahn where only one side of two lanes would be fixed. There was no paint to be had, no material to fix anything! The communist system had "no love" or compassion, just a certain "greed" taking jobs or swiping from others where they could. One had to have a certain authority in that system "to exist", or otherwise you had to *be* "still and suffer quietly". People here in the west were kind, and one could buy a little more than before, if one had the money, since more goods, clothes and food were available. I found out from a girl about a most beautiful seamstress who sewed so beautifully, and for little money. She knew how to create with love for ones person. I was forever grateful for her, since paying her for sewing was much cheaper than having to buy in the stores!

LOVE AND NEW LIFE

Oh, life was blooming with hope for this country, and nobody in the world wanted to think of that war anymore. Building was going on, tourists arriving bringing money; and laughter was more present than sorrow because of new "hope". Fritz and I had a love for each other, and all was well! I felt so healthy, so good, as I was carrying a baby. So papers were filed for us, stating that the child had a mom and dad. I confided in my mom and she right away tried to encourage me, no scolding, just understanding for us! It was to be a joyful happening for all of us concerned and the paperwork would also get done! But the government reacts quite slowly in some cases, which is what happened to us. Fritz, born in Chicago as an American citizen by birth, was raised and lived all his life in Germany. The Americans had problems with that; the Germans did not care to hear about changes of citizenship. He is a German, was their contest! So it went the governmental tour of the changing of his nationality.

After a little while I moved to Bernd and Hildegard Friedrich's at Garmisch, which was closer to Fritz, and closer to the doctor. Hildegard came from the Erzgebirge where I had been as a child. That made us good friends! She had two little boys and they were fun to play with. Fritz struggled with the paperwork; it seemed to go so "slow". Many people did not want him to be recognized as American born, others did not

want him to lose the German citizenship. Slowly things went forward though. Then our son was born at Friedrich's on a couch that was my bed. The midwife could not do anything and had to call the doctor because I had difficulties giving birth... the doctor put some ether over my nose and told me to give it a good push, but nothing happened. He was puzzled. We tried again and finally our precious Fritz was born with a very elongated head. I was scared that there was something wrong with him, but was told it would heal, since it was from all the "forcing" at birth! My, what joy!

It was April and we could put him in a buggy and let him look up to the apple blossoms on the tree. We were so happy, and for my parents it was like having a son back again. I received the most encouraging letters from both. Slowly we looked into a possibility of getting married in the little Lutheran church in Garmisch, and we told both of our parents to come, along with the Pette family: Karin, Dirk & Jochen planned to play for our wedding, Karin on the flute, Dirk on the viola and Jochen on cello. We found out about a meal to be had, but at which restaurant? The "Melber Restaurant" at Partenkirchen was chosen. The date was set for the 12th of Juli 1950. My dad received a passport, but my mom had to come over the "green" border – very dangerous without papers. Fritz had to pay for his folks to come by train! In between times we rented an "apartment" at Hubers so we could all gather there. We picked Mom up from Munich. After she called, we found her wandering. She had been so nervous about finding us in that big "depot". God led me right to her and as I approached her she said "Oh, you look so much like my daughter, could you help me?" "Mutti!" I said. I embraced her – oh thank you God for having directed our steps toward each other in such crowds! The others came for the wedding directly by train to Garmisch.

THE LONG-AWAITED WEDDING DAY

All was set for a 10:00 a.m. wedding the next day at the church; but first to the courthouse at 9:00 am. to sign the papers and then on to the wedding. However, now we had difficulties with the papers "again". We had to bring Father Ibs from the church to the courthouse with the original birth certificate from the hospital in Chicago, Illinois. Finally it lit a light!! But instead of a 10:00 a.m. wedding, we were married at 11:00 a.m. because of the government and the paper delay! The little group of people at church patiently waiting were the pastor, the Pette family, the Friedrichs, and our parents with little Fritz. Our wedding was a little bit exciting with all the governmental routines. I felt so bad for the little church and the people and the pastor having to wait for the couple that was needed to be present. I felt happy that my seamstress sewed me a beautiful silk merone dress, (white would have not been appropriate). As my dad finally walked me down the isle I realized that if I said "yes" I would be leaving to go to the US. "Do I really want that? No, but Fritz needs a father." I'd always felt responsible for my parents that had lost two beautiful sons, and my emotions and feelings for them having to live in East Germany told me I could not leave them behind and go to the USA, to America so far away. But undeniably there was that strong love for Fritz and young Fritz. Can one understand the pull in all directions in those days for me? (What about young people today, how much are they pulled in different directions?) Fritz Siegfried was baptized after our ceremony where we both committed our lives to each other.

After the ceremony we gathered at the "Melber" for a very nice meal. The table had miniature pink roses in the middle. The table was beautiful, the food was good, but don't ask me, I don't remember what we ate. It was so wonderful for us to have our parents there. My dad spoke kind words and my mom joined in. Oh, how much it meant to us! We stayed together for a while and got acquainted with all present, and then went to the apartment for coffee and kuchen and more visiting. Later on we took all our guests home to their quarters. Jan Pette, from Partenkirchen, was the last one to be delivered home. Our car, the VW, was the only one we had – none of our friends had a car! We dropped Jan off and headed down the hill. Then I saw a wheel from our own car rolling ahead of us. We bounced a bit and got stuck on a small plaza. As Fritz picked

up the wheel trying to get it back on, a policeman arrived with a “flashlight” inquiring “what gives?” We told him and I mentioned also that it was our wedding night! He said to Fritz, “move over”, and the policeman fixed it just fine, with a big grin on his face. We thanked him and went home. Father and Mother Ibs did stay overnight to return the next day to Peter and Karl’s in Marne. My dad stayed one more day and we visited with Mom till he left to go see some friends about coming to the western world! Then we brought Mutti back to Munich to put her on the train heading in the direction of Goettingen where she tried to cross the “green” border again into East Germany. I knew of a joy that was mingled with disappointments and sadness, yet life was good even though we had “so many partings”, never knowing whether there would be a “Wiedersehen”.

Our wedding had many blessings that came through all our friends, and most of all “our parents” being able to come from the communist zone and from Marne; that Father Ibs had the “original birth certificate” -the proof needed - so our wedding was detained for only **one** hour; for patient friends who waited for us to arrive; for a kind policeman with a flashlight who helped when we lost a wheel off our car. Often my thoughts went back to those incidents – did they have any meaning?

Now we know there were many more uncertain moments ahead in our lives!

A PAINFUL SEPARATION

Fritz and little Fritz, called Hampsi, enjoyed being together at the Hubert place. We had not quite two and a half months together when Fritz’s paperwork was completed. That meant he would go to the US before the 1st of October, his birthday! We started to pack and make plans for me to follow soon! Now another goodbye for us, and we trusted we would be together again!

The sun shone onto the mountains and on us during September and October. All was well! Then in November I was to go to Munich to the consulate to receive my 1st passport from the US! The government employee asked me all kinds of questions about my upbringing and made me sign into the “green book”. He told me he could not let me have it because I had been in the JM (Jung Madel) – Hitler youth, and because of a new law, the Macarthur Act, it was withheld for a time. Saddened, I went back to Huberts and stayed there for... an uncertain time...I cancelled my boat reservations on the Holland-America Line. During that time Fritz had already gathered furniture and rented an apartment in hope of our coming. He had to give it all up, for we did not know when I could follow him to the US. All had changed!

Letters followed back and forth between Wisconsin and Bavaria. Patience! Mariele from “Hotel Roter Hahn”, where Fritz roomed before we were married, came to visit me often, because she was leaving soon to be with her husband in the US. Because of this new law, she got stranded at Ellis Island. I believe it took one week till her husband got her out. He was with the army in Fort Campbell Kentucky.

Faye Hubert, widowed, with a son Luke, became a friend that helped – just to give advice and go for walks and talks.

For my mom and dad it was a terrible time. Dad fought with that new regime to keep his grounds and work buildings. The commandantura hauled him in for questioning two times. That’s when a dear friend said, “You better leave immediately! Take the train to Berlin and stay at friends.” This sounds all so easily done, but it was with lots of heartaches and emotions to become an immigrant!?! So he did leave! As the train slowed down through the American occupied zone, he and others jumped out of the train to be in safe territory.

Mom stayed behind and packed, sending boxes to us in the west. She often had to answer to the authorities over Dad's whereabouts. So she told them, "You go find him for me, he just left me. He does this quite often!" (Smile – a little white lie) Dad was able to stay with his fraternity brother Dr. Schnatz in Berlin in the American zone. Ten days later Mom joined him in the same way. She left our home in Klotesche for Berlin. I am not sure how long they were in Berlin...one day they both flew out to West Germany, maybe after one month or so?...1951.

