



Great-grandpa Friedrich Wilhelm
Wiesner 1937

CHAPTER 8

MY MOTHER'S FAMILY

I believe the Wiesner and Sorge family came from Russia in 1902 and bought a farm in Drückenhof, State of Briesen. Back in 1921 when my parents first escaped into Germany, part of my mother's family had stayed in West Prussia which was now under Polish rule. This included Great-grandpa Friedrich Wilhelm Wiesner, mother's parents, Karl and Wilhelmine Sorge, and her two sisters, Else and Hilde, who stayed in Poland. Else and Hilde became Polish citizens but the parents were exempt. Being of German descent, even though they were now officially Polish citizens, unfortunately they were subjected to terrible mistreatment, suffering persecution on every side.

I was told that at one time the hymnals of the German church they belonged to were burned. The extreme bad blood between the Poles and the Germans had been generated by years of wars and the numerous times the countries changed hands. Because of the hatred and prejudice, nobody trusted each other. My Grandfather Karl and Uncle Otto Arndt, Else's husband, slept with guns under their pillows. Three big watch dogs were tied around the farm house and barn. I remember at the gateway guarding was a big Saint Bernard.

In 1937, Hilde was married to August Wehrman. I was her bridesmaid. It was strange to see German young men in Polish uniforms at the wedding. I recall, after the wedding we drove with my mothers brother, Uncle Willy, in his car into the old part of Poland where the newlyweds had their picture taken. I was surprised to see many people, dressed very poorly, staring at us as we got out of the car. I wondered if they had never seen an automobile before.

The married couple received numerous wedding gifts and we had some in the car with us. To disguise the gifts at the checkpoint on the Polish border so as the Polish officers would not detect them, we hid them in our clothes. We used the sheep fur blanket they received to cover up, as I do not recall the car was heated, The silverware was hidden in our coats. My Aunt Emma stuffed the large soup ladle into her stocking. At the checkpoint my aunt showed the young Polish officer everything she thought he should see. He was a handsome young man and only had eyes for me so he did not pay any attention to what Aunt Emma was displaying. The smitten officer completely missed seeing the ladle protruding from Aunt Emma's stocking when she bent down. End result, we passed inspection without having to declare our booty. We all had a good laugh about

that afterwards! One day in 1939, Uncle August Wehrman discovered a family in his village with their tongues nailed to the kitchen table. This atrocity outraged him so much he vowed he'd wage a fight to the end for freedom.

Stories about the frightful mistreatment of the German-speaking people in Poland was a factor in Hitler's decision to invade Poland in the Fall of 1939 and take back the land lost in World War I. He ordered Poland to hand over the strip of territory across the Polish Corridor to link Germany proper with East and West Germany. When the German troops invaded Poland, my family rejoiced that now their relatives would be free again.

When Hitler demanded Polish territory, Great Britain and France backed Poland and declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939. Uncle August was drafted into the German Army shortly after this as Poland became German territory again. Sad to say, he was killed in 1943 leaving two young daughters to grow up without their father.



Sorges Farm in Drueckenhof.

From left to right: Anna, Adolfine, Else, Mother Wilhelmine with Hilde,

Lydia and Willi



Rostock 1920: Anna, Lydia (ny mother) , Willy & Ado lfine. Karl & Wilhelmie Sorge's children



Karl & Wilhelmie Sorge abt 1920



daughter Hildegard & husband August Wehrman



Great- grandparents Friedrich Wilhelm II and
Katharina Sorge Wiesner in Briesen West Prussia 1905

This picture was take in 1905 by the royal Duke Pfotographer, OSC Grohmann.

Recognizing acknowledgment of the orders served.

His Majesty the King of Preussen, Albert von Preussen

Her Majesty Princess Feodora von Sachsen, Meiningen

(Niece of the Emperor)

His Highness Princesse von Schwarzburg Rudolstadt

His Majesty Prince Albert von Sachsen-Altenburg

His Highness Prince Heinrich XXX Reuss

Drückenhof
in the State of Briesen, West Preussia, Germany
before 1945

The village of Drückenhof was about 6-10 miles from the state city of Briesen. Briesen was a clean and beautiful town built around a large lake. I remember the lake well as I lived in a house right on the lake for about a year. During the winter, we ice skated on the frozen lake. In Summer, it was so beautiful to stroll around the lake on the walkway which the city kept up and which was free for every one to use. I remember the cobblestone market place which was situated in the center of the city. There weren't many cars around then, it was still the age of the horse and buggy. Walking on the cobblestone streets wasn't an easy thing to do. I usually rode my bike to the business school which I attended for 2 years.

