

CHAPTER 3

AMERICA BECKONS

As inflation increased in Germany my parents lost everything again. People charged their merchandise and by the time they settled their accounts the money had lost its value.

After so many years of struggling through one adversity after another, there was little hope that things would get better in Germany. That was the reason in 1926 the plan to migrate to America began to formulate.

The brothers of my grandfather Heinrich Krebs, they grew up with my dad, John was only three years older and Emil two years older than my Dad, lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. At the urging of John, my family decided to undertake the journey to America. Again my parents put their future in the hands of the Lord. Germany was bankrupt, there was nothing to hold us back.

My parents bid "*Auf Wiedersehen*" (good-bye) to friends and family and embarked on their long journey to this strange new land across the sea. (Years later, when my husband and I emigrated from Germany to the United States, this same great-uncle also sponsored us and helped us get settled).

I do not remember crossing the ocean as I was only 4 years old. My mother told me I was the only person sitting at the dining table set for six people. All the others were sea sick. A tough little girl!

CHAPTER 4

LIFE IN AMERICA

Upon arriving, my parents rented a house in Milwaukee, with the help of Uncle John. They were able to obtain gainful employment and life settled down. My father worked in a chair factory, he loved working with wood. My mother worked in a place where she sewed buttons on men's jackets by hand. She was paid by the hundreds. This made her very nervous, as she tried to do more and more.

I started school in Milwaukee. An early memory that has stayed with me is how fascinated I was with the gas light in the house we lived in. Also, I was entranced with the gas man lighting the street lamps when darkness set in. I remember pulling my little red wagon to the ice house weekly to buy a large chunk of ice for the ice-box.

I remember well when a big crate arrived from my beloved Grandma Luise from Germany for my first birthday in America. In it was a beautiful big baby doll with a porcelain head, she had on a pink dress. Only the head was broken and so was my little heart.

I was the flower girl on December 17, 1927, at Linda and Alex Freigang's wedding. They were close friends of my parents. Later they became my uncle and aunt through marriage.

I was a little tomboy, always getting into some kind of mischief. My curiosity sometimes got the best of me. I was full of energy, not afraid to try new things or go different places. When I was about 8 years old I gave my Dad a real scare when we visited my great-uncle August Wiesner in St. Paul. When we arrived at the place, I recklessly ran ahead and fell headlong down the stairs landing in the basement. Dad yelled, "My God, she's dead." When I heard that, I got up, brushed myself off and asked the panicked people around me, "Daddy am I really dead?"

My parents sang in the German choir at the Baptist church. I had to sit through choir practice every week. On Sundays I was to sit in the front row of the church so my Mom could see me. One Sunday I did not go to the front row but played hide-and-seek with a Sunday school friend. As the minister was preaching we two girls ran into the sanctuary, in one door, out the other. This was so embarrassing to my mother, she left the sermon and came looking for me. Not a word was said, all she did was take my hand and home we walked in silence. On the way she picked up a stick, still not speaking, as I begged for forgiveness. End result, I got a good spanking I deserved.

Another time, on my way home from school I saw some beautiful tulips as I passed someone's garden. I decided to pick some for my mother, thinking she would be so happy about receiving them, but that was a big mistake. Instead of the praise I expected, she made me march back to return the tulips and apologize to the people.

I recall that I was told over and over again never to go with a stranger. That warning slipped my mind one day as my girlfriend and I were playing in front of the house. A car stopped and the man asked for directions to a street in our neighborhood. He told us to hop in the car and show him the way. We got in, my friend sat in the middle, I on

the outside. He suddenly changed directions and reaching for my friend's hand, he proceeded to expose himself. We were so frightened and began to cry and begged him to stop the car and let us go. When he came to a red light, I opened the door, jumped out and pulled my friend out also. I know now the Lord was with us. We ran home crying, having learned a painful lesson. This best friend passed away at ten years of age of complications from an ear infection.

One summer during vacation time I came down with scarlet fever. My mother kept it quiet, I wasn't to tell anyone. With my big mouth, as school started I told the nurse about it. She could see the insides of my hands were peeling. I was sent home. The door in front was nailed shut with a warning sign, "Scarlet Fever DO NOT ENTER". Even my dad was not allowed in the house. He brought us food which he placed in front of the door.

My mother became very sick one year and was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She was placed in a sanitarium for a few months. Her birthday was during that time. My father bought a light green dress for her and told me to keep it a secret. As we arrived at the sanitarium, I ran into her room crying out, "Mom, dad bought you a green dress but I was not to tell you." That was me, could not keep a secret.

My mother also was a tomboy growing up. I heard she could climb any tree as fast as the boys did. One time she watched as her brother Willy and friends in the barn were betting who could pee the farthest over a straw pile. When they left she had to try, I wonder how !!! She had to watch her little sister Hilde some time and would rock the cradle so hard that Hilde would fall out. Another time she put a bean up her sister Anna's nose. There were complications and they had to take Anna to the doctor. She got lots of

spankings in her young life. **Proverbs 29, 15** reads **“Scolding and spanking a child helps him to learn, Left to himself, he brings shame to his mother.”**

We had many friends in Milwaukee and we'd get together to do crafts. My father made three guitars, one of which I still have. It crossed the Atlantic Ocean with me several times. Even though it's been damaged, I'm holding on to it as a wonderful keepsake and reminder of my father's expert workmanship. My mother was also very talented. I can still see those beautiful crochet pillows she made, one with an airplane and the other a flower design. It was crochet with very fine yarn. One thing I still have is a towel where she had sewn a hand crocheted basket on it with washcloths in it.

During this time Great-uncle John moved to Texas with his family. Great-uncle Emil went back to Germany where he married at the age of 52 to a woman half his age. Only the marriage didn't last very long. After two sons were born, he accused his wife and farm helper of having an affair. He said the sons were not his but that of the helper, which was not true as both boys looked a lot like him. My Grandfather Heinrich prayed with him, trying hard to talk him out of this. He just lost his mind and one morning his wife found him hanging in the barn. What an ending.

Later, his wife and sons migrated to America. I first heard in 1986 that one of the sons lives in Michigan. We started to correspond and he let me know that his brother also could not handle the pressures of life and took the way out as his father did. Their faith in the Lord wasn't strong enough. I wonder if they ever really gave their lives to the Lord. Trusting the Lord, He will guide you through all hardships.

In 1932, both my parents were out of work. It was the time of the Great Depression when over twelve million Americans were without jobs. Many people were

trying to survive, as were my parents. To make ends meet, we moved together with Linda and Alex Freigang, into an apartment to save on rent. Linda and Alex did not have any children so I became their pet and they loved me as if I were their own.

I recall how much I liked to eat pork and beans. Every day for lunch I'd open a can of my favorite food. One time years later, Linda and Alex Freigang came to visit us, and remembering my fondness for pork and beans, they brought me three cans. When Hitler called all Germans in America to come back home promising them help to get started, Linda and Alex followed his call and went back to live in Berlin. Sorry to say, only a year later, Alex was killed in an car accident.

Many memories of my childhood, some joyous and some sad, come to mind as I'm writing this story.



Edith Krebs flower girl Dec. 1927



Milwaukee Wis. 1930
Lydia, Assaph and Edith Krebs