In between times Pette's wanted someone to stay in their home, because their son was studying in Zurich, Switzerland. So I moved again with my Fritz and my few belongings back to Partenkirchen. That was maybe good. Then Mom came and stayed with us as I worked at the Hotel Wiggers as a telephone operator. She took care of the little guy - what joy for her! In between times my dad tried to find work, to make money to build with and start a new existence. His energies came to help him. He never gave up trying to get new papers, papers to be able to have a small home as an invalid from the 1st world war. Low and behold, after "quite some time", Dad got an okay for a small home in Bonn-Duisdorf! What joy for both! But it really did not go all that fast. I think they waited for the home nearly 8-9 years. Life demands a lot of patience!

A JOURNEY ACROSS THE SEA

Now things changed for me again. I received my passport and could book a berth on the "Queen Elizabeth". I quit my job and my mom helped me to pack. She brought me to the train in Garmisch – it all was very emotional – so many unknowns, again and again new situations, even for Mom, leaving little Fritz, who had given her new life! ***Good bye again!***

My dad met me in Munich, as we had time to board the train to Paris. My travel trunk was sent ahead, but I had a big bag with diapers and clothes for Fritz and myself, also a big shoulder purse. Well, Dad told me all the things to pay attention to, hugged me so hearty and let us two go on an adventure!?, into the wide world "unknown" to us. I only knew Germany, Austria, Poland and now onto a big boat crossing over the ocean?!

First we had a sleeper car on the train and that was good; at the border to France, leaving Germany, we had to show our passport and ticket. So far it all went well, then was the announcement that we were near Paris. There we were to change trains, but were first directed to a hotel lobby where you could buy something if you had French money! But I did not! A lady bought some milk for my little precious boy and I still had some crackers which kept him content!

After a while we were told to board a bus that took us to the train to LeHavre. It did not seem to be a long trip and soon we were told to get out. There we stood at the depot and LeHarve Harbour, and people were told to have the tickets for boarding the boat handy. Okay - we were right at the pier of LeHavre where smaller boats were to be used to go on to the big, big Cunard lines "Queen Elizabeth"! A very nice gentleman from the American Express office was coaxing me on to go with him. He helped us onto a boat, crossing over a rope in front of us to stand in there to be able to be unloaded first with little Fritz. That let me think of a schutzengel (guardian Angel), because he helped us all the way, even to the room with our berth and then said good bye, good trip, and "welcome to America". How kind! But it brought realization – we are going to the USA.

There we sat alone on one of the beds, and feelings of thankfulness overcame me, yet, understanding we are to leave Europe?! That's all I was familiar with. We both took our coats off and looked outside of the door. There seemed to be an endless alley with a thick rope hanging all along the walkway and several cabin doors. We tried to unpack a little, finding our things and settle in for a three day trip. A very friendly stewardess

came and explained she could bring me “pablen” for Fritz. I did not know what to think of it and said so, and then she told me she will be back and so it was, with some kind of cereal/pudding- and Fritz liked it! At sup-
pertime I was told to come to Dining Hall B and I will be seated with Fritz. We were served tea and open
sandwiches. Our table could sit 6, so a family of 4 was seated with us who were going to California to meet
their daughter. But they also had two young daughters with them! My English was not too good I noticed, as
we tried to converse. Lots of vocabularies were missing.

The night in the cabin went by nicely. We rested well and were given further instructions when breakfast,
lunch and dinner were served. One could have tea or coffee in the afternoon. Fritz and I tried to walk about
and found a table tennis with some men playing. Fritz tried to pick up the balls and they let him have the
fun. They were two fellows from London on the way to New York for business! We could tour the boat and
go to A Deck where we found a “street like” filled with stores: jewelry, stationary, photo equipment, perfume
and cosmetics, sweaters – a small shopping mall on a big, big boat! We also found a huge ballroom, bar, and
movie. It seemed everything was possible to have on hand. But we felt comfortable on our Deck B with
some chairs to sit on or play ping pong.

Fritzi’s first birthday happened to be on our trip. He was blessed with his “own cake” which was presented to
him after the lunch. The steward cut into the cake, first piece for the birthday boy, and around the table,
everyone joining in. He ate his cake with the fork very neatly and people commented how good he could eat,
like a grown up! Two days gone on the ocean, one and a half to go to be in New York- Hoboken Harbor –
where we were supposed to meet Fritz’s daddy, my big Fritz – a little scary! A new country-BIG New York!
Will we find each other? It’s sort of like my mom at Munich’s depot looking for us, like a needle in a hay-
stack?

OUR NEW LIFE IN AMERICA BEGINS

The day we arrived everyone was aboard deck to see us coming into New York-Hoboken Harbor and we did
see the famous “Statue of Liberty”, her arms stretched out to welcome strangers! What emotions, what
thoughts...one cannot describe it after all the pains, hurts; and then this 8th of April 1951 “welcome” from a
big country far away from home! New York – Hoboken Harbor! We were dressed for maybe 40-50 degrees
but not 82 degrees. I took one big orange from the ship for Fritz to have some juice. Well, just as I stood at
the dock with him, some authority told me that it is forbidden to take fruit along and removed it!! What dis-
appointment.

Well, we were further directed to a big hall with big letters of the alphabet ABC...to go and find our luggage
under “I” (beginning with the 1st letter of your family name – lbs). Far in the distance behind a gate where
people gathered I could pick out “my Fritz”_in all of them. What a relief to see “My Fritz”_in all those strange
surroundings! Thank you God! Well now, all the inner little anxieties about the whole trip vanished with
knowing this is what we hoped for, and there is Fritz’s dad and my dear Fritz. What an embrace, the 1st one
on American soil! I really am in America?! New York?! Fritz came all the way with a 1936 Ford car from Wis-
consin to pick us up! He had rented a sleeping room and all I remember, we hardly slept with sharing with
each other; stories of what we saw and had to do, and especially how he found everything in the states.

The next morning, first thing we went to a “Diner” where one could choose from many things for breakfast.
It was like a Schlaraffenland (storybook like) much too much to choose from-sort of confusing to the mind!
Fritz chose eggs for us with toast, coffee and juice. As we looked for a place to sit down, we picked out a
booth and slid onto the bench; but as I touched the table to help me move, I felt something very sticky on my
fingers. Fritz explained it was chewing gum left by people. This was a new strange encounter – how can you
leave bacteria- bazillus- behind for other people to touch? This would not happen in Germany!! (smile)

After this rich breakfast we packed up the car and left slowly through New York on to the Pennsylvania Turnpike, (the only one at that time). From Ohio on we traveled regular roads in the direction of Green Bay, Wisconsin. In those days we had no booster chairs for Fritz, he could sit in the back seat just fine, but stood up mostly between us on the seat. One time he was thrown around by a bad railroad crossing that we took too fast, and another time when Fritz had to put the brakes on very quickly. With all this being cooped up in the car, Fritz lost his walking ability. Nearly 3 days after our arrival in the US we arrived "home" in Green Bay at Clarence Rothe's home where we were allowed to stay in their upstairs apartment. This lovely couple, Clarence and Martha, were my dearest friend Brigitte's parent-in-laws. Fritz, going on the Queen Elizabeth was all potty trained and walking, but now we started to train him again to walk between the furniture in the Rothe's home living room. Clarence thought that was just great! The very next morning Rothe's neighbor on the north side came to see us, to welcome us to America, and then handed me a white gardenia with exotic scent. This kindness that I found overall toward us newcomers was a very surprising feeling. In Germany one was always more cautious because of "Auslander" = foreigners! I found the warmth of my hosts reminding me of my home as I grew up. Anybody was welcomed because we had a very open mind toward all people.

Clarence Rothe and Martha lost a son Roderic over in Holland, shot down by Germans. This made me sad and I told them so, but they replied, "You lost two brothers in that same war, that's why we have extra love for each other!" We all have suffered in different ways and we have learned to understand the other person as they share their hurts with us, and have learned more and more about having compassion for all kinds of people.

Later Fritz found a neat clean basement apartment for us. It was great to have our own place, just we three. He also found a new job with a company, Totman Morgan, and I learned to speak more English, as the daily language. I visited Brigitte with Fritz a lot, and she loved having us. Fritz played with Michael and slowly one adjusted to living in the United States. Green Bay was a smaller town, quite German, located on the Fox River, with some nice parks, churches and schools and a downtown that had a fairly big department store called "Prange" where one could buy lots of good clothing etc.

We took trips up to Door County in cherry blossom time, spending time on the weekends with the Rothe family at Uncle Ray's cabin and with Aunt Barbara. Oh, the beach reminded us of the sand dunes at the Baltic Sea in Germany. Life was slowly unfolding in Green Bay. Grandpa Rothe and Grandma gave me heavy Ecko cookware and a Betty Crocker Cookbook to learn more of American ways to cook! I still have the cookware and the book, but the Rothe's have all gone on to the Lord. Life, love, joy and sadness are all related to each other.

MUTTI NEEDS ME!

