

CHAPTER 10

THE RISKE FAMILY

The Riske family also came from the Ukraine district of Russia. Both Herbert's, grandmother Justine Freigang, and mine, Luise Krebs were friends, we found that out much later.

Herbert Riske was inducted into the Hitler Youth group. This organization was similar to the Boy Scouts in America. Only in Germany, it was compulsory that you belong. I did not join. My parents would not allow it, which could have resulted in severe reprimand. It was considered a major infraction of the rules. How we escaped punishment is still a mystery to me. God was in control.

If you wanted a good job, you had to belong to the Nazi party. Party meetings were Sunday mornings. No one in my family joined the party. Instead of going to meetings, we went to church. Church to most Germans was not important but in my family it took priority over attending Nazi meetings. Catholic and Lutheran churches stood empty. People became disillusioned since the state controlled the churches and assessed dues; therefore attendance was low because allegiance to the state took precedence over loyalty to religion. Freedom of religion applied only to Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist churches...all other denominations were eliminated and most joined the Baptist churches.

Herbert lived with his parents, Emil and Lydia Riske in Mosgau, State of Dt.Eylau, province of West Prussia, Germany. The Hindenburg estate was in the next village. General Paul von Hindenburg was twice elected President of Germany after World War I. In 1932 he appointed Adolf Hitler as Reichs Counselor. In 1934, after the death of

Hindenburg at age 87, Hitler proclaimed himself the Ruler of Germany. Herbert trained to be a hair stylist and frequently was called to the Hindenburg estate to cut the family member's hair.

Herbert was drafted at 18 into the Arbeitsdienst and right after into the medical corps of the German Army in 1937. In 1938, he was stationed in Angerburg, a city about 60 km from where we lived. One day I received a letter from him asking if he could visit us, since it was too far for him to go home on weekends. He remembered me as an eleven-year-old girl, when my parents and I visited my mother's sister in Mosgau in 1933. He was only fifteen then. I was invited to some young people get-togethers. We played spin the bottle, and as I remember, Herbert had to give me a kiss. Did he remember also? I wondered! From then on as long as he was stationed in that city he came to visit us.

I remember a big tile heating unit in our living room where I liked to stand and daydream. That is where I got my real first "kiss" from Herbert. My Parents' bedroom was next to the living room and at night when Herbert was there my mother would leave the door open slightly to make sure there was no hanky-panky going on. Not to our liking, we closed the door.



before 1945

The Riske home in Mosgau, West Prussia, Germany
Riskes Heim in Mosgau, West Preussen Deutschland



Herbert & Erwin >

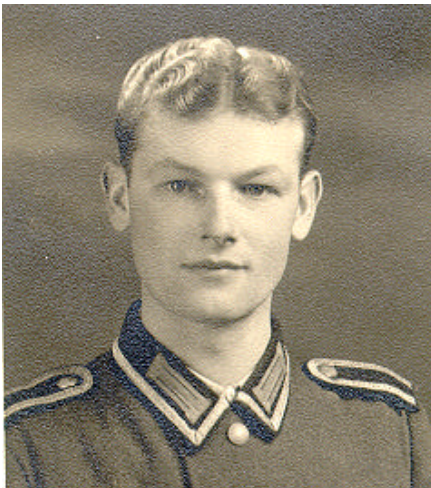


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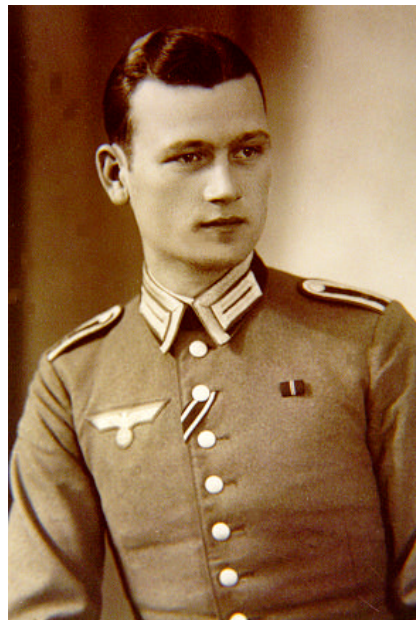


Herbert was handsome, with blond wavy hair and blue eyes. He had a brother Erwin, who was two years younger than he. Erwin's hair was dark but he had the same penetrating blue eyes. Before the German troops were sent to Russia, Erwin was stationed in one of the villages near Konradshof, not too far from our village. This enabled him to come visit us every day. In fact, I saw Erwin more often during this time than I ever saw Herbert. We shared a close relationship and so it happened that I fell in love with both brothers. I knew Erwin loved me also but he cared too much for his older brother to hurt him. We did exchange lots of hugs and kisses. If I would have known what lay ahead, the romance might have progressed further.

Herbert was with the first troops that marched into Poland and was one of the soldiers that came across the massive graves in Katyn, Poland, where 1000 Polish officers were murdered by the Russians. For a long time this atrocity was blamed on the Germans, but in fact was perpetrated by the Russians.



Herbert Riske in 1941



Erwin Riske in

1943> killed in March 1944 >