There were a few farmhouses in the middle of the village of Drückenhof, the rest were staggered over a few miles along the main road. The Sorge - Wiesner farm was located about a mile outside of the village. I will never forget the three big dogs that protected the farm at each of three corners. At the gate, a huge St. Bernard greeted you. That was in the year 1937. The village was still in the possession of Poland. It was a period of distrust and fear as the German people were victimized by the Poles who broke into the German farmsteads to steal whatever they could get their hands on. The German farmers slept with guns under their pillows to safeguard their possessions. The large farmhouse had four or five bedrooms. Great-grandpa's bedroom was way at the end. Each room had a tile heater. The good-sized living room was only used when special company came. The kitchen with a living corner was the only area heated during the wintertime.

When Poland took over that part of Germany after World War I, they did not have electricity in the village and it stayed that way even when I was living there in 1941-42. Petroleum lamps were used. I did my home work by the light of a Petroleum lamp. I remember my aunts, Else and Hilde, did beautiful hand work, such as tablecloths with cut - out embroidery, by the dim light of these primitive lamps

There were no bathrooms in the house. Such conveniences were not commonplace in those days. The OUT HOUSE next to the barn was used. When it was dark you lit a petroleum lamp to guide you to the outside toilet. Fun? A chamber pot in the bedroom served the purpose at night or when illness prevented you to go outside. Great grandpa was a pleasant man. I enjoyed talking to him. He was always interested in what was going on in the world; the daily newspaper kept him up - to - date about what was happening. And he never missed reading passages from the Bible each day—that was his source of strength. Every day he went out to feed the cows and he was still going strong in the 1941 at the age of 88 years.

Then in January of 1945, at the advanced age of 92, he was forced to leave his beloved home with practically nothing but the cloths on his back. He, together with his daughter and son - in - law and family (my grandmother Sorge) had no choice but to flee from the Russian invaders that bitter cold morning. They left behind all their earthly possessions, traveling by horse and wagon over frozen roads many days and nights, without sleep, and no destination in sight. The physical hardship was too much for great - grandpa. He perished in strange surroundings under harsh conditions and was buried in a snow bank by the side of the road. The danger at the time didn't even allow his loved ones to pause long enough to grieve for him. He was a Christian man, loved by all who knew him. He went to a better, safer place to meet the Lord. I am thankful for the privilege of knowing him and will always remember him.

I am reminded of a letter I received from a Wiesner relative Lilia Wiesner Kick written in German, a descendant of **Heinrich Wiesner**, the **son of Friedrich Wilhelm Wiesner**, brother of my grandma Wihelmine Wiesner Sorge, who stayed behind in Russia.

Lilia writes about the tragedies that befell the family. I translated into English.

We went through a terrible time, so did our parents and grandparents. Our destiny was filled with unbearable terror. It was a dreadful time for the German people in Russia before and after World War II. Good thing communism collapsed.

My parents were children when it began. One night they came and dragged my grandparents with the children out of the house to be sent to Kasachstan. My grandfather also named Heinrich Wiesner born in 1894 disappeared that day in 1932 and was never seen again. The same thing happened to his father **Heinrich** born 1870-80, never seen again.

In the bitter cold winter time grandma Amalia Mut Wiessner born in 1894 was homeless with 8 children, the youngest 8 months old. Six of the children died shortly

after that. Grandma and the two oldest sons, Friedrich (my father) and brother August were the only survivors. This happened when the land was taken from the people and put into collective farms. Who ever opposed was shot or disappeared.

Then the dreadful War started in 1941. The German people were called the enemies of the Russian people. They were dragged away to Siberia or to the far east Kasachstan. Most were killed. My uncle August Wiesner was killed in 1948. People that were capable to work were sent to labor camps. Their freedom was taken from them, were beaten, spit on, they were forced to hard labor. The suffering was hard and bitter. We as children, born during that time, went through hardship, we were called fascist. Slowly in the 1960s it got a littler better. But still the state did not acknowledge, recognize us as Germans. That's when the massive exodus started.

My grandma died at age 90. I learned German from her even so it was forbidden. My parents had nine children. One still lives in Kasachstan. The rest are now in Germany.

Lilia Wiesner Kick

Picture taken in Saratow, 1920
Standing: great grandpa **Heinrich**
his son Friedrich, his wife and
child.