My memory does not help me to know how long we were together as a little family (close to 7 months perhaps) before my father sent a letter begging me to come. Mom was in the hospital with contagious yellow jaundice and Dad was devastated. So, we talked things over, and Fritz borrowed money from the bank so that Fritz and I could go by plane to New York, with the "Ryndamm" Holland American Lines to Rotterdam, then by train to Bonn, Germany. Since this took seven days, my mom was home in their little apartment when we arrived. They were happy to see us! Mom did look peaked, not much color in her face. Well I helped clean, cook and she enjoyed being with Fritz. Dad seemed to run to different offices applying for better quarters for them to live. I noticed money's now were tight as immigrants were going to the West, so I took a job as clerk and appointment scheduler at a newspaper. Somehow it felt good to be with my dear parents, but I did miss my own family -Fritz!!! My Mutti was better. She had her old friend from her youth close by while my dad tried to find more possibilities for a home.

My money's came together for a return trip (smile). Then "another goodbye" but with more hope of seeing each other again. We did return just as we came, but this time we got seasick on the Ryandamm boat. Thankfully it lasted only a day. We had the worst cabin at the very end of the ship and we could feel every movement up and down. The stewardess came with tea, toast and apples that helped us get over this sickness! Our plane from New York took us to Minneapolis, as my dear Fritz had changed jobs and had left Green Bay, Wisconsin. On arrival we had to cruise around quite a bit because of a strong thunderstorm with lightning. We naturally wondered about how much delay, and would Fritz be at the airport? We landed "safely" with warm rain showers, and warm temperatures (I love showers.) Yes, dad was there! How glad we were to see him.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS!

Fritz had rented a furnished apartment on Lyndale Ave. South in Minneapolis, a lovely place at Mary Applebee's. We had the whole upstairs, though not much yard, but the neighbors LeRoy and Luella Nelson had more than enough room for all of us to play outside. Fritz was their joy, never having had children. LeRoy sure knew how to play with that happy boy. He showed him how to rake the lawn. On Sunday afternoon we were asked to come and see "Lawrence Welk's" program, my 1st TV show. Soon we needed to move. Our next place was on Bryant Ave. So., a totally furnished apartment. It had all mahogany furniture, old and elegant. I loved that place, and not far from a park with swings for Fritz. Our neighbor Lena Lamuga was great. She had us over for meals, helped us with shopping and explaining many things, even "budgeting". Lena suggested we should move to a cheaper rental and find a job with Honeywell or other...places.



So Fritz found a sixplex building and we moved into the empty apartment upstairs on 2nd floor. It had a kitchen, dining area, living area, one small bedroom and one big one, but "no bathroom". The toilet was between the two upper apartments used by both families. We made do with the small sink in the kitchen. Here on 7th Street is where I met the owner of the house, a lovely family (7th Day Adventists), kind and helpful. Fritz could play with their son in the yard of this building, safe from the traffic! It was a start. Fritz worked and I cleaned, washed, (much by hand), and hung clothes on lines through the rooms. Fritz had a homemade bed made out of boxes and carpet sent by Mom. We slept on the floor until we had money to buy our 1st bedroom set from Romsas Store on Lake Street. That became our living room until Luella brought us 3 chairs and a table to eat on. We were thankful to her and Leroy.

I wrote many letters to Mom and Dad, who by now were settled in Bonn Druisdorf. The letters took three days and returned in three days, so with a generous week, we heard from each other. I still have all my moms, Mutti's letters. Will I ever read them? Would it be good going back to know and read again about the then difficult struggles such as having lost two sons and the family home and dad's business? Yet hope like a rope was gliding through their lives as they found a new little house and could come to visit America! It was unthinkable at first, but life has its surprises!

Sometime later we moved to the 1st floor apartment, from up to down, with one more bedroom and a "bathroom", I felt rich to have more conveniences. Fritz's brother Ernst arrived from Germany to stay with us till he could find his way around. He had lots of stories to tell and he was helpful and easy to live with. We all

had to adjust to Minnesota's climate: winter's cold, blistery and lasting; spring, short, and demanding everything to get done outside before summer with its heat and humidity. But then there always came the golden fall, a time for frolicking and picnics! No, Minnesota is a good state to live in and we knew we would stay.

We moved several times more, finding out about cockroach, ant and mice infested places, until we came to rest in a rented home on the eastside of Minneapolis. It was a big old spacious home with a coal furnace, big enough for all of us, as Dad and Mom came to see us. Oh, how we enjoyed the time together, especially since I was pregnant with our 2nd child! Something beautiful happened through Luella and LeRoy Nelson. We were able to purchase our 1st little house from Grandma Hughes, mom to LeRoy. "One more" move to our "first owned place"! We moved on the 1st of May into the house, and Tom was born on the 3rd of May! What timing! God is so good! My parents found so much joy in their two grandchildren and us with our "two boys". We were thankful for living in the US, its openness, friendliness, helpful neighbors, "freedom" of speech and thoughts and worship allowed! What a difference from the days of Hitler! Now we were a family of four!

LOOKING FOR A CHURCH CONNECTION

Living in "The House in the Sun" had been really a wonderful time. We still went here and there to the Trinity Lutheran Church on 11th Street. Since my parents were with us we had Tom baptized, (one service was still held in the "German" language!) 4344 12th Ave. South was a quiet neighborhood with no through traffic at the end of the block because of a huge Chicago Ave. Cemetery with all its greens, flowers on graves, huge trees, beautiful and peaceful. Our boys gave us much joy. Fritz worked on fixing up the old little house, trying to find places to store things, and added to the kitchen some space. It became such a cute place, very workable even with family coming, like my parents, Fritz's brother Ernst for a short stay, Peter for a long stay. Fritz and Tom went to Lake Nokomis Grade School. They had friends who came often to play ball or catch in the big front yard.

We started going to the Hiawatha Lutheran Church. Pastor Teigen showed interest in us and asked Fritz to work with him in translating some of Luther's writings from German into English. Those were interesting evenings! We did not attend regular. Fritz however, attended Sunday School often enough without us. I was so into having a big "Sunday meal" together as a family, like in the old country, for all who could come and share! I was so torn between duty for my family and the church where unfamiliar English was spoken; and I did not get to know any of the church goers because I was kind of insecure and Fritz did not encourage me or us. (He was not at all used to going to church back in Germany!) Even so we prayed over meals and bed-times because we knew about our Father in Heaven. Christmas and Easter and Pentecost were very meaningful to us.

Pator Teigen came and suggested we put the young sons of ours into the Pilgrim Christian School (Wisconsin Synod), which happened until we moved to the Maple Lake area. I remember that our son Fritz really enjoyed the Pilgrim school time in 7th and 8th grade. He heard a lot about the Savior. He might have heard more than we knew at that time. Tom was there in 2nd and 3rd grade. He remembers a lot about the teachers and things that happened.

FAMILY, TRAVELING AND GOOD TIMES

In 1959 Vater Fritz Ibs visited us for the very "first" time. We went to see his sister Tante Taletta Harder, who left Germany in 1923 to go to Keystone, Iowa to help a former widower raise his family of eight. They then married and had their own son Eldo, a direct cousin to Fritz, my husband! Vater also wanted to go see his other sister in San Francisco, California, so we drove with Vater Fritz - all four of us. We went first to South

Dakota and on to Tante Tine's where Vater stayed. We took another route home through Lake Tahoe. In Utah we stopped to see the Salt Lake and the Mormon Tabernacle then back through South Dakota to home.

Tom was left with my mom and dad, who came at that time again for a visit. My dad loved coming to the USA, but always was lured back to his little home in "Germany", to familiar language and friends.

Fritz began to read lots of books on farming! I quit my job (factory assembly) and stayed home for a while until Fritz asked if I would want to go to beauty school. Well, in Germany one learns in "three" years so it didn't sound all that good to me, but here it takes not even "one" year. So I applied and started the next day. That was really what I enjoyed doing, working on people, talking and finding out all about them! So I went to training all week even Saturdays which meant I could be done in 8 months!!!

I did not see much of my family – that was what I was missing – hurry to get things done for them and go to school! But, the day arrived and my diploma was handed to me! First the state board and then I started to work! I had Mondays off to catch up on house routine jobs.

These were good years, having family visiting and having wonderful neighbors, the Shannons, and the Larsen's; also the Larsen's letting the boys go with them to the Shrine Circus. Roy and Luella were still being our American "parents", beautiful people! Lutz's brought us squirrel to try to bake and eat (it was just like chicken, tender and mild!). Fritz began looking for a farm, so on weekends we went sightseeing. Then suddenly we found a "rocky" farm, a little bit of lakeshore to put a boat on to go fishing, and swimming. It had an old granary and an old, tiny house, what to us looked like a nice perfect place 1 hour from the city!

OUR JOURNEY BACK TO THE HOMELAND

By then we had saved a little moneys, so we began to think, "Shall we go back home? It's been eleven years by now, and nobody knows Tom and Fritzi, now so grown up; and the boys could still go as "children" on the flight. Or do we buy the farm?" We discussed and weighed things and thought this might be the only time to go back, later it would cost so much more and there might be even a better place for us?!

So arrangements were made: passports, suitcases, tickets. We also bought an old Oldsmobile that would take us to Maryland to visit a fraternity brother of my Dad's and to Washington D.C. where we met Hubert Humphrey in his office. He let Fritz sit in his chair, telling him "Now pretend you are me!!" We saw the Smithsonian Museum, Lincoln Statue, Gettysburg Fields and then on to New York to Wragge's, friends of Fritz's Mom. They were lovely people who had an egg farm and a cozy home outside of the City. They wanted to take care of our car till we would return in summer. Now we stayed with my cousin Helmut who had rented a house in a New York suburb as he was temporarily working for IBM and had his family with him, his wife Renate and two girls and one boy, Sigrid, Horst and Gertrud.

He was kind enough to take us with his car to Templehof Airport where we had tickets with Icelandic Airlines and boarded the plane to Iceland. Our crew had nothing other than some candy to serve us (the food supplier was on strike) until we came to Reykjavik where we landed and were given some sweet rolls, coffee and milk. After that they gave all of us passengers a bus trip through town and explained that absolutely everything was heated from the warm springs: the houses, any buildings etc. Afterward we boarded another plane to Hamburg, Germany!! where we were received by Vater Ibs and son Karl with two cars. We arrived!!! Home??!!

We used time wisely, living half the time with the Ibses in Marne and half the time in Bonn-Duisdorf with my parents and took lots of trips to meet all relatives and friends, which meant going to Garmishch-

Partenkirchen too. Fritz and I took a little honeymoon, our first vacation alone together, in our new VW car. We went to Milano, Italy, Venedig and back over the Grossglockner mountains, the Alps of Austria. Our Fritz and Tom stayed with my Mom and Dad and loved it and their German language improved so quickly. Our stay altogether was really beautiful, to see everyone and catch up on the 11 years gone by. We traveled north to south but could not go "east"; we tried and made it to the "Leipzig Messe-Fair" to the family of Oma Haase from Minneapolis where we stayed one night. We "could not go" to Dresden, my home town, because it was sort of only by an extra stamped paper. (There's so much to explain why I left Dresden without papers! That system works so against any type of freedom; you live in constant fear!) So we traveled back after having talked our heads off to the Haases to go and leave that communist town! It's so depressing how you were bullied in the Eastern zone, which was under Russian rule – what a difference in West Germany with the "Marshall Plan"...Our hearts went out to those depressed people. It all looked so hopeless in the East – but 19 years ago the 9th of November 1989 the Mauer-Wall fell. Germany had lost some areas through the 2nd war, but the "Reunification" was a thrill to behold! Can you believe, after we were four months overseas we took the same Dodge car home from Wragge's in New York, who polished and cleaned it and had it travel-ready for us. What love goes around with friends of family! We came home to our castle! (smile) Our house was covered with brown paper with big columns painted on it, making it look like a miniature real castle: "Our House – Our Castle". Fritz's "brother Ernst" who went to the school of architecture, gave himself such a work to-do, to make us happy as a "Welcome" gift, and all the neighbors popped in to say hello, "Good to have you back"; and it **Was** good to be back in Minnesota. What brotherly love from Ernst to Fritz – the two lbses!

A FARM FOR FRITZ

It did not take Fritz long and he went looking for "a farm". His mind must have kept this thought alive. So he found the real estate man from before who told him the farm we had our eyes on had been sold. Not long after, the same fellow told Fritz that for some extra amount he could have the farm, because the one that bought it wanted out of the deal?!

Now tell me, was it not handed to us by our Father in Heaven!!! The trip to Germany, all went so well, and then coming home to another dream fulfilled: the Farm!

Yes, Fritz put some money down to hold it for us and in 1962 we paid the extra for it. We both worked and on weekends we took picnic type food along and went to clean up an area which was used as a small dump. Trailer loads went to the given dump 1 ½ miles from our place - lots of exercise for us city people. By the year 1963 we started thinking of moving closer to "our farm". But it was not till 1964 that we "found" an old farmhouse to rent from

the Cavanaugh family, whose daughter Bernice Goeltz was the lovely land lady. We had a lot to clean in the kitchen and bathroom, but we gave it a good scrubbing and it became livable for us four and later even for more. Now we started more seriously to "farm"? I had customers coming out to me for hairdos and I had some customers where I went to their houses in the city after moving to Maple Lake. The House in the Sun was sold to Oma Haase with daughter Marianne Gilfert and they loved to have it after apartment living.



We tried to make this “old” house comfortable and homey looking. The summer was beautiful to roam around or sit in the huge screened-in porch. Fritz had to drive into Golden Valley every weekday. It was not too strenuous since there were only “two stop signs”, one in Buffalo and one in Golden Valley. He still worked for Honeywell. Then arrived the winter 1964, we prepared with hay bales stacked around the house to keep warm; Fritz saw umpteen pheasants in the corn fields in the fall. The boys went with the school bus to Maple Lake School. The telephone had several parties on the line which had different rings, but we learned to use it. In winter it was nice to find out through the neighbors, as one could listen in, about where the snowplow was and how far from us! Fritz had some steers on our farm 1 ½ miles away. He visited that place every evening after work and took care of the feeding. He tried his life in farming, often having to talk to neighbors and find out more and more about it. Fritz was so brave in starting out and finding a way to do things. To me it was something new, even though I had heard a lot of farming, my Mutti grew up on a farm- but they had help, servants Knechte and Mägde.

Here in the US farming was mostly alone, by ourselves, by the individual, or a family. We were quite adventurous: we learned to pick up rocks in the fields, pick up and clean up things like branches and bundled hay, help bailing, stacking, cut weeds back, ship steers to the market or to Andy’s for butchering for his store. We tried some pigs, chased loads and got a little frustrated with these critters!

Our son Fritz played football and we tried to go to most of all his games; then came Mr. Engel to town and he started a “wrestling” program. We went to those events to see our son and let out screams accidentally in fear?! Tom followed into wrestling through the school years and even after.

Winter arrived with a blast of snow, a “blizzard” which took all the beautiful pheasants. Oh, it was so sad to have them totally disappear. We found out that all that snow demanded boots for all of us! The boys had some fun with snow shoveling or snowball fights or trying to sled.

One of those snowy days Fritz could not make it through the snow to get home from Maple Lake, so he stayed with Walter Powers overnight, but called that young Fritz had to walk to the farm and feed the animals! I saw young Fritz start out. I was concerned for him and counted the time to realize when he could be back. I kept watching until the neighbor Mrs. Higgins called me that she saw Fritz struggling against that blizzard-like wind, but she thought better to let him go home, then stopping him for a break because it was getting dark. Finally “I saw him” coming through that abundance of snow to make it home. Tom and I were so glad to see him and thanked God for his safe return! – I believe he told us he had trouble watering the steer, but fed them. Then our son came home with “stiff frozen jeans”, it did not seem to harm him! Those were some of the excitements with farming. In winter we seemed to play a lot of games in the long evenings. The TV never worked! (smile)

The bales around the home kept us fairly comfortable with one oil stove going. The winters with all its school activities and chores came to an end and spring was arriving, what a fresh new feeling to step out in the sun and find buds on the bushes, trees and the yellow dandelions mixed with some blue violets.

All throughout our lives we had a guiding light. We might have not always realized it, but looking back we did understand that doors closed and others opened! Our God is faithful watching his created beings that He made with love, with that eternal love. We are the ones that often strayed away, to return, because of our longings for Him....Moving to the farm, living with nature, God speaks through it to us: through the cattle, the hogs, the chickens, the meadows with yellow color of the dandelions, the deep brown colors of the soil, the trees budding, the bushes blooming, the burdocks clinging to you, even weeds one can eat and look not so useless anymore!

After having our trip with the boys to West Germany it became an exciting time to live in a small town like Maple Lake, Minnesota.

WELCOME MUTTI AND PAPPI

We wrote home in 1965 and my parents felt like coming again, so we prepared the downstairs bedroom for them. It must have been late spring as it was still cool for their first visit in the rented farm home. We found out my Mutti did not have return tickets; it meant they would be with us from now on! So Fritz and I had to adjust again, but he had his job and his animals to take care of. The boys Fritz and Tom were always helpful. We finally got a dog "Happy" for them that brought some excitement to the home. Happy chased a skunk up the screen on the screen porch and left a lot of scent! Time and sprays took care of that! (smile) My Dad decided to go home to Bonn without my Mom. Dr. Raetz told us to let him go and find out that he couldn't do everything anymore. Fritz brought him to the airport and he left, but Dad sent telegrams asking Mom to come. She, this time, was stern on having to stay where she felt safe and wanted. Dad returned after 4-5 days finding a friendly "stranger" who called us and stayed with him at the airport until Fritz picked him up. We were glad he was safely back, but never did the restlessness of wanting to go back leave him! We took my parents along to football games, to wrestling tournaments, to visit friends where German was spoken! During those days, life kept going; I had to cook and wash for six people.

One day Pastor Kurt Gust came to the house. He was telling us he came from Schlesien Kattouite, where Mom and Dad had to leave because of the Polish uprising. That bonded these three people so close. He came out and visited often; and because of Pastor Gust we became member of St. John's Church. We were going to church again: Tom and Fritz, Mutti and Pappi, Fritz and I.

At this time my dear husband Fritz quit smoking, realizing that it's too much moneys gone up in the air if one needs a home to live in. He did it "cold turkey" as people say and my social puffing had to quit too. We Did It – what a clean feeling

A WARM NEW NEST

We realized we could not stay in this cold house, so Fritz tried to get moneys for building. He designed the "house plan" himself with what we needed and maybe some luxuries like big windows. Again there was an open door from God, and one bank helped us build. Now Fritz found builders and still worked at Honeywell. We looked for a place on the farm and started building in the Thanksgiving time without any kind of permit! In 1965 the building progressed and when the workers put the cedar shingles on the roof it was 60° - what good temperatures to work in. After that the heat, electricity, water, toilets, and bathroom all went "much slower". Winter started again coming around like all seasons have their time. We ran back and forth from the rented home to the building sight looking, looking, to when we might move into a warmer situation?!

Remembering Fritz's birthday on the 1st of October, we had cooked and baked and had friends, especially Ernst, come. The dining table was so nicely set with ceramic dishes bought by Lee, Ernst's friend. The temperature was 81° that day and we had everything opened up to the outside. We had our meal and kuchen around the table just being so happy together. But then came winter again with snow and wind and cold! January 18th, 1966 we received the okay to move to the new (unfinished home) and when Fritz, our dad, came home from Honeywell, we began to move load after load. My parents and I were moved in first so to begin finding room for things and put them into place. The temperature was -41 degrees, the rented place cold, and now we came into a warm new nest for us and my mom cried out, "warm water out of the faucet!" Nobody will ever know what that meant to us unless you've experienced it. That evening was so special with excitement, and joy with thanksgiving. Who could sleep? Fritz even moved my rubber tree in his heated car, barely fitting it into the car. We laughed, and giggled and the boys had to help as we were so caught up in being "warm"! More snow fell, and lots of shoveling. Rollie Wurm came with his big plough and removed all the snow off the driveway, actually piling it up on the sides.

SETTLED IN!

Finally we settled into the new home; Fritz began to work on the room downstairs that was meant to become the Beauty parlor. My dream came true when we opened the salon, "Cedar-Lake Beauty Salon". Nobody could see the lake but it gave people a certain direction. We hung the shingle under the mailbox, red with white letters.

Life became a new routine. Fritz's confirmation Tante Luella and Roy Nelson came to be with young Fritz. They were happy for us to have a nice home. We bought Oma Hugh's home in the sun from them. The Nelsons retired to a cabin home at Cross Lake, Mn where we visited once. Our next family gathering was for our parents 50th Anniversary 1966, (they were married April 26th, 1916) with Biewalds, our dear German friends from Schlesien, Witt's, Oma Hase, Marianne Gilfert, and Pastor Kurt Gust. What wonderful memories! Willi Berg took the photos, there was beautiful weather, and God's grace with us. There were no more needs for Mom and Dad. They had lost their two sons, but had a daughter with dear Fritz and two grandsons Fritz and Tom who they cherished.

Lovely people found out about the new beauty salon and there were "beginning" customers to come and return. First I had just a cement floor; later on we covered it with a heavy underpayment and added good carpet. It helped my legs and feet not to hurt so much from long work days. Some clients were Kate Punchocur, Kate Mooney, Evelyn Hoffman, Mary Smith, Marilyn Muller, Florence Mooney, Tena Skermer, Kathy Manual, Gloria Vandergon, Doddy Stuhr and more- like the Eggie family from "Hoot 'N Holler".

The boys had their bedroom, tiny but warm with one desk between the beds. The family room slowly got done and we had table tennis set up in the winter. They could play and have some friends in.

I remember one time we needed to heat the "fireplace" to put heat into the house because the electricity was out; the cable broke somewhere toward Mink Lake. We had fun trying it out, and it helped to keep some heat in the house. We found out that it was a good tool in case other heat was not working! My gas stove had a pilot light so we could turn the oven on and warm the kitchen and cook without the electricity. Now these things are all changed. The wires to the houses have better, stronger poles; the new gas stove has to start with electric!

We learned to live in the country; the farm needed lots of "rock" picking. Dad sat on the little Ford tractor with a stone boat and the boys with me picked the rocks and aimed for the stone boat to save some extra walking. (smile) It was not a well liked job. There was fencing to do for the new Herford cows with calves. Fritz found summer work from the neighbor bailing hay, some places being harder than other places. We had our own hay also to do. But then we could go swim in Cedar Lake down by Claire Zahn's place, which surely was a treat.

The Maple Lake School principal was Bolyard. He had a paddle hanging on the wall of his office, and the children said he has used it on some! Our Fritz had fun in German class with Dr. Von Holt because some German words he knew better with the meaning and pronunciation. He seemed to enjoy the class with drafting, sports and camaraderie with his friends. Tom never said much, he just did his things and "gathered" many friends.

Looking back, one realizes there was not much time for the boys at home, with the grandparents here, with dad going to work and farm and my beauty business. We trusted that they were our good sons and never worried much about them.

Oh how wonderful, that we still could enjoy living with my parents, Fritz and Tom in this new home on a farm. It kept us all together busy and happy. Fritz drove every workday into Golden Valley to Honeywell. In the evening he took care of things always needed to be fixed, besides now caring for Herford cattle. That was for all of us a new experience, especially when those cows found a way to get out.

The salon business was picking up and doing well. We met more neighbors, especially Bill and Tootie Mavencamp who came to see us and we would stop in at their big farm. We learned a lot from them, about life around on farms and small town people as well as from our direct neighbors John and Eleanor Fobble.

Fritz and I became involved in musical performances raising enough monies for doing the new school auditorium's interior. Two years in a row Joe and Nancy Thomas directed the townspeople to perform and show off their God given talents. Through this we came to meet more and more Maple Lakers in the years of 1968 and 1969.

Our oldest son Fritz was one of the "first class" to graduate from new Maple Lake High School in 1968. We celebrated that event with family including Mutti and Pappi at the Steak House in Annandale. Afterwards the graduates came and went to say hello at our home and partake in some snacks and goodies. Young Fritz then started to work for construction. In the fall he went to the

U of M, but did not seem to enjoy it.?! He kept working and found a lovely girl to date. Pamela Leahy was "the one". On the 17th of April, 1970 Fritz and Pam took their vows as witnessed and given by Pastor Brown of St. John's Church. So Fritz and I gained a daughter. What joy! We were so glad for all involved.

Two years later we received our first relatives from Germany: Fritz's Dad and step mom call Oma, and Tante Lene Schwarz. All Three came and spent time with us and also with Ernst in Minneapolis. We laughed and had wonderful moments of reminiscing. It became difficult for Fritz's father to leave as our granddaughter Kristina cried when saying goodbye to them.

Yes, by then we had our lovely little girl, our first granddaughter Kristina. She became new life for my parents. Another generation – how gracious from our Father to let them live with this joy. She was a sweetheart for all the lbs's family and grandma Arietta Leahy.

In the following spring grandpa, great grandpa Rudi Krieger went to be with the Lord. He slipped so quickly away as he had been very still in his last years, but had loved Kristina's coming when she'd put her little head on his knees. "His smile" gave us joy in return for all the help he needed in his care.

We prayed with hope that Mutti "Mooney" could still be with us for a while longer and thanks to God, she lived 8 years longer, taking care of Kristina and Kimberly who followed Kristina. Both were the sweetest girls to have wonderful times with; fun, giggles, laughter were all around us. Their dear mom Pam went to St. Cloud College for a Special Ed degree so my mom had the best time of her older days with those two. How blessed we were! One always has to roll back the time and thank God for ALL His provisions ALL along.

Now became time for Thomas William to graduate from the High School in 1973. We celebrated his special evening also at the Steak House of Annandale, but now without Pappi. We all shared in the jubilation of another graduate! Tom helped coach wrestling during school and took the job of coach for 10 years, as he decided against going to Bemidji College. Rather, he also started in construction work.

Looking back, one realizes there was not much time for the boys at home, with the grandparents here, with

dad going to work and farm and my beauty business. We trusted that they were our good sons and never worried much about them.

THE NEW FOUND SPIRIT

One day a new lady customer came to the salon from Silver Creek. I thought, "Oh! Another teacher, I have already several from Maple Lake". (Every one in my family was or is married to a teacher – they were all around me!) But there was something special about this teacher. She was a gentle, neatly dressed lady with a smile that never seemed to leave her. We had easy conversations and she was pleased with my work on her hair. I seemed to learn a lot more of my neighbors and the school she taught in. One year she was celebrated as "Teacher of the Year!" She cared for me differently- she was interested in my mom and dad. After she returned, she had time to come and go on tours, she drove a "Pontiac" yellow bird and took my mom for rides to be able to see a bit more of Maple Lake and area. Then Dorothy began to pick me up to go to Christian Women's Dinners in Big Lake. I worked Monday and took Tuesdays off to be able to go with her once a month. We listened to ladies speak about times and situations of life, and their having to learn to live with them. But they "always" talked about having to have **Jesus in your heart**. Finally, I grasped what they were telling: "Jesus Saves"! Those two words were on a big billboard on the highway to Menomonie, Wisc. for us all to see on the way to Green Bay. I came to understand the one speaker lived in an orphanage, nobody loved her, and everyone looked out for themselves! Then one day she received a Bible and found in the New Testament that there is someone that "loved her unconditionally", this Jesus, the Son of God who took all of everyone's sins to the cruel cross, died, was buried and resurrected from the grave, to ascend back to his father! I heard Jesus is the way to eternal life. All I had to do was believe and to ask: Come into my heart Lord Jesus. I believe you died even for me a sinner. Forgive me, Christ Jesus for past and future fleshly sins. I will follow! (October 1972)

After that meeting I felt like flying home! Dorothy Bowen drove too "slow". It felt like I was bursting at the seams. I longed for home to tell the world what wonder happened. Christ "freed me" and strengthened my faith. What an acknowledgement of God's GRACE. Now I was even closer to my Father, who watched over me from little on. I was one of his sheep and He carried me through the ups and downs of the many years, "37" years to be exact, but now I know more of His purpose for me: to follow him and his soft voice touching us in different ways to show how to walk on in their new life with Jesus. Praises with a thankful heart to Him that makes everything possible! He is still the miracle worker. May the harvest be good and plentiful for the lost!

So one is a new person, born again, into the eternal life. My poor customers were shared this new life and in such a vehement style; some looking at me like "What is the matter lady?" Well, I was on fire for my Lord and Savior! I scared my family and some of them could not grasp what I had to be so joyful about! Then I took time for Bible study at Dorothy Bowans, and her sister in Christ Henrietta Klemz always volunteered with joy to teach the Stonecroft lessons! What Spirit blessed lessons! Soon I offered the home to come to for studies and I grew and it was like "catching fish" with some of my customers! My ministry started – to share the gospel. What joy when many people became interested! We even started on Saturday morning a small prayer group- that was some wonderful times. Fritz and I started going to the Maple Lake Café at 7 am. on Saturdays for Bible Study. It was started in "Hoot and Holler" by Winifred Plaggerman who was a paraplegic and moved by his aunt Dorothy B. to Maple Lake Cafe. When one finds the "light", from then on, one sets out onto the walk prescribed. There were many highlights along that way, giving us encouragement to go on. My love for all kinds of people grew. The story of Stonecroft was so inspirational – Mrs. Baugh-Miss Clark: "The outreach to the unreached". What a theme! How blessed Fritz and I felt all along, but now even more. We grew together in Christ. Maybe you find me very simple in my walk with my Lord; I found Him as a little

girl, loved to praise Him with song and loved everyone around me. My faith IS simple; in my heart I carry a melody of my Father in Heaven, who always took care of me in my wanderings. He was present in the happy, sunny days of my life. We called on Him in the darkness of despair and by His right hand He led us through. Why should I not trust the Almighty Father that wants us to love Him? He gave us the understandings through His very own son that He, God, gave us as a way completely for ever to come to Him:

What a gift to us all, that we believe
as we receive the gospel
and find personal relationship
with Jesus Christ our Savior
and receive the Holy Spirit.
What wonders of the very plan of the Creator;
To be always with us,
never to leave us till we meet some day,
face to face.

That GRACE, that very gift of His, is there for everyone to come to; and the Spirit works through the entire world, through all generations. He has not yet taken it away....what a patient Father.

So I walk on, knowing I can trust Him in All Things, and wait to meet Him someday. So we praise His holiness, eternal Father!

MINNESOTA BLESSINGS

Yesterday I woke up and laid still and I knew of the snowfall going on and I reminisced: how each flake is different shaped from the next and how wondrous all these trillions...of flakes cover the ground and purify it. Our hearts should through Jesus Christ become white as snow. This snow is fluffy and light and covers every ugly looking thing. It beautifies the land, Minnesota, this land that became my home. It's the sunniest state in winter even with the snow. One has to feel glad to live here. Yes, I learned to really appreciate this state: the woods, the lakes, the Mississippi, the endless sky, blue and grey, with clouds or without; the quietness of this farm, to just be able to go for a walk and look at the ever changing nature and appreciate God's creation. How thankful I am to have lived 36 years here near Maple Lake. Often it feels more like 10 years.

Again, the creator of the universe who provided the beauty of this land and the seasons, let us look forward to 1975, our 25th anniversary. We understood that families from Germany would come. It became an "Ibs gathering". There were Opa and Oma Ibs, Fritz's two brothers Karl and Peter with Brigitte Ibs, cousin Eldo and Mamily with family from Iowa, Onkel Nico Dreesen and Guita from Germany, Ernst and Guna Ibs, Erdie & Ann from California, Inge & Ray Carr, and Fritz and Friedl Biewald. Our Pam arranged for her sister-in-laws Ruth and Eve to help serve the meals. What wonderful help for all day long! This was a dream, the weather was perfect, besides having Mutti with us and our sons Fritz with Pam, Kristina and Kimberly, and Tom with friend Sue. What a lovely sharing time with family from afar. What thankful hearts we had as all this was happening!

OUR EXPANDING AND CHANGING FAMILY

The following year Thomas William and Sue Theder decided to tie the knot on Valentines Day 1976. They were married in St. Tim's Church with Pastor Robiski officiating. Now we had two daughters besides our two sons and two grandchildren. My, we felt so richly blessed. Life was lived to the fullest and it kept growing,

sharing, blossoming as years went on, as we kept a steady walk with the Lord. There is a verse of a song that is always a blessing to me, written by Francis R. Havergal: "Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace, over all victorious in its bright increase; perfect yet it floweth fuller everyday; perfect yet its growth deeper all the way. Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest; finding as He Promised, perfect peace and rest. Every joy or trial falleth from above, traced upon our dial, by the Sun of Love. We may trust Him fully all for us to do; they who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true. Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest; finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest."

Many years have passed, and Fritz and I are looking forward to being married 60 beautiful years. It's interesting we say "how fast" the time went and then again at times we think back and realize how much happened in those years. There was the birth of grandson #1 Bradly, quickly followed by #2 Steve. Then we lost our mom, grandma and great grandma Gertrud Krieger who went home to be with the Lord after 89 years full of life. Opa Ibs had gone before her in Germany at the age of 85. That's why Oma Ibs came to visit from April-September 1981. She brought a game called Rummikub for all the families and we still play it nearly 30 years later! Sue and Tom blessed us again with a third grandson Brian making us grandparents to 5 grandchildren, but more were to follow. During this time Fritz parted with Honeywell. He farmed and took jobs around Maple Lake and was never without work.

Besides all the good years and times, some hurts came along. Our Pam decided to leave Fritz. Both had "rights" to see and visit the girls, our Kristina and Kim. We were thankful for the many times we could be with our granddaughters. The girls would go sightseeing with their dad and we always tagged along. We were allowed to go on picnics in the area parks with Kristina and Kim, Dorothy Bowan, Tena Skermer, and sometimes Steve. Dorothy, who seemed to know many different parks, drove and we were singing along the way.

Then Scott was born on the 100th birthday of Rudi Krieger – oh how generations are moving on! The children keep growing so fast one finds barely enough time to enjoy them. Sue and Tom enjoyed going to the Baptist Church of Maple Lake and had Bible Studies in their home.

The seasons came and went. We sold all the herford herd to a man from up north. That was not an easy time – Fritz knew each one, and counted the animals into the semi truck. For us it became very quiet around here; no more grazing, no more chasing cows or calves.

My beauty shop work, styling hair, kept me busy. I enjoyed the customers also as friends. Dorothy Bowen took me along to several Stonecroft conferences. One time we even went to an International one in Toronto, Canada. To meet people from far away places and oh so many good speakers and missionaries, the world grew small. It widened my understanding of where God works, not only in Minnesota.

GROWING IN GOD'S WORD

We decided to join the Annandale Evangelical Free Church in the old church building in Annandale with Pastor George Klippiness. Those were wonderful years of growing in the Word. Soon we opened our home to Bible studies with a group from that church. Craig and Karen Lieberg were interested in guiding and Cliff Mol with Karen helped out, then Sommars, Schuts, Marpls, Vandergons, and Lahr's later on. The church was planning on building a new building which happened with lots of prayers and a gift from some family for land to be occupied for that reason. We believe the old church was sold and the congregation moved to the high school for two years having our services there until the "church" was built on the new premises. Pastor Tim Erickson came to help Pastor George there.

From that time on we seemed to have an open house for whoever needed a stay over. It was here that missionary speakers came. Pastor Dan Elifson came to AEFC when Pastor Erickson left. Dan became interim pastor with his talented wife Nora. One year Julie Anderson and Nora dreamed up something special "The Walk through Bethlehem". People were all involved painting sceneries, sewing costumes, hammering and practicing. Each part had to be so! Well, it was a beautiful happening to bring the children and parents through the scenes of Christmas with a new born live baby in the crib. This was our first time, more would follow later. It was always received with joy....There was and is a mission to bring the gospel to others that have not heard. So Fritz went with me to Haiti in 1986, 1987 and in 1988. Somehow it was easy to get involved with the poor through food, love, teaching songs and the word. We did it like short term missions but also helped from home with many other beautiful believers raising support with the Gullings, Betty Johnson, Hefly's, Romans, Vandergons, Roger Fobbe, Francis and others.

GOD'S GIFTS: FAMILY, FRIENDS, MEMORIES

Our Tom and Sue moved to Big Lake with their four sons. What fun they had to have a home with lots of trees and yard to run around in; a beautiful spot at a dead end street. Years passed and this house became filled with two girls Rachael and Hannah Joy. Then Tom and Sue opened their hearts for two more, adopted children: Jacob and Gracie. They surely were blessed with a quiver full of children and then to become grandparents through their oldest son Brad with Rachael, who had Marna, followed by Luke Thomas. John 1:16 "From the fullness of His grace, we have all received one blessing after another."

Our son Fritz found a nice place outside of Monticello and built a home between two good sized ponds. They gave it a nice view. So both of our sons were glad in their homes and we could go and visit many times. Fritz's Kristina and Kim live there some of the time at his home and both later graduated from Buffalo High School!

Our place, the house that our Father in Heaven provided so lovingly became a shelter for Judy and Jessica Bellefeuille for quite some time. Later we had our dear polish family living with us, our Agniescka, later Wojitek and Alina with Veronika. Then there came Pat and Connie Lahr. Before all that happened many relatives came to visit from Germany and stayed for little whiles. These were busy times of sharing as God provided.

Our wonderful grandchildren grew and their parents or parent helped them along and we enjoyed graduations, wedding, and many birthday parties – a new generation of great grandchildren – how the fullness of His grace has blessed us and still does.

God graciously allowed us to celebrate our 60th anniversary – it came so very fast! Fritz and I still can't believe it has happened. We have lived such full, long lives and have so very much to be thankful for: our sons and their children with third generation children. They all joined in on the festivities of those special two days. There were Fritz's two daughters with families, Kristina and Tom King with Ellie, Anya and Owen; plus Kimberly and Cisco Skanson with Tanner, Sayer and Ryder. Also Thomas and Sue came with Gracie, Jacob, Hannah Joy, Rachel Lynn, Scott, Brian and Sara, and Steve. Only Brad and family had to miss that day because they were overseas! Fritz's brother Ernst and wife Anna with their children Jon and Ann and their children Emily, Aaron and Elaine also were a special part of the celebration.

Fritz and I were surrounded not only with our dear family but with many, many dear friends that came out to make our day special. The party was held in a large tent in our front yard, and dear friend Lucy Haglin had cared for the decorations on all the tables. God also graced us with a perfectly beautiful day! So much love shared that day – so many memories! We continue on into year 61 knowing that our days are in the Lord's hands.

LOOKING HOMEWARD

If the Vater calls me home, I am so very ready. I know His home is more beautiful yet, than His creation for the earth. How anxious one can become for those hidden mysteries. Now we know only in part what we will see in reality. **Wow...it takes my breathe away!!!**

1 Chronicles 16:34 NIV

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever.”

We would most of all give thanks to Christina Lee for her kindness in starting this story out. With her prayers and patience it found its way. Our dear Jan Ostroot picked up the job, lovingly working with this struggling writer to help bring it to a finish! With love and gratitude!

~Inge



Recipe:

Recipe for Friends and Family's Needs!

4 cups of love
3 cups of forgiveness
5 spoons of hope
4 quarts of faith
2 cups of loyalty
1 cup of friendship
2 spoons of tenderness
1 barrel of laughter

Take love + loyalty, mix it thoroughly with Faith.
Blend it with tenderness, kindness + understanding.
Add friendship and hope,
sprinkle abundantly with laughter.
Bake it with sunshine.

Serve daily with generous helpings.

*A message left
by Inge Ibs
for everyone!*



Read at Inge's Memorial Service

September 15, 2017

Romans 8:31-39

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died-more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our LORD.

Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

I am Grateful. I am Blessed.

By Kristina

Before I read Isaiah I would like to share some thoughts about why I am grateful today....I am blessed to have had a grandma for nearly 47 years. Over those years I received **countless** letters of encouragement on everything from her take on hormone replacement to parenthood to friendship. Here is a sample:

"My dear Kristina and Tom, tomorrow is your 16th anniversary and we remember the perfect day so well, with thoughts back and forward, we felt to give you some of the words of God, who were inspired by his spirit, to show us the way, the truth, and the light. It is good to gain wisdom through his teaching, we are all so thankful for you, your Ellie, Anya, and Owen. May his blessings rest upon you for many solid years. You are married 16 years and of now its 61 years for us and we can say it was good, we worked on it and still learn about the other partner in life, but love and forgiveness covers many blunders :) We are thankful for every day; each one was special and is special even now towards the 62nd year! Always with deep love for you, your grandma and grandpa"

(Included over two pages handwritten Ephesians 5 14-33 and 6 1-3)

Another

"Hello dear Kristina,

Thank-you for your call and sharing some things about a growing family. Today was the day for grandpa at the dentist! Well, he said in ½ an hour it was all done, now he has a lot of numbness and smiles, it's all done, it looks great! Thank God

Your Dad came in the morning and cleared our driveway. He knew grandpa had to go and so it was prepared for him, then he went home to do his own and will stop in tomorrow, we do appreciate our Fritzi watching over us.

My friend Colleen came by for a little coffee time and some sewing; the covers for the three pillows that we had without covers and she sewed some protection for the arms of the chairs. We are so glad to have her in our lives: so kind, understanding, and sharing her love with us two.

Now to you dear beautiful Kristina, time is at its speed and won't change, we can use it more wisely but not slow it down. Through all my ups and downs, my joys, my sorrow, my pain there was my comforter, my parachute where somehow we always found new strength never to despair.

My grandma, Elli King, prayed for Mutti and her sister, 2 brothers, and family. Mutti prayed for my Dad and our family. So we pray diligently for all our generational family and thank God for having given us intercessors in heaven who hear us. Mutti said and hoped before she slipped away, that she prays on for all of us. The most wonderful moments are a still voice telling us, just wait, it will happen at his time.

Take time with your family as you noticed they grow up so quickly, give them their needed attention, today with so much to lure them away...

We surely have found inner peace and live with joy as always your grandparents with love and prayer."

I am grateful for my grandma...

Grateful to have taken walks around the flower bed with Mutti and sung German songs.

Grateful to have dressed up in her clothes and the high heels grandma rocked in the mid 70's

Grateful I grew up connected to a house filled with warm potato salad, advent calendars, and oranges in my shoes,

I am ...

Grateful for meat and cheese for breakfast, and making sure the Salon was stocked with Coffee and yes, even for the many perms I once sported.

I am ...

Grateful for the sense of contentment, peace, and unconditional love.

Grateful for the picnics and hours in the swimming pool, as well as her bringing cabbage rolls to my German class at Buffalo High School in 1988.

Grateful for Christmas on the farm with all of us dressed in our best and gathered around her tree.

Grateful for our time traveling together in Germany and Belize

Grateful for her support hosting my engagement party, attending my college graduation, and the baptisms of my children.

Grandma was so proud of her family. We know that her cup is overflowing today--celebrating her life with family and friends. I can hear her saying "I am so blessed" as she did so many times in her last days.

She is now bigger than life--a power greater than herself--we can all feel our Inge and hear her voice in the decisions we make every day about how we treat one another. I used to worry about letting grandma down or not living an authentic life until I finally got what she had been trying to tell me; we are all flawed and imperfect and we are forgiven and loved unconditionally.

Isaiah 12 1-6

In that day you will say:

"I will praise you, Lord.

Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.

The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense;

He has become my salvation."

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

In that day you will say: "Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;

Make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things;

Let it be known to all the world.

Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

Today I am grateful and I am blessed.

My Forever Hero

By Kim Skanson

For someone who is used to speaking in front of others for a living, this is by far the hardest speech I have ever had to give. It's not because I am sad and grieving the loss of my life-long hero. It's not because I am unsure of what to say. It is because there are no words that I can say, during these next few minutes, that will give justice to the absolutely remarkable women I have been fortunate enough to call my Grandmother these past 43 years of my life.

Born Ingeborg Helga Gertrude Krieger in 1926, my Grandma endured hardships that many of us can't even fathom. Raised in Dresden Germany, one of the most heavily bombed cities in the former East Germany during World War 2, Grandma lost not only both of her brothers in the war, she also lost her home and by 18 had to say good bye to friends, family and teachers at a pivotal point in her life. Her home on the hill, filled with flowers and vegetable gardens, became a refugee camp where Communism took over. She recalled those horrific days of the war, explaining the impact on being on a train that was bombed. I will always remember her saying through teary eyes "I am so blessed...to have lived through so many miracles Kimmy. I will never forget where I came from....it shapes who we become."

Fortunate enough to meet the love of her life, Fritz Ibs, while visiting friends in West Germany; her steadfast bravery (which I saw until her last breath) was apparent during her escape from former East Germany. I recall the impact it had on me the first time I learned she escaped boarder control in the wee hours of the night on a milk truck. I recall her saying "I don't know how the officer didn't hit the top of my head when he checked the back of the milk truck.....it was meant to be for me to get to Grandpa." Leaving her parents to start a new life in a foreign country left a void for Grandma that never quite went away.....but it opened doors that she was forever grateful for. Grandma was braver than anyone I have ever met!

The town in Southern Germany, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, where my Dad was born is one of the most remarkable places in the world. The vast mountain peaks, and lush green valleys will forever be a picture of purity and calm. Over time the desire to really be free took over and through fortunate circumstances that Grandma always called her "little miracles", they were able to come to the United States. They settled in Wisconsin before finally ending up in Minnesota. Maple Lake has been home for over 50 years, but Germany was always Grandma's real home....the home that made her the humble, compassionate, giving person she was to all. It was important to her that her Grandchildren knew her German heritage and traditions, and many of us were fortunate to accompany her to her homeland to see first-hand the country side that made her forever smile.

As many of you know, Grandma was a masterful cook and nothing beat her authentic German recipes. I recall the countless hours she spent in the kitchen preparing just the right dish for the occasion. She was forever teaching those around her as well, demonstrating not only a love of food, but a love to share her wisdom with others as to how to prepare just about anything. I have many of her secret recipes written down and can't wait to pay tribute to Grandma by learning how to prepare her favorites. While my German dishes will never be as good as hers, I will never forget

how her red cabbage, potato pancakes and roulade tasted. My mouth is watering just thinking about it.

Family and Friends meant everything to Grandma. Blessed to have 10 Grandchildren, 9 Great Grandchildren (another one on the way) and many friends' young and old...she was the epitome of selflessness. I came to expect Christmas's on the farm would be a chance to meet new people; visitors from Haiti, where Grandma helped build an orphanage, to people in the community needing somewhere to go for the holiday.....you name it, Grandma embraced it. She taught me at an early age the valuable lesson of putting others before yourself. Through Grandma's eyes, everyone was family and had a special place in her heart.

Faith is something that kept Grandma going. Her weekly Bible Study group was her favorite day of the week where she could laugh, share stories and worship with her friends. When her physical strength slowly retreated over the years due to her myopathy (a condition that made her lose muscle mass and strength) she said "it is okay Kimmy...I have my routine at home on Sundays and Grandpa can go and tell me about the sermon when he gets home (I just hope he wears his nice sweater when he goes)." I remember many Sunday morning visits to Grandma where her church music was playing, her bible was on her lap and faith was ever-present. Grandma taught me the importance of believing....believing in life ever after....believing that everything happens for a reason and believing that, in faith, anything is possible. Thanks Grandma for never wavering from your strong beliefs and modeling that a positive attitude is contagious.

When we left the hospital to come home one last time....Grandma looked each nurse in the eye, held their hands and told them how much she appreciated what they had done for her. She made two of her nurses tear up as she gave them positive accolades for being good mothers and great role models. She never ceased to amaze me, at how she could make everyone feel like they were the most important person in the world. Many people stopped me when we left that day. They told me how, in a few short days, Grandma had also left a forever-lasting impression on them. I smiled and just said "I know...I get it."

On the ride from the hospital to the farm...she told the driver which way to turn (just in case I forgot). Her steadfast sense of humor never wavered...and lit up the room. While the medicine was making her drowsy, she miraculously stayed awake most of the ride. She was at peace, going home....the place where both of her parents held their last breath....she looked at me and said "I am at peace Kimmy....I am where I am supposed to be. I am so blessed and will always love you."

I will love you forever too Grandma.....thanks for making the world a better place for the past 91 years. For giving yourself unconditionally to so many, and for being a role model for our family. You have taught us all to put others first, to give and serve the Lord....and to never give up! I promise to never let you down and to follow your lead in all that I do.

Bis wir uns wieder treffen (*until we meet again*)

"Chuse" (*Grandma's infamous German slang term for good-bye*)

-Kimmy

My Grandma, a Battle Axe

By Brad Ibs

A little introduction to Grandma Inge, for my Grandchildren one day

I used to have a grandma too, her name was Inge. She really was one of a kind.

My Grandma Inge would sometimes call herself, "The Old Battle Axe"

But if you ever reached her top step, and were greeted by one of her giant smiles, and even bigger hellos, as you entered her living room, you might wonder to yourself... "Battle Axe???", I don't think so.

You see, my grandma was tiny, and tender, and always wanted to greet you and leave you with a tight squeeze.

My grandma loved to play games with me when I was little. My favorite was Rummikub, and she would often give me the pieces I needed to win the game. Grandpa didn't like that.

My grandma used to sneak us treats when we were at her house.

Schwan's ice cream bars and yogurt push-ups, especially after swimming in her pool.

My grandma took me to Germany once, when I was seven.

When I couldn't sleep and I missed my parents, she stayed at my bedside telling me stories and singing me songs. She stroked my forehead until I fell asleep, I can still remember the feel of her smooth yet cracked hands.

I loved staying overnight at Grandma's house. The best part was breakfast. We sat at a small round white table in the kitchen. We ate soft boiled eggs and had fancy breads with salami and cheese. That's where I learned to eat with my elbows OFF of the table, and that it is not ok to put your face to your plate and shovel food into your mouth. Who knew?

My grandma gave the best good-byes. It seemed like they would never end. After I learned to drive, I can remember her standing in her bedroom window waving. I would think she was finished after I drove the car away up her driveway, only to realize she was still waving as I turned left onto County Rd. 7.

My Grandma Inge cared for me a lot. She saved all kinds of drawings and newspaper clippings from when I was young and gave them all to me in a big box.

My Grandma wrote me notes, lots and lots of notes. She would tell me about life at her house, what the weather was like, what animals were wandering around her farm, and what family events were coming up. Sometimes, when I was in college, she would slip a little cash into those notes to make sure I had spending money. I still have many of those notes, I'll show them to you one day.

My grandma loved people. People from all over the world. I can always remember new faces at her house. Sometimes they just shared a meal, other times they slept there. All of them, at one point or another, were prayed for by her. She LOVED to pray for the people in her life. My Grandma's (and Grandpa's) love for people from all over the world was a big reason I chose the vocation that I did.

Come to think of it, my Grandma Inge *was* a little bit like a battle axe. She had a toughness and a stubbornness to her, having been shaped by the cold realities of war. But the battles she chose to fight were not those easily seen by the naked eye. She fought for things like mercy, compassion, contentment, and love. She longed for broken relationships to be mended, addictions to be overcome, and for all people to live freely and peacefully. Her weapons were faith in an unseen God, unceasing prayer, hope that even the most difficult of situations could be changed, unrelenting perseverance, and, of course, her infamous sharp words of challenge and encouragement that often landed with a force that belied her small stature.

Like cut marks on a tree, the evidence of this "battle axe" is well seen throughout the members of our extended family. Marks of faith, hope, and love. Marks of welcoming the foreigner into one's home. Marks of tender compassion. Marks of simple living and rooted contentment. Marks of stubborn perseverance in pursuing what is right. Grandma Inge, the Battle Axe, has forever carved these beautiful marks into my life. I pray by God's grace, that I might someday be the kind of grandparent to you, that she was to me, leaving with you the legacy she left to me.

Grandma Inge

By Marna Ibs

Grandma was such a special lady. When I would reach the top of the stairs I would immediately hear “Ohhhh Malna, my Malna! You’ve grown so tall, how are you?” At that moment I would know this was going to be a fun trip to Grandma and Grandpa’s. I remember eating Grandpa’s delicious food while telling Grandma about school in Kenya. I remember her smile, warm and welcoming. I remember going on 4 wheeler rides and riding past their beautiful fields and trees. Then we would come back and talk with Grandma some more. I remember goodbyes, tear filled, big goodbyes. With lots of hugs and kisses... and pictures.

And she would say “Until next time,ya?” And now I guess I have to wait longer for the next time. But I am glad such a wonderful lady got such a long wonderful life. We miss you Grandma Inge